

SUSTAINABILITY OF COMMUNITY

RADIOS – MODULE V

A TRAINING GUIDE



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This module represents the fifth in a series of brief guidebooks aiming to support the sustainability of community radios. It responds to the growing prevalence of community radio in Sub-Saharan Africa and their vital role in providing a space for diverse community voices. However, community radios face many challenges in areas of governance and operation. Drawing on years of experience in training, coaching and support in Cote d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, and Sierra Leone, to name just a few, the guidebook provides concrete advice to assist stations in improving administrative management, increasing resource generation, recommending financial tools, improving marketing strategies and guidelines for programming.

This Module V continues the theme of Module IV and elaborates on the possible ways of involving community members in production and programming – a central feature of community radios. It presents the notion of “public programming”, highlights the advantages of listeners clubs and offers practical guidance to make your programmes genuinely participatory and community-oriented.

Module V is useful for anyone whose role is essential in the day-to-day operations of a radio station: station managers, programme directors, technical directors, members of the Board of Directors, and other interested parties.

The module builds on the principles and documents discussed over the course of Module I-IV, including topics on administrative management issues such as the governing bodies of a community radio station; human resources questions; and the various elements of programming. All previous modules are available at Radio for Peacebuilding Africa's (RFPA) website at http://www.radiopeaceafrica.org/index.cfm?lang=en&context_id=3&context=manuals.

RFPA looks forward to sharing these modules, and invites your feedback on their relevance and usefulness within your stations and work. Comments are always welcome at rfpa@sfcg.org!

Mechanisms to ensure participation in radio programme production

As we have highlighted in the previous Module, involving community members in the production and programming is a central feature of community radios. Module I specified how such involvement can be facilitated through the inclusion of community members in the General Assembly and the Board of Directors. This section describes how implementing other, programming-related mechanisms can lead to increased community participation.

1) Creating a “public programme” in order to involve the community in the production

One strategy for engaging community residents in the production of radio programmes is to produce “public programmes” – programmes consisting of interviews recorded with community members outside of the station.

In order to produce such programmes, station journalists need to go and meet with community residents. This can take place on a regular basis as it is intended to provide an opportunity for the population to express their different views and opinions on the ground. This allows them to actively participate in collecting and presenting information and directly contribute to the programmes that are aimed at them. These public programmes produced with community involvement are a good way to decentralise the radio’s activities and allows listeners to become real participants and actors of the show.

2) Local committees or listener clubs as frameworks for participation

Creating local committees or listener clubs provides an opportunity to organise regular focus groups to discuss issues covered in radio programmes. Such meetings allow:

- To inform staff about the audience’s expectations and daily issues.
- To verify that the radio station’s objectives, set in accordance with the population’s needs, are still valid.
- For the station director to update programme content after open discussions with the audience members about problems with the station. These genuine and direct dialogues allow staff to prepare the ground for future campaigns.
- To raise funds: this is also an opportunity to raise awareness about the community’s duty towards their station.

As the audience’s engagement and willingness to participate might fade over time, it is important to take every possible opportunity to reach out and “revive” the enthusiasm of the listeners.

3) Involving communities in drafting and revising programme plans

Ideally, the programme plan should reflect the target population's concerns and issues of interest. Therefore, creating a programme plan should not take place only in the station, excluding the community. Several different mechanisms exist to allow for the involvement of the communities in one way or another in this process.

To adequately serve the community, the staff of the radio station must identify the needs of the residents and get to know their listening habits. Regularly conducted studies (at least once a year) help to obtain data on these factors; and analysing the data helps to create programming that corresponds to the community's expectations. Studies or surveys are also a good way to collect feedback to adjust the station's programming. The community dimension of the radio implies that such revision should be undertaken regularly to reflect the socio-economic changes in the context.

It is important to highlight that a community radio station does not only provide general information; it should provide specific answers to development challenges the community encounters, such as the prevention of malaria through mosquito control or agricultural challenges in the rainy season. This sends a signal to the population that the community radio is in fact there to serve their interests.

4) Public relations

The Programming Committee of the Board of Management¹ should use public relations as a mean to increase community participation in programming. Its role is to go out and meet with different organisations whose work is relevant to the station, such as community associations, to talk about the radio's objectives and priority topics. This allows for a forum for discussion where residents can share their suggestions, which helps members of the Committee integrate the community's viewpoint and thus ensure that community members are the true owners and beneficiaries of the radio. Regular consultations with community leaders also ensure the participatory aspect of the community radio. Such meetings are more informal than the focus groups; they are considered more as a public relation exercise.

5) Producing specific and targeted programmes

The community-oriented aspect of the radio is also highlighted by the fact that the different groups of the community are represented in the management and control structures of the station as well as the programme plan².

To ensure participatory dimension in programming, locally spoken languages must all be represented to the extent possible. This is a great way to address and involve the local

¹ For more information on the different Committees on the Board of Management and other organs, please see Module II of our Manual series.

² For more information on how to involve the various groups in the management structure of the station, please see Module I and II of this Manuel series.

population that speaks those languages and, even more importantly, to emphasize the diverse cultural heritage of the community.

Furthermore, the community aspect can be strengthened if each segment of the community (youth, women, etc.) as well as the different professions (artists, farmers, etc.) has its own, specific and targeted programmes within the programme plan. While this can make it difficult to manage the station, it is important not to neglect this feature.

6) Co-organise activities to support local development initiatives

The radio can emphasise its role within the community by sponsoring, mentoring or co-organising local activities such as concerts, festivals, sporting events or competitions. These activities, aiming to provide support to community organisations and local development, are an excellent opportunity to strengthen the relationship between the radio and its audience. They can contribute to improve community involvement, reinforce ties within the community and develop new types of cooperation with local organisations.

Communities have high expectations towards their radio. These types of support are ways to respond to these expectations and opportunities to create stronger ties with the audience. It is the radio's responsibility to create the necessary conditions for the audience's involvement and participation. Through strengthening the relationship between the station and the community it serves, radios can contribute to the socio-economic development of the area.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



For more information on the management of community radio stations, please refer to the list below.

“A Guide to Sustainability” by Developing Media Partners. Available at

<http://www.radiopeaceafrica.org/assets/texts/pdf/Lo%20Res%20Guidebook.pdf>

“Community Media Sustainability Guide – The Business of Changing Lives” by Internews. Available at:

<http://www.internews.org/research-publications/community-media-sustainability-guide-business-changing-lives>

“Community Radio Handbook” by UNESCO. Available at:

<http://developingradio.org/files/UNESCO%20CR%20Handbook.pdf>

“Community Radio Start-Up Information Guide” by AMARC. Available at:

http://www.amarc.org/documents/manuals/community-radio-start-up-guide_e.pdf

“Designing and Conducting Focus Group Interview” by Krueger, R. A. , University of Minnesota. Available at: [http://www.comm.umn.edu/~akoerner/courses/5431-S10/Krueger-](http://www.comm.umn.edu/~akoerner/courses/5431-S10/Krueger-FocusGroupInterviews.pdf)

[FocusGroupInterviews.pdf](http://www.comm.umn.edu/~akoerner/courses/5431-S10/Krueger-FocusGroupInterviews.pdf)

“Governance, Management, and Sustainability of Community Radio Stations” by J-A. ‘Rantimi Jays, Leiden University. Available at: <http://www.internews.org/research-publications/community-media-sustainability-guide-business-changing-lives>

“How to Conduct a Focus Group” by Sharken, J.A., The Grantmanship Centre. Available at

<http://www.tgci.com/magazine/How%20to%20Conduct%20a%20Focus%20Group.pdf>

“How to Write a Mission Statement” by Raedtke, J.M., The Grantmanship Centre. Available at

<http://www.tgci.com/magazine/How%20to%20Write%20a%20Mission%20Statement.pdf>

“Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences” by Berg, B.L. (2011) Pearson: New Jersey.

“The African Community Manager’s Handbook – A Guide to Sustainable Radio” by AMARC. Available at:

http://www.amarc.org/documents/manuals/The_African_CR_Manager.pdf

“What is a healthy station” by Developing Media Partners. Available at
<http://developingradio.org/files/WhatisaHealthyStation.pdf>

We hope you will find our Manual useful and we always look forward to your comments and feedback. Please do not hesitate to share your thoughts at rfa@sfcg.org!