

# Civic Voice: Empowering the Poor Through Community Radio

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# 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

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!