Analysis of Frameworks for Management and Sustenance of Community Radio in Nigeria

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Abstract

Community radio is relatively new in Nigeria. Issues of its peculiar management and operations require careful attention. This area has not sufficiently been addressed. This study developed a basic conceptual structure that underscores the management and sustainability of community radio in Nigeria. Three dimensional frameworks for management and sustenance of community radio in Nigeria were identified: social sustainability, institutional sustainability and financial sustainability. The work was anchored on the development media theory which emphasises use of the mass media for national development. The organizational life cycle theory also reinforced the theoretical premise. A good number of management principles and dimensions of sustainability identified by development communication scholars were highlighted. The study recommends that the existing bureaucracies in the management of community radio stations in the country be revised to guaranty easy participation of community members in making decisions on issues and programmes of community radio. For proper funding, the National Broadcasting Commission by way of policy reforms should allow community radio stations to access advertising income. To control the boundary between sustainability and editorial independence, management of community radio stations in Nigeria have the duty to ensure that community radio is not hijacked by sponsors and advertisers.

Key words: Framework, Management, Sustainability, Community and Community Radio

Introduction

Community or rural radio holds great potentials for measurable and participatory community development. It constitutes the third tier of a three-tier structure of radio broadcasting. Alumuku (2006) holds that the concept of community radio is best understood against the background of other forms of broadcasting namely: public service broadcasting and commercial or private broadcasting. While public service refers to media services provided by a statutory body usually state-funded but publicly owned, commercial broadcasting on the other hand provides programmes designed primarily for profit from advertising revenue and is owned and controlled by private individuals or by commercial enterprise. The third tier of broadcast ownership and operation is community radio which the Nigeria Community Radio Stakeholders Charter (2005) sees as a medium which is for, by and about the community whose ownership and management is representative of the community, which pursue a social development agenda and which is non-profit.

Community radio remains a useful communication tool for meeting the information and development needs of people at the grassroots. Thus, Kasoma (2002:23) notes that community radio is "a system of radio broadcasting whereby a community establishes, operates and manages a radio station for the ultimate objective of meeting the communication need of its members".

Despite the development imperative of community radio, its management is undeniably confronted by some challenges, the greatest being sustainability. The absence of a well-articulated strategy to guarantee the financial viability of community radio towards a sustainable daily operation constitutes a major challenge. Da Costa (2012) asserts that sustainability remains a big challenge in the African Media landscape. Evidence, according to him, suggests that community radio stations are not yet sustainable. Sustainability is important as it determines whether a station can stay alive and continue to operate or not. The frameworks for management and sustainability of community radio stations as articulated in this paper would provide a background from which to develop tools and methods for identifying and understanding issues that affect community radio performance and life span.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

Management

Management of community radio is normally predicated on grassroots participation in policy formulation and implementation as well as programming functions. According to Kasoma (2002, p. 49):

> The management of a community radio station should be based on the principle of making it easy for members of the community to participate in making decisions. There should, therefore, be representative management which enables every member of the community to have some influence over the management of the station.

This implies that a proper understanding of representative management should begin with a clear delineation of a community and its components. In the Nigeria context, a community could be a group of villages, a district, a group of streets in an urban or sub-urban neighbourhood, a group of hamlets, or any other such grouping acceptable to members of the community. There should be a unifying factor that brings the members together because geographical proximity alone may not be an adequate defining characteristic. However, irrespective of how the community is delineated, its constituent members should be properly represented on the management of the station to qualify as a community radio. The premise of the need for inclusiveness in the management of community radio is that the concept of community radio itself is fundamentally designed to be a participatory and development medium of public communication.

Sustainability

Fairbairn (2001) cited in Tavhiso (2009, p. 57) views sustainability as "the capacity of a station to manage a range of available resources to sustain its service to the community without compromising its community service mission". The resources are identified as skills, ideas, labour, donations and organizational support from the community. Resources may also include

energy, efficiency, flexibility and planning. The implication is that the community constitutes the richest resource to sustaining community radio stations. Mobilizing the right kind of resources is important. Sustainability therefore, is a set of activities that enable community media mobilize the right kind of resources to meet community needs as they emerge and to manage them efficiently over time.

Community Radio:

Several descriptions of community radio abound. What is important is that some principles and characteristics of community radio clearly differentiate it from other broadcast media. These characteristics which are: 'community-based', 'participatory', 'community service', 'not-for-profit', and 'independent' (Girard, 2007; Fairbairn, 2009), form the pillars of community broadcasting. Da Costa (2012) adds 'developmental purpose' and 'non-partisan funding' to the list. From these descriptions of community radio, is it obvious that community radio must be built on popular ownership and non-profit foundation as opposed the values of government or commercial radio stations.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Democratic-Participant Media Theory

The Democratic-Participant Media Theory is the second theory that Dennis McQuail (1987) brought into the fold of the normative press theories, the other said to be the development media theory (Anaeto, Onabajo and Osifeso, 2008). According to Folarin (1998), the main thrust of democratic-participant media theory lies in its insistence that the existing bureaucracy as well as the commercial and professional hegemony in media systems be broken down, so as to guarantee easier media access for all potential users and consumers. McQuail (1983:122) also notes that:

> The central point of a democratic-participant theory lies with needs, interests and aspirations of the active receiver in a political society. It has to do with the right to relevant information, the right to answer back, the right to use the means of communication for interaction in small-scale setting of community, interest group, sub-culture.

The above key tenet of the theory shows that it is a reaction against some manifest media practices especially the pattern of information flow. McQuail (1983) confirms this when he said that the theory has arisen both as a reaction against other theory and actual experience and as a positive move towards new forms of media institutions. Specifically, McQuail (1983:122) states that the democratic-participant media theory is:

a) A reaction against the commercialisation and monopolisation of the privately owned media and against the centralism and bureaucratization of public broadcasting institutions, established according to the norm of social responsibility.
b) A sense of disillusionment with established political parties and with a system of parliamentary democracy which has seem to become detached from its grass-roots origins, to impede rather than facilitate involvement in political and social life.
c) A reaction against a "mass society" which is over-organised, over-centralised and fails to offer realistic opportunities for individual and minority expression; a

rejection of the necessity of uniform, centralised, high-cost, highly professionalised, neutralised, state-controlled media.

d) A reaction against public broadcast organisation for being too elitist, too susceptible to the whims and caprices of those in government, too rigid in structure and too slavish to professional ideals, even those ideals that tend to hinder social responsibility (Folarin 1998:30).

This view shows that the democratic-participant media theory is concerned with the democratisation of communication. It favours horizontal communication which is interactive and participatory in nature. Moemeka (2000, p. 17) states that:

> The theory strongly supports unrestrained opportunities for access to and participation in media activities to rural and sub-urban citizens on terms set by these receivers rather than on those set by editors or proprietors or even by government. Hence, it requires the establishment of local media for each community, and believes that it is such media that can raise the people's aspiration to self-actualisation and grassroots development. The assumption is that the gauge for measuring real development should be the level or the standard of living of the underprivileged.

The relevance of this theory to this paper therefore, lies principally on its call for decentralisation of the communication media. This is particularly important in Nigeria where the principle of radio broadcasting is still largely trapped in the philosophies of state and commercial order. Hence, the voices of the citizens of rural communities to achieve expression is mostly denied. This situation clearly justifies the need for a sustainable community radio sector to facilitate the agenda for overall development in Nigeria.

Organizational Life Cycle Theory

The theory of organizational life cycle explains that in different stages of an organization life cycle, firms such as community radio exhibit varying behavours in order to remain sustainable in the market. Adopted from biological sciences, organizational researchers, began to apply the notion of life cycle of organizational development from birth to death (Penrose, 1952; Haire, 1959). The theory posits that an organization move through different stages from inception to death (Dodge, Fullerton and Robbins 1994; Hanks and Chandler, 1994; Mintzberg, 1984). The four most common overlapping stages of organization's life cycle: inception, emerging growth, maturity and decline or revival (Baird and Meshoulam, 1988; Jawahar and McLaughlin, 2001). A range of measures and techniques have been developed to categorize firms into their proper life cycle stage, but three common indicators are age, size, and growth (Rutherford, Buller and McMallen, 2003). This implies that emerging community radio stations in Nigeria experiencing high growth rates would be classified in early stage of the life cycle while older, larger and slower-growing stations or firms can be classified in maturity stage.

Empirical studies have supported the proposition that in different stages of an organization life cycle, firms exhibit varying behaviours. For example, Koburg, Uhlenbruck and Sarason (1996) found that more mature organizations such as the mainstream broadcast media were less innovative because their formal structures and centralization inhibited interaction with other environments like the poor rural communities in Nigeria. Since mature organizations are more inward looking, they may be less attuned to trends and opportunities especially the need to serve the poor and marginalized rural communities with relevant information that can facilitate

development. Rutherford, Buller and McMullen (2003) also found that more mature organizations, less pressured with start-up and growth concerns, attribute greater importance to equal employment opportunities (EEO) in order for organizations to remain stable and sustainable in the competitive market.

This theory adequately supports this paper as the knowledge of a community radio's present position and stage of development can help its managers in understanding the relationship between organizational life cycle, competitive strategy and fulfillment of the goals of community broadcasting.

Community Radio Initiative in Nigeria

The struggle for community broadcasting started in early 2000 by community radio advocates led by Alfred Opubor, the first Professor of communication in Nigeria and Akin Akingbulu, Executive Director of the Institute for Media and Society who later became the Coordinator, Nigeria Community Radio Coalition (NCRC). Despite the advocacy for the development of community radio in Nigeria, successive governments remained adamant to develop and implement appropriate policy and legislation for the operation of community radio. This is against the reality that Nigeria has enormous governance and development challenges which the operation of community radio will help to address. All other countries in the west African Sub-region have for long commenced community radio broadcasting. Niger Republic has 98 community radio, Mali has 88, Senegal has 14, Burkina Faso has 33, Guinea-Bissau has 14 while Ghana has 15 with well-articulated frameworks for their operations In all these countries of the region, development experts are crediting rural empowerment to the power of radio especially at the community level (Nigeria Community Radio Stakeholders Charter, 2005, Pate, 2008).

The advocacy for the establishment of community radio in Nigeria could not yield any significant result until May, 2015 when the Jonathan administration through the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) approved 17 provisional community broadcast licences to community development organizations across the six geo-political zones of Nigeria (Olufemi, 2015, Garba, 2015). Out of the 17 beneficiaries, South-West got four (4), North-West, North-Central, South-East and South-South had three (3) each while North East got one (1).

According to Garba (2015), the licensees in the North-West are Dawanau Market Development Association, Dawakin-Tofa Local Council, Kano State; Bayintntrung Community Development Association, Zango-Kataf Local Council, Kaduna State and Bright Capacity Initiatives Community Enhancement, Gwandu, Kebbi State.

In North-Central, the beneficiaries are Agba Community Radio Initiative, Oju Local Council, Benue State; Isin Community Radio Initiative, Irepodun Local Council, Kwara State and lavun Radio Awareness Initiative, Kutigi, Niger State.

For North-East, only Gelengu Community Development Association, Balanga Local Council, Gombe State, got the license. The community based associations from other regions in Nigeria that got approval for community radio broadcasting include:

South-East: Owerre-Nkwoji Town Union, Nkwere Local Council, Imo State; Uroshi Community Association, Igbo Eze North Local Council, Enugu State and Michael Okpara University, Umudike, Abia State.

South-West: EjuleNen Development Association, Okitipupa Local Council, Ondo State; Iwoye-Ketu Community Foundation, Ondo State; Integrated Community Initiative Centre, Ogijo, Ogun State.

South South: Feefeelo Information and Resource Centre, Gokana Local Council, Rivers State; Amassoma Information and Resource Centre, Southern Ijaw Local Council, Bayelsa State and Otuoke Community, Ogbia Local Council, Bayelsa State.

In giving effect to the NBC approval, some of the above licensed stations have since commenced operations. For example, Agba Community Radio Initiative in Oju Local Government Area of Benue State commenced broadcasting with its community radio station, Choice FM, 93.3 on 23rd December, 2016 and has remained on air. Even though there is a compelling need for government to embark on relevant legal reforms in favour of community radio in Nigeria, another major concern now is to ensure effective management and sustainability of the stations in line with global best practices.

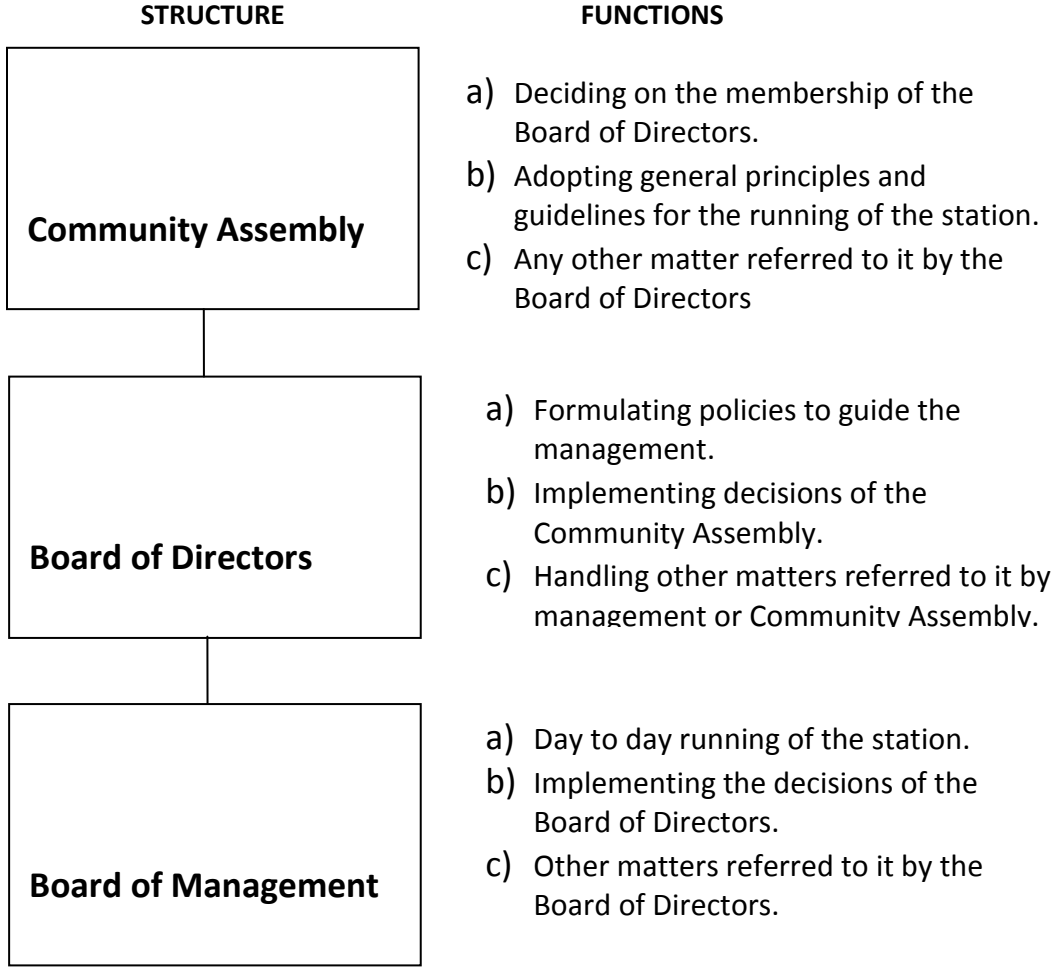
Framework for the Management of Community Radio in Nigeria

The participation of community members in the day to day running of community radio, conceptualization of programme ideas, packing and dissemination to target audience are basic conceptual structures that underscore effective management and operation of community radio. According to Asemah (2013:318), "since the community radio station is the type that is owned and managed by the rural people, the station's policies, management and programming must be the responsibility of the community". However, it is recognised that the whole community cannot be involved in the station management all the time hence, some sort of management body needs to be formed that represents the different sectors in the community. In doing this, Fraser and Restrepo-Estrada (2001, p. 51) state that:

> In many cases, a community media committee is created to assume the management role. Whatever the body is called, its members must realize that they are accountable to the community at large and to the particular sector they represent. Their decisions regarding the running of the station and its programming must be democratic and transparent.

The model below as developed by Enemaku (2003, p.132) provides a useful guide to community radio stations in Nigeria on the idea of what constitutes the structure:

Fig 1: Management Structure of a Community Radio Station



Source: Enemaku (2003:132)

While the Community Assembly is open to all of the community, the Board of Directors according Enemaku (2003) is usually made up of people elected at the Community Assembly for that purpose. The number of people to serve on the board as well as the mode of election should be a prerogative of the Community Assembly, but where necessary, professional advice should be sought. Members of the Board of Directors need not be experts, but the presence of experts on the board could help provide valuable information, guidance and direction. But as much as possible, membership should reflect a broad range of interests and diversities in the community so that marginalization will not set in. The Board should be changed periodically to reflect changing needs and also to prevent some of the Board members becoming tin gods.

It is essential to recruit professionals possibly as volunteers to manage the community radio station. These professionals would include broadcasters, broadcast engineers, marketers and others whose knowledge, skills and experience would be required in managing the station. The local people must however be actively involved and be trained for eventual take-over of the management.

Framework for Sustainability of Community Radio

Until recently, the idea of sustainability of community radio was narrowed to financial sustainability, considered fundamental to the survival of community radio. Sustainability, however, over time, has been seen to be a much broader and more complex concept that is not limited to just the financial capacity of a community radio station (Lush &Urgoiti, 2011). It addresses a whole range of issues which Gumucio-Dagron (2001) has wrapped up in three parts namely: social sustainability, institutional sustainability and financial sustainability. Jallov (2007) shares this view and has described sustainability a little differently. She also identifies three components of sustainability as: Social sustainability, organizational sustainability and financial sustainability.

In this paper, the three dimensions of sustainability as identified by Gumucio-Dagron (2001) and Jallov (2007) constitute our framework for sustainability of community radio and they are discussed in relation to effective community radio broadcasting thus:

Social Sustainability: Social Sustainability is of utmost importance to community radio stations. It involves community ownership of the station and community participation in production and airing of programmes at both decision and operational levels. Jallov (2007) describes it as ownership of institutions, processes and ideas, development of local content, language, as well as local culture and relevance. Only through participation can a community achieve ownership of community radio. Consequently, only communities that have 'owned' a communication process can make it socially sustainable (Da Costa, 2012). A socially sustainable station therefore is that station that depends on community members in programming and other activities of the station. It also involves members in decision making processes.

The second framework for sustainability of community radio is **Institutional Sustainability**. Institutional sustainability as identified by Gumucio-Dagron (2001) relates to the station's policies; democratic processes; management styles; internal relations and practices, and partnerships with external agencies. In Jallov (2007) concept of institutional sustainability, we find issues of management and supervisory bodies, appropriate technologies, appropriate democratic structure, training and participation, and belonging to relevant networks. This is the level of policy making. Policies here may or may not support a sustainable community radio. An institutionally sustainable community radio encourages participatory decision making processes, transparency and transfer of knowledge to those with less experience in broadcasting.

The Third category, **financial sustainability** relates to the station's model for generating revenue and how its funds are managed and accounted for. Jallov's financial sustainability includes the development of realistic budgets, identifying local, national and international funding opportunities and determining the desired funding mix. According to her, "these elements of building up a radio contribute to, detract from, sustainability - from the way you organize your community around your radio to the involvement by community producers and so on "(Jallov, 2012:141). In more specific terms, financial sustainability relates to the station's ability to meet operating costs, including ability to pay staff, maintain equipment, train staff and develop programmes. To achieve this, community radio stations must be able to mobilize resources from external donor agencies as well as from the communities they serve.

All the three dimensions of sustainability are interrelated and impact on each other. It is a holistic approach to addressing the sustainability and funding problems of community stations. Communities must make conscious effort at building their stations on this framework if they must succeed in their mission.

Funding Sources for Community Radio Stations

Funding is an aspect of financial sustainability and comes with its problems. Money is often the concern of community radio stations. Stations are often so concerned that they become distracted from achieving other tasks. However, this does not have to be if the roles of social and institutional sustainability are well understood.

Usually community radio stations are funded from diverse sources such as grants, sponsorships, donations, advertising and government support (in some cases). The story is not the same for all stations. Tavhiso (2009) describes some funding models recommended by Banda and Fourie (2004). The scholars proposed mechanisms through which a community radio support fund (CRSF) could be financed within the institutional framework. Their proposal includes:

- Support from Government Subventions;
- Percentage of any sponsorship and/or advert revenue accruing to the community radio should be targeted;
- Community levy to be charged on every private business firm operating in the community (as a beneficiary of that community's broadcasting service);
- Donations from a number of aid agencies such as UNESCO, to be used as a legitimate source of financing for community radio broadcasting
- Where community radio stations do not carry advertisements, a tax on advertisements from mainstream radio is advocated and which should be kept as a fund to support community radio.

In addition to these, other ways of raising funds for community radio stations which have been suggested (Ojebode, 2009) include:

- **Contributions from community members in the forms of membership dues and donations**: To demonstrate commitment and ownership of community radio stations, community members could pay some fee as may be agreed upon by the community radio committee. Communities need to know that they could do more to sustain their stations.
- **Donations/Grants from External donors**: Where a community is so poor that she can contribute very littleto the financial sustainability of her radio station, that community station needs to look elsewhere for bigger sources of funds. This is where grants come in. Grants, which are major sources of funding, come in from organizations that identify with the vision and goals of community radio stations. Support from donors is usually time bound, and donors are in interested in results. Accountability is also required as mismanagement of funds may have dire consequences for the station.
- **Local fundraising**: A community radio station could decide to organize local fundraising events to keep the station alive and service the community. How this is done will depend on individual communities and their peculiarities.

Again, Tachi and Price – Davies (2001) in Kombol and Ogi (2013) identified a relevant funding model for community radio as practiced in France which is called, **Tax on advertising.** In this model, the French government places tax on all advertisements in commercial stations. The proceeds of the tax are used for funding of community radio in the country. The aim is to keep community radio stations functional in recognition of their non-profit community services and overall contributions to national development.

Other ways of improving on funding include, developing a strong vision and mission statement as well as making community participation work. The mission statement is the most visible expression of what the station believes in, explaining to others why the station exists and what it hopes to achieve. It thus provides the framework for programming and other decisions.

Handling Sustainability Challenges

Financial sustainability is perhaps the most sensitive and problematic of all the dimensions of sustainability and should be handled with care. If this is not done, it can jeopardize the independence of a station. This in turn may undermine a station's relationship with community members, and subsequently, affect trust. The community radio station cannot afford to lose trust among community members. Interest groups such as parties, churches, business men also may try to exercise undue influence on the station.

The challenge of financial sustainability is particularly serious for stations serving poor, rural communities, where community members can contribute only little to the sustenance of the station. This may result in unhealthy compromises by such stations. Da Costa (2012) draws attention to donor funding related challenges such as: **Over dependence on one source of income**: This might also result to undue influence on a station, particularly on content, as community stations may be tempted to tell donors what they want to hear.

The use of top-down approaches by international donor agencies: Donors need to employ bottom-up approaches as top-down approaches may lead to project failure. Top-down approaches do not encourage participation and community members may be left out of decision making processes on matters that concern them. Donor agencies are encouraged to know where the boundaries are and not overwhelm local initiatives.

Change in funding agenda: This can happen anytime for several reasons. A change in funding agenda by donors may impact negatively on a project by terminating support for that project.

These challenges are surmountable. Community radio stations can overcome them if there are clear set of principles and policy, strong leadership and transparency (Da Costa, 2012). Ogbu (2014) adds that the demand of transparency makes it imperative for management of community radio stations to operate in such a way that it is easy for community members and relevant stakeholders to see what is being done by giving reports of actions as and when required.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The issues discussed in this paper demonstrate that management and sustainability, though complex can be achieved by community radio stations. Importantly, community radio

exists for and because of the community. To this end, the management structure should be representative of the entire community.

For a sustainable community radio sector, management of community radio should be based on the principles of sound financial management such as transparency and accountability. Functional budgeting and efficient deployment of available resources to relevant areas of the station's needs can also help in achieving sustainability. For proper funding, National Broadcasting Commission by way of policy reforms should allow community radio stations to broadcast advertising messages to improve their revenue for quality and sustainable service delivery. It will also require the establishment of an independent community radio trust fund to which government and other stakeholders should contribute. This is more so that a study conducted by Ogbu (2016) on Uses, Frameworks and influences of Community Radio in Ghana established that community radio has proved to be more effective and credible in promoting government policies and programmes among rural dwellers than their public and private counterparts.

To control the boundary between sustainability and editorial independence, management of community radio stations in Nigeria have the duty to ensure that community radio is not hijacked by sponsors, advertisers, and political parties, federal, state and local governments to achieve their interest which may be different from the common good of the rural community. Community radio broadcasters need to concentrate on making community radio democratic, participatory and ensure that it remains a useful alternative to public and commercial broadcasting.

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