



Community Radio Legitimacy

Geographical scope/benefitting country(ies):	Global – Africa, Asia Pacific, Latin America, Europe (Mediterranean and South-East)
Duration (in months):	Thirty-six months
Name and Unit of project Officer	Venus Jennings, Programme Specialist, CI/FEM/MAS
Partner(s) institutions:	Media Institute for Southern Africa, GenderLinks, International Media Support, Knight Foundation, Article 19, WACC, CAMECO, InterNews, Centre for Law and Democracy, Open Society Initiative of Southern Africa, Commonwealth of Learning, World Association for Community Broadcasting), regional broadcasting unions (AIBD, ABU, AUB, COPEAM)
Total estimated budget inclusive of Programme Support costs	US\$ 3.5 million

Rationale and background

The project aims to achieve pluralism and diversity through standard-setting community radio activities. Community radio is characterized as an independent vehicle for sharing the stories and experiences of communities. It facilitates dialogue to shape knowledge-driven societies. The sector offers affordable means of communication to marginalized, rural and isolated communities, fosters social inclusion, inspires creative cultural expressions and enforces democratic values that invite equal participation in shaping public opinion.

Typically initiated by grassroots activists to secure wide-ranging rights, community radio today is an opportunity to strengthen inclusive development practice and democratic participation. It's enhancement with new information technologies should continue to solidify access to and interaction with marginalised populations including young people and women particularly in developing countries. While social media offers opportunities to urban-based populations, community radio assures access to those outside mainstream, internet and social media reach

In a recent study conducted by UNESCO, it was found that there is no universal, standard-setter that is relevant to community radio outside international normative standards. Nevertheless, those are applied randomly rather than methodically or systemically. Partly,

this is because community radio governance and practice is inadequately regulated, demands voluntary participation, uses unsophisticated approaches, locally tailored methods and local language. Also because standard practice neglected its inclusion in national development plans. This is changing and a number of governments recognize the utility of community radio and are setting up national community radio networks.

Standard-setting, anchored on the principles of international standards, will enlarge networking opportunities and facilitate credible knowledge-transfer. It will introduce structured, interactive and independent application of information in response to community needs and in alignment with the rights-based principles of society at large. This, in addition to standards promoted by media development indicators, may facilitate new in-roads for community radio to accompany the post-2015 development process. Regulatory bodies, public broadcasters and civil society can play an important role by qualitatively ranking good practice in line with international standards. Strengthening the awareness and capacity of regulators in this regard may promote and accelerate fair policy formulation and improved standards of practice for community radio.

Focus on Young People and Women

The legitimacy of community radio is heavily dependent upon the active participation of community members in all levels of its function. The participative formats commonly used by community radio invite and successfully engage young people and women in talk shows, interviews, and production. They are mimicked by poorly resourced public broadcasters and help to demystify traditional misconceptions in relation to prescribed programming for young people. Trained staff, volunteers and community members collectively challenge obstacles to women's empowerment and gender equality at a level and reach that is unprecedented by any other media.

Continuity is essential to maintain the active participation of young people in long term interventions that responds to their needs. Obtaining the views of marginalized children and young people in pre- and post-production has long-term, positive implications on democratic participation in a similar manner to the empowerment of women in media.

The following examples illustrate how community radio has contributed to young people's and women's empowerment:

- Teenagers supported by UNESCO in Sub-Saharan Africa are producing quality radio programmes for and with peers
- Community radio stations in South Asia strengthen media and information literacy skills among school children
- The Mapuche indigenous people in Chile obtained the right to own and operate their own community radio stations with the support of activists promoting international standards related to women's rights
- In Fiji, community radio stations facilitating women's opinion on the enforcement of international standards won international recognition by the NGO Caucus of the Commission on the Status of Women (2014).
- Nepal's community radio network, ACORAB, addresses cultural and traditional practices that inflict harm upon women.

Community media offers affordable, responsive, flexible and participatory opportunities for long-term and democratic sustainability. This is important to consider in the context of the post-2015 development agenda, UNESCO's Strategy for African Youth, ILO's 2013 Youth Employment Trends, and Priority Gender Action Plan, among others.

Why UNESCO ?

UNESCO is well placed to promote and facilitate standard-setting practices in community radio with a specific focus on young people and women's empowerment given its extensive experience and successful implementation of projects worldwide. Civil society, academic and government actors expect UNESCO to take leadership in this area due to the Organization's unique mandate on communication and its track record in promoting pluralistic and editorially independent media worldwide. That track record is matched by holistic knowledge about the international development community and the ability to facilitate networking. Examples can be drawn from the connections facilitated by UNESCO Field Advisors in Kenya, Lesotho, South Africa, Zambia and others between government and non-government actors in disaster relief and reduction and community radio actors and networks in those countries. Similar networking is important for gender equality, and women and young people's empowerment in community media.

UNESCO works in consultation with its implementing partners, Member States, network of field experts, and Headquarter based Programme Specialists. It is through such consultation that it has come to recognize that the presence of community media is an indication of growing media pluralism. It acknowledges that effective and inclusive practice requires a level of systemic, participative and methodological intervention, planning and follow-up. It seeks to stand by the global community broadcasting community to meet long-standing challenges: quality content, lack of sustainable funding, professional capacity, adequate equipment, fair policy and legal recognition.

The Organization continues to design and implement tools to assess media development, gender-mainstreaming and young people's engagement in media. They are available in many of the UN languages and are easily adapted for translation and use in local languages. They demonstrate innovation and cost-efficiency as they are adapted for use in advocacy as well as training. This project will complement ongoing efforts to upgrade the legitimacy of community radio stations through standard-setting practice. It is directly related to MP V, ER 2: Pluralistic media institutions are facilitated, including by adoption of gender-sensitive policies and through support for strengthened community media policy.

Sensitization and awareness-raising about the need for sustainable media as an integral part of social development is advocated relentlessly by UNESCO through initiatives that are wide-ranging –promoting collaborative action within UN Country Teams to high-level advocacy as evidenced in the UN Plan of Action for the Safety of Journalists.

UNESCO's positive and historical relationship with international and regional broadcasting unions and associations, the World Association of Community Broadcasters (AMARC), and national networks of community media is based on the guiding principles of a number of international standards and provides the possibility to strengthen partnerships and effectively carry out this project.

Overall Goal/Objective

Strengthen the legitimacy of 100 community radio stations representing all regions through targeted activities that respond to international standards that promote gender equality and young people's engagement in media practice.

Main expected results

- Young people's and women's participation in local content development is enhanced through community radio.
- Gender balance in professional and volunteer functions as well as in editorial content is strengthened.
- Regulators and civil society facilitate ranking system for standard-setting practice among community broadcasters.
- Community radio capacity is strengthened and responds to public interest, knowledge sharing and information needs.

Activities and outputs/deliverables relating to the achievement of expected results

- Standard-setting practice adopted by 100 community radio stations in line with international standards.
- Gender-sensitive and youth-friendly operational standards adopted by 10 regulators
- Gender-sensitive operational strategies implemented by 100 community radio
- Culture of documentation and showcasing of good practice adopted by community radio, community radio advocates, civil society and national actors.
- Young people's and women's local content production is enhanced through 500 representative bodies.
- Gender balance in professional and volunteer functions as well as in editorial content is strengthened in 100 community radio stations.
- Ten regulators adopt inclusive standard-setting ranking system in consultation for civil society and media
- Ten national development plans support the advancement of independent community radio

Activities

Research and development

- Community radio practice (age/gender audience mapping, age/gender targeted content analysis)
- Community radio performance standard (assessment and ranking of network members)
- Priority benchmarking and identification of gaps (gender equality and mainstreaming assessment in community radio)
- Gender mainstreaming in community radio (resource mapping, pilot networking strategy tested and adopted)
- Identification and establishment of gender and media monitors (benchmarking, monitoring strategy, roster of experts, networking and communication chains)
- Dialogue and networking (regulatory bodies, law enforcement specialists and relevant associations and unions, community radio).
- Twinning community broadcasting managers with media research institutions (monitoring and evaluation indicators)
- Rebroadcasting community content in public media (feasibility assessment, monitoring, ranking by public broadcaster)
- Document and promote good practice promoting sustainable youth and women's engagement in community media
- Directory of national community broadcasting support experts; volunteer rosters; community radio stations

Training and skills building (gender; community radio ethics and practice)

- International standards and community radio (regulators, law enforcers, managers, trainers, unions, civil society)
- Community radio ethics and practice (management, governance, production, new technologies, participation)
- Programming with women and youth (role models, leaders, gender-sensitive concepts and formats, reporting)
- Inclusive radio practice (radio and community workshops)
- Gender-sensitive assessments, consultations, focus groups (regulator, community broadcasters, associations, unions)
- Programme creation and sponsorship (modeling, planning, local fund-raising with NGOs implementing standards)

Capacity enhancement in collaboration with mainstream broadcasters NGOs, civil society and relevant government bodies

- Promote and advocate for media pluralism and diversity in line with international standards (seminars, public debates, workshops)
- Partnerships with public broadcasters (production exchange, co-productions, inter-communal debates)
- Tools, publications and reports
- Multilingual online portal (training material, license-free recordings and editing software; radio formats and concepts)
- Community radio expert and mentors' network (in collaboration with academic institutions, schools, volunteers)

Beneficiaries and stakeholders

Key stakeholders include the direct beneficiaries of community radio themselves. Specifically, those are community members and leaders; civil society groups; community practitioners, radio stations and networks; the mainstream broadcasting community; regulators and law enforcers; UN system organizations; donors, and academics.

For the purposes of this project, only licensed community radio stations that are physically accessible to local community and at least 5 hours per day of broadcasting will be considered.

From the onset of the project, close cooperation and consultation with community radio governing bodies, broadcasting regulatory systems and academic networks will assure that the project is owned by the beneficiaries themselves. The opportunities offered to enhance the legitimacy of community radio stations are rights-based and the implementation strategy is participation oriented.

Implementation strategy

Stakeholder representatives will be consulted and invited to work closely with UNESCO's Project Leader, Advisors for Communication and Information and UNESCO appointed or seconded Consultants, Experts, Legal Advisors and Project Coordinators. Overall coordination and monitoring will be guided by UNESCO HQs and implementation responsibilities will be decentralized including to UNESCO Field Offices including Nairobi, Harare, Kingston, New Delhi and Beijing. Wherever necessary, stakeholders will be subcontracted to carry out the implementation and technical advice will be made available to

them by UNESCO. The project will be linked with the work of national stakeholders and civil society groups engaged in the implementation of international standards.

Participating countries will be identified based on experience and demand for establishing and implementing (i) gender and media policies and (ii) young people's radio for, by and with young people. Ministries of Women and Youth will be consulted and invited to designate members of staff to deliver technical support on gender mainstreaming both to community and mainstream media so that the policy development process is wide reaching. Representatives of mainstream media will be invited to propose collaborative projects with community media to assure that information flows are not hampered due to lack of networking. The project will champion supportive regulators, legislators and elected representatives and will profile outstanding community radio practitioners and civil society leaders in publications and reports resulting from the project. Academic institutions conducting research on community development will be invited to undertake research on the viability of independent community radio in the development process.

The project fully addresses gender equality through activities that promote gender equality policy development in media and positive portrayal through media.

Sustainability and exit strategy

The project is designed to be carried out in close consultation with national and local stakeholders who will assume ownership of the project before its finalization. Policymakers and beneficiaries will be empowered with new capacities, networks and sustainable models to continue actions after funding and technical support have come to an end. The mobilisation of other bodies within the UN, the media and civil society will help build further sustainability.

From the onset, the project will promote systems and networking that will generate positive, rights-based results for the community, community radio stations, government and non-government organizations implementing and monitoring the implementation of international standards. Due to the high turnover of community radio staff, women's and youth activist groups and associations will be assigned monitoring roles to ensure that the continued implementation of gender-sensitive policies.

UNESCO will guide and facilitate strategic plans to mobilise the replication of the project in countries that have not participated in the project. By involving the participation of mainstream media in this project, it is expected that organic scale-up will take place to involve all sectors, private, public, and community to adopt gender-sensitive policies at the minimum.