GHANA'S EXPERIENCE IN PARTICIPATORY COMMUNITY RADIO

BROADCASTING

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ABSTRACT

This article documents more than ten years' experience of community radio (CR) broadcasting in Ghana and the problems and the challenges community radio has encountered in attempts to apply the key principles and concepts underlying participatory radio broadcasting. Through a description of some main socio-cultural and political change episodes, the article clearly demonstrates how community radio can positively impact the quality of life of people. The study notes that attempts at creating truly democratic community radio stations can be fully realized by ensuring that the fundamental principles, which underpin the operation and democratic management of community radio stations, are actually implemented to benefit community members.

Keywords: community radio, participatory community radio, democratic management of community radio, socio-cultural change episodes, challenges of community radio.

I. Introduction

Even though many African countries have had their own historical process of establishing a community radio movements, Ghana is a particularly interesting case. Though community members in whose interests CR are established seem very excited to receive information from CR and occasionally air their views on some programmes, they hardly understand the concept of CR.

Notwithstanding the lifting of the ban against private media in 1992 in Ghana, which

permitted the emergence of dozens of small newspapers, virtually nothing happened for some time regarding attempts to start community radio stations. It was not until 1995 that there was an indication of the deregulation of broadcasting in Ghana by the then Ghana Frequency Allocation and Board (GFAB), now known as the National Communication Authority. Such a move provided an impetus for the establishment of *Radio Ada* in 1998, which served as a catalyst for community radio in Ghana. Prior to the establishment of *Radio Ada*, the authorities in Ghana did not yet seem to know anything about community radio. Following the commencement of operation of *Radio Ada*, a community media workshop was organized in Ghana and the promoters of *Radio Ada* took advantage of the event to introduce and promote the concept of community radio.

By that time, only three stations (*Progress*, *Peace* and *Ada*) of the now twelve community radio stations were established. During a meeting of the three stations in September 1999, a proposal was made for the formation of an association of community radio in Ghana. Ford Foundation, an international NGO provided seed funding for the formation of the association. In December 1999, a workshop was organized to lay the foundation of the network, build the concept of community radio and draw guidelines for the Ghana Community Radio Network (GCRN). It was agreed that the three operating stations would form an Interim Council of the GCRN. In 2001, a forum was organized for parliamentarians on CR when the concept of community radio was introduced to them. This was with the instrumentality of John Dramani Mahama, the current President of the Republic of Ghana, who was then a member of Ghana's Parliament. The parliamentarians showed a lot of enthusiasm and expressed their support for the CR movement in the country.

Subsequently a forum for Anglophone Network of Community Radio was held in Ghana, which drew together people from civil society organizations, parliamentarians, media or communication experts. It was during that meeting that a suggestion was made to have a Broadcasting Law (BL) in Ghana. A BL would promote community radio in the country among other things. With support from Right to Voice Initiative (RVI), a non-governmental organization, a proposal for the establishment of a BL was produced. The proposal sought to make the process of formulating a BL participatory, with the aim of organizing nationwide consultations. However, the idea of having a bill stirred up a controversy. While communities and community radio stations as well public service radios were in favour of the BL, big commercial radio stations were against the idea as this would limit their scope of operation and jeopardize their commercial interest.

Finally, a bill has been drafted and a technical committee has been set up to speed up the process of passing a BL. Meanwhile, the late President of Ghana, Professor John Atta Mills, in his address to the nation of 2009 made a commitment to implement a Freedom of Information Bill which would give a further boost to press freedom in the country. The GCRN had presented a position paper on the character of CR in the country to the Ghana Media Commission. This was in response to a proposal by the Ministry of Information to promote the establishment of CR on district basis. There exists a cordial working relationship between the GCRN and the NCA. In most cases, the National Communications Authority (NCA) allocates frequencies to prospective CR stations in consultation with the GCRN. Thirteen years after the introduction of the operation of CR in Ghana it is important to find out whether the ten CR stations actually understand the concept of CR very well. In many parts of the developing countries, particularly in Africa, radio broadcasting is a vital source of information to people living in rural areas. What specially

distinguishes the radio as a medium preferred by the majority of people is because of its ability to reach a lot of people across different geographical boundaries. It is not surprising that in the pre-independence, independence and post-independence periods in Ghana, as in many other African countries, ruling governments implementing the modernization paradigm of development viewed the state-owned media (radio, television and newspapers) as vital to that process. The media were viewed as both channels and indicators of modernization. They served as the agents of diffusion of modern culture and also suggested the degree of modernization of society (Everett 1962, 1983; Waisbord, 2001). The model of radio within this framework was heavily one-sided in its approach to the diffusion of information and news to people. This approach to communicating messages to people hardly empowers them, especially in rural areas. What even complicates the situation is that given the fact that the language of broadcasting was foreign -- English language in Anglophone Africa and French in the Francophone zone of Africa -- large proportions of the population of these countries who could not speak any of the foreign languages used in radio broadcasting were denied access to the benefits of radio.

The advent of democracy in the early 1990s across Africa has to some extent changed the situation. Participation, a core principle of democracy, is also at the heart of the operation of CR. This implies that the Ghana CR movement has an important role to play in strengthening participatory democracy if it dedicatedly implements the core principles undergirding the operation of CR. Community radio stations offer a bold and empowering message to all members of the community: men and women, young and old, people of different faiths, the disadvantaged poor and the marginalized, giving them both knowledge and a place to participate in public discussion (Alumuku, 2006, p. 14). The premise of the present study is that laying a solid foundation for a viable and strong CR movement in Ghana demands a high sense of

commitment of CR members to decide and constantly take actions based on the principles of operating CR to build truly democratic CR.

II. The Process of Promoting CR in Ghana

One central question of the study is: what is the driving force behind moves by pioneering members of CR in Ghana to begin to want to genuinely represent people in radio as way of amplifying their voices? A serious attempt of realizing that desire began with the formation of the GCRN. The main role of the GCRN has been the building of a strong participatory ethos for CR.

A constitution for the CR has been developed to embody a participatory ethos. The main approaches used in fostering participation are centered around workshops to produce joint series of programmes in local governance, financial literacy and natural resource management among others. This has led to the deepening of the concept of participation through formative research through Focused Group Discussions (FGDs). The GCRN makes a conscious effort to build consensus in the day-to-day management of its member stations.

Community Participation in Natural Resource Management (CPNRM), an initiative of GCRN, has succeeded in building the capacities of series producers to engage community people in participatory ways to find solutions to problems. An evaluation of the series on the CPNRM by GCRN has clearly revealed that community members have learnt that instead of resorting to violence, there are alternative avenues for redressing grievances related to natural resources. At every level, CRs are defending the rights of people in various communities by enabling them to defend their resources and to speak out against exploitation.

III. The Methodology of the Study

In Ghana, there is a dearth of literature on the topic. Such an observable trend is understandable on account of the fact that the CR movement in Ghana is still going through a process of maturation. Though Alumuku's study (2006) could be described as a seminal study of the operations of CR in Ghana, issues were discussed in a broad manner without tackling some specific key principles of the CR concept, which undergird our research. Conceptually the empowerment model of communication, which encapsulates key principles of CR and is clearly demonstrated through the seven cases presented, significantly marks a new beginning of discourse indicating how community members can actively own and manage CR for the benefit of all stakeholders.

The study hypothesized that CR is less committed to empowering people as real agents of change and development if community members do not actively participate in activities and programmes on the radio. The study, which was conducted in 2010, sampled six out of ten community radio stations currently operating in the country. This sample was obtained by dividing the country into three zones, namely the northern, middle and southern. In each of these zones, purposive sampling technique was used to select two community radio stations. In the northern zone, *Radio Progress*, based in Wa in the upper west region, and *Radio Simli*, based inDalun in the northern region, were selected. In the middle zone, *Radio Royals*, based in Wenchi, and *Radio Dormaa Ahenkro*, in Dormaa in the Brong Ahafo region, were selected.In the southern zone, *Radio Ada* and *Radio Peace* in the Greater Accra and central region were chosen respectively.

Each of the sampled radio stations constituted a case for study, which involved a critical examination of major socio-cultural and political change episodes in which CR opens up a process of discussion in the community about serious problems and gets everybody involved in

the discussion. Essentially, the study has made an effort to reconstruct important episodes with the aim of teasing out their relevance to, or impact on, the lives of community members. Data were collected in 2010 through focus group discussion, in-depth interviews and examination of relevant documents at the selected radio stations. At each of the radio stations, six to ten members of the respective communities were involved in the FGD on relevant issues about the programmes and activities of the radio station. There were two levels of interviews at each radio station. The first level was in-depth interviews with the management of each station to find out basically the extent to which democratic principles of operating CR are being implemented. At the second level, the interviews were conducted for programme producers and /or volunteers of the stations to find out their educational backgrounds and level of training as well as the motivations for their involvement in the work of the station.

IV. Seven Case Studies

A. *Affirming People's Right to Ensure Judicious Exploitation of Environment Resources*

The first case was recounted by *Radio Royals*. The context of this case is that over the years timber contractors have had a field day in timber logging in the forest belt of Ghana. The negative impact of their operations in terms of the depletion of vital tree species and on the biodiversity of the area is now being shown to members of the community. No sustainable development can be achieved if all people are not actively involved in deeply understanding why natural resources must be appropriately exploited. In Ghana, several articles have been in newspapers on the need to avoid the degradation of the environment by individuals and corporate bodies (Adu-Asare, 2002; Morgan, 2007). Even though such advocacy journalistic pieces are crucial in raising awareness on the issue and mobilizing all stakeholders to take concrete measures to protect the environment, a lot remains to be done.

Environmental journalists in particular need to adopt a consistent and systematic approach to actively engage communities whose natural resources are being threatened by the irresponsible activities of illegal chainsaw operators who cut down trees with careless abandon.The media have a vital role in realizing the Millennium Development Goals (Pagliani, 2007).

The Community Participation in Natural Resource Management (CPNRM**)** project, which *Royals FM* implemented on timber, demonstrates vividly the power of community radio in mobilizing people for development education. Through the project, community members got to know their rights and responsibilities with respect to forest resources. The project was done at Agubie and Tromiso communities in the Brong Ahafo region. Timber contractors were challenged by the discussions with the communities. This has resulted in reduction in the activities of chainsaw operators. Another positive effect of the radio programme is that it has created environmental awareness, which resulted in a drastic decline in bush burning and the revamping of abandoned cocoa farms. Vanishing species of trees are gradually being replenished.

A vital aspect of the concept of participation brought out in this case is that meaningful and sustainable development aimed at improving people's quality of life can take place when the beneficiaries are actively involved in decision processes central to the effective implementation of development activities. People's participation in decision-making leads to consensus between them and the development agencies on actions aimed at more sustainable community development. The outcome of this type of participation is often successful and sustainable because people see the decisions and plans as theirs and strive to ensure effective implementation (SADC, 1998, p. 11).

B. Providing an Even Platform for Political Campaigns Aimed at Promoting Transparency and

   Accountability in Ghanaian Politics

In many established democracies such as in the US, the role of the media in promoting the ideals of democratic governance cannot be under-estimated. In Ghana, for example, as one moves from the 1992 elections and then to subsequent elections in 2000, 2004 and 2008, one finds progressively greater freedom for the media to keep the public fully informed, greater legality of the elections and greater public satisfaction with the elections (Gyimah-Boadi, 2004, pp. 102-103). What remains a sticky issue during national elections is the ability and willingness of the media, especially the electronic, to give an objective, fair and balanced coverage of the political activities and programmes of the various political parties contesting both the presidential and parliamentary elections.

Such a situation is not only peculiar to Ghana but forms part of a broader picture of the difficulty of the media in Africa to emancipate itself from the strangle-hold of some corrupt politicians during the time of elections. In Ghana, many journalists and editors have the reputation of being in the employ of political parties and make little pretence of being objective, fair and balanced. This has damaged the reputation of the news media and the journalistic occupation in general. How politically independent journalists should be is a matter of some discussion (Diedong, 2008, p. 219). Some argue that that model of involvement of the press in politics in Africa is closer to the model of the Mediterranean or the polarized-pluralist model that Hallin and Mancini propose as one of the legitimate modes of relationship of media and politics (2004). The polarized-pluralistic model is said to be particularly relevant to Africa because it assumes the characteristics of low literacy, the strong role of the state, instrumentalisation of the press, clientelism and lower professionalization of journalists. The majority of media theorists

and journalists in Africa argue for a greater degree of independence of journalists with the press demanding greater accountability and responsibility from political leaders.

In the presidential elections of 2008, Ghana's Electoral Commission refused to declare a winner in the nation's run-off presidential election, saying it would have to re-run the elections in the Tain Constituency in early January 2009.In the Tain elections, *Royals FM* played a crucial role. As the only radio station in the area, it attracted the two main political parties – the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the National Democratic Congress (NDC), including former heads of state Jerry John Rawlings and John Agyekum Kuffuor. The people depended on the station to tell them what to do, while considering the tensed political environment at the time. The radio boldly informed the people not to fear or panic but to vote freely. More importantly, and to the surprise of many observers of the heavily polarized media scene during the election period, the station resisted attempts by parties to influence it with money to broadcast messages to influence the voters. On the contrary, the radio station acted professionally by granting equal airtime to the two main political parties to broadcast their campaign messages. The outcome was peaceful even though NPP boycotted the elections.

What has emerged from the Tain episode marks a clear departure from a questionable "norm" in many African countries where no major media group will seriously support an opposition party, and most are blatantly biased in favour of the "ruling party." When it comes to elections, if the dominant political regime is threatened by the voting electorate, African neo-patrimonial political strategies come into play and the repression and manipulation of the media become particularly active (Esuh, 2008, p. 406). By demonstrating a rare commitment to working in the public interest in the crucial moment of election, *Royal FM* has carved a niche in attempts by CR to fashion out a unique model of communication, which lends credence to the argument that the

process of entrenching participatory democracy in Africa is a long "learning experience" that requires increasing levels of political socialization, education and greater exposure to the media (White, 2008, p. 319; Bratton, Mattes, & Gyimah-Boadi, 2005).

C. Being an Advocate of Empowering Physically Challenged Persons in Society

In Ghana, the liberalisation of the airwaves has brought about the establishment of many private radio stations. Such a development has particularly served commerce, business and politics. However, the media need to contribute to the social transformation of society by facilitating processes which would ensure that the marginalized in society are given a voice in the process of development.

Since 1998 *Radio Progress* introduced the 'Disability Programme' aimed at giving voice to members of the disabled association to express themselves about what they consider as attitudes of discrimination and stigmatization and to advocate the implementation of laws that have been made by the government to promote the well-being of the disabled. The benefits of the weekly programme include:

- Many blind children are being enrolled at the Wa School for the Blind because the programme has created the awareness of the school and the right of the blind children to education as their sighted counterparts.

- Some of the District Assemblies are giving 2 percent of the Common Fund to the disabled in the district in accordance with provisions of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana.

- Members of the Disabled Association have testified that there is generally a positive change of attitude of some members of society towards themselves as a result of the radio programme.

D. Providing a Forum for Fostering a Sense of Community and Social Support Networks

There is one unique innovation that CR radio has succeeded to introduce to the broadcasting scene in Ghana, namely enabling people to find their voices and self-worth by becoming thinking and active users of the media. Notably, one thing that has become the weakest point in communication in both state-owned and commercial radio stations is their strong penchant for setting the agenda for the discussion of social issues solely on their own terms. What CR has done quite differently is its ability to intelligently use local languages for the discussion of relevant issues. Such an approach has not only expanded access to lots of people who have been denied their voices on radio on account of language, but it has also re-ignited people's appreciation of the intrinsic value of their own languages in opening up windows of interactions that enhance social cohesion and harmonious living among people of diverse cultural backgrounds.

'Friday Morning Toaster,' a relation-building and problem-solving social programme, can be said to be the most popular social programmes on *Radio Progress*. Broadcast every Friday, the programme is driven by letters written to the producer on very challenging social, personal or moral issues that confront individuals or small groups like families. This could be on marital or other difficult relationships, and the persons affected seek views from the community to help resolve the confusion and to take an appropriate decision to redress the issue. The producer reads the letter and invites views from the public through phone-in or text messages. Typically, the phone-line is jammed with calls, and at the end of the programme usually over a 100 calls are counted within the two hours There have been some episodes of reconciliation, forgiveness or encouragement reported not only by the people who send in the letters but also by other people who use the contributions from the public to resolve similar problems confronting them. It is a

programme that can be described as a unique platform for bringing the community together to dialogue and find solutions to individual problems. Melkote and Steeves (2001) implicitly underscore the impact of community radio when they stated that "if there is political and social revolution going on throughout the world, it might well be as a result of what can be called the participation explosion" (p. 109).

E. Creating Awareness among People to Effect Certain Cultural Changes to Fit into the Needs of Contemporary Society

Funeral discourse has become a topical issue in the media as well as in some religious circles in Ghana. This is not surprising because many Ghanaians believe that the dead must be given a decent send-off. What has become a source of concern for some Ghanaians is that bidding farewell to the dead is becoming complex and somehow like competition. The amazing thing is that it looks like families are trying to outdo each other when it comes to preparing for the funeral of their loved ones. Funeral celebrations in Ghana leave a heavy financial burden on relatives of the bereaved because of media announcements (these days funeral announcements are being placed on the internet as well) and the festivities associated with them.

A noted Ghanaian columnist, Wireko (2011), posed the following questions: who will bring the necessary "regulation" into being? Should it be the Church? Is it the traditional councils or is it the Parliament? There certainly must be a way out because the expenses involved in organizing funerals today can fix the education of children in most families. The funeral discourse in the media is yielding some dividends. The Catholic Archdiocese of Kumasi banned the buying of special clothes for the One Week Celebration and final funeral rites as well as the Thanksgiving service. Among other things, these new regulations issued by the Catholic Archdiocese of

Kumasi are to reduce ostentations and the cost involved in the celebration of funerals by sympathizers (Catholic Standard, 2011, p. 1).

Through a cultural programme that *Dormaa FM* designed, the Dormaa District Director of Education has reported the steadily falling standards of education in the district. This generated discussions which established that a major cause of the state of affairs was lack of parental care for children. This, in turn, was caused by too much time and money being spent on funerals. In response to this, the frequency of funeral ceremonies has been reduced to save money and time. Funerals are now held on the last week of the month as against the weekly celebrations in the Dormaa traditional area. Extravagance at funerals -- manifested through the wearing of new funeral cloths and the serving of alcoholic beverages such as beer -- has been banned by the Dormaa District Assembly with the endorsement of the Dormaa Traditional Council. Only palm wine, a locally produced drink, and soft drinks are now served during funerals.

F. Mainstreaming Gender Issues into Education

There are debates about the role of women in the decision making processes at different levels of Ghanaian society. Culturally, in many African societies, when it comes to making important decisions on some matters particularly affecting the family, it is usually a men's affair. This approach to making meaning in socio-cultural relations according to gender activists is dysfunctional to unearthing the talents and skills of African women, which can be beneficial to the society in which they live. (Dolphyne, 1991; Kapoor & Shizha, 2010; Kwesiga, 2002; Women's Manisfeto Coalition, 2004).

Education is a vehicle for obtaining knowledge, skills and attitudes for work, home and personhood. Good education makes women better mothers and homemakers as well as productive workers and responsible citizens. Giving women the opportunity to have a voice on

matters pertaining to education is fundamental to the process of opening up chances for them to exploit their potential to live fulfilled lives. In Sub-Saharan Africa, illiteracy among women continues to be high due to the inability of these countries to enroll and retain girl children in schools (Fabiyi, 2002). However, the contextual realities for girl children and the state of their education in Africa are daunting. The girl child becomes successful in education if she does not become pregnant in the course of education, holding other variables constant. The moment she becomes pregnant it terminates her education, especially if her parents are very poor (Alhassan, 2010, p.58).

In line with one of CR principles of giving voice to the voiceless, *Radio Peace* in Winneba gave the microphone to an old woman in a village known as Gomua Buasi in the central region to comment on the state of education in the village. She commended the teachers for the good work done but revealed that some of them impregnate some school girls. When the Director of Education of the Awutu-Efutu-Senya District heard the story on air, he followed up. This, in turn, infuriated the teachers who challenged her story. However, when they were offered the microphone to react to the allegation, they declined.

G. CR as a Rallying Ground for Peace-Building and Conflict Management

No peace-loving individual or community would like to experience any form of conflict. However, the phenomenon of conflicts continues to flare up from time to time among any group of people living together. There are several factors that trigger conflicts within communities. According to Awedoba (2010), some of the contested issues about which people and communities disagree so violently, leading to serious conflicts, include succession to chieftaincy positions; land and land-related claims, such as boundary disputes; superior/subordinate relations between ethnic groups or what may be called a premise of inequality between groups; ownership

of facilities or where a facility may be sited by the government or NGO; the replay of primordial hostilities between groups; demand for tribute from settlers and the willingness to yield tribute to landowners; religious and doctrinal differences(p. 28). The term "conflict management" is perhaps an admission of the reality that conflict is inevitable. Therefore, what practitioners can do is to manage and regulate them for lasting peace (Enu-Kwesi & Tuffuor, 2010). Any form of conflict provokes feelings of fear and insecurity.

In many parts of the world, conflicts, violent conflicts in particular, have thwarted attempts of improving the quality of lives of people. It is believed that insecurity in Africa has made it impossible to realize the economic development potentials of the continent (Adetula, 2006). The process of peace-building requires multi-faceted and integrated approaches and strategies, especially by media organizations as vital linkages and facilitators. Due to the complex nature of conflicts, nurturing attitudes and behaviours towards peace practice at all levels of society demands that peace practitioners support the development of peace "media" stations to foster fair, balanced and objective reporting and to counter the attempts of unscrupulous individuals and bodies desirous of using the media to fan conflicts. The role Radio Télévision Libre Des Mille Collines, which operated in 1993 and 1994 in Rwanda, played in the genocide should spur peace practitioners, security experts and development practitioners to collaborate effectively with CR in order to equip and train them on ways of managing conflicts within communities.

Radio Peace has helped to manage community conflicts. For example, a young man came from a village known as Apam claiming that the chief of the village sold a piece of land belonging to the community for GHC8,000 (about12,160 US dollars)**.** He did not want to tell the story through the radio but indicated that out of anger, he had a bomb and wanted to bomb the village. The station called the police who arrested the young man. By this move by the station, an

intensive investigation was conducted by the security agencies, which forestalled the likely creation of a communal conflict.

From cross-examining the cases, a major point appears to be worth spotlighting, namely the need to take the "right to communication" beyond its abstract form -- as found in important documents such as the 1948 UN Declaration on Human Rights and in chapter 12 of the 1992 Fourth Republican Constitution of Ghana -- to concrete and practical levels, whereby ordinary people can easily appreciate the positive influence of their voices (see cases 1, 3 and 6 above). The process of fostering a truly democratic society in Ghana is in dire need of a shift to such a human-centred approach to development while at the same time actively and creatively engaging the political elites as presented above in case two.

V. Confronting the Challenges of Making CR More People-Centred and Participatory

The CR movement in Ghana has been able to make some remarkable progress, but there are some challenges confronting its operation. However, consolidating the gains marked up so far requires the commitment of all members of the GCRN to the core principles which underpin the operation of CR. According to the World Association of Community Radios (AMARC), a community radio's main communication strategy is participation. This type of participation is not limited to sending messages to the public; it is an agent for social change, cultural development and democratisation (see also Price-Davies & Tacchi, 2001). This implies for every community broadcaster a democratic dimension, popular participation in the management of the station and in the production of programs (Naaikuur, 2005, p.20). There are some general principles or characteristics which several experts agree are fundamental to the operation of good and successful community radio (Fraiser & Estrada 2001, pp. 18-21; Juneau, 1997). These include community ownership and democratic management of radio stations.

As compared to the actual situation on the ground in implementing the principles outlined above, the biggest challenge demonstrated by the study is how to effectively put into practice the involvement of community members in the management of the station and the creation of a sense of community ownership. In terms of grasping the real concept of CR, there is a wide gap in understanding between the management of CR and community members in whose interest the stations are established. If CR is set up for particular community it means that the radio station is one that is owned by the people it serves. This principle implies in fundamental terms that the community whose members, motivated by community consciousness and willingness to pool resources, agree that they want their own radio station in order to advance their community should initiate the radio. In this case, "the facilities of a community radio are almost invariably owned by the community through a trust, foundation, cooperative, or some similar vehicle" (Fraser & Estrada, 2001, p. 17). When a community radio comes into existence through this process, there is a genuine sense of community ownership which would, in turn, influence most aspects of the operations of the station.

Often, however, community radio stations are established in a way that prevents them from being truly owned by community members. Such stations tend to be too closely associated with individuals who can be the founders. These 'proprietors' feel at liberty to do what they like with the radio and are often not prepared to involve other key players in the community in the project. Worst of all, "depending on how the process is handled, the result is sometimes one of bitterness and sadness from people who want to be part and parcel of the radio but feel excluded" (AMECEA- IMBISA, 1999).

In this context, democracy involves first and foremost the "transparent exercise of power within a structure that guarantees the broadest possible form of public accountability" (Fairchild,

2001, p. 93). This implies that at the minimum level, the community should elect the board of management of community radio periodically and that there should not be monopoly over the positions or portfolios. This is another ideal in community radio in Ghana. In almost all the stations that have been studied, there has not been any change in the Board of Directors and most community members do not even know the members of the boards who have been hand-picked by the founders of CR.

Whereas the management of CR are quick in noting that first and foremost giving voice to the voiceless is the raison d'êtreof their operations, a deep analysis of the processes, which are essential to carrying out that objective, seems muddied in the political economy of running CR. More than ninety percent of the interviewees understood democratic management and ownership of CR as the capacity of the radio station to give them information on issues relating to agriculture, education, health, culture, and politics and serving as a channel for them to make important social and public announcements. Some community members who clearly understand the concept of CR have expressed misgivings about the ownership and management of CR.

The point worth noting is that when community ownership is questionable it can affect other aspects of the operation of community radio, especially democratic operation and community participatory processes which are fundamental to the viability and sustainability of CR. In a community in which people fully understand the concept of CR it is not difficult to find volunteers who would like to offer their skills and talents to the radio station. This implies that creating the necessary environment for people to understand the philosophy and functions of CR and their participation in its operation can facilitate relevant dimensions of CR such as the role of dedicated, energetic, talented and volunteer producers of integrity in ensuring good programming. Though the volunteer producers interviewed indicated that they came to work at

the stations because they loved their communities and wanted to serve them, when deeper level questions were raised about how they could reconcile their disappointments with the low allowances given them and the spirit of voluntarism they seemed to be at a loss as to what to say.

However, what emerged as a possible way of addressing the challenge of how to engage, maintain and motivate a corps of volunteer producers as well as how to enhance volunteer staff's understanding of the principle of employment in CR was for the management of CR to have a policy to regularly offer in-service training programmes and other external training opportunities for them to upgrade their skills and knowledge in CR broadcasting. Heavy reliance on non-professional staff can compromise quality. It was observed that funding was a challenge to CR. Since the majority of listeners of CR in Ghana are the poor illiterate segment of the population, they find it difficult to contribute money to support the running of the station, even if they were to fully understand that such financial support was expected of them as owners of the CR. Despite their poverty, these communities are nevertheless often willing to volunteer labour when called upon.

VI. Conclusion: A Look to the Future

The main challenge confronting the operation of CR in Ghana is how to ensure genuine community ownership and participation. Most of the stations are dominated by a few individuals who are behind their establishment. The lack of real or deep participation is manifested in some or all of the following ways:

a. Professionals and volunteers without the direct participation of marginalized groups are still creating many programmes.

b. Some organised publics or groups are precluded because their interests and values are perceived to be in conflict with the interests of the so-called founding fathers and/or Management Boards. Community members are hardly represented in almost all the boards and board members remain in post for many years.

c. Lack of clear policies, objectives, mechanisms for feedback and evaluations.

d. Lack of appreciable levels of community participation in community radio processes presents some negative implications. The first is ethical in nature and borders on the apparent negation of the democratic principles on which the community radio concept is based. "Democratic communication in practice implies that there is broadly based support and participation from the communities served by the media. The radio listeners…do not constitute an audience or a market; rather, they are intimately involved in the planning and production of programming" (Hochheimer, 2002, p. 321). The second is that lack of community participation in radio station affairs often poses a threat to their very survival as community members are often reluctant to contribute towards it in money terms or voluntary services. Therefore, it is important that facilitators of community radio projects should, right from the inception create entry points for community members to take control over the process of creating a community radio station to ensure that the ownership of the station is not called into doubt in the future.

Rendering of voluntary services is a key aspect for the sustainability of CR. The concept of voluntarism seems not to have been well understood by many community members. Perhaps this accounts for the litany of complaints from volunteer producers, particularly about the small allowances they receive. It is important in recruiting staff that not only the basic principles of volunteerism should be taken into consideration but also that those who work as volunteer

producers should be motivated with in-service training packages and other incentives to augment their capacity and the effectiveness of the service.

The CR movement in Ghana has lots of potential to grow and positively impact society at different levels as discussed above. Its visibility and viability in terms of the style of programming, effectiveness and efficiency of the use of language and accessibility to community members have remained unparalleled in the history of radio broadcasting in Ghana. The challenge of moving forward under the banner of genuine community radio broadcasting hinges on the well united and vibrant GNCR not only continuing with the kinds of projects it has initiated to enrich the programmes of CR, but more importantly tacklingthe knotty issues discussed in this paper in its quest for a more truly democratic operation and management of CR.

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