Chapter 19:

Leveraging Partnerships to Close the Feedback Loop

(Excerpt from Part Four: Praxis in the Commonwealth)

Gail White, in Chapter 19, provides insights into the relationship between media and community partners in the case of Summer for All, a learning programme about HIV/AIDS developed in Upington, South Africa. While technical elements of the Summer for All programme were well handled by the radio station, whose station manager underwent an HIV test live on air (discussed in Chapter 9), engaging directly with members of the target audiences proved to be more successful under the leadership of the lead community partner — a finding that emphasises the need for improving models for collaboration. This mirrors some of the same matters raised by Prendergast (in Chapter 17) with respect to community programmes in Jamaica and Belize.

More information: www.col.org/LearningWithCM

COL’s Healthy Communities programme: www.col.org/HealthyCommunities

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Leveraging Partnerships to Close the Feedback Loop

Gail White

The *Noord Kaap Vigs Forum* (Northern Cape AIDS Forum, or NKVF) is a church-based non-governmental organisation (NGO) located in Upington, South Africa. Its core activities include counselling and home-based palliative care for people infected and affected by HIV and AIDS. It employs approximately 166 lay people who function as home-based caregivers in marginalised areas where patients cannot easily access the public health care system. The organisation is also supported by the provincial departments of Health and Social Development to assist with Food Provision programmes by providing daily meals to the elderly and the indigent at community centres. As part of their own HIV/AIDS prevention programmes, NKVF interacts with regular groups providing knowledge and information that could lead to behaviour change amongst the participants.

In 2009, NKVF joined a collaborative project to introduce a new educational programme about HIV/AIDS. The project was led by Radio Riverside, Upington's community radio station, in association with a national media development agency, the Media and Training Centre for Health (MTC), based in Cape Town in Western Cape province, with technical and funding assistance from the Commonwealth of Learning (COL).

NKVF lived up to its reputation as a credible and accountable partner, participating actively in programme design and staying on through the programme delivery stages. For NKVF educational communication, using radio represents an innovative way to interact with their clients, with less reliance on lay counsellors who may not necessarily have prior training or always be in a position to provide accurate and up-to-date information and advice.

*Summer for All* is a one-hour biweekly radio programme that was born of a participatory design process. After a period of one year, although the technical and pedagogical quality of the programme were both solid, a gap persisted between media producers and target learner-listeners,
making any monitoring or assessment of learning and behaviour-change outcomes or impact on community health difficult. To address the issue, MTC contracted NKVF to assist with the co-ordination of listening and discussion sessions among target learner groups, and to provide content development input to programme producers at the broadcaster, Radio Riverside.

With NKVF effectively leading *Summer for All*’s learner support activities, producers were more easily able to engage with community members and other experts, ensuring that messaging is relevant, sensitive, accurate and appropriate to the real needs of community learners; and MTC was assured regular reporting on the numbers of learners actively listening to the radio programmes and on observations about behaviour and social change.

Such a strategy of local stakeholder involvement not only assists with the implementation of the community learning model in its present format; it also bodes well for the future sustainability of the project, because partners clearly understand the paradigm shift from passive listening to active learning and will be able to continue the project with minimal support from external donor parties.

As well, the NKVF lobbies other civil society organisations to become involved in the community learning programme, thus further growing the numbers of learners in each site who are able to benefit from the intervention.
In addition to promoting active collaboration between media and community groups in designing and delivering programming, MTC conducted a baseline study at the outset of the project to find out the knowledge, attitudes and practices learners had related to HIV/AIDS. With that information, MTC then used a participatory message development method that ensured the overall programme design was relevant and appropriate given the needs of learners. The baseline survey, for example, identified stigma and discrimination as two key factors inhibiting people from undertaking voluntarily testing for HIV. The project’s mid-term evaluation revealed that the radio programmes have helped normalise HIV testing and dispelled the myth that only promiscuous people need regular checks.

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The **Media and Training Centre for Health** (MTC) was established in 1994 as an affiliate to the National Progressive Primary Health Care Network and has provided training to a majority of community radio stations in South Africa. MTC takes a collaborative approach to media development.

For further reference, see:

- Media and Training Centre for Health – [www.mtcforhealth.co.za](http://www.mtcforhealth.co.za)
- Northern Cape AIDS Forum (Afrikaans) – [www.upington.co.za/sub_links/social_services/noord_kap_vigs_forum](http://www.upington.co.za/sub_links/social_services/noord_kap_vigs_forum)
- Radio Riverside, Upington, South Africa – [www.radio-riverside.co.za](http://www.radio-riverside.co.za)

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13 The message matrix tool is part of a concise programme development approach. It was developed by Charles Simbi, Joke van Kampen and Gladson Makowa from Story Workshop for a programme design workshop in Mchinji district, Malawi, led by the Commonwealth of Learning (COL). See Chapter 16 in this publication for a full discussion of the message matrix.