Developing Skills and Training

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Developing Skills and Training

When you are setting up your CMC, you will need to think very carefully about the kind of people that are needed to run it and the skills that might be available locally. In the case of Mozambique, for example, very few rural districts can provide full secondary education, consequently there is an inevitable move by young people to the cities in search of more schooling. The job market is also limited by the size of the local economy.

Begin by identifying available human resources before attempting to design an elaborate structure with departments, workgroups, technicians and university graduates, especially when you know that there aren't many people who went to university in your community.

Let's take the example of radio. The strong separation of tasks that is found in mainstream radio is marked by the presence of a technician, an anchorperson, and a news writer. This clear-cut assignment is missing in community radio where each team member is expected to be multi-skilled and able to perform all of the tasks and gradually focus on his or her preferences. But they can truly select their 'specialisation' only after they have a chance to get to know every aspect of running a radio station.

With training, most people can learn how to broadcast, become multi-skilled and make programmes that are effective in bringing in more listeners and participation. The challenge of community radio is to open up the airwaves to everyone – not just giving interviews, but sitting behind the mixer and conducting interviews.

The basic rule is that skills <u>can</u> be learned, so long as people want to learn them and someone is there to teach.

Skills required in a CMC

Imagine that in your setting you have basic equipment that includes a network of computers linked to a printer, with access to email and the Internet, a suitcase radio, a photocopier, a fax machine, and a telephone… now, what skills do you need to run the centre?

To start with:

- **Technical skills**
  - Ability to use computers – basic word processing, spreadsheet, organisation and management of files and information, safety procedures such as how to switch on and off correctly, do backups

  - Ability to use email and the Internet – for communications and for searching out information and saving it

  - Ability to operate radio equipment – the studio, broadcasting, taping, interviewing, editing and making programmes, safety procedures

  - Maintenance – first line computer maintenance, installing programmes, using anti-virus, keeping the radio equipment clean and in good order.

- **Organisational skills**
  - Management – how to keep everything going, plan activities, pay bills, do the accounts, organise meetings, make sure agreed work methods are followed, supporting volunteers, preparing reports

  - Radio operations – organising programme schedules, volunteer timetables, coordination.

- **Creative skills**
  - Ability to teach computer courses, train volunteers for the radio station

  - Creativity and journalism – radio programme production, web production, producing a local newspaper, willingness to experiment with new ideas.

- **Communication and animation skills**
  - Mobilisation – working with the community to ensure full involvement, liaison with community resource people and informants, maintaining contacts with local authorities and organisations, looking for support and sponsorships, ways of bringing in more clients for paid services, fundraising

  - Communicating with community members about CMC activities

  - Respect for fittings and equipment and understanding of ownership.

Even in areas where the CMC is breaking new ground, it is often possible to find people who already have useful skills, or have had experience elsewhere. For example, among the volunteers there may be someone who has worked with a community radio elsewhere, or has a relative who does; school students who have produced the school wall newspaper; a budding electrician; or a retired teacher or health worker with some spare time.

The most difficult jobs to fill are often the management, organisation and financial ones on the one hand, and the creative areas on the other, but training can resolve most problems.

What kind of training

Get people hands-on

On the job training works well if it is properly structured and focused. The best results are usually generated by training people at the CMC itself, using the equipment that is provided for daily CMC activities. There are examples of people going for radio or computer training courses elsewhere, then coming back and finding that they cannot use their training because their own equipment is significantly different! This should obviously be avoided.

Your training should consist of a lot of practical exercises. Keep the theoretical inputs short and let the participants immediately apply what they have learned. After learning about how to conduct an interview let them go out to the field, do an interview, listen to it and critically analyse it.
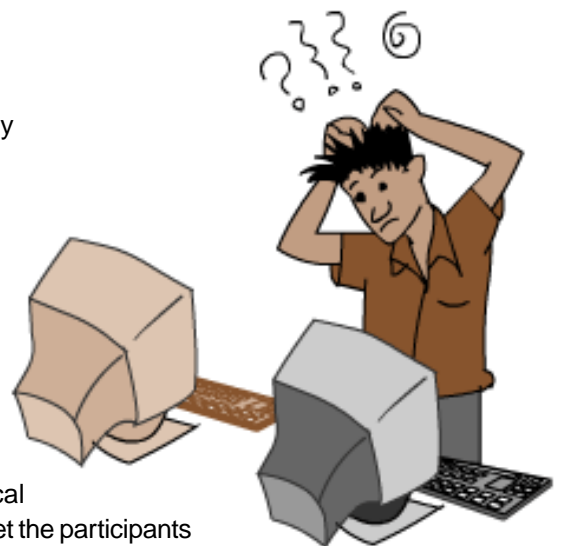
Getting hands-on in the studio is usually the part of the training people like most. An important task of the trainer is to encourage the trainees to venture to produce their own radio programme. It is very empowering for the participants to produce their first radio production during the training itself.

Developing creativity

The biggest challenge of the training is to develop people's creativity. Many people tend to copy the style of programme they know from commercial or state radio. But radio is a sensitive, colourful and diverse medium and there are many ways of presenting a story. Community radio allows us to elaborate and experiment with different ways.

It is advisable to start with a simple introductory training of 3-5 days during which all aspects of radio production are taught (see sample training schedule in annex). Then the trainees can gain some experience in the field. At the next stage, they get in-depth training in different aspects of community radio.

Train trainers

Select the best people among your staff for a course in basic computer and radio operations at the nearest professional facility – a computer school, a radio training centre, a well-established radio station, or wherever is most appropriate. These people will come back ready to train radio volunteers and to give computer courses at the CMC.

They should be chosen for their suitability from all points of view: they may not have any previous technical skills, but they must have enough basic education to be able to assimilate the training and transmit what they have learned to others.

Choose people who are likely to be with the CMC for some time, who are steady and reliable and get on well with others. Always send at least two people, or three if you have the funds and they have the time. This allows some people to do better than others in a certain skill and also reduces the risk of losing the skills when people move on.

Don't forget that your trainers should bring back the manuals and programmes they have used in the training, so that they can be adapted or reproduced (with permission).

Formal basic training at the CMC

Include a line item in your budget to provide a formal course on basic computer skills that will motivate your staff. Members of your management committee or community advisory group should also be offered these courses, as a way of bonding them more closely with the CMC.

The courses can be given by your own trainer/s, and should cover at least the basic skills. By the end of the course everyone should be able to write and print out texts, do basic layout for newspapers and publicity leaflets and the like, and be able to search the Internet and select and organise information from it.

Depending on the equipment you have, the teams also need to know how to use CD Roms to search for information, or to copy material or music onto them for use by the radio. If you do not have digital editing studio equipment in your CMC, the radio team can download interviews with a digital tape recorder into a computer, edit them there and transfer them to CD Rom for radio transmission.

The CMC should have its own course programmes and manuals and do final tests to give a certificate at the end of the course. This should be done for courses for the paying public as well as courses for volunteers and staff.

Specialised courses

The most practical way to get specialised training is to make contacts with other organisations in the country that are working in the same areas and join together with their training activities, following the same principles as for training of trainers.

This can also have the advantage of getting to meet people from other parts of the country who are working in radio or telecentres or CMC projects, and learning from their experiences.

However, if you want to train a larger number of people (say a minimum of six), it may be cheaper and more productive to contract a trainer to come to the CMC and stay for a week rather than sending the trainees to another location.

Specialised courses could include:

* Financial management

* Web design

* Radio programme production

* News gathering

* Advanced maintenance.

Workshops

A good way of mobilising larger numbers of people is to organise a half-day workshop. The objective could be a general introduction to radio, or to teach a new skill, or bring in a specific group from the community. Try to bring in different kinds of people – some of your best long-term volunteers might come out of this kind of contact.

For a successful training workshop

* Decide your topic

* Decide who is the priority target group for the topic

* Fix a time, date and place that is most convenient to that target group

* Fix a clear agenda, including showing starting and ending times

* Organise your presenters or facilitators and any materials you will need

* Publicise the event, particularly aiming at your target group, with invitations and individual contacts as necessary

* If you have the budget, serve some refreshments (for example soft drinks and biscuits) during or after the session.

Study visits and networking

One of the best ways of learning is to see for yourself how other people are dealing with the same kind of issues. Sending a group to visit another CMC, radio station or telecentre is always an excellent experience – people come back full of enthusiasm and ideas about new things to do or what not to do. Managers, in particular, can gain a lot from spending a day or two working with managers at a longer-established CMC.

Depending on your location and the size of your country, this can be quite an expensive exercise, but perhaps no more than sending people to a formal course in the capital city, for example, and at

least as useful. And then, of course, you must invite people back so that they can learn from your experience and maybe give some practical tips.

A big advantage of both study visits and attending other organisations' courses is that you make friends and establish permanent working relations with other groups. You will find that this results in an informal mutual help network. For example, the CMCs can consult each other by phone or email if they have problems; perhaps one place has a really good technician who can be invited over to give a short course or run a workshop; another CMC nearby may be able to lend you a tape or some printer ink if you run out, and so on.

Good networking can really help your own long-term consolidation and sustainability.

Handholding

It is useful to have a back-up resource available for your CMC through "handholding" or mentoring. The idea is to have a permanent contact – or contract – with experienced professionals who agree to give you support in a certain area of activity. Usually this will include "online" support by phone or email and regular visits (perhaps once a month or once every three months) for a given period.

Things to think about

Who are you training?

Almost anyone can learn technical skills. However, we need to remember that they will only learn if they get the opportunity.

Throughout the world cultural myths prevent women and girls from being included in technically oriented training. Often, girls will find it difficult to present their views in a room full of men because of different cultural orientations. The same can be true for young people with a limited education background, people with disabilities, or farming communities who are more comfortable in their fields rather than behind a desk. You must make a conscious effort to select a balanced group of trainees in order to create the right type of atmosphere where everyone can be at ease with each other and you, the trainer, can give equal attention to all.

You may also want to think about organising special courses for different groups. Women may find it preferable to attend a training session with other women. A woman trainer can serve as a role model. Young members of a session will tend to

learn faster and can sometimes assist in teaching the older trainees. Although it may not be good to separate groups permanently by sex, origin, language etc., it can help build confidence when starting up.

Local correspondents at the village level will need special training in using equipment (such as a tape recorder) and preparing news items; local professionals can be encouraged to produce radio programmes about their areas of expertise.

Involving less educated and disabled people

Illiteracy or disability should not prevent members of the community from participating fully in the CMC. People do not need to know how to read and write to produce a radio programme. Deaf and dumb people can find a whole new world of communication working on the CMC website or moderating email discussion groups. Blind people can operate a radio studio if there are blind language stickers on all the controls.

Training materials

If possible, all trainees in formal courses should receive manuals. If that is not possible, then the CMC should have a permanent library of manuals and handouts for use by trainees and reference by others.

Creating your own material

English-speaking countries have the least difficulty in getting training materials, locally or off the Internet. If your local language is not English, you may need to translate or adapt material to your local languages. You can, of course create manuals in your own language if this is more cost effective. Keep in mind that language translation alone will not resolve problems encountered in teaching new concepts.

Learning by doing

Once people have acquired skills, they must be able to practise them immediately. Training should only start after the equipment has arrived and been installed. After training, people continue to learn by doing – and can also pass on their skills to others.

Keeping things going

As with projects that only plan for funding the initial equipment and don't have a budget for spare parts and maintenance, some projects plan only the initial training courses without including follow ups. This can prove harmful for the sustainability of CMCs. Ongoing training must be planned and budgeted from the beginning, so that your pool of human resources can be consolidated and expanded. Always plan for continuous training, plus support through manuals, training software, tutorials, online advice and handholding, discussion groups.

Don't forget that the skills learned in your CMC aren't lost when a staff member or volunteer moves on – they are used somewhere else, as part of an individual's lifelong experience and contribution. However, they are lost to you! That is why you must always be sure not to depend on just one or two people. Make sure trained staff share their skills and keep working on new mobilisation.

Multimedia Training Kit (MMTK): An adaptable training resource

UNESCO launched in 2002 the creation of a Multimedia Training Kit (MMTK) to provide trainers in telecentres, CMCs, community media organisations and the development sector with a structured set of materials to help bridge the gap between new and traditional media.

The MMTK materials, built up by a group of partner organizations, cover a range of areas. Modules and units from modules can be used as building blocks, which trainers select to build up a workshop programme. For example, for a workshop on IT skills for a women's organisation, a trainer could choose units from "Searching the Internet" and "Violence Against Women", and combine them into a single workshop course.

Topics available include Searching the Internet, Digital Audio Production, Producing Content for Radio, Writing for the Web, Cooperative Problem Solving, Using Open Source Software and Reporting on HIV/AIDS. The materials released so far are just the first step towards the comprehensive collection, which is still under development.

Introduction to computers training at Sengerema Telecentre, Tanzania

Photo courtesy: Habby Bugalama

All materials are released under a Creative Commons licence which allows their free use and distribution for non-commercial use.

Materials are distributed on CD by UNESCO and can be downloaded from http://www.itrainonline.org/itrainonline/mmtk/

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Telecentre Training at Nakaseke CMC in Uganda

Skills assessment

The three-month training programme at the Nakaseke CMC started with an assessment asking what type of ICT skills the local community was interested in learning. Primary schoolteacher trainees, high school students, unemployed youth and women, farmers, entrepreneurs, other local community members and the CMC staff responded to the questionnaires and showed that:

- The teachers were interested in word-processing, using CD Roms, email and learning how to surf the Internet

- The centre staff was interested in learning HTML and basic hardware and software troubleshooting skills

- Farmers and entrepreneurs were interested in Internet classes as well as using CD Roms for research purposes

- The youth were mainly interested in the Internet and email.

Based on the above responses, a free ICT workshop was organized on the following topics: introduction to computers, typing, basic HTML and web design, Internet surfing and email.

At the end of the training, the trainees filled out a skills assessment form (see annex) to evaluate the skills they had acquired. The trainees were then counselled on what particular areas they could further focus on.

Scheduling the classes

In order to accommodate people's work schedules, learning curves and interests, plus the fact that there were only five computers, the classes were divided into three sessions:

- Morning 9 a.m. to 12 noon

- Lunchtime 1 p.m. to 2 p.m.

- Afternoon 2 p.m. to 5 p.m.

The CMC was open from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday through Saturday, thus providing the students with ample opportunity to complete their homework and practise before or after class.

Typing and word processing

Typing and word processing became a major part of the course as the participants discovered that these skills would help them to generate some income.

Literacy and language

The basic requirement for all the participants was the ability to read, write and understand English as this was the common language with the trainers and also the language used for instruction in most local schools.

However, there was always a staff member to assist in explaining in Luganda to the group, whenever necessary. While explaining, the staff used scenarios the participants were able to relate to; they also helped in breaking the ice for the outside trainers. Throughout the course we drew upon these examples to further illustrate difficult concepts like sending email, folder structures, saving files etc.

They also learned how to use a scanning machine and make cards with photographs. They designed certificates and used the printer and photocopying machine to make copies of their completed work.

Email and Internet

It was planned that the phone lines would be connected and working towards the end of the course but, unfortunately, this did not occur. It was a challenge to explain the functionality of email and the Internet theoretically by drawing parallels with normal mail and explaining the instant delivery or receipt of messages through this new technology.

During the frequent power outages at the centre a series of quizzes were given on the content covered and this served to occupy the time till the power was reconnected. When prior notice was given that the power would be off the whole day, a generator would be hired and the class would continue with no interruptions.

Training resources

The typing tutorials available on floppy disks and CD Rom became a great supplement to teaching as they afford the students the opportunity to practise in their free time and at their own pace.

Additional teaching resources are found on interactive CD Roms on wide ranging subjects — from agriculture and medicine to cattle farming and appropriate technology. Tutorials are available on diskettes and are useful for CMCs that are using old model computers.

Peer to peer training

One of the advantages of offering the courses at different times during the day is that it manages to group the students into categories with similar interests, as they are usually available at the same time. This affords them the opportunity for collaboration on homework assignments at times convenient to most of them as well as providing opportunities for sharing and exchanging ideas.

Certification

At the end of the workshop a test was conducted and students were awarded a certificate of completion. There was a sense of pride and achievement at the award ceremony as the certificates were handed out. The certificates stated the trainees had participated in an *Introduction to ICT* course and a list of the course content was attached.

The students were concerned about the recognition of the certificates by other computer training institutions. This is a challenge facing many of the ICT training courses.

It is worth exploring the possibility of developing a standardised test that could be taken at any CMC globally and which would be recognised at other learning institutions as well.

References

What is community radio? Published by AMARC Africa and Panos Southern Africa, ISBN: 0 620 22999 3, 1998, email amarc@global.co.za; available in English, French and Portuguese

Women on Line Training Material by AMARC Europe Women's Network to encourage women in using new technologies for radio; http://www.amarc.org/wol/ available in English, Spanish and German

http://www.school.za/edict/edict/appl.htm

http://www.itrainonline.org/itrainonline/english/trainers.shtml

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