Community Television for the poor

Abstract

This report aims to examine the role of community television for the poor. Research sources are acquired from the internet, and compare a range of media, in both developed and developing countries.

The technology and process for presenting messages to the poor has changed. The focus is now on promoting horizontal communication, involving the local people in the creation and distribution of the message. This has been enabled by the presence of digital technology, which has already contributed to the problems of the digital divide, but can now be used to bridge that gap, by forwarding development.

Community radio, community television and telecentres already exist, and work under this description. However, with the development of technology, and the steady move of media towards going digital, television seems the way forward to present messages and involve the community in local issues and awareness.

It has also been made clear that each project must be designed specifically to its area and community, in order for the media to be accessed fairly and appropriately, and for action to be taken by the community to improve development.

Examples of community television stations in the developing world have shown positive responses, as well as slight problems, mainly concerning licence fees. As community television is a more recent development than community radio, it is useful to assess the successes and failures of radio. From examples of community radio, it has been shown that heath and education messages can be broadcast in such a way to receive large audiences, for instance, by incorporating these messages into soap operas, or simply by an ask-the-doctor type programme.

Therefore the way forward looks to be with community television, although for success, pilot projects, assessing the audience, and training are essential.

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Introduction

As technology has changed, the approach taken towards development must also change. The diversity and quality of this technology makes media communications ever more easy and accessible for people. However, the invisible boundaries belonging to developing countries has led to the creation of a digital divide, where the rich 'north' has leaped ahead of the 'south' in terms of it's access to information and technology. It is assumed therefore that to further development in these less well-off countries, information must be made available.

As the technology is now available, the implementation must be addressed. This report focuses on how the approach to message presentation is steering towards horizontal communication, rather than top-down organisation. This involves the local community being involved with the creation and presentation of the message, for example, through community television. Several community-based media will be examined, in both developed and developing countries.