

Radio for Development – Discussion Paper
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Radio for development is a well established sector, which is increasingly reassigned under the banner of information and communication technologies for development (ICT4D), and as such is often included in the broader debates about the role and impact of ICTs for development.

During September 2005 Healthlink Worldwide and partners ISHED and AfriAfya have been conducting an online discussion about 'ICTs and Health', as well as developing a bibliography about the subject. The discussion has raised the subject of radio extensively, with many commentators emphasising the centrality of radio for reaching, and impacting on audiences that are often otherwise hard to reach or socially and geographically isolated.¹

For many people working in the field of radio for development this shoehorning of radio into an ICT definition is frustrating as radio has been a medium of communication in development for many years, and there is an extensive body of evidence and academia on radio within development.

Within development communication radio has featured as a tool in most of the methodologies and paradigms. As a broad sweep of development communications is divided into two main paradigms – the dominant 'delivery' mode and the more participatory mode² – we can see radio as a significant feature in all the areas. Historically development communication has been conceptualised as either within the dominant paradigm of message/information delivery³, where effective communication is received with understanding; or within the critical/participatory paradigm of context and process, whereby communication is viewed as a route to increase participation in development, empowerment and increased articulation of social relations among people.⁴

Many commentators see health communication in the past 10 years as having led the development of communication because it has been the site of innovations in methodologies.⁵

¹ Please see www.d-groups.org/groups/healthict for an archive of this discussion. A summary will be available shortly. Please also see the **draft** ICT and Health bibliography, that will be on the Source website shortly (http://www.asksource.info/res_library/ict_tax.htm)

² Silvio Waisbord. 'Family Tree of Theories, Methodologies and Strategies in Development Communications'. Rockefeller Foundation. <http://www.comminit.com/stsilviocomm/sld-2881.html>

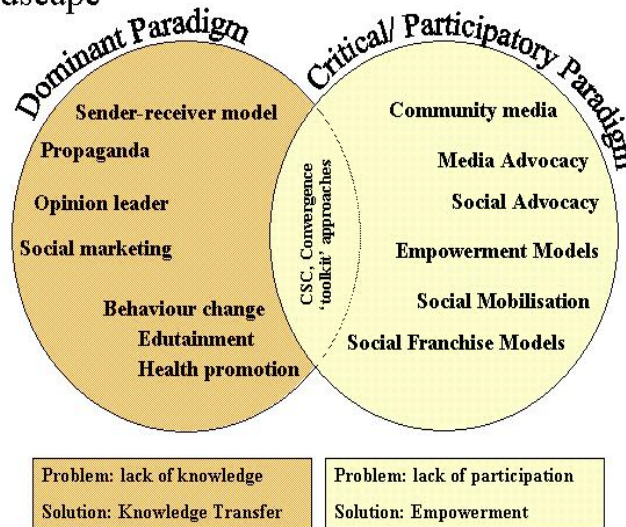
³ Dominant paradigm: modernization – knowledge transfer models such as sender-receiver, magic bullet; diffusion of innovation theories – opinion leader theory, participatory diffusion theories; social marketing approaches – social marketing, health promotion and education, behaviour change [specifically in health], entertainment education.

⁴ Critical/participatory paradigm: community media, empowerment models/strategies, advocacy approaches: media advocacy, social advocacy, social mobilization, social franchise models.

⁵ WHO meeting, Integrating HIV/AIDS communication strategies. April 2004

The use of social marketing and 'edutainment' for example has been significant, and there has been a trend for increased 'cross-over' methodologies employed whereby a campaign may include both diffusion and participation. And there is an increasing awareness within major NGOs and agencies that messaging has failed and that more participatory dialogical communication strategies are needed.

Development Communications' Conceptual Landscape



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While health communication is increasingly seen as the area of innovation within these different paradigms 'radio in health communication' is often on the cutting edge of this innovation.

Within a mass media focus radio has been used widely in public health awareness raising, and significantly in HIV and AIDS awareness raising, both in developed and developing countries. There are many case studies of effective awareness raising campaigns, with a growing body of evidence about behaviour change and broader impact. The Soul City evaluations are an often cited reference in this area, as they track the impact of radio (and TV) programming produced by Soul City in South Africa,⁶ but there are many other examples. The Communication Initiative website has a 'radio window' that includes numerous studies.⁷ The work of governments, NGOs and UN agencies has ensured that radio is central in large-scale public health campaigns.

For NGOs there are three main questions:

- What is the appropriate nature of our intervention?
- What resources are necessary in this context?
- What is the impact?

Within a community/participatory focus radio has been developing strongly in Latin America and Africa, and emerging in South Asia. The work of organisations such as AMARC (Association of Community Radio)⁸ has put community radio on the map, and 'community radio' is broadly acknowledged in development communication to be a powerful route for both

⁶ Soul City Evaluation: <http://www.comminit.com/evaluations/idcc2001/sld-2405.html>

⁷ The Communication Initiative, Radio window: <http://www.comminit.com/radio/>

⁸ AMARC: <http://www.amarc.org/>

reaching local communities and for local communities to actually voice their own concerns and views, and for them to reach out to others.

The voice of community radio is being amplified through innovative uses of convergent technology. Radio and the internet is a powerful combination, and many community radios are also broadcasting online, participating in networks and global broadcast events⁹ (or sharing content and views via audio exchange and online community portals such as OneWorld Radio (www.oneworld.net/radio)).

Community radio also presents donors and NGOs with an enticing arena for delivering pre-produced or pre-conceptualized programming. This presents a strong tension within the field – some support agencies and organisations are strong proponents of delivering high quality products,¹⁰ while others believe the focus of money and effort should be on directly building the capacity of local broadcasters themselves, in order for them to then produce content that is locally relevant and to develop a local media infrastructure and talent pool that is sustainable.¹¹ Within these two positions there is also a plethora of projects and organisations that are aiming to both develop community radio content and capacity, but providing trainings, fellowships, competitions for programming, distributing fact sheets, scripts and 'locomotive inserts' of short programming that can be placed in a local programme as an engine for further discussion.

For NGOs working in community radio there are again three questions:

- What is the appropriate nature of our intervention?
- What resources are necessary in this context?
- What is the impact?

When thinking about radio in development the challenges, lessons learnt and pros and cons of the medium need to be examined. This is the case for radio in development generally, as well as specifically in looking at top-down approaches and bottom-up approaches.

A helpful grid in thinking about radio in development might be:

	Radio in Development – Generally	Radio in 'Top – Down' approaches	Radio in 'Bottom-Up' approaches
Pros	Language usage Reach – beyond literacy Reach – beyond geography Reach – beyond social limits Access to women and children		
Cons	Blanket approaches – what impact? Problem of context Problem of evaluation		

The importance of 'resourcing' the media in health is also a vital one.¹² Media in developing countries require both training and resources in the form of content development, authoritative and trustworthy information sources, confidence and experience in health reporting and potentially strong support from peers around the world via networks of media who share a concern and focus on health, and who want to share experiences and content. Many

⁹ Events section – OneWorld Radio: <http://radio.oneworld.net/section/news/events/archive>

¹⁰ For example The Straight Talk Foundation in Uganda is well known for producing, widely distributing and developing effective HIV/AIDS communication for youth around the country. <http://www.straight-talk.or.ug>

¹¹ For example AMARC Africa's training of local media and the development of a network of community radio stations. <http://africa.amarc.org/site.php?lang=EN>

¹² Exchange at Healthlink Worldwide has recently taken on the editorial of a portal dedicated to 'resourcing' the media on HIV/AIDS. This portal is an initiative of the World Bank and is a partnership between a significant number of support organisations and NGOs; such as Panos, UNAIDS, Hopkins and others. More partners are welcome. www.aidsmedia.org

organisations are active in the area of 'media support' for health, particularly training of journalists, but there is a level of duplication in many instances and a need for more comprehensive knowledge sharing and coordination among support agencies.

There is also a new question – should we be rethinking radio interventions in the light of the new technologies and ways of communicating that are emerging? Are there new opportunities to reach people and hear people via the convergence of radio with mobile, the web, PAD, and other technologies?

Radio in health communication is a vibrant and dynamic field, and one that has signs of lasting many years as radio retains a pre-eminence in media in developing countries as well as experiencing a 'renaissance' in the developed world over the past ten years. Health communication will continue to innovate with radio in seeking to impact on behaviour change, delivery of key health information and broad health education. The role of appropriate resources however is vitally important; training, information and networking are a potential route for building a strong and effective media, whether on a national or local scale.

Useful Links

OneWorld Radio	www.oneworld.net/radio
Aids Media Center	www.aidsmedia.org
AMARC	www.amarc.org
Communication Initiative, Radio Window	www.comminit.com/radio
Health Unlimited	www.healthunlimited.org

Some interesting profiles of 'radio in health' initiatives

- OneWorld Radio members, searched by 'health'

<http://radio.oneworld.net/contact/advancedsearch/?CompanyTypeIDArray%5B%5D=31&CountryIDArray%5B%5D=-1&RestrictPackage=0&Search=Search>
<http://www.aidschannel.org/section/aidsradio/community/member/profiles>



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