Foreword
Acknowledgements

(Excerpt from the book)

This resource provides readers with fresh insights into the practice of participatory educational communication using community media, particularly radio and increasingly mobile devices. It shares a range of examples from the Commonwealth and Latin America as part of an ongoing exchange and collaboration. Those from the Commonwealth are drawn from COL’s network of partners, while those from Latin America were selected by the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters for Latin America and the Caribbean.

We are delighted to be able to showcase and support the capacity building in community media in its very important role in the field of “learning for development.”

Asha Kanwar
President & CEO, Commonwealth of Learning

More information: www.col.org/LearningWithCM

COL’s Healthy Communities programme: www.col.org/HealthyCommunities
If we are to achieve *Education for All*, there is little doubt that countries and communities alike must utilise all the means at their disposal to expand the scale and increase the quality of learning opportunities. Conventional educational institutions will need to be supplemented and complemented by open schools, distance learning centres and various community media and technology facilities.

The nature of community media as local communication platforms, characterised by the type of local issues covered and the priority assigned to the involvement of local stakeholders, warrants a special place in educational and development programming. Community media operate in indigenous languages, are firmly rooted in specific cultural contexts, and draw on local human resources, both as content creators and subject *experts*.

Community media in the developing countries of the Commonwealth also represent a largely untapped resource for educational communication and development support. In order to address collective development goals and to meet the aspirations of communities the world over — for example, livelihoods for youth and improved maternal and child health — all development stakeholders must leverage the power of this unique type of communication.

Community media perform two important functions in relation to communication for development:

1. Community media reach large audiences in specific geographic and cultural-linguistic contexts, often in remote areas largely unserved by other media and lacking in other infrastructure.

2. Much more so than national broadcasts and international online media, the participation of local populations in determining the most appropriate content and formats is a critically important element of their character.

Along with national governments and other international and national stakeholders, COL recognises that in many regions community media have a long way to go in realising their full potential, and that there are significant and particular gaps in available capacity. For example, programme design methods, engaging listeners and community stakeholders, and the measurement of results often need improvement.
As community-based organisations, community media face major challenges in achieving self-reliance and sustainability.

The experiences detailed in this publication tell us at least two important things:

1. The models and principles of open and distance learning have great relevance in media-based non-formal learning for development; for example, the need for collaboration between media producers and subject experts, the value of blended approaches, the importance of assessment and the need for quality assurance.

2. Although designing and delivering educational programmes is challenging and requires financial, human and technical resources, content that addresses the real needs of local populations increases the degree of participation and ownership by community stakeholders, builds social capital and contributes directly and indirectly to social and financial sustainability.

The extensive presence of community radio in developing countries such as Cameroon, Mozambique and South Africa, the growth of the medium in populous nations such as Bangladesh, India and Nigeria, as well as its great potential in the islands states of the Caribbean and the Pacific, make it an important area of research, innovation and exchange of good practices, a need which this book addresses.

Community media is in large part about dialogue — between and among citizens and groups from civil society, public and private sectors. Aptly, this publication is also a space of dialogue, bringing together experiences from the Commonwealth and those from Latin America, the cradle of community radio and certainly where it has found one of its most impressive expressions.

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Acknowledgements

This publication emerged from advocacy work done by the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) and its many partners during 2010/11. These efforts centred on the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters’ Tenth Assembly (AMARC10), which took place in November 2010 in Argentina, and the Sixth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF7), also held in November 2010, in India.

Both these important events highlighted the role of community radio and other media in enabling education, formal and non-formal, with a special emphasis on the exchange of good practices among the Commonwealth, Latin America and other regions of the world where community broadcasting has developed as a platform for learning.

*Learning with Community Media* is the result of a year-long collaboration between COL and the AMARC chapter for Latin America and the Caribbean (AMARC-ALC). This publication would not have been possible without the generous contributions of time, effort and expertise by Mónica Valdés, Colombian journalist and anthropologist and the Training Officer for AMARC-ALC, as well as the support of Carlos Rivadeneyra Olcese, Regional Co-ordinator of AMARC-ALC, based in Peru. We are also indebted to AMARC’s international secretariat in Montreal, especially to Marcelo Solervicens for his help in bringing AMARC and COL together.

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*Ian Pringle for the Commonwealth of Learning*

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