Community Radio Start-Up Information Guide

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INTRODUCTION

"A community radio station is one that is operated in the community, for the community, about the community and by the community" (Tabing 2002: 11)

A community radio station can be a powerful tool for addressing social concerns and promoting social change in a community. A community radio station is defined as one that is:
- not for profit,
- has community ownership and control,
- and has community participation (http://africa.amarc.org).

This guide is meant to be used as a tool for those interested in starting a community radio station. Setting up a community radio station may at first seem overwhelming, but with the right resources, and with community support, it can be a rewarding experience.

This guide has two main goals:
1) To provide a general overview of some of the steps that are involved in starting up a community radio station. This manual discusses how to get started, legal issues, funding options, things to think about when selecting equipment, ideas for managing your community radio station, and broadcasting tips;
2) To provide links to websites, publications and other resources that may be useful when starting up a community radio station.

It is important to note that there is no 'right way' of setting up and managing a community radio station. This guide should *not* be seen as presenting the 'only way to do community radio', but rather should be seen as a tool that can be used to find information, ideas and case studies to help you develop a community radio station that suits your community's specific needs and desires.

In addition, it should be noted that this guide is not exhaustive. It simply touches on some of the resources that are available to help you set up a community radio station. For more links and resources regarding community radio in general, consult DCFRN's website, in English, at: http://www.farmradio.org/english/links.asp, or in French at: http://www.farmradio.org/francais/links.asp

SETTING UP A COMMUNITY RADIO STATION

Setting up a community radio station can seem complicated and intimidating. However, there is a lot of information and resources available to guide you and your community through this process. This section will help you find some of that information.

This manual is divided into six steps:
- Getting Started
- Legal Considerations,
- Funding Options,
- Selecting Equipment,
- Managing a Community Radio Station,
- and Broadcasting.

This guide briefly explains the significance of each of these steps and then points to where you can look to find additional information. Again, it is important to note that these steps may differ for each community so you should adapt them to fit your community's specific needs.

1) Getting Started

A good place to start, when considering a community radio station, is to read a general community radio guide or handbook. These handbooks provide good overviews of some of the processes involved in setting up and managing a community radio station, and often offer tips for broadcasting. Many are quite long and detailed, and some provide checklists. Here are some suggestions of general community radio handbooks that may be useful:

❖ **How to Do Community Radio: A Primer for Community Radio Operators**
   By Louie Tabing, 2002

   This lengthy handbook is divided into five chapters: *Concept and Practice of Community Radio*, *Equipment*, *The Community Radio Council (CRC)*, *Ethics and Code of Conduct*, *Managing Finances*, and *Securing a Broadcast License*. These five chapters are then followed by a section called Community Radio Programming.

   This handbook is very detailed, especially in terms of programming. Although it does not provide many case studies, it does raise awareness about many things you should think about when developing a community radio station.

   This document can be accessed in English at:
   http://portal.unesco.org/ci/en/files/17593/11014593681Com_radio.pdf/Com_radio.pdf

❖ **Community Radio Handbook**
   By Colin Fraser and Sonia Restrepo Estrada, 2001

   This guide is divided into eight sections: *Community Radio in the Broadcasting Scene*, *Features and Functions of Community Radio*, *Legal Aspects*, *Technical Aspects*, *Getting Started*, *Program Policies*, *The Community Broadcaster* and *Case Studies*.

This guide provides a detailed description of the steps involved in setting up a community radio station, and provides case studies from around the world. The chapter titled 'Technical Aspects' may be of particular interest since it goes into great detail about equipment options and set up, and provides a list of recommended equipment. This is useful for those who are new to community radio. In addition, on page 54-55 there is a box called *Main Factors to Consider When Planning a Community Radio Station* which has a list of important questions to ask yourself in the early planning stages.

This document can be accessed in English at:
http://www.unesco.org/webworld/publications/community_radio_handbook.pdf

❖ **Community Radio – The People's Voice**
Ed. John Van Zyl, 2003

Although this community radio handbook was written for a South African audience, much of its content can be adapted to fit other countries. This handbook is divided into six chapters: *What is Community Radio?*, *Why human rights are essential*, *Managing a Community Radio Station*, *What Community Radio Journalism Involves*, *Why production is the heart and soul of community radio!*, and *How to make your community radio station self-sustainable*.

One important feature of this handbook is its checklists. This handbook provides checklists to help you every step of the way and has a summary checklist on page 27 that can be photocopied.

This document can be accessed in English at:
http://www.abculwazi.org.za/jsp/ABC_Ulwazi.jsp

❖ **The African Community Radio Manager's Handbook**
AMARC Africa

"Across Africa, more and more people are becoming excited about this thing called community radio. The problem has always been trying to explain it in a way that makes sense to people, wherever they live. The handbook is meant to describe the process of community radio as precisely as possible" (AMARC Africa, http://africa.amarc.org/index.php?p=home&l=EN)

This handbook provides particularly useful information about obtaining support from your community and government, and offers suggestions for fundraising.

This document can be accessed in English at:
http://africa.amarc.org/files/African_CR_Hanbook.pdf

❖ **Prometheus' Guide to Radio!**

This guide is a collection of links to other documents. It features a beginner's guide to radio, a technical handbook, and tips about audio production and broadcasting. Although this guide is written for an American audience, some of the information may be adapted to fit the situation in your community.

This guide can be accessed in English at http://prometheusradio.org/content/view/193/145/

❖ **A Passion for Radio: Radio Waves and Community**
Ed. Bruce Girard, 1992

This book is written by individuals around the world who are involved in community radio. Although it does not provide information on the steps of starting up a community radio station, it does share each author's personal experiences with community and alternative radio.

This book can be accessed in English at: http://www.comunica.org/passion/index.htm

These general handbooks are a good place to start, however they may not answer all of your questions. The following sections of this manual will provide specific details on community radio.

2) Legal Issues

In many countries, radio stations are regulated by national agencies. The airways - or frequencies for broadcasting - are considered to be a 'public good' in many countries, and are often governed by national legislation and regulatory bodies. However, these regulations are different between countries. It is very important that you investigate and understand the legislation in your country. Failure to do so could mean that your community radio station will be operating illegally.

The following questions, taken from Tabing's handbook *How to Do Community Radio* will help determine what steps need to be taken to get a license in your country:

- "Which licenses – to purchase, to build, to operate or to possess – must be secured?
- Which agencies are concerned?
- Which documents need to be presented?
- How much is the processing fee?
- How long does the process take?" (2002: 37)

To answer these questions and others, here are a few places you can turn to for information:

❖ **Legislation & Community Media for Southern Africa: A Guide**
   Ed. by Nick Ishmael-Perkins for AMARC Africa

   This document examines radio legislation and policy and provides useful information and contacts for Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

   This document can be accessed in English at: http://africa.amarc.org/files/Legislation.pdf

❖ **Legislation & Community Media for West Africa: A Guide**
   AMARC Africa

   This document examines radio legislation and policy and provides useful information and contacts for Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Ivory Coast, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo.

This document can be accessed in French at:
http://africa.amarc.org/files/WEST_AFRICA_COUNTRY_LEGISLATION-FR.pdf

❖ **International Telecommunication Union (ITU)**

The ITU is an international organization that was established to develop a global telecommunications network. The ITU's website has a searchable 'Global ITU Directory' which may be helpful in finding contact information for the regulatory bodies in your country.

The 'Global ITU Directory' can be accessed in English at: http://www.itu.int/cgi-bin/htsh/mm/scripts/mm.list?_search=ITUstates&_languageid=1
And in French at: http://www.itu.int/cgi-bin/htsh/mm/scripts/mm.list?_from=&_search=ITUstates&regionvarnam=ctry_councilregion&_territories=&_totals=&database=&_languageid=2

3) Funding Options

Funding is important when setting up a community radio station. Buying equipment can be expensive so many community radio stations look to outside donors for support. Funding can come from national or international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), development agencies, private donors, and/or governments. To find out more, consult the following websites and documents.

❖ **Farm Radio International (Formerly Developing Countries Farm Radio Network)**

Farm Radio International has put together a list of international bilateral and multilateral donor agencies that give funding for projects related to agriculture.

This list can be accessed in English at: http://www.farmradio.org/english/bdg/bdg5d.asp

❖ **OneWorld**

OneWorld Radio has also published a large list of possible funding sources, as well as tips on how to approach these organizations and how to write a good funding proposal.

This information can be accessed in English at:
http://radio.oneworld.net/section/community/funding

❖ **Fundraising**
By Prometheus Radio Project

The Prometheus Radio Project offers a guide to fundraising. It includes various creative tips about different options to raise funds, such as grants, events, and underwriting. While this guide is written for an American audience, some of the information may be adaptable to fit your community.

This guide can be accessed in English at: http://prometheusradio.org/content/view/158/145/

In addition to initial start-up fees, it is important to remember that community radio stations require an ongoing source of income to finance day-to-day operations. While this amount may not be a lot, many donors, when agreeing to fund initial start-up costs,

will want to know how you plan to ensure the 'sustainability' of your community radio station. To find out more about sustainability, consult the following resources:

❖ **Community Radio Handbook**
By Colin Fraser and Sonia Restrepo Estrada, 2001

This handbook provides a list of possible options that can be used to raise revenue to cover day-to-day costs. This list includes:
- "Commercial advertising (when legally allowed);
- Sponsorship (when legally allowed);
- Donations;
- Fees paid by people in the community who want to make a private announcement over the radio; and
- Membership fees" (2001: 52)

For further details, see page 52-53 of Fraser and Estrada's guide, which can be accessed in English at: http://www.unesco.org/webworld/publications/community_radio_handbook.pdf

❖ **Guidebook on Sustainability**
By Developing Radio Partners

This document looks at not only financial sustainability, but sustainability in general. It also provides five case studies, from Tanzania, Mozambique, Zambia, and South Africa to demonstrate what some community radio stations have done to ensure sustainability.

This document can be accessed in English at:
http://www.developingradiopartners.org/downloads/Lo%20Res%20Guidebook.pdf

4) Selecting Equipment

Selecting equipment can seem like a daunting task, especially if you have a limited background in the technical aspects of radio. While community radio stations do not require a great deal of equipment, it can be hard to know where to start especially with today's quickly changing technology. However, there are quite a few places you can turn to for information and advice.

Some of the general community radio handbooks, as mentioned in Section 1, are a good place to start. In particular, Tabing's *How to Do Community Radio* and Fraser and Estrada's *Community Radio Handbook* provide a good overview of the equipment needed to start a community radio station as well as the processes involved in setting up this equipment.

For more detailed information on various aspects of equipment, the following resources may be useful:

❖ **WANTOK**

WANTOK is a Canadian organization with a mission to "make it feasible for every group/organization in the world to own, operate and maintain their own community broadcast station regardless of their socio-economic conditions" (WANTOK,

http://www.wantokent.com/). To achieve this, WANTOK produces 'suitcase radios', which are complete radio broadcast systems contained in a single case. These suitcase radios can be purchased from their website at a low cost.

WANTOK's website can be located in English at: http://www.wantokent.com/
And in French at: http://www.wantokent.com/frindex.htm

❖ **Hang 'em High: Options for antennas, masts and towers**
By Prometheus Radio Project

This guide outlines the differences between antennas, masts and towers and provides instructions on how to assemble each option. In addition, it provides links for further information and distributors. Although it is written for an American audience, some of the information may be adapted to fit your community.

This document can be accessed in English at:
http://prometheusradio.org/content/view/194/145/

❖ **Some basic electronics for radio**
By Prometheus Radio Project

This document defines words such as 'charge', 'current', 'voltage' and 'power'. In addition, it describes what exactly electricity is and how a circuit operates.

This document can be accessed in English at:
http://www.prometheusradio.org/media/pdf/electronics_basics.pdf

❖ **RadioActive**

RadioActive is an organization based out of the United Kingdom that supports community radio stations by providing technical planning, design and installation of radio station studio equipment, transmission systems and solar panels. In addition, they offer technical training courses, technical support and maintenance.

To find out more information about the services offered by RadioActive, visit their website in English or Spanish at: http://www.radioactive.org.uk/

❖ **OneWorld**

OneWorld Radio's website has a section on training, which provides links to various organizations and publication regarding radio training. Their section on community radio may be of particular interest, especially their *technical tips and tricks* section. This section gives links to information about using minidisk players and microphones.

This information can be accessed in English at:
http://radio.oneworld.net/section/training/radio

❖ **First Voice International**

First Voice International is an organization that, amongst other things, integrates satellite radio with community radio. Satellite radio is a relatively new technology that can open up opportunities for community radio stations.

For more information on First Voice International's community radio projects, visit their website, in English, at: http://www.firstvoiceint.org/

5) Managing a Community Radio Station

There are various ways of managing a community radio station. However, since many donors require that you develop a management strategy, it is a good idea to think about this in the early planning stages.

The best place to find examples of management strategies is to look at some of the general community radio handbook and guides that were mentioned in Section 1. In particular, Tabing's (2002) *How to Do Community Radio: A Primer for Community Radio Operators* and Fraser & Estrada's (2002) *Community Radio Handbook* are useful starting points from which you can determine the best strategy for your community.

6) Broadcasting

Broadcasting is a huge topic, with a lot of information available. Again, many of the general community radio handbooks and guides that were mentioned in Section 1 of this guide may be a good starting place, particularly Tabing's (2002) *How to Do Community Radio: A Primer for Community Radio Operators* and Fraser & Estrada's (2002) *Community Radio Handbook*. For more specific information, however, some of the following documents and websites may be useful:

❖ **Farm Radio International (Formerly Developing Countries Farm Radio Network)**

Farm Radio International produces script packages four times a year. Each package focuses on a specific topic relating to food security, such as health and nutrition, Indigenous knowledge, and women in agriculture. In addition, Farm Radio International offers information on creating content for broadcasting, broadcasting training, and a quarterly newsletter called *Voices*.

These resources can be accessed in English at:
http://www.farmradio.org/english/partners/about/index.asp

❖ **The BBC News Style Guide**
By John Allen

This document was written for British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) News scriptwriters, however it may be useful when writing scripts. This guide outlines, in great detail, the basics of scriptwriting, including grammar, reported speech, and speaking out loud.

This can be accessed in English at: http://www.bbctraining.com/pdfs/newsstyleguide.pdf

❖ **Producing Content for Radio**

This training module provides information on scripting, interviewing, presentation, editing, radio formats, audience participation and content for exchange.

This information can be accessed in English at:
http://www.itrainonline.org/itrainonline/mmtk/radiocontent.shtml

❖ **Community-Media.com**

Community-Media has a web page that is dedicated to providing tips and techniques for conducting radio interviews. This can be accessed in English at: http://www.community-media.com/interview.html

In addition, Community-Media has a web page that gives tips on collecting and recording sounds that can be used to enhance a radio program. While this is written for a Canadian audience, some of these tips may be adapted to fit your community. This information can be accessed in English at: http://www.community-media.com/collecting_sound.html

❖ **Bua Fela – Just Talk**
By ABC Ulwazi

This guide offers community radio broadcasters tips and suggestions on how to involve children in your community radio station. It discusses the importance of creating radio with and for children. While this book is written for a South African audience, many of its suggestions may be adapted to fit other countries.

This guide can be accessed in English on the Internet by going to ABC Ulwazi's website at http://www.abculwazi.org.za/jsp/ABC_Ulwazi.jsp and then by clicking on *Published Works*.

Many radio stations are now integrating new technologies such as the Internet and cell phones to improve their broadcasting programs and encourage community participation. The following resources give tips on how to do this effectively.

❖ **ItrainOnline**

ItrainOnline is a web page that contains a lot of information related to computer and Internet training. This material is aimed to support those who are involved in development and social change. ItrainOnline has information about basic computer and Internet skills, multimedia, and resources for women, and has a section on community radio.

This web page can be accessed in English at: http://www.itrainonline.org
And in French at: http://www.itrainonline.org/itrainonline/french/

❖ **Telecentre**

Telecentre is an organization that believes that communications technology can empower individuals and community. Telecentre's web page has a large collection of resources, including some specific to community radio, a support center, a blog page, community chats, an event calendar, and other features.

Telecentre's web page can be accessed in English at: http://community.telecentre.org/
And in French at: http://community.telecentre.org/fr/node

❖ **The Association for Progressive Communications (APC)**

APC is an international network that aims to support individuals and communities who are working for social change through the strategic use of information and communication technology (ICT). APC's website features resources for capacity building and a detailed page on women and ICTs. While this website is not directly aimed at community radio, their resources may be useful if you are thinking about integrating the Internet or other ICTs into your radio programming.

APC's website can be accessed in English at: http://apc.org/english/about/index.shtml

❖ **Step by Step: a guide to radio browsing**
   By UNESCO

'Radio Browsing of the Internet' is a type of interactive program in which radio broadcasters respond to their listeners' questions by providing information from reliable Internet sites, CD-ROMS or other digital resources over the radio. This guide outlines the steps that should be taken to develop an effective radio-browsing program.

This guide can be accessed in English at: http://portal.unesco.org/ci/en/ev.php-URL_ID=5590&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html
And in French at: http://portal.unesco.org/ci/fr/ev.php-URL_ID=5590&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

❖ **Radio Browsing**
   By Branislava Milosevic

This radio browsing training module provides step-by-step lessons on how to produce a radio program using the radio browsing of the internet format.

This training module can be accessed in English at:
http://www.itrainonline.org/itrainonline/mmtk/radiobrowsing.shtml

❖ **OneWorld Radio**

OneWorld Radio is an organization that shares programs related to development. OneWorld Radio has a tool called the 'Audio Exchange' where members can download radio programs and re-broadcast them on their radio stations. Members can also upload programs to share with other members.

The 'Audio Exchange' network can be accessed in English at:
http://radio.oneworld.net/section/audio
Or, in French at: http://fr.radio.oneworld.net/section/radio_fr/audio

CONCLUSION

Community radio is becoming a popular choice of mass media in many countries. Although developing a community radio station involves a lot of hard work and the dedication of many individuals, it can be a powerful tool for addressing social concerns and promoting development within a community. With the right information and the right people, community radio can be fun, exciting, and rewarding. We hope that this guide has been helpful in locating useful information regarding the set-up of a community radio station.

Finally, we wish you the best of luck and we hope that your community radio station brings you and your community many rewards!

REFERENCES

Fraser, Colin & Sonia Restrepo Estrada (2002). *Community Radio Handbook*. UNESCO.

Tabing, Louie (2002). *How to Do Community Radio: A Primer for Community Radio Operators*. UNESCO.

WANTOK. http://www.wantokent.com/ Accessed on 30 March 2007.

World Association of Community Broadcasters (AMARC). http://africa.amarc.org/ Accessed on 17 March 2007.

Start with competition research to identify the radio stations that run similar themes. Once you do, you can come up with your own idea that will enable you to occupy a unique sub-genre. If you're inclined towards political commentary, for example, you can have a focus on local politics and social issues. Inviting local representatives to discuss matters of importance to the community will make your station different from a radio that looks at national or international political issues, for example. Creating your Business Website. Other things to consider when starting your radio station. Legal Requirements: You will need to consider the placement of your transmitter and the licenses needed in order to start broadcasting. The licensing requirements will vary from country to country.