

*Tanzania is a country rich in natural resources, such as gold, diamonds, tanzanite, nickel, uranium and natural gas. However, all these resources haven't transformed the standard of living of many citizens. According to UNICEF, the number of Tanzanians experiencing poverty is estimated at 12.9 million which is around 30% of the country's population. Approximately 80% of Tanzanians live in rural areas which mean that the majority of people living in poverty are located in rural areas, places only served by the few local radios operating in Tanzania. The UNESCO project "Empowering Local Radio with ICTs" is important for Tanzania as it bridges the differences in access to knowledge and information between people living in the urban areas and those living in the rural areas. To tell us more about the media sector and the challenges it faces in Tanzania, we asked **Professor Mohammed Sheya, Deputy Permanent Delegate of the United Republic of Tanzania to UNESCO.***

The media situation in Tanzania can be described as one that is vibrant. However, in Tanzania we have many challenges. 40% of the population has no access to mass media mainly due to high cost. Also electricity in the rural area is a hindrance. It's about 11% of the population have access to Internet services. There are also challenges which include collection of local news due to poor networks of local correspondents; high labor turnover due to departure of trained staff; lack of basic ICT equipment such as voice recorders, computers, mobile phones; and to some extent low Internet connectivity.

How has the situation changed over time? For example, if you go back to your childhood how you can describe media at that time?

If you go back to my childhood at that time the media was to a large extent government controlled. I think after 1992, when Tanzania became multi-party state, it opened an avenue for many opportunities including those for the media expressions and media freedom. Therefore, a number of newspapers and radios and television stations were established. But again the problem is that most of these are urban centred, and some of the TV did not have access to the rural areas, because the majority of people in Tanzania live in rural areas, around 80% of the population. The infrastructure is not very good, also the cost of transportation of the newspapers. So it was evident that perhaps the establishment of community radios and local radios could be an alternative of providing information to the people.

Not only that, but it also enable the people to know their own environment and their own local situation. I can recall the first project that I also visited was the Sengerema Community Telecenter where the local radio was established, and I was very much impressed actually. It is managed by women. It is owned by community itself. I also remember the most senior government officials went to the Center to learn how to use a computer. I'm sorry if I said this but that is the fact.

There are also other radios which had an impact especially in educating the people and also sensitizing the people in the program for general election. I can sight radio Kyela FM and Radio Micheweni which played very active and significant role in voter education, sensitizing the people to participate in voting and also to give them an opportunity to voice their feelings about political issues. As we know, we say in many languages that if you educate a woman you educate the whole family. These radios open opportunities to women in many ways, making them aware about available opportunities, in promoting women entrepreneurship, in sensitizing women in social economic matters, engaging women in

fisheries. Also there are other programs dealing with micro-financing, social problems including early girls' pregnancy.

How can ICTs give additional value to local radio?

ICTs offer new opportunities in many areas. In Tanzania the use of ICTs for the local radio began in the time of the Sengerema Radio, and the national ICT policy of Tanzania put a lot of stress on the infrastructure in the rural areas. Therefore, with the advent of ICTs, there are opportunities to communicate faster and more reliably. As I said a number of these radios lack equipment and facilities. However, through this project there is the window of opportunities to provide them with such equipment.

There is evidence of improved investigated journalism already in Tanzania. There is improved access to ICT equipment, computers and digital voice recorders. Also, there is a better accountability in the community radios as interventions by board members on good leadership and management has been put forward. There is also an improved marketing and financial management because training has been offered for accounts and marketing staff. Also, each participating community radio has been provided with an accountancy package to manage finances. In the past, I must say, trainings were focused only to journalists. There is also another positive mark: that is correspondents' network has been created. Now each community radio has at least 5 correspondents who report from the world level. There is improved local news coverage; also there is a new network of national correspondents with regular communication on email.

The project also has enabled training to correspondents. Most of them are actually ordinary people such as farmers, small traders, teachers who are leading normal lives in the communities. These people have now email addresses, can use computers as well as voice recorders.

And what results do you expect in the future?

I think, with this project, the future is bright. As more citizens get involved, there will be improved awareness of the importance of local radio, thereby strengthening capacity for local content production and information delivery. I can foresee that more citizens will be knowledgeable on issues pertaining to local environment, as well as they will be better informed and able to participate fully on community activities. I can also see an improved level of rights-based education and knowledge, especially among women and girls. You know, women and girls need to be much more empowered. I can also see an improved ICT use leading to better access to information and knowledge. I can say these are just a few of existing possibilities, but the horizon is extremely high. Generally, UNESCO has been a very worthy partner to developing countries. I think all countries in the world, in particular countries in developing world, rely very much on UNESCO intervention because the needs are many and ability for countries to do a number of things is limited because the demands are extremely high. With the UNESCO intervention in a small way, even with a small project, this can be a trigger, or if you like a catalyst for a much bigger project. With the UNESCO level to projects this gives governments and policy makers credibility of the international organizations. Therefore, I appeal to UNESCO to do more. UNESCO is a partner that we cannot do without.

The UNESCO project "Empowering Local Radio with ICTs" launched its capacity-building program to train local radio staff and establish standards for radios future self-reliance. Knowledge creation and sharing lies at the core of the UNESCO project, and is seen as an essential asset for the sustainability of radio stations.