

Presentation by Mr [Franklin Huizies](#), [AMARC](#), at a meeting on Namibia's community radio broadcasting sector in Windhoek, 11-12 August 2011, organised by UNESCO, in partnership with Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung-Africa (Fesmedia Africa), the Media Institute for Southern Africa Namibian chapter and the United States Embassy. COL sponsored Mr Huizies participation as part of its ongoing collaboration with UNSECO in the area of community media and non-formal learning. For more info on the Windhoek meeting, see UNESCO [press release](#).

Building a Sustainable Community Radio Sector in Namibia

Good morning, my name is Franklin Huizies, Vice President for Amarc Africa and Treasurer for Amarc International. I want to thank the Commonwealth of Learning, UNESCO and the American Embassy for this opportunity....

Community Radio initiatives have sprung up organically in many countries throughout Africa. These initiatives are enjoying some support from various donors and funders to assist setup and public education campaigns, i.e. OSISA, SIDA, FES etc. There is also a growing trend where media development support organizations assume the role of facilitating the coordination of these initiatives on a country and regional level. Although the latter is an important component to ensure growth of this sector, there is always the threat that the sector never owns this process and might fail to take responsibility. There are several cases in the region where tension developed between media development organizations and newly formed community radio associations, precisely because the participatory development of an agreed upon growth strategy was neglected.

There are examples here in Namibia as well as South Africa, Zambia and Botswana, to mention a few. There is a clear indication that strong country associations are essential to the establishment of a sector identity and to gradually take the lead in the facilitation of local growth of community radio stations.

The Community Radio sector, both at station and association level, increasingly struggle with issues of sustainability, i.e. Financial sustainability, Social sustainability and Institutional sustainability. Strengthening partnerships with civil society organizations can improve all levels of sustainability within stations as the relevance and quality of the content improves so does the premium on this currency.

Community Radio is a driver/platform for local development through communication, the following definition illustrates this point; "Development Communications (DevCom) is the planned use of communication processes and media products to support effective policymaking, public participation and project implementation geared towards social, economic, political and ecological development. It is a two-way social inter action process enabling the people concerned to understand key factors and its' interdependencies and to respond to problems in a competent way. DevCom aims not so much at information dissemination as at a shared vision of a sustainable future, it also focuses on empowering social groups to solve or prevent rising problems¹."

¹ <http://www.cbd.int/cepa/toolkit/2008/doc/Strategic%20Communication%20for%20Sustainable%20development.pdf>

A functional community radio association enables the facilitation of this shared vision and ensure the necessary partnerships between community radio as a platform and civil society organisations and other stakeholders as a source by providing parameters within which editorial independence is safeguarded.

Proposals towards a Sustainable Community Radio Sector in Namibia

The community radio sector in Namibia has to unite behind an agreed upon vision, a vision that is endorsed by member stations nationally through signing a charter, and a vision that adopts a vigorous advocacy and lobby strategy.

In order for the latter to succeed we need to

- Ensure that the Board and Governance structures of NCRN have capacity and are empowered to give Leadership in advocating for principles of the right to communicate as enshrined in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as well as the NCRN principles for Community Broadcasting. That the Board have a program of action with strategic focus on the sector vision.
 - Ensure that NCRN give leadership in the sector through employing good governance principles; principles that respect the different organisational structures you constitute, allowing them to be effective in their respective functions. Have clear roles and responsibility of board and management.
 - Ensure that the organisation do regular strategic review in providing a strategic plan that can guide implementation of the said objectives.
 - Ensure that NCRN secures its own identity within the current development sector environment with the existence of parallel organisations through bilateral agreements and continuous advocacy activities in order to educate and inform stakeholders.
 - Ensure that NCRN documents learning and accomplishments as best practices, and do continuous research and publications in its efforts to provide models within the sector.
 - Ensure that the current strengths of the sector are integrated to benefit all projects within the network.
 - Ensure that NCRN have a specific program of action to address the lack of proper enabling legislation, or barriers in market place or to advocate for strategic partnerships that will realise community radio social impact and sustainability.
 - Donors and funders should commit to provide incubation support through availing resources for at least 3-4 years.
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Basic Principles and Challenges of Community Radio for Development²

- To increase effectiveness of communities through community radio in achieving Millennium Development Goals;
- Recognize voicelessness and powerlessness as key dimensions of poverty;
- Address the contribution of community radio to accountability, equity and civil rights;
- Ensure the full and effective participation of women; Be participatory and inclusive of marginalized groups;
- The lack of proper enabling legislation is the single principal barrier to community radio broadcasters in Africa. The absence of a friendly legislation; the existence of media oppression and threats are a generalized barrier to the development of community radio throughout the world today.
- On varying degrees, these factors hinder community radio capacity to develop its positive impact in giving voice to the marginalized, in developing inclusive and democratic societies where governments are accountable and people are empowered to achieve development objectives.
- Likewise, the absence of appropriate legislation recognizing the social contribution of community radio creates financial sustainability challenges that hinder the possibility for scaling up good models of sustainable community radio.
- Community radio is a distinct media sector and a vital alternative to state owned public broadcaster and commercial private media.
- Communities have sought in community radio a means to express their own issues, concerns, cultures and languages. The expansion of community radio is the result of the reduction of diversity of voices that accompany the formation of media conglomerates that is a fore runner of the globalization processes.
- Community Radio Sustainability is a global challenge. In spite of increasing positive experiences of socially sustainable community radio, financial and technological sustainability remain a challenge that often distract community radio practitioners from dedicating themselves to ameliorate radio production, increase community participation and pertinence of programming.
- Community radio faces important sustainability challenges regarding capacity building, and in enhancing local ownership.
- Knowledge sharing on best experiences across regions as well as increased use of new ICTs can make a difference.
- Community Radio Networks and knowledge sharing are weak. Even though community radio has become a global sector, interaction and exchange between regions is weak and systematic impact assessment within regions is rare.
- A multifaceted challenge for community radio is the need to strengthen its own country and regional networks and communications.
- There is a need to embed appropriate assessment tools, to document and disseminate good practice and to strengthen network development through institutional capacity building and communications

² <http://africa.amarc.org/index.php?p=amarcpublications>