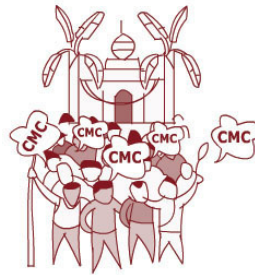


Getting Started

Nick Ishmael-Perkins



In this chapter

- **Needs assessment**

- **Developing your mission statement**

- **The business plan**

Getting Started

There are a number of preliminary steps you will need to complete in order to establish a responsive and effective CMC. The steps described in this chapter provide an overview to support your management, technical, and business plan considerations with an emphasis on a baseline approach rather than a detailed description of the entire process. The detailed descriptions that are relevant to the starting up process are provided in the other chapters, as you shall find indicated.

The overview here should demonstrate that the more responsive you are to the community, the better the chances are of sustaining the centre, as the community and other stakeholders will be more committed to supporting it.

Some of the steps, outlined below, may not seem relevant for those of you who are already operating community radio stations but it may be worthwhile repeating them if you are planning to add a telecentre facility.

- **Needs assessment**

This should help you deepen your understanding of the community and help you promote the CMC to the community. In addition, a needs assessment can help you establish the information and communication needs of your community as discussed in the chapter on participation. A needs assessment is especially important for obtaining a licence for community broadcasting if you need one.

- **Develop a mission statement**

This sets the goals of your CMC. It is crucial that you can clearly demonstrate the objectives of the centre and how they respond to the context of your community. This will increase your chances of making the centre successful.

- **Devise a structure for your centre**

It is quite important to have an idea of how the CMC will work. This will help you to decide on a wide range of issues – from the sort of space you will use, to the number of staff you will have. Refer to details in the organizational structure and human resources chapters respectively.

- **Develop a constitution for the centre**

Make sure that any associations involved in the running of the centre are registered and known by legal authorities – this may be important for securing a broadcasting licence. Details are found in the organizational structure chapter and the annexes.

- **Business plan**

This is related to the structure of your CMC, e.g., planning income and expenditure, linking decisions about energy supply to costs and linking those to planned opening hours. Refer also, to the chapter on sustainability and the annexes.



The Steps

- *Needs assessment*
- *Develop a mission statement*
- *Devise a structure for the centre*
- *Develop a constitution for the centre*
- *Business plan*



Needs assessment

Mapping your community

The community is the primary stakeholder in the CMC; it is for them that the centre exists. It is crucial that you understand the needs, interests and constraints of the community. However, communities can be complicated, dynamic and made up of several groups. Mapping your community will allow you to visualise your connections and help you to formulate the best way to get your information across to your audience. Exercise 1 helps you to establish more precisely who constitutes your community so that you can develop a suitable approach for your planning and research.



Exercise 1: Mapping your community

Draw a map of your community; on this map include all the types of groups in the community. There are many aspects that make people different, here are some of the things that you should think of when you are drawing your map:

Age group

Gender

Language group

Religious group (Protestant, Catholic, other churches, Muslim, Hindu or others)

Ethnic group

Activity (Farmers, traders, students, craftspeople...)

Special needs (No/very low income, disabilities, illiterate...)

Location (Does the group live in big or small families, individual, extended or nuclear families? What is the distance between the group and the CMC? What mode of transport is available?)

Of course, you can identify many other factors relating to the important groups, which make up your community. All of the groups should contribute to your planning process, which ensures that you are building community ownership from the start and minimising the risk of any resentment and feelings of isolation. In fact, when in doubt about anything, ask the community – start with the logo of the centre. The more they contribute, the better they feel, and the more they will support the centre.

Second, you may find it useful to have additional space that could be used to support your income, e.g., office space for a business or organization in exchange for some resources.

Questions for you and the community to think about

Where should the centre be located?

You will need a suitable site for the location of your CMC. Remember it should be easy for most people to get to the centre so they can participate in running and using it. Try to find a place that will allow you to expand at a minimum cost in the future. Also, keep in mind that additional office space may generate your CMC additional resources from an interested organization or business. The site should not be exposed to the dangers of natural physical disasters or adverse conditions, such as flooding or earth slides.

Name of the centre?

Using a name that was suggested by the community makes their participation clear to see. It also gives the community a sense of pride and value.

What issues does the community want to see the centre address?

Remember, the development of the community is your primary objective. It is important to consult your community to determine the types of services your centre will offer.

How does the community think your centre should be managed?

Instil a sense of ownership amongst the community by building on existing resources. Distinguish your services from anything else that might be available.



Who should work at the centre?

Make your service different from other services by involving the community in providing the services.

When in doubt about anything, ask the community — even for a logo for the centre. The more they contribute, the better they feel, and the more they will support the centre.

Next, let's take a look at ways of gathering basic information from your community.

Getting to know your community

It is important to know concretely how your CMC is responding to the expectations of the community. How many people use the services at the centre? Who uses the centre and who does not? Does it contribute to the development of the community?

Baseline research is the answer to all these and many other questions about your constituency. It is best to conduct your research *before* starting the CMC so you can plan successfully. There are many types of research methods and the ones discussed below are different from the unique approach discussed in the research and evaluation chapter.

Some research hints

Plan to meet with different interest groups including civic and youth organisations, women's groups, religious groups and traditional leaders. Conduct informal, face-to-face discussions with community members.

The purpose of the meetings is to **find out** how the community perceives its own needs; whether the community thinks these needs can be served by a CMC; whether the community will support and participate in a CMC initiative; what the community expects from the management of a CMC.

There are a number of workshop approaches and participatory research techniques that you could use to elicit this sort of information. These include developing a situation analysis and creating a problem tree, conducting a quantitative survey, and working with researchers — all of which are presented in the preceding sections.

User research for CMCs

There are many different types of research but you may be particularly interested in *user research*, which involves your target population and represents their views and needs in running the CMC. The results obtained through this research method can be used in many ways to benefit your centre and to improve the role of the CMC. *User research* can also help you to:

- understand and document the problems that the centre should expect to tackle.
- document your findings to demonstrate your effort and success and especially to prepare you for future evaluation and monitoring exercises.

Other considerations in mapping your community

- Infrastructure – connectivity, telephone lines, electricity supplies, possible sources of power, e.g. purchasing excess power from local hospital; roads, transport
- Resources – existing access to computers, radio stations etc.
- Institutions – is there a health clinic, a school, local government offices, and agricultural outreach service? These should be involved and their needs identified as they will be important partners and clients of the CMC
- Associations and NGOs – women's groups, farmers' cooperatives, small traders associations, religious communities etc.
- Local businesses – could be key clients

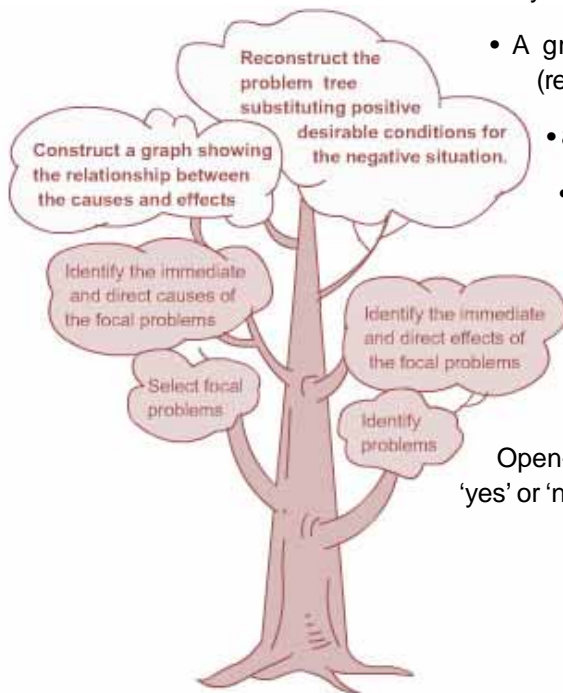
See also Technical Considerations later in this chapter.



- respond to the needs and aspirations of the community and secure community support and patronage by developing the required services.
- use your research information to seek support from stakeholders such as the government and donors.
- create a demand for your CMC; attract co-operation and general support by providing quality and useful information to a broad range of development stakeholders. In this way, you can strengthen your centre and develop sustainable partnerships at the same time.

Situation analysis/ Problem tree

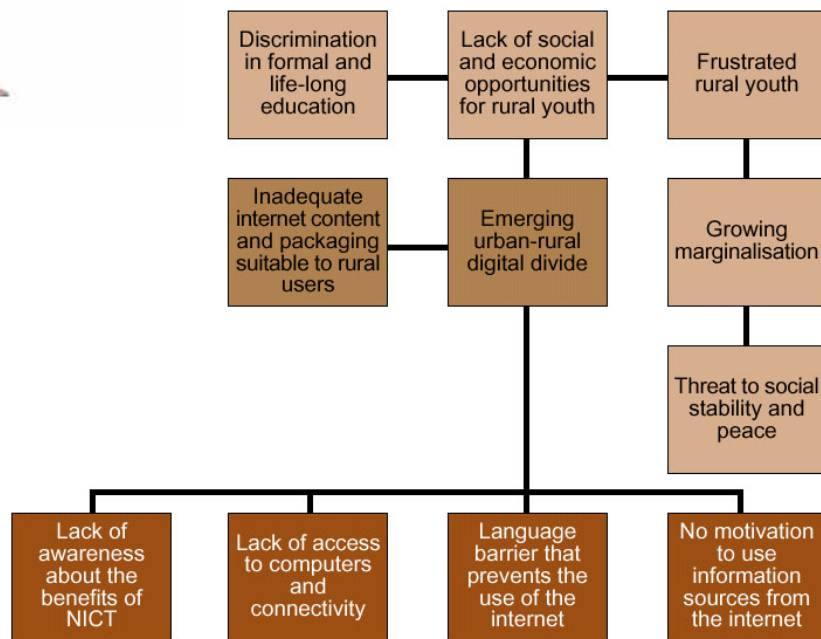
This is a process that can be used with focus group discussions. To conduct a focus group discussion you require:



- A group of 8-12 participants of similar background and experience (refer to Exercise 1).
- 8-10 carefully thought through and sequenced 'open-ended' questions.
- A moderator with facilitation skills and knowledge of group dynamics.
- An assistant moderator to take notes.
- A comfortable place where everyone can sit facing each other.

The participants may present their questions from different perspectives even though they come from similar backgrounds.

Open-ended questions are those that cannot be answered with a simple 'yes' or 'no' but express people's opinion and/or experience.



An example of the Problem Tree made by the community at Kothmale, Sri Lanka, which shows their local conditions and problems. Your community groups would identify different problems and issues.



Quantitative survey

This involves the use of a short, simple questionnaire to be filled in by community members. The questionnaires are usually completed with the help of staff or volunteers. It is important to try to get a cross-section of people to respond to the interviews even though they are likely to be held on a one-to-one basis.

The responses are then collectively evaluated to determine a common opinion. The conclusion of the survey can be put forward as the basis of planning and management decisions.

In the questionnaire

- ask people some basic information about themselves – such as their age, gender, where they live and any information that you think is important in order to understand who your users are.
- ask people about **each** of the centre's services:
 - what would they use them for or why not?
 - when they would be most likely to use the services and with whom?
 - what contribution they would like to make to the centre
 - ask them for indicators that would prove that the centre is a success for the community.
- in general, ask people for any suggestions they can offer to improve the centre and its services.



Who does the research?

As far as possible, try to ensure that the researchers come from your community and that the team has a balanced representation of men, women and youth who speak the local languages. This makes it easier for an open interaction with the community. At the same time, be careful that the researchers do not offer their own opinions instead of listening to those being interviewed.

Working with researchers

The methodologies above avoid too much scientific rigour but instead try to focus on the kinds of questions that you might need to ask. There are, however, a number of ways that you might be able to work with experienced researchers. This is important for larger research projects, or for achieving greater quality control in your findings.

You may also want to familiarise yourself with the terminology that is used in research work. Below are a few examples:

- **commissioning user research:** the centre can employ professional researchers from a commercial research agency, an educational institution, or an NGO to do a particular type of research, in this case user research. The CMC will need to be actively involved in setting the objectives of the research so that the results are completely in line with the needs of the centre but the professionals you hire or commission will conduct the actual research.
- **establishing a research partnership:** the CMC participates both in setting the objectives and in conducting part of the research in collaboration with another organisation or research agency. The advantage of this sort of partnership is that your staff can learn research skills.
- **participatory research:** here, the CMC involves the participation of the community in doing its own research but in partnership with a research organisation. This option requires specialised training, great effort and commitment from the centre, as well as a lot of support from a research organisation during the early stages of the partnership. This option, however, allows the centre to take control of its research so that there is a constant flow of information at a relatively low cost, over a sustained period of time. (Refer also to the participation chapter)



Remember to

- ask necessary questions
- listen to what people have to say
- accurately record community input; prioritise the input and present it in a way that truthfully reflects the community's views, suggestions, needs and priorities
- most importantly, use the information in setting up the structure and functions of the centre.

- **ethnographic action research:** this method allows the researcher to look at the whole social setting and all social relationships of a community including any patterns that describe local relationships, understandings and meanings in order to make sense of the complete range of social relationships and processes within which a project is working. It involves a long-term engagement by an experienced researcher who will document cultural observations on a daily basis. (Refer also to the research and evaluation chapter).

Developing the mission statement

A mission statement helps you to articulate the vision of your CMC and allows everyone to quickly understand your overall objectives. It is also a useful guide that can be used by the CMC management in decision-making and reflects the interests, needs, and values of your community and stakeholders.

Your mission statement explains the vision of the centre.

Visioning exercise

Much of the work for this exercise can be done in groups but the facilitator will have to be mindful that everyone is given space to contribute. It might even mean regrouping participants according to their background and social status so they can relax and open up during discussions. The exercise could take place in various situations, for example, in a meeting that reviews the problem tree emerging from the situation analysis.

It is important to include 20-30 community representatives in the meeting and to involve community leaders, opinion makers and other persons of influence. Make sure that all the groups represented in Exercise 1 are included; this will sometimes mean deliberately stepping outside of the status quo to invite those who are often voiceless.

Step A: Describe where you are now – if possible start by reflecting on the problem tree and situation analysis exercises that were conducted in the focus group discussions. If not, participants should think through the current situation by identifying one or two priority or problem areas and the causes.



Step B: Describe where you want to be. Participants should engage in the discussion as though they have the authority and power to make all the changes that are necessary to achieve the vision.

Step C: Participants should then consider what the vision means for each demographic group in the community. This can be expressed in simple statements. For example, farmers will produce more and be paid better.

Step D: Identify all the positive things that might be achieved through communication, information or education at a community level. For example, farmers will learn about soil conservation to reduce their vulnerability to natural disasters.

You can then develop your mission statement describing how your centre will help the community to achieve the identified needs.



How to operationalize the vision

Step One - Go to your map in Exercise 1 and visit the groups you have established.

Set up some focus group discussions then ask some questions that will clarify their position. Find out what would be of interest to them. Try to understand what might stop them from getting involved.

Step Two – Draw up the following table based on your focus group discussions.

Interests	Groups	Activity	Constraints	Solution
	(E.g. Young women)			
	(E.g. Older women)			

Interests – what they might want or need to do
Activity – the activity in the centre that would best meet those interests
Constraints – what might stop them from becoming involved?
Solution – how you could get around these constraints.

Operationalize the vision

How do your programmes and services respond to the needs identified by the community? Do your activities and content match the vision you adopted in your mission statement?

Structuring your CMC

As discussed in the organizational structure, technology and human resources chapters, the structure of your organization is composed not only of your assets, fittings and infrastructure, but also of elements that make it possible to manage programme content, staff, and finance. The overall structure of your CMC is therefore determined by the results of the needs assessment and baseline research, the skills and human resources incorporated in your CMC, the way you tackle the challenges and obstacles faced, and the relative advantage that your CMC has over other commercial radio stations.

It will be useful to consider creative ways of responding to your community's needs to popularise your CMC, e.g., considering child-care services for mothers who are interested in using Internet services.

Practical and technical considerations for the premises of your CMC

(See also the chapter on Technology)

Internet connections

Make sure you have a telephone line or satellite uplink so that computers can connect with the Internet. Talk to the service providers in your country to discover your options.

Power

You may need to establish one or preferably two links with a reliable source of electricity to avoid any power interruptions. Many community radio stations have a regular electricity supply and a generator and some explore alternative sources of energy such as solar power. Keep in mind the additional power you may need for future expansion plans.

Mission statement of Radio Zibonele

“We are a group of volunteers with diverse skills, who have formed a Community Radio Station owned, managed and programmed by the community of Khayelitsha. Our concern is to enhance the quality of life by improving the health standards of our people. All those we serve are affected by poor health and poor environmental conditions. Radio Zibonele is committed to sharing skills and information through honest process, in this way empowering the community of Khayelitsha to have a better life.”

Radio Zibonele serves a community outside of Cape Town in South Africa and concentrates on health as a priority for the community.



Size

You will need sufficient space for your computers, the radio studio, and to accommodate visitors from the community, who must feel welcome at the CMC.



Insurance

It is important that you think of insuring your equipment. This way there is a better chance of recovering your equipment in the event of an accident. Talk to different insurance agencies to find out the best option and understand the conditions for replacing damaged equipment.

Practical hint

From the outset, consider planning simple measures to improve the CMC site, e.g. the type of roof covering makes a big difference to room temperature and may result in added costs for air conditioning; dust reduces the life of equipment but can be controlled by planting flowers and bushes around the CMC.

Developing a constitution

The constitution explains the legal nature of the CMC, its objectives and the way that it is to be managed. If you already have a constitution for your existing facility then it is important to amend it so that the full CMC is included or considered under each heading. (Refer also to the organizational structure chapter and annexes).

Something to think about

List each of the headings of the constitution and think of what you could do in each section to serve the interests of the community and the CMC. Remember, these interests must reflect the values and needs mentioned in your mission statement.

Business plan

The primary purpose of a business plan is to plan for a sustainable, viable, well managed entity. A solid business plan will attract financial support from donors and community members. It is important to present the business plan using clear objectives and forecasting community involvement, turnover of staff, and profit in a measurable way using milestones and indicators. It explains your vision, proves that you are serious and shows that you are working on a plan that will sustain the future of your CMC. The chapter on sustainability will guide you through the key steps in developing a business plan. (Also refer to annexes).

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The Business Plan (see annex at the back)

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