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This book shares a wide range of experiences of community media, education and development groups in conceiving, designing, delivering and evaluating participatory communication programmes in developing countries of the Commonwealth and Latin America. It profiles educational participatory communication experiences from the perspective of facilitators and trainers, stakeholder individuals and groups, as well as participants.

COL and its partners welcome your feedback and involvement in our journey through this exciting and rapidly evolving field in participatory communication for education and development.

More information: www.col.org/LearningWithCM

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

Ian Pringle

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Linking communication, participation, education and development

Community media — whether conventional radio or video, or new online and digital media forms — are natural vehicles for participatory communication. Participatory communication is a process-oriented approach to communication in which learning, understanding and knowledge emerge through a two-way conversational model of communication. In contrast to more traditional one-way, top-down approaches, target audiences in community media must be central actors throughout any process of change.

As Freire suggests, there is a strong inherent connection between participatory dialogical communication and education, in particular adult and social constructivist approaches to education in which learning is understood to be active, contextual and full of social relationships. Although founded largely in the desire to overcome barriers of time and distance and expand the scale of education, the field of open and distance learning (ODL) is, by promoting self-directed learning and learner-centred educational models and approaches, a close relation.

This book shares a wide range of experiences of community media, education and development groups in conceiving, designing, delivering and evaluating participatory communication programmes in developing countries of the Commonwealth and Latin America. It profiles educational participatory communication experiences from the perspective of facilitators and trainers, stakeholder individuals and groups, as well as participants.

Why community media?

Based in local geographic areas or communities of interest, community media are accessible, in terms of production and use by citizens and in terms of the capabilities and costs involved. In other words, community media enable citizens to be meaningfully involved in the creation of media content: there are few barriers to listening or viewing content; the overall process of media management is relatively simple compared with that for other forms of media; and, relatively speaking, the costs of production and distribution are low.

Community media’s relative technical accessibility is combined with a stated mandate for socio-cultural development. The growth of community media, in regions such as South Asia and the Commonwealth countries of Africa, is based partly on the interest of governments and civil society groups in the explicit developmental orientation of community media — specifically, how these media contribute to social change and local development by giving citizens greater chance to participate in public life and to be empowered by opportunities to voice ideas, concerns and experience.

The field of community media is often framed by freedoms associated with free speech, expression and information. It has most famously been described as the voice of the voiceless. Expression and what Latin American scholars have long identified as the “right to communicate” are closely linked to the empowerment and agency of citizens, which underlie any type of participatory development. Literature about community media highlights the media’s role as local watchdog, which favours press functions, reporting and news in the service of keeping local government accountable.

Comparatively little has been written of community radio from an educational perspective, particularly as it concerns non-formal education. Education is typically discussed in reference to training and technical education for citizens (for example, in building communication skills for students or community volunteers) rather than in reference to public education through a broadcast medium.

This publication, Learning with Community Media, is part of a process that aims to help put education more squarely on the agenda of community media groups, and to put community media on the radar of education and developmental groups. Both offer the opportunity to launch new educational programmes as well as to promote a more participatory approach to learning.
People’s participation in educational media content is critical for relevance, both in terms of the problems identified and the solutions offered. Field-based interactions and interviews, such as the one pictured above in Mchinji district, Malawi, are an essential strategy if programme content is to reflect the lives of the target audience, in this case mothers.
Community media for development

The developmental or educational potential of community media is based on the combination of scale of potential listenership and the possibility of genuine participation of citizens within a specific cultural context. The movement is rooted in development communication which originated in the 1950s and 1960s with farm radio and school-on-the-air broadcasts, largely a top-down approach to knowledge transfer using media. It evolved towards a communication for development approach, in which knowledge and social change are understood to emerge from a two-way model of communication through dialogue with different stakeholders in the development process.

In this context, the idea of community media developed as an accessible, open space for widespread communication at the community level, and it is in this sense that it is often described as “giving voice to the voiceless.” Its real significance as a means for education lies in its emphasis on people’s participation in communication.

Recognising the challenges as well as the benefits

The natural association between community media and participatory communication does not, however, mean that participatory communication programming is easy to do for community media or other district-based groups, or that participatory communication practices among community media are necessarily widespread.

This book shares stories of participatory communication and learning programmes by community-based media and development groups, bringing together experiences from developing areas of the Commonwealth with those of Latin America. Chapters address different themes and challenges faced by community media, including how to involve communities in ways that result in meaningful participation, what makes for compelling programming, and how to integrate mobile devices and telephony to engage audiences.

In addition to its strengths and potential, the bottom-up approach to development communication suggested by community media has limitations and challenges. Running media at the community level raises problems associated with human resource capacity and know-how across a range of knowledge and skills areas. These challenges range from programme design and field-based production to collaboration among groups at the local level and mobilisation of the resources necessary to sustain programming in difficult (often dire) financial circumstances.
Challenges persist in part because the criteria for success are still unclear. The case for community media as a viable, effective vehicle to support learning for development continues to be lacking insofar as convincing partners — from public, civil society and private spheres — to invest. Even where community radio has been used effectively for community learning, many institutions responsible for local education and development are not sufficiently motivated to get involved in participation communication and learning strategies.

Innovative, low-cost solutions are needed — ones that ensure quality throughout the learning process — if participatory approaches to non-formal ODL are to be popularised. Ironically, while quality educational programming may in fact be a net contributor to the sustainability of radio stations, in the short run it is difficult for stations to devote time to building the requisite know-how and partnerships that enable this sort of programming.

It is our hope that the chapters that follow go some distance in addressing these issues, mitigating some of the challenge; and that they make a meaningful contribution to advancing community media, participatory communication and ODL.

How this book is organised

*Learning with Community Media* is divided into five parts made up of four or more chapters.

**Part One: The Educational Potential of Community Media**

This first section of the book touches on key themes that provide an overview of the educational potential of community media, including experiences that cover the spectrum of formal, non-formal and informal education.

Kevin Perkins’ chapter (1) gets to the heart of a key question confronting community radio advocates: the generally poor evidence of impact of educational communication. He presents compelling results from a large-scale study of participatory radio campaigns conducted in Sub-Saharan Africa to increase knowledge and promote the uptake of agricultural innovations. In the process, he also addresses the criteria for quality and success: learning and change outcomes and cost.

Amalia Jiménez Gallan’s chapter (2) on the background and experience of community radio in post-conflict Guatemala represents a strong current in the Latin American experience of community media — namely, the role of communication (in this case, community radio
stations broadcasting in local languages) in linking post-colonial, often post-conflict realities to traditional cultural and spiritual guides and revaluing indigenous world views, what Jiménez calls the *cosmovision*. She emphasises the importance of communication that is rooted in culture, a theme that comes up again in Rezaul Haque’s chapter (5) on traditional cultural forms and, indeed, through the stories that follow in Part Two.

In Chapter 3, Carlos Manuel Araña traces the history of educational communication in Venezuela through the work of the Faith and Joy Radio Institute (IRFA). Araña takes readers through different ages of IRFA over the course of 30 years, from work guided by the slogan “every house is a school,” in which the radio extended the classroom into students’ homes, to a social constructivist approach informed by students’ prior knowledge and experience, and on to the present day, which finds IRFA in a quest for a new 2.0 model that targets youth, mostly girls and youth women, and aims to support technical and vocational education.

In “That Wave Is for Sure” (Chapter 4), Edgard Patrício introduces the radio-schools of Brazil. In contrast to IRFA’s early work in taking the classroom to the home using radio, Catavento, an educational communication organisation in northeastern Brazil, has brought the radio to the classroom and the school. Each radio-school functions as a joint school-community workshop space to develop practical communication skills among teachers and students. Through both face-to-face interactions and radio broadcasting, the whole community learns.

Rezaul Haque in Chapter 5 illustrates the importance of cultural context and traditional communication forms through the work of Rupantar with three different cultural media formats. Rupantar is a development communication organisation in Bangladesh that works with traditional cultural forms as development communication tools and is now exploring the use of community radio, which was sanctioned by the government of Bangladesh in 2010. Haque suggests that community broadcasters look to traditional cultural forms, such as theatre, the visual and performing arts, and even more contemporary popular print publications, to inform models and approaches to non-formal education and local, community media.
Part Two: Stories of Learning

“Smart people learn from experience. Smarter people learn from other people’s experience.”

Part Two shows the power of stories by sharing stories — of listeners, citizen-producers and producer-citizens. Experience packaged in stories, those illustrated through interviews with community stakeholders and those shown through drama and other cultural forms, help ensure that learning content is contextually appropriate and linked to people’s everyday lives. Taking these experience-based stories to community media, through serials and magazine programmes, enables the exchange of other people’s experience across communities, often at a significant scale.

Joke van Kampen’s chapter (6) takes readers for a ride on airwaves of local FM stations into the villages of Malawi. Through a series of micro-stories, community media are shown to be megaphones for storytelling about real problems faced by ordinary people and role models and actual solutions gained across the different stages of behavioural and social change. The stories featured on community learning programmes airing on local broadcasters could be listeners’ own. These are stories that are real, inspiring and empowering, with key messages that are understandable and doable.

“From Public Speaking to Community Broadcasting” (Chapter 7), written by a Guatemalan women’s collective, describes women’s own journeys and those of their communities. In the process, it shows the power of community radio as a tool for the emancipation of women in Guatemala, a way for them to find and channel their voices and their experiences of the long civil conflict and unrest and the discrimination they face as indigenous women. The radio enables them to disrupt negative conventions and exert their social leadership in public-community space.

In Chapter 8, Mónica Valdés introduces us to Martha Calderón and traces her journey from the kitchen to the radio studio in the town of Belén de los Andaquíes in Colombia. Martha transforms from a nagging citizen, who uses the local radio station as a forum to vent her frustrations with local citizens’ attitudes and behaviour, into a social communicator and a focal point for dialogue in the community through her very own programme, which becomes a vehicle for informal learning and community participation.

Gail White tells the story in Chapter 9 of Thabang Pusoyabone, station manager from Radio Riverside in Upington, South Africa, taking an HIV test live on-air as part of a community learning programme. The story

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2 A saying of her grandmother’s, related by Simone Simpson in a programme development workshop at Roots FM in Kingston, Jamaica, in November 2010.
demonstrates the importance of formative research and the power of role modeling, especially when it is combined with live broadcast and real-time online media.

**Part Three: Praxis in Latin America**

“Praxis” means theory put into practice. Freire called it “reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it.” It is precisely what community media and their local partners do in developing and running participatory communication programmes such as those examined in this publication, helping us to understand what participation means in specific social contents and how it is achieved, as well as offering insights into its significance for communication, education and development.

The five chapters in Part Three, each from a different country in Latin America, emphasise: the centrality of popular and engaging formats, exemplified by the edu-entertainment approach adopted by so many practitioners; the importance of blended approaches, including print and face-to-face mobilisation; and the role of online, mobile and social media in reinforcing and complementing community-based broadcasting. The relative maturity of Latin America’s experience of participatory communication and community media is evident in the co-ordination and networking, often at a national level, among individual communities and communication initiatives.

In Chapter 10, Kenia Regina Sanchez Ford profiles DKY FM, or *de Calle FM* (Of the Street FM), which broadcasts simultaneously on five community FM stations in Nicaragua and online. The programme uses a popular media approach, combining education and entertainment, with evidence indicating that little by little DKY FM is modifying attitudes, changing behaviours and improving adolescents’ and youths' interpersonal communication skills. The result is more dialogue concerning women’s rights and autonomy, HIV/AIDS, sexual diversity and gender violence. In addition to radio, DKY uses Facebook and short message service (SMS) texting, as well as face-to-face networking in listening communities.

João Paulo Malerba chronicles, in Chapter 11, the work of CRIAR Brasil in developing a network of social communicators and community radio stations to combat violence against women. Broadcasters are trained as social communicators in order to engage local communities. The resulting discussions inform the design of learning materials, including series of short audio spots, radio drama serials and magazine programmes broadcast on more than 100 community radio stations. At the heart of the participatory process is consultation with concerned communities in order to inform decision-making about programme content, and
community dialogue facilitated through media broadcasting, which in turn underlies a constructivist approach to learning and the use of stories as a pedagogical tool.

In Chapter 12, Maria Ilse Andrade shares the experience of Colombia’s Júraco groups in running Minga of the Sun, a project that grew out of the establishment of neighbourhood communication collectives to become open workshop spaces for children and youth to learn about and use media. The children create micro-programmes that are broadcast on community stations. In the process, they develop a range of communication skills and at the same time animate a space of dialogue among other children and youth and with the wider community about their lives, rights and the natural environment.

In “Joining the Dots” (13), Javier Ampuero Albarracín shares the experience of PCI Media’s My Community, a long-running series in Latin America of edu-entertainment programmes (which use radio drama, magazines and face-to-face mobilisation in schools and community spaces). Ampuero Albarracín highlights the case of Aquí no pasa nada (Nothing Happens Here), an educational programme about youth sexuality, linked to a network of 21 organisations working in HIV/AIDS in Peru. In the process, he points to the stories and relationships as being the real substance of communication and shows how drama mixed with discussion can be an appropriate and effective format to bring those to life within an education- and change-oriented context.

In writing about The Paths of Life, a radio serial about six young people who make a living on the land in a small rural community in Mexico, Eloisa Diez emphasises the importance of “starting your walk with listeners well before the stage of content creation”; and of working to close the gap between teacher and student, producer and listener (Chapter 14). Alongside the intrinsic value of the communication skills gained by the children involved, she says, is the function of drama in self-identification, self-reflection and learning overall.

**Part Four: Praxis in the Commonwealth**

Many of the chapters about praxis from the Commonwealth are based on presentations made during a seminar, “Learning from Community Media,” which was held jointly with UNESCO as part of the Sixth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, in Kochi, India, in November 2010. There the idea for this book was germinated. The chapters in Part Four examine strategies for enabling participation, experiences of collaboration at the local level, and the importance of assessing programme outcomes.
In “Stories from the Bag of Life” (Chapter 15), Gladson Makowa, in an interview, shares his experience with the process of designing and operationalising a participatory learning programme about maternal and child health in Malawi. Makowa analyses what it is that makes *Phukusi la Moyo* (Bag of Life) a participatory communication programme. He focuses on the design process through which the programme was created, highlighting the participation of women, especially pregnant women and new mothers, in making decisions about the programme.

A follow-up interview with Charles Simbi, Makowa’s colleague who was also part of the team that facilitated the initial development workshop for *Phukusi la Moyo*, looks in detail at the design process of the programme. The chapter (16) focuses on the message matrix tool that Simbi and the team from Story Workshop developed to engage in the development of the programme both representatives of the target audience (women, especially mothers and their families) and key stakeholder groups (including the district health office, a maternal and child health project and the community radio station).

Patrick Prendergast of the Caribbean Institute for Media and Communication looks at the key issue of partnerships and collaboration in participatory communication programming and community media (Chapter 17). He identifies the key constituencies associated with learning programmes in Jamaica and Belize and discusses different configurations and how they have changed in the course of training and programme design and delivery.

In Chapter 18, a companion piece to Prendergast’s, Rosamond Brown, also with the Caribbean Institute for Media and Communication, considers the effect of different partnership configurations in Jamaica and Belize on participation by members of the community. She also looks at how participation is enabled through the message matrix, a tool described by Charles Simbi in Chapter 16, and through storytelling.

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.
In his chapter, “Pausing to Plan at Kumaon Vani” (20), Ram Bhat provides a snapshot of working with a community radio group in Uttarakhand, India, to develop strategies and tools for use in planning ways to monitor and assess community radio initiatives. This assessment is necessary in terms of understanding whether specific expectations are being met (for example, the number of people participating in particular programmes), as well as of determining whether expected impacts — notably, changes in the community — are being achieved.

**Part Five: Tools for Integrating Mobile Devices and Telephony**

The educational and developmental potential resulting when broadcast media is combined with mobile telephone devices is increasingly the focus of a high level of interest from community media groups. The final section of this book therefore looks at how broadcasters and other community-based groups can make use of the voice and text functions of mobile telephones across different aspects of educational programming, including content provision, programme logistics and learner support.

In Chapter 21, Bart Sullivan shares a case study of Freedom Fone, an open source tool for telephones using interactive voice response (IVR) menus to make content available to callers. Although Freedom Fone can be used by anyone with a dedicated computer, a special modem and mobile phone number, the focus of Sullivan’s study is the use of Freedom Fone by radio broadcasters as a way of complementing and extending communications, particularly feedback from listeners.

The two chapters by Zahir Koradia (22 and 23) look at different technical systems that are designed for mobile telephones but also have promise for radio broadcasters and other community media. Chapter 22 compares four different tools — Frontline SMS, Freedom Fone, GRINS and vChannel — based on what they can and cannot do and what applications each has for 1) learning materials, 2) learner support, 3) programme logistics and 4) feedback and evaluation. In Chapter 23, Koradia provides a detailed look at GRINS, a solution developed for community broadcasters by a small IT group in India. He describes how it facilitates increased community participation in programming using mobile telephony while at the same time helps streamline production and broadcast systems and reduce the demand on human resources.

In the last chapter of the book (24), Gail White shares the experience of South Africa’s Media and Training Centre for Health in introducing strategies to use mobile telephones as part of community learning programmes. She specifically discusses the use of mobile telephones as a way to: identify learners and, where possible, get feedback from them;
link learners to other learning channels (for example, social networking sites); and access further content, as demonstrated by the production of an inexpensive cellbook about HIV/AIDS.

**Community media as part of Healthy Communities**

Learning with Community Media is part of the ongoing Healthy Communities initiative of the Commonwealth of Learning. The aim of the initiative is to facilitate more and better participatory learning opportunities at the local level using community media and other communication channels. Strategies include helping community broadcasters and local development and education stakeholders build capacity through efforts such as: collaborative management and gender integration; community learning demonstration projects and applied research; advocacy with practitioners and policy- and other decision-makers; and knowledge-sharing between and among Commonwealth groups and their counterparts in the other regions of the world.

COL and its partners welcome your feedback and involvement in our journey through this exciting and rapidly evolving field in participatory communication for education and development.