

Rural radio and the promotion of people-centred development in Africa: Radio Listening Clubs and community development in Malawi

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Introduction

This paper explores the nature and levels of villagers' participation in dialogues on local development, facilitated using radio as a rural Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Focusing on two models of Radio Listening Clubs (RLCs) organised by the Malawi Broadcasting Corporation's (MBC) Development Broadcasting Unit (DBU) and Dzimwe Community Radio, the discussion establishes how rural radio broadcasting shapes local discourses on local development planning, implementation and evaluation. The critique draws on Guy Bessette's (2004) concept of participation and Felix Librero's (1985) concept of rural educational broadcasting to critically examine the nature and forms of radio-based electronic participation or *e-participation*. The paper begins by introducing two structural forms of rural educational broadcasting – centralised and decentralised, as a key to understanding how Malawi's broadcasters and communities conceptualise and implement development *e-participation* through village-based RLCs. The discussion is built on semi-structured and open-ended interviews with RLC field monitors; RLC members and programme managers; observation of monitoring and evaluation exercises of RLC progress by project management; analysis of field reports and importantly, participation in recording sessions of RLC programmes.

Pre-multiparty community participation in Malawi's development policies

The first British colonialists to settle in Malawi (then known as Nyasaland) were explorers, followed by missionaries and then finally, the farmers and settlers (Cullen, 1994; Muluzi, Juwayeyi,, Mankhambera & Phiri, 1999). In 1891, Nyasaland was declared a British Protectorate. Bakili Muluzi, Yusuf Juwayeyi,, Mercy Mankhambera, and Desmond Phiri (1999: 6) observe that the planters and traders were responsible for economic development whilst the missionaries were responsible for education, agriculture, health and social welfare services. The administration was very ruthless and oppressive in dealing with the native populations and implemented socio-economic policies that favoured settlers.

After independence in 1964, the then President, Hastings Kamuzu Banda got rid off political colleagues who strongly "disagreed with him on several policy issues," outlawed multiparty politics and made himself Life President (Muluzi et al, 1999: 81). With the aid

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of his closest allies in John Tembo and Cecilia Kadzamira, Kamuzu Banda exerted total control over the country with “finesse” of a “patronage system” (Cullen, 1994: 15). Through the Malawi Congress Party (MCP), the trio controlled information and its flow within the society, which resulted in banning of numerous literary publications and not surprisingly, the only broadcaster, MBC Radio and the only two main papers, *The Daily Times* and *Malawi News*, were under political control (Manyozo, 2005). Consequently, the design and implementation of development policies was the prerogative of the state.

The introduction of multiparty politics in 1993 resulted in political and social reforms, which centred on media diversity, freedom of expression and participatory development, all of which are founded on the libertarian principles of empowering local people to consciously generate and utilize local knowledges for improving their status quo. Today, Malawi is among the poorest countries in the world, and faces numerous social and economic challenges. Since television and print media are linguistically and economically inaccessible to them, the huge responsibility of empowering and challenging people to actively perform their citizenship, thus engage in the formulation and implementation of policies affecting their lives, falls on radio, which is a much more extensive, available, flexible, readily understood, personal, portable, speedy and efficient media (Gomez, 1975).

Doing participation within citizens’ radio: Development broadcasting through RLCs

Guy Bessette (2004: 14-16) observes that participation is “central to the task of defining and achieving development.” Participation focuses on empowering local people, through building their conviction that they are not “permanent victims of any situation.” By empowering local people first, participation does not become an “extractive process of information, enlisting or mobilizing community support” for centralized projects conceptualised, planned and controlled outside the local environment. Bessette’s participation is thus centred around providing a conducive environment and forum through which communities are helped to understand their socio-economic challenges and act upon the debated issues. Participation is therefore a collective praxis of decision-making within the community in which “communities are involved in identifying and planning their own development problems, in seeking solutions and in taking decisions in how to implement them” (Bessette, 2004: 17-18). Bessette’s participation therefore, entails an inclusive development, inclusive in that consultation requires making constant contacts with the majority of the local community, without manipulating them to accept outsiders' thinking towards a particular problem (Manyozo, 2004).

Participation as a praxis does not exist in a vacuum, rather within communication practices or structures, one of which is development broadcasting. Probably referring to development broadcasting, Librero (1985: 1) conceives rural educational broadcasting as the “use of radio for non-formal education purposes primarily to support planned social change in the rural setting,” focus being on promoting human development consciously through the broadcast of programs designed to help people diagnose their problems and clarify their objectives so that they may be able to make wise decisions. He observes that such a radio “must inspire individuals, families and communities to work together in

identifying needs and problems” and “help them determine their objectives” and “counsel and supply technical knowledge” since the radio’s philosophy was based on the principle of “serving people’s interests and needs” (Librero, 1985: 18-21).

Despite the diversity of definitions over the employment of broadcasting practices and structures as support tools in micro and macro development interventions, Manyozo (2005) draws on Librero’s (1985) concept of rural educational broadcasting to define development broadcasting as the strategic theory-based and method-driven employment of broadcasting media and technology as both support and main participatory development interventions in building local capacity, strengthening local decision-making structures, reducing illiteracy, poverty and improving socio-economic growth. Central to development broadcasting practices is the community ownership of radio programmes and structures, in which participation is both an interaction, flow and sharing of local knowledge and experiences (Manyozo, 2005).

The concept of radio forums and local development

Organised and structural radio forums were originated in Canada from the 1940s to supplement formal education needs (Flor 1995; Rogers, Braun & Vermilion, 1977). Everett Rogers, Juan Braun and Mark Vermilion (1977: 361) describe a radio forum as a “small listening and discussion group that meets regularly to receive a special radio programme, which the members then discuss.” They further contend that on the “basis of the program and discussion”, community members of a radio forum then decide on what “relevant” action to take. Ansu-Ayeremeh (1994: 99-101) conceptualises the rural radio forum as a structural “device for disseminating development information.” On the other hand, Flor (1995: 60) describes radio forums as “special broadcasts prepared for rural listeners who meet in organised listening groups and discuss what they have heard.” He notes that “each forum is supplemented with printed study materials before the date of each broadcast”, which are used as “references for discussions.” Rodriguez would have conceptualized a radio forum as a citizen’s radio with which radio rural people conducted dialogical discussions as a means of developing and acquiring knowledge as well as building local capacity towards local development.

The Malawi Broadcasting Corporation Radio Farmer Radio Listening Groups

William Mackie notes that since independence, MBC Radio was utilized as a communication tool in agricultural and rural development considering the many logistical, financial, staffing and transport problems the Ministry of Natural Resources’ Extension Service with regards to “teaching Malawi’s farmers better agricultural methods” (1971: 106). Mackie (1971: 108-109) again notes that the introduction of the farmers’ forum listening group project in July 1966, proved to be a cost-effective and effective rural development communication strategy in increasing farmers’ knowledge gain and contact between farmers and agricultural service providers.

Through hasty preparations, coordinators were selected and “given a one-day briefing sessions on how to conduct forum meetings” (Mackie, 1971: 110). Guide books were prepared and distributed, to help coordinators. The “consistent format” of the MBC radio forum programme had four parts: the first ten minutes provided agricultural information

and advice for the following week; the next five minutes featured field reports like interviews with successful farmers and news of ongoing activities by listening groups; then followed three minutes of short informational features like, why buy fertilizer, why dip cattle, why spray cotton; and the final two minutes in which the radio teacher summarised the week's recommended practices (Mackie, 1971: 111). After the 20 minute broadcasts, there ensured a discussion facilitated by local coordinators, who also provided technical demonstrations where need arose.

The project initiated interest from more farmers at grassroots level with so that the "number of farmers listening groups steadily increased," as evidenced by the fact that two months after the first forum broadcasts, more than a hundred groups were meeting every week in schools, government buildings and under trees (Mackie, 1971: 112). Participation in the forum project improved the "morale of some extension workers in remote areas, making them feel connected" to their colleagues and the communication program (Mackie, 1971: 114). This resulted to increased hours of agricultural programming from less than an hour of weekly programming to about four hours per week (Mackie, 1971: 116). Over the years the Ministry of Agriculture's Agriculture Communication Branch (ACB) has built on the same farm radio forum model to implement RLCs for rural farmers.

The Development Broadcasting Unit and *Kanthu N'khama* Radio Listening Clubs

The Development Broadcasting Unit (DBU) is a new structure within MBC, established in 1999 to liaise with the station's Programmes Department to effectively engage in development programming through participatory communication activities, to promote national dialogue around development issues (Sisya, 2003: 3). The Unit's formation was part of a wider decentralization process. The Unit was formed to engage in participatory broadcasting through empowering rural communities, promotion of dialogues, training of communities in radio production skills and conducting advocacy on development policy, as a way of ensuring productive national and local dialogue on and about development (Chijere-Chirwa, Kayanula & Lijenda, 2000; Radio for Development, nd; Sisya, 2003). A coordinating partner in the establishment of the Unit, the U.K.-based Radio for Development (n.d) observes that through participatory broadcasting, DBU facilitates people's participation in development efforts through using radio in "community mobilization exercises in developing tools for assessing local needs."

By focusing on empowering communities to define themselves and their understanding of the world through radio, DBU is promoting what Rodriguez would consider a citizens' radio, as a tool for encouraging dialectical and dialogical challenge of civil rights and citizenship among the many rural, illiterate and poor people who have no adequate access to telephones, electricity or Internet. In the case of MBC, "almost all programmes are based on top-down information from government to the citizens with little room for alternative viewpoints and little dialogue with end users," a fact MBC admits (DANIDA, 2000: 10). These grassroots citizens' radio structures are also in themselves communication processes "through which community-generated programmes are produced," thereby "encouraging a participatory, needs-based approach to communication" which "supports democratic development through creating an effective

dialogue between the civil society, the media and politicians” (Radio for Development, n.d). To complement its community research and training services, are seven development journalists, comprising four RLC facilitators, one producer, one secretary, one driver and a Team Leader (DBU, 2000; Chijere-Chirwa et al, 2000).

The establishment of DBU was timed to coincide with the Unit’s first RLC civic education campaign for social change project, *Ndizathuzomwe* (These things are ours) which was funded by the U.K. Government Department for International Development (DFID) for the first phase, which ended in 2002. *Ndizathuzomwe* project aims at “developing the lives of people in Malawi by giving them an opportunity to discuss development on radio” (DBU, 1999: 1). The DBU RLC concept was largely borrowed from Zimbabwe, where, the Federation of African Media Women-SADC (FAMW) had successfully piloted a Development through Radio (DTR) project, which involved rural women making their own radio programmes.

RLCs and the production of *Kanthu Nkhama*

Kanthu n’khama is a 30-minute magazine radio program broadcast every Saturday afternoon from 2 o’clock on MBC Radio One and is produced at the DBU. Initially falling under *Ndizathuzomwe* project, *Kanthu N’khama* is a short form of a vernacular proverb, ‘*Kanthu n’khama phwiti anakwatira njiwa*’ (Hard work pays). Currently the Inter- Ministerial Committee on Human Rights and Democracy (IMCHRD) supports the project with funds from UNDP. Through a DTR methodological approach of enabling “local communities to directly inform the programming they receive,” the pilot phase of the project involved producing a radio series of 26 episodes through RLCs (Chijere-Chirwa et al, 2000: 4). *Kanthu n’khama* tackles ‘developmental issues’ of food security, health, gender HIV/AIDS, education, water. Thus, the Unit’s location of its development discourse within poverty and social development highlights the influence of the early Los Banos School. The development discourse is carried out within a network of RLCs established across the country by the DBU (Sisya, 2003: 3).

DBU (2000) defines an RLC as a community-based group organized by community members themselves and uses radio programs to facilitate development discourse within their own community. It consists of consciously elected members of the management committee and voluntary members of the community and operate on democratic principles where membership is open to anybody in the community regardless of social status, religion, sex, age, political affiliation and tribe (Chijere-Chirwa et al, 2000; Sisya, 2003; DBU, 2000). Each RLC has about 12 members, consisting of a chairperson, vice chairperson, monitor, secretary, treasurer and regular members. The RLCs operate on a set of guidelines, which are principles on how to conduct discussions, manage the groups and coordinate with other locally based development groups (DBU, 1999). By 2000, DBU had established 30 RLCs, which over the years have increased to about or over 40. These clubs should not be seen in isolation from other local development clubs, as *Guidelines to Managing RLCs* (DBU, 1999) stress collaboration and facilitating local partnerships as well as participatory management, themselves key issues within Bessette’s authentic participation and Rodriguez’s citizens’ radio. This collaboration of

RLCs with other community groups legitimizes the development dialogues raised in the radio programmes as the RLCs are functioning as local community spokespersons.

Kanthu n'khama itself is “primarily produced” by the RLCs, whose members have acquired basic production skills (DBU, 2000). They first identify a development issue they want to tackle through a participatory process, in which different groups of people are able to make input. This is then recorded and presented to a preferred service provider. The problem statement is called a village voice (Sisya, 2003). The village voice outlines an analysis of the problem including the responsibilities of the community and the existing gaps the service provider is expected to fill. These are articulated through drama, traditional songs, poetry and discussions. Upon listening to the village voice, the service provider agrees with the community for a possible dialogue, which takes place in the community itself. The dialogue is also recorded and facilitated by RLC members themselves but sometimes the DBU facilitators assist in moderating it. At the end of the dialogue, the RLC must always ensure that an action plan has been developed and responsibilities of both the RLC and the service provider are clearly stated in the dialogue (Chijere-Chirwa et al, 2000).

The RLC then sends the village voice and the dialogue to the DBU producer who then “fine-tunes and combines” the segments for broadcasting as *Kanthu n'khama* program (Sisya, 2003: 3-4). The producer is aided by a program-planning sheet, which gives a guide on the key message from each of the program that is ready for broadcasting. A segment in which RLCs are reminded of how they are supposed to be managing RLCs and facilitate development in their areas further spices the program (Sisya, 2003; DBU, 2000). The dialogues have taken place with various bureaucratic levels such as policy makers. On the other hand service provision has come from public, private sector and civil society organizations. DBU facilitators visit RLCs at least once in a month or two to help them with challenges met, dialogues made, short comings and provide general direction along the rights-based approach in development.

The DBU approach has empowered communities to point of summoning high public officers as cabinet ministers to villages to account for decisions or services provided by their respective departments (Sisya, 2003; Chijere-Chirwa et al, 2000). In Mulanje district for instance, a Ministry of Health’s health surveillance assistant (HSA) was asked to vacate a building which the community had constructed as an under five clinic but he had occupied it for two years when his house was swept by floods (Sisya, 2003). His moving in was meant to be a temporary measure but with time, he never bothered to get own accommodation. Twenty-four months later, the community summoned the district health officer (DHO) to raise their concern and demanded that the HSA pays them rental fees in arrears since he had been claiming his housing allowance despite not paying for his accommodation (Sisya, 2003). Being field generated therefore, *Kanthu N'khama* promotes a sense of ownership of the national airwaves as it enables communities to determine program content through their chosen discourse, as evidently, the day and time of broadcast were decided by the communities themselves (Sisya, 2003; Chijere-Chirwa et al, 2000).

The format of *Kanthu N'khama* programme itself consists of a five minute review of previous programme, followed by ten minutes of village voices raised by communities, drama excerpts performed by RLCs and then finally, fifteen minutes of action-oriented responses from service providers (Chijere-Chirwa et al, 2000: 9). Dominant issues in the programmes comprised water problems, income generating activities, land problems, health services, bridges, insufficient primary school blocks, irrigation facilities, drinking water or food security, which itself shows a “reduction of the concept of development” with focus being “establishment of infrastructure” (Chijere-Chirwa et al, 2000: 10).

In terms of community participation, the formation of RLCs and subsequent development dialogues within them shows that there are some question marks over levels and extent of different participations. Chijere-Chirwa et al, 2000: 11-20) problems of gender imbalance, with women dominating RLCs, access to working radios, dominance by men in the dialogues and top-down approaches of service providers who advise instead of dialoguing on development issues. Despite the fact that some “clubs were established on already existing structures” in villages, like farmers’ clubs, there has been a “feeling that the RLC establishment consultation was not adequate” (Chijere-Chirwa et al, 2000: 13). Bessette’s (2004) participation however is an open-ended process of bargaining and negotiation, which involves “lobbying, creating of rapport, partnerships and support networks” (Chijere-Chirwa et al, 2000: 14). Worse still, the RLCs face hostilities from prospective service providers such as District Assemblies, Civil Service Organisations and other NGOs who usually “do not appreciate listening to audio-tapes” that “articulate problems of a particular community” as well as the idea of “driving to communities for dialogues” with the RLCs (Chijere-Chirwa et al, 2000: v, 27, 29).

Dzimwe Community Radio and the Development through Radio (DTR) Forum Project

Located at the foot of Dzimwe Hill in Monkey Bay and about 30 KM from Mangochi District, Dzimwe Community Radio (DCR) went on air in October of 1998 with funding from UNESCO and technical support from the Malawi Media Women’s Association (MAMWA). The station can be tuned in on 93.1 FM and footprints a radius of around 95km, enabling it to have a listenership of over 2.5 million in five districts (MAMWA, 2001). MAMWA was established in September of 1994 with the aim of positively imaging women (and children) because “women have always made bad news in the media” and at the same time, to provide a network of women working in the media (Yuma, 2005; MAMWA, 2001). By the time it was registered as an association, MAMWA had 16 members, a figure that has increased over the years to 60 members. Sub objectives of the Association include improving the status of women journalists through training and networking and highlighting issues affecting women and image these things in a way that empowers them (MAMWA, n.d.; MAMWA, 2001: 1-2).

Implementing and establishing DCR became MAMWA’s first project (Yuma, 2005). MAMWA’s project proposal for the establishment of village-based radio listening clubs submitted to the American Embassy observes that DCR was established with the aim of “empowering the rural woman” by giving her a medium and voice “through which she could articulate without fear or repression or favour, issues that concern her” (MAMWA

Project Proposal, 2001). The same proposal also notes that “in 1996, MAMWA received funding from UNESCO to launch the country’s first rural-based and women-run community radio station” (MAMWA, 2001: 2).

UNESCO and MAMWA launched the station in Nankumba, an area that “had been chosen” for various reasons, among which were: the high illiteracy rates and low economic status of rural women, growing numbers of premarital pregnancies, domestic violence, rising deforestation and environmental degradation, mismanagement of aquatic resources, increasing sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS. Malawi-UNESCO (1996) observes that Lake Malawi National Park was already working in the Monkey Bay Area and had already in the 1980s, been declared a World Heritage Site. It was probably for this reason that Malawi UNESCO (which was working with the National Park on some community-based natural resource management projects) requested that DCR be housed in part of the Lake Malawi National Park building at Monkey Bay. The broadcasting license was obtained in 2001 from the Malawi Posts and Telecommunications Corporation before MACRA was established. This license was granted in the name of the Radio itself, but it was handed over to MAMWA.

Upon launching the station, UNESCO provided equipment and a Toyota Venture, but “there was never any start-up capital in form of cash” (Karim, 2005). Since the radio is housed in a Lake Malawi National Park building, it is the Park that foots electricity bills and other related costs related to the maintenance of the building. The partnership and exchange programme with a Blantyre-based commercial radio station, with Power FM 101 Radio temporarily provided sustainability security because FM101 paid DCR’s Station Manager, trained its volunteers, and serviced its equipment as well as training one volunteer in equipment maintenance (MAMWA, 2001: 5). In exchange, DCR would either let Power FM 101 use its band to reach Mangochi listeners or just broadcast some of the commercial radio’s programmes (Karim, 2005; Mhura-Kaliwo, 2005; Yuma 2005 and MAMWA, 2001).

Dzimwe Community Radio and development broadcasting

Dzimwe Community Radio broadcasts between 6AM to 9PM. The station is run by a management committee of ten, which reports to the board of trustees, comprising senior traditional, social and local political leaders. The management committee oversees DCR’s staff, which is headed by the station manageress. The Station Manageress maintains a duty roster as well as ensuring that the station has the day’s programmes. There are 10 staffers working here. By the time DCR was launched in 1998, the National Park had already established about fifteen village-based women’s development clubs, which were formed with the aim of engaging in income generating activities (IGA), so as to improve their contemporary low economic status. The major IGAs are vegetable growing, bee keeping, guinea fowl rearing, tree nursery and rabbit keeping.

Mhura-Kaliwo (2005) argues that, in community media, there is always need for a community-based back-up to sustain radio programmes. The establishment therefore, of the RLCs with the technical support of FAMSA under the DTR Project was meant to solicit ideas from women and then take them to their service providers directly-and

through this, DCR became a local citizens' radio for facilitating dialogues on local development between grassroots women and their elected representatives. (Mhura-Kaliwo, 2005; Karim, 2005). MAMWA started with five RLCs, which, were funded by PANOS-Zimbabwe and in 2001, with funding from American Embassy, MAMWA established seven more RLCs which have been extended over the years by DCR's staffers. In establishing the RLCs, MAMWA just built on the already existing 15 Wildlife Women Clubs in the villages. Dzimwe as an educational broadcaster and a citizens' radio produces programmes like *Amai Pa Kachere* (Women under a fig tree), *Chitukuko ku Mangochi* (Local development in Mangochi), *Luso Lina* (alternative micro forms of IGA), *Umoyo wa Thanzi*, (Healthy Life), *Usodzi wa Lero* (Today's fishing), *Edzi ndi Ife* (Aids and Us) and *Tisamale Chilengedwe* (let us take care of the environment) through which DTR clubs share experiences and lessons with regards to development activities that were being implemented on the ground.

Recording of village-based programmes

Together with Getrude and Justice Sumaili, who is also Getrude's deputy, we visit Tiwonere Radio Listening Club of Chimphamba II in TA Nankumba, a club that has about 20 members, 18 women and two men. This club is one of those established by the Wildlife Society of Malawi. For a long time, this club, like many others, has not managed to record their own programmes through which they could share their economic experiences with other villagers. Their radio and cassette recorder has been broken for four months; they have no tapes, nor batteries. One of DCR's volunteers, Ellen Masina who is also a member of Tiwonere RLC, begins to record a DTR program. The village women demand more programmes and new styles of presentation, whilst mentioning specificities like names of presenters, broadcast times as well as signal tunes (Tiwonere RLC, 2005: Focus Group Discussion). They demand new programmes on agricultural marketing and community news; they express dissatisfaction with "pompous DJs" and the repetition of music and finally, "would you please extend the broadcast times to midnight please?" Patricia Nkumbira however appreciates that Dzimwe's radio programmes on women are very educative and help women to learn more much because of the dialogical nature of the presentations and that the presenters themselves are women they identify or even know personally.

Ellen Masina (2005: Focus Group with Tiwonere RLC) describes the development leading to the establishment of the Tiwonere DTR from the already existing women microfinance group by the Wildlife Society. The DTR concept itself is understood as *Chitukuko cha pa Wailesi*, (Radio-based development), through which "our village radios interact through Dzimwe Radio and through Dzimwe, these village radios educate other village radios' about the respective microfinance initiatives that are being undertaken all over, observes Maliko Kabango, Rita Malembo and Sellina Chilonga (Tiwonere RLC, 2005: Focus Group Discussion). Despite this, the DTR concept was a later addition by MAMWA, and as observed by Regina Mateyo, Juliet Matola and Patuma Nsombe, MAMWA's community approaches raise a lot of questions with regard to concepts of consultation and participation (Tiwonere RLC, 2005: Focus Group Discussion)

About 30 Km from Chimphamba II Village, lies Group Village Headman Mwalembe Village. A burial of a child has just taken place but the Village Headman but the women insist they “want their programme to be recorded.” This is a newly established RLC and the women here use DCR as a citizens’ telephony with which to communicate with their elected representatives and service providers, by demanding social services like boreholes, hospitals and markets. Conspiracies and controversies again: Someone in the crowd wants to know if it is possible for “our station” to introduce a programme on family issues because the men in the area are mistreating their wives. The accusations and counter accusations begin. Sellina Kunyada argues their men are so greedy to an extent they take away the money women have generated and use that to get extramarital affairs. The men led by Village Headman Mkundika protest. In fact Mkundika himself believes women feel good when they are beaten and frequently assaulted as it also helps them to become better people. He contends women are too rude and without assaulting them, they would “go astray.” The women and other men take him head on: Who gives a man the right to beat up a woman? What if a woman assaults a man? What if a man kills his wife? The recording of this DTR programme therefore provides a forum for village women to challenge traditional values, assumptions and practices that are harmful to the community’s welfare and health.

The community here that argues most listen to Dzimwe Radio, but also cite the rising costs of batteries and lack of the radio sets themselves as major impediments to constant listenership. Currently, batteries cost MK25 (less than US\$0. 40) each. The most popular programmes are those on farming and natural resource management, because this village and the surrounding villages is a farming area (Mwalembe RLC, 2005: Focus Group Discussion). The community demands a programme on news especially on local events, about markets, prices of commodities, sicknesses or local conflicts. Others demand programmes clarifying complex political issues and processes in indigenous languages for the largely non-English speakers. Such requests however are in conflict with Section 51 (3 c and d) of Malawi’s Communications Act (1998) which restricts community broadcasters like Dzimwe from broadcasting news services, factual programmes and programmes in support of democratic processes.

Like in Chimphamba II Village, the villagers from Mwalembe demand that the broadcast hours be extended to 12 midnight; that the DJs should not speak when they are playing their music; that “our radio” should feature “our local band music”; that religious programmes should be balanced to reflect the diversity of denominations in the area; that Dzimwe should carry local news and events as it “is our only telephone in the village”; that the broadcasters should visit them regularly because “we have many, many stories to tell” (Mwalembe RLC, 2005: Focus Group Discussion) Getrude Katete and Justice Sumaili attempt to outline the financial challenges that prohibit the station from exploring new styles of broadcasting as well as with new community-originated programmes, focus being on transportation.

Despite the many logistical and financial challenges, through the DTR project, Dzimwe citizens’ radio has contributed positively to local development in the area, with regards to facilitating interaction between service providers and communities: more boreholes have

been constructed; the wildlife has culled monkeys which have been destroying crops, a development that had forced many young girls to drop from school so as to guard over field harvests; the National Park offers long term firewood licenses to people in their villages than people making long trips to the Park Offices; communities are benefiting financially from the various microfinance activities; communities are now open to contribute to development dialogues through radio; radio is providing much needed environment education on topics like soil management; the youth are able to educate themselves through fan clubs; communities are becoming open to talk about issues like sex and reproductive health issues as well as HIV/AIDS; importantly, communities are planting many trees.

Afterthoughts

In establishing citizens' radio structures and processes, Castello (n.d.) highlights the need for consulting communities, establishing management committees, establishing a legal framework as well as planning for training. As argued hitherto, the establishment of MBC's and Dzimwe's RLCs overlooked satisfactory requirements for community consultation and mobilization. In concept as well as in practice, citizens' participation is very subversive, as it involves radical redistribution of power especially with economically, socially or politically marginalised communities. On the part of the people, implies that they challenge the relevancy of new knowledges and technologies through their indigenous lenses, and thus, refuse to be co-opted to rubber-stamp development project designs conceptualised and "undertaken off-site," (Ansu-Kyeremeh, 1994: 101). Citizens' radio forums provide an opportunity for broadcast journalists to write and produce development reports with and alongside local people, a process through which collective and public memories are challenged, contested, corrected and tested.

Nevertheless, DBU's and Dzimwe's participatory radio programming through RLCs should be considered a form of development broadcasting. Unlike other centralised development and general radio reporting, *Kanthu N'khama* and DTR dialogues derive their strength from the local people who generate and listen to them. Requests for communities for service providers' attention has benefited them as some communities have managed to get assistance for various grassroots projects in which radio programmes themselves become both the object and subject of further discussions and community development activities.

The challenge of developing participatory evaluation indicators, instruments and methods should also not be underestimated and swallowed up by current efforts at enabling people to make their own programmes. Participatory evaluations require empowering local people to take stock of projects' progress from their own indigenous perspectives, which on the part of the development communicator, requires patience and time to learn (Gumucio, 2001). It is the funding from the centre and the control of evaluation tools and methods by the centre that makes *Kanthu N'khama* and Dzimwe's village-based DTR clubs share both traits of centralized and decentralised development broadcasting. By providing spheres for dialectical and dialogical dialogues on local development policies, both formats RLCs become local citizens' radio, with which indigenous people practice

e-participation, through which they offer alternative definitions of development and participation.

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