

**WEDNESDAY, 10 DECEMBER 2008 (09.00am – 10.30am)**

**Workshop 7 : Impact of radio on development in Africa**

**MYCENAE, LEVEL 1, English**

**Workshop Title:**

Research on the impact of radio on development in Africa – what do we know, and what do we do next?

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**Language:** (Please mark one) English, French, Spanish, Russian, Arabic

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**Workshop description:**

**1. What are the main points you want to raise in the workshop?**

- Donors need evidence that support for radio benefits development - what research already exists?
- We offer three conceptual approaches to initiatives that seek to support the development of radio – radio as a tool for development, radio as a forum that enables development processes, and radio as part of the ‘fourth estate’ – and we focus in this workshop on radio as a forum that enables development processes.
- The gaps in the existing research base for ‘radio as a forum that enables development’ – the missing research questions.
- Two examples of research - case studies that point a way forward.
- Exercise for small group discussions – designing a research process - what indicators might capture processes and effects of empowerment and participatory communication? How might we capture ‘before and after’ data?

**2. Give some background information to the issue you want to raise.**

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Panos London is finalising an overview of research and evaluations undertaken to understand the impact of radio on development in Sub-Saharan Africa, and will produce a report on the findings in 2009.

The distinguishing features of the approach to radio in the category we are discussing at this workshop are, first, that it promotes dialogue, debate and participation, and second, that this empowers individuals, communities and societies. These concepts are underpinned by the assumption that this type of communication and empowerment is both a form of development and that it contributes to development. Many of the interventions designed to support radio do so to enable it to fulfil these functions.

Some interventions to support this kind of radio have 'enabling communities to participate fully in development processes' as their primary objective. These interventions promote participatory communication in order to enable communities to have a greater level of ownership of communication processes, channels or content, with the intention that this will in turn foster a greater level of ownership of development. Such interventions may also seek to achieve specific development goals, but this is not their primary objective.

Evaluation of them, however, does not often explore the 'participation and ownership' aspect very deeply. They take the approach described in this category when planning and describing a project and outlining its aims and objectives, but research and assessment of the results generally focus more on the operation of the station (with some exploration of the degree of community participation and just a little of the effect of this participation). Some evaluations seek to measure change by measuring the impact of a project on changes in knowledge, attitudes and behaviour. This may be appropriate as part of an evaluation, but fails to provide information about what creates changes in power, inclusion and ownership.

This lack of 'fit' between the assumptions underlying the intervention and the assumptions underlying the research is rarely discussed but it poses some key questions. Are specific development outcomes appropriate proxy indicators for the kinds of empowerment envisaged by the interventions? And if so, do they capture change processes in a meaningful way, from which the sector can learn to use participation approaches more effectively?

There should be a body of research showing the extent to which radio succeeds in promoting dialogue and empowering people, and the extent to which this contributes to wider development. Our review, however, finds a substantial lack of research looking for impact at these levels. Some of the research examples reviewed do seek to address these questions, but there is generally very little evidence.

This underlying gap in research and evaluation, we suggest, reflects insufficient socio-political analysis of what kind of difference radio is expected to make. What is needed is a detailed conceptualisation of what "empowerment" consists of, how communication contributes to it, what is the specific contribution of radio, and what difference this kind of empowerment can make in the long term.

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**3. List three key questions you want the workshop to address.**

- a) What are the gaps and problems in developing impact data for radio interventions that take this approach?
- b) What are possible ways forward?

Practical questions for small groups:

- a) How do we think interventions to support radio according to this approach work in practice?
- b) What would indicate that the changes we are seeking are taking place – or not?
- c) What would good impact data look like for this kind of radio support?

**4. What would be the main desired outcome of the workshop?**

Increased knowledge about the gaps in impact data, and the challenges of seeking it, and a stronger focus on how researchers might go about seeking it.

Feedback for Panos London on what we are learning and how best to communicate it.

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