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THE USE OF RADIO TO REACH REMOTE AUDIENCES:
THE CASE OF THE JANAMORA RADIO PROJECT

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Abstract

This paper embarked on finding out how radio is used to address listeners located in a rural setting. It involved a radio project that specifically aims at addressing listeners in the district of Janamora in Gondar. The study adopted qualitative methodology tools. Data was gathered from Four Focus Group Discussions involving listeners of the radio programs. Three facilitators and three other individuals representing different bodies involved in the radio project were also interviewed. An observation of the Sunday listening and discussion sessions was also conducted. A document, the radio programs' manual, was also consulted as well. In a bid to find out how radio is used to reach remote audiences, related literature which includes the idea of development communication is discussed. As theoretical frameworks, the diffusion and participatory approaches to communication are also touched upon. The analysis is done under different themes that are hoped to assist in throwing light on the research questions under consideration. The study identified that the radio programs are regarded highly by listeners. The group listening sessions were found to be an integral part of the whole process as they are believed to be a forum to mutual learning. Discussants also made clear there are some gaps that need to be filled which includes the fact that a portion of the programs are poorly recorded. It was found out that a group of young people acted as facilitators whose task is to maintain the proper running of the listening and discussion stages. However, these were untrained individuals who consider themselves short of adequate know-how to deal with the demanding task they are provided-coordinating the group listening and discussions. The radio project allows some room for the participation of listeners but this is limited in many ways. As things stand, though, the way radio is used to reach remote audiences seems to be something to cherish.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

1.1 Background

Hall describes radio as the pioneering medium of the participatory communication movement. She also states that radio is by far the cheapest electronic form of communication at the receiving as well as transmission ends. “It requires no complex infrastructure, no outlay on expensive hardware. Above all, it makes no demand on literacy” (Hall, 2004:49).

The history of radio broadcasting in Ethiopia dates back to 1935 when Radio Addis Ababa, the Voice of Ethiopia, currently known only as The Voice of Ethiopia started its services in 1935 with one KW short wave transmitter (Eleni et al 2003). The government is said to have destroyed this when the Italians captured Addis Ababa.

One cannot say that the national radio broadcasting and other regional stations alike address and respond to the concerns of every community since they are designed to reach the general listener.

In order to provide a certain target of population information of its needs, radio programs that specifically deal with issues of concern seem vital. Jankowski believes that mass communication does not play that role as it emphasizes one-directional flow of messages and conceives of ‘audience’ as a construct of message consumption (Jankowski, 2002:363).

Community radios are believed to be much closer to the people they serve than other forms of radio broadcasts. Although community radios are flourishing in many parts of Africa, Ethiopia has only started granting licence to such broadcasters-The Kore community radio being the first one. Mtimde et al. state, community listening clubs are in operation in Kenya, Zimbabwe, South Africa and gaining popularity in areas where community radio stations have not yet been established (Mtimde et al. 1998). The

Janamora radio project fits to this category as it involves group listening of radio programs targeting a specific listener groups.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Referring to the listening habit of the 1950's in Ethiopia, Eleni et al (2003) state that in the 50's, "when people were eager to listen to the radio but did not own such a device, a curious thing occurred." Large crowds of Ethiopians gathered at various squares and around monuments and listened to horn speakers (public address systems) which broadcast the daily radio programs.

This gathering somewhat resembles the radio listening groups formed in Janamora although the latter goes a little bit further in using the forum for discussion. Gondar Educational Radio is engaged in different radio projects and the Janamora radio project is one of them.

The radio programs meant for the Janamora listeners are said to have started off with the objective of combating poverty and issues like good governance, women's rights, harmful traditional practices and policy issues are also the subjects of discussion. The programs are aired every Sunday for a period of 20 minutes and are followed by discussions (Action Aid Ethiopia's Newsletter, February 2006).

In this paper, attempt will be made to find out how radio is used to address specific listener groups located in a remote area. Besides, the level of community participation in the radio programs will be assessed.

1.3 Objectives

1.3.1 General Objective

This research has the objective of finding out how radio is used to reach people in remote areas.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

The research has the following specific objectives:

- Describe how radio is used to reach remote audiences.
- Explore community participation in the radio programs.
- Assess some of the gaps in the radio project.

1.4 Significance of the study

The research is hoped to be valuable in understanding how radio can be used in reaching people in remote areas. The experiences of the Janamora project may also be a lesson for how other projects/radio programs can be better run.

1.5 Limitations of the study

Due to time and financial constraints, the researcher could not have stayed in the field for a long time. That would have helped in gaining a more comprehensive understanding of the project.

1.6 Organization of the paper

This study consists of five chapters. The first chapter presents a general background to the study, the research problem, objectives, significance, and scope of the study.

In chapter two, theoretical considerations underlying the study are given attention. This chapter presents a review of literature that mainly deals with the notion of development communication. It presents literature on theoretical arguments surrounding development communication and provides a brief background on radio broadcasting.

The focus of the third chapter will be the methods, procedures and techniques employed in the study. It deals with the methodologies used to conduct this study and the justifications for using them.

Chapter four consists the presentation and analysis of the findings and the last chapter contains summary and conclusion.

CHAPTER TWO

2. Review of Related Literature

Introduction

In this section of the paper attempt will be made to highlight relevant literature to the study. The first part discusses the concept of development communication. Two major conceptual models in development communication: diffusion and participation will also be highlighted. The literature also includes points that are hoped to shade some light to the discussion.

2.1. Development Communication

2.1.1 Development

Inayatullah defines development as a change towards patterns of society that allows better realization of human values and that enables its individuals to gain increased control over themselves (Inayatullah 1976:101 cited in Moemeka 1994). On the other hand, Moemeka states that Rogers has redefined the term as “a widely participatory process of social change and material advancement...for the majority of the people through their gaining greater control over their environment” (Rogers 1976 in Moemeka 1994).

Moemeka takes it that these two definitions show that ‘development’ is a multifaceted concept but he contends that the term means basically one thing;

[T]hough seen from different perspectives, development means one basic thing in all perspectives and to all people—a change for the better in the human, cultural, socioeconomic, and political conditions of the individual and consequently of the society. It is not solely a matter of technology or of gross national product; more importantly, it is a matter of increased knowledge and skills, growth of new consciousness, expansion of the human mind, the uplifting of the human spirit, and the fusion of human confidence (Moemeka, 1994:11).

2.1.2 Communication

Hiebert *et al.* define communication as the exchange of ideas and that “[i]t is not the mechanical transfer of facts and figures as the mathematical model of communication (Shannon and Weaver, 1949) would appear to indicate.” Herbert *et al.* add that communication is also not talking at people but an interactive process that works in a circular, dynamic and ongoing way (Hiebert et al cited in Moemeka 1994:11).

Communication is, according to Moemeka, talking with people-a process with no permanent sender and no permanent receiver. “In the process of communication, the roles of sending and receiving change hands depending on who is talking and who is listening. This implies freedom, equality and shared interest” (Moemeka, 1994:12).

2.1.3 Development Communication

Development communication, according to Moemeka, is the application of the processes of communication to the development process. Moemeka adds that development communication is the use of the principles and practices of the exchange of ideas to achieve development objectives (Moemeka, 1994:12). The same scholar cites Rosario-Braid, 1979 as defining development as follows:

In a very broad sense, development is “the art and science of human communication applied to the speedy transformation of a country (economic growth, modernization, industrialization, etc.) and the mass of its people (self-actualization, fulfillment of human potentials, greater social justice, etc.) through the identification and utilization of appropriate expertise in the development process that will assist in increasing participation of intended beneficiaries at the grassroots level.”

For it is communication with a social conscience, Moemeka notes, development communication is heavily oriented toward the human aspects of development which means that physical and economic growth are important only in so far as they help to improve the human condition. (Moemeka, 1994)

Wilkins (2000:197) cited in Morris (2005:123) understands development communication as “the strategic application of communication technologies and processes to promote social change.” On the other hand, Servaes and Malkhao define development communication as the sharing of knowledge aimed at reaching a consensus for action that takes into account the interests, needs and capacities of all concerned. The two scholars believe that communication media are important tools in achieving this process but level their use as something not an aim in itself and contend that interpersonal communication too must play a fundamental role (Servaes and Malkhao, 2005:4).

Waisbord, 2000 (in Waisbord 2005) underlines the difficulty in coming up with a clear and unambiguous definition of development communication but states that there is a growing consensus around five ideas in thinking and practicing the field.

The first one concerns power. “Power is present in the idea that community empowerment should be the main goal of interventions.” The point being made here is that development initiatives are expected to aspire to contribute to process by which communities gain more control over their lives.

Secondly, the issue of integrating ‘top-down’ and ‘bottom-up’ approaches comes. Waisbord states the 1970s and 80s saw a shift from government –led to community based approaches in development communication. He argues both are imperative to a better result “... the focus on community empowerment should not lead us to underestimate the role of governments. Whether a government decides that a given issue is a priority substantially affects the prospects of development work.”

“A third key idea is the need to have a ‘tool-kit’ approach to communication” Here, Waisbord is emphasizing the need for a multiplicity of communication strategies to improve the quality of life in communities. He notes that different techniques in different contexts might be required to deal with specific problems and priorities.

Fourthly, Waisbord makes the point that interpersonal communication and multimedia activities should be combined. He states that the media are extremely important in raising awareness and knowledge about a given problem and contends that “because social learning and decision-making are not limited to the consideration of media messages but also involve listening and exchanging opinions with a number of different sources, interventions cannot solely resort to the mass media.”

The fifth key idea, according to Waisbord, is the incorporation of approaches that focus on individual and environmental factors in understanding the role of behaviour change communication.

2.2 Theoretical Framework: Diffusion and Participation

2.2.1 Diffusion of Innovations

Moemeka identifies ‘The mass media approach’ as one of the main approaches of development communication which is further divided into centralized mass media and localized ones. According to Moemeka, the media’s unique characteristics of speedy delivery messages and extensive reach endow them the quality of being particularly useful in the dissemination of development messages to large and dispersed populations (Moemeka 1994:55).

Emphasis is given here to the interaction with the target audiences, and on the establishment of local media channels to provide access for the people. However, as Servaes contends, the nature of communication in reality is far from what is envisaged here:

Although development strategies in developing countries diverge widely, the usual pattern for broadcasting and the press has been predominantly the same: informing the population about projects, illustrating the advantages of these projects, and recommending that they be supported [Internet n.d].

According to Servaes, in the context of development, the communication media are generally used to support development initiatives by the dissemination of messages that encourage the public to support development-oriented projects (Ibid).

It is the way these messages are communicated to the audience and what they are believed to do with 'receivers' which has been a topic of debate for decades. One line of thought is the "Diffusion of Innovations" which is introduced by the American scholar Everett Rogers.

The diffusion model, according to Morris, regards behaviour change as a goal of a communication campaign and views persuading individuals to change their behaviour by providing them new ideas and information as the purpose of communication campaigns (Morris, 2003).

Morris underlines Lerner and Schramm note that this model derives from modernization theory of the 1950s and 1960s. "The purpose of communication campaigns here is persuading individuals to change their behaviour by providing them new ideas and information". (Lerner, 1958; Schramm, 1964 cited in Morris (2003:226)

However, the excitement about the possibilities of the information-diffusion approaches which dominated the field in the early days, as Waisbord notes, has receded:

Because the diagnosis stated that the lack of information and traditional norms prevented development, as the modernization tradition concluded, communication was assigned the role of disseminating 'the right knowledge' to facilitate cultural change. These days, however, the notion that communication equals information, or that development problems are reduced to citizen's 'lack of information', have been discredited. ...sometimes communication, not information, is the issue at stake. (Waisbord 2005:82)

Watson (2003:62) states that several writers on media in the 1960's and 70's, including Denis McQuail and Jay Blumer, countered the view that audiences were easily brainwashed, that they always believed what they were told and seemed to have no mind of their own. However, as Moemeka would argue, the media's role in persuading audiences and imparting new information is still the basic agenda of media outlets.

The part which radio plays in the transmission of information and culture is generally beyond question. The general impression is that the basic role of the radio (and other mass media) is to survey the environment, collect stories about everyday occurrences, transform them into news and information, and transmit these back to society through dissemination. Underlying the performance of this role is the belief that radio, as well as other media of mass communication, has the power to fully control our behaviour. Hence, Sproule (1989) is convinced that the hypodermic needle theory is still largely the underlying basis of the use of mass media communication. (Moemeka, 1994:126)

2.2.2 Participatory Approach

Huesca, 2000, p. 74; Thomas, 1994, p. 54 cited in Morris (2003:226) state that the participatory model emerged in part as a reaction to the underlying assumptions of the diffusion model. Comparing this model with the diffusion one, Morris adds that participatory communication is not a vertical process of information transmission from the knowledgeable to the less knowledgeable, but rather a horizontal process of information exchange and interaction. "Proponents of this approach stress the model of dialogue as a catalyst for individual and community empowerment adopted from the work of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire (1970)" (Morris 2003:226).

Bessette, 2004 cited by Cadiz (2005) defines participatory communication as a planned activity, based on the one hand on participatory processes, and on the other hand on media and interpersonal communication, which facilitates a dialogue among different stakeholders, around a common development problem or goal, with the objective of

developing and implementing a set of activities to contribute to its solution, or its realization, and which supports and accompanies this initiative.

On the other hand, Servaes and Malikhao stress that communication between people thrives not on the ability to talk fast, but the ability to listen well. “People are ‘voiceless’ not because they have nothing to say, but because nobody cares to listen to them. Authentic listening fosters trust much more than incessant talking”. Servaes and Malikhao (2005:91)

Servaes underlines that in order to share information, knowledge, trust, commitment, and a right attitude in development projects, participation is very important in any decision-making process for development and cites Xavier Institute as stating that:

Development efforts should be anchored on faith in the people’s capacity to discern what is best to be done as they seek their liberation, and how to participate actively in the task of transforming society.” The point being made here is that people are intelligent and have centuries of experience so one has to draw out their strength and listen to them. Xavier Institute, 1980:11(cited in Servaes 1999:89)

Servaes states that in a participatory communication environment, it is at the community level that the problem of living conditions is discussed and interactions with other communities elicited. He notes that the most developed form of participation is self-management. “More important is that participation is made possible in the decision-making regarding the subjects treated in the messages and regarding the selection procedures” (Servaes cited by Cadiz (2005:146).

Participatory communication is further divided in to two categories: ‘dialogical pedagogy’ of Paulo Freire (1970, 1973, 1983, and 1994) and the ideas of access, participation and self management articulated in the UNESCO debates of the 1970s. (Servaes and Malikhao, 2005:96)

Cadiz (2005:147) points that the foundation of participatory communication in development is in Freire's (1970) basic model of the dialogue.

Cadiz notes that Freire talks of 'communication between equals' which emphasizes equality between the change agent and the development partner. "Our paradigm shifts from a view of our counterparts as development "beneficiaries" ("objects") to that of development "partners" and "colleagues" (fellow "subjects") Cadiz (2005:147)

Elaborating on Freire's 'Problem posing dialogue' Cadiz states that this has to do with doing away with a "banking-type" of education where teachers, trainers, extensionists, or development communicators merely 'deposit knowledge'. "The problem -posing dialogue or what Freire terms as participatory communication, draws from the learner's or people's stock knowledge, experiences, and insights, eliciting there by raising relevant thought-provoking questions rather than merely presenting perspective solutions to development problems" (Cadiz, 2005:147).

Servaes(1999:84) summarizes Freire's model as follows:

The Freirian argument works by a dual theoretical strategy. Freire insists that subjugated people must be treated as fully human subjects in any political process. This implies dialogical communication. The second strategy a moment of utopian hope derived from early Marx, that the human species has a destiny that is more than life as a fulfillment of material needs. Also from Marx is an insistence on collective solutions.

Servaes and Malikhao state that one problem with Freire is that his theory of dialogical communication is based on group dialogue rather than such amplifying media as radio, print and television. Freire is also accused of giving little attention to the language or form of communication, devoting most of his discussion to the intentions of communication actions (Servaes and Malikhao 2005:96).

The UNESCO language about self-management, access and participation from the 1977 meeting in Belgrade, according to Servaes and Malikhao (2005:96-97), can be summed up as follows,

- Access refers to the use of media for public service. It may be defined in terms of the opportunities available to the public to choose varied and relevant programs and to have a means of feedback to transmit its reactions and demands to production organizations.
- Participation implies a higher level of public involvement in communication systems. It includes the involvement of the public in the production process, and also in the management and planning of communication systems.
- Participation may be no more than representation and consultation of the public in decision making.
- On the other hand, self-management is the most advanced form of participation. In this case, the public exercises the power of decision-making within communication enterprises and is also fully involved in the formulation of communication policies and plans.

As some authors might argue, it is difficult to measure people's participation in communication initiatives. However, Peruzzo states that there are many mechanisms that can promote popular participation in the media. Some of them include:

- Have meetings, with the participation of the community, to discuss the programming or even plan a radio program, to establish the guidelines for a small newspaper, to evaluate, etc;
- Keep reporters in charge of collecting and covering local, regional or national events;
- Allow people direct access to microphones or to newspapers so that they can give their opinions;
- Keep programs, or sections of them, supported by ample and democratic participation;
- Open a system to collect complaints and suggestions;
- Introduce participatory planning in the medium and/or program planning; etc. (Peruzzo, 1996:177-78).

Just like the diffusion model, the participatory communication model is not without its doubters and critics. Eng, Briscoe, and Cunningham 1990 (cited in Morris, 2003:229), for instance, have some reservations on the participatory approach of communication as they say that “Participation is not an object that exists in specific quantities or that can be measured in particular units to be compared over time,” nor is it “simply a yes-no variable that is either present or absent”.

Hall, on the other hand, stresses the fact that there is no ideal or unified model for participatory communication. However, she insists that if such communication works, it is a transforming process for those involved. “Participatory communication is about democratizing the media: taking it out of the hands of those on high-governments, commercial operators, global media conglomerates-and giving it to those for whom such providers have little or no relevance” Hall (2004:48).

According to Chetley, although participatory approaches have successfully challenged old conventions, they have not devoted sufficient time to the consideration of several questions. Chetley provides a list of some of the questions of these types:

Under what condition is participation possible? What happens when participatory ideals run counter to community norms or are rejected by local authoritarian practices? How is participation possible at different stages of development programs (e.g. funding, planning, instrumentation, evaluation, sustainability) and how is community empowerment and participation measured? (Chetley, 2002 in Waisbord, 2005:84).

It will be sound to conclude this section of the discussion by what Morris has to say about the two methods of communication: diffusion and participation. She states that “[a]lthough participatory communication is often defined in contrast to the more traditional diffusion model; the two are not polar opposites.” According to Morris, the diffusion model has evolved in a participatory direction since its initial formulation, and participatory projects necessarily involve some element of information transfer.

2.3 Media and Interpersonal Communication

According to Waisbord, the media are extremely important in raising awareness and knowledge about a certain problem but they can do much more than that-generate conversation among audiences and others who were not exposed. He goes on to say that because social learning and decision-making are not limited to the consideration of media messages but also involve listening and exchanging opinions with a number of different sources, interventions cannot solely resort to the mass media....Media centered models are insufficient to achieve behaviour change (Waisbord:2005).

Servaes underlines the importance of the use of a mix of interpersonal and impersonal sources:

Research has shown that, while groups of the public can obtain information from impersonal sources like radio and television, this information has relatively little effect on behavioural changes. And development envisions precisely such change. Similar research has led to the conclusion that more is learned from interpersonal contacts and from mass communication techniques that are based on them. On the lowest level, before people can discuss and resolve problems, they must be informed of the facts, information that the media provide nationally as well as regionally and locally. At the same time, the public, if the media are sufficiently accessible, can make its information needs known (Servaes [Internet, n.d]).

McKee on the other hand, states that nothing replaces community involvement and education in the effective dissemination of information. He adds that media centered models are insufficient to achieve behaviour change. The most successful strategies in family planning, HIV/AIDS, nutritional and diarrhea programs have involved multiple channels, including strong, community-based programming, networks, peer counselling, and government and NGO field workers (McKee 1994 in Waisbord 2005:81).

Waisbord adds that similar conclusions are found in the UNAIDS (1999) communications framework, which recommends the integration of multimedia and

interpersonal communication. The media have powerful effects only indirectly, by stimulating peer communication and making it possible for messages to enter social networks and become part of everyday interactions. Interpersonal communication is fundamental in persuading people about specific beliefs and practices (Waisbord, 2005, 81).

Even though it is held that interpersonal communication generally is considered more effective in inducing attitude and behaviour changes, according to Rogers, it is also true that two media are better than one in achieving desired objectives (Rogers *et al.*, 1977:363, Yu, 1977 cited in Moemeka, 1994:125).

Be it media or interpersonal communication, Prehn underscores that there is a general consensus on an egalitarian definition of the concept of communication:

In the past, the role of communication in human society was seen essentially as to inform and influence people. It is now being proposed that communication should be understood as a process of social interaction through a balanced exchange of information and experience... This shift in perception implies the predominance of dialogue over the monologue. The aim is to achieve a system of horizontal communication based upon an equitable distribution of resources and facilities enabling all persons to send as well as to receive messages' (Prehn 1992, cited in Vatikiotis 2005).

2.4 Radio broadcasting

From its first tentative experiments and the early days of wireless, radio has expanded into an almost universal medium of communication. It leaps around the world on short waves linking the continents in a fraction of a second. It jumps to high satellites to put its footprint across a quarter of the globe. It brings that world to those who cannot read and helps maintain a contact for those who cannot see (McLeish 2005:1).

In countries like Ethiopia where the illiteracy rate is so high, the potential radio has to reach millions does not come in to question. McLeish enlists some of the benefits the medium offers as follows:

- It acts as a multiplier of change, speeding up the process of informing a population, and heightening an awareness of key issues.
- It acts as a watchdog on power holders, providing contact between them and the public.
- It disseminates ideas. These may be radical, leading to new beliefs and values, so promoting diversity and change-or they may reinforce traditional values, so helping to maintain social order through the status quo.
- It enables individuals and groups to speak to each other, developing an awareness of a common membership of society (McLeish 2005:11).

Brecht contends that “radio should be converted from a distribution system to a communication system...if it were capable not only of transmitting but of receiving, of making the listener not only hear but also speak, not of isolating him but of connecting him.” Brecht adds that this means that radio would have to give up being a purveyor and organize the listener as purveyor (Brecht 1983, 169 in Vatikioti 2005).

According to Moemeka, in order to make radio suitable for education and communication, conditions must be created which will enable it to become a channel for dialogue. He notes that this means that radio must be changed from a mere information-disseminating medium to an educational medium in order to make it an effective instrument in the task of community education, which is the first step toward ensuring community development (Moemeka, 1994:126).

Hall (2004:49) states that the experience of participatory communication goes back at least 50 years and takes radio as the pioneering medium of this movement. Vatikioti on the other hand stresses that electronic communication systems in general have a central

place as conveyors of participatory communication due to the communal character of their pertinent reception and production processes (2005:13-14).

Vatikiotis (2005:15) recognizes radio as the most important vehicle for promoting the ideal of democratic communication and cites Hartley (2000) as saying “radio continues to be used in a variety of community building developmental situations, providing remote, marginal and disenfranchised communities with low-cost, low-tech public space.”

Tudesq 2003[internet] underlines that radio is not simply the most popular form of media in sub-Saharan Africa but also the only media widely accepted in rural areas.

Since the 1960s, Moemeka states, UNESCO has been stressing the importance of radio broadcasting in community education., especially in rural and/or slum areas of developing societies. The organization’s faith in radio is base on the medium’s unique characteristics. It is cheap to purchase, and therefore is the one mass medium with which the rural and slum communities are familiar it is versatile in utilization; and anyone-literate or illiterate-can learn from it (Moemeka, 1994:125).

2.5 Radio Broadcasting in Ethiopia

The declaration of the new press law-proclamation No. 34/1992 brought about a marked change in the Ethiopian media scenery as it was followed by a proliferation of many private newspapers and magazines.

Although proclamation No. 178/1999 legalized the establishment of private and commercial broadcasting media, it was only in 2006 the government allowed the running of two such stations which are just started test transmission.

As far as community radios are concerned, Mathewos (2006) in his thesis notes that they are new phenomena in Ethiopia. He cites HOACBP et al. (2002) as stating that the idea was raised and discussed for the first time as a symposium held at the Ghion Hotel in Addis Ababa on January 2002.

In his study on Harar community radio, which was closed ten months before he undergone his study, Mathewos has found out that the community radio “still has the trust and support of Harar community. Almost 89% of the audiences need HCR (Harar Community Radio) to resume its broadcast. Almost 90% of the sample population has also expressed their grievance because of its closure.”

Eleni et al consider Sidama radio as the first community radio in Ethiopia. It is one of the components of the Irish Aid-funded Sidama Development Program. It started out as an autonomous project in 1997, but currently is under the supervision of the Zonal Education Department.

Eleni et al. note that a marked difference had been witnessed in the way the media are managed by the current government of Ethiopia, which came to power in May 1991, bringing hopes for democratization and freedom of expression. However, as Mairegu argues, it was almost instantly that these hopes began to fade. “As was the case in the past, the state-owned media became simply the propaganda machinery of the new government, launching violent verbal attacks on those political or ethnic groups that are ill favoured by the ruling circle” (Mairegu, 2000 in Eleni *et al.*, 2003).

Ever since the inception of FM radio in Ethiopia, FM Addis (97.1) being the pioneer, there are other two currently in operation. One of them is run by the Addis Ababa City government and the other one is a formerly government affiliated and now operating as a private entity called FM 98.1(Fana FM). The government granted the opening of other two private FM stations in the year 2006 which just resumed test transmissions in October 2007.

2.6 The History of the Janamora Radio Project

Gondar Educational radio was established in 1996 with an aim to support grades 1 to 8 lessons by radio. Programs for the general public also started at the same time. Interview with the head of the station asserted that “The educational programs are employed in a co-teaching manner-the teacher takes radio sets to class [Interview, June 2007, Gondar].

According to the station’s head Getinet Eshetu, the station runs a distance education by radio in agriculture, civics, and health issues targeting farmers are broadcast every morning and evening. The intention is to catch the farmer before and after s/he embarks on farming chores.

There are also programs targeting adults and teacher trainings on how to teach English as well: all these are regular programs. In addition, programs for the general listener are aired weekly: one is ‘kefasil Amba’ of Sunday’s session and Saturday’s ‘Yichalal’ for children and youth.

Getinet Eshetu refers to how the Janamora project all started:

Our station has a long experrvience of working on projects. Because we are successful, many donors approach us and are attracted to us. People from Action Aid contacted me about 3 years ago telling me about their interest to resume a radio project. I showed them what we do in the ‘yichalal’ project. They came with officials from information bureau. We agreed on matters and began a ten minute program for starters. For a year we followed that format. The radio listening groups increased and a 20 minute show started after a year. [Interview]

Head of the district’s information bureau Getinet Tsegaye underlines that the radio project started off in 2005 after Action Aid Ethiopia signed an agreement with his bureau. The whole idea was, according to him, to reach people in the rural areas via radio or to

enable them to use radio as a source of information. To do this, air time was secured to be used at Gondar's radio [Interview].

Conclusion

This chapter highlighted related literature that was hoped to shed light on the research under question. Points like development communication and the two approaches to it are also discussed. The chapter that follows will focus on the methodologies used to conduct this research.

CHAPTER THREE

Research Methodology

Introduction

This study set out to have some understanding of how a particular form of radio project is organized and describe the process involved at different stages in the entire process. As stated earlier, this study will employ qualitative methods of data gathering. This in consideration, it is imperative to discuss the nature of the methods used and the justifications for using them. This chapter provides a description of the different methods used to gather data.

3.1 Methods and Procedures of Data Collection

The radio programs in Janamora are listened to by already formed groups. Different groups comprising women, men, young boys and girls are formed and members listen to the program and conduct discussions on issues broadcast.

Considering time and financial constraints, the observations had to be limited to two sessions. Since there was an amalgam of the groups sex wise (men and women listeners shared the same listening spot for the discussion stage as well) the researcher did not have to look for exclusive men or women groups. Besides, the purpose of this paper is to have an understanding of how radio is used to communicate development issues and not to make comparisons or generalizations of any kind.

Attempt was made to decipher the actions and reactions of audiences during the listening sessions via different methods. As Babbie and Mouton put it, qualitative researchers always attempt to study human action from the perspective of the social actors themselves (Babbie and Mouton, 2001:270). The radio listening and discussions are conducted every Sunday and two sessions were observed. This is hoped to suffice as data was also gathered through Focus Groups and Interviews.

3.1.1 Observation

Observation is one of the methods employed in this study to gather data. This method was chosen because it was thought to be useful that listeners are observed in their natural settings. The radio programs for the Janamora listeners are not only tuned to but also talked on-the groups formed usually debate and discuss on the issues that the radio programs present. Hence, what goes on in the listening and discussion sessions was thought to be possibly better depicted by the use of observation.

Since the researcher's purpose was not to direct or influence the group discussions in any form but to have some understanding of how they are conducted, simple observation, which Deacon et al. describe as a 'fly on the wall' approach was used in which "The observed has no relationship with the process or people being observed" (Deacon et al., 1999:250). Thus, the groups were left to exercise their regular tasks.

Although interviewing is often an efficient and valid way of understanding someone's perspectives, according to Maxwell, observation can enable to draw inferences about this perspective that couldn't be obtained by relying exclusively on interview data (2005:94).

An observation check list was consulted during the observation to assist the researcher pay attention to important actions of the listeners. Notes were taken of noticeable events during the listening and discussion stages. The researcher tried to put down notes of noticeable events from the group listening and discussion stages right after completing the task of observation in the two sessions. What the researcher considers are important events and actions during the observation are presented in chapter four and discussed under the heading 'Reflection'.

3.1.2 Focus Group Discussion (FGD)

FGD was another method of data gathering used in this study. This was conducted with regular listeners of the radio shows. Participants for the FGD were chosen right after the

Sunday sessions came to an end and the discussions took place the following day as it was thought that discussants may feel tired after the listening sessions. The researcher worked with the facilitators to maintain variety in the selection of discussants in terms of their level of participation in the Sunday discussions. Facilitators were given this role because they were believed to be the ones better positioned to be familiar with the listeners. This is a sensible way of picking discussants as Mack et al. (2005:56) point out:

While selecting the participants [of FGD discussions] if the researcher is an outsider it is recommended to rely on major key informants for the first selection of participant. The key informants might suggest individuals who could be invited to a focus group discussion. But, the researcher must be cautious that the key informants may select person similar to themselves so that you do not get an adequate variety of views in the discussion group.

With regard to the number of groups and participants in each group in FGDs, Hedges states that it depends on the aims of the research and available resources. Hedges underlines that as many as four focus groups may be sufficient for exploratory purposes (Hedges 1995 cited in Hansen et al. 1998). Considering the fact that this research employs other methods as well, four groups were believed to be adequate. Thus, four groups, two comprising men and the other two women listeners were formed.

The location chosen for Focus Group Discussions, according to Hansen et al., varies depending on the purpose of the research, convenience and practical feasibility (Hansen et al, 1998). Hence, the same venue for the Sunday group meetings was used as it was believed that interviewees will be familiar with the location. The proximity of the location to discussants was also taken in to consideration. The researcher acted as a moderator in the FGDs.

3.1.3 In-depth interview/Interview

Another method that was used to gather data was interview. In-depth interview was conducted with four selected discussants from the FGDs. These were selected by the researcher from the focus group discussants based on how articulate each individual was during the FGDs. One discussant from each group was chosen. The advantages of In-depth interview, Babbie and Mcuton note, is that it provides a wealth of detailed information, the rapport between respondents and interviewer makes it easier to approach certain topics that might be taboo in other approaches. (Babbie and Mcuton, 2005) Schroder et al. (2003:153), cited in Mabweazara(2006), on the other hand explain that individual interview prevents the “spiral of silence” impacts, contentious outlooks and experiences from being expressed in a group perspective.

Moreover, individuals representing the different bodies involved in the radio project were interviewed. One of them was the district’s information bureau head. The other interview was conducted with the coordinator of the program from Action Aid Ethiopia and the third interview was conducted with the head of Gondar’s Educational Radio.

Since it was found out that the group listening and discussions were coordinated by young volunteers called ‘facilitators’, interview was also conducted with three of them.

An interview guide was used to assist the researcher during the encounters. Hanson et al. underscore the importance of this guide as follows,

An interview guide is principally a menu of the topics, issues and areas of discussion to be covered, and it gives a direction to the sequence of issues to be covered, the nature and extent of prompting and probing, the nature and use of visual or verbal aids and the points at which they should be introduced during the discussion (Hansen and et al, 1998 cited in Hungwe,2006).

Interview questions were designed in such a way that they can be modified and/or changed depending on the actual encounter in the sessions. In fact, Flick notes that “[i]n semi-structured interview the interviewees’ view points are more likely to be expressed in

a relatively openly designed interview situation than in a standard interview or questionnaire (Flick, 2002). Bryman, on the other hand contends that the unstructured nature of research questions is evidence of the concern qualitative research makes possible for the perspective of those being investigated (Bryman: 1988:47).

3.2 Sampling

As far as sampling is concerned, Guba and Lincoln, 1984 in Babbie and Mouton (2001:277) argue that in contrast to random sampling that is used in quantitative studies, qualitative research seeks to maximize the range of specific information that can be obtained from and about that context, by purposely selecting locations and informants that differ from one another (Lindlof, 1995 cited in Wimmer and Dominic 2006:25). When participants for the Focus Group Discussion were chosen, attempt was made to maintain variety in terms of sex, age and level of participation in the discussion sessions that were observed.

The nearest listening posts to the capital of the district under study was located some 17 kilometers away and the researcher thus opted to consider the inclusion of only those. As Jensen puts it, researchers could opt to employ ‘convenience sampling’ which allows the studying of those individuals most easily available to the researcher. “[G]iven the notorious difficulty of gaining entry to certain social arenas, convenience in the sense of physical and social accessibility is a legitimate consideration” (Jensen 2002:239).

This research is meant to explore how radio is used to reach a particular listener groups and not to reach at generalizations of any kind. As Strelitz notes “qualitative research is not representative of large population because participants are not selected randomly and the number of participants is too small to be representative of the population” (Strelitz, 2005). The results of this research are thus not representative of all the radio listening groups that are formed in Janamora.

Attempt was made to look at the manual for the programs and have an understanding on the preferences made and the priorities given as far as contents are concerned. Some of the radio programs broadcasted were also listened to so that the researcher can have some taste of the nature of the radio programs.

3.3 Data Analysis Procedure

As Fossey (2002:728) would note, qualitative analysis is a process of reviewing, synthesizing and interpreting data to describe and explain the phenomena or social worlds being studied'

This paper employs qualitative methods of data collection namely Focus Group Discussion, Interview and observation interpretation of data will be made.

All interviews were transcribed and the data was interpreted emphasis being given to those sections that relate to the research questions under consideration.

Thus, to deal with the analysis, the interviews recorded from both the focus group discussions and individual in-depth interviews will be transcribed and then translated into English together with the notes taken since the discussions were held in Amharic.

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter presented the method of data collection and the justifications for using them. The following chapter deals with the presentation of data and its analysis.

CHAPTER FOUR

4. Presentation and Interpretation of Results

Introduction

This part of the thesis will be devoted to a discussion of the findings of the research. Since this is an entirely qualitative research, interpretation of data will be employed. Data gathered through observation are presented separately and they will be touched up on in other parts of the discussion where necessary. The Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and Interview results are presented under the same heading as most information gathered either way reinforces the other.

4.1 Background to the study area

The following notes on the study area are adapted from the Executive Program Summary of Action Aid Janamora.

Janamora is one of the 15 districts of North Gondar Administrative zone. It is located some 930 km North of Addis Ababa. The topography of the district is rugged (61.6%) and hilly (14.1%). Janamora has a total area of about 1,949.7 km².

According to the Bureau of Finance and Economic Development (BoFED), the district's population estimated in 2006 is 179,313 of which 49.6% are female. And the number of households in 2001 was 32,724.

Data from BoFED show that literacy rate for Janamora district is 14.2% which is very low compared to 23.1% for the region and 29.2% of the country as a whole. The number of first cycle primary school (1-4) is 15, while that of elementary school (1-6), and primary school (1-8) is 9. There is only one secondary school first cycle (grades 9-10).

According to the district's office of education, in 2004 out of 34,949 school age children in Janamora only 18,564 (53%) were attending schools. Primary school enrolment of the district in 2004 was 45%.

There is no electric power supply in the district. Besides alternative source of energy and firewood are also scarce.

The use of electronic media is extremely low in the district. There are only three TV sets in Mekane Berhan, capital of the district and not more than 2% of the rural households own radio.

4.2 Observation

As noted in chapter three, two sessions were observed and this part of the paper will present a description of what was going on at the different stages of the listening and discussion stages during one of these two sessions. A mention of what was observed in the other session will be provided where appropriate.

As the listening post was an open area, there was some noise around the location. Although the listening post was fenced, it was possible to outsiders to look at what was going on inside and there were a good number of them. Some did talk. One member came to the show with her baby and had to divert her attention to sooth her crying child once in a while. There was another kid who wanted to run around and did so for some time in one of the sessions.

At one time, the facilitator had to switch off the radio set one listener was fine tuning in search for the same radio program. In his attempt to do so some music popped up and that was when his radio set was confiscated by the facilitator and given to other groups sitting nearby.

When a portion of a program for other groups came to an end, the facilitator asked the question ‘What have we learnt from the program?’ Before he could get proper responses from group members, another program had started and he had to stop.



*Women's group tuning to a radio show
Photo by Researcher*

Since group members were supposed to show up for an earlier broadcast organized by other projects, most arrived at the location before what one facilitator referred to as ‘our program has started’(he was referring to the particular radio program meant for the Janamora listener groups). There were some group members who came in the middle of the broadcast and greeted those they were about to sit next to.

The waiting was over and the radio programs meant for the Janamora listeners started. At this juncture, the facilitator reminded everyone that ‘their own’ radio broadcast had resumed and asked for listeners’ undivided attention.

The program started off by a proverb. The program was on how one should treat people living with HIV/AIDS. As is the case in many other programs(the Manual was consulted), the proverb was followed by a journalist’s account of what the day’s program was all about and the procedures it was to be presented in. That was followed by a play involving two neighbours on a related topic. One of them was

living with the HIV virus and the other was giving him advice on what he should do to better his situation.

What followed the play were expert opinions on the matter. A doctor was talking about the usual ways people react to people living with HIV/AIDS and how that should be corrected. The multitude of problems that the virus can cause humanity was also discussed. The expert's points were followed by letters from listeners in which different listener groups reported on the different achievements they have registered. The radio presenter was commending their deeds and stating that others should emulate that.

The show came to an end after the journalist reiterated some important points she said were on the day's show. She concluded the show by asking a question for discussion.

The floor was then the facilitator's. He started off by asking questions related to the program. (In both observations there were two facilitators, one assigned for female listeners and the other addressing male groups and the latter did almost the whole talking in one of the sessions although the former had an equitable share of the talk in the other session)

The group discussion stage was more like a question and answer session. At some point, the facilitator had to be assisted by some expert from Action Aid (who accompanied the researcher) to explain the different ways HIV/AIDS transmits. There were a couple of members who responded to the questions. Although the facilitator tried hard to encourage everyone to speak his/her mind politely (He gave particular attention to female members to participate) He did manage to make a couple of female participants involve in the discussion.

Realizing that the topic of the day did not generate adequate discussion, the facilitator moved on to some other topic he said was very important 'child marriage'.

After a brief question and answer session, another facilitator emerged and said he has another program at stock. It involved a play between two young girls on radio listening which was followed by a dance performance. It was learned later that such programs are part of the Sunday sessions to ensure that group members are not only educated but also entertained.

At the end, the facilitator stated that the following week's program will be on gender and urged everyone to come prepared for the session. In fact, the facilitator did summarize the day's points.

Although a group is generally believed to comprise of about thirty people, (Interviews with the coordinator of the programs from Action Aid , Mengesha Melku and head of Gondar radio Getinet Eshetu asserted that), it was observed that about sixty of them (half men and half women) belonged to the same group. In fact, Getinet Eshetu expressed his concern about this increasing trend of members belonging to a group:

While we monitor the projects, we sometimes come across a listening post in a certain place where different groups are formed here and there. What is appropriate is to limit group members to 30 to the maximum. When the number increases, it would be hard to conduct a proper discussion and everyone cannot have a reasonable chance to participate in the discussions. [Interview June 2007, Gondar]

The listening sessions resumed right after radio programs organized by other projects. Organizers said that the listener groups are made to listen to radio programs aired by these other entities in the belief that group listeners can benefit from them albeit designed to different target groups.

The idea of making listeners tune to two other radio programs by other projects meant that group members should show up earlier, 10 AM. In fact, one facilitator said that this created some confusion as some group members at times do not know which groups to join.

Asked about the concerns of some listeners about the fact that the change in program times has affected church-goers, Getinet Eshetu stressed that this is the question of some older men and women. He stated that most listeners of the radio shows are youth and that the problem of timing is not that much significant.



*Youth entertaining listener groups
Photo by Researcher*

4.2.1 Reflection:

As noted earlier the listening spots lacked proper fencing and hence the radio shows and group discussions attracted the attention of passers-by. This could affect the proper running of the shows as some members were seen to divert their attention to have a look at what is around them. Besides, since some onlookers talked, it would be hard to maintain concentration in the groups. It would, therefore, be wise to make sure that the listening spots are free from such distractions.

Although group members seemed to be fine when some kids who accompanied their parents disturbed, it is not possible to have full control of the kids all the time.

During the radio shows, some radios had poor sounds and the researcher had a difficulty to come to grips to what was being said at some points. Radio sets need to be positioned in the right way before the programs start. The confusion created when one listener was fine-tuning his set could have been avoided if there was ample instruction prior to the show.

The researcher observed that there were two groups within a group of listeners. A female facilitator took care of women listeners and a male facilitator addressed men listeners but they were in the same group. Things were fine at the listening stage for there was no involvement of the facilitators. However, when the discussions started, the manner they were to be run was not clear-the male facilitator did most of the talking and he had to give his back to one group of listeners as he was standing in the middle. He did give the chance for his female counterpart the chance to do some talking but that was not done in an organized manner. This needs to be sorted out in order to have a proper discussion session. It would be better if one facilitator addresses a single group at a time.

Facilitators were not able to handle the discussion stages well because they lacked the expertise to do so. At some point in one of the discussions, an expert had to intervene to assist in explaining a point the facilitator had a difficulty with. This might call for the training of those who handle the task of a facilitator. Although there is a manual which stipulates what shall be done at different stages, it does not give all there is to know about the different topics that are discussed in the radio shows.

4.3 FGDs and In-depth Interviews

4.3.1 Access to radio

Results of the focus group discussion have shown that only three of the 24 discussants own a radio set. This fact is also reflected in the estimated 2% ownership of radio sets in the district according to notes from the Executive Program Summary (EPS) of Action Aid Janamora. Some four of the discussants said they sometimes listen to different radio programs using a friend's or neighbour's radio set. The rest said Sunday is the ideal day they have a real chance of listening to radio.

The in-depth interviews have also shown the desire to get informed through the radio by the part of discussants had there been the opportunity to do so. The fact that “[poverty] is rampant in the district” is said to be one of the reasons Action Aid Ethiopia is attracted to the location. (EPS)

Getinet Tsegaye, head of the district's information bureau, underlined that his office receives a growing number of demand for radio sets by individuals planning to set up new listener groups.

4.3.2 Listeners Preference for Content

Although FGDs showed discussants' contentment in the way the programs are produced and the contents that are broadcasted, there were some areas of interest they said should be given a priority. The purpose of this research is not to have comparisons of any kind but for this instance it would be sensible to present what women and men discussants said should be included in future programs. Here are some of the points made by discussants; the first two are of women discussants and the latter two belong to men discussants: (FGD1D1=Focus Group Discussion 1 Discussant 1)

We would like to have more stories on women and children. It would also be nice if we also have more health issues covered. Particular focus should be given to the burden women are supposed to bear. (FGD1D4)

Although we have seen some sign of freedom for women, there is a long way to go. Programs that create awareness on the fact that women can decide for themselves without men's interference need to be included. Even if women's inputs are gaining recognition these days, the final decision rests on men's hands. We want that changed and radio should assist that. (FGD2D2)

We would like to have more of how people in other places have changed their lives so that we can learn from them. Such stories can be highly motivating. (FGD3D1)

It would be nice if the radio tells us about the market situation in and around our district so that we can benefit from it. (FGD4D4)

Women discussants believe that the radio can do a lot in assisting in their empowerment. One of the men respondents explained the state of things during the early parts of the radio broadcast as follows:

We used to oppose the idea that women are going out just to listen to a radio show. But now we are the ones who force them to attend the sessions since we know the family benefits if there is at least one person attending the meetings. (FGD3D5)

The responses, as varied as they are, suggest that radio programs should maintain variety in order to meet the needs of different members of the listener groups. To do that, listener feedback should be sought in a regular basis and reacted to. "The relevance of mass media content to listener's needs and aspirations is a determining factor in media message effectiveness." (Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch, 1974 in Moemeka 1994:138).

4.3.3 Concern about inconvenient timing

According to the coordinator of the radio project from Action Aid, Mengesha Melku, each group is made to tune to other similar radio programs which are aired just before the ones meant for the Janamora listeners. This is done in the hope that it would create an opportunity to gain more information. These are programs that focus specifically on children and HIV/AIDS. During the observations, the facilitators were observed making great efforts to remind everyone that ‘their’ program has started’ in order to keep them animated.

Despite the good intents of the coordinators in providing more information for their target groups, the FGDs and In-depth interviews showed the discomfort that has created:

The radio programs used to start at 11 am and for a reason we don’t know, they are moved to 10 am. This has forced us to leave church sermons early which are inappropriate behaviour for a Christian. We are always in a predicament. (FGD2D3)

Listeners coming from far places say the time the programs begin is a bit early. We are a stone’s throw from here (the spot the Sunday meetings take place) so have not experienced such a difficulty. (FGD4D1)

Given the nature of the radio broadcasts to the Janamora listeners, since they are prepared to address a relatively small and specific target of audience, attempts need to be made to respond to the needs of the majority, if not all. The remarks made by Gondar educational radio’s head on the concern of some discussants about inappropriate timing, thus, need revisiting.

4.3.4 The significance/weakness of the group discussions

The discussants made clear that the group discussions are an important part of the whole process of the radio project. In the same manner, one of the facilitators said that the group discussion is a vital part of the project for it is the instance when everyone can have many matters clarified and decisions reached of important points. In the words of one discussant, the group discussion is an arena where listeners benefit much from:

The group discussion enables me to have things clarified. The facilitators help us in that regard and we also learn from one another. If you tune to such a program alone you will not have that chance. (FGD2D5)

Morris states that the mass media are important in spreading awareness of new possibilities and practices, but at the stage where decisions are being made; personal communication is far more likely to be influential (Morris 2003).

The district's Information bureau head, Getinet Tsegaye puts the importance that such forums are believed to provide in the project:

In the event the contents of the radio programs are difficult to grasp, the forum will serve as a stage for clarification. Facilitators and members of each group work together to that end. Besides, in groups participants take the contents seriously and have the chance to debate issues. [Interview June 2007, Janamora]

Waisbord stresses the fact that the media have powerful effect only indirectly, by stimulating peer communication and making it possible for messages to enter social networks and become part of every day interaction which makes the blend of media and group discussion evidenced at Janamora all the more important. Interpersonal communication, according to Waisbord, is fundamental in persuading people about specific beliefs and practices. (Waisbord, 2005:81)

Although Rogers states that it is held that interpersonal communication generally is considered more effective in inducing attitude and behaviour changes, he concedes that it

is also true that two media are better than one in achieving desired objectives (Rogers et al, 1977 in Moemeka, 1994). Moemeka himself underlines that the combination of mass and interpersonal communication can help eliminate the limitation of each while improving on the strength (Moemeka1994:62).

Waisbord agrees that interpersonal communication and multimedia activities should be combined and adds that because social learning and decision-making are not limited to the consideration of media messages but also involve listening and exchanging opinions with a number of different sources, interventions cannot solely resort to the mass media (Waisbord, 2005).

As Moemeka notes, however, radio forums are not without weaknesses. One of the obstacles in the way of successful use of this strategy is the “strong need for a network of supervisors.” (Moemeka, 1994) This is a reflection of the lack of facilitators who can manage the group discussion stage well, a point made clear by the district’s information bureau head as one of the obstacles to having more listener groups. The fact that already existing facilitators lack proper training could also be a case in point.

4.3.5 Desire and dilemma to listen to similar programs at home

The FGDs indicated that there are mixed feelings among the discussants towards the idea of tuning to similar programs while one is at home:

Definitely we can benefit from listening to such shows more often even as in listening to such shows at home. The whole of the family would have benefited from that as well. However, we do not have a radio set to do that so we depend on the Sunday shows. (FGD1D2)

Our children could have benefited a lot if they had listened to such programs. Obviously everyone cannot possibly attend the Sunday sessions however interested one is in doing so. (FGD3D2)

A woman respondent said:

If you listen to the radio at home, you have to deal with a number of issues that divert your attention including all the house chores. You may have to prepare meals, look after children, etc. But here I have a 100% concentration on the messages of the radio and the chance to learn from others. I take that task of listening to the radio seriously here. (FGD1D3)

4.3.6 What listeners do with the information they gain

The discussants were asked what they usually do with the information they gain from the Sunday sessions:

I usually try to apply what the radio tells me to do. There is a sense of competition between neighbours to implement what we learn from the radio and have things improved in our lives. I have started making sure I have a proper toilet. (FGD3D3)

I think once the radio tells us how we can better our situation everyone attempts to put that to practice. (FGD2D2)

The radio teaches us about important issues like how we can maintain sanitation, treat children and all that and we attempt to implement that. (FGD1D4)

Obviously not everyone in a family can attend the Sunday sessions. So I always tell everyone in my family about the important things that I have learnt. (FGD4D2)

The actions of discussants go in line with what Moemeka's belief that the follow-up of a radio message with localized discussion and decision ensures positive commitment to agreed-upon decisions and subsequently to social change. "The combination of a message carried to many groups by a mass medium like radio, then localized by discussion in small groups and guided to a group decision conforms closely to existing theories of communication and social change (McAnany, 1973 in Moemeka, 1994:130).

As Moemka underlines, membership in the group helps to expose the participants to information important to the rural communities, and this turns such individuals into opinion leaders whose views would tend to be respected in the community. Thus, according to Moemeka, one of the main benefits group sessions like the ones formed in Janamora is the effect they have on non-participants as a result of their impacts on participants (Moemka, 1987). In the words of a female discussant the ones not attending the sessions are always the more eager to hear and implement what the radio had said.

What members belonging to the listener groups do by imparting the information they gain from the radio programs to those not attending the sessions could be an instance of the ‘two step flow of influence’ in which “[i]deas often flow from radio and print to opinion leaders and from these to less active sections of the population” (Lazarsfeld et al., 1944 in Servaes 1999:23). According to Servaes, the general conclusion of this line of thought is that mass communication is less likely than personal influence to have a direct effect on social behaviour.

4.3.7 What needs to change

This particular question generated varied answers from listeners. One discussant rephrased the above question and said that it should be ‘what needs to be added?’ He was making the point that listener groups should be supported with some fund. He claimed that some other listener groups, belonging to other projects, are provided with pocket money and he wanted the same thing to apply to his group.

Another discussant emphasized the fact that although he tried to contact the radio program producers on a number of occasions his letters were never aired. The head of Gondar’s radio station, Getinet Eshetu, was asked about the concerns of the listeners regarding the letters they send to the station. He stated that the station receives an increasing number of letters from listener groups and that at times they have to be

selective. He noted that the twenty minute allocated for the program speaks volumes about the number of letters they can possibly manage to entertain in a session.

Moemeka regards audience oriented feedback as imperative in radio projects like this one. He contends that the importance of feedback lies in the opportunity it creates for understanding the receiver's point of view, and therefore, for ensuring co-orientational influence (Moemeka: 1994:12)

A female interviewee made the following point about the letters group members send to the producers:

The fact that our messages are aired is highly motivating. However as I cannot articulate the responses myself, I feel incomplete. We would have benefited from some literacy training. All of us are making sure that our children go to school. (FGD2D5)

Moemeka argues that one of the problems with reaching listener groups is the fact that the production centers are usually far away from most of the village groups, and so cannot always benefit from contact with forums to get the feedback which is a vital factor in program content improvement (Moemeka, 1994).

In addition to the problem of air time made earlier, Getinet Eshetu added the difficulty to reach the listener groups. According to him, frequent visit to the different listening groups located in the district is sometimes totally impossible. The way out he said was in operation is to rely on facilitators who gather listener opinions and send it to the station.

4.4 The Role of Facilitators

The facilitators, who are responsible for several roles along the different lines of the listening and discussion stages, were found to be an integral part of the project. Interview

was conducted with three of them. They are youth who were given the role of a facilitator their interest in literature and school performance taken into consideration.



*A facilitator addressing men's group
Photo by Researcher*

The facilitators have the task of making sure group members attend regularly. Besides, they check the radio set is brought (since the radio sets used for the Sunday sessions are always in the hands of some selected listeners) and fine-tuned for convenient listening. Perhaps one of their demanding tasks is that of coordinating the group discussion stages.

(F1=Facilitator No 1):

F2: We have been given a manual which states what we are supposed to do before, during and after the radio programs. We make sure that listeners are seated in circles for convenient listening. After listening we encourage discussion and collect information.

F3: For instance a certain word could prove hard to grasp to the audience. We assist in explaining such difficult terms.

The facilitators are better suited to tell about the participation of group members and following is how they rated the level of participation of group members:

F3: We measure their participation by the accuracy of the answers they provide after the broadcast. Most regret the fact that they are not able to read and write.

F2: Those who can write take notes. Others actively participate and answer to question even if they may not use the right words. Most arrive at the meeting spot on time and at times, even if rain interrupts the discussions, all stay around in the hope it would subside.

One facilitator explained the reason why plays and dramas are popular and expert opinions are not:

F2: Well, surely plays are popular. The heart of the matter is aired by the experts. However, most expert explanations are poorly recorded so they are hard to tune to. At times, when the experts are on air some listeners even begin to chat among themselves. This is not because they do not like what is being talked about but because of the poor quality of sound.

The facilitators said they have contacted the radio program producers and they have received assurances that the problem (a technical one) will be solved soon.

The facilitators act as liaisons between some of the group members who are illiterate and the radio station at Gondar. They gather comments from members and then send it back to the station. As Moemka notes, the sending of reports and messages provides the vital feedback which is often missing in mass media activities.

The researcher asked facilitators what some of the problems they think come in the way of their tasks:

F3: Trying to settle some disagreement among listeners who do not bring the radio sets they are supposed to bring always brings about an argument. There are some listeners who have not brought the radio set for a year and half: we can do nothing but use other listeners' radio sets. Besides, we are not provided with stationary so resort to using our own books.

F2: We have a rule which states that if a listener misses six consecutive sessions s/he will be dismissed from the group. When we attempt to ban a person who committed that offence problems usually arise.

More than anything else, as one of the facilitators expressed, the fact that facilitators were not given any sort of training stands out as a big obstacle. On this issue, F2 said “What we are doing now is not backed by any training. We are not sure if we are doing it all right. No one gives us any feedback. We rely on pamphlets and some magazines.”

Getinet Eshetu, head of Gondar Educational radio concedes some gaps are observed because these particular facilitators were not given some training:

In other projects we give training to would-be facilitators and to persons who are provided with radio sets: on how they are supposed to operate the radio and on group meeting conducts. Facilitators are usually given orientation, which includes simulation. We have not done that in this project and I have witnessed some gaps in the way facilitators handled their tasks. The training is very crucial: there is a discrepancy between those who got training and those who did not in the way they handled the group discussions. [Interview June 2007, Gondar]

Although the FGDs and In-depth interviews showed that group members have high opinions on the manner facilitators handled their job, one of the facilitators felt incomplete about not being backed by appropriate training and expressed his frustration:

F2: I am doing what I am doing now out of sheer boldness. We were not given any training. We simply rely on the manual and other readings we conduct by ourselves. I cannot possibly respond to all the questions the listeners might have. I desperately need some training on the issues raised.

4.5 *The radio programs*

According to Gondar educational radio’s head Getinet Eshetu, the radio programs were produced in what he called was a ‘participatory message design approach’:

We went out to the field and consulted listeners on what points they would like to be informed about. The donor's agendas/issues were also included but most of the points included in the contents are from listeners.
[Interview, June, 2006]

The manner the programs were designed seems to be in line with what Morris stated participatory communication should be about. According to her, the essence of participatory approach lies in working with citizens to determine their needs and to design and implement programs to address these needs, rather than imposing an intervention on a community (Morris, 1994:226).

In participatory approaches such as these, Servaes notes, one is no longer attempting to create a need for the information one is disseminating, but one is rather disseminating information for which there is a need. He says that "Experts and development workers respond rather than dictate; they choose what is relevant to the context in which they are working. The emphasis is on information exchange rather than on persuasion." (Servaes, 1999:88)

Coordinator of the radio programs from Action Aid, Mengesha Melku noted that the radio programs differ from other broadcasts of national and regional stations alike in that they address 'Janamora specific' issues [Interview, June 2007]. On the other hand, Getinet Eshetu underlines that there are several qualities that distinguish the Sunday radio programs from others:

Different issues are the focus here. Even if we take programs we broadcast ourselves, in 'yichalal' only HIV/AIDS issues are raised. 'Embutochu' is all about children (and their rights). Different programs are produced for the Sunday sessions including agriculture, health, cereals, pests, HIV/AIDS, girls, harmful traditional practices etc. Format wise as well it is different; Message was designed in a participatory manner: not totally donor dominated [Interview, June 2007].

Mody argues that the decentralized local media, which have production centres at regional level, could enhance a 'bottom-up approach' (Mody 1991 in Jayaprakash, 2000).

The group listening and discussion strategy, according to Moemeka, is based on the conviction that rural community development must essentially be the duty of the rural people themselves and should not be dropped on them from above. “The built-in localized discussions and decisions ensure that people are put in a position in which they can be the subject and object of their own development.” (Moemeka, 1994:130)

Many authors, according to Jayaprakash, have criticized the ‘top-down approach’ in development communication and quotes Melkote(1991) as suggesting that in this approach messages are disseminated from top-level authorities to the grassroots and that the messages are often difficult for rural audiences to comprehend because of their complex nature (Jayaprakash, 2000).

The researcher did not have the capacity to discern the level of participation target listeners were allowed to exercise during the ‘Participatory Message Design’ stage apart from taking discussants and Gondar Educational Radio’s head at their words. However, one can safely say that it is the nature of the radio broadcast to the Janamora listeners that allowed such an initiative. Radio programs for the national listener wouldn’t have allowed these specific groups of listeners to have their input sought prior to the production of programs.

4.6 Achievements so far

Even though it is not the scope of this study to uncover how successful the radio programs have been so far, the coordinators of the radio projects were asked what they consider has changed since the resumption of the project.

Interviewees representing the three bodies involved in the project-head of Gondar educational radio, head of Janamora’s Information bureau and Action Aid Janamora’s

coordinator-all gave reserved responses. Their comments are presented as follows respectively:

Getinet Eshetu: We should have kicked off the project with a small survey; some ten questions could have done. The changes registered because of the radio programs are thus difficult to tell. But there are some signs-women are coming out in numbers, and the increasing numbers of letters speak for themselves. Newly formed groups are asking their agendas to be included in the radio programs. [Interview, June 2007)

Getinet Tsegaye: It was not common to listen to radio programs let alone contact radio program producers. Even men have now started to write letters. I feel there is a move from listening to participation. There is a greater desire by other people to form new groups. [Interview, June 2007]

Mengesha Melku: I think people have now come to realize the importance of information. They take the Sunday sessions seriously and rarely miss a session. [Interview, June 2007]

Similar questions to discussants and interviewees generated somewhat bolder responses. Almost all said that they have changed in some way or another since they started tuning to the radio show. Here are some of the responses:

The programs have enabled me to realize that it is not wise to burden children with all the house chores. Besides, it is through the radio that I learned about the harmful effects of early marriage. (FGD3D2)

We do get information on family planning issues at health centers and other meetings. It is, however, the radio that taught me to avoid extravagant behaviour and to save for tomorrow. (FGD2D3)

Above anything else, radio has made it possible for me to have information on the deadly virus HIV/AIDS. We make sure that all the prevention methods are practiced and nowadays testing is very common before couples can get married. (FGD1D5)

A female discussant told the researcher that she had already established a group of sixty listeners and that all she was waiting for is for the organizers to provide her with radio

sets and facilitators. Organizers said that they always welcome such initiatives as they are indicative of how the radio programs are regarded.

4.7 On listeners' participation

In development communication, participation can take several forms: from the mere representation and consultation of the public in decision making to the advanced form of participation, self management. The preferred approach gaining acceptance these days seems to be the existence of dialogue among the different stakeholders in the process which promotes the involvement of people at the grassroots level in the communication process.

Although participation is something that cannot be measured in units, it is possible to look at the way the Janamora radio project is organized and talk about the level of participation it allows to its target listeners.

One can talk of the relatively better room the project has allowed to the entertainment of listeners' inputs. The latter were given the chance to air their views on what the radio messages shall concentrate on prior to the production of radio programs. This wouldn't have been possible in national broadcasts as they are meant to address the general listener which will always take the presence of other groups into consideration even if there can be some programs specifically addressing a certain group of listeners. According to Servaes, if the media are sufficiently accessible, the public can make its information needs known [Internet, n.d].

A relatively better involvement of the audience is observed in the other end of the radio project where listeners are able to congregate and discuss about issues raised in the radio that matter to them. This, of course, is found to be a demanding venture as it demanded the expertise of facilitators and better arrangement. Group members stated that they reach at decisions on various issues of concern in the group discussions and see to it that they are implemented.

It is better said that the listeners seem to be fine with the way things are at the moment as they regard the radio programs valuable. FGDs and observations showed that the desire and commitment to listen to the radio shows and acquire new knowledge is there.

When it comes to feedback, the radio station depends on the postal service. To make matters worse, however, the district possesses a single postal agent who is usually unable to deliver letters in a regular basis. Besides, listeners are paid regular visits by representatives from the radio station who gather their views and pass it on to management.

As is noted earlier most of the group listeners are illiterate so do not write the letters to broadcasters themselves. They rely on the facilitators for that. Besides, not only does the discussion stage lack proper facilitators, it is also observed that it requires a better arrangement. Even if the letters of listeners reach broadcasters in time the latter usually find it difficult to air most of them due to lack of adequate air time.

With regard to the involvement of the Janamora listeners in the form of radio production and matters regarding ownership both are non existent. This obviously emanates from the very nature of the radio station as it is owned by the zone's Educational Department. The fact that the production center is far from the target listeners might have come in the way of a faster and better correspondence between broadcasters and listeners.

In a nutshell, due to the nature of the project and its location, the level of participation envisaged by advocates of greater participation in the form of ownership and production of media content cannot be practical at all in the Janamora radio project. However, it can be said that the Janamora radio project has allowed a better involvement of listeners however limited it is.

5. The Manual for the Radio Programs

The radio programs' manual stipulates what needs to be done before; during and after the listening session. The introduction part underlines the importance of communication in 'this age of information'

The manual provides guidance on how radio programs shall be listened to, the manner group meetings need to be conducted, and how letters may be written to the broadcasters. Besides it lists a detail of each week's radio program content.

The also guide provides information to facilitators and group listeners on what they are expected to do at the different stages of the listening and discussion sessions.

Apart from this information, the manual simply puts a list of each week's programs with objectives and some detail on the format the programs take.

Interviews with facilitators indicated that although the manual is highly invaluable, it does not provide answers to all questions. They have emphasized the need for thorough training on the various issues the radio programs contain.

6. Conclusion

In this chapter, attempt was made to highlight some of the issues the paper sat out to look into. The way radio is used to reach people residing in a remote area was looked at. To do that, data gathered through Focus Group Interviews, interview, and observation were analysed. The following chapter will present a summary and conclusion of the findings.

CHAPTER FIVE

5.1 Summary

This study set out to explore how radio is used to reach listeners located in a rural setting. Community radios are new phenomena in Ethiopia and as is the case in some other African countries where there are no such radios the way out seems to be to use listening clubs/groups.

The subject of this paper, the Janamora radio project, involves the cooperation of three entities namely Gondar Educational Radio, Action Aid Ethiopia, and Janamora district's Information Bureau. Radio programs targeting listeners in the Janamora district are broadcast every Sunday and are then discussed on in groups.

The fact that radio has the potential to reach a great number of listeners at a time is said to be one of the reasons that made these three bodies attempt to reach listeners located in remote areas with development related issues. As most of the residents in the district live under impoverished conditions, the group listening format is believed not only to create the chance for discussion but it also makes up for the scarcity of radio sets in the district.

Members belonging to the listener groups stated that they are generally pleased in the manner the radio programs are designed. Even then they pointed out that it would be better if programs could have the nature of educating and entertaining at the same time.

Target listeners were consulted prior to the production of radio messages and their feedbacks are taken seriously. This is something nonexistent in national broadcasters which address a nationwide listener.

The group discussions are considered as a vital part of the radio project both by organizers and listeners. It is an instance where radio messages are discussed by local listeners. As important as this stage is, it has some drawbacks attached to it. Securing a

listening sport free from disturbance is one of them. The fact that facilitators lack proper training is another issue of concern.

There are unique characteristics that distinguish the way the radio programs for the Janamora listeners are designed and consumed from the mass media that address nationwide listeners. One is the fact that target listeners were consulted prior to production of radio programs. Besides, the radio programs are listened to in groups and discussed on as well. This can be taken as an instance where the blend of media and interpersonal communication is evident. The specific nature of the radio programs targeting listener groups is another point worth motioning here.

5.2 Conclusion

The radio project for the Janamora district can fairly be taken as a valuable means of reaching listeners without access to mainstream media outlets that provide culturally appropriate information.

The very idea that people gather to listen to a radio show itself received a due regard among the discussants as they said it is crucial in enabling them to learn from one another. The meeting is also considered as an instance where listening to the radio is taken seriously.

Group listeners also expressed that they pass on the information they gain from the Sunday sessions to friends and family members alike and try to put what they learn into practice. Listeners emphasized the sense of competition the group listening format has created in this regard.

However, this study identified that there are also some gaps that need to be addressed for a better running of the project. Although listening to radio programs broadcast by other projects may be an opportunity to gain more information, it was found to be a nuisance as that meant the group shall gather at an earlier time than was the case before. This has caused an inconvenience for a significant number of the listeners.

It was also spotted that the group discussion sessions demanded the expertise of facilitators who are often in short supply both in quantity and quality. Facilitators, who were found to be an essential part of the entire process, are usually youth who have the enthusiasm to assist in the group discussions. Despite this goodwill, however, the facilitators say that they are not backed by any training as a result of which their assistance in coordinating the discussions and clarifying some vague points for group listeners has not yet reached the level it should normally be.

The number of listeners belonging to a group is also another area of concern. Although it is generally believed that a group shall normally consist of not more than 20-30 members,

the observation and interview results showed that the numbers are usually high. Besides, the group sessions were observed to be marred by destructors such as passers by and children that made listeners struggle for attention.

Another point worth mentioning here regards the inconvenience of the newly adopted practice of making group listeners tune to programs aired by other projects which, apart from making them congregate early, demands attention for a longer time. Some poor quality of a portion of the radio programs is another issue concerning discussants that needs to be addressed.

Concluding, it is clear that the Janamora community members have not enjoyed community ownership with the radio project as yet. Neither do they directly participate in the program production process. However, the fact that the radio airs programs that deal with specific issues which directly address the audience is a valuable practice.

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Appendices

1. Interview Guide for Focus Group Discussion

Demography

Name

Age

Sex

Education

On programs

1. Is this the only instance you listen to the radio?
2. How are the programs different from those you listen to(if) in other media (local/international)
3. Do you like the way the programs are presented?
4. Which contents do you like most?
5. What topics would you like to have more of?
6. Do you get such information in the programs?
7. Is the timing appropriate?
8. What needs to change about the project?
9. Do you think the programs are good and effective?
10. How do you rate the producers of the radio programs?
11. Do you trust them?
12. Is the language used in the programs simple or difficult?
13. Do you get similar information to the one you get in the radio programs via other means? (Health centers, public meetings?)

On Group Discussion

14. How important (if) are the group discussion stages?
15. What will be done after the group discussion?

16. Do you share the information gained from the group discussion with friends or family?
17. Can't you do without the group discussion? (As in listen to the programs at home?)
18. How often do you think such discussions can be held?
19. What do you feel has to change about the group discussion?

On Participation

20. How regularly do you attend the listening sessions?
21. When do you miss (if) any of the sessions?
22. How do the programs respond to your interests? (How are community interests, needs and concerns served?)
23. What do you do with the information you gain in the programs/discussions?
24. Would you like to listen to such programs while you are at home?
25. How do you contact officials to address your demands?
26. What do you think is the main thing the project has provided you?

2. Interview Guide To organizers

1. What is radio mainly used for?
2. How is community input sought?
3. What are the major problems you encounter?
4. What are the aims of the programs?
5. Do you think they met?
6. For what sort of information does the community demand the radio programs for?

7. How do you rate the level of participation of the community in the project?
Are they passive listeners? Or active volunteers?
8. How close is the relationship between the community and you?
9. What changes have you observed in the community since the commencement of the programs?
10. What is the significance of the group discussion?
11. Can't you do without them?
12. How are the radio programs different from other broadcasts?
13. Is there trust and open talk in the group sessions and with the organizers?
14. Couldn't any of the messages broadcast have been communicated other wise?
(Why go use radio?)
15. How do you fund the projects?

3. Interview Guide for coordinator of the region's Information & PR bureau

1. Why is radio chosen to reach the community?
2. What are the legal grounds the radio programs are operating under?
3. How long do you envisage the programs can continue to operate?
4. How do you keep track of the progress of the programs?
5. Do you have any long term plans to expand the radio programs to other areas?
6. How do you rate the role the radio programs play?
7. What are some gaps you think need filling?
8. What has been achieved so far?
9. How important do you think are the radio programs?

4. Interview Guide to Facilitators

1. How were you given the role of a facilitator?
2. What are your major tasks?
3. What sorts of programs does the community demand most often?
4. How do you rate the participation of the community?
5. How interested are listeners in the programs?
6. What are the major problems you encountered as a facilitator?
7. How do you solve these problems?
8. How are the radio programs different from other you listen to?
9. What do you think are the achievements of the project?
10. How important to you think are the Group Discussions?
11. What do you think motivates listeners to keep on listening?
12. How do you think the programs/project can be improved?

5. Observation Guideline

- How does the listening session resume?
- What are the reactions of listeners during the listening session?
- What content is being broadcast?
- How is the move from listening to discussion made?
- Who dominates?
- Who facilitates the group discussion?
- How is decision reached at?
- How is conclusion reached at?
- What is done in the final stages?

6. The manual

A list of what facilitators and/or listeners should do

Before the broadcast:

Check attendance: it is crucial in attaining the behaviour change aspired.

Fine-tune the radio

Position the radio so that everyone can enjoy easy listening

Discuss on the day's radio program topic

During the broadcast:

Make sure everyone is listening attentively

Make notes of important and/or points that are unclear.

After the broadcast

Discuss on the points covered in the program

Relate the topic to things on the ground

Answer the questions for discussion

Report on the entire process and write feedback to Gondar radio including question (if) to be clarified.

How to use and handle the radio set:

Handle the radio set with care

Depose expired batteries

Send malfunctioning radio sets to the center for repair

How group discussions should be conducted:

Try to catch the day's agenda well

Properly introduce the topic

Coordinate/facilitate the meeting properly: giving every one a chance to participate

Conclude appropriately and take notes of the overall performance

7. Program Contents

Program title + aim	Details	Presentation format
<p>P1. Harmful Traditional practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to curb Female Genital Mutilation and early marriage <p>Aim: To help listeners come to grips with the problems and discuss on them</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase parents' awareness • Encourage open dialogue among parents and children • Make legal bodies to protect children • Inform police and legal bodies to tighten their control 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proverb • Expert opinion • Letters • Questions and answers
<p>P2. The values of forests:</p> <p>Aim: To encourage the community involve in afforestation and stop deforestation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rain will be there where there is forest • Why deforestation? • Forests contain water and result in springs • The benefits of forests:more 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Saying • Play • Expert advice • Letters • Questions to listeners: <p>Why do people deforest? How can you stop that practice?</p>
<p>P3. The economic consequences of HIV/AIDS:</p> <p>Aim: To create awareness on the many economical problems HIV/AIDS can expose to</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medication can be expensive • Child orphanage • School drop outs • Migration • Street children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expert opinion • Letters • Questions: <p>What happens to orphans in your locality? How can you support orphans?</p>

Declaration

I, the undersigned, declare that this thesis is my original work and all the sources of materials used for the thesis have been duly acknowledged.

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Advisor_____

Signature_____

Name_____

Date of Submission_____

Signature_____

Place of Submission_____

Date_____