



## **Community Media and Development**

**November 21, 2004  
Marrakech, Morocco**

**Organized by The World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (Amarc)**

### The Marrakech Roundtable

The aim of the Marrakech Roundtable, which will be held in November 2004, is to foster an open dialogue among donors and facilitators of community media on the contribution of the sector to the Millennium Declaration.

It will bring together key stakeholders in the communications and development sectors.

The Organizations invited to participate will include bilateral agencies from the United Kingdom (DFID), Canada (CIDA), Denmark (DANIDA), Sweden (SIDA), Switzerland (SIDC), France (Ministère des Affaires étrangères) Norway, Netherlands, Finland, Germany, Italy and Spain. Some Foundations will also be approached (Friedrich Ebert, Ford, Open Society and EED among others). Multilateral organizations such as the World Bank where AMARC is already part of the Consulting Body on Communications, UNESCO, FAO and UNDP will also be invited to play a role as key stakeholders.

It is also key that local civil society develop productive partnerships with the community radio sector and in this regard, it is anticipated that there will be a number of media concerned NGOs, such as PANOS, One World and FEMNET.

The purpose of the roundtable is to explore strategies for support to the sector to enhance impact on the achievement and monitoring of MDGs; to exchange experiences and compare models, approaches and contexts; to identify needs and recommend measures to meet these needs for successful implementation; to review the AMARC Community Radio Development Fund for its potential contribution to the debate and that can serve as a rallying point for all partners and stakeholders including donors.

The findings of the Marrakech Roundtable can be expected to provide the impetus for a new international co-operative effort to empower and network disadvantaged communities through the integrated use of a common development fund project.

### Fostering Partnerships in Africa



The Information, Communication & Technology sector in Africa has reached an exciting phase in its development. There is considerable commitment in civil society at national and international levels to reforming the way that information is used and developed with the help of new technologies, such as the Internet. Community radio remains however the most penetrative medium and is an important site for technology convergence and development practice. This is matched by a vigorous debate around governance and empowerment on the continent that is reflected in initiatives from NEPAD at the trans-national level to media reform in all but two African states over the last ten years. As a result, the number of community radio stations is growing in Africa and the opportunities for them to make an impact appear unprecedented.

However the community media sector faces two key challenges, one is the lack of advancement on the partnership between such media and the development community. For instance, the potential of community media to engage poor and marginalized communities in a way that enhances service delivery or impacts on policy and governance is not being fostered strategically. Community radio operators also suffer from a lack of consistent and sustained support

across the continent. Often those communities or radio initiatives that are most in need are less likely to gain access to technical or funding support.

The situation in West Africa is marginally better than other parts of Africa but even here the practice of communication for social change does not match the potential of the structures in place.

This roundtable is meant to explore strategies to redress these problems. AMARC wants to provide some reflection on the ethos of the Millennium Declaration and the opportunities that might be inherent here for the community media sector to develop partnerships with those working on reducing poverty. AMARC believes there is mutual benefit to be had from a dialogue and working relationship between the development community and animators of community radio. In this regard, AMARC has been leveraging a Community Radio Development Fund that should provide a cost-effective and practical framework such collaboration. This roundtable will also be the opportunity to share progress on this fund and solicit input from the stakeholders that we expect will take it forward.

### The Community Radio Development Fund

Radio remains the most widely spread media in Africa. In 2001, it was estimated that 1 in 4 Africans had a radio. Community radio is low-cost, easy to operate, reaches all segments of the community through local languages and can offer information, education, entertainment, as well as a platform for debate and cultural expression. As a grassroots channel of communication, it maximises the potential for development to be drawn from sharing the information, knowledge and skills already existing within the community. It can therefore act as a powerful agent for community and individual empowerment.



Funding for community radio has tended to be in the form of isolated relationships between a single donor and a single recipient. There are many successful examples of community radio to be found in Africa but few funding sources readily available to scale-up successful models when the opportunities arise. In very few cases, notably recent developments in Niger, efforts at scaling up have been made at country level. There is no readily accessible regional funding programme to ensure strategic support for new community radio opportunities as and when they arise.

A well-resourced "Development Fund for Community Radio in Africa" would have major impact on the pace of development in the continent and provide a cost-effective mechanism of getting resources down to local community level. Transparent and competitive procedures backed up by specialist technical support would assure value for money and quality of outcome. Strategic impact and effective decision-making would be ensured by involvement of key donors and support agencies in the region and a panel of expert advisors with practitioner experience in community radio.



It is anticipated core activities of the fund will include:

- Grants for studio design, equipment purchase and installation;
- Technical support service to ensure best value and sustainability.

The structure proposed is that stakeholder organizations, donors and NGOs compose a new separate entity with an independent Board of Directors. The rollout of the "Development Fund for Community Radio in Africa" will

commence with the establishment of a "Task force" in November 2004. This "Task Force" will assist in latter establishment of the Board and will be key in establishing governance mechanisms and purpose review and other efficiency procedures.

Sustainability of the fund and exit strategy beyond fixed term donor contribution by the establishment of a levy on spectrum sales or satellite orbit fees are also to be explored in terms of feasibility, management and local decision-making. Promoting local content production, it recognizes and utilizes the wealth of skills, initiative and indigenous knowledge within the community. In this way, information, communication and knowledge become the basic tools of the poor in improving their own lives.

The Marrakech Roundtable will feature presentations from those who have brought innovating work or thinking in the area of poverty, participation and communications as a means of provoking discussion and reflection on the way forward.

The Marrakech Roundtable is being held under the hospices of the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC). AMARC is an NGO working to develop community radio on the continent and outside and is driven by the belief that radio as the most affordable, egalitarian and accessible communication technology, should be harnessed to carry forward the need for social justice and the creation of a better world.

It is the intention of AMARC to have practical recommendations for the next steps forward at the end of the roundtable.

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