

New Opportunities for Development Journalism: Enlarging the Public Sphere with ICTs

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Dissertação de Mestrado em Jornalismo

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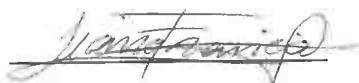
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Vicente, Ph.D

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científica de Prof. Doutor Paulo Nuno Vicente

DECLARAÇÕES

Declaro que esta Dissertação é o resultado da minha investigação pessoal e independente. O seu conteúdo é original e todas as fontes consultadas estão devidamente mencionadas no texto, nas notas e na bibliografia.

O candidato,



Lisboa, 30 de abril de 2014.

Declaro que esta Dissertação se encontra em condições de ser apreciado pelo júri a designar.

O orientador,

Lisboa, de de

*Dedicated to my parents, Nelma and Bento França,
whose unconditional love and support made me reach further than I ever dreamed.*

ABSTRACT

NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT JOURNALISM: ENLARGING THE PUBLIC SPHERE WITH ICTs

Leandro Pereira França

The present study examines new opportunities offered by the introduction of information and communication technologies (ICTs) to enhance the development journalism practice, in order to enlarge the public sphere and empower ordinary people to participate more actively in public debate on issues affecting their development. The analysis of the achievements and challenges faced by 32 radio stations under the UNESCO project “Empowering Local Radios with ICTs” offers an overview of the introduction of ICTs in different contexts, within and among seven countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. Even though the lack of ICTs access and knowledge is still a concern in the developing world, especially in rural areas, these new tools can be adapted to each context and foster a more pluralistic and participative media in order to address people’s needs and promote social change.

KEYWORDS: Development, Journalism, ICTs, Radio, Africa

RESUMO

NOVAS OPORTUNIDADES PARA O JORNALISMO DE DESENVOLVIMENTO: AMPLIANDO A ESFERA PÚBLICA COM AS TICs

Leandro Pereira França

O presente estudo analisa novas oportunidades oferecidas pela introdução de tecnologias de informação e comunicação (TICs) para melhorar a prática do jornalismo de desenvolvimento, a fim de ampliar a esfera pública e capacitar as pessoas comuns a participar mais ativamente no debate público sobre questões que afetam o seu desenvolvimento. A análise das conquistas e desafios enfrentados por 32 estações de rádio no âmbito do projecto da UNESCO "Capacitando rádios locais com TICs" oferece uma visão geral da introdução das TIC em diferentes contextos, dentro e entre sete países da África Subsaariana. Mesmo que a falta de acesso e conhecimento das TIC ainda é uma preocupação no mundo em desenvolvimento, especialmente em áreas rurais, estas novas ferramentas podem ser adaptadas a cada contexto e promover uma mídia mais plural e participativa, a fim de responder às necessidades das pessoas e promover mudança social.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Jornalismo, Desenvolvimento, TICs, Rádio, África

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ACRONYMS

AMDI: African Media Development Initiative

AIDS: Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome

C4D: Communication for Development

CI: Communication and Information

DRC: Democratic Republic of the Congo

ECOSOC: Economic and Social Council

FAO: Food and Agriculture Organization

GDP: Gross Domestic Product

HIV: Human Immunodeficiency Virus

ICT: Information and Communication Technology

IGO: Intergovernmental Organization

ILO: International Labour Organization

IPDC: International Programme for the Development of Communication

MIL: Media and Information Literacy

NGO: Nongovernmental Organization

SMS: Short Message Service

TIC: Tecnologia de informação e comunicação

UGC: User-generated content

UN: United Nations

UNDP: United Nations Development Programme

UNICEF: United Nations Children's Fund

UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

MLA: Main Lines of Action

SIDA: Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency

WHO: World Health Organization

INTRODUCTION

The so-called development journalism, an approach regarding the news where ordinary people are informed about issues of local concern and empowered to find possible solutions to reach the development of their regions (Chalkley, 1968), now has new opportunities to address people's needs and foster the development of lower-income regions with the introduction of new technologies (Xu, 2008). Frequently considered by scholars and professionals as a tool for government propaganda (Domatob & Hall, 1983; Odihambo, 1991; Skjerdal, 2011), development journalism is a field practically abandoned by the journalism academia (Xu, 2008). There is a lack of recent studies into how this practice has evolved over time and its new perspectives permitted by new technologies (*Ibid.*).

The mainstream media top-down perspective, with highly professionalized elite and then transmitting information to the mass audience, is experiencing a shift to a horizontal flow of information permitted by the broader access to new technologies (Gillmore, 2004). This new structure of communication brings more people into the public sphere and gives them more channels to interact with broadcasters and address their concerns in the media agenda (Castells, 2008). Ordinary people are empowered by interactive tools, such as mobile phones and the Internet, to actively participate in the public debate (Pew Research Centre, 2010). Thus, the objective of this research is to verify how the introduction of new technologies can impact the development journalism practice.

Unfortunately, access to mainstream media and new technologies is still uneven between the masses and the elite in the developing world (ADMI, 2006). There is also a lack of media literacy and digital knowledge especially in rural areas and among marginalized groups of the society (Domatob & Hall, 1983). Radio is the medium that reaches the broadest audience worldwide and overcomes the barriers of distance and illiteracy. In Sub-Saharan Africa, for instance, local radios are often the only source of information and entertainment in local languages for rural communities (AMDI, 2006). Due the lack of equipment and training often faced by local radios in this region (Domatob, 1988), the introduction of information and communication technologies

(ICTs) to enhance their work practices is likely to lead to a wide array of new opportunities for development journalism and the challenges that still need to be overcome to make this happen.

The present study was conducted during an internship at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris, France, whilst working on the project “Empowering local radios with ICTs”. This project includes 32 radio stations in seven Sub-Saharan African countries: Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania and Zambia. Such professional experience allowed for close access to the problematic, working closely with eminent media development experts implementing the project and constantly dealing with reports sent by field officers regarding the project’s activities on the ground. Therefore, the present study make an analysis of the project’s implementation to verify the impact of the introduction of ICTs in the radios’ working routines, pointing out opportunities and challenges to turn them into social service providers.

This study verified that the lack of ICT access and knowledge, especially in rural areas, is the main barrier for a deeper participation by the population in public debate. However, despite differences of the resources available among the radio stations, an improvement in the newsgathering and the interaction with the audience in the radios under the UNESCO’s project with the introduction of ICTs has been noticed. While there are some radio stations with a stronger presence on the Internet, usually in urban areas, mobile phone is the most used methods of interaction between the radios and the public due its wider dissemination and lower costs. Most commonly this is through call-in and text messages. Therefore, development journalism has new tools to provide current and relevant information affecting the development of the communities, with a horizontal approach, empowering the public with the intention to promote social change.

The present study begins by explaining conceptual and contextual aspects about communication flows, the roots of development journalism, the communication for development under the United Nations system, and the development journalism practice in Africa. Then, an analysis of qualitative and quantitative raw data of the UNESCO’s project “Empowering Local Radios with ICTs” reveals different scenarios of how the introduction of new technologies can benefit development journalism in Sub-Saharan Africa, allowing a comprehension of new perspectives for this practice in developing

nations. Finally, questions raised by the research's main findings are elucidated through interviews with UNESCO's experts about the project's implementation and expected results.

CHAPTER I: Conceptual and contextual aspects

I. 1. Enlarging the public sphere with ICTs

The German sociologist Jürgen Habermas (1962) defined the *public sphere* as a middle ground between the State and the society to legitimize public affairs based on individual views. However, in Habermas' first conception, this discussion arena was supposed to receive contributions only from privileged layers of the society, such as the elite, professionals and intellectuals – being contested by many critics (Maigret, 2003). Nancy Fraser (1992) stated that the *public sphere* is larger than the imagined by Habermas, including also marginalized groups claiming for representation, defined by her as *subaltern counter public*. In this sense, the media is considered part of the *public sphere* since it can be used as a space to share ideas and stimulate discussions on issues of public concern.

The shift caused by the globalization process, with technology facilitating the communication flows around the world, extended the concept of Public Sphere to the global level (Castells, 2008). Now citizens from different backgrounds can interact and discuss problems beyond their local or national boundaries, what Castells defines as being a *global civil society*. “It is the interaction between citizens, civil society, and the state, communicating through the public sphere, that ensures that the balance between stability and social change is maintained in the conduct of public affairs” (*Ibid.*, p.79).

Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), which have mobile phones and the Internet as platforms for instance, allow an active participation of the audience in the debate arena (Pew Research Centre, 2010). This enlargement of the public sphere decentralizes the top-bottom hierarchy of the communication process, what characterizes the mass media, and creates a horizontal flow where more voices can be heard (Gillmore, 2004).

New digital media connect the world and lower the distinctions between professional and citizen; both can express themselves and be potentially received most anywhere in the world. Old and new media continue to co-

exist but become networked and interpenetrating, creating new structures of communication through which journalism happens (Reese, 2010, p.350).

According to Habermas' *Theory of Communicative Action* (1981), this social interaction in a global level should be driven by intercomprehension and regulated by moral principles, producing what he defines as *Lifeworld*. On the other hand, a social action guided by economic and technocratic powers towards an instrumental rationality would lead to a *System* – what Weber believed being impossible to produce a common world (Maigret, 2003). Still, the media has an important role mediating this process.

It is through the media, both mass media and horizontal networks of communication, that nonstate actors influence people's minds and foster social change. Ultimately, the transformation of consciousness does have consequences on political behavior, on voting patterns, and on the decisions of governments. It is at the level of media politics where it appears that societies can be moved in a direction that diverges from the values and interests institutionalized in the political system (Castells, 2008, p.90).

New forms of counter-power are emerging from this horizontal communication networks, defining the public space largely in terms of communication and turning it into an increasingly contested terrain (Castells, 2007). "A new round of power making in the communication space is taking place, as power holders have understood the need to enter the battle in the horizontal communication networks" (*Ibid.*, p.259).

The new dynamics between journalists and the audience, resultant from the interactivity of the digital space, produced an ideological division among the professionals in this field (Robinson, 2010). While there are journalists who still advocate the hierarchical relation between who produces the news and who consumes it, the increasing participation of the public in the online media is receiving a substantial number of supporters. Gradually, the audience is seen as active and collaborative networks empowered to produce and disseminate information through the interconnected digital media (Loosen e Schimdt, 2012).

User-generated contents (UGCs) used to be rejected by mainstream media since there is no guarantee that they are following verification, neutrality, objectivity, ethic and other journalistic values (Lewis, 2012). But, nowadays, amateurs guided by professional standards – who are trained, committed and connected with new

technologies – are more common, being called as “*Pro-Ams*” (Leadbeater e Miller, 2004).

Given the high logistic costs and the lack of time to send a crew to inaccessible locations, during natural disasters for instance, traditional media is increasingly covering this kind of events selecting testimonials of “citizen journalists” on the field through social media such as *Facebook* and *Twitter* (Monroy-Hernandez, 2013). Despite the uncertainty of their contents’ credibility, which can lead to misinformation, social networks are a platform that stimulate debate and provide information – especially when traditional media is censored or controlled by the government (*Ibid.*).

This active participation of the audience in the public debate can lead to the enhancement of the development process of poor regions, since issues of local concern can be heard and proper solutions demanded (Madamombe, 2005). In this sense, the movement so-called *development journalism* or *development communication* has new tools to address common people’s problems in the discussion arena. It is necessary, however, verify in which extension this new structure of communication flow enlarges the public sphere, especially in marginalized regions such as Sub-Saharan Africa.

I. 2. Development Journalism

The concept of development journalism emerged in Asia in the late 1960’s; when there was a need for social, economic and political development in some Asian countries that suffered with colonization and the Pacific War (Richstad, 2000). The idea, advocated by the British journalist Alan Chalkley, addressed a new approach regarding the news, which should alert the ordinary people about their problems in order to find possible solutions to reach the development of their regions (Chalkley, 1968). The term “ordinary people” refers to marginalized groups of the society, historically without voice in the *public sphere* – such as women, youth, indigenous, rural and poor population. The idea of communication for development, where journalism plays a role as a tool to foster national development, was strong supported by politicians and academics at that time – especially among countries recently independent in Asia and Africa (Xu, 2008). The beliefs and expectations around this

practice lead to a raising popularity of development journalism in developing countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America (*Ibid.*).

In each region, due to particular contexts, the development journalism had different approaches. In Africa, for instance, the practice was mostly used by the governments as a tool to build national identities in the recent independent countries (Skjerdal, 2011). Meanwhile in Asia the development journalism was mainly concerned in ensuring regional values in the press coverage, rejecting the commercialization and sensationalism of the western news making model, focusing on social problems regarding ordinary people (Wong, 2004). In Latin American countries, on the other hand, the practice of development journalism can be noticed before the previous regions and is mostly associated to community media (Villamayor, 2005). The practice has been in use there since the late 1940s and is primarily used as a tool to foster education and give voice to isolated indigenous populations through community radios (*Ibid.*).

Scholars have classified these different approaches mainly regarding the role of the journalists in the development process. As indicators, it is analyzed if they are investigating or cooperating with governments for the implementation of development projects (Kunczik, 1988; Romano, 2005); or even fostering ordinary people's empowerment (Romano, 2005). Three major schools of thought are identified from those different categorizations (Xu, 2008): *Pro-Process*; *Pro-Participation*; and *Pro-Government*.

The *Pro-Process* thinking focus on deliver information effectively to the ordinary people, rather than the elite, about development issues concerning their lives – such as health prophylaxis, sexual education and family planning – with a simple language, including the use of charts and pictures (Chalkley, 1980). Instead of seeing the audience as passive receptors of development news, *Pro-Participation* academics and professionals see the development journalism as an opportunity to empower people to participate in the discussion arena regarding political, economic, cultural and/or social issues of their realities (Servaes, 1999; Wilkins, 2000; Melkote and Steeves, 2001; White, 2004). Meanwhile, with stronger political and professional impact as well as broader geographical amplitude (Xu, 2008), the *Pro-Government* approach advocates a cooperative relation between journalism and governments in order to promote nation-building, driven by de-westernization and “responsible use” of press-freedom (Xu, 2005).

Several critics are made to this later approach since it is vulnerable to government control that can restrict freedom of expression and establish ideological bias in the news (Domatob & Hall, 1983; Odiambo, 1991; Skjerdal, 2011). However, the diversity of principles and practices that development journalism have produced in more than four decades across three regions are not properly captured by journalism research community – which have been neglecting this subject (Xu, 2008).

Meanwhile, there are scholars that considered development journalism as model for media practice in poor regions, such as Sub-Saharan Africa (Banda, 2010; Berger, 2010). This practice can be enhanced with the raise of new media technologies, enlarging the *public sphere* (Xu, 2008). Despite the still considerable digital divide in those regions (AMDI, 2006), it is necessary more investigation on how new technologies can impact the practice of development journalism, empowering more people to participate in the public debate of issues concerning their realities (Xu, 2008).

I. 3. Communication for development under the United Nations

The formal definition of Communication for Development (C4D), adopted by the United Nations (UN) in 1997 through the Article 6 of General Assembly Resolution 51/172, “stresses the need to support two-way communication systems that enable dialogue and that allow communities to speak out, express their aspirations and concerns and participate in the decisions that relate to their development” (UN, 1997, p. 2).

In this sense, the UN’s conception of C4D has a *Pro-Participation* approach since its focus is the enlargement of the *public sphere* through the empowerment of marginalized people to reach their own development. “Communication processes are central to broader empowerment practices through which people are able to arrive at their own understanding of issues, to consider and discuss ideas, to negotiate, and to engage in public debates at community and national levels” (UNDP, 2011, p.1).

As Intergovernmental Organizations (IGOs), the UN and its agencies are formal institutions whose members are states that joined voluntarily, contributing financially and making decisions within the organizations (Pease, 2012). The IGOs’ members are sovereign states that have power to limit independent actions of the IGOs, often using

these organizations as an instrument to reach their own interests (Archer, 1992). There are different approaches of development within IGOs, mostly towards a macroeconomic growth or an improvement of social conditions (Pease, 2012). The debate of development reflects the opposition of worldviews, between the “orthodox” and the “critical” strands (Thomas, 1998).

In the view of the critical advocates, the liberal manner of the orthodox approach to measure development – by the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita, for instance – ignores the gap between the poor and the rich, and other important issues that affect the quality of life in the developing world (Pease, 2012). In this sense, the critical vision of development is more suitable for the C4D within the UN since it is seen as “the ability of people to meet their material and nonmaterial needs by their own efforts” (Thomas, 1998, p. 453). The UN agencies under the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) are responsible to promote economic and social cooperation among their members, making studies and reports with recommendations regarding these issues to be implemented by the states (Pease, 2012).

Since 1988, the UN promotes a bi-annual inter-agency round-table on Communication for Development to exchange experiences and ideas in order to promote cooperation among its agencies (such as UNESCO, UNICEF, UNDP, FAO, WHO, ILO, etc.) and international external partners dealing with this matter. The organization established four main ways, recognizing a crossover among them, to treat the C4D: “(i) behavior change communication; (ii) communication for social change; (iii) advocacy communication; and (iv) strengthening an enabling media and communication environment” (UNDP, 2011, p. 7).

The “behavior change communication” approach is widely used in development programs, especially health-related, to promote and sustain positive behaviors towards better development results. Meanwhile, “Communication for social change” has a more participatory approach since its focus is to stimulate dialogue, empowering poor people to participate in the public debate. “Advocacy communication”, on the other hand, aims at influencing policy makers and social leaders in order to promote a better political environment and equitable allocation of resources. Last but not least, “strengthening an enabling media and communication environment”...

emphasizes that strengthening communication capacities, including professional and institutional infrastructure, is necessary to enable: (i) a free, independent and pluralist media that serves the public interest; (ii) broad public access to a variety of communication media and channels, including community media; (iii) a nondiscriminating regulatory environment for the broadcasting sector; (iv) media accountability systems; and (v) freedom of expression in which all groups are able to voice opinion and participate in development debates and decision-making processes (UNDP, 2011, p. 8).

With these different approaches, “C4D resonates with and reinforces many of the inter-related principles that govern the common approach of the United Nations to development at the country level” (UNDP, 2011, p. 9). Among the UN principles addressed by C4D, for instance, human-rights, gender equality, environmental sustainability, capacity-building and development effectiveness can be highlighted (*Ibid.*).

The main UN multilateral forum around this issue, the International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC), is under the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)¹. The objective of IPDC is to “secure a healthy environment for the growth of free and pluralistic media in developing countries”². UNESCO has a specific programme addressing the issues of C4D, Communication and Information (CI) – where IPDC is located.

The CI sector, which is the organization’s Major Programme V, has two Main Lines of Action (MLAs) towards the strategic objective 9 of UNESCO: “Promoting freedom of expression, media development, and access to information and knowledge” (UNESCO, 2013a, p. 31). Those MLAs are: (1) “Promoting an enabling environment for press freedom and journalistic safety, facilitating pluralism and participation in media, and supporting sustainable and independent media institutions” and (2) “Enabling Universal Access and Preservation of Information and Knowledge” (*Ibid*, p. 33).

To reach those objectives, the projects managed by the CI programme address thematic areas such as: Communication for Sustainable Development; Community Media; Public Service Broadcasting; Measuring Media Development; Journalism

¹ <http://www.c4d.undg.org/round-tables>

² <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/intergovernmental-programmes/ipdc/about-ipdc/>

Education and Training; and Media Literacy³. Also, they should cover crosscutting priorities of the organization such as HIV and AIDS; Gender and Media; and Post-Conflict and Post-Disaster Responses. In this sense, UNESCO's role in ensure a free, pluralistic and participative media environment has the potential to stimulate development journalism practices, with a *Pro-Participation* approach, empowering community media and ordinary people to participate in the public debate and promote the development of their regions and their lives.

UNESCO's project "Empowering Local Radios with ICTs" will be taken as a case study because its scope of action, covering 32 radio stations in seven Sub-Saharan African countries (UNESCO, 2011), allows a wide overview of the challenges and the opportunities of introducing new media technologies to foster development journalism, enlarging the *public sphere* in poor regions. The project intends to strengthen local radio stations usage of ICTs, mainly through capacity-building workshops, to enhance their programming quality, news coverage range and financial sustainability. As a result, it is expected to engage the audience in the public debate on issues of local concern. The 4,5 million dollars project, financed by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), was launched in the beginning of 2012 and is due to be completed by the end of 2014 (*Ibid.*).

I. 4. Development Journalism in Africa

After independence from western powers, in the late 1960's, many countries in the Sub-Saharan Africa used mass media as an extension of the government to foster social, economic and cultural development, stimulating the creation of national identities (Skjerdal, 2011). Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana's first President, a leading Pan-Africanist, was one of the African leaders who saw the media as a tool to liberate the continent from the bondages of colonialism and imperialism. The development journalism was practiced in this region basically to promote nation-building (Domatob & Hall, 1983). This approach, however, was questioned due the role of the state in the control of the news agenda, what could lead to censorship and political promotion (Odihambo, 1991). "Redefined versions of

³ <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/media-development/communication-for-sustainable-development/>

development journalism, however, claim to promote national interests while at the same time safeguarding independent reporting” (Skjerdal, 2011, p. 2).

Despite intending to promote local values, the African mass media was conceived in the western model due the region’s lack of infrastructure, technology and training for this matter (Domatob, 1988). The formula used proved not being suitable for the local reality; not considering the complexity of the African society in terms of ethnic and linguistic groups, level of literacy and social inequalities between the masses and the elite (Domatob & Hall, 1983). This situation undermined development journalism initial attempts to reach the poor people and contribute to their empowerment (Odihambo, 1991).

Where the media in the Western World probably act to homogenize society, in the Third World they divide it, making the task of finding points of convergence between the leaders of the new nations and their subjects far more difficult. In the developing states of Africa, it is the urbanized elite which tends to be the beneficiary of the imported media, to the near exclusion of the rural hinterland (Domatob & Hall, 1983, p. 22).

An important vehicle to reach the ordinary people in rural areas is radio, the most accessible medium of mass communication due its capacity to overcome illiteracy and distance barriers (Edeani, 1993). In 2006, the African Media Development Initiative (AMDI) published a summary of a broad research, contemplating the realities in 17 countries⁴, about the development of different aspects of the media in Sub-Saharan Africa. The study indicated that, although the national radio was still dominated by state-owned broadcasters in the majority of the countries researched, their number remained constant in contrast with the increasing of local and regional commercial radios.

This medium demonstrated to have a high acceptance in rural regions of the countries surveyed, due the low literacy of the population and the lack of access to main-stream media, being the main information and educational source. “The radio, in most of rural Africa, has the force of the Bible. It is not uncommon for someone to substantiate whatever statement or claim he or she has made by adding ‘the radio said so’” (AMDI, 2006, p. 16-17).

While state-controlled and main-stream media outlets reflect the perspective of the government and the urban educated elite, community and private media appeared as an alternative for marginalized population of the region analyzed. Although there is a lack of a widespread consensus of its definition, community media can be characterized as

⁴ Angola, Botswana, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Mozambique, Somalia, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, Sierra Leone, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

(...) non-profit, small-scale private enterprises, and some state owned community-based radio stations, that generally serve the interests of local communities. This sector was seen by a majority of respondents to have a special role in advancing development objectives, giving a voice to communities, and was recognized for its ability to empower and skill communities. Its principal challenge is financial sustainability and continued dependence on donor funds. (AMDI, 2006, p. 14)

The researchers found that community radio has proved an important medium that provides information and empowerment for local communities across Sub-Saharan Africa. Despite its growth in several countries surveyed, supported mainly by the state and/or nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), community radios' continuous dependence on donors' funds challenges their long-term financial sustainability (AMDI, 2006).

Among the most notable challenges faced by the community radio sector in Africa are inadequate funding and inexperienced staff. Many stations are dependent on external funding, following a topdown model that is not fully supported by the community and which routinely fails when donor funding dries up. Even where stations are sustainable, the impact of overall human resource deficiencies are felt and reflected in the high levels of staff turnover which are unmatched by adequate replacements that would guarantee continuation of professional and quality programming. The sector is also hampered by lack of resources to maintain and upgrade modern equipment and technology, and government censorship and closure. However, since radio receiving devices (which often include cell phones) are inexpensive, portable, operate independently of power grids and are accessible even to those who cannot read, radio is still the medium of choice for the majority of people living in the region, and community radio has much room for growth (UNESCO, 2013c, p. 29).

Moreover, the village level approach of the community radios is more likely to promote social change since it has a closer contact with the audience (Domatob & Hall, 1983). Addressing issues of local concern in this platform, it is expected to raise awareness among the population and the policymakers about the community's needs. "When this knowledge is available, meaningful and hopefully effective policies, programmes, and activities would then be brought to bear on rural development" (Edeani, 1993).

The AMDI researchers verified a significant growth in the number of journalists in all the countries surveyed (AMDI, 2006). Furthermore, development journalism

seems to be an important subject in the African journalism education (Wimmer & Wolf, 2005). However, “it is extremely difficult to estimate the number of untrained persons who work in an informal or freelance capacity as journalists” (AMDI, 2006, p. 37).

A broader access to new technologies, especially mobile phones and Internet, is verified across the region (AMDI, 2006) and is likely to contribute to a broader number of UGCs. These new forms of communication, with a horizontal approach, are seen as an opportunity to bring ordinary people to the public sphere and address development issues through community media (Berger, 2010).

While mainstream media was off the radar for a developmental role, the historical moment saw the rise of community media, focused on participatory views of development. The involvement of audiences in such radio stations was seen as key to the very definition of development, as well as its implementation (Berger, 2010).

Once, African radio programs and newscasts were mostly dominated by official voices, such as declarations from government members and politicians, usually concerned in portraying a good image of the state and the ones who are in power (Domatob & Hall, 1983). This approach didn't allow ordinary people to have an active role in the development process of their regions, being sedative rather than stimulating (*Ibid.*). However, with the introduction of the ICTs, the development journalism has different channels to address issues of local concern and make the public's voices heard.

The new phenomenon is that rapid advances in media technology mean that audiences are able to gather more and wider ranging content to offer to broadcasters. And not only is new media technology available, it is also more accessible and increasingly affordable to members of the public (Scott et al., 2009, p. 6).

On the other hand, it is necessary to ensure not only the quantity, but also the quality of the user-generated content to provide a pluralist media environment that stimulates fruitful discussions on development issues (Wilson et al., 2007). In this sense, one of the challenges faced by the development journalism is to guarantee media and information literacy (MIL). To participate actively in public-sphere, the audience should be able to “understand the functions of media and other information providers, to

critically evaluate their content, and to make informed decisions as users and producer of information and media content”⁵.

The present research envisions examining the use of ICTs by local radios to enlarge the public sphere in Sub-Saharan Africa. It is expected to realize how new technologies can benefit the practice of development journalism to empower ordinary people’s participation in the public debate and promote social change in poor regions. For this purpose, the opportunities and challenges faced by 32 radio stations under the UNESCO’s project “Empowering Local Radios with ICTs” in seven Sub-Saharan African countries are analyzed.

⁵ <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/media-development/media-literacy/mil-as-composite-concept/>

CHAPTER II: Using ICTs for development journalism in Southern Africa

II. 1. Methodology

The use of ICTs in the development journalism practice by local radios in Sub-Saharan Africa are supposed to enhance their news gathering, stimulate the participation and engagement of the audience on issues of local concern, spreading the information and facilitating its assimilation in order to promote social change. To verify these assumptions, the collection of data was done in two levels. Firstly, gathering and treating qualitatively and quantitatively raw data and interviews produced by the UNESCO's project "Empowering Local Radios with ICTs". These data reveal different scenarios of how the introduction of new technologies can benefit the development journalism in Sub-Saharan Africa, enlightening the comprehension of new perspectives for this practice in developing nations. Secondly, conducting interviews with UNESCO's experts about the project's implementation and expected results to elucidate the research's main findings.

The project includes 32 local radio stations from seven African countries (see Appendixes): Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania and Zambia. "These countries were chosen according to their potential to grow in terms of local media and the capacity to deliver through UNESCO field offices" (UNESCO, 2011, p. 4). Based on the situation of each local radio in the beginning of the project (UNESCO, 2011), it is specified the main characteristics among the radio stations regarding their location, audience size, structure and ICTs literacy; due different realities among and within the countries. The location indicates whether they are in urban or rural areas; the audience size is indicated by the number of people under their coverage radius; the structure indicates how well equipped they were; and the ICTs literacy, on the other hand, indicates how were their access and knowledge of new media technologies. The analysis of this information intends to highlight the different levels of media development among local radios across the region.

Then an analysis of the improvements achieved by each local radio is made to elucidate how they are using ICTs to report on issues of local concern; testing the initial assumptions of the benefits of using these new tools for development journalism. For this purpose, it is made a presentation of the project's implementation process and the main ICTs used; followed by the identification of the major achievements and difficulties faced by the radios during the project's implementation. Some examples of how the radio stations are producing contents and interacting with their audience illustrate good practices of using ICTs to promote the development journalism among them.

The main sources of raw information for this research are the project's initial document (UNESCO, 2011); its annual report of 2012 (UNESCO, 2013b); and the contents available in the project's website⁶ such as workshops' reports, radio stations' profiles and interviews with field officers and experts. In addition, Jonathas Mello, UNESCO consultant responsible for the project, and Fackson Banda, UNESCO programme specialist in the Division of Freedom of Expression and Media Development, were interviewed to clarify some questions raised by the research's main findings.

However, there is a lack of quantitative data since the Annual Report of 2013, which would have more information gathered to analyze quantitatively, was not published until April 2014 – when this research was due to be finished. Moreover, the surveys carried before and during the project's implementation were conducted by distinct institutions with different methodologies for each country (UNESCO, 2011), producing data with diverse natures that are difficult to compare. In addition, the data about the Namibian radios is not accurate, since radio West Coast FM was replaced by !aH FM from March 2013 due not having attended in the project's trainings claiming lack of available staff to participate (UNESCO, 2013b). Also, an extensive content analysis was limited by the language barrier, since great part of the radios' production is in local languages, and the lack of material available online.

Nonetheless, it is expected that the combination of the methods of analysis above can demonstrate the opportunities offered by the introduction of new technologies in the practice of development journalism to enlarge the public sphere in

⁶ <http://en.unesco.org/radioict>

poor regions and promote social change. While the differentiation of the radio stations intends to put in evidence the variety of challenges faced by them, among diverse contexts; the analysis of their improvements aims to demonstrate the good practices and how they can overcome the obstacles. Furthermore, the diversity of realities among and within the Sub-Saharan African countries analyzed is likely to offer a deep and broad overview of how local radios, even in harsh contexts, can be turned in social service providers empowering ordinary people to actively participate in the public debate on issues affecting their development.

II. 2. Different realities among and within the countries

The different contexts among and within the seven Sub-Saharan African countries regarding ICT access and knowledge to ICTs is likely to enlighten a broad variety of challenges faced by local media to introduce new technologies in their work routines. Thus, the implementation of the UNESCO's project "Empowering Local Radios with ICTs" had to face different realities among the 32 participating radio stations (UNESCO, 2013b). It is noticed that although some of these radio stations are based in urban areas, usually better equipped and trained, the majority of them covers small communities in rural areas. However, the audience can be quite vast (see Appendix I) even in stations based in isolated regions since their coverage signal usually reaches several communities in their regions, sometimes also in neighboring countries. Moreover, there are some radios broadcasting in different local languages since their public comprehends a diversity of ethnicities, being able to serve as a pluralistic platform that brings marginalized populations to the public debate.

The radio stations based in major cities, such as capitals of provinces, in Namibia, South Africa and Zambia presented a better situation regarding their access to equipments and ICTs knowledge and literacy before the project was implemented (UNESCO, 2011). In Windhoek, capital of Namibia, Base FM counted with trained journalists and already had a strong presence in the internet, broadcasting worldwide through a streaming radio signal. This scenario was also present in South African radios such as Jozi FM, in Johannesburg, and Bush FM, in Cape Town. In Zambia, the same

happened with the radio stations based in Livingstone (Southern province), Zambezi FM, and in Chipata (Eastern province), Breeze FM.

Nevertheless, usually these radios reach an audience broader than the population of their cities, including rural communities in their regions. Breeze FM, for instance, reaches the entire Eastern province of Zambia and some neighboring parts of Malawi and Mozambique, comprehending 800.000 people under their coverage area. Also in Zambia, Zambezi FM is covering several communities in four neighboring countries of the region: Southern Zambia, Northern Namibia, Eastern Botswana and Western Zimbabwe.

Such a pluralistic audience requires production in different languages. In South Africa, for instance, the majority of the radios participating in the project produce content at least in Xhosa, Afrikaans and English. The local radios usually are the main source of information in local languages for an audience most of the times illiterate, which is marginalized by the mainstream media (UNESCO, 2011). In the DRC there are more than 400 local languages still in use due the high illiteracy rate in the country, while the mainstream media only broadcast in one or more of the four national languages (Lingala, Swahili, Kikongo and Tshiluba) (*Ibid*). Before the project's implementation, a survey was made to identify the listeners' habits and revealed that, in the DRC,

Languages like Kikongo and Lingala are preferred by youth and people without formal education, while French is preferred by respondents with university background. The Namibian radio station Base FM broadcasts most of its programmes in English; however the audience assessment has revealed that 70% of listeners prefer Oshiwambo. This kind of information created knowledge in the radio station for choosing the best language to reach poor people with and providing them access to the public debate (UNESCO, 2013b, p. 8).

The project (UNESCO, 2011) pointed a rapid growth in the ICT sector in all the seven countries covered, especially regarding mobile phone subscribers. Although the number of Internet users is still low in most of them, the access through mobile devices and cyber-cafes has shown to be a more affordable alternative to reach more people. However, the Internet penetration in rural areas still faces some challenges.

In Kenya, high operation and maintenance costs were inhibiting the spread of Internet in un-served areas. "Low level of ICT's knowledge and high illiteracy rates

among disadvantage groups, especially women and the aged in Kenya, also continue to limit the full use of ICTs” (*Ibid*, p.7). While in Namibia and in Zambia great part of the people, both in urban and rural areas, can afford to have mobile phones; the high connectivity costs still limits the access to the Internet for most of them. The same happens in South Africa, where Internet penetration is blocked by the high cost of access and expensive compatible-devices.

Besides the lack of ICT’s access and literacy among the public, especially in isolated regions, the project’s local radios in rural areas were also challenged by the lack of equipments and trained personnel. Before the implementation of the project, some of them were facing structural limitations such as power shortages, poor or none internet connection, damaged computers and no multi-function mobile phones. In the DRC, for instance, Radio Moanda and Radio Bangu were migrating towards digital equipments but the first was exposed to frequent electricity shortages and the other had almost all its computers out of service. In Namibia, !aH FM was still operating through analogue system and didn’t have even a single computer, facing a lack of human and technical capacities to deal with ICTs. Among the 32 radio stations participating in the project, 10 didn’t have internet access before its implementation (see Appendix I). Namely Radio Kimvuka na Lutondo, in the DRC; Sauti FM, in Kenya; Ohangwena and !aH FM, in Namibia; Kyela, Mtegani and Pambazuko FM, in Tanzania; and Iso, Mkushi and Lyambai FM, in Zambia.

The ICTs knowledge and access among the local radios as a group proved to be in an earlier stage in the DRC than in other countries. During a three-day workshop on the use of ICTs for reporting⁷, in December 2012, it was verified that 80% of the 65 participants from the four participating radios in the country (Bangu, Kimvuka na Lutondo, Moanda and Télé Déo Gratiass) had never touched a computer. Besides that, the hands on training approach was compromised by the lack of equipment resources in some radio stations for practical demonstrations, what also wouldn’t allow them to put into practice what they learned. In addition, the trainees without any previous contact with the technology world needed more time to assimilate the content.

⁷ <http://fr.unesco.org/radioict/workshops/lutlisation-dinternet-pour-faire-du-reportage-sur-des-sujets-se-rapportant-lenvironnemet>

However, the existing gaps among the 32 local radios were identified before the project implementation with in-depth studies conducted by local research institutions in each country to create knowledge about the reality of each station and their communities. The results of these studies helped UNESCO's team to establish different training starting points for each station according to their needs. "While in some radio stations the goal was to introduce basic Internet skills, other radio stations were able to implement more complex ICTs like SMS polling or automated call-ins" (UNESCO, 2013b, p. 9).

Although the inequality of ICT access and knowledge among the local radio stations across the region is clear, it is presumed that they can benefit with the introduction of these new tools in their work. Fostering the use of ICTs in development journalism practice, even in harsh conditions, is likely to enhance newsgathering and audience participation in the public debate on issues of local concern, intending to promote social changes towards their development.

II. 3. Achievements and challenges

The introduction of ICTs in radio stations' work routine is likely to be an important tool to develop their news gathering, fed both by the local correspondents and the audience, who is stimulated to participate in the public debate on issues of local concern through new channels. This interactive and pluralistic approach to spread information about development issues has the potential to raise awareness and facilitate assimilation among the public in order to promote social change. The UNESCO's project "Empowering Local Radios with ICTs" addresses the lack of quality programming of the participating radio stations on development issues by providing them a series of activities mainly to strengthen their capacities on the use of ICTs, establishing a network of local correspondents and fostering their financial sustainability (UNESCO, 2013b, annex i)⁸.

One of the objectives of the project is that "radio stations use ICTs for improving programming, editorial work, communication and interaction, broadcasting and delivery, financial planning and management" (*Ibid.*). The ICTs in use vary among

⁸ http://en.unesco.org/radioict/sites/default/files/rbm_matrix_231112.pdf

the stations and consist in software, Internet-based applications and devices for the various purposes above mentioned (UNESCO, 2013b, annex x)⁹. The present analysis focuses primarily in how the radio stations are using these resources for news gathering, interacting with the correspondents and engaging their audience on issues of local concern. It was identified that the preferable tools in use consist mainly on software for call-in and short message service (SMS) through mobile phones, such as Freedom Fone and Frontline SMS; social media, such as Facebook and Twitter; blogs, website and audio streaming to reach broader audiences; and email accounts for interaction, networking and newsgathering. The previous knowledge and access to these tools implied on the extension of how the radio stations were using them to enhance their work routines and engage their audience, what is examined next.

⁹ <http://en.unesco.org/radioict/icts>

CHAPTER III: Findings and discussion

III. 1. Improving newsgathering

Hezekiel Dlamini¹⁰, UNESCO field officer responsible of implementing the project in Zambia, highlights that the use of ICTs permits the radio stations be able to deliver current and relevant content almost in real time, covering breaking news within their signal area. “They can have programs that actually carry the voices of the local population instead of re-broadcasting news from the capital city or from a big global network”, he explains.

The use of ICTs facilitates the access of information through different channels, such as the Internet for emails, social media, media outlets’ websites, databases and search engines; and mobile phones for SMS and call-ins, for instance. These channels of gathering information are more pluralistic than relying mainly on official sources, allowing local radios to inform their audience what is happening in their proximities and issues affecting their realities. However, the quality of the UGCs gathered is still a concern and trainings on MIL are required to improve the public debate on issues affecting the development of their regions.

Under the period reviewed in the project’s annual report of 2012, 268 members of the communities representing all the 32 stations were trained on reporting and ICT skills and to interact with the local radios (UNESCO, 2013b, annex xi). Students, farmers, traders and teachers, for instance, were feeding the radio stations with a plurality of sources and diversity of local news, reinforcing the local radios’ potential to be social service providers for their communities. “The identification, training and networking of correspondents in the radio stations have been enabling an expansion of the news coverage area with local and relevant content” (UNESCO, 2013b, p. 13).

None of the four local radios in the DRC under the project had a network of correspondents previously established, having 48 in total after its implementation.

¹⁰ <https://soundcloud.com/empoweringlocalradios/hezekiel-dlamini-unesco-field>

Radios Kimvika na Lutondo, Bangu and Télé Déo Gratias established a network of ten each; while Radio Moanda recruited 18 contributors. The equipments being used by the correspondents from the four stations were basically mobile phones and the computers from the stations for interaction and content production, with a regularity of once or twice a week. The content submitted by the correspondents is mainly stories exploring problems faced by the community, about health, visits of officials and car accidents.

In Kenya, there was already a network of 20 correspondents before the project's implementation. While radio Mug'ambo and Mangelete did not have any, Sauti FM had 18 and radio Mwanedu had two. Meanwhile after the project's implementation, radio Mangelete recruited two, radio Mug'ambo six, radio Mwanedu remained with two, and Sauti FM increased its number of contributors to 23; forming a net work of 43 correspondents in the country. All of them were using mobile phones, especially for SMS, and also computers among the Sauti FM's contributors.

The content submitted by radio Mangelete's correspondents, on a weekly basis, consisted mainly in stories about local political issues or related to the environment and agriculture. Radio Mug'ambo was in a daily contact with its correspondents, who were submitting stories about agriculture such as market information and daily prices of the products. Radio Mwanedu kept in contact with its correspondents in a daily basis to receive stories from the grassroots, primarily on agriculture. Sauti FM, on the other hand, increased its contact with the correspondents from weekly to a daily basis. They were submitting stories about women empowerment, environment, agriculture, health and governance.

Radio Mafeteng, the only community radio in Lesotho, already had 15 correspondents but raised this number to 22 after the project was implemented. Moreover, the contact with them became more frequent from only about four times a year to twice a week. The correspondents were using mobile phones, recorders, laptops and the stations' computers to access the Internet and social media tools, for instance. Weekly programmes on health issues and debates about entrepreneurship are some examples of content submitted.

All Namibian Radios under the project at the time already had correspondents before its implementation, 22 in total, but they increased their networks afterwards reaching 40. Base FM raised the number of local contributors from 6 to 11; Ohangwena doubled reaching 12; Live FM from 7 to 11; and the former participant West Coast FM

doubled to 6 its number of correspondents. The frequency of contact between the stations and their correspondents also increased, from a few times a year to twice a week. The equipment used by the correspondents consisted mainly in mobile phones, recorders, laptops and office computers; and even tablets and digital recorders among Base and West Coast FM's contributors. A variety of issues covered by them was broadcasted two or three times a week. For instance, in Base FM there was a new gender related programme; in Ohangwena the thematic were primarily gender and health, especially HIV prevention; in Live FM they were addressing gender violence in their community; and in West Coast the focus was mainly local unemployment, dairy farming and health issues.

In South Africa, the scenario was similar. All the five local radios participating in the project already had correspondents before its implementation, 106 in total, reaching 129 afterwards. The number of local contributors was raised from 26 to 33 in Radio Riverside, 15 to 19 in Bush FM, 4 to 11 in Radio Atlantis, and 8 to 14 in Valley FM; while in Jozi FM, which already had a large number of correspondents, it decreased from 53 to 52 due one turnover. It was noticed that the frequency of contact between the stations and their correspondents also increased from a few times a year to twice a week in most of the stations, about only twice a month in Radio Riverside though. The equipment used by the correspondents consisted mainly in mobile phones, recorders, laptops and station's computers; also tablets and digital recorders among contributors from the radios Riverside, Bush and Jozi FM.

The South African correspondents covered a diversity of issues broadcasted on radio programmes once or twice a week. In the radio Riverside, for instance, the content submitted was mostly related to health, especially HIV prevention and teenage pregnancy. While Bush FM was receiving content addressing employment challenges, health issues and education on farming. The programmes in radio Atlantis, on the other hand, touched issues such as accessibility of land, teenage pregnancy and health care. Valley FM's correspondents were addressing the high prevalence of drug and alcohol abuse in their community in the airwaves. An issue addressed by Jozi FM's contributors as well, who also sent contents about crime and youth in Soweto and accessibility of land.

Tanzania has nine local radios under the project, the largest number among the seven countries participating. The network of correspondents in the country was raised

from 77 to 129 community members contributing to feed the stations with local news. Only Pangani FM did not have any correspondent before the project's implementation, recruiting 6 afterwards. While Pambazuko FM remained with its initial 6; all the other stations got more contributors. The station that had the largest number of initial correspondents was radio Sangerema, with 23; which also had the largest number of recruitments, reaching 45. The equipment used by them consisted only in mobile phones and audio recorders, sometimes the stations' laptop.

The frequency of contact between the stations in Tanzania and their correspondents was already high before the project started, daily in almost all of them. In radio Micheweni, on the other hand, the previous frequency was once a week and afterwards the correspondents were participating on daily news and weekly on programmes. The contents submitted by the correspondents addressed a wide range of issues such as health, education, governance, entrepreneurship, gender, agriculture, environment and violence.

In Zambia, on the other hand, the number of correspondents remained the same during the period reviewed by the annual report of 2012. There was a network of 17 correspondents from all the five Zambian local radios participating in the project. The only changes were in Breeze FM, from 5 to 4 due one turnover; and in radio Mkushi, from 1 to 2 correspondents. Although, "in Zambia, only Breeze FM had a policy for contracting correspondents. Throughout the trainings provided, Breeze FM performed a key role, sharing its practices with the other four radio stations, which have now established their own policies and started to contract correspondents"(UNESCO, 2013b, p. 13). The regularity of contact with the stations increased though, from few times per month to a few times per week. All of the correspondents were using audio recorders and mobile phones; while some of them from Breeze, Lyambai and Zambezi FM also had access to the Internet through their devices. They were sending live news reports to the radio stations from public events and places such as local markets and community meetings; and producing interviews for weekly programmes on issues such as health, gender, environment, etc.

Despite all the different initial situations regarding ICTs access and knowledge among the radio stations, it is noticed that all of them improved their newsgathering on local and relevant issues affecting the development of their communities somehow. The inhibition of an improved and more effective use of ICTs to collect local news can be

attributed to lack of access to these resources, being more frequent in rural areas than in urban areas. While there are still some stations using primarily SMS to receive only short reports from the field, especially in rural areas, it is noticed the emergence of more elaborated content such as edited interviews sent by email to broadcast almost in real time.

III. 2. Interacting and engaging the audience

The ICTs offer the audience different channels of interaction, turning them into a valuable source of information for local news and feedback to adjust the radios' programming. The shift from a top-down approach, mainly with official voices, to a more participative programming is likely to generate more interest among the listeners and engage them to participate in the public debate (Berger, 2010). The ways of interaction and level of engagement varies with the ICT access and resources available in each context.

In the DRC, the project's report (UNESCO, 2013b) stressed that it was the first time radio stations' staff was trained on the use of ICTs and the Internet for their work. To interact with the audience, all of the radio stations were using only SMS polls advertised in their programs. Rigobert Malalako, director of radio Bangu, points that "we currently use software such as Front Line SMS, which allows us to conduct opinion polls amongst our listeners to know what issues they would like to listen to, who their favorite host is, and so on"¹¹.

In Kenya the situation is diverse due problems with Internet connectivity faced by some radio stations. All of the four radio stations in the country under the project have Internet access, however radios Mug'ambo and Sauti FM still had an intermittent connectivity that was undertaking their work. Sauti FM, for instance, didn't have a website and was using the manager's personal email for official communication. On the other hand, radios Mangelete, Mwanedo and Mug'ambo were using the stations' own mobile phones to encourage listeners to participate sending their opinions through SMS and phone calls.

¹¹ http://en.unesco.org/radioict/sites/default/files/radio_bangu_presentation_transcript.pdf

Besides interacting with the audience through SMS polls advertised in the radios' programmes and call-ins, the report pointed that the radio stations in Kenya were using a new medium for monitoring and engaging the audience. The radios' staff was using their own Facebook page to interact with the listeners, an attempt to motivate them to be familiar with this tool and to create ownership to their programming content. It was also pointed that Radio Mangelete also invited sometimes listeners to participate through their Facebook page¹², however it was noticed that their profile in this social network did not have regular updates.

Georges Mwamodo, station manager of Mwanedu FM, stresses the importance of receiving the feedback from the audience to address their needs in the radio programming to foster the community development. "We are able to monitor through short code messages, through phone calls. (...) We get feedback from people telling us what they like while we run programs on agriculture. And now you are able to tell that something is happening on the ground"¹³.

In Lesotho, it was pointed that radio Mafeteng counted only with staff's personal mobile phones with Internet access and two computers in the beginning of the project. The interaction with the audience for monitoring reports was basically through SMS and call-in polls and emails. However, it can be noticed some attempts in the stations' Facebook page¹⁴ to engage the audience on the debate of issues of local concern but usually with only few adherents.

The radio stations in Namibia were interacting with their audience for monitoring reports basically through SMS and call-in polls. However, it was pointed that Base and Live FM were also using the Internet for this purpose through social media such as Facebook and Twitter. It was also noticed in the project's annual report of 2012 that Base FM's listeners were participating actively in the radio's programming through SMS, call-ins and the station's Facebook page¹⁵.

In South Africa, it was indicated in the project's report that the interaction with the audience for monitoring reports was made mostly by SMS and call-in polls and emails in all radios. However, it is noticed that all of them also have presence in social

¹² <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Mangelete-Community-Radio/166372196816984?fref=ts>

¹³ http://en.unesco.org/radioict/sites/default/files/audio_1_-_interview_with_mwanedu_radio_manager_mr._mwamodo_english_-_transcript_0.pdf

¹⁴ <https://www.facebook.com/MafetengCommunityRadio>

¹⁵ <https://www.facebook.com/BaseFM>

media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. The report pointed out that Radio Riverside was ahead of the other radios in the country concerning the use of ICTs. It was highlighted that this radio station was frequently using SMS for interacting with the audience; offering also other channels such as Whatsapp, online streaming, podcasts and blogging.

In Tanzania, the radio stations were interacting with the audience for monitoring reports mainly through SMS and phone calls; while radios FADECO, Kahama and Orkonerei also were using Facebook and other social media for this matter. It was pointed that radios Kyela, Pangani and Sengerema were using Facebook for interaction, feedback and sharing information with their audience as well. The report stressed that radio Kahama was “creating a virtuous cycle of engagement with its audience” (UNESCO, 2013b, annex xii, p. 30) through Facebook. In addition, it was highlighted that radios Kahama and Orkonerei were streaming their radio programmes online through their websites, reaching broader audiences.

In Zambia, the interaction between the radio stations and their audience for monitoring reports was being made basically through SMS polls and flash voting. However, radios Breeze and Zambezi FM also have a strong presence in Facebook. It is verified that Breeze FM¹⁶, with 790 likes by March 2014, uses this platform primarily for sharing information; on the other hand, Zambezi FM¹⁷, which has almost 3.500 likes by the same time, attempts to stimulate a dialogue with its listeners but with low adherence.

Some stations, including Breeze, have tried for years to make broadcasting more of a conversation, encouraging their listeners to send letters, to drop in to the studio, or to have their voices recorded by reporters and used in news stories to illustrate the breadth of popular opinion on certain topics. But that all still leaves a lot of power in the hands of the journalist, to decide who gets to speak and what sorts of opinions are heard. However, dramatic increases in the ownership of mobile telephones have made a huge difference to the extent of popular participation. They allow lots of shows to be made, relatively cheaply, in which the voices of listeners are heard directly as they call or text in to express an opinion, vote in a poll, or ask a question of an invited guest. (Fraser, 2014)

¹⁶ <https://www.facebook.com/breezefmchipata>

¹⁷ <https://www.facebook.com/zambezifm107.7>

UNESCO field officer Hezekiel Dlamini¹⁸ believes that empowering local radios to engage their audiences using ICT tools will give them capacities “to make those voices of the local opinion leaders heard but also those of ordinary people who would have no other means of sharing their stories, sharing their successes, and also sharing their experiences, whether negative or positive”. Lydiah Gachungi¹⁹, UNESCO field officer responsible of implementing the project in Lesotho, pointed that the trainings on the use of ICTs in Radio Mafeteng “is helping communities participate more, it’s helping communities have their voices heard more, it’s helping communities to actually discuss and network with the other people on-air”.

Despite some attempts of local radios to use social media such as Facebook to engage the audience, usually in major urban areas, it is noticed that the adherence of the listeners through online platforms is still low in the region. The lack of knowledge and access to the Internet and its high cost, especially in rural areas, inhibits its proliferation. Although, the spread use of mobile phones permits the audience actively participate into the radio programmes through SMS and phone calls, what is noticed in the majority of the local radios under the project.

III. 3. Fostering social change

It was indicated above how the use of ICTs can enhance newsgathering and public engagement in development journalism practices in Sub-Saharan Africa, intending to foster social change in poor regions. However, further studies with a deeper approach (such as content and audience analysis) are necessary to comprehend in which extension the use of ICTs are effectively helping local radios to change people’s mindset and stimulate the audience’s participation in the public debate on issues of local concern related to their development. Meanwhile, some examples of social change are already being noticed by the local radios under UNESCO’s project in their communities.

¹⁸ <https://soundcloud.com/empoweringlocalradios/hezekiel-dlamini-unesco-field>

¹⁹ <https://soundcloud.com/empoweringlocalradios/lydiah-gachungi-unesco-field>

Mike Daka²⁰, manager of Breeze FM, in Zambia, noticed that the radio's "manner of interacting with its listeners, opening up the station, the studios, bringing close contact between the listeners and the presenters and producers, has changed completely the way the people of Eastern province viewed radio". For him, this participative approach brought more ownership for the listeners with the proximity of the information, directly related to their realities.

In Kenya, the manager of Mwanedu FM, Georges Mwamodo²¹ was noticing an increasing participation of the station's audience through SMS to get involved in agriculture activities in order to improve their living conditions. "Everybody is trying to change his or her livelihood. Mwanedu has changed the lives of the people and that is why many people are also tuning to the station to get to know how they can move forward from where they are", he believes.

Radio Mafeteng, in Lesotho, attempts to improve the lives of the people by reporting on the issues affecting the community such as crime. "Since the station started there is a huge improvement in the lives of these people concerning crime and reporting anything that is not good in the community. Everybody is happy, everybody wants to live a normal life, so radio has really changed the life of local people", radio station's manager, Mr. Jessy²², believes.

In South Africa, Radio Riverside is addressing community's challenges in order to promote an active participation of the audience around issues of local concern. The radio station's manager, Tebogo Monyo²³, states that "We have been speaking against wrong doing in the community, in businesses, in local government to ensure that people are not complacent in what they do, and also to ensure that people do not take communities for granted, people are able to speak against ills in their community".

Victor Musonda²⁴, Zambezi FM's radio station manager, pointed that this Zambian radio station was promoting various initiatives to engage the audience to make their community a better place. Through a gardening competition, for instance, they are encouraging the residents to keep their surroundings and thus the city clean. "People are encouraged to send their photos of their surroundings, and depending on how clean they

²⁰ http://en.unesco.org/radioict/sites/default/files/breeze_fm_presentation_transcript.pdf

²¹ http://en.unesco.org/radioict/sites/default/files/audio_2_-_mwanedu_fm_presentation_transcript.pdf

²² http://en.unesco.org/radioict/sites/default/files/mafeteng_radio_presentation_transcript.pdf

²³ http://en.unesco.org/radioict/sites/default/files/radio_riverside_presentation_transcript.pdf

²⁴ http://en.unesco.org/radioict/sites/default/files/zambezi_fm_presentation_transcript.pdf

are, every month they do walk away with prizes which are provided through our various partners”, he explains.

Therefore, the perspectives of the use of ICTs by local radios to enhance the development journalism practice are stimulating. For Victor Soo²⁵, senior research assistant of the Permanent Delegation of Kenya to UNESCO, the improvement of the interaction between the radio stations and their audiences through these new tools creates a participative platform that “is really needed for a good society in terms of exchanging to raise our voices and also to find common solutions on common issues”. He stresses the importance of radio to empower communities, adding that “ICT is there to help radio be of better quality, and indirectly or directly, in a sense, empowers the radio which empowers the community. So ICTs are really important in development of radio”.

Mohammed Sheya²⁶, deputy permanent delegate of Tanzania to UNESCO, believes that the use of ICTs can lead to the improvement of information and knowledge of the citizens on issues of local concern, being able to actively participate in the public sphere. “As more citizens get involved, there will be improved awareness of the importance of local radio, thereby strengthening capacity for local content production and information delivery”, he explains.

Thus, fostering a more participative approach in local radios with new technologies, despite all challenges still existing, is showing evidences that the use of ICTs can enhance the development journalism practice. With different channels to address issues of local concern, even in hard conditions, ordinary people can give their opinion and actively participate in the public debate to promote the development of their communities. This approach contributes to a pluralistic media that is likely to promote social change.

²⁵ <https://soundcloud.com/empoweringlocalradios/interview-with-victor-soo>

²⁶ <https://soundcloud.com/empoweringlocalradios/interview-with-prof-mohammed>

CHAPTER IV: Perspectives for development journalism with ICTs

Despite the different levels of previous ICTs access and knowledge verified among the radio stations under the UNESCO project “Empowering Local Radios with ICTs”, it was identified above that the introduction of new technologies in their work routines somehow helped to enhance the newsgathering, stimulate audience participation in the public debate in order to foster the development of their communities and promote social change. However, these findings raise some questions regarding their effectiveness, applicability and scope in the practice of development journalism.

To reach a broader perspective of how ICTs can enhance the development journalism, UNESCO experts were interviewed in order to enlighten the following questions regarding the project’s implementation:

IV. 1. Contents quality

1) The use of ICTs facilitates the radio stations’ access to UGCs sent by the audience, raising the quantity of local content. How to ensure the quality and journalistic relevance of these contents?

Jonathas Mello, UNESCO consultant responsible for the project, stressed that the idea of the project is to stimulate an audience participation mediated by the local radio stations’ staff. Selected members of the communities, acting as correspondents, inform the radio stations what is happening in their area, interviewing local residents, pointing their problems, being a bridge between the people who don’t have access and knowledge to use ICTs and the radio stations.

Fackson Banda, UNESCO programme specialist in the Division of Freedom of Expression and Media Development, argued that training opportunities offered by IGOs and NGOs for journalists, citizen journalists and communities in the developing world

raise a civic awareness that leads to a better understanding of information, stimulating more debate and thus promoting the quality of the discussions on issues affecting their development. “ICTs, by their very nature, are helping in the sense of putting opinions in the public sphere for everybody to look at, to critic, to access. So we ourselves are bringing to the public sphere our experiences, our knowledge, our views and so on”, he stated.

IV. 2. Audience engagement

2) *How the interaction of the audience in the radios’ programming through ICTs can be transformed in actual engagement on issues of local concern?*

Turning local radios in social service providers, addressing issues concerning their communities to get solutions from the authorities, is one of the project’s objectives which Jonathas Mello believes being important for the communities’ development. He also pointed that an initial survey was carried to identify issues of local concern among the audience of each radio, adjusting their programming to empower the public on issues affecting their development such as health prophylaxis, agriculture practices, etc. Mello said that bringing government representatives to discuss problems raised by the community, for instance, is a way to stimulate leadership and promote an actual engagement among the audience.

For Fackson Banda, “ICTs are building a bridge between radio stations and the audiences. (...) I think that is changing the dynamics of radio production because there is more participation, there is more use of people who are situated in their own communities and therefore better able to analyze issues within their own lived experiences. For me, that is very transformative and brings to radio production an opportunity to truly understand what people’s problems are”.

Banda also believes that this interaction of the audience turns them into co-producers rather than only consumers of content, being included in the radios’ programming production. “So there is a greater sense of ownership, community ownership of the radio station. And it becomes, in that sense, the community good or

public good. And when you have people's energies invested in a project like that, I think that it helps to transform an entire community in terms of the information that it gets, how the information is used. Indeed there is more trust in that information because it is generated through a process of co-production. And if you can attach that kind of value to such information, then I think the chances of that information being transformative can truly be realized", he stated.

IV.3. Social change and community development

3) *How important are these accomplishments to promote social change towards the development of their communities?*

Jonathas Mello stressed that the establishment of a correspondents' network feed the radios with current and relevant local news content within their signal coverage, informing and empowering the audience about important issues and events happening around them. While the interaction with the audience, according to Mello, let the radio stations aware of what the public want and need to know, mapping their concerns to address these issues in the radio programming in order to empower the people and find solutions.

However, as Fackson Banda recognizes, social change is a long term process and it is difficult to measure it. The programme specialist believes that the use of ICTs is changing the way both radio production and consumption are taking place, being less professionalized and more passionate. "Less professionalized because people see the opportunities that are there, most of them as a result of usage of ICTs, to engage in co-production as I've already said. Interactive radio makes people see themselves as citizens first and foremost, and only secondly as radio consumers. For me that is important because it changes the whole game, as opposed when we viewed radio production as a vertical process with one point producing and the other just consuming".

In this sense, Banda concludes that information dissemination has now "a horizontal arrangement of production that involves aspects of participation, of

empowerment, and even of identity information. When you identify yourself as a producer, rather than a consumer, it empowers you. It makes you feel like you are able to solve a particular problem using the means at your disposal. Those tools might be the media of radio and also, linked to that, ICTs, mobile telephony, the ability for you to contribute with what is going on and so on”.

IV. 4. Overcoming challenges

4) In which extension the lack of ICT access and knowledge, especially in rural areas, can inhibit the development journalism practice? How to overcome these challenges and stimulate the public debate on issues of local concern even in harsh contexts?

Banda pointed that “rural communities are generally been known to organize themselves differently. Even in the absence of ICTs they have their own systems of debating issues, communicating with one another, and so on. But I think that the value addition that ICTs bring to that environment is that they strengthen that space of public debate and they extend it to more people within the particular locality”. Thus, the specialist stressed that the lack of infrastructure jeopardizes the opportunities for information to flow, for creating knowledge that can be disseminated broadly and for overcoming development challenges in a collective way.

Jonathas Mello explained that, during the project’s implementation, the choice of ICTs considered the context of each radio and their communities. He pointed that software such as *Freedom Fone* and *Frontline SMS*, for instance, are some options that can be introduced even in radios without internet access to interact with their audience through call-ins and SMS. However, the project’s coordinator stressed that there is no standard solution and it is necessary to adapt the technology to each particular context in a bottom-up approach. Mello pointed that the level of participation of the public varies according to their connectivity to new technologies and media and information literacy.

In the meantime, as Banda pointed, the ICTs access is increasing in many instances across Africa, especially mobile phones in rural areas. “With access to ICTs

the people in rural areas can interact not only among themselves but with the power brokers in the nation. So they can begin to see themselves as part of the larger country and begin, for example, to engage with their elected officials. (...) ICTs should be broadly defined. Not only in terms of new technologies, like mobile telephony, but also conventional ICTs, like even analogue radio. It does bring changes sometimes underrated”, he stated.

IV.5. Spreading the practice

5) *Despite Sub-Saharan Africa, which regions could be benefited with the strengthening of community media with ICTs and why?*

Fackson Banda pointed that, despite all regions could be benefited, in terms of access the main concern is about the developing world like Asia, Latin America and the Pacific. Meanwhile, Jonathas Mello stressed that for a more effective implementation of ICTs in radio broadcasting to address development issues it is necessary to assure some conditions such as minimum infrastructure and connectivity, freedom of expression and editorial independence.

On the other hand, Banda believes that even in developed countries there are communities that are still out of the public sphere and need people to participate more in media production. “In Western countries, for example, where media are said to be highly professionalized, that means that in fact they practice vertical communication: communication produced by highly professionalized elite and then transmitting it to the mass audience”, he stressed.

But the specialist pointed that the notion of *hyper localization*, noticed during the 2008 economic and financial crisis, indicates that things are changing. “Media organizations started to look inwards, started to focusing on their own local communities to try to get information from them and push it within the confines of those communities. This signs the fact that media organizations are becoming more open to user-generated contents. And that of course is facilitated by the presence of new ICTs. So this issue is applicable to all regions, not only in the developing world but also

developed world, at least in some communities in the developed world”, Banda concludes.

CONCLUSION

The present study has pointed new opportunities offered by the introduction of ICTs to enhance the development journalism practice, in order to enlarge the public sphere and empower ordinary people to participate more actively in public debate on issues affecting their development. The achievements and challenges faced by 32 radio stations under the UNESCO project “Empowering Local Radios with ICTs” offered a wide overview of the introduction of ICTs in different contexts, within and among seven countries in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Even though the lack of ICTs access and knowledge is still a concern in the developing world, especially in rural areas, some improvements are seen in the local radios’ newsgathering and interaction with the audience using the existing resources. While Internet is still unreachable for many people due high tariffs and the lack of literacy and infrastructure, mobile phone proved to be an affordable tool broadly used even in rural areas. Local voices can be heard and have their opinions considered in the local radio’s programming especially through call-in and SMS, ensuring a pluralistic and participative approach.

The ICTs offer the audience different channels of interaction, turning them into a valuable source of information for local news and feedback to adjust the radios’ programming. Listeners can have access to local and relevant content on issues affecting the development of their communities, turning the radio stations providers of social service providers in order to foster social change. The shift from a top-down approach, mainly with official voices, to a more participative programming is likely to generate more interest among the listeners and engage them to participate in the public debate. The ways of interaction and level of engagement varies with the ICT access and resources available in each context.

Although there are barriers, such as the lack of access and knowledge, to a broader use of ICTs in many regions; it is still possible to include more people in the public debate. Selected members of the communities can be trained to act as local correspondents, informing the radio stations what is happening in their area,

interviewing local residents, pointing their problems, being a bridge between people who don't have access and knowledge to use ICTs and the radio stations.

In this sense, the audience becomes a co-producer rather than only a consumer of information. This creates a greater sense of ownership of the radio programming by the community, which can use this debate arena to address issues concerning their development and find solutions for common problems. With access to ICTs, even isolated communities can feel themselves belonging to the broader nation since they are able to interact not only among themselves but also address their development issues with the authorities and national powers. Thus, this horizontal approach of information production and consumption is likely to be more transformative and empower the public towards their development. Adapting the use of ICTs to particular contexts, development journalism has new tools to be more pluralistic and participative in order to address people's needs and foster their development.

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**APPENDIX I: List of radio stations under UNESCO Project
“Empowering Local Radios with ICTs”**

Country	Radio	Audience	Previous Internet access
Democratic Republic of the Congo	Kimvuka na Lutondo	635.000	No
	Radio Bangu	500.000	Yes
	Radio Moanda	200.000	Yes
	Radio Télé Déo Gracias	150.000	Yes
Kenya	Mangelete Radio	700.000	Yes
	Mug'ambo Jwetu Radio	400.000	Yes
	Mwanedu Radio	560.000	Yes
	Sauti FM	750.000	No
Lesotho	Mafeteng Radio	70.000	Yes
Namibia	!ah Radio	N/A	No
	Base FM	250.000	Yes
	Live FM	21.000	Yes
	Ohangwena Radio	230.000	No
South Africa	Bush Radio	86.000	Yes
	Jozi FM	564.000	Yes
	Radio Atlantis	29.000	Yes
	Radio Riverside	73.000	Yes
	Valley FM	37.000	Yes
Tanzania	FADECO Radio	540.000	Yes
	Kahama FM	600.000	Yes
	Kyela FM	349.000	No
	Micheweni Radio	N/A	Yes
	Mtegani FM	N/A	No
	Orkonorei	N/A	Yes
	Pambazuko	380.000	No
	Pangani FM	45.000	Yes
	Sengerema Radio	650.000	Yes
Zambia	Breeze FM	800.000	Yes
	Iso-Community Radio	130.000	No
	Mkushi Radio	150.000	No
	Radio Lyambai	80.000	No
	Zambezi FM	300.000	Yes

Source: UNESCO, 2011; 2013b.

APPENDIX II: Geographical distribution of the local radios



Source: <http://en.unesco.org/radioict/local-radios>