

Role of community radio in promoting rural development: A case study of radio Habari Njema in Mbulu district, Manyara, Tanzania

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Abstract: This study sought to determine the role of community radio (CR) in promoting rural development. Radio Habari Njema in Mbulu district in Manyara region in Tanzania was used as a case study. The study employed a case study research design using mixed methods techniques where by both quantitative and qualitative data were collected and analysed with the sample size of 54 respondents. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics while qualitative data were thematically analysed. The study found that RHN as a community radio was playing a key role through its programs to improve agriculture, youth participation, gender equality, protection of environment, promoting good governance and reduction of negative cultural practices. The study recommends that the management of community radios should prepare programs in a more participatory manner with the community it serves. CFs, have to call in programs by inviting leaders to come to talk on various development issues and give them a chance to be interrogated by the people on how they solve various development challenges and expand the coverage to attract many audience for rural development in Mbulu district, Manyara, Tanzania.

Keywords: Community radio, Communication, Community mobilization, rural development, Development, Participatory Communication.

1. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

It has been observed that the global legal and political environment conducive to community radio development is absent where local needs and potential is present. For instance, according to National Endowment for Democracy (NED) and Centre for International Media Assistance (CIMA) report that the international development community should find ways to encourage governments to adopt and enforce legislation and regulations necessary for community radio to operate (CIMA (2007)).

Community radio as medium of communication has an important role to play in the community. The radio is the most important instrument in information dissemination because it reaches larger percentage of the people irrespective of their location. It promotes the level of awareness of the people on socio-political and economic issues and it also enables people to be adequately informed about programmes and activities of the government (Olufemi, 2014).

In a situation where a considerable number of people from rural areas who cannot read, write or conduct simple calculations; where transportation is poor and roads impassable; where many are poor, give birth at home, are not immunized, suffer and die of malaria and tuberculosis; and where the traditional media (television and print) are either inaccessible or unconnected. Radio, especially Community Radio (CR), becomes a viable communication tool for mobilizing people towards a development agenda (Egargo, 2008, White. 2011, Alumuku, 2013) this can sensitize and empower the disadvantaged, marginalized, and the poor in the countryside, stimulating them to begin to spearhead rural development activities

Radio is a widely used media in rural areas. A study done by UNESCO (2018) indicted that it is cost effective compared to television and mobile phone, internet and satellite. Radio is mostly used to access information followed by mobile phone, television, newspaper, social network, satellite and cable television followed by the internet. Therefore, when used very well community radio can be a very strong tool to mobilize the community towards promoting rural development initiative for sustainability through community radio.

Some of the major challenges facing local radio operation and promotion of community radio and participation in rural development in Africa are lack of salary or poor remuneration, inadequate equipment, low capacity generators, insufficient working space, unprofessional productions and high staff turnover. These challenges are due to lack of finances since the community radio stations are not allowed to advertise to make money as commercial radio. The major ways to tackle these challenges are to get funding and get other ways of raising money instead of depending on one source of income like promotions. Most of the challenges facing the community radio stations are financial in nature. The reality indicates that the CRS are in need of financial support and establishment of non traditional source of income. Alternative means should be found to support CRS including government funds, and permits to advertise in order to raise money for operations. Donors, sponsors and the local community should put more effort in supporting these stations. In so doing CRs will be able to promote rural development and community participation in Tanzania as well as in the world as a whole (White, 2011).

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

The role of community radio has been significant. However, insufficient and ineffective use of community radio for promoting rural development and mobilizing community to participate in rural development is one of the major factors contributing to little participation in rural development of people in Mbulu district. While there are studies that show CR plays an important role in promoting participation in rural development (Kkan, 2010). There are still persistent problems and challenges that affect the role of CR in promoting rural development. This study therefore, aimed to examine the role of community radio in promoting community participation in rural development through radio sensitization using Radio Habari Njema as a case study.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objective of this study was to examine the role of community radio in promoting rural development in Mbulu District, Manyara, Tanzania.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research used both qualitative and quantitative methods through a case study. A case study design allowed the utilization of mixed methods of data collection where both quantitative and qualitative data were collected and triangulated (compared) in order to arrive to the results that the research seeks. The sample size of the study was 54 respondents which was obtained from the Development partners, Local government leaders (councilors, village chairpersons, ward executive officers and village executive officers), ten households from each ward and Radio staff.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Presence of relevant programs for promoting rural development

The findings agree with the findings obtained from interviews and focused group discussions where it was observed by respondents that RHN had programs which were very relevant to the lives of the community it served. The respondents had this to say, "Some accomplishments the radio has achieved on the issue of governance were mainly through the programs such as Jicho la tatu, Zungumza na kiongoziwako, ubaonileo, Jukwaa la Mkulima, sautiya mama, Choo na maji kwaelimu bora, Pazasauti, Wanawake tuzungumze. Those programs had a lot of impacts in the lives of the community where RHN is heard".

5.2 Extent to which the programs are oriented towards empowering the community.

On the extent to which the programs empower the community the findings indicated that 55.3% ranked the program as high in empowering the community followed by 42.1% who ranked the programs as very high and only 2.6% ranked the programs as somehow high. These findings conform to the fact that RHN is indeed a community radio and caters for the needs of the community it serves as it was also found through interviews. One of the interviewees had this to say on the relevance of the programs "the radio has educative programs for youth which is called JUKWAA LA VIJANA.

Table 1: Extent to which the programs are oriented to empower the community

To what extent do you think RHN relevant programs are empowering the community to participate in rural development					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Somehow high	1	2.6	2.6	2.6
	High	21	55.3	55.3	57.9
	Very High	16	42.1	42.1	100.0
	Total	38	100.0	100.0	

Women empowerment is another area where RHN is keen to address. This was evidenced during the focused group discussion where the panelists said, women empowerment is an area that the radio has articulated very clearly. The program called SAUTI YA MAMA is very relevant example. Furthermore the radio touches other issues which have negative impacts to rural development. One of the growing problems is that of children living in vulnerable environment. In the focused group they mentioned a program run by RHN which discusses on how to help these children who live in vulnerable circumstances. The panelists said, we remember there is a day we overheard one person giving testimony on how he assisted some street children to go back to school, I think it was in the program called NURU YAKO which talks of the children living in difficult environment. Such testimonies could inspire other people to do the same and help to reduce this growing problem of children living in vulnerable environment.

Not only has that but RHN had programs which also touch the economic activities of the community in which it serves. Majority of the people in Mbulu district are farmers and pastoralists with some few especially in urban areas employed in formal sectors. To cater for development initiative of this community the radio designs programs in these economic activities. Specifically one of the interviewee mentioned the programs such as KIPINDI CHA UFUGAJI and JUKWAA LA MKULIMA to be very relevant in the economic activities of the people of Mbulu district and other areas where RHN is heard.

On contemporary issues such as environment protection and hygiene RHN has also covered that aspect. There are radio programs which are relevant to such issues. From the interviews respondents mentioned two programs which were specifically on environmental issues. The respondents had this to say, I can confidently say that RHN has succeeded in some way in designing programs which are on contemporary issues such as hygiene and environment issues. To be specific RHN run programs which were called PAZA SAUTI that is advocating on the proper use of latrines and Gender Based Violence which the district leadership also took as their agenda just to find that many families had good latrines to use and stop GBV. There was also another program on hygiene in primary schools which was called LINDA LULU that advocated for latrines in primary schools which also saw that many schools which had no good latrines built them and also built friendly latrines for the disabled.

On good governance RHN also is actively involved in seeing that the community it serves have access to accountable and transparent leadership. Accountability and transparency are the aspects of good governance which will help the citizens to have access to good social services free of corruption. The interviewee had this to say, If I have to mention the specific program I will name the program called JICHO LA TATU. This is the program that starts from the grassroots and brings the community face to face with the leaders from below up to the district level to discuss issues of accountability and transparency. The community like this program because they feel being very close to their leaders and being able to air out the concerns of the communities. Leaders also like the program because it gives them the platform to interact with their people.

5.3 The influence of RHN radio in promoting rural development

The study also aimed at determining how the sensitization of the community through RHN had influence in promoting rural development. The influence of RHN on in sensitizing the community was measured on the basis of how various programs aired have helped in transforming the communities. The study also sought to determine the effectiveness of the RHN programs on influencing community participation in promoting rural development. The results were as follows

5.4 Contribution of RHN programs in promoting rural development

The attributes that were studied with their mean scores in brackets beginning with the highest scores to lowest scores were improved hygiene (4.18), improved agriculture, gender equality, importance of a girls child education all with the mean score of 4.13, youth participation (4.00), improvement in good governance (4.11) followed by environmental protection

(3.92), reduced negative cultural practices (3.89) and lastly was increased transparency and accountability (3.58) as shown in table 4.4. The findings are consistent with the findings which were obtained in a study conducted in Rwanda where it was found that community radio had registered success in mobilizing the community to improve in literacy, enrolment in primary schools, agriculture, health and nutrition (Migisha, 2011).

5.5 Effectiveness of the RHN programs in promoting community participation

The findings indicate that 55.3% ranked the program as very high in empowering the community followed by 42.1% who ranked the programs as high and only 2.6% ranked the programs as somehow high. The panellist in the focused group conform with these findings because when asked to rank the effectiveness of the programs five out of seven panelists ranked the programs at a scale of B and two ranked the programs at A. This is what they had to say, we rank the programs at B because there are some programs where RHN is doing very good especially the religious programs and other socio – economic programs. Because of mixing religious programs and other programs it would sometimes make some listeners who are religiously not affiliated to the catholic faith switch to other channels hence missing some of the programs run by the RHN while those two ranked it to A had the opinion that the listeners of the radio are increasing every day which is the evidence that they are attracted by the good programs broadcasted by RHN.

These findings also conform to the fact that the community agrees that RHN programs have impacted their lives in a positive way. This was evidenced in the focused group discussion by the panelists who cited a program such as KIPINDI CHA UFUGAJI, JUKWAA LA MKULIMA, KIPINDI CHA WATOTO, NURU YAKO and SAUTI YA MAMA. The panelists said, the radio has very good programs which attract many listeners. They are attracted because the programs touch their day to day activities of their lives such as agriculture, livestock keeping, gender issues, hygiene and the need to take good care of the children in particular those living in difficult environment.

The effectiveness of the programs broadcasted by radio Habari Njema was also testified through the interviews. Many of the interviewees agreed that the programs they broadcast have a positive impact in the lives of the community the radio serves. The area where the radio has been effective is hygiene, agriculture and livestock keeping and the rights of the children living in difficult environment. Among the interviewee had this to say, I have been involved in developing some programs and to a certain extent I am confident to say our programs are effective. Just to give an example we run the program called PAZA SAUTI which was advocating on proper use of latrines or so to say hygiene in general and GBV. The district leadership took on this campaign and sensitized the community to have latrines which they did. We also run a program called LINDA LULU which was looking on the problems of latrines in primary schools which the leaders also took as a challenge and made sure that all the schools which had no latrines had them and also they made sure that latrines which are friendly to the disabled are built. It was indeed rewarding to see the leadership of the district support our campaign and that's why I say the programs are effective.

Table 2: Effectiveness of RHN programs in promoting community participation

To what extent do you think RHN programs are effective in influencing the community to participate in rural development					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Somehow high	1	2.6	2.6	2.6
	High	21	55.3	55.3	57.9
	Very High	16	42.1	42.1	100.0
	Total	38	100.0	100.0	

6. CONCLUSION

The findings concluded that RHN had in place many programs which promote community participation in rural development. The programs which were ranked high were programs on civic education, women participation, good farming practices, youth participation, hygiene, sustainable development and good governance and those on election and democracy. Programs public service and entrepreneurship, tourism and mining were ranked low. On the extent to which the programs empower the community the findings indicate that they were ranked high to very high.

On the extent to which the programs empower the community the findings indicated that they were ranked high to very high. The findings also indicate that the society had been influenced to participate in community development mostly through improved hygiene, improved agriculture, gender equality, importance of a girl's children education. Programs

were generally found to be highly effective. The findings further showed that there was increased awareness on issues of gender and participation of the community in activities such as child mother health, hygiene, agriculture, environmental campaigns especially in planting trees and matters of good governance.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends to the radio management and owner to prepare programs more in a participatory manner with the community it serves by involving the leadership of the community such as members of the village council, councillors, members of parliament, district commissioners, religious leaders, youth, women and the elders.

The study recommends that local government authorities make use of the radio since it is available within their reach and has a large audience. When they have matters to communicate to the community using the radio will help them reach many people in a short period of time. The local government authority can buy some airtime or sponsor a program run by the radio and then use that chance to pass on their information regarding rural development to the community.

The study recommends that RHN management should have call in programs whereby leaders will be invited to come to talk on various developmental issues and give them chance to be asked questions through phone calls or SMS by the people. This can be achieved by when the staff of RHN will be proactive by going out in different villages to conduct simple surveys on the challenges that affect the community. Having come up with the specific challenge then a leader or an officer responsible for solving that challenge is invited at the studio and have him asked and explain how that challenge will be tackled by the government.

The study recommends that the RHN should put in place the mechanism to obtain the feedback from audience. Obtaining feedbacks will help the management and staff to conduct a self-evaluation on the contribution of the radio to community development. Receiving feedback will also help the management and staff to get the success stories from the community which has utilized the knowledge obtained from their programs. Social media channels such as Face book page, Whats App, twitter and Instagram can be the easiest means of obtaining such feedbacks especially from youth. Other means such as direct phone calls and sending in SMS should also be in use especially for a generation which doesn't use social media.

The study also recommends that RHN management and staff should capitalize on the advancing information and communication technologies (ICT) especially taking the radio to the social media such as you tube and Instagram as well as Facebook and twitter which attract large follow-up especially of youth. This can be achieved by engaging ICT specialist to design on how to take the radio online. Radio online will capture the youth audience

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