Civic Voice: Empowering the Poor Through Community Radio

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The World Bank
Community Radio…

Is a **sustainable** and **interactive** medium for poor and illiterate populations to:

• be heard

• be informed

• shape knowledgeable opinions

• learn the give and take of informed dialogue, and

• become more decisive agents in their own development
Why community radio?

• accessible by large illiterate populations, even remote

• source of information, education and entertainment

• low cost technology, can be combined with other ICTs, e.g. telecenters

• many cultures have strong oral traditions - this “fits”

• vehicle for social accountability in public sector issues
The World Bank and Community Radio

• April 2003: International workshop of expert-practitioners to orient the World Bank to the roles community radio stations play and how they function

• Countries identified for “pilot” support by the Bank

• Pilots are large-scale prototypes for ways the Bank can integrate support to the community radio sector through its country assistance – especially to support

  • community voice and empowerment and local government accountability in CDD lending; and

  • media policy reform through country dialogue and policy-based lending.
Pilots seek to:

• promote **enabling environments** (development of favorable policy and regulatory frameworks)

• enhance **content development** and **strengthen capacities** of community radio stations (training in radio programming development, capacity building in station management, strengthening of local institutions working in the sector, ensuring community involvement); and

• foster development and strengthening of **community radio networks and south-south exchanges** in communities of practice.
Pilots cont’d

• Since 2003 pilots have been completed within policy-based operations in Ecuador, Peru and Benin.

• Pilots are being implemented in Timor-Leste (expanding on CEP support), Indonesia and Sri Lanka.

• As of 2004, work is getting underway in Ghana and Kenya, and potential activities have been identified for Mongolia, among other countries.
The example of Timor Leste…

Community Empowerment and Local Governance Project

Context:

- infrastructure destroyed (post-conflict)
- high illiteracy rate
- lack of access to information
- limited connectivity
- no trusted source of news
Timor Leste…

Why establish community radio stations?

• After 25 years of oppression, people wanted freedom to express themselves
• Communities requests for alternative media and trusted source of news
• Channel for communication, news and information, and entertainment
• Tool for social healing – and knitting social fabric together
Timor Leste...

Strong community engagement

In Establishing Stations:

• villagers selected station managing boards and recruited community reporters

• groups from different groups in civil society (women, youth, religious and community leaders…) in districts participated in meetings

In Developing the Enabling Environment:

• now community broadcasting groups are joining forces, drafting joint proposal for government on regulatory framework for them to continue as independent media
Timor Leste: Initial results and impact

- Attracted many young people, and young women in particular – many on managing boards, or working as reporters, station managers, technicians
- People involved with the Commission for Truth and Reconciliation used community airwaves to disseminate messages of peace and dialogue
- Broadcasting of educational programs (language, MCH) & talk shows
- Community radios used to press for social accountability – e.g., community leader reported fraud on the air – named perpetrator and asked him to come forward or face the community on the air. The accused paid back the money.
- Some stations are selling air time and services in program production, etc. – generating income
Plans in Ghana

Assistance is expected to include:

• strengthening of community radio stations’ program development and delivery capacities

• thematic program development by the Ghana Community Radio Network

• technical, equipment and infrastructure support to help communities establish new radio stations, and

• potentially, technical support to a domestic working group proposing new legislation and regulations for broadcasting.
Improving Legal and Regulatory Environment Worldwide

Interest and opportunity: particularly in countries that are

- democratizing and opening their economies
- decentralizing delivery of public services to support local development.
Draft good practice guide

Overview of policies, description of good practices, country examples

Uses:

• to facilitate policy reviews and analyses in particular developing countries,

• to assist in identifying key areas for reform, and

• to provide a broad framework for dialogue and planning of reform efforts, where the context permits.

Expected to be ready for dissemination by mid-2005
Community Radio

It’s about VOICE!