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This article examines the growth and the impact of the community radio in Africa across the political, social and economic fronts. The paper focuses on the sub Saharan Africa with special attention to the East, South and West Africa regions. In East Africa for instance, the paper argues that the emergence and growth of the community radio stations has entrenched within the communities many programmes for poverty alleviation and numerous peace initiatives especially for the pastoralists communities. The researcher also realized that during the COVID-19 pandemic, the community radio stations have come in handy to facilitate home based learning for both primary and secondary school students. In West Africa, especially in Ghana, the researcher discovered that these stations have enabled the farmers to embrace modern methods of farming and marketing strategies. In Southern Africa countries such as Namibia and South Africa, they have been key in advancing political and economic liberation and giving a voice to the marginalized communities especially the slum dwellers. Various primary sources of data were used including interviews with radio managers, listeners and journalists. Secondary data was taken from earlier researchers and organizations such as UNESCO, Communications Authorities of various countries and Balancing Act of 2008.

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the growth and the impact of the community radio in Africa across the political, social and economic fronts. The paper focuses on the sub Saharan Africa with special attention to the East, South and West Africa regions. In East Africa for instance, the paper argues that the emergence and growth of the community radio stations has entrenched within the communities many programmes for poverty alleviation and numerous peace initiatives especially for the pastoralists communities. The researcher also realized that during the COVID-19 pandemic, the community radio stations have come in handy to facilitate home based learning for both primary and secondary school students. In West Africa, especially in Ghana, the researcher discovered that these stations have enabled the farmers to embrace modern methods of farming and marketing strategies. In Southern Africa countries such as Namibia and South Africa, they have been key in advancing political and economic liberation and giving a voice to the marginalized communities especially the slum dwellers. Various primary sources of data were used including interviews with radio managers, listeners and journalists. Secondary data was taken from earlier researchers and organizations such as UNESCO, Communications Authorities of various countries and Balancing Act of 2008.

Keywords: community radio, communication, programmes, development, vernacular languages.

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I. INTRODUCTION

As we have indicated in chapter one, the era of digital migration caused liberalization of the airwaves resulting to unprecedented growth of telecommunication avenues. A part from the emergence of the vernacular televisions of late, the emergence of FM radio stations has been more visible. Their accessibility has been boosted by the emergence of the cell phone technology which has enabled radio applications to be integrated as part of their software. This impact can be seen by the prolific nature and diversity of the radio channels witnessed in Africa in the last twenty years. As a result of this proliferation, there has been diversity in ownership, content formulation and regulation. For instance, there are community radio stations whose specialization targets the farmers, the youth, the church members, university students and business communities. Apart from the community radio stations, there are other categories of radio services in the Africa. Concerning this exponential growth Mayers (2008) notes that radio is the dominant media with the widest geographical reach compared with TV, newspapers and other ICTs.

The African Charter on broadcasting recognizes and advocates for three tiers of radio broadcast: public service, commercial/private and community radio. Fraser and Estrada quoted in Pate and Abubakar (2013: 3) defines these three categories as: =

Public service broadcasting is usually offered by statutory entity
body or a state owned corporation with broadcasting policies
and programming controlled by a legally constituted authority. Community

broadcasting is that non-profit service that is owned and managed by a particular community, usually through a trust, foundation or association. Its aim is to serve and benefit that community, relying on the resources of the community.

According to this definition we observe certain features that set the community radio apart from the other categories; First, they are communally owned for the interest of the community members who are its founders, thus power and control is asserted by the many as opposed to the few who normally call the shots in the commercial radios. Secondly, they are need based initiatives rooted in the understanding of the specific social or economic problems of the community. Thirdly, they invariably rely on the use of indigenous languages, that of the founding community. The same community also plays a big role in content generation.

Besides the above features, the UNESCO adds several other features that define the community radio:

- (a) A community radio makes its audience the main protagonist, by involving them in all their aspect of management and programme production.
- (b) Its news must be geared towards supporting change and development of the community.
- (c) Where entertainment is offered, it is done as a collective cultural expression rather than featuring refined popular artists.
- (d) They also run on the principle of public access and participation where all the community members have a right to reliable, accurate and reliable information.
- (e) It must also be editorially independent from national and local authorities.
- (f) Funding can be of diverse sources such as donations, grants, membership fees, sponsorships and advertisements.

At this point it is important to note that the term 'community' in communication parlance can carry diverse meanings as it is usually defined within spatial and social context. Pate and Abubakar

(ibid) says that in spatial perspectives, a community radio is defined as a particular geographical territory or a particular political or cultural entity. While the social context is defined in terms of shared interests, values, tastes and demographic factors. Therefore since a community is bound by common interests and values, physical proximity of its neighbors may not be such a significant factor. This is especially so due to the advent of modern communication systems that have made the world a global village. We now examine how the community radio has facilitated rural development in various African regions below.

II. GROWTH OF RADIO IN SUB SAHARA AFRICA

Sub Saharan Africa has recorded massive growth in various categories of radio communication especially the community ones. Their potential to impact change in social economic aspects has been noticed across the globe especially in the third world countries. Da Costa)(2012) notes that the impact of the community radio in Africa has been uneven since some countries have been slow in embracing them while in others, legal and governance frameworks have been enacted to facilitate their growth. Yet in a few other Africa countries, such frameworks have either been inconsistent, non-existent or openly hostile. Fraser et al (2002) for instance says that Asian broadcasting legislation generally lags behind that of Africa and Latin America. However, since independence, many Sub-Saharan African countries have recorded growth in the number of radio ownership, the number of radio stations and the government support. The following table indicates how this growth has been:

Country by grading	Population	Radios owned	% of pop. Owning radios
1. Nigeria	135031164	27, 006,233	20
2. DRC	65,751,512	24,985,575	38
3. SUDAN	39,379,358	18,153,884	46
4. SOUTH AFRICA	43,997, 828	10,911,461	21
5. TANZANIA	39,379,358	16,462,609	41
6. KENYA	36,913,721	8,057,191	21
7. UGANDA	30,262,610	4,932,805	16
8. GHANA	22,931,299	4,586,260	19
9. ZIMBAMBWE	12,311,143	4,035,000	32
10. MOZAMBIQUE	20, 905,585	3,135,838	14
11. IVORY COST	18,013,409	2,629,958	14
12. TOGO	5,675,356	2,326,896	41
13. CAMERROON	18,060,383	2,311,729	12
14. BENIN	8,078,314	2,164,988	26
15. ZAMBIA	11,477,477	1,698,662	15

Source; various balancing Act projections, 2008

As can be seen above, by the year 2008, some African countries had many citizens owning radios proportional to their population growth rates. This is particularly impactful bearing in mind that one radio set can serve families of ten or more people. Still there are some countries lagging behind in Radio accessibility for example Eritrea is listed at the bottom of the ranking list by various Balancing Acts reports with very few radio outlets (only one state broadcaster), Equatorial Guinea has two stations, Swaziland has five together with Botswana. Myers (2008) explains that these countries have relatively small populations and government policies which do not favour media freedom.

In a different study of Sub-Saharan Africa by BBC World Service Trust, quoted by Ngugi and Kinyua (2014) points out that local commercial radio stations grew by an average of 360% between the years 2000 and 2006. The community radio stations grew by a striking 1,386% in the same period. For instance, in Tanzania, there were only 8 community radio stations in the year 2000 but by the year 2006, they were 32, while in DRC in the same period, the number grew from 10 to 150, Mali has over 300 community radio stations while South Africa has over 200. The following sub-sections gives us a glimpse of how other African regions have been fairing in establishment of community radio stations.

III. DEFINITION OF COMMUNITY RADIO

Myers defines a community radio as a small scale decentralized, broadcasting initiative that has some elements of community ownership or membership that is easily accessed by local people who also participate in their programming. Key principles of community radio that feature in this definition are access, ownership and participation. Thus the community radio differs from the mainstream media in the sense that the local community plays a significant role in identifying the needs and then sets the objectives to be achieved by their radio station.

Ojomo (2015 : 137) observes that African charter on broadcasting recognizes three tiers or radio communication in African Countries; public service, commercial/ private service and community broadcasting service. Pate and Abubakar defines public broadcasting service as that which is conducted by a statutory entity, usually but not necessarily state-supported or state owned corporation with broadcasting policies and programming controlled by a legally constituted authority. According to them community broadcasting is a non-profit service that owned and managed by a community, usually through a trust, foundation or association.

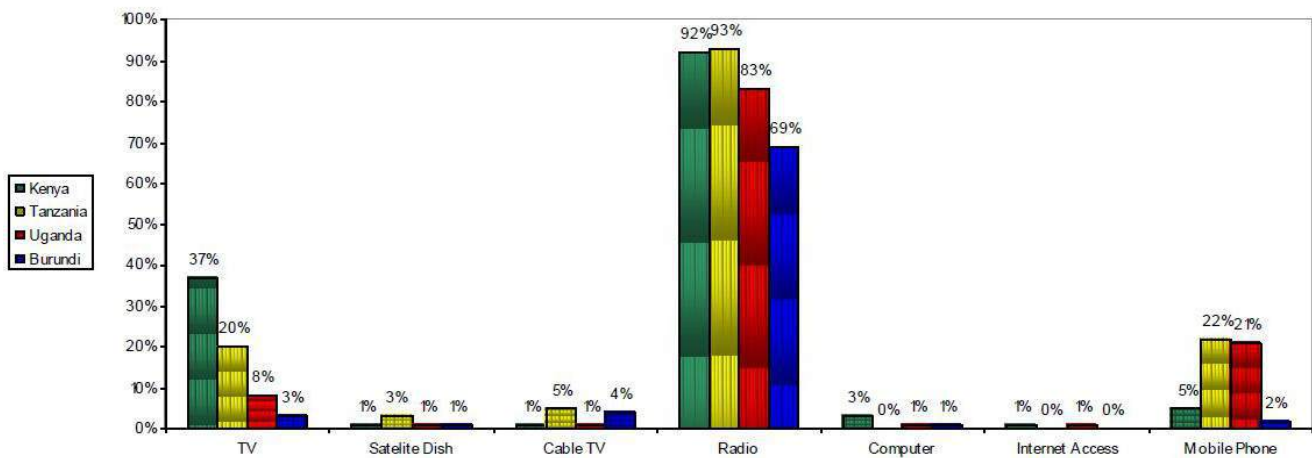
A community in broadcasting jargon is viewed relative to a geographical territory of occupancy or according to cultural perspective. Thus, a community socially defined, could be the one with similar interests, common history, common language and lifestyles (Alumuku, 2006). While geographically, a community is that which is found in a similar locality. From the social-cultural view, then it follows that a community is not necessarily a local entity but can as well be a global one, connected by shared values. Ojomo (ibid) notes that the community radio is thus an extension of the lives and aspirations of the community. Community radio is therefore, by definition, content, orientation and philosophy grassroots based and people centred.

IV. COMMUNITY RADIO AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN EAST AFRICA

Da Costa (2012) in a case study cites the East African Community Media Project (EACMP) as a success case of how the rural communities can be involved in development. Through this project three community radio stations were set up in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania to facilitate sensitization on how to control desertification. The project co-opted Kibaale-Kagadi Community radio (KKCR) in Uganda, Orkonerei Radio Services in Terrat, in Tanzania and Radio Mang'etele in Nthongoni, Kenya all with funding from SIDA (Swedish International Development Agency). The community radios strengthened various programmes for poverty alleviation leading to improved livelihoods and social welfare. The project faced sustainability problems due to withdrawal of the external lender coupled with embezzlement of funds.

Besides this collaborative effort to start community radios in East Africa, there has been community based organizations and other action groups that have set up community radios in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania. In East Africa, especially Kenya FM radio stations have been embraced as a powerful tool for enhancing social economical and political growth due to their affordability and accessibility. They are available in all manner of sizes such as pocket sizes, in mobile phone applications, medium size for nuclear family, and extra large ones for entertainment joints. The radio is the most common equipment of Communication in East Africa compared to the proliferation of other communication gadgets such as mobile phones, TVs and Computers. The following graph shows this:

East Africa: Equipment ownership (Balancing Act 2008)



4.1 The Kenyan Case

According data from communications authority of Kenya (2011) there are 96 FM Radio stations in Kenya Broadcasting either in English or Kiswahili or by use of Vehicular languages.

Of these vernacular stations comprise 76% of all radio stations with almost every tribe boasting of one or more vernacular station. Majority of these stations are owned by royal media services (RMS) which host Citizen TV with both national and international coverage. The same report notes that RMS controls 11 stations, Kenya broadcasting Corporation (KBC) runs Five vernacular stations while media max company is the third one with three vernacular stations. More vernacular stations are waiting to be licensed according to communications authority of Kenya (CAK).

Community radio as a subgroup of FM radio stations has been more visible in influencing growth and development in the rural areas than the privately owned radio stations. Githethwa (2010) notes that community radio in Kenya begun in 1982 with the establishment of first ever community radio station in Africa set up in Homabay, on the shores of Lake Victoria through a joint initiative of UNESCO and the Kenyan Government. Alumuku (2006: 133) points out that in a way this station served as an experimentation model for decentralization of broadcasting. Besides, it also showed how communities could use low and less costly

technology to improve their livelihoods. However, political problems led to the collapse of the project after barely two years of existence. Since then, community radio stations have been on the rise and by 2011, CAK indicates that there were nine community radio stations in Kenya. Other such community establishments are Koch FM, Ghetto FM, Pamoja Radio and Mugambo FM. Ghetto FM was began by Slums Information and Resource Centre (SIDAREC) which is a youth development project that targets the slum dwellers in Kenya. It educates the public on such matters as effects of drug abuse, domestic violence, HIV Aids pandemic, how to maintain social order and on basic human rights violations.

Koch FM was founded in 2006 by the youth from Korogocho slums in the outskirts of Nairobi as a forum for effective participation in social, economic and political discourses. Bosibori (2011) notes that the station's editorial focuses on human rights, governance issues, gender related matters, religion, environment, sports and children's welfare. The station's website indicates that the project was inspired by the Radio Favela in Brazil that has won UN honours for fighting drug trade in Brazil's third largest city. Bosibori notes that so as to boost its efforts in uplifting the lives of the slum dwellers, the station has partnerships with international Organizations such as Norwegian Church Aid, Open Society International and Kenya Human Rights Commission.

Pamoja FM is another radio station that targets the slum dwellers in Kenya. It was began in 2007 by the youths of Kibera slum to empower themselves and other community members through education, information and entertainment. The radio also offers training opportunities for the youths especially through internships for those studying Journalism. Mugambo FM, located in Tigania West sub county is an example of how politics and leadership can run down a community project. Having been started by a local parliamentarian to serve his constituents, the project was discarded by the next Member of Parliament after elections. Due to this, it has since shut down due to financing problems and political interference in the management.

In a recent development, Isiolo County in Kenya, a community radio (Radio Shahidi, 91.7 FM) has rolled out a mass sensitization drive on community members on how to stop domestic violence, how to foster coherence and peace among various ethnic groups that reside in the county. The radio station in partnership with Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO), Isiolo County Government and the Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops (KCCB) is offering lessons to primary and secondary school students. This has been intensified even more during the Corona pandemic which has caused schools to close across the globe. Through this initiative, children from marginalized groups such as the orphans access to home based education. On health, the radio station in collaboration with Caritas and

Action Aid, conducted a three-month Covid-19 campaign. This is done through a daily interactive programmes and giving of prizes to listeners who provide correct answers on how to keep safe during the pandemic. The station also keeps the community members abreast with news on Covid-19 developments besides helping to clear the misconceptions about the origin, transmission and treatment of the disease.

Other community radio stations in Kenya include, Mang'elele community radio in Kibwezi district, Radio Maendeleo in Bondo district, Maseno University Radio in Maseno, Daystar University Radio in Athi River, ST. Paul University in Limuru, Baraton University Radio in Eldoret, Masinde Muliro University Radio in Kakamega, Kenyatta University Radio along Thika Road from Nairobi and Kenya Institute of Mass Communication Radio in Nairobi.

Thus, with this flexibility and accessibility the radio has a big impact on developmental discourses. Socially, the radio is a source of entertainment, a stimulus for exploitation of talents through oral narratives, songs, efficient information delivery on such matters as disaster mitigation on such areas as flooding, fire outbreaks and weather changes. According to communications authority of Kenya (CAK), other topics covered by the stations include education, gender issues, preservation of law and order, religious teachings, sports and family matters as shown below.

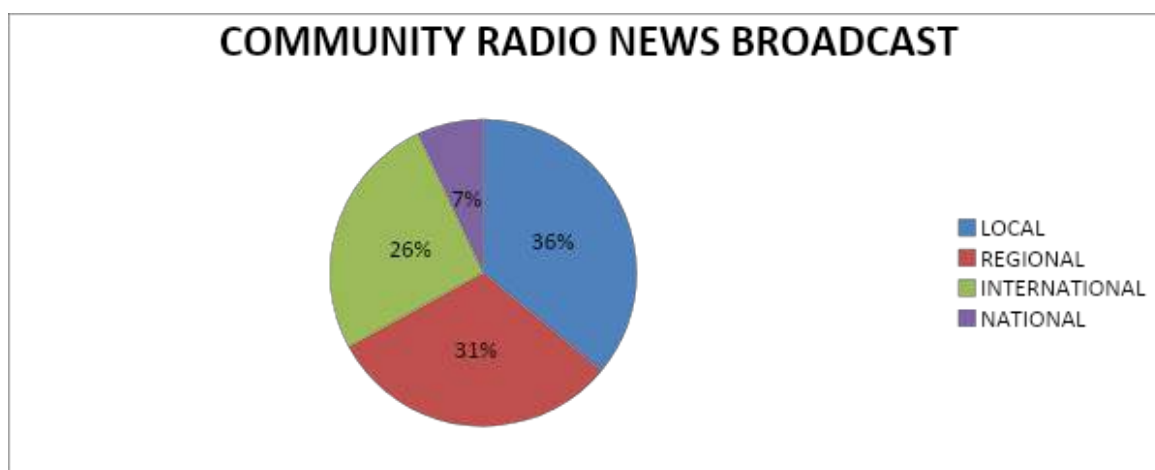


Figure 2

On the economic front, the radio comes in handy in facilitating access to agricultural information such as the best time for planting and harvesting, livestock breeds suitable for specific areas and marketing strategies. Thus, use of vernacular language by the FM radio stations plays a similar role with the agricultural extension officers employed by the government.

According to research done by Mithamo et al (2015) in Kenya regarding the role of private vernacular radio in facilitating access to agricultural information, it was found out that small scale farmers relied on the messages spread by vernacular radio stations because they were more convincing especially to the illiterate farmers. Most farmers accessed information to do with disease control, feeds and feeding, parasite control, marketing strategies, farm inputs, soil conservation, crop varieties, availability of credit facilities, green house farming among other categories of information. However, most farmers needed information to do with field management such as types of fertilizers, fertilizer application methods, weed and pest control.

According to a survey by Geopoll (Feb 2019) which collects daily data on TV and Radio listenership in Kenya found out that vernacular radio stations command the second highest positive rating by listeners aged 35 years and above. This is critical because this is the group that is active in production activities such as farming and trading. According to CAK report concerning the scope of news coverage by vernacular stations it was found out that 36% of all news items were local and regional, 31% were national, 7% was African news while 26% was international news. This underlies the effectiveness of using vernacular stations to influence rural development in Africa.

Politically, the vernacular radio has been used effectively to conduct campaigns at the county level, mobilization of the masses for public participation in political discussions. Besides, they have been used to sensitize members of the public on political developments such as the review of boundaries and referenda.

In other East African countries such as Uganda and Tanzania community radios have been effectively used to achieve rural development. Uganda for instance, has over 200 radio stations mostly privately owned. This increase has resulted from the 2015 digital migration which led to emergence of community radio and other privately owned stations. Over 69% of these broadcasts in different vernacular languages. The community radio stations have played a key role in promoting health, education, sports and community dialogue. One of the most persisting dialogues in which the community radios played a role, was the recent influx of refugees from DRC and South Sudan. For example, the DFID financed community radio station named Mega FM, has been at the forefront in women empowerment programmes in Northern Uganda since 2002. This station broadcasts in local languages with news and occasional government and NGOs programmes in English.

Similarly, in Tanzania local Vernacular radio stations have been influential on many fields. In agriculture for instance, these establishments have actively informed the farmers on the quality of seeds, animal breeds among others. Social cultural matters have been highlighted too. According to Tanzania's communications regulatory authority there are 123 broadcasters of which 29 are community based for example, Chuchu FM based in Zanzibar, broadcasts in Pemba and Dar es Salaam as active programmes targeting women empowerment and youth. In rural Zanzibar fishermen look up to community radios to guide them on the weather changes for effective fishing.

A study by Internews in 2017 concerning community radio stations concluded that these stations are key in facilitating access to information on health, sanitation, women and youth empowerment. the report further notes the use of indigenous languages makes them most reliable in communicating development messages more so, the journalists are derived from the same communities and the recipients of the contents have mutual linguistic intelligibility. As a result journalists from this station can use the standard Swahili or can use a variety of Swahili dialects to

drive their messages home. Contentwise, the radio stations lay more stress on entertainment and information. Information is passed through news briefings often twice or thrice per day lasting between ten to twenty minutes, talk -shows featuring topics such sports, culture, religion, politics and other matters depending with the locality and objectives of the stations.

It is prudent to note that since most of community radios are founded by NGOs, quite often, the objectives of the NGOs takes centre stage. For example, if the objective of the NGOs in question is to promote gender inequality, then the content is organized in such a manner that it focuses on topics to do with education for the girl-child, early marriages and women rights. Thus prominence is given to issues that touch on the ideals of the founders and financiers. Other international agencies such as UNESCO and FAO have control over some of the stations through financing and directing for example UNESCO has been funding around 35 such stations, Farm Radio International has been funding 11 stations and Farmer voice controlling 7. Apart from absolute ownership NGO also sponsor production and broadcast of some specific programmes with clear orientation to achieve a particular goals.

In February – April 2017 Internews assessed the state of community Radios in Tanzania and found out that in Arusha there are 5 community radio stations , Dar es Salaam has 2, Lindi has 5, Mtwara has 2 and Zanzibar has 5 such stations all influencing rural development in Tanzania. Though this is a commendable level of success, there are daunting challenges facing both community radio stations and other vernacular based Radio stations. The research by internews in 2017 found the following as the main barriers to effective utilization of the radio to achieve meaningful development;

- i. Poor remuneration and training of journalist leading to huge labour turnover in the stations. In many countries where journalists are not paid decently there is often poor reporting with biases. Poor reporting might also emanate from poor training and ill-prepared editorial policies. Poor training also manifest itself

through the quality of debates and discussions conducted in these stations.

- ii. Inadequate financing results to installation of poor quality equipment, shortage of personnel and low quality content. In some stations some personnel double up as managers, editors and reporters. This leads to poor production of news items and transmission to the viewers. This scenario is especially common in community radio stations than in private commercial stations where funding gaps is plugged through advertisement.
- iii. Political interference and ownership – in cases where a radio station is owned by a politician there is a tendency for manipulation to achieve certain ends. Upholding political neutrality might be hard especially during campaign times. Some are used to influence the voters to the direction of the owner thereby disadvantaging other candidates. Political debates may also be distorted in favour of a particular political party. Internews found out that in Tanzania a certain radio station is owned by a parliamentarian who is also a key leader of the opposition under financier of the opposition party, CHADEMA. The same report also quotes a political confrontation between a journalist who had allegedly supported the government position on the gas saga that had infuriated other citizens. The journalist's home and other properties were set ablaze by the protestors.
- iv. Lack of gender inclusivity in the management and the running of community radio stations was cited as a major shortcoming of some stations in Tanzania. For example, it was reported that in some stations the number of female journalists was so minimal that it could only account for a paltry 30-40% of the entire staff. Female news editors are uncommon while female radio owners and editors are rare. This situation hampers the integration of gender based topics in the programming.
- v. There is usually competition from the mainstream media especially those with a regional and national televisions coverage.
- vi. Inadequate mastery of the local vernacular languages by the journalists. This interferes with the preparation of the programmes by

distorting messages through translation. A study by Sawe et al (2015) found out that there are many reasons affecting growth and use of indigenous languages. These includes shortage of technical lexicon to handle emerging communication needs. With the integration of mobile phone based features of communication such as the Short Text Messages (SMS) and social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter in broadcasting, there is often the need to translate and interpret new ideas into indigenous languages. Absence of the right term to match new ideas emanating from the new communication technologies hinders the use of vernacular to effectively communicate development ideas. Secondly, in Africa there are some indigenous languages whose orthography has not been developed thus posing a challenge to the broadcasters in producing written materials or accessing such materials for use in the community media house.

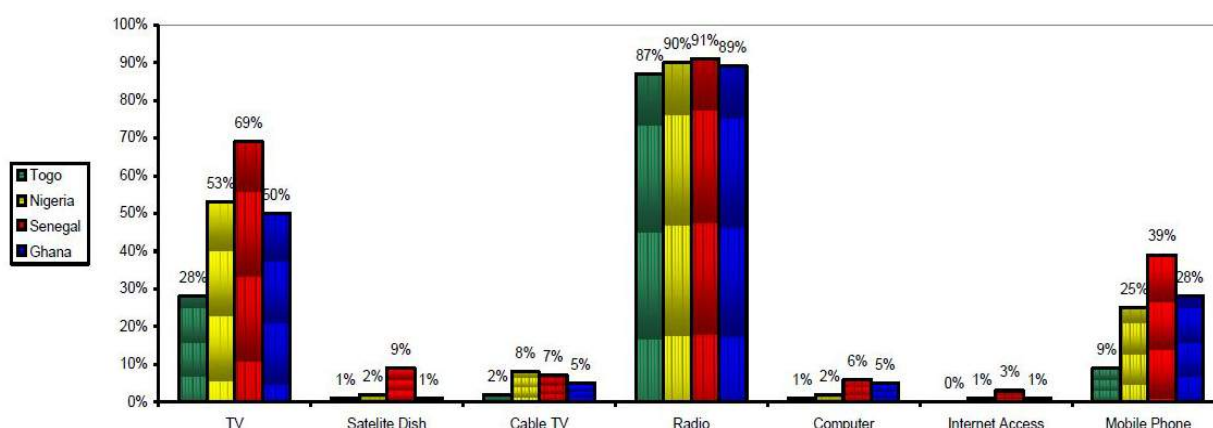
Due to such bottlenecks, the minority communities often find it hard to start their own community radio station on which it can articulate its issues. In such cases then, they continue to be marginalized and disenfranchised in their own lands. The Ogiek community living in the rift valley province of Kenya for instance fill excluded by the use of dominant Kalenjin languages by the local FM stations. It is against this background that the

Ogiek community set up Sogoot FM to communicate with the members of the community who are found in small pockets in the counties of Nakuru, Narok, Baringo, Bomet and Kericho. Mr Lelei, one of the project directors praised the initiative, “Now members of the Ogiek community will have an opportunity to get the latest news in a language they best understand”. Thirdly, since development for the entire community needs a collaborative effort by all the stakeholders, the indigenous languages frequently fails to bridge the gap between the illiterate and the literate members of the society. It tends to put the professionals and the non-professionals apart.

IV. COMMUNITY RADIO STATIONS AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN WEST AFRICA

This section will seek to highlight how the community radio has been utilized to better the lives of the people in other regions of Africa, in terms of enhancing information access, participation, a tool for education, self-assertion, a tool for enhancing democracy and decentralization for development. As the graph below shows in Wes Africa the radio remains the most common means of accessing and disseminating mass information across various states such as Togo, Nigeria, Mali, Senegal, Ghana and others.

West Africa: Equipment ownership (Balancing Act, 2008)



Community radio has been embraced by many states in West Africa as a tool for accelerating development through collaborations with NGOs, CBOs and UN agencies such as FAO and UNESCO. Indeed as Coldevia, (2000) notes, FAO started such experimentations in the 1960s, when it established centrally funded rural radio stations that used indigenous languages. Therefore the use of the vernacular languages in broadcasting has been found to be effective in enhancing access to information and mobilization of people for development. A research by Rivera et al (2003) found that farmers prefer to listen to vernacular radio than those that broadcast in foreign languages. This habit was reported to have impacted on their livestock rearing, animal health and local resource utilization.

In West Africa, some countries have utilized the community radio to advance the growth of the local communities especially the marginalized ones. In Ghana for instance, community radio has been used to teach the rural farmers on how to maintain soil conservation. Chapman et al (2003) says that the use of community radio to broadcast development oriented programmes began in 1980s with the establishment of Upper Region Radio (U.R.R) which had the responsibility to broadcast to the people of the upper Eastern and Western regions of Northern Ghana. In 1997 a second FM was set up, Radio Savanna, Tamale (RST) which broadcasts in vernacular languages, Dagbani and Gonja. The task of these stations was to use participatory approach to broadcast development messages and non-formal education programmes, especially agricultural messages.

The research by Chapman et al (ibid) shows that the community radio was very instrumental in changing the altitude of the farmer in participating in water and soil conservation efforts. In this research, the radio was used to package the message through drama, music direct address by the presenter. The target group was taught how to reduce soil erosion using contour ploughing and planting trees. Drama was used to provide entertainment so as to capture the listeners attention while at the same time teaching on how to use alternatives to chemical fertilizers such as animal and plant manure, agroforestry.

After a survey on the impact and success of the programme, 75% replied affirmatively. It was reported that the radio had enabled the farmers to discard old habits such as bush burning while agroforestry and organic manure application seemed to have improved.

Nigeria, though regarded as the economic powerhouse in West Africa, seems to have lagged behind in embracing community radio. This is partly due to Nigeria's troubled political past that has constrained freedom of expression up to 1999 when the country returned to democratic rule. This transition led to liberalization of airwaves in 2003. This liberalisation of communication was meant to give people more access to information in furtherance to increased participation in governance. The delay in adoption of the rural radio for development is aptly captured by Akingbulu (2007), who asserts that by 2007, Nigeria was the only country in West Africa that had no single community radio. He compares Nigeria with less developed countries of the same region such as Mali which had 88 community radio stations, Ghana with 15, Senegal 14 and Burkina Faso 33 in the year 2006.

Although Pate and Abubakar (2013:7) says that radio coverage is high with over 80% of Nigerians having access to radios, majority of these are located in the urban centres, thus targeting the elites. The sector, they assay is dominated mainly by government and private entrepreneurs. They are found in metropolitan areas of Lagos, Abuja, Kano, Kaduna, Enugu among other areas. However, they also note that some stations have some special features focusing on community led initiatives such as the BCA radio in Abia state. However, these efforts are hardly enough to stimulate rural development because such special programmes are produced without any input from the concerned communities. This scenario represents lack of bottom-up communication model. Thus there is a need to enlarge the available broadcasting space especially by repealing the legal frameworks that hampers the growth of community radio stations. This will help fast track rural development and reduce marginalization.

Concerning the potential of the community radio to address local concerns, Garba (2011) says that if embraced, community radio in Nigeria would help foster national cohesion by reducing tension by way of preaching peaceful co-existence. He says this is because community leaders' is more authentic than the distant voice of the government officials. He notes that comparatively, other nations had succeeded in the use of the community radios to achieve remarkable changes in the lives of their people. For example USA has over 200, Australia 116, India 103, Canada 95, Hungary 60, United Kingdom 200, Mali 100, South Africa 28 and Namibia 26. We feel therefore that Nigeria with the pluralism and diversity offered by her huge population, diverse religious affiliations, diverse linguistic variations and over 250 ethnic groups comprising of over 450 dialects would benefit immensely by tapping the opportunity offered by the community radios to accelerate the growth of the rural economies through creation of employment. However, this may not be achievable in the near future unless there are clear holistic steps taken by the government and other stakeholders in addressing the challenges that bedevil the sector. Such challenges are:

- a. Bureaucratic bottlenecks such as lack of a national mass communication policy have hindered establishment of community radios. However, some steps have been taken through the Nigeria Broadcasting Code (NBC) of 2012 now provides frameworks for community broadcasting.
- b. Abubakar et al (2013) also notes that the fear of competition by the private and commercial radio stations, who consider the community radios as business rivals, is hindering the growth of such stations. Due to this, the private radio stations lobby the government against implementing community radio stations.
- c. There are huge costs associated with setting up community radios especially where there is no government subsidy. Huge cost implications arises from the purchase of the equipment, procurement of appropriate technology, hiring of human resources and

installation of electricity. Fees and other charges for licenses are exorbitant and thus cannot be afforded by some local communities considering that 60.9% of Nigerians live below poverty line according to data from National Bureau of Statistics. Unlike private radio stations who recoup back their money from advertisements, the community radio stations rely chiefly on donations from external sources. Abubakar et al (2013) noted that the following remedial measures need to be out in place to facilitate the growth of the community radio stations in the country:

- i. The government to step up infrastructural and operational support which may involve extending electricity to the remote areas and funding especially on maintaining the equipment
- ii. Proper legislation and implementation of existing regulation which can allow community radio to thrive. Such legislation may focus on reducing political interference from the executive, licensing fees and other requirements.
- iii. The government needs to foster inclusivity by putting the interests of the communities at the fulcrum of its fiscal planning. This may assist in bridging the gap between the rich and the marginalized groups.
- iv. Encouraging partnerships with Community Based Organisations, Non-governmental Organisations and international development agencies such as FAO. They cite the collaboration by the Ford Foundation that has funded a three years project to construct 12 community radio stations as the best example of how linkages with external sources can be used to promote sustainability of community projects.

In Mali community radio has been used to promote levels of transparency and accountability in public resource management by helping to combat corruption (Myers, 2006). This approach has helped to improve good governance. According to Myers, Mali has a strong community radio presence in West Africa and has continued to witness more growth since the collapse of one party rule in 1991. She says that there are more

than 110 private radio stations, 86 of them being community radio stations based in the rural areas.

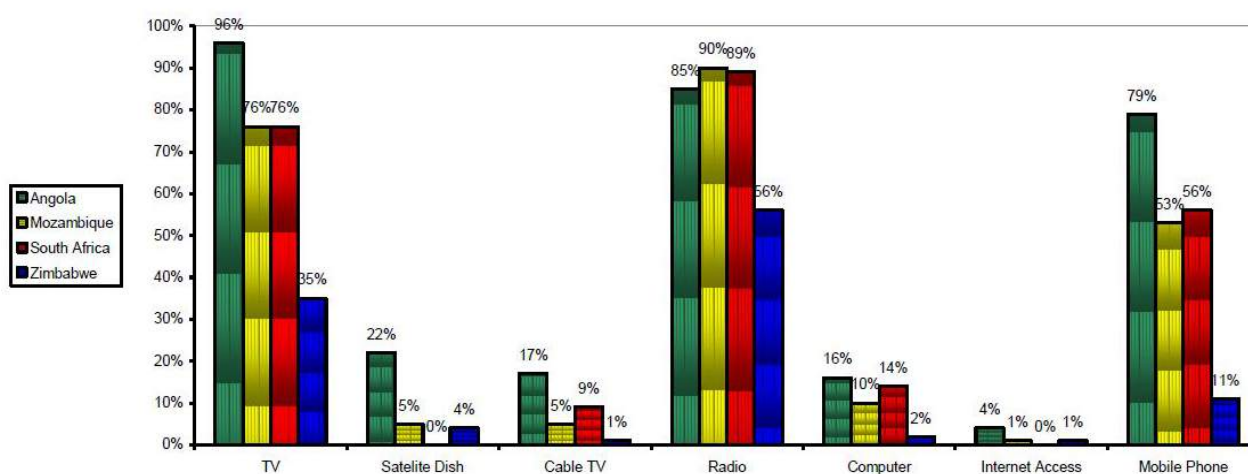
V COMMUNITY RADIO STATIONS AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

Radio is the most accessible item of mass communication in Southern Africa too, as we have seen also with the East and West African

countries. This is both in ownership of individual gadgets and establishment of radio stations. The figure below shows how the growth of radio in South Africa, has kept pace with the population growth. From this totality in growth, the community radio has been more influential in the development of the minority and marginalized groups:

Southern Africa: Equipment Ownership (Balancing Act 2008)

Note: the figures for Angola are for Luanda only.



Community radio has grown exponentially in the countries of Southern Africa over the last two decades. In South Africa they are found in the remote areas although many are concentrated in the densely populated areas with Gauteng province, South Africa's economic hub, hosting majority of them, around 52 community radio stations. It is followed by Kwazulu-Natal, Western Cape, Limpopo and Eastern Cape with each ranging between 30-36 community radio stations. Groups of communities that own such establishments include campuses, religious communities and various ethnic groups (Konrad, 2018). Because of the heterogeneous nature of the South African society, a wide range of languages are used for broadcasting in these stations including a multiplicity of ethnic dialects, foreign languages such as German, Arabic and Urdu.

Konrad also notes that they have created employment to about 6000-7000 youths in addition to offering an opportunity to the youths to learn new skills and growth their talents. He says that community radios began in 1994 when the country's broadcasting authority began granting authority to diverse social cultural groups such as women cooperative organisations, youth and religious groups. One such case is Alex Community radio that offers listeners a chance to report issues such as lack of water, electricity and shortage of medicine from their areas of residence. These issues are then forwarded to the concerned authorities.

A recent study by the Broadcasting Research Council (BRC) in 2018, shows that 91% of South Africans listen every week (around 35.8 million

listeners) for 3 hours and 43 minutes to various radio broadcasts. Another study by Da Costa (ibid) found out that by 2007, South Africa had 191 radio stations of which 152 are classified as community radio stations, while the rest, being distributed as public or private radio stations. This indicates how influential the community radio can be if well tapped especially by the rural communities to accelerate development. Konrad (2018) observes that some community radio stations have played a key role in the liberation struggle. He cites Bush Radio, the first community radio in the country, as being a catalyst for political change by promoting anti-Apartheid discourse. It aired revolutionary poetry, promoted local music and even broadcasted banned speeches thereby advancing the liberation agenda. Jozi FM is another community radio serving the Soweto communities where people of diverse cultures interact by sharing information to enhance access and participation in governance.

Other countries in Southern Africa where community radio has taken root include Zambia, Namibia and Botswana. In Zambia for instance, a community radio has partnered with USAID to help the local communities adopt safer health practices. For instance, it has been able to influence traditional birth attendants into embracing ways of curbing infections. UNESCO has also been involved in setting up a number of community radio stations across various countries of Southern Africa. Such stations include Radio Dzimwe in Malawi, Radio Katatura in Namibia and Zambia's Mazabuka community radio station (Banda, 2003).

IV. CONCLUSION

It is observable across Africa and elsewhere that community radio can be harnessed to stimulate the growth of the rural economies. To achieve this, we have seen that tapping the use of the indigenous languages is paramount as tools of mobilization of the people to participate in community projects. Access to information specially delivered in the people's mother tongue has too been found effective in enhancing democracy and governance. This is because they are able to understand ideas better thereby

enabling them to make informed choices when voting or when choosing priority areas of development.

The use of indigenous languages in broadcast has enabled governments world over to communicate development messages even to the remotest sections of the countries and more so to the illiterate sections of the population. This is because of the oral nature of the radio that does not require any skill in decoding the transmitted message. However, this orality too has some disadvantage since it is not possible to demonstrate a skill being broadcast. Even in Mali and Ghana where community radio has been used to play the role of the agricultural extension officer, sometimes farmers are left to imagine how to implement a particular procedure. Production of the local content may also not be as costly as creating content for national utility. In cases where electricity power is not accessible, solar panels and generators have been used to ensure the sustainability of projects. This is more achievable where the radius of transmission that does not require very sophisticated equipment. However, the overall costs remain high in some rural areas leaving such communities at the mercy of seeking external funding. Relying on advertising is not efficient due to the low population densities in the rural areas where most of community radio stations are located. This though may not be the case for urban base community radio stations. Other challenges include geographical features such as hills and mountains which sometimes blocks the FM signals from the transmitters. This in turn interferes with the quality of the reception and sometimes overlap of frequencies.

The future of the community radio in Africa looks bright especially due to the integration of emerging ICTs in broadcast. This integration has already started taking shape with many radio stations streaming their broadcasts through YouTube, Facebook and Twitter. This has further helped to connect the community radio stations with the youth and those citizens living in the diaspora. Mayers (2008:7) Observes that community radio stations too have been able to

boost patriotism, communal cohesion and integration.

On the flip side, there is a tendency to misuse the community radio stations by the local politicians to achieve certain interests such as attempting to use them for campaigns, spreading propaganda, using them to spread tribal and clan animosities and thus divide rather than unite the people. Our next chapter will focus on this aspect with a view to showing how the vernacular radio stations have been abused to cause strife in certain countries in Africa.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

To make the use of the community radio stations more viable in influencing growth of the rural areas, several steps need to be taken by various stakeholders such as the government, the community and the financiers. First, the governments should simplify the licensing bureaucracies and also reduce the license fees. This could be by charging the community radio stations lesser amounts than the private and commercial one, reducing tax on the purchase of equipment and possibly subsidize the construction of the stations.

The community members and financiers need to create linkages with other organisations so as to increase their economic sustainability and come up with creative ways of making the projects more viable. This may be done by establishing cooperative partnerships with women groups, youth groups, local football clubs and small scale and medium enterprises (SMEs). This will go along way in improving their financial status.

More research need to be done before starting community radio stations so that they are founded on strong philosophical and ideological backgrounds. Therefore the objectives of the founders must be firmly embedded on the ideals that will guide the sustainability of the project.

There is a need to put down policies on managerial guidelines so as to assist in directing the activities of the project. Such policies might guide on training and hiring of the staff, leadership and evaluation of the performance.

Lastly there is a need to intensify regulation on two fronts; ownership and content creation and dissemination. This is because media is a powerful tool that often influences people's behaviour by affecting their thinking and consequently shaping the public opinion. Therefore regulating ownership will eradicate abuse of the media by the owners who might want to use them to advance self-interest. On the other hand, control of the content will weed out transmission of indecent matter that may create harm to certain sections of the listeners. Unrestricted content might cause disharmony by dividing people on the basis of age, religion, gender, nationalities, ethnicity and even social status.

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