



# Sustainability of CMCs

Alfonso Gumucio-Dagron and Hezekiel Dlamini





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Sustainability is a very wide topic that involves long term social change as well as medium to long term financial issues. In an attempt to address both broad areas, this Chapter is divided into two parts. Part I examines some of the broad issues of social and institutional as well as financial sustainability. It draws on important examples that you will need to reflect upon when starting up and organising your CMC. In Part II you will find some practical advice that guides you in developing a sustainable financial model for your CMC and provides step-by-step instructions for the creation of your business plan.



#### Part 1

### Sustainability of CMCs and Community Media

Community based projects are expected to be *sustainable*, i.e. they have to survive and develop after an initial two or three year period of donor funding. Let's examine the complex issues around sustainability from a wider perspective that goes beyond financial autonomy, which is only one of many elements that can bring about long-term change in any given community.

#### Sustainability as a tripod

If economic sustainability were the primary objective of a CMC, it would be very disappointing. A community radio station may turn profitable if it chooses to air music all day long to satisfy the demand of the younger audience; a rural telecentre may become financially sustainable by providing telephone and fax services only. However, to achieve sustainability, we need to ask: how does the economic self-reliance of the centre impact on economic and social change in the community?

The importance of community participation during the entire process of planning and implementation is now widely recognised. Therefore, sustainability cannot thrive on funds alone. Rather, sustainability depends on social, institutional and financial viability, as presented in Diagram 1.



Funding may fulfil one important need, but so do social involvement and participation, internal democracy and efficient organisation. Let's look at these three components in detail.

#### Social sustainability

The social component is essential when planning for sustainability of CMCs. Moreover, it underlines the importance of a participatory approach at all levels and at all times. Community media services in any form – radio, theatre, Internet, telephone, or video – need community participation for their creation as well as for their use and survival.

There are three basic conditions to achieve social sustainability.

- Community ownership of the communication process
- Development of local content
- Language and cultural relevance



The social appropriation of the communication process is central to sustainability of community media. It also includes the ownership of infrastructure and equipment, but is not that alone. The concept of appropriation is wider; it includes the whole process, including decision making, management and technical skills and, if possible, acquiring the property of all fittings and equipment.

#### Distinction between CMCs and cyber cafes

Contrary to grassroots' radio stations, community telecentres are still struggling with the issue of appropriation of the communication process. Many of them are "projects", that is, initiatives of the government, the development community or even the private sector. Whilst the distinction between a commercial radio station and a community radio is clear, the line between community telecentres and commercial cyber cafes is blurred.

It is unrealistic to think that installing a few computers in a remote community will have any positive influence in social change, particularly when the community didn't ask for it and scarcely sees any benefit. Setting up computers in rural areas doesn't make any sense if it is not part of a wider social development initiative.

Computers, Internet and "local area web" are additional tools, not the centrepiece of a community development initiative. Computers *alone* will not have a high impact unless associated with community radio as a relay for online information.

#### **Development of local content**



Students hone their computer skills at Sengerema Telecentre in Tanzania

The second condition for social sustainability is the development of local content. The most successful Internet connectivity projects are those that manage their own mini-web with appropriate content for the local population.

A third factor is language and cultural pertinence. The fact that English largely dominates the World Wide Web already marginalises the vast majority of people in Third World countries. Unless local web content is developed in languages of the local people and in a way that appeals to their culture, one cannot expect the participation of traditionally marginalised communities. Its important that the CMC does not become a standard cyber café that merely entertains young people with interactive games and chat rooms. Local communities will not use the Internet if they don't find it useful — it is as simple as that.

The success of community radio is also related to the above conditions – speaking the language and culture of the community they serve, building appropriate content relevant to community needs, and facilitating a permanent process of democratic participation, empowerment and appropriation of the communication process.

#### Institutional sustainability

Community media have fought many decades to gain recognition. In Latin America, the continent that has pioneered the field since the early 1950s, community radio stations were first established without asking permission and often in frank confrontation with military dictatorships and corrupt governments. Later, many of them already had the benefit of legislation that recognised their right to exist and did not have to defend their centre from bullets and soldiers. South Africa lived through a similar situation in the early nineties, when the first "pirate" stations were established in open defiance to the apartheid authorities.



#### Key factors for institutional sustainability

The critical issues in achieving institutional sustainability are:

#### Enabling legislation, regulation and policies

In some countries, where licences for community media centres exists, the critical issue is that of community ownership and voice. If community media really represent the community and become its voice then they also become an instrument for establishing and strengthening the vision of a better future. You will need to be aware of external influences and tread carefully in the presence of powerful political and economic interests that dominate the community. You will need to chart a careful course to avoid political interests taking over or controlling the CMC.

## Ownership by the community and their involvement in identifying issues to be addressed

Ownership can become a deciding issue: you will be in a better position to defend your CMC against control or silencing attempts if your community group legally owns the CMC.

#### Internal democracy, training and participation

The in-house dynamics in CMCs are also a factor of institutional sustainability. Internal democracy, training and participation in decision-making, programming, development of content, management and accountability are essential. The transparency of the management, the spirit of camaraderie and solidarity among workers, a permanent dialogue in the process of building programmes together and acquiring new skills to serve the community better must all send a clear signal about the nature of your CMC and its sustainability.

## Appropriate and democratic structure, management and supervisory bodies

The role of stable institutional structures is very important for institutional sustainability. There can be no institutional sustainability unless there is an effective board of governors, steering committee, or core user groups and unless these are representative, accountable and renewed regularly.

There is also the key issue of clear and appropriate division of responsibilities within the organisational structure. You may encounter crises and conflicts over the responsibility of funds, budgets, fundraising etc. This can jeopardise sustainability unless clearly defined responsibilities and procedures are put in place.

#### Appropriate technology

Many community media projects fail because of a weak design. This often happens when the knowledge of social

## Baraka Telecentre : owned by the community ...it lasts!

Baraka is a small and poor locality in the heart of a residential area of Dakar, capital of Senegal, inhabited by squatters from Mali, Guinea and rural Senegal. The average household income is US\$ 70 a month and its surrounding, more affluent, neighbours often ostracise its residents. Maybe this is why there is such a strong sense of community here. In Baraka, even access to water and electricity are community-based, as all households must share one water hole and an electricity outlet.

It is within this context that Enda Tiers Monde

decided to build a Baraka community tele-centre. The telecentre gives residents access to a phone and the Internet, trains them on how to use ICTs and serves as a



The Baraka Telecentre, Senegal

meeting place for community leaders. Its management is based on a community ownership model, where a local steering committee organises telecentre activities and finances.

There was a fire recently in Baraka, which looked like it would destroy the whole village. The only way the residents could get in touch with the fire department was through the phone in the telecentre. That saved their community.

However, as in many telecentres in Africa, Baraka Telecentre has had trouble paying for its telephone and Internet bills, as the revenues generated by the telecentre are not meeting its costs. Despite this, the telecentre is still working, because the Baraka community decided it was too important to have it close down.

#### How did they do this?

They've used a continuing surplus from the community water fund to settle unpaid telecentre bills.

#### **Laurent Elder**

Acacia and Connectivity Africa Program Officer IDRC West Africa Regional Office (BRACO), Email: Lelder@idrc.org.sn



and cultural reality is limited and proper use of appropriate technology, which is essential to institutional sustainability, fails. Sophisticated hardware does not replace the numerous steps involved in the communication process and equipping a multimedia centre with expensive computers that become outdated by the time the centre starts using them is a case of poor planning, which does not serve a sustainable purpose.

## Financial sustainability can come in many ways

In the case of public service radio, public funds are usually the major source of financing (often directly from users as licence fees).

If CMCs are going to provide a real community service, than the community/public should also have a direct role in financing them. If a CMC works with the community to ensure its social sustainability by, among other things, providing a service that is valued by the community, then it can translate that social sustainability into financial sustainability. This is a political challenge - to convince the public/government that it is better to pay for a public service than to get a "free" commercial service at a very high cost in terms of values, "acceptable" exclusion of the poor, services that are optimised for commercial rather than public use...

Public money supports other infrastructure development, e.g., roads. In the long run, if we are really going to have an "information society", I think it will be more sustainable if publicly financed than advertiser financed.

Director Comunica and editor
The One to Watch:
Radio, New ICTs and Interactivity
Email: bgirard@comunica.org

It is therefore important to plan carefully and avoid accumulating equipment to the extent that it cannot be used. Such oversight can lead to serious issues that can, on their own, cut short the life of a CMC. Ask yourself, during the planning stages, if you are investing in equipment before securing a telephone line for Internet connectivity. How are your decisions on equipment being made? Who decides the number of computers that are needed? These are important questions to consider when planning for sustainability.

There seems to be more rationality in designing community radio stations than telecentres, perhaps because of the experience accumulated over decades. Also, radio equipment is made to last longer. Some radio stations still work with recorders and mixers purchased twenty years ago. Telecentres can become victims of hardware and software multinational companies competing for new markets; be wary of being led into buying expensive equipment which may be used at 5 per cent of its capacity. Initially, many CMCs need computers primarily for word processing and email if connectivity with Internet is available.

#### Networking and convergence

It is increasingly difficult to foresee institutional sustainability without networking and\_convergence; networks can spread the total investment and costs, pool expertise, share good and bad practices. The stand-alone nature of some CMCs can be a disadvantage. The Tambuli Radio Network in the Philippines works because there is at least a strong sense of being part of a wider network. Telecentre projects that are associated with community development programmes have more opportunities of success than those operating in isolation.

#### Financial sustainability

Funding is, indeed, an important issue. However it involves many aspects that are not often taken into consideration. Income generating activities and financial sustainability must mean the survival and development of the CMC within the framework of freedom of expression and consistency with the needs of the community. The best models of financial sustainability have managed to combine different sources of economic support to keep their independence and ensure the continuity of their community vision.

See Business models and Fundraising sections later in this chapter.



#### Government support

It is appropriate to mention government responsibility and support while discussing CMCs. Elected governments are often sympathetic or at least tolerant towards community media. The network of indigenous radio stations in Mexico is an example of this tolerance and clear policies that have evolved over the years to a modern and fully participatory model. Similarly, South Africa has an enabling policy to promote community radio stations, telecentres and CMCs.

Community media centres have a social and cultural role in development and do some of the educational work of the government. Therefore, it may be possible to approach the government to give funds to set up a CMC, in the same way it funds rural schools or public libraries.

You can also consider approaching your government to contribute towards financial sustainability of your CMC in different ways – for example, providing the Internet connection, giving preferential tariffs, advertising, grants etc.

#### Local institutions and businesses

Local institutions and organisations can support community media if they find it is useful for development. Local NGOs that are contributing in education, agriculture, human rights, or health related programmes may find it very useful to have an alliance with your CMC for creating and distributing programming content relevant to their activities. Unions, cooperatives, women's clubs, and other civil society organisations usually contribute to community radio stations by buying airtime for their programmes. Similarly, international agencies like UNICEF, Communication Assistance Foundation, OXFAM, Save the Children, have often contributed to community radios and CMCs, either with direct support for their role in ensuring information and communication diversity, or in exchange for airtime.



Banikoara CMC in Benin opened a cafe to service their users and raise more revenue

Many community radios in Africa (like Radio Kwizera (Hope Radio), at the border of Tanzania, Rwanda and Burundi) co-produce radio programmes on water and sanitation, health, peace and reconciliation with support from Oxfam, UNESCO, UNHCR, UNICEF, etc.

Support from local businesses is very important for CMCs – they could be key contributors to

your financial sustainability. They can help stabilise your CMC's revenue, e.g., the CMC can operate as a local ISP to local enterprises by paying an annual subscription for Internet access or businesses and NGOs can rent office space in your premises to perform periodic activities.

#### Advertising

Countries that have an approved legislation recognising community media often ban or limit the amount of advertising that community radio stations can air. This measure is said to protect the station itself from becoming too dependent on advertising and to ensure that community radios do not compete unfairly with private FM stations that pay much higher license fees. However, this restriction can also hamper the ability of stations to become financially sustainable. Wherever possible, CMCs must consider local advertising as a significant source of income.





#### Innovative ways to generate funds

La Primerisima, an independent radio station in Nicaragua, has been struggling during 18 years not only to survive, but to compete for the first three positions in national ratings. The station is owned by a collective of journalists, and through many years of fighting for its independence, has managed to create innovative ways of generating funds.

For example, any worker at the station is allowed to bring in advertising revenue and to keep a percentage of it. Several programme slots are "rented" to NGOs that use them to air programmes on human rights, environment, migration or gender issues. Advertising has been scarce for La Primerisima due to its progressive political position, always favouring the less advantaged in Nicaragua. However, the support from the audience has been enormous. External support from sympathetic organisations in Europe and Australia only amount for 6 to 10 per cent of the station's annual income. The rest is generated locally.

#### Community support

The contributions from the community are often neglected <u>by</u> project planners and not accounted for. The truth is, communities contribute more than is generally perceived. For example, it is not unusual for the community to donate the land where the building of the CMC and the radio station will be raised. The community often contributes the labour for the actual construction and provides construction materials that are available locally.

A famous example of direct contributions from the community is that of the Bolivian miners' radio stations. During more than thirty years, each worker in the tin mines donated one day of his monthly salary for the radio station. This is a demonstration that even the poorest communities can afford to contribute to a communication project that empowers their voice and identity.

#### Conclusion

Community participation and commitment is the fundamental condition for the sustainability of CMCs. You may find CMC projects that do not worry about their future because they have continuous funding from a donor; however, if the other two sustainable components are not present, the centre would collapse soon after the external funding is withdrawn.

The sustainability of your CMC is closely linked with the level of user participation, the capacity-building work you do, and the funding support of your community and other stakeholders. You will also find that the effective integration of the radio and telecentre components contribute to sustainability as they balance, complement and support each other.

If social, institutional and financial sustainability are closely interwoven, your CMC will survive and evolve over the years, in tune with the people you serve.

Alfonso Gumucio-Dagron is a development communication specialist, filmmaker and writer from Bolivia, with experience in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean.

Email: gumucio@guate.net.gt



#### Part 2

### **Planning for Financial Sustainability**

CMCs could be considered as business ventures with a development mission. The business and development approaches need to be modeled carefully to satisfy a community service on one level and a properly managed, self-sustaining, small to medium-scale enterprise on another level.

The core business of a CMC is in the media services you provide using both traditional and new information and communication technologies (ICTs). Some basic management tools need to be employed not only to ensure these services are delivered efficiently but also to draw credibility from potential partners and stakeholders and sustain the longevity of your centre. In this Chapter you will be able to visualize the types of business models you can combine and adapt, develop a CMC business plan, and generate funding for your CMC. **Business models for CMCs** Some of the business models that can be implemented in CMCs include:

In this model, the CMC provides radio and Internet space to local brokers or representatives of local producers to bring buyers and sellers together for direct sales or auctions.

The brokerage model

A fee can be charged for each transaction supported by the CMC. This model requires the CMC to be proactive in selling its services to local brokers as a new way of enabling market place exchanges.

The local producers thus benefit by dealing directly with buyers rather than having urban brokers collect their produce at reduced rates. This also creates business for the CMC. If well implemented this model can facilitate transactions in business-to-business(B2B), business-to-consumer (B2C) and consumer-to-consumer (C2C) markets.

This model can also cover the development of product catalogues for online or offline use. In this case, a *search agent* finds out the price and availability of a specified good or service and locates hard-to-find information for the buyer.

Similarly, this model can facilitate market information for people who want to know about similar products from other areas. CMC radio and Internet services can be used to inform local producers about market developments.



#### The advertising model

Community radio advertising is well understood by many CMCs and constitutes one of the main sources of revenue generation.

However, the same cannot be said of web advertising. In most cases, web advertising entails the provision of content and services, e.g., email, chat, forums – mixed with advertising messages in the form of banners.

A listing fee or membership fee is charged for web advertising whereas, for radio, a fee is charged for airtime used.

An advertising website may contain original content or can play the role of a content distributor. On its own, the web advertising model works well only when the volume of viewer traffic is large. Hence the website should be accessible through search engines, portals and other "bigger" websites.

Depending on the type of CMC, advertising can be used successfully to target users beyond the immediate community and to attract buyers from other areas.

#### The infomediary model

This model, which implies information intermediaries, is based on the concept of market data provision. Data about consumers or producers and their practices are collected and analysed to target marketing campaigns.

To apply this model, CMCs could create web databases containing information about local production and development issues in their areas to support government, political, NGO and even business campaigns, e.g., handicraft production, local HIV/AIDS information and trends etc. Information about library users is also very important for content providers especially as e-books become widely available and local readership increases. This information can be collected over time and provided at a fee.

Independently collected qualitative and quantitative data about consumers, producers, communities and their habits and practices are very useful for development initiatives and investors.

#### The community model



Internet and email subscription services are becoming increasingly popular

This model is already very popular in CMCs, community radio stations, and multipurpose community telecentres. Its strength is based on user loyalty and the amount of time users invest in the business.

Revenue can be generated from the sale of ancillary products and services and/or voluntary contributions. On a larger scale the model is used to support open source development initiatives, public broadcasting, knowledge networks and specialized discussion sites.

CMCs could apply this model by training youth and women in return for some volunteer work. Another area that can produce growth for CMCs is to establish national/regional networks.



#### The subscription model

The success of this model depends on the type of CMC you are running and the financial ability of your community to spend. In this model, users are charged a periodic fee to subscribe to a service on a daily, monthly or annual basis.

An example drawn from Uganda on the use of this model is the monthly CMC membership cards to frequent users. These cards allow the user to borrow library books, CD-Roms, etc. An effort is being made to develop membership services to include a more "privileged" package without compromising service provision to one-time users. This means that CD-Rom readings can take place at a fixed fee for one-time users, and at no charge to subscribed users who can also borrow books, CD-Roms, video cassettes, and DVDs using their subscription.

The subscription model can be extended to Internet users. Internet use can be provided for a specific duration, such as 30 minutes per day, at a fixed subscription rate. This is useful for businesses and individuals who find the one-time use payments too expensive.

It is important to maintain free or subsidised services in a CMC in order to maintain the development purpose and the public space that can serve as a hub for civil society participation. Hence, the CMC management should be very careful when applying this model to avoid over subscribing their services.



#### The utility model

This model is already being used by many CMCs when offering telephone, email and web browsing services. The utility or *on-demand* model employs a method of metering usage, or adopts the *pay-as-you-go* approach. Metered services generate revenue based on actual usage rates. This model has been traditionally used in the provision of essential services, such as telephone, electricity and water. However, many Internet Service Providers (ISPs) and cyber cafés in developing countries also use it to generate revenues from Internet users.

CMCs should continue to use this model in the most familiar and tested ways. It is a model that is easy to apply with numerous tools available in the market to support its application.

#### Developing short, medium and long term strategies

Any CMC, like other small-scale enterprises, should start by developing a business plan, which embraces short term, medium term and long term strategies. Lets take a look at the different strategies before tackling the many steps involved in developing a business plan.

#### **Short-term strategies**

A short-term strategy describes your desired outcome with a focus on immediate and specific issues. This category of strategies addresses key questions that include:





- what services are to be provided?
- where and who is the target market?
- who are the competitors?
- what is the sales strategy?
- how much money is needed to start the business?
- what is the source of finance?
- what are the human resource and material inputs required for the startup and daily management of the centre?
- what are the managerial requirements of the business and what management controls should be put in place?
- when should changes be made to the business plan?
- where should the management go for technical support and advice?

Your CMC should identify services that can be offered quickly and with minimal operational cost. For many CMCs, this would imply using cheap and simple technologies. The services you offer would typically include: community radio broadcasting, basic computer training, telephony (if available), and perhaps a library with e-books on CD-Rom where Internet is not available.

A vigorous marketing and sales strategy should follow your short-term strategy to inform the community about your CMC.

Once the basic plan has been elaborated, use a start small approach for results.

#### **Medium-term strategies**

Once your short-term strategy is in place you will need to take steps towards carrying out the medium term vision of your CMC. For example, a CMC focusing its comparative advantage on business differentiation and image building will want to promote customer loyalty and goodwill by taking actions that include:

- introducing additional services, such as a full-fledged library, to strengthen its image
- defining and applying a business model or combination of models, e.g., if the centre plans
  to use the brokerage model, the CMC can start to identify existing brokers or representatives
  of associations to be trained for the implementation of this model.

#### Long-term strategies

Here the CMC will be looking at the social change it aims to bring about and attempts to realize its overall vision by exploring, e.g., linkages and networks.

Major concerns would include:

- setting up or joining a national or regional CMC network for radio programme exchange, joint human resource development, group purchasing and maintenance arrangements, etc.
- linkages with national and regional institutions for complementary service provisions and value-adding
- participation in knowledge networks
- creation of discussion sites as an outreach to the diaspora.



Microcredit group members broadcast from Radio Afia, Senegal



#### Developing a business plan

As discussed in the Starting Up chapter, developing a business plan is a first step in the creation of any CMC. A business plan is a written document that makes it possible for a CMC to share its plans with an investor. The content of the business plan will therefore need to demonstrate a detailed and properly articulated plan that ensures the creation of a sustainable, viable, well-managed entity. Depending on the type of CMC, it will be useful to include how this entity can make a return on the invested capital.

There are many types of business plans that can be adapted to your particular situation. In all cases you will need to gather and present your information under various categories that are outlined in a table of contents and summarized in the executive summary. You will also need to explain:

- · goals and values of the CMC
- history of the CMC
- structure and organisation of the CMC
- · services offered
- · how the CMC generates an income
- · how much money it makes
- how much income it plans to generate
- · how much money it plans to spend.

The business plan allows potential supporters and donors to judge the value of the CMC and the chances of its success. It also helps the CMC management map out its needs and identify problems. A good business plan is very useful in making short-term decisions and allows helps to set goals



in forecasting the future of the CMC. Fundraising efforts must always be embodied in the business plan. The following exercise may help you conceptualize the amount of time that is required to develop your business plan.

You are now ready with all the elements that are required for the composition of your business plan! Refer to the annex at the back and adapt the format to your needs.

#### Diversifying funding sources and partnerships

CMCs need to be aware of the following when planning to mobilise funds from various sources:

 It is important to keep up-to-date with the development priorities of the donor community, as they are very dynamic. Explore opportunities that will allow you to access donor networks; find out if they issue newsletters; try and visit their websites.



#### Step-by-step business plan checklist

**Step 1** – List all the major things that must be included in your business plan — services, marketing plan, operational plan and structure.

**Step 2** – Check these points for the following:

'In the Budget' – make sure that your financial plan shows the income or expense. For example, if you are distributing t-shirts in your marketing plan, there should be an expense for making the t-shirts in the financial plan.

'Important Value' – each part of the business plan must serve the values of your mission statement and your ability to serve that mission statement.

'Proved' – demonstrate that you can support the importance of the point you are making with experience or documents

'Agreed'- show that all internal stakeholders, who include the Board, the staff, and the community, have agreed to the point you are making.

**Step 3** – If you have checked Step 2 and done what is asked, then present the business plan in a readable format. For example,

Major Point	In the Budget	Important Value	Proved	Agreed
Move to bigger premises	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

- Donors are more likely to finance development initiatives that comprise substance rather than infrastructure, e.g., content development, targeted training, development campaigns. These require the use of the CMC services.
- Government or public sector institutions are likely to provide funds for national and community development programmes. Be aware of these and always seek to play a role in them.
- Civil society organizations such as NGOs and CBOs can provide some funds for the development of thematic initiatives that require CMC services, e.g., HIV/AIDS, women's empowerment, etc.
- The corporate or private sector will most likely buy a service or a product from a CMC. A
  CMC product could include information about local markets/producers (see the infomediary
  model above). However, approach partnerships within this sector with caution to avoid
  conflict of interest.
- The diaspora community is a potential contributing source to CMCs, but their contribution is less likely to be financial and more likely to be voluntary time, expertise and technical support.

#### Fundraising from the community

You can use creative ways to raise funds from your immediate community in addition to providing



services such as ICT training, Internet access, radio announcements, and recorded and live radio coverage. One of your community members may be interested in making a specific contribution e.g., for the expansion of the library. The community as a whole may be interested in paying a contribution for the broadcast of a school play or coverage of an important local event.

#### Involving the diaspora

Any diaspora is often equipped with a financial capacity that would be of significant importance to community development. Keep an open invitation to your diaspora for financial or voluntary contributions including technical expertise and support.

Fundraising from this community
will require extensive and
creative ways of networking by
CMCs. Possible ways of promoting
their service to the diaspora include
leading debates on development
issues, proactively informing the
international community about the
development of their communities, broadcasting
suggestions about how the diaspora can play a role in

community development, and announcing services that may be of interest to the diaspora.

#### Working relationships with commercial operators

CMCs could be seen as potential channels for reaching new markets in a country or region. The corporate sector will be interested in expanding and accessing new markets so it may be beneficial to explore ways of forging partnerships. However, you will need to keep guard against commercial organizations that use friendly or hostile approaches to gradually take over the CMC.

Your CMC can request the participation of the private sector on valid grounds for corporate social responsibility, which may provide valuable support for development initiatives.



A businessman watches his tender application being faxed from Sengerema Telecentre, Tanzania

A possible window of opportunity for your CMC may be to establish relations with commercial operators once you have identified a service or a product that you can re-distribute at community level.



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Hezekiel Dlamini is UNESCO Adviser for Communication and Information in West Africa.

Email: h.dlamini@unesco.org