Global Scientific JOURNALS

In Defense of Vernacular Radio Stations in Kenya; a study of West FM and Radio Mambo in Bungoma County, Kenya

Samuel L. Kitui,[1] Prof P. K. Chepkuto, [2] Dr. Jared Obuya [3]

[1]School of Media Technology

LivingStone International University, P.O. Box 994, Mbale, Uganda

[2]Department of Publishing, Journalism and Communication Studies

Moi University, P.O. Box 39100-30100

[3]Department of Publishing, Journalism and Communication Studies

Moi University, P.O. Box 39100-30100

Email: luswetisamuel@livingstone.ac.ug, chepkutopaul@gmail.com, jaredobuya@hotmail.com

Abstract

Vernacular radio stations in Kenya have been viewed with suspicion. In 2000, former president Daniel Arap Moi proposed that they ban them. In 2008, they were blamed for contributing to the Post Election Violence that rocked the country. Kass FMs' journalist Joshua Arap Sang was arraigned before the International Criminal Court at The Hague to face criminal charges against humanity. Given the power of media to mobilize people and target the enemy, the above statements look valid. But the trend in media growth in Kenya indicates that though full-fledged vernacular broadcasting is a recent phenomenon, it has become an established component of radio broadcasting. In fact, the status of radio industry in Kenya represents a rapid departure from a state controlled monopoly that existed from 1928 until early 1990s. Taking case studies of West FM and Radio Mambo in Bungoma County, Kenya, this paper looks into the popularity of this third form of broadcasting among the audiences against the criticism that has been leveled against it. It also discusses the policy framework that can be used for the effective and efficient utilization of this form.

Keywords: Vernacular FMs, Media, Broadcasting, audiences, perception, Bungoma

1. INTRODUCTION

Broadcasting in local languages offers distinct benefits. In Kenya, vernacular radio stations provide added opportunities to the rural population because they are more proficient in their first language (mother tongue) than Swahili and English, the predominant languages used in radio broadcasting. A small exception can be found in some parts of Coastal Kenya where Swahili is used as the first language.

The vernacular broadcasting model makes it necessary for the broadcaster to target rural audiences. Due to settlement patterns in Kenya, audiences who use a given vernacular language are likely to be concentrated in particular regions. Thus, while radio can possibly reach relatively large dispersed audiences in any part of the country, the potential of vernacular radio exists in rural areas.

Different vernacular languages are also widely spoken in the highly homogenous rural areas with the exception of a few heterogeneous areas. An important determinant of a radio audience in Kenya is the language used because it limits the audience members of radio stations. Thus, most Swahili stations broadcast countrywide. A few regional Swahili stations are found in the Kenyan Coast where Swahili is the first language for most people. Vernacular radio stations are regional or multi-regional (serving a number of regions) but never national.

Commercial audience research in Kenya has devoted little interest to rural audiences. If viewed from the traditional media economic model where audiences are commodities to be sold to the advertiser (Webster, Phalem & Lichty, 2006), rural audiences have for a long time been of marginal concern to commercial media research in Kenya where poverty levels in rural areas are considerably high. It is estimated that 56% of the Kenyan population lives below the poverty line and most of these live in rural areas (KDHS, 2004).

As a result, rural audiences have limited purchasing power compared to their urban counterparts. Media research carried in Kenya by the Steadman Group, the only entity recognized by the industry, draws its largest sample from the urban population (Steadman Group, 2011). According to a sampling frame used by Steadman in 2010, a population of 2,050 was selected from six urban areas while 1,510 were selected from 12 rural areas. In terms of settlement however, the ratio of urban to rural population is 1:4. Even barring the distribution of radio stations which are concentrated in Kenyan urban areas, rural audiences are still underrepresented in Steadman's research.

The emergence of vernacular broadcasting as a central component of radio broadcasting, an outcome of the liberalized market that has shifted broadcasters' attention to the rural audiences

makes it imperative for media studies to develop a body of knowledge on how this broadcasting situation is affecting the rural audiences. It is important to study the vernacular broadcasting component due to its ability to influence development. As an aggregate, vernacular radio broadcasting intimately addresses the largest section of the population, the rural audiences.

Vernacular broadcasting proximity in terms of language used and material broadcasted is important because rural population is critical in developing countries like Kenya for several reasons. Rural populations are always a focal point in Kenya in terms of government policymaking, non-governmental organizations' activities and any organization that is concerned with improving the living standards and conditions of underprivileged communities.

 At a national level, Kenya continues to wrestle with different challenges of economic, political, educational, health, and social-cultural nature. Economic challenges include high levels of unemployment and low production output especially in the agricultural sector, the backbone of the Kenyan economy. Economic production in rural areas such as those focusing on agriculture can be improved with reliable information. Vernacular radio is well positioned to address this issue.

Politically, ethnic tensions, human rights abuses, and corruption in government and its institutions need to be addressed. Low literacy levels and gender disparities require attention. Health presents one of the most daunting problems as illustrated by high prevalence of infant mortality, maternal deaths, soaring incidences of HIV/AIDS and other communicable diseases. Today, local cultures are threatened by globalization but the rural population remains as main custodian. As discussed earlier, different strategies and programs that use radio have strived to address some of the issues above. The present radio industry presents even a broader avenue through which a wide audience can be reached.

Vernacular broadcasting in particular can contribute to positive media steps towards information, entertainment, and education provision. Vernacular broadcasters carry more local content that is relevant to their target population and allows for fine targeting which makes it possible to include very specific content. These include targeting messages that are only relevant to a particular group of people or region.

For instance, a Luo language radio station can address issues that affect fishing communities on Lake Victoria effectively in greater depth and regularity than a national Swahili station because it is not competing with other worthy news for a wide audience. In the same line, a Luhya station can address farming issues for farmers in Western Kenya region. This possibly improves information access for the rural section of Kenyan population.

In addition, use of multiple languages in broadcasting has increased the proportion of local materials carried by radio channels as multiple outlets allow for wide distribution of local content. Vernacular stations carry more local materials as opposed to foreign content that dominates English stations. These include content such as music, drama, current affairs, and local news. Readily available outlets for local material in turn spur more production due to increased popularity through exposure. The increase in locally produced music consistent with the rise in the number of radio stations supports this assertion. Spitulnik (2004) has argued that transmission of African material such as folklore through new media can contribute to cultural and linguistic preservation and revival as well as functioning as a tool for national integration and education.

The overall objective of the study is to develop knowledge on how vernacular radio stations can best work closely with and help the rural people to improve their welfare. This overall objective is further specified by the following more concise objectives, which are divided according to professional and activist motives.

1. To add to/strengthen the academic literature and discourses on journalism and development in rural areas.
2. To assess the effectiveness, relevance and sustainability of using radio in community development
3. To discuss the policy framework that can be used for the effective and efficient utilization of this form.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In the late 70s, Berlo Bretch in his seminal publication on radio wrote "Radio could be the most wonderful public communication system imaginable, a gigantic system of channels…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" (Bretch, 1979: 25). Bretch's vision is well caught in the activities involving vernacular radio in that it has given rural communities ample opportunities to be interactive.

One of the characteristics of the underdeveloped rural community is isolation, both physical and social. This isolation is one of the problems which mass communication systems hoped to tackle. Vernecular FM stations have to address themselves to the problems of creating self-awareness, of boosting morale, and to the problem of giving access to information to those who need it towards societal conscientization (Servaes and Malikhao, 2005: 98).

To understand the importance of vernacular radio as an alternative media we need to situate them in the political and democratic theories that have provided theoretical and intellectual support for their identities and practices. The participatory models of democracy and the related broadening of the definition of the political especially have influenced and cross-fertilized alternative media as suggested by researchers in this field such as Paulo Freire.

Vernacular FMs can foster development and participation in the Freirean sense of conscientization that further leads to reflection and consequent action: What is required for social change and development within the community is a collective perception of the probably diverse perceived local reality and the people's individual opinion for improving it. Such a collective perception can only be achieved through access to information and internal discussion to reflect problems, identify solutions and mobilize the adequate groups for action of change.

Vernacular FMs fulfill this function by providing an independent platform for interactive discussion which encourages open dialogue and democratic processes (Girard 2000). Through this platform people can define who they are, what they want, and how they get it, at the same time building long-term capacity to solve problems in ways that lead to sustainable social change and development.

Thus vernacular FMs facilitate dialogue in the way Freire refers to as generating communication in the sense of reflection that can lead to action. He emphasized that the correct method to initiate reflection and communication lies in dialogue (Freire 1968: 54) – vernacular FMs have strong potential to realize this form of beneficial dialogue. This is specifically important considering that communities are not necessarily homogenous entities. Communities can consist of diverse religious or ethical groupings, they consist of different genders and ages targeting different interests and necessities.

In this process, the role of vernacular FM stations is to respond to priorities set by the community, to facilitate, reinforce and challenge their discussion. The ability of people to hear and make themselves heard through this third form of media is a core democratic process and vernacular FMs provide the forum to realize it (Girard 2000). Vernacular FMs succeed when they grow out of the community's sense of internal cohesion and consciousness.

There have been many examples of how communities have managed to bring about important change relevant to their specific conditions. While those changes may appear trivial to outsiders, in the context of prevailing poverty and considering often existing apathy of the people, they signify the potential of radio to create will and energy for change within communities.

The New Left theorists of democracy (Mouffe, 1993) have suggested the introduction of direct democracy in more localized and organizational spheres such as the political party system, the workplace and the local community. As such vernacular media, particularly vernacular radio stations represent the ideality of organizational local community workplace hence is an ideal place for participation (Bailey, Cammaerts & Carpentier, 2008).

This study utilized the exploratory research design. The aim of the study was to provide insights and understanding about the role of vernacular radio stations as they relate to development in Bungoma County. It helped in gaining perspective regarding the breath of variables operating in the study's situation. This design enabled the information obtained to be loosely defined in flexible and unstructured way. Sample was small and non-representative which suited well with this design. It also assisted primary data to be analyzed qualitatively and to establish priorities regarding the potential significance of various problems (threats or opportunities).

History of vernacular radio in Kenya

The British East African Company initiated the first radio broadcast services in Kenya back in 1927. This was only the second radio broadcasting service on the African continent after South Africa which had begun in 1920 (Bourgault, 1995). These broadcasts relayed the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) signals for the expatriate colonial community and followed news from their home country and other parts of the world. During the Second World War, the first radio broadcasts targeting Africans were initiated mainly to inform parents and relatives of African soldiers who were fighting on the British side what was happening on the war front, mostly in regions outside Africa such as Asia. In 1953, the first inclusive broadcast service that targeted the local Kenyan population, African Broadcasting Services (ABC) was created by the colonial administration. ABC started to air programs in major African languages that included Swahili, Luo, Kikuyu, Nandi, Luhya, Kamba and Arabic. In 1954, the Kenya Broadcasting Services (KBS) was established with regional stations in Mombasa (Sauti ya Mvita), Nyeri (Mount Kenya Station) and Kisumu (Lake Station). BBC world service started broadcasting in Swahili in 1957 (BBC, 2007).

In 1963, Kenya gained self-rule and the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC) was formed by the new Kenyan administration led by the Prime Minister, Jomo Kenyatta, to take over broadcasting services from the state-controlled Kenya Broadcasting Services. KBC became the leading broadcaster in the country. In 1962, television was introduced in Kenya for the first time with a transmitting station set on a farmhouse in Limuru, twenty miles outside the capital, Nairobi. The new television station transmitted a radius of 15 miles (KBC, 2012). In 1964, the

Kenya Broadcasting Corporation was nationalized and renamed the Voice of Kenya (VoK) through an Act of Parliament. In 1989, the VoK reverted back to Kenya Broadcasting Corporation through an Act of Parliament.

As state controlled bodies, VoK's and KBC's activities were very closely monitored and controlled by the government machinery. The VoK and the KBC were used as mouthpiece, photo album and propaganda tools for the government and the ruling party, Kenya African National Union (KANU) (Bourgault, 1995; Odhiambo, 2002). VoK/ KBC also monopolized both radio and television. Radio broadcasted in two main languages, Swahili- the national language and English- the official language, as well as a host of local vernacular languages through the Central Station. Different languages were allocated hourly slots throughout the day in two-hour or four-hour sessions (Roberts, 1974; KBC, 2012). Television broadcasts on the other hand were exclusively in English and Swahili and remain so to date.

Changes in the broadcasting industry that began in the early 1990s saw Kenya move away from a dominant state-controlled public broadcasting model to a liberalized media market. In 1990, the first independent television station, the Kenya Television Network (KTN) started broadcasting. While radio was the most popular and accessible media form, ownership remained concentrated in government hands. Broadcasting was on AM frequencies until 1995 when FM frequencies were opened. A KBC subsidiary, Metro FM, was the first to hit the airwaves and was followed by privately owned Capital FM in 1995 and Nation FM in 1996. The Kenya Television Network (KTN) was established paving the way for private ownership in broadcast media.

The new FM stations targeted the urban young population with music as the predominant content and broadcasted in English. The emergence of FM stations was revolutionary, in part because it marked the first signs of media freedom in broadcast media (Odhiambo, 2002). FM broadcasting also presented an opportunity for diversification of content in the plural Kenyan society. One area that needed to be addressed was the language used in broadcasting. The new FM stations were all in the English language, surpassing Swahili language broadcasting by far.

Based on the Kenyan linguistic setting, radio delivery remained skewed because the predominant use of English provided many options to the educated population who were comfortable with English. However, the majority of Kenyans had fewer choices. At the same time, most of the new FM stations were concentrated in the capital city, Nairobi, and relayed their services to a few major urban areas. As a result, only a very small segment of audiences accessed them. The urban centeredness led to an elitist approach by the new FM broadcasters where their content targeted the youthful middle and upper class urban population.

There are over 60 languages and dialects spoken in Kenya (Githiora, 2002). Although Swahili is the most widely used language, its use in radio cannot serve all audiences' needs adequately. Therefore, there has always been a need for wide media coverage using local languages that could address diverse local dynamics of the plural Kenyan population. In 1998, the first vernacular language FM station, Kameme FM, which broadcast in the Kikuyu language, was established. In the same year, KBC, sensing increased competition, established a second Kikuyu station, Coro FM. Since then, different vernacular FM stations have emerged leading to a more diversified radio industry that serves and appeals to a wide range of audiences. Vernacular stations have also increased the variety of content available. The radio industry in Kenya is still expanding. As of December 2011, there were about 148 radio stations in the country.

Vernacular radio policy making: Some models

Vernacular radio stations, especially in rural areas, provide an important social infrastructure. In Kenya, vernacular radio stations have helped in conflict transformation and peace building by promoting human rights and culture of peace through messages, awareness programmes and 'social narration'. In some cases it has even sustained injuries to help resolve conflict or at least reducing its intensity and by helping communities cope with conflict by showing working alternatives to the conflict victims (Dahal and Aram, 2010: 113).

An examination of vernacular radio legislation around the world finds a sector dominated by a lack of cohesive policy. There is a sincere acknowledgement that vernacular radio is not "just radio" but a platform for "social organizing and representation coalesced around 'communities of interest' and/or small-scale geographic locales" (Coyer, 2006:129).

Drawing from Nicholas Henry's (1999: 225) models of public policy-making, Fackson Banda and Pieter J. Fourie (2004) discuss four different models of policy making for vernacular radio for the developing economy. The first is 'Elite/mass model', where the elite public administrators as policy-makers calling themselves as either 'servants of the people' or as 'the establishment', postulates the policy making. This is a top-down policy making exercise with the notion of a society divided in the line of power haves and power have-nots. Within this model of policy formation exercise the status quo is supported and curtails any chance of alternative changes within policy scenario.

The second one is 'Institutionalist model' (Banda and Fourie, 2004: 63), which focuses on policy making through the organizational structures within the state machinery. It advocates that only the state institutions such as the legislature, executive, judiciary, political parties have role in the policy formation. The policy originates according to the government's requirements and it is

drafted within state institutional periphery as a control tool. In democracies the mass is represented in proxy of 'institutional web'. The main significance of 'institutionalist' model is giving legal authority to policies with a complete set of sanctions for those who disobey such policies. Public policy will be universalized and extended to take into all the citizens.

The third is 'Group model' (Banda and Fourie, 2004: 64), in which the model projects the notion that in a pluralistic society pressure groups and lobbies also have relevance in public policy formation. This model allows groups other than the government such as special interest groups or non-profit organizations (equivalent of civil society per se) bring their respective ideologies or agendas to bear on the process of policy-making. Interestingly this model takes public agendas into consideration and systemizes it in the public policy formation. The model looks more democratic than the first two. But the power issues remains intact within this model also, as chances are likely that the influence of more powerful interest group tilts the policy-making into its favours. The power may be in the forms of "finances, information, capacity, et cetera" (ibid).

The fourth is 'Organized anarchy model'. The organized anarchy model imagines three key 'streams' of players in policy formation, they form "problem stream, political stream and policy stream" (Banda and Fourie, 2004: 65). The role of the first two streams is to focus the public's and policy-makers' attention on a particular social and political problems, defining the problem, and either applying a new public policy to the resolution of the problem or letting the problem fade from sight. The policy stream specifies the decision agenda or the "alternative specification". This agenda or specification is the list of alternatives from which a public policy may be selected by policy-makers to resolve a problem.

Kenya's broadcast policy formation as public policy exercise, by and large, falls in the category between 'elite/mass' and 'institutionalist' models. Although from the year 1990, some public policy formation initiates within different committees in the parliament, there are instances, where even the parliamentarians as 'people's representatives' are 'creatively' by passed to establish the status quo retaining the old form of elite control (Dahal, 2005: 9).

But, a change in Kenya's political history after 2010 promulgation of the new constitution, a new socio-political agenda through new constitution making has been put forward. Although the country's bureaucracy and polity are still marred by the old school of thoughts and actions preferring status quo, a new breed of social engineers are craving for radical changes.

The change makers are taking the public policy formation between 'group' and 'organized anarchy' models of public policy formation. There is inherent threat that absolutism towards any

set model might create a 'bandwagon effect' to status quo ante. The 'pseudo policy exercise' in the forms of advocacy and lobby activities, is an exemplary in this regard.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research design

This study utilized the exploratory research design. The aim of the study was to provide insights and understanding about the role of vernacular radio stations as they relate to development in Bungoma County.

The FM stations

The two FM radio stations under investigation – West FM and Radio Mambo are general audience stations based in Bungoma, my home County. Their signals cover over a radius of about 100 kilometres from Bungoma town. One of the reasons for selecting them is that I felt closer and familiar with them, and they were easily approachable within a short time.

Data collection Methods

Because of time limitation and the scope of study, I utilized three methods of qualitative study – focus group discussions, respondent interviews and observation.

Focus group discussion

For the purpose of this study, three focus groups discussions, each lasting between one and two hours, were conducted in Bungoma between June 4 and 11, 2012. All the discussants were listeners of at least one of the radio stations under inquiry. In the first group, eight people participated. The second and third groups had seven people each.

Respondent interview

This component of the study comprised six individual respondent interviews with three news editors/station managers (two from West Fm and one from Radio Mambo), and three field reporters (also from the two stations). Respondent interviews were face-to-face interviews with individuals that the researcher felt were in the best position to answer the research questions.

Observation

Observation allowed the researcher to examine community perceptions of the contributions of FM radios on community development in different social settings within Bungoma County. In the domestic setting, it allowed me to see how people listen to the radio at home.

Analysis and presentation of data

Similar concepts, ideas or themes were categorized together in order to label, separate, compile and organize the data. The dominantly appearing themes and ideas were interpreted as more

important, while the seldom appearing patterns were viewed as less important to the phenomenon of vernacular FM radios and rural development.

Direct quotations from the interviewees, and exemplars were also useful in the analysis, especially to advance argumentation. Exemplars are incidents, examples, strips and case studies (Lindlof, 2002) which support the researcher's hypothesis. In this case, the hypothesis is that vernacular FM radios are promoting development in the rural areas.

The other phase was the 'triangulation' of data, which involves a 'compare-and-contrast' assessment of more than one form of evidence about an object of inquiry (Lindlof, 2002: 239). In doing the triangulation, the different data from focus groups and respondent Interviews were synchronized, distilled, gleaned for evidence and compressed.

Ethical consideration

Permission to carry out the study was sought from the National Council for Science and Technolochy and the office of the district Commissioner. Phone calls and letters were written to relevant respondents to negotiate for access and about the detailed modalities of conducting the research such as dates and times of visits. Data collection was done by the researcher. The nature and rationale for the study were explained to the respondents by the researcher. The researcher respected the individuals' rights and also safeguarded their personal integrity. In the course of the study, the respondents were assured of their anonymity, confidentiality and their ability to withdraw from the study at any time.

4. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

From the findings and analysis of the study, it is rational to confidently conclude that despite some weaknesses which call for adjustments, vernacular FM radios are playing significant roles in the promotion of development in the rural areas. From the data analysis, I can draw specific conclusions which support my hypothesis in chapter one that vernacular FM radios are promoting development in the rural areas.

From the analysis of the interview data, and the program schedules of the two FM stations in Bungoma, it is clear that most of the major programs conform to the parameters of development. And by development we should not only think of agricultural, health or nutritional programs. Even the fact that the FM radios have broadened the people's horizon of access to information is in itself an aspect of development. The diversity of information channels in the different FM stations brings with it different types of information sources to the rural people, almost free of charge. It is good for people to be exposed to different kinds of information.

Because of the FMs (some of which relay the BBC Amuka na *BBC* program every morning and at the top of the hour), information about events happening anywhere in the country and other parts of the world now penetrate the villages much faster than in the days when vernacular FMs were not there. The news bulletins run by each of the two stations every morning and every evening keep people abreast with events happening within and outside their communities. Hence, the concept of diversity of information channels is applicable here. This concept says that when there are multiple channels of communication, the audiences have alternatives/options from where to get and compare/crosscheck information. At the same time, this diversity gives the community a chance to express itself on different forums.

Before the FM radios started operating in Bungoma nine years ago, people were relying solely on the Public Service channel, KBC, which never used to address the most local needs of the community. The lone radio station had to 'cover' the whole country and was therefore 'detached' from the villages. Its main interests were national issues. Fewer people used to have any opportunity to participate in the production of the radio programs.

With programs such as *Women's Desk, Youth Desk, Law and Order, Human Rights*, among others, the rural people are increasingly becoming aware of their human rights, while at the same time guarding against either committing crimes, or falling victims to criminal acts. Being conscious of one's human rights, and being able to exercise them without violating other people's rights, is an important aspect of development as spelt out in the universal Declaration of Human Rights and the UNDP Human development Index.

Other important programs, which I looked at include Health, Environment, Sanitation, and HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns. These have, no doubt, contributed to changing the people's perceptions and behaviour, so as to stay healthy. Through such programmes, many people have got tips on how to avoid certain diseases like malaria, cholera or sexually transmitted diseases like HIV/AIDS. People have also increasingly become aware of the symptoms/side effects of certain diseases, and how to treat them or where to seek treatment in case they fall sick.

The vernacular FM radios have also played a significant role in promoting information on how to successfully start income-generating projects, or where to acquire small-scale credits/loans to kick-start or expand one's business. A number of people have benefited from programs such as Market Price, Farming, and Business Panorama, among others. Some of them have started growing crops like upland rice and sunflower after getting information on how to grow them, and where to get the seeds from, through the radios. By helping promote agricultural messages on

new crop varieties, for instance, the FM radios are fulfilling the theories of diffusion of innovations and development journalism, which stress the role of the media in promoting technological innovations.

In terms of family cohesion, it was evident from the focus group discussions how much the members appreciated programs like Family Life, which preaches peaceful co-existence, tolerance, respect of the rights of one's husband or wife, in-laws and children, and how to live in harmony with one's domestic neighbours. In a way, such programs have helped to build the spirit of communitarianism (which I discussed in chapter two), as an ingredient of communal development.

The importance of peace for development should also be underlined. The rebellion that was going on in Mt. Elgon greatly affected the development of Bungoma County and other Counties in Kenya. Until peace was achieved, the region never boasted of development. That is why we have to recognize the role of the FM radios through the *Peace and Reconciliation*, *Ija Engo* (Come back home), *Karibu* (Welcome) programs which have helped to lure rebels out of the bush and encouraged the spirit of reconciliation and forgiveness between the insurgents, the government and the community. Again, this is a fulfillment of the concept of peace, communitarianism and development – which concept says that for any society to develop, people must be in harmony with each other, and collectively work together for a common goal, rather than for selfish motives.

The use of local language and local content generally, by the FM radios is another important element of development. As the Agenda of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) states, the use of local language and local media content (like music, drama, etc.), is crucial for any community's development. The FM stations in Bungoma County seem to have taken note of this WSIS recommendation. Without the 'platform' offered by the FM radios, there would not be many local musicians or drama groups coming up. By promoting local music, dramas and other cultural products, the FMs are fulfilling their development role as prescribed by the concept of "development and culture", which I looked at in chapter two. Under this concept, the media is expected to help the community conserve and preserve its cultural heritage.

5. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Since the shift in development thinking over the last decades recognized the relevance of program implementations which are endogenous to the perceptions and backgrounds of the persons concerned, this work aimed at understanding the degree to which mutual communication can contribute to change and development. More specifically, this research was conducted in

order to evaluate the community perceptions on the contributions of vernacular FM stations on rural development.

The shift from a top-down towards a rather participatory approach moved the relevance of Communication for Development high on the agenda of development thinking. This process changed the meaning of communication from a mere information transmitter towards a crucial tool for the creation and stimulation of awareness as basis for change. Since the need for own information channels, based on the peoples' cultural backgrounds and demands became recognized in the field of PDC, vernacular FM stations build a crucial tool in this process.

My theoretical framework builds upon top-down and to a great extent guided and informed by bottom-up participatory theories influenced by Paulo Freire's theory of critical conscious with which he highly contributed to the field of PDC. Since Freire emphasizes that conscientization in the sense of problem reflection and consequent action ideally has to be undertaken by the people themselves, applying the study of Radio Mambo and West FM and their specific Bungoma County community was relevant to evaluate such context-specific dynamics by gaining an in-depth insight into 'the people's' needs and their according solution-finding processes and action.

6. CONCLUSION

The different programs presented above may not be the only development-oriented programs. But at least they give a fairly broad scope of the kinds of developmental programs running on the two FM stations. Some of the programs, like the religious ones, peace and reconciliation, and cultural awareness have had direct impact on the community. Religious teachings, for instance, have helped to build the spirit of kindness and love for other human beings. The stations are contributing to the realization of peace in Mt Elgon, by encouraging rebels, who have destabilized this region, to lay down their weapons. Many of the guerrillas have surrendered as a result of the peace and reconciliation programs on the radio stations.

The radio stations have also been able to promote local singers and dramatists, as well as raise community awareness on the need to nurture indigenous knowledge. Other radio programs such as farming and self-help projects have been able to stimulate rural development by providing useful information on loans, and tips on how to start or improve income-generating projects. The news programs have greatly improved the flow of information in the rural areas; while the programs about human rights, family values, democracy and political awareness, have raised the level of understanding about those issues. Like it was mentioned during the interviews, a community which does not know its rights can hardly develop. Other programs, like environmental alert, health education, and law and order, may not have directly contributed to

tangible development, but they have helped to raise public knowledge and observation of the prescribed codes of behaviour. This is good for communal development.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

All the staff, especially station managers, editors and reporters, should be given some form of training on some development journalism. Although this did not become apparent in my findings, it is my own observation that the more the media people get skills on development journalism, the better they can perform in the rural areas. The government should come up with a "minimum wage" law to ensure that the vernacular FM radios' workers get not less than a certain amount of wages/salaries. More women should be encouraged to join the radios, either as reporters or editors. This will boost gender balance in programming.

Participation

The FM radios should find ways of encouraging more ordinary people and grassroots leaders to take part, either as guests or contributors, in the talk shows, phone-ins and other programs. The FM radios in Bungoma should introduce pre-recorded talk shows for rural people who are unable to take part in the live talk shows. This will involve journalists going out to the grassroots to seek and record people's views on any topical issue. The recorded debate is then broadcast on air, say once or twice a week. This is an alternative form of community participation, and some FM radios in other parts of Kenya were already doing it at the time of this study.

8. REFERENCES

Alumuku, P. *Community radio for development: The world and Africa.* Nairobi: Paulines. 2006.

Arnst, R. *Participation Approaches to the Research Process*, in Servaes, J., Jacobson, T. L. and White, S. *Participatory Communication for Social Change*, p. 109-126. London: Sage Publications. 1996.

Atieno-Odhiambo, E. *Hegemonic enterprises and instrumentalities of survival: Ethnicity and democracy in Kenya. African Studies,* 223-249. 2002.

Aubrey, C., David, t., Geoffrey, R. and Thompson, L. *Early Childhood Educational Research: Issues in Methodology and Ethics.* London; Routledge/Falmer Press, 2000.

Bailey, O. G., Cammaerts, B. & Carpentier, N. (2008) Understanding Alternative Media. Maidenhead, Berks: Open University Press.

Banda, F., & Fourie, P. (2004). Towards a policy model for community radio broadcasting in Zambia. Communicatio, 30(2), 50-83. doi:10.1080/02500160408537996

Barlow, M. *Water as Commodity—The Wrong Prescription*, *The Institute for Food and Development Policy*, Backgrounder, Summer, Vol. 7, No. 3. 2001.

Barlow, W. "*Community radio in the U.S.: the struggle for a democratic media*," *Media, Culture and Society* 10, 1:81–105, 1988.

Berger, A. *Media Research Techniques*, Thousand Oaks: Sage 1998.

Besette, G. *Involving the Community – A guide to Participatory Development Communication* Oslo: International Development Research Centre (accessed online at: http://www.undp.org/oslocentre/a2i.htm viewed on March 29, 2012 at 5.05pm).

Bhasin, K. *Education for women's empowerment: Some reflections. Adult Education and Development*, No 39, p16, 1992.

Bourgault, L. *Mass Media in sub-Saharan Africa*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. 1995.

Brecht, B. (1979). Radio as a Means of Communication: A Talk on the Function of Radio. Screen, 20(3-4), 24. John Logie Baird Centre.

Carron, G., Mwiria, K., & Righa, G. *The functioning and effects of Kenya's literacy program: A review from the local level.* Paris: International Institute of Educational Planning. 1989.

Chaney, D. "*Communication and community*," *Communication* 7, 1:1–32, 1982.

Codding, G. *Broadcasting without barriers.* Paris: UNESCO. *Communication*, New Delhi: Sage, 1959.

Coesmans, K. and Goor, G. *El aire para todos, communication participativa en tres pequenas emisoras de Costa Rica* (The ether for everyone: participatory communication in three small local cultural radio stations in Costa Rica), San José, Costa Rica: Instituto Costaricense de Enseñanza Radiofónica, 1990.

Coyer, K. (2006). Community radio licensing and policy: An overview. Global Media and Communication, 2(1), 129-134. doi:10.1177/1742766506061847

Dahal, S., & Aram, I. A. (2010). Community Radio in South Asia: Technology for Community Benefits. QUADERNS DEL CAC, XIII(1), 111-119.

Deacon, David et al. *Researching Communications: A practical guide to methods in media and cultural analysis*, New York: Oxford University Press Delhi: Sage 1999.

Fardon, R. and Graham S., *African Broadcast Cultures*, in: Fardon, R. and Graham S., African Broadcast Cultures :Radio in Transition, p. 1-20. Oxford: James Currey Ltd, 2000.

Feek, W. *Moving Media: Global Forum on Media Development*, (2005) December 2011: Issue 328 (see: http://www.comminit.com/pdf/WFAmmanSpeech2005pdf accessed on December

Fisher, H. "*Media and Development: The insights of a Pioneer and Reformer*" in Melkote, Srinivas R. and Rao, S. (eds) *Critical Issues in Communication: Looking Inward for Answers,* New Delhi: Sage. 2001.

Fossard, E.D. *How to Write a Radio Serial Drama for Social Development*. Jonh Hopkins University: Center Publications. 1996.

Franklin, Bob et al. *Key Concepts in Journalism Studies*, London: Sage, 2005.

Fraser, C. and Restrepo-Estrada, S., *Communication for Development – Human Change for Survival*, London: I.B. Tauris Publishers. 1998.

Freire, P. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, New York: Herder and Herder

Fuller, L.K. "*Public access cable television: a case study on source, content, audience, producers, and rules-theoretical perspective*," dissertation, University of Massachusetts, 1984.

Gadsen, F. *The African Press in Kenya,* 105-1962. *Journal of African History, 21*(4), 525-535. 1980.

Garforth, Chris, Khatiwada, Yadav, & Campbell, David *Communication research to support knowledge interventions in agricultural development: case studies from Eritrea and Uganda,* Paper presented at the Development Studies Association Conference, Glasgow, 10-12, Sept2003

Girard, B (ed.) A Passion for Radio: Radio Waves and Community. 2001.

Githiora, C. Sheng: *Peer language, Swahili dialect or emerging Creole*? *Journal of African Cultural Studies, 15*(2), 159-181. 2002.

Gourevitch, P. *We wish to inform you that tomorrow we will be killed with our families.* New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux. 1998.

Green, Lelia *Communication, Technology & Society*, London: Sage 2002.

Halloran, J.D., Elliott, P., and Murdock, G. *Demonstrations and Communications: a Case Study,* Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970.

Hamelink, C. *The technology gamble: informatics and public policy:* 1988.

Hein, K.J. *Radio Baha'i Ecuador: A Baha'i Development Project,* Oxford: George Ronald, 1988.

Hendy, D. *Radio in the global age.* Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers. 2000.

Hewitt, Cynthia *The Development Divide in a Digital Age*, Geneva. Issue Paper by United Nations Research Institute for Social Development. 2001.

Hochheimer, J. *Organizing democratic radio: issues in praxis. Media, Culture and Society*, 15, 473-486. 1993.

Hodel, M. and Chappelle, L. *A Twenty-Year History of KPFK-FM, Los Angeles,* Los Angeles: Pacifica Foundation, 1979.

Howley, K. (2005). Community Media People, Places, and Communication Technologies. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Mouffe, C. (1993). Radical democracy: modern and postmodern. In C. Mouffe (Ed.), The Return of the Political (pp. 9-22). London: Verso, 9-22.

Servaes, J. & Malikhao, P. (2005) 'Participatory communication: the new paradigm?'. In O. Hemer & T. Tufte (Ed.), Media & Glocal Change Rethinking Communication for Development (pp 91-104). Argentina: CLASCO and Sweden: NORDICOM.

Williams, R. (1983). The year 2000. New York: Pantheon Books.