

Radio assesses community change in Mozambique

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An expanding network of community radios is strengthening civil society and supporting community development and social change in Mozambique. The increase from one community radio station in 1994 to nearly fifty in 2005 means that more than a third of the population now lives within reach of a station. Regular, sustainable, impact assessments are essential if these stations are to be effective.

The UNESCO/UNDP Mozambique Media Development Project set out to determine whether community radio stations promote democracy, active involvement of communities and allow people to set their own development agendas. They also wanted to ensure that volunteer community radio producers would be able to carry out assessments by themselves beyond the project's end. They designed and then used what was labelled a 'barefoot' impact assessment, so called because the methodology was easy to apply and produced understandable results. The impact assessment focussed on three sets of questions:

Is the radio station working effectively internally and do the volunteers have contracts, rights and clearly defined duties?

Do the programmes respond to the interests of the public? Are they well researched, using culturally relevant formats such as story telling, songs, proverbs and music? Are they considered good and effective by listeners ?

Does the radio station create desired development and social change (determined by the original baseline research) within the community? 'Barefoot' impact assessments of eight of Mozambique's community radio stations revealed both positive results and potential problems:

The conclusions drawn indicated that 'Barefoot' impact assessments can ensure that community radio stations are on track with their objectives. They can also provide feedback to the communities in which they are working and demonstrate their credibility to local and international funding partners. They need to be simple enough to be sustainable without external assistance and systematic, making sure that impact is assessed at all three levels outlined above.

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