

Development Broadcasting in Malawi: A Study on Factors Affecting Effective Development Programming at Malawi Broadcasting Corporation (MBC) Radio 1.

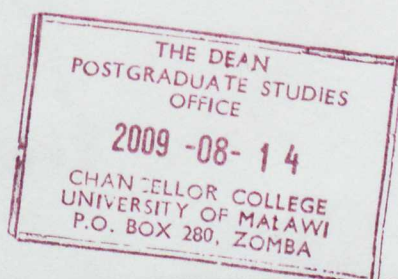
MA THESIS

By
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Submitted as partial fulfillment for the degree of Master of Arts in Theatre and Media for Communication in Development to the Department of Fine and Performing Arts, University of Malawi, Chancellor College.

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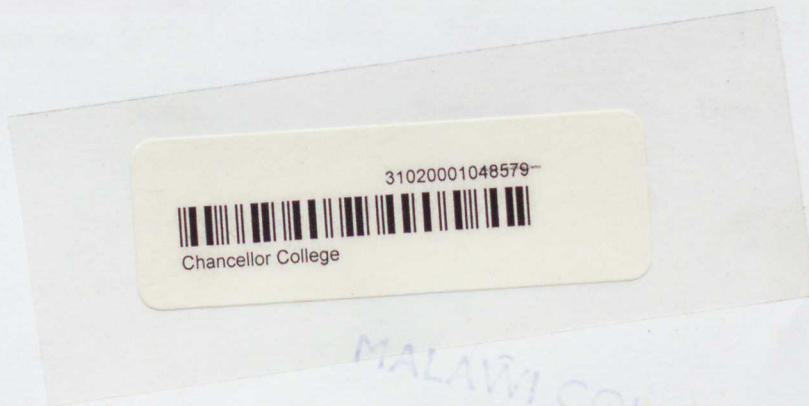


Declaration

I, *Aubrey Chikungwa*, hereby certify that this is my own original work and has not been submitted in part or in full for any examination and is being submitted for examination with my full knowledge and authorisation.

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Certification

We certify that this thesis has been submitted to the University of Malawi,
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Dedication

To my mother, Virginia Bruwer

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To Lucy for typing the proposal and having the questionnaires printed. Many thanks also go to all my classmates for the constructive criticisms and suggestions during the proposal presentations.

Abstract

Development broadcasting falls within an approach of development communication that favors large scale actions and use of the mass media. The Malawi government uses this approach, mainly with the Malawi Broadcasting Corporation (MBC), but not much is realised and no study has so far analysed the context within which development programs are produced.

This study examines societal, communicator and organisational level factors that affect production of effective development messages at MBC. Among other research questions, the study interrogates MBC's programming schedule to determine the quantity of development content in relation to other programs such as entertainment and religion. A focus on a sample of health, self-help and cultural programs appreciates the impact of these factors on content. Most of the content is cultural oriented with critical areas like health and agriculture getting 7 and 5 hours of broadcasting a week respectively. Most of the programs lack allure due to the societal, communicator and organisational level factors and are laced with pro-literate terms even though the target groups are illiterate. These factors most likely interact within and between the levels to affect production of effective development messages. Radio is the most accessible medium in developing countries and addressing the hurdles determined in this study will make it a more effective tool in promoting change.

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Chapter One

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

Putting people first is what development must be all about. But the question that readily comes to mind is how we achieve it in the context of poverty, the HIV/AIDS pandemic and other problems associated with the Third World, Malawi to be specific. According to Bessette (2004), participatory development communication is a powerful tool in facilitating this process. He defines participatory development communication as 'a planned activity...which facilitates dialogue among different stakeholders, around a common development problem or goal, with the objective of developing and implementing a set of activities to contribute to its solution or its realisation ...'¹

The word *stakeholders* in the definition refers to community members, local and regional authorities, NGO's, government technical services, service providers and other institutions working at the community and broader policy levels. One way through which participatory development communication is practiced is development broadcasting and central to this approach 'is the community ownership of radio programs in which participation is both an interactive flow and sharing of local knowledge and experiences.'² Talking about development broadcasting, Librero, conceives rural educational broadcasting as the 'use of radio for non-formal education purposes to support planned social change in the rural setting, with focus on promoting human development through the broadcast of programs designed to help people

¹. Bessette G. 2004, p. 9

². Manyozo L. 2005, p. 6

dialogue their problems and clarify their objectives to enable them to make wise decisions.’³ Such a radio program must inspire individuals, families and communities to work together in identifying needs and problems as well as determine their objectives because the radio’s ‘philosophy was based on the principles of serving people’s interests and needs.’⁴

This thesis provides the results of a research project conducted to examine factors affecting development broadcasting in Malawi, specifically the production of effective development radio programs at the Malawi Broadcasting Corporation (MBC) Radio 1. The study was inspired by the realisation that since its inception, radio in Malawi has been engaged in development broadcasting but no study has examined factors that influence the production of effective development programs despite clear indicators that very little has been achieved not only in Malawi but in many African countries. What could be the bottlenecks curtailing production of programs that should help people dialogue their problems as well as inspire individuals and communities to work together in identifying their needs and problems? To address such questions, the study examined societal, communicator, and organisational level factors that affect production of development messages at the MBC Radio 1 station. Among other research questions, the study critically interrogated MBC’s programming schedule to determine the quantity of development content in relation to other programs such as entertainment and religion. The study then narrowed down to focus on a sample of health, safe-help and cultural programs to determine the content, actors, sources, geographical focus and

³. Ibid

⁴. Wigston, 1996, p. 305.

quality to appreciate the impact of the societal, communicator and organisational level factors on content. 'Knowledge about the context in which development programs are produced is essential for understanding the nature of development content and its potential impact on the process of national development.'⁵ Interrogating factors influencing development content production enables not only researchers, but also policy makers to determine bottlenecks in the production process so that policy can be formulated to make radio a more effective tool in promoting national development. But before the data is presented, this first chapter provides some background information to contextualise the study. The chapter also gives a critical analysis of the limited literature on the topic as well as the purpose of the study. An attempt has also been made to justify why the study was worthy undertaking. Guy Bessette's concept of participation and Havelock's model of *problem-solving* have been discussed as frameworks for examining how the development radio programs are produced as an instrument and discourse towards the generation and sharing of knowledge on local development issues, planning as well as implementation.

Chapter two focuses on how radio and development broadcasting in Malawi has evolved to its current form. Apart from giving important background to the study, the chapter takes a critical look at the participatory communication model of the Development Broadcasting Unit (DBU) – a semi-autonomous unit of the MBC which was established in 1998 to produce development oriented programs. 'Scholars, donors, and policy makers alike have agreed that the DBU's model is one of the most effective

⁵. Shah, 1990, p. 1034.

strategies in incorporating rural masses in defining development needs and problems.⁶ The discussion on DBU thus not only forms part of the history of development broadcasting in Malawi, but also shows how effective development broadcasting ought to be. The idea is to offer a working model that MBC can emulate or perhaps be challenged to adopt if radio is to be more effective in promoting change. A critical analysis of the DBU's *Kanthu Nkhama* – Hard Work Pays, forms part of the chapter.

The focus in chapter three is on policies governing production of development messages as well as the quantity and nature of such messages i.e. area of focus in terms of health, culture or agriculture. Attention is on MBC's programming schedule to determine the nature of development messages and total time allotted to such content. The discussion on policies centers on MBC and ministries of Health and Agriculture.

Chapters 4, 5 and 6 dwell on development programs produced by MBC. These programs include those on health, self-help and culture. The idea is to provide an in depth and critical analysis of the approach, format, content and structure and treatment of the messages to determine the programs' effectiveness. People's perception of the episodes in question also forms part of each chapter. The last but one chapter focuses on results of the face-to-face interviews, questionnaires as well as observations, bringing insights into the organisational, communicator and societal-level factors that affect production of effective development messages at MBC.

⁶. Documents on policy and organisational structure, DBU offices, Blantyre, 14/11/07

Chapter 8 offers the conclusion. This chapter does not only give a summary of the crucial issues raised in the thesis but also provides recommendations to make development broadcasting more effective in facilitating community dialogue which is central to the task of defining and achieving development.

1.2 Background to the study

Radio is the most effective medium of mass communication in developing countries.⁷ Radio effectively deals with high illiteracy rates and poor transport and communication infrastructure commonly associated with the Third World where other forms of mass communication such as Television, Magazines and Newspapers are not fully developed or remain urban-centered in their sense of audience and content.⁸ Recognising radio's ability to transcend geographical and other barriers to communication, the first government in independent Malawi decided to task the country's only radio station for over three decades - MBC - with the responsibility of promoting social change.⁹

In other words, radio was seen as an instrument that could help government eradicate hunger, poverty, ignorance and disease through development oriented programs on health, education and agriculture. Consequently, with government probing, MBC initiated several development radio programs on health, education and agriculture to promote socio-economic development of the country. Other countries in Africa had actually started using radio to aid the development process prior to independence.

⁷. Wigston, 1996, p. 414

⁸. Newspapers are mostly written in English and remain practically non-existent in the rural areas. Television is a new phenomenon in countries like Malawi and cannot be accessed by people in the rural areas where the majority of the population live.

⁹. Nkhata M. 2003, p. 17

Cameroon, Mali, Nigeria, Ghana and Benin among others introduced broadcasts to promote economic development way back in the early 1950's before they attained independence.¹⁰ Commenting on the role of radio in Africa, Nkhata (1993) states that:

“In contrast to the role of radio in the western countries, in developing countries it is expected to be an active partner if not an integral part of the efforts to mobilize the population and persuade it to engage in activities to counter such problems as hunger, poverty, ignorance and disease, while at the same time promoting self-reliance, African culture, political stability and economic development.”¹¹

Since independence, the Malawi government's main objective has been economic development and raising the living standards of the people, the majority of whom live in the rural areas and are poor, illiterate and have poor health. MBC, being a public broadcaster, has therefore always shouldered more responsibilities beyond the three aims of entertaining, informing and educating in the tradition of western society. During Dr. Kamuzu Banda's era, the role of radio in this endeavor was more crucial because other forms of communication like newspapers were not ideal for the task of promoting social change due to the country's poor road network and high rates of illiteracy. Information, Education and Communication (IEC) activities were also very limited or non-existent in most sectors due to the prevailing political landscape.¹²

The new democratic dispensation and the subsequent coming in of new radio stations has not altered MBC's role as one of the tools to facilitate the development process. If

¹⁰. Iiboudo 2003, p. 211

¹¹. Nkhata, 2003, p.17

¹². The history of IEC activities in the country date back to the time the country attained multiparty pluralism in the early 1990's. See Chinsinga, (2003:200) for a brief but lucid account of the history of IEC activities in Malawi.

anything, MBC has introduced new programs to meet the challenges posed by the HIV/AIDS pandemic as well as the new democracy. The station has introduced programs aimed at mitigating the impact of HIV/AIDS, promoting human rights, gender equality, safe motherhood, and those aimed at instilling and promoting self-reliance and grassroots participation in self-help development projects. A notable program that has just been introduced is *Nkhani za Chitukuko*, meaning *Development News* - a 10 minutes bulletin to promote and disseminate development news. The bulletin comes out thrice a week and is always in Chichewa. 'The aim of the newscast is to circulate information about development efforts and activities so that others may learn or emulate other people's experiences and perhaps be challenged to achieve the same.'¹³

The concern, however, is that 'radio has not lived up to people's expectations' in the 40 or so years that it has been employed as a tool to 'facilitate the development process.'¹⁴ And no study has examined factors that influence the production of such content, critically examining the quantity and characteristics of the development programs to determine overall time allotted to development content, sources used as well as whether the programs reflect the needs and interests of the local populace. A clear indication that radio has not had much impact is when MBC's Controller of Programs, Mr. Geoffrey Kazembe visited a remote part of the country in Mangochi district, Southern Malawi. To his dismay, he found that people were 'not following safe motherhood practices,' and any 'family planning methods' despite numerous development broadcasts on MBC

¹³. Interview with Charles Nkalo, Editor of Development News, MBC, 18/09/07

¹⁴. Okigbo 1995

on the same.¹⁵ Programs such as *Tilele* 'Family Planning' and *Uchembere wa Bwino* 'Safe Motherhood' are aimed at fostering family planning and safe practices for pregnant mothers.

"I asked if there was any hospital nearby and they said no. I also asked why they were not following any family planning methods despite broadcasts on MBC on family planning methods...They claimed that they do not understand the Chichewa broadcasts...We have now diversified on the language issue. We now have broadcasts in *Tonga, Yao, Lomwe, Sena, Nkhonde and Tumbuka*."¹⁶

While language seems to be a problem, it may not be the only hurdle curtailing the effectiveness of the development broadcasts. Nkhata (1993) says that a number of factors, mainly historical, political and organisational, have combined to reduce the effectiveness of this powerful mass medium to bring about change. Nkhata, however, does not explain what these historical, organisational or political factors are.

Apart from the experience of the controller, there are several other indicators supporting the view that radio has not had much impact. The station was vested with the task of producing health, education and agricultural programs to counter hunger, poverty, ignorance and disease yet these ills still plague the nation. Although the factors that contribute to these ills are too complex and diverse, it is important to note that during Dr. Banda's era radio was seen as a very powerful tool to disseminate development oriented information to counter these ills. Communication programs *per se* may not be to blame; government policies could have been faulty but it is nevertheless necessary to scrutinize how the communication programs were initiated, produced and delivered.

¹⁵. Inter view with Geoffrey Kazembe, Controller of Programmes, MBC Radio 1, 18/09/07.

¹⁶. Ibid

One of the ills Dr. Banda sought to eradicate through radio in the thirty or so years of his rule was cholera. Stories on cholera outbreaks in various districts across the country are however common in magazines and newspapers. One notable article worth mentioning was published in *The Daily Times* issue of March 16, 2006 titled '*Cholera cases go up*'. This article indicates that cholera was still infecting a lot of people in the country with the number of people infected by March 2006 pegged at over 4000. The article further said the infection rate was increasing and over forty people had already died. Statistics compiled by the Ministry of Health starting from October 17, 2005 to March 2006 show that the infection rate was rising with Lilongwe, Blantyre and Nsanje recording the highest figures.¹⁷ In 2005 alone, the country had registered three hundred thousand cases of diarrhea and cholera. Former Health Minister Hetherwick Ntaba was quoted in *The Daily Times* issue of March 16, 2006 as saying the situation was pathetic and derailing development efforts although his ministry and other stakeholders were seriously implementing control measures to curb further spread of the disease. And the editorial opinion of February 22, 2006, titled, '*Cholera shame to our nation*,' *The Daily Times* asked the question: "In 2006, is not it a huge shame that this nation is still battling with cholera, and is not it even a bigger shame that each year, the authorities search for clues to combat cholera ... The way forward would be for the people to be taught and told that the battle against cholera can only be won if they practice great personal hygiene."

The question, however, is: "Has there not been broadcasts and messages on 'great personal hygiene' in the media in general since the time the first cholera case was

¹⁷. See Mkawihe, M. 16/03/06.p.3

reported in 1973?" These messages have always been there and it has been government policy since independence to use radio, with its wide reach, to effectively deal with illiteracy and to wipe out poverty, hunger, ignorance and disease, including cholera. The question should therefore be: "Why have these messages failed to bear fruits?" Do people have access to the channels used to disseminate these messages? What about the nature and content of the messages in terms of quality and quantity to ensure effectiveness? What factors at the societal, organisational or communicator levels may have affected and may still affect production of effective development messages? To narrow it down and to be specific, the fact that diseases like cholera still claim lives of many Malawians each year despite 35 or so years of broadcasts to eradicate these ills clearly casts doubt on development strategies put in place as well as the effectiveness of MBC's health, education and other development oriented messages. This study intends to examine MBC's programming schedule to determine the quantity and characteristics of development programs; i.e. topics, actors as well as geographical settings most frequently covered among other research questions.

1.2.1 Hypothesis

Quality and quantity of radio development programs affect the effectiveness of MBC's development messages.

1.3 Literature Review/Critical Framework

Most of the research on how the media in developing nations like Malawi facilitate national development has not only been done abroad but is largely on print news.¹⁸ Only a few studies have examined development news/programs produced by the broadcast media such as radio. For example, Barghout¹⁹ examined Jordan's radio and television networks while Mc Daniels²⁰ studied the television networks in Malaysia and Pakistan. Shah (1988), who found not only little attention devoted to development news but poor quality as well when he examined development news on all India radio in 1988, actually observed that lack of attention to radio was somewhat surprising because of the medium's importance as an effective channel of mass communication in developing countries where literacy rates are low.²¹

Most of these studies, however, as Shah (1990) rightly observed, cannot be generalized to apply to countries like Malawi because the aspects examined are peculiar to the specific area's history, economy and polity. For example, India, Pakistan as well as Malaysia have more vibrant economies - very advanced manufacturing sectors - than Malawi and their media industries are better developed. These countries also have many radio and television networks, which is not the case with Malawi.

Development related literature on the media in Malawi is limited. Piriminta (2003) did a study on representation of rural areas in Malawian newspapers and found that they were

¹⁸. There are numerous studies on print media in development done in developing nations like Malawi. See, Shah, 1988, p 425-429.

¹⁹. Barghout, 1974, p. 418

²⁰. Mc Daniels, 1986, p 167.

²¹. Shah, 1988, p. 426

portrayed as being poverty stricken and lagging behind in development when compared to the urban centers of Blantyre, Lilongwe, Mzuzu and Zomba. He also argued that the rural areas got little attention and coverage compared to the urban centers despite the fact that the resources that yield the revenues of the nation such as Tobacco and Cotton in Malawi, Coco in Ghana invariably belong to these rural areas. Piriminta's dissertation, however, suffers from several weaknesses. Firstly, he does not tell us what proportion of the stories he had analysed were about rural or urban centers to support his claim. Secondly, he concluded that there was generally little media attention on rural areas when he had not assessed what the broadcast media such as radio was saying about these areas. This study will fill this void, i.e. it will examine the characteristics of development messages: the topics, sources and geographical setting most frequently covered as well as proportion of development messages in MBC's broadcasts.

a Nkhata (1993) did one readily accessible study in Malawi on radio for development titled '*The Role of Radio in Malawi's National Development.*' His study, however, focused much on what MBC, the only radio station at the time, was tasked with in the fight against poverty, hunger, ignorance and disease during the thirty years of president Banda's rule. Nkhata does not necessarily show why radio had failed to live up to people's expectations. He also does not tell us whether the programs were trivial and lacking in development content and does not clearly indicate if indeed Chichewa - in which all the development programs and newscasts were produced - communicated effectively the development objectives to the nation.

→ Nkhata (1993) points out that radio failed to deliver because it had either been underutilized, or sometimes misused, or outright abused.²² He argues that activities by the president, government ministers and top civil servants took precedence over anything else at MBC. My point of departure here, however, is that focus on government officials should not be the issue of concern but rather the quality and quantity of the news programs in terms of offering development content. For example, do the news items focus on personalities or the issues and policies these officials espouse? Furthermore, were such policies relevant to the needs and interests of the people? Nkhata also contends that audience members, particularly the educated in urban areas, had cynically lost interest on MBC's programs because of the station's focus on officials, referring to it scornfully as the "official megaphone." This contention, however, is not supported or based on any research findings. My own observation is that focus on officials is mostly in news bulletins and not necessarily in all programs. Furthermore, development programming at MBC targeted farmers and people in the rural parts of the country and not educated elites in the urban areas. Priority on officials in news bulletins, therefore, could not have been a major reason programs on health, education and those aimed at economic development of the masses failed to bear fruits. It was actually government policy to use radio, as a tool to eradicate poverty, hunger, ignorance and disease and it could not have been in its interest to see the campaign fail. During this period, most Malawians also did not have a variety of choices on what radio stations to listen to apart from MBC. Therefore, I believe that radio failed to deliver due to a combination of factors, which can presently be mere

²². Nkhata, 2003, p.37

speculation unless a study is done to ensure that history does not repeat itself especially where using radio for development is concerned.

One other notable aspect highlighted by Nkhata (1993) is the fact that officials from the Ministry of Education, Health as well as Agriculture worked hand in hand with MBC staff in the planning and production of health, education and agricultural programs. This means that organisations and people other than MBC staff produced and had influence over some of the development-centered messages aired by the national broadcaster with Ministry of Agriculture's *Ulimi wa Lero* 'Modern Farming' as an instance. Consequently, this research will also examine the policies governing production of development messages by institutions such as the Ministry of Agriculture and Health.

Several authors have also commented on communication and the role of the media in general to facilitate sustainable development. For example, Moemeka (1995) says that:

"Unless a communication strategy includes a two-way flow of messages, makes sure that rural people have access to adequate channels and can express themselves in freedom and unless the authorities are willing to listen to the messages which come from the country side and learn from them, the best of such strategies i.e. development strategies, will come to naught."²³

Moemeka (1995) further points out that the history of post-colonial Africa has emphatically proved that it is near impossible for any nation overwhelmed by disease, poverty and illiteracy to successfully effect any positive social-political and economic changes without effective communication and active participation by its people in the

²³. Moemeka 1995, p 65

life of that nation.²⁴ The question that comes to mind here is: "Are the rural people given a voice in issues that affect their lives and aired on the radio as development programs?" In other words, what are the characteristics of development programs in terms of actors, sources and setting most frequently covered to facilitate development? Moemeka (1995) points out that while the natural resources that yield the revenues for the nation invariably belong to the rural areas - Cocoa in Western Nigeria, Ground-Nuts in Northern Nigeria, Petroleum in Southern Nigeria, Copper in Zambia and Cocoa in Ghana - it is the cities and not the rural areas that take all benefits from such revenues. Ansah (1990) also expressed similar sentiments when he talked about the African media. He said that '...they are mainly urban-based and elitist in orientation ... In terms of roles assigned to the media, African States see them as tools for nation-building and development and the professional journalist is perceived as an intermediary between the State and citizens rather than as an independent observer belonging to some "fourth" estate.'²⁵ Expressing more or less similar sentiments, Kariithi, (1995), in his essay '*Questioning the Policy Maker: The Role of Mass Media in Shaping Africa's Economic Future*,' says many African journalists lack the requisite skills to report effectively on economics, health and other development related issues to facilitate national development. He writes:

"African journalists lack the 'Scientific Outlook' necessary for objective reporting of development issues. No wonder they report events rather than processes of the events, and personalities rather than the issues raised by these

²⁴. Ibid

²⁵. Ansah, 1990, p. 32

personalities...Many African journalists do not understand...issues well enough to effectively report on them to facilitate national development.”²⁶

Hunger, poverty and cholera outbreaks are examples of events and not processes. Could lack of this ‘scientific outlook’ on the part of journalists be one of the major reasons why radio has failed to deliver in Malawi?

Current thinking in development circles highlight different views on why development programs in the media have failed. Okigbo (1995) points out that the mass media in Africa today are active in the tasks of promoting social development through public enlightenment and general education but their performance has often been less than expected because of financial constraints, self-interest by proprietors, government’s direct and indirect controls and the undemanding nature of audiences. But Melkote (1991) believes otherwise and asks these questions: “If indeed there is some potential for communication activities in development, why have current programs using both conventional and communication technology failed to realise their objectives? Does the fault lie with the receiver for not adopting the innovation?” His answer is that the fault is not with the audience members. He writes: “while the *victim blame* theories succeeded in explaining the problems in the fifties and sixties by pinning the blame on the receivers, today scholars concur that the problem lies with the way information programs are conceptualised, designed and delivered. There is very little information

²⁶. Kariithi, 1995

flowing to the beneficiaries and much of it is not relevant to their needs and problems.”²⁷

Among other research questions, this study intends to examine if there is indeed little information about rural people and if indeed such information reflects less of the needs and interests of the rural masses and why? In other words, this study intends to examine MBC's development programs to determine the quality and quantity of development messages; characteristics of these messages in terms of the actors, setting and sources most frequently used among other research questions.

1.4 Main Objective

The main purpose of this study is to investigate some of the factors that affect development programming at MBC.

1.4.1 Specific Objectives

Specifically, this study intends to utilize more or less the same specific research questions addressed by Shah (1990) when he examined factors influencing development news production at three Indian daily papers. The study will:

1. Examine characteristics of development programs.
2. Examine institutional policies governing production of development messages at MBC and ministries of Health and Agriculture.

²⁷. Melkote, S. 1991, p 232

3. Identify how societal-level factors, such as government-media relations and journalism traditions affect development programs content.
4. In what ways do communicator-level factors, such as journalists' educational level, influence development programs content?
5. Examine ways how organisational-level factors, such as policies and financial resources, affect development programs content.
6. Make recommendations that will make MBC radio a more effective tool in facilitating development.

1.5 Methodology

This study is about factors that affect development programs production at public broadcasting institutions. By 'public' this thesis refers to those institutions that are run by public funds or get subvention from government to supplement revenue generated through in-house income generating activities such as advertising. Therefore, apart from MBC Radios 1 and 2, Television Malawi as well falls in this category. However, to have an in depth analysis of these factors, only MBC Radio 1 has been examined as a case study. MBC Radio 1 is also the most accessible in the country and one that has been utilized by government as a tool to aid the development process since independence.

This study employed both the quantitative and qualitative research approaches to investigate the research questions. Quantitative analysis - an approach that requires that the variables under consideration be mathematically analysed - was employed to enable

the researcher to determine setting most frequently covered, i.e. urban/rural and sources most frequently used as well as what proportion of the total programming schedule is devoted to development messages. To do this, a content analysis of MBC's programming schedule and development programs was undertaken. The coding protocol required the researcher to make decisions on the topics covered by the items as well as content characteristics such as actors and sources used and geographical focus - urban, rural, regional, national or international.

It is, however, very difficult to explain human behavior in measureable terms. Measurements inform us how often or how many people behave in a certain way but do not sufficiently answer the question 'why?' In other words, not everything in life can be quantified or measured hence this researcher supplemented the quantitative analyses with the qualitative approach.

As regards qualitative research, the study utilized the case study approach. A case study is a research design that allows a researcher to focus on one 'actor/case' to reveal individual layers that might finally be applicable to others of a similar nature. According to Hancock, (1998) a case study is one of four major types of qualitative research inquiry and design that allow a researcher to understand why things are the way they are in our social world and why people act the way they do. The case study research claims to offer a richness and depth of information not usually offered by other methods because the design allows a researcher to get close to data through the use of

observations or individual interviews. Like surveys, case study design can take a qualitative or quantitative stance²⁸.

One of the major criticisms levied at the case study design and qualitative approach in general is generalisability of the findings. Critics argue that the results of qualitative enquiry may not be generalisable to a larger population because the sample group is small and the subjects not randomly selected. The case study method is criticized for not necessarily being representative of similar cases and therefore the results of the research are not generalisable. However, as Hancock, (1998) notes, this is a misunderstanding of case study and qualitative research in general because the original research question may be to seek insight into a specific aspect or subgroup and not the general population. Generalisability is, therefore, not usually an issue for the researcher who is involved in studying a specific situation as in the present case which is to examine 'Factors that Affect development programming at MBC.'

Qualitative tools such as Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and individual interviews were used to gather "factors data" from development journalists, development journalism educators and government officials. These people were selected purposefully using Snow Ball Sampling - a form of purposeful sampling that occurs when the researcher asks participants to recommend other individuals to the study, so that only those people with adequate knowledge and experience on the issue at hand are interviewed - this especially assisted the researcher to talk to people who once worked

²⁸. Hancock, B. 1998, p. 6.

as reporters or producers at MBC during Dr. Banda or Muluzi's eras. The FGDs were used to gather data regarding people's perception of the various development programs.

Interviews are sometimes criticized for providing data which is difficult to validate. For instance participants may be asked how they behave in certain situations but there may be no guarantee that they actually practice what they say they do. To counter this criticism, this researcher also used observations, which is a qualitative research technique for verifying or nullifying information acquired in face to face interviews.

1.6 Theoretical Framework

Melkote (1991) provides two broad theoretical perspectives that may be more effective in getting Third World Countries out of their economic and social problems than the dominant modernisation paradigm which was known for its prescriptive and top-down nature in development planning and implementation. These approaches - Alternative and Another development paradigms - though propounded by two blocks of differing ideological beliefs, are both known for their human view, emphasis on equality, grassroots participation, call for ecological balance, provision of basic needs such as food, clean water as well as new roles for communication media in development. This study will analyse MBC's programs from the perspective assigned to the media by both approaches. Specifically, this paper employs Guy Bessette's concept of participation, which falls under Another development and the *problem-solving* model suggested by Havelock (1971). This model falls under Alternative development models.

1.6.1 *The Problem-Solving Model*

The Alternative development approaches were largely championed by western scholars and economists in the mid and late 1970's after realising that the dominant paradigm *vis-à-vis* Third World development with its prescriptive, top-down nature in development planning and implementation had failed to eradicate poverty and other economic problems of the Third World. Although there are several approaches put forward as alternatives to the dominant paradigm – for example The Basic Needs approach and Mc Namara's Integrated Rural Development – their common underlying call was eradication of human suffering and for communication to be a two-way user initiated process. Accordingly, the *problem-solving* model casts the spotlight on the needs of users and their own diagnosis of their problems.

In other words, the *problem-solving* model proposes that communication for development should be initiated in response to articulated needs of the users. People should discuss together, identify their needs and problems, decide on a plan of action and then use a specific medium of communication most appropriate to their needs. In this model, according to Melkote (1991), the needs of the users are studied extensively, as well as how the people go about solving their problems. The need for information, then, is the prerogative of the user at the village level rather than some authority at the top. But since most Alternative models are criticised for mobilising community support for projects conceptualised, planned and controlled outside the local environment, this researcher will also analyse the programs in line with Bessette's concept of participation.

1.6.2 Guy Bessette's Concept of Participation

Bessette (2004) believes that participation is 'central to the task of defining and achieving development.'²⁹ This mode of participation focuses on empowering local people to have self-confidence and conviction that they are not permanent victims of any situation and that they can change things for the better.³⁰ Bessette's participation is thus not an extractive process of information, enlisting or mobilising community support for centralised projects planned and controlled outside the local environment. The emphasis in Bessette's idea of participation is on local communities as stakeholders or key players in defining, planning and seeking solutions to problems affecting their lives. Development broadcasting is one way through which community participation and dialogue around development issues and problems can be promoted. This type of broadcasting should not only be people centered, but also inspire individuals, families and communities to work together in identifying needs and problems. As a tool to facilitate change, to what extent has MBC employed participatory strategies to engage the local communities in issues affecting their lives? This research will therefore use Bessette's concept of participation to determine whether MBC's development programs are participatory and if they engage the local masses in issues that affect their lives.

1.7 Limitations

Limitations form part and parcel of virtually every research project. The limitations encountered in this study could be described as the normal hurdles every research faces, although some were so limiting that the thesis stalled for some time.

²⁹. Bessette, 2004, p:16

³⁰. Ibid, p: 17

Several respondents promised to provide copies of their organisational policies to enable the researcher to examine them on production of development messages. None of the respondents fulfilled their promises. The section on policies regarding production of development content at MBC and Ministry of Health has been developed based on interviews with officials from the two organisations because the policies were never made available.

Ministry of Health officials revealed that the ministry has no policy over content where as MBC staff said they have one which is not followed. No one was able to shed light on what the policy says. It is important to note that institutions usually publish their policies – if they have them – and if not it is because they do not want to be held to that policy which may be the case with MBC since the station is always accused of bias in favor of the government of the day.

The second limiting factor was availability of programs for content analysis. MBC has been technologically evolving from analogue to digital. Consequently, most of its programs for 2006 and back have been lost or misplaced. Controller of Programs Geoffrey Kazembe explained that the programs were not stored after broadcasts. Some producers, however, tried to retrieve the few that could be found. As a result, the researcher focused on readily available programs such as *Uchembere wa Bwino*.

Another limiting factor centered on the questionnaires. Some development producers took the questionnaires and stuffed them on their bookshelves. Almost 7 out of 30

questionnaires were not returned. There was also a great delay in returning the questionnaires. I had to resort to face-to-face interviews to catch up with time.

1.8 Rationale

The relevance of examining the context within which MBC's development programs are produced should not be underestimated. Knowledge of these factors is pertinent to understanding and appreciating the nature of development programs and their potential impact on the process of national development. Among other things, the study will determine traditional broadcasting practices that impede effective development programming. Based on the information from this study, appropriate steps could be taken to effectively use radio in development communication. Improvements on treatment of messages and use of appropriate language to enhance comprehension of communication objectives may be among crucial factors that need to be taken into consideration.

Although MBC has made efforts to produce programs in other languages such as *Sena*, *Yao*, *Tumbuka* and *Lomwe*, Chichewa still dominates. The prevailing assumption is still that all Malawians understand Chichewa fluently to appropriate content produced in the language. This author, however, believes that use of appropriate language is a serious issue, which has over the years profoundly contributed to the ineffectiveness of MBC's development messages. Currently, all the designated Agricultural programs such as *Ulimi wa Lero* 'Modern Farming', *Ulimi Ndi Bizinesi* 'Farming is Business' as well as the DBU's *Kanthu N'khama* 'Hard Work Pays' are produced in Chichewa. This is the

same way in which MBC produced the health, education and agricultural programs for over 30 years for the *Chewa, Yao, Nyakyusa, Sena* and *Lomwe*. If language was a barrier to effective communication during the 30 years MBC bombarded the masses with broadcasts to eradicate hunger, poverty and disease, then it is also a barrier today in the quest to empower the masses in Chitipa Wenya with *Kanthu N'khama* or how to improve farming in *Ulimi wa Lero*.

It is not too late to employ effective ways of using radio to facilitate the development process because it remains to date the most pervasive, accessible, affordable and flexible mass medium available.³¹ In rural areas, according to Girard (2003), radio is often the only mass medium available more than ninety years after the world's first station was founded. The findings of this study will allow researchers, journalists as well as policy makers to determine where bottlenecks in the production of development messages exist or are likely to arise. Based on that knowledge, policy can be formulated to fix the problems or to prevent them altogether, resulting in a more effective role for radio and journalism in the development process.

1.9 Scope of the work

Although this research uses MBC Radio 1 as a case study, its findings may be applicable to other public funded broadcasting institutions such as TVM and MBC Radio 2. The findings may also influence the privately owned broadcasting houses such as Capital Radio, Star Radio and Power 101 because the practitioners attend the same training schools and they criss-cross from one organisation to another.

³¹. Girard, 2003, p. 10

1.10 Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to introduce and justify why this study was worth undertaking. Focus among other things has been on providing background, purpose of the study as well as the methods that were employed to collect data. The chapter has also provided a critical analysis of the limited studies undertaken on the subject. Worth noting has been the observation by scholars that lack of effectiveness of development programs should not be pushed on audiences. But rather the way information programs are conceptualised, designed and delivered. Melkote (1991) and a 'majority of other scholars believe that there is little information flowing to the beneficiaries and much of it is not relevant to their needs and problems.'

Could this be true for MBC? The next chapters grapple with these questions. Chapter 2 focuses on how radio and development broadcasting in Malawi has evolved to its current form. The chapter takes a critical look at one episode of *Kanthu Nkhama* – Hard Work Pays, a development radio program produced by the Development Broadcasting Unit. In chapter three the thesis dwells on policies governing production of development messages as well as on MBC's programming schedule to determine the nature of development messages and total time allotted to such content. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 take a critical focus on development programs produced by MBC to determine the quality of such programs i.e. relevance, design and treatment. The last but one chapter's attention is on the factors that affect production of effective development messages. Chapter 8 concludes the thesis.

Chapter Two

RADIO AND DEVELOPMENT BROADCASTING IN MALAWI

2.1 Introduction

The historical development of radio in Malawi is well documented in scholarly research projects and books.³² The historical account of development broadcasting is however scanty and narrow in focus. The few studies undertaken on the subject have focused on rural radio forums or listening clubs without considering other efforts at using radio to promote change even though such efforts may not necessarily have fitted their conceptual frameworks of development broadcasting. This chapter provides a brief historical overview of development broadcasting in Malawi with a view to not only address the existing gap in literature on the part of development radio broadcasting, but to also offer a strong foundation on which this study is based.

It is not enough to critically analyse the quantity and characteristics of MBC's development programs without a look at how effective development broadcasting ought to be. Consequently, as part of the history and development of development radio broadcasting in Malawi, this chapter also focuses on the participatory communication model employed by the DBU. Scholars such as Manyozo (2005) and donors - the UK based Radio for Development for example - have acknowledged the DBU's approach as a true and effective strategy of promoting dialogue and achieving development. The researcher, however, critically analyses one episode of the DBU's *Kanthu Nkhama* to determine the format, content and structure as well as treatment of the messages. The idea is to subject the program to a critical analysis and determine whether it is indeed

³². See works by Mackie 1974; Kerr, D. 1998; Nkhata, 1993.

participatory with content that is relevant to the needs of the masses as well as presented for easy listening. The discussion on DBU aims to form part of the historical development of development broadcasting in Malawi as well as a case study MBC's programs department can emulate.

2.2 Radio Broadcasting in Malawi

The history of broadcasting in Malawi is directly linked to that of other former British Colonies of Zambia - Northern Rhodesia, and Zimbabwe - Southern Rhodesia. Initially, being British Colonies, these three benefited from the Empire Services of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). This was before the establishment of Southern Rhodesia Broadcasting Services in Salisbury, Zimbabwe and the Central African Broadcasting Services (CABS) in Zambia's capital, Lusaka. Save for CABS - a pioneer in broadcasting in vernacular languages with programs intended and addressing needs of Africans - broadcasting during the early colonial era was largely aimed at white listeners. Mackenzie, quoted in Kerr (1998) summarises the function of this broadcasting phase:

“For expatriates it was essential to keep them in touch with home, provide them with a set of nostalgic and ritual links that would offer solace in exile, a reward and consolation for services in the tropics, and maintain their awareness of the larger imperial enterprise of which they were a part. The settlers had to be reminded of the wider imperial community, had to be offered a set of symbols that would encounter regional loyalties...while recognising the creation of local traditions and patriotism,”³³

³³. Kerr, D. 1998, p. 112

Thus radio targeted expatriates not just to provide them with information or entertainment, but also served as a linkage with home. This function was particularly important to those settlers who were in outlying, potentially vulnerable areas, where radio was often the only link with the outside world.³⁴ In Malawi, what could be considered as the first ever radio station was set up in the mountainous outskirts of Thyolo in 1953 purely to protect the interests and needs of the settler community. Thyolo station - *Blue Band Radio* - was set up purely as a means for defense communication for the white tea planters during the disturbances over federation in 1953.³⁵ A relay transmitter was installed the same year in the then capital - Zomba, to provide propaganda specifically aimed at the disturbances.

When Britain federated its three colonies - Nyasaland, Northern Rhodesia and Southern Rhodesia - broadcasting became centralised and most of the best equipment and human resources concentrated in Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia, which had a larger settler community than Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia. CABS, with its afro-centric and often times subversive programming, was rendered useless until after the collapse of the federation and the subsequent attainment of independence by Zambia.

Malawi seceded from the federation in 1963. The end of the federation also marked the end of Federal Broadcasting and the various stations including the station in Lusaka (CABS) started broadcasting independently. The only facilities Malawi inherited from the defunct federation consisted of a station center in Blantyre, a 20-kw short wave

³⁴. Ibid, p.112

³⁵. Ibid

transmitter and a 250-kw medium wave transmitter.³⁶ But plans for Malawi to establish a broadcasting corporation had been hatched way back in 1960. This was when the nationalist movement had gained momentum, and it was clear that the country would soon become an independent state. By early 1960, a consultant had been commissioned to advise the colonial government on the establishment of a national broadcasting corporation.³⁷ The facilities left by the federal government and the results of the consultants advice, laid the foundation for what came to be called *Radio Malawi* or The Malawi Broadcasting Corporation, established by an act of Parliament on 1st January, 1964 with Aleke Banda as its first Director General.³⁸

When MBC was established in 1964, it had similar programming ideals to those of the BBC, namely to inform, entertain and educate. This was not surprising since Britain was Malawi's former colonial master and had also pumped in both technical and financial resources for the corporation to be functional. However, in 1970, programs aimed at building an African national identity were introduced. Programs detailing the country's history, plays by African writers, reading from African authors and emphasis on locally produced programs on health, education and agriculture became a priority.³⁹ In other words, radio was now tasked with the responsibility not only of informing, entertaining and educating the masses, but also promoting change. MBC, with technical support from experts from various government departments, produced programs aimed at achieving government policies on national integration as a prerequisite to social

³⁶. Mackie, 1974

³⁷. Hall 1994, p. 16

³⁸. Ibid

³⁹. Chikunkhuzeni F, 2000, p.10

change; social, economic and educational development and preservation of culture, among others.

Malawi is predominantly rural and poor and over half of the population is illiterate. As a result, government's major preoccupation was to use MBC to promote economic development aimed at raising the living standard of the rural people. But before these crucial problems were tackled there was a more urgent task to be overcome by radio as a prerequisite to social progress. This was a problem of nation building which Mwakawango (1986) defines as the welding together of many tribes, races and ethnic groups. He states that:

“National building implies... cultivation of a larger consciousness...requires concepts that cut across narrow ethnic and parochial considerations. Thus our country, our government plus the symbolism of state flag and the national anthem need to become the focus of loyalty in place of the tribal chief or the village headman.”⁴⁰

The new government wanted to fuse all the country's ethnic groups and races into one identity. Most African States had small race or tribal identities and the focus of loyalty was the traditional leaders. In the new reality of independence, the allegiance needed to be changed into a larger consciousness transcending ethnic, tribal and racial boundaries as one nation.⁴¹ Knowing the strength that radio had, the new government seized the opportunity and utilised MBC to build the nation. Programs aimed at building the nation included plays by African Writers; crowing of a cockerel moments before the call sign

⁴⁰. Mwakawango 1986, p. 83.

⁴¹. Nkhata, 2003, p. 18

when opening the station; a 40 minutes program of patriotic songs that depicted Dr. Banda as a special person possessing almost superhuman qualities - the program also highlighted the achievements of the new nation as a result of the wise and dynamic leadership of the president.⁴² Chichewa was decreed that it should be taught in all primary schools and higher institutions of learning to allegedly enhance national cohesion; inception of the International Services of the MBC in the early seventies. This service, according to Nkhata (1993), was aimed at the large Malawi labor population in countries such as Zambia, Zimbabwe and South Africa. One of the noticeable programs aimed at this migrant population was *Kwanu Mkwana*, 'East or West Home is Best' - a listeners request program broadcast between 6 and 8 pm Monday through Friday.

Apart from using radio for building the nation, the authorities in Malawi embarked on projects aimed at promoting economic growth and better conditions of living for the people. This involved mobilisation of the populace to participate in what government called the war against hunger, poverty, ignorance and disease. MBC was chosen as a catalyst for this process. Malawi being an agricultural based economy; government placed a high priority on broadcasting aimed at improving agricultural productivity. In this endeavor, Ministry of Agriculture officials provided staff at MBC with technical support in producing programs such as *Bwalo la Alimi* - Farmers Forum; *Zokomera Alimi* - Farmers Requests; *The World of Agriculture* and *Chitukuko M'Malawi* - Development in Malawi, a program designed to instill a spirit of self-reliance in the rural community by highlighting projects initiated by the villagers themselves. Most of these programs focused on advising farmers on modern farming methods including

⁴². Ibid p.20

marketing techniques and application of fertilizer. The main objective of the exercise was to effect rapid increase in agricultural productivity particularly among the rural people who formed over 97% of Malawi's population.

To ensure effectiveness in reaching the rural masses as well as broaden its agricultural extension initiatives, government introduced a rural radio forums project in 1964. This concept originated in Canada, where the forums were organised for rural development purposes in 1941. Manyozo (2005) points out that the Canadian National Farm Radio Forum brought together rural peoples from across Canada to learn about and develop a deeper understanding of the issues that affected the lives of people in their communities. In the Malawi Farm Forums Project the best extension workers coordinated the clarification and localisation of Agricultural content through practical demonstrations and group discussions.⁴³ 'The farm forums radio initiated interest from more farmers at grassroots level so that the number of listening groups steadily increased as evidenced by the fact that two months after the first forum broadcasts, more than a hundred groups were meeting every week in schools, government buildings and under trees.'⁴⁴ 'Participation in the forum project improved the morale of some extension workers in remote areas, making them feel connected to their colleagues and the communication program. Mackie, (1974) says this generally resulted in increased hours of agricultural programming from less than an hour to about four hours per week.

⁴³. Mackie, 1974

⁴⁴. Manyozo, 2005

While the agricultural programs took care of the poverty and the hunger, health programs were introduced to promote awareness on the importance of immunisation and other health related issues. As with agriculture, health programs were developed with assistance from experts from the Ministry of Health who were responsible for the content and technical information of the programs where as MBC staff focused on script writing, recording and final production.

Nkhata (1993) points out that personal hygiene and public health information was being incorporated in the health programs so that the simple rural folk and urban poor, as well as the general public, could be exposed to information which was vital in their day-to-day lives and in times of outbreaks of epidemics such as cholera. The most popular of these health programs was *Dokotala wapa Wailesi* 'Radio Doctor' - a five-minute weekly program series that is still broadcast to date, making it one of the oldest development health radio programs. During president Banda's era, *Radio Doctor* was sponsored by big companies that sold over the counter drugs, but nowadays the Ministry of Health pays for it annually. This program is broadcast every Monday and Tuesday from 5:55 – 6:00 and 5:45 – 5:50 respectively.

Other notable health programs were *Umoyo ndi Chitukuko M'Malawi* meaning 'Health and Development in Malawi' – currently shortened to *Umoyo M'Malawi*, i.e. 'Health in Malawi' - a program that highlights the importance of nutrition, pre-natal care and immunisation against preventable diseases such as whooping cough. Anti-rabies campaigns also formed part of the health programs.

On education, government initiated the formation of a committee to address the country's education problems using radio. As a result, the Malawi Committee for Education comprising personnel from the Ministry of Education, Malawi College of Distance Education (MCDE) and MBC was formed in 1965. 'The committee recommended the use of radio for direct teaching, supplement to teaching and teacher training.'⁴⁵ Consequently, a Schools Broadcasting Unit was established in Blantyre comprising education officials and staff from MBC. The Unit was mandated to develop programs suitable for Primary and Secondary Schools and the National Correspondence College. About 14 hours of educational materials were being broadcast every week from Monday to Friday when school was in session. 'This was in the form of curriculum based programs deliberately designed for specific target groups.'⁴⁶ Entertainment programs would then take the education segment when schools closed. Nkhata (1993) observes that the educational programs were a success because distant education correspondence college centers blossomed in many parts of the country filled with students who were not able to make it to formal educational institutions.

Radio was also used to a great extent to promote culture. The Malawi Government believed that the colonial masters wanted to wipe out African beliefs, values and traditions. To revive Malawian traditions and beliefs, government decided to broadcast programs such as *Nyimbo za m'Maboma* – Songs from the Districts, featuring traditional songs, music, dance and drama purely for cultural revival. The authorities realised that just as radio could be used as an instrument of change towards better life, it

⁴⁵. Nkhata, 2003, p: 31

⁴⁶. Interview with Geoffrey Kazembe, Controller of Programs, MBC Radio 1, 17/09/07

could also be used to revive and maintain those elements of the Malawi culture, which were not only desirable, but also necessary in preserving the people's cultural identity.

As part of the programs aimed at cultural revival, MBC staff visited rural areas to talk and interview old men and women - usually whose Chichewa had not been adulterated by urban slang - on the correct use of the language. The producers would then go back to their studios to produce programs based on the field trips. These programs, called *Chichewa Chakumudzi* 'Chichewa of the village' and *Tiphunzitsane Chichewa* 'Let us teach each other Chichewa' - 'in which listeners used to write to the producer to express their views about a particular expression, word, or syntactic structure,'⁴⁷ - have all been stopped on the basis that president Banda wanted to portray the Chewa as the 'real' Malawians, the dominant group and founders of the nation. The inception of these programs was thus seen as part of Dr. Banda's 'process of Chichewaization,' which 'effectively erased histories of other ethno-linguistic groups.'⁴⁸

MBC adopted block programming to meet the interests of people in the urban and rural areas. A survey conducted by Mackie (1974), showed that MBC's 127 hours of broadcasting a week were broken down as follows (in percentages): music (both popular and traditional), 49; Education (classroom, adult, and agricultural), 20; News and Current Affairs, 17; Drama and variety, 9; Religious, 3; Promotional, 1; and Miscellaneous, 1. Looking at the time allocated to the programs one can deduce that music, both popular and traditional and the education programs (classroom and

⁴⁷. Kishindo 1998, p. 258.

⁴⁸. Ibid p. 256

gricultural) got the lion's share. As for the songs, it should be noted that Dr. Banda banned blues on MBC and, therefore, most of the songs, and drama were afro-centric solely for cultural revival.⁴⁹

In summary, therefore, one can argue that the major pre-occupations for MBC from 1964 - early 1990's were to establish a unique identity as an African radio, free of any influence from the colonial past, and to be a tool in the task of nation building. Thus cultural programs took center stage in that endeavor. The government also invested the country's limited resources to make radio a more effective tool in the fight against poverty, hunger, ignorance and disease (Mackie, 1974). But the question lingers on: why has radio failed to effectively meet the expectations of the people?

2.3 Multiparty Politics and Participatory Radio

In 1993, Malawians ushered in a 'neo-liberal form of multiparty politics, resulting in political and social reforms which centered on media diversity, freedom of expression and participatory development,' principles founded on the libertarian ideals empowering local people to consciously generate and utilize local knowledge for improving their status quo.'⁵⁰ The introduction of multiparty politics necessitated the establishment of a broadcasting authority to control and regulate the industry. Manyozo (2005) observes that the Communications Act of 1998 – which established the Malawi Communications Regulatory Authority (MACRA), 'ensured relative independence and media diversity, despite the existence of some 'normative trends,' which are in

⁴⁹. Chikunkhuzeni, 2000, p. 20

⁵⁰. Manyozo, 2005

themselves, ideological and repressive state apparatus, through which the government polices critical journalism.'

Though government through MACRA has been reluctant to issue broadcasting licenses to radio entrepreneurs to promote diversity in the sector, commercial and community radio stations have entered the market. Today the country boasts of 23 broadcasting houses.⁵¹ *Capital Radio* was the first private radio to enter the market and the latest radio to join the industry is *Star Radio*. The country has a total of 'five community radio stations' namely: '*African Bible College, Mzimba Community Radio, Nkhota-kota Radio, Mudziwanthu* in Mchinji, and *Dzimwe* in Mangochi.'⁵² *Zodiak, Power 101, Malawi Institute of Journalism (MIJ)* among others, form part of the private radio stations ushered in after the general elections in 1994. *Zodiak* and *MIJ* are currently the only other national radio broadcasting institutions apart from MBC. Another national broadcaster, *Maziko Radio* has just been established but is yet to go on air.

It cannot be refuted that this diversity has empowered communities to own communication processes and structures and use these as tools and forums for dialoguing out their development aspirations. The extent to which radio has been employed as a participatory communication tool by the various stations is a different story. What is important to note, however, is the fact that the 'community radio stations are mandated to serve the people in the communities within which they operate by disseminating development related information to those within a radius of 100 square

⁵¹. Interview with Kelton Masangano, Deputy Director of Broadcasting Services, MACRA, 15/11/07

⁵². Ibid

Malawi 'Sing Malawians' and *Mwambi wa Sabata Ino* 'Proverb of the week'; HIV/AIDS programs such as *Njatonse* 'Its for us all', *Umoyo m'Malawi* 'Health in Malawi' and *Tikuchitaponji* 'What are we doing about it'; on gender issues: *Mayi wamakono* 'Modern Woman' and on self-help projects: *Tili pa Ntchito* 'We are at Work. However, the question is: does MBC's National Development Section employ participatory approaches for people to contribute to their own development in line with the libertarian ideals empowering local people to consciously generate and utilize local knowledge for improving their status quo? The other chapters of this thesis critically analyses selected development episodes with a view to determining the approach, format, content and treatment of development messages produced by MBC's National Development Section.

The National Development Section is not the only unit or initiative by MBC to promote national development. In September 1999, MBC established a semi-autonomous unit called the DBU with funding from the UK's Department for International Development (DFID). The unit is financially independent from MBC and intends to completely break away and become an NGO.⁵⁵ Until that time, the unit directly falls under the Programs Department of the MBC. An important issue is that the DBU employs a communication strategy unique and different from that of its mother body. The 'participatory communication approach the unit employs aims to promote national dialogue around development issues by giving rural communities access to radio to voice out their

⁵⁵. In an interview early in August 2006, one of the senior producers at the Unit stressed that they had already finalised the paper work for the DBU to become an NGO. He said the DBU has enough funding to operate on its own.

concerns and have them resolved.⁵⁶ The section that follows provides an in depth analysis of the DBU and its communication approach.

2.4 Participatory Radio Broadcasting in Malawi: The DBU

The DBU is a semi-autonomous unit of the MBC because the unit is responsible for its own finance, production and personnel despite the fact that it falls directly under MBC's Director of Programs. 'The DBU is managed by a Steering Committee of 12, comprising prominent members of Civil Society, Academics and key development practitioners in government.'⁵⁷ The unit is composed of a team of development journalists with a small support staff. It has a project manager appointed by Radio for Development (RFD), a UK based media consultancy group that offers technical assistance; 4 facilitators, 4 producers, 1 assistant producer, secretary, accountant and messenger.⁵⁸

The DBU offers participatory forms of broadcasting by generating program content with communities.⁵⁹ The aim is to ensure that marginalised groups or communities are given access to radio to raise issues affecting their livelihoods. The communities are then linked to service providers for action-oriented dialogue within the community. This is probably why the DBU's approach to development broadcasting is regarded by scholars such as Manyozo, (2005), and donors – for example the UK based Radio for Development - as a true and effective strategy in promoting dialogue and participation

⁵⁶. Interview with Hamilton Chimala, producer, DBU, 12/09/07

⁵⁷. Ibid. (14/08/07).

⁵⁸. Ibid.

⁵⁹. Interview with Hassan Nkata, producer, DBU, 18/09/2007

around development issues which is essential to the task of defining and achieving development. 'A coordinating partner in the establishment of the Unit, the UK-based Radio for Development had observed that the DBU has facilitated the involvement of marginalised groups of women, youth, the elderly, orphans and people living with HIV/AIDS in development dialogue.'⁶⁰ Dialogue is a central tenet in Bessette's concept of participation. By the mere fact that the DBU uses a participatory communication technique that involves giving marginalised communities access to radio to voice out their concerns, and then linking the communities to service providers for action-oriented dialogue within the community clearly comes in line with Bessette's idea of participation. This is clearly in line with Bessette's concept and definition of participatory development communication because he conceives dialogue amongst the stakeholders i.e. community members and service providers as crucial for defining and achieving development.

At the centre of DBU's development programming is a Radio Listening Club (RLC), whose concept is based on the Farm Forum model introduced in 1964 after independence when the first government in independent Malawi used the approach to broaden agricultural extension initiatives. For DBU, the listening clubs are normally at the center of the development activities themselves. Among other skills, the DBU equips the clubs with program production skills to be able to develop a village voice and enter into effective dialogue with service providers.

The DBU's methodology involves the following stages: Problem identification – whereby the communities identify and prioritise issues affecting them; Developing a

⁶⁰. Documents on the DBU's mission, background and projects, DBU offices, Blantyre

village voice – whereby the prioritised problems are recorded and sent to a particular service provider to initiate dialogue on the same; Action oriented dialogue - where the communities discuss the prioritised problems with a service provider and agree on a plan of action; Packaging – the village voice and dialogue with the service provider is packaged ready for broadcast, (this is done by the DBU). The last phase involves production of a reflection program. This stage allows for reflection on the issues raised by the communities. To influence policy change, the reflection program includes a team of experts and policy makers who dialogue and debate on the pertinent issues raised by the communities during the action-oriented dialogue with the service provider. This part is also done by the DBU, which is currently implementing three projects; *Ndizathuzomwe* ‘Our things’ which involves production of *Kanthu N'khama* ‘Hard work Pays’ and *Tiunike Kanthu N'khama* ‘Analysing Hard work Pays’ as a reflection program; A rights education through communication and broadcasting project which involve production of *Nzotheka* ‘It’s Possible’ and *Tisanthule Nzotheka* ‘Analysing It’s Possible’; and the National AIDS Commission (NAC) funded project called *Ndife amodzi Tigwirane manja* ‘We are One Lets Hold Hands’ and *Tiwombe Nkota* ‘Summarising’ as the reflection program. The remaining segment of this chapter focuses on one episode of *Kanthu N'khama* to appreciate the approach used in coming up with the program, format, content and its organisation, technical factors and appeals deliberately employed for effect. The program analysed here was broadcast on 10th November, 2007.

2.4.1 The Program

Opening:

Voice 1: “You have been...lying that a contractor is coming to install a water pump...three years nothing has happened...Why...believe you now?”

Voice 2: “What I can tell you is that...the way our bosses told us...there is no doubt that construction will begin this year.”

This is exactly how the program starts. The quote above is an insert of a discussion between a community member and a representative of Horticulture – an NGO that had promised to bring a water pump for irrigation but failed to honor the promise. This insert is followed by a sign-tune that invites people to listen to *Kanthu N'khama* every Saturday at 2 O'clock in the afternoon.

Presenter: When the sign-tune fades the presenter announces the program, mentions the producer and sponsors namely: The Inter-ministerial Committee on Human Rights and Democracy, Democracy Consolidation Programme. This is followed by the objective of the program, which is ‘to ensure that our birth rights are fulfilled.’ The presenter, Edina Valani, asks:

‘*Kodi lero, Tilowera Kuti?* – ‘Today, where are we going?’

‘*Eeeee! Kuno mukutimva ndi ku Titemwane Radio Listening Club ku Rumphi...muli ndi ine muulutsi wanu Joyce Kapokonye Nyirenda*’ - ‘Yees this is Titemwane Radio Listening Club and you are with me Joyce Nyirenda.’

After the above insert, Valani introduces the topic and issue of discussion in the community namely: ‘Irrigation Farming.’

Song: Women clapping hands and singing a traditional Tumbuka song

title: *Banyinu Tasgusika* (We are suffering)

Tabanyinu Tasgusika...Tasgusika nanjala...Vyaka Vitatu tikusgusika...Muli kochi

Horticulture...Tikusgusika iskye... – ‘We are suffering...suffering due to unger...for three years...we have suffered...Where are you Horticulture...We are offering.’

Discussion 1

Speakers: 11 people - 9 men and 2 women from the community

Topic: Lack of a water pump at Ntilira Irrigation Scheme

Content: (Dramatisation of the discussion by the 11 people. Each individual joins the discussion by greeting the group and asking what they are talking about). The group talks about traditional manure production; lack of a good harvest due to lack of a water pump for irrigation and three years of suffering waiting for a water pump.

Song: Tumbuka tune – ‘*Tasyudzika tabanthu iske* – (We people have suffered).

Content: Focuses on the NGO and its promise and the suffering the people are going through. The song also mentions a water pump the NGO had promised.

Discussion 2

Speakers: One woman, the chief of the area and two other men

Topic: NGO's promise to provide a water pump

Content: The discussion centers on the NGO's promise to provide a water pump, money the people were told to save at Finance Bank, which they did. The people also bemoan the three years they have spent waiting for a water pump from Horticulture.

They finally agree that they are being taken for granted and that they should summon Horticulture to explain their stand on the issue.

Song: A traditional Chichewa song

Title: *Kanthu ndi Nkhama* (Hard work pays)

“Muziyamba kudzipangira zinthu nonkha musanayambe kupempha...olo Chauta anpatsa olimbika...Kanthu ndi Khama...sikabwera kokha...” – ‘Start doing things for yourselves before you ask for help...even God helps those who work hard...things do not just come...we need to earn them.’

Announcer: Reminds people about the program and the issues under discussion i.e. irrigation farming at Ntilira in Rumphi followed by what is coming next, that is the action-oriented discussion with Horticulture.

Song: *Moni Alendo* – ‘Welcome our visitor’

Discussion 3

Speakers: Gerald Munthali – from Horticulture and the community members

Topic: Water Pump

Content: Munthali talks about paper work and other office procedures that have delayed the water pump for the area and other parts of the country such as Mzuzu, Salima and Kasungu. He gives the people hope that the engine is coming. The people do not seem convinced and asks Munthali what they should do in the event the pump is not installed.

Song: *Tasgusika* (We are suffering - as in the opening sequence but sang by women)

Content: ‘Where are you Horticulture? We are suffering with hunger’

the discussion continues with the people taking Munthali to task why the NGO was not honest in the first place that the pump might delay. He insists the pump will come and asks the farmers to have patience saying the money for the project came from the African Development Bank and the process initially seemed straight forward.

Closing

Announcer: Summarises the discussion and says: 'In this program we have heard Mr. Munthali from Horticulture promising farmers that this year (2007) the water pump will be installed without fail.' An insert follows this:

'You...Horticulture people have been telling us lies for three years...the engine (water pump) is coming...the engine is coming for three years...if the pump does not come this year...what should we do?'

'The engine is coming...the way our boss said it I am very optimistic that the engine is coming.' The announcer then continues to wind up the program by repeating what she had said in the opening sequence to the program i.e. mentions the producer and sponsor with the sign-tune playing in the background.

Sign-tune: *Kathu N'khama* - Hard work pays

2.4.2 Approach and Format

A critical analysis of the *Kanthu N'khama* episode outlined above shows that the program indeed takes a participatory radio approach, 'which implies the use of radio for the people and by the people.'⁶¹ In participatory radio, the issues to be discussed in the

⁶¹. Mefalopulos P and Kamlongera C, 2004, p. 51

program are decided by the community.⁶² People in the community have the opportunity to set the agenda and contribute to the program by expressing their needs, concerns and priority interests. The issues tackled in the program i.e. lack of a water pump for irrigation as well as the lies by the NGO, were all decided upon by the community members. This was after they had deliberated the issue amongst themselves and resolved to summon the NGO to explain the delay in bringing the water pump. The discussions provided an open forum where the community members openly expressed their views and concerns with the aim of having their problems resolved. This is clearly in line with the aims of participatory radio, as Mefalopulos and Kamlongera (2004) say:

“Participatory radio’s purpose is that of providing an open forum where people can express their views, opinions, and concerns and in doing so providing the opportunities to improve their livelihoods. It also tries to change the common flow of information, traditionally top down, into a bottom up or horizontal flow of information that brings ‘communication’ to its original meaning of sharing and exchanging ideas, opinions, solutions from different perspectives.”⁶³

The DBU’s mission is to use participatory communication approaches to ensure national dialogue around development issues.⁶⁴ This is clearly seen in the episode analysed in this study. The community members were given access to radio where they brought out issues affecting their livelihoods - the first and second discussions - and were then linked to a service provider – third discussion - for action-oriented dialogue. The community members decided upon the issues tackled in the program and did not

⁶². Ibid

⁶³. Ibid, p.52

⁶⁴. Documents on the DBU’s mission, background and projects, DBU Offices, Blantyre

only set the agenda, but also expressed their needs, concerns and priority interests without fear.

If the program analysed in this study is anything to go by, then *Kanthu N'khama* is produced within the conceptual understanding of info-tainment. Info-tainment is a combination of information and entertainment. This format 'can be a dramatisation of an issue or event,' as in the current scenario, 'or a radio soap treating priority issues.'⁶⁵ The entertainment bit in the episode above is coming in because of the dramatisation of the issues raised as well as constant use of songs that apart from entertaining listeners and keeping them glued to the radio, also serves as a vehicle for channeling the people's concerns. The Tumbuka tune – *Tabanyinu Tasgusika...Vyaka vitatu Tikusgusika nanjala* – We people have suffered for three years - as well as the *Kanthu N'khama* song – *Hard work pays* - are very informative because they focus on the people's grievances and what hard work does but also entertains listeners. However, the overriding objective of the program is not to entertain. The program aims to inform people about their rights by focusing on how people in other parts of the country demand the realisation and/or protection of their birthrights.⁶⁶ This is even emphasised by the presenter in the opening sequence of the episode above:

"This is *Kanthu N'khama* coming to you from MBC Radio 1; through the Development Broadcasting Unit...The aim of the program is to ensure that birth rights, which everybody else enjoys, are met..."⁶⁷

⁶⁵. Mefalopulos and Kamlongera 2004, p. 52

⁶⁶. Interview with Hamilton Chimala, producer, DBU, 14/08/07; Documents on the DBU's mission, background and projects, DBU Offices, Blantyre.

⁶⁷. *Kanthu N'khama*, DBU, 10/11/07.

One of the participants to the discussions in the episode above said:

“This NGO is infringing upon our rights...our right to food...even education because our children cannot go to school on an empty stomach...Horticulture has to come and tell us whether it is interested in helping us or not ...”⁶⁸

Clearly, the major thrust of the DBU’s programming is to give people an opportunity to demand their rights to development and the type of development they want. The episode above gives people the chance to demand and define their development needs but also affords other communities the opportunity to learn/be informed about other people’s efforts in having their rights fulfilled or protected. This is done by combining information and entertainment – dramatisation of the issues and the frequent songs for example – to ensure that the program is not only informative but also lively and entertaining.

2.4.3 Content and Structure

The content in *Kanthu N’khama* is determined by the needs and desires of the Radio Listening Club producing the recording. In the episode analysed in this study the content and issues tackled were decided upon by the community members of *Titemwane Radio Listening Club* in Rumphi, Northern Malawi. The people asked the questions and stirred the discussions by focusing on the water pump and false promises by Horticulture despite several attempts by the NGO official to focus on other issues such as farm inputs and savings. The community members, especially the women, took part in the discussions and also provided the entertainment in form of songs.

⁶⁸. Community member, *Kanthu N’kama*, DBU, 10/11/07

Generally, the content of the program – the songs, drama inserts, dramatised discussions as well as the repetitions and summaries by the presenter - were all organised or structured in a simple and straight forward manner that kept the listener interested in the program. The program consists of 18 minutes of village voices – which can be defined as the recordings of the community's priority needs, concerns, desires and interests, expressed through songs, drama inserts or discussions. This was followed by 10 minutes of action-oriented dialogue with the representative of Horticulture. As seen in the program structure and content's outline earlier, the program starts with an insert of the discussion between the NGO's representative and community members. The opening with controversy on development issues raises curiosity and makes listeners interested: 'You have been telling us lies for three years that a contractor is coming to install the water pump...nothing has happened...Why should we believe you now?' This insert on controversy comes before the announcement of the program and makes listeners curious. Similarly, the closing, which also has an insert of the action – oriented discussion with the service provider, makes the listener reflect upon the main message in the program. The closing gives hope to the farmers that the pump will be installed despite the delay.

Whilst the constant songs entertained and informed listeners about the plight of people in Rumphi, the repetitions and summaries by the presenter, Edina Valani, reminded people of the crucial issues under discussion. 'It is usually good practice to repeat more than once the crucial points your program wants to get across.'⁶⁹ Valani successfully does this and is able to help listeners who switch on their radio sets late appreciate what

⁶⁹. Mefalopulos and Kamlongera 2004, p. 54

the program is all about. For example, the statement, 'You have been telling us lies for three years...' and the song 'We are suffering' is repeated more than three times in the entire program and makes listeners feel and understand the major issues tackled in the program. This practice also gives listeners a second chance after missing some crucial points at the beginning of the program.

4.4 Technical Factors and Appeals

Appeals are like baits you include in a message in order to lure the listener through emotions or reason. For radio, these appeals may include special sound effects such as the sound of a car or birds, pitch or tone of the voice, music as well as descriptive language.

Technically, the audio recordings in the program are clear and the music and other sound levels are well balanced with some words stressed for impact. For example, the words 'lies' and 'Why now' in the sentence: 'You have been telling us lies' and 'why should we believe you now?' are stressed for impact. However, the program has no special sound effects such as sound of water – which is associated with irrigation – or goats, cattle or birds, which are associated with the home of a farmer. Nevertheless, the farmers make good use of drama, songs as well as descriptive language, all elements Mefalopulos and Kamlongera (2004) highlight as ideal to make audio messages attractive and capable of holding listener's attention. A critical analysis of the program shows that the producer deliberately used these appeals not only to entertain people but also show cooperation between the participants, gain sympathy from people and create

a picture of the suffering the community had gone through. A good example to elucidate on sympathy and suffering is the choice of songs. Songs naturally appeal to a person's emotion. The song: '*A Horticulture muli kochi...banyinu tasgusgika...tasgusgika kwa vyaka vitatu...muli kochi a Horticulture?*' – 'Where are you Horticulture...we have suffered for three years...where are you?' The song focuses on hunger and three years of waiting for a water pump. It is repeated three times and creates a sombre mood probably to gain sympathy. On a lighter note, the discussions and final resolution to summon the NGO is a sign of cooperation. Cooperation is essential in community development and the producer capitalizes on it to appeal to listeners. Generally, these appeals whether by design or not, attract listeners and keeps them glued to the radio.

2.4.5 People's Reception of the *Kanthu N'khama* episode

The *Kanthu N'khama* episode analysed above was taken to 3 sites in the Southern Region Districts of Blantyre, Thyolo, and Nsanje. The researcher held three FGDs in each site consisting of three men and women ages 21-45. The issues tackled in the program did not require separation of the participants based on gender. Some of the participants were farmers and others were business people. The sites where the FGD's took place were Chigumula in Blantyre, Goliati in Thyolo and Marka in Nsanje.

Participants from Chigumula and Thyolo said the farmers in the program showed a great deal of cooperation regardless of sex. For example, one of the participants said: '*Anthuwa ndi ogwirizana...onse...amuna ndi amayi. Zokambirana zawo akupangira*

limodzi...sanatsutsane zoitanitsanso a bungwe... – ‘These people are cooperative...both men and women...there is togetherness in their discussions.’ Some participants from Nsanje said the Tumbuka song evoked a sad mood, although they could not quite tell what it was about: *‘Nyimbo zina mupologalamuyi ndi zomvetsa chisoni...akuimba ngati modandaula,’* – ‘some songs give an impression of sadness.’

The general feeling was that most NGOs take people for granted and should be exposed for what they are. Participants from Nsanje said some NGO’s in the area make money by lying to donors that the money is for orphans and other vulnerable people in the area when they do nothing for the people in the areas in question: *“Mabungwe ambiri ndi abodza. Cholinga chawo ndi kubera anthu amasiye ndi osauka. Kuno kuli ana amasiye ambiri...mabungwe...kudzati lonjedza chithandizo koma palibe chochitika. Tikufuna mapologalamu ngati awa kuno’* – ‘Many NGOs tell lies. Their aim is to make money by using orphans and the poor. We have many NGOs here because of orphans. They just promise us things but do not come back. We need such programs.’

Overall, only four people had listened to the episode. These people also pointed out that the program was interesting because of the songs and discussions, although they could not understand anything that was said in *Tumbuka*. One of the participants from Chigumula remarked: *‘Pologalamuyi ndiyosagonetsa. Muli nyimbo...komanso kulimba mtima kwa anthuwa kukupangitsa chidwi. Anamutengetsa mkulu wa bungwe...ndi mafunso’* – “This program is interesting. You cannot sleep...songs are there and the courage from the people is awesome. They took the NGO representative head on.”

In summary, therefore, most of the FGD participants felt the program was lively and interesting and that most NGOs should be exposed for what they are. The problem with the program was language. Most of the participants could not understand *Tumbuka*.

2.5 Lessons from the DBU's Participatory Radio

Several observations can be made from the DBU's approach to development broadcasting. Although most listeners failed to understand the discussions and songs, which were in *Tumbuka*, the approach used empowers communities that produce the initial recordings as Manyozo, (2005) rightly observed:

“This radio of Mayera is giving us villagers, some power. This radio is guiding traditional leaders about development, and reminding people...about their roles and responsibilities in development. Before this radio, we village people were nothing to government officials, but today, when I visited the government offices to follow up on the proposal for a local development project, I was received as an important person...with important ideas too...”⁷⁰

Clearly, the approach used by the DBU is guiding communities that have Radio Listening Clubs to realise that development is not only infrastructural but also something we cannot touch. Such an approach gives local people courage and *mphamvu* (*power*) to speak out their aspirations. The notion of *mphamvu* embodies empowerment, enlightenment and elevation of social status. By becoming enlightened, the communities with Radio Listening Clubs easily mobilise and demand or speak out on what is rightly theirs. It is this *mphamvu*, which made Titemwane Radio Listening Club

⁷⁰. Manyozo, 2005

n Rumphu to have the courage to summon and demand from Horticulture answers on why the NGO was failing to honor its promise:

“You have been lying all these years that the engine is coming...If you knew the procedure would take long...2-3 years, why did you not tell us in advance,” queried one of the Titemwane Radio Listening Club’s member during the action-oriented dialogue with the representative from Horticulture.”

The courage shown above stems from the feeling of speaking or being heard on the radio as well as directness of the radio dialogues themselves. Speaking in a group coupled with the home environment also makes speakers feel protected. Consequently, these speakers freely complain of lazy authorities or inadequate social services, especially in the presence of those being accused of inefficiencies. No wonder then that in his analysis of citizen participation in the production of *Kanthu Nkhama*, Manyozo (2005) observed that *Kanthu N’khama* promotes a sense of ownership of radio MBC, as it enables communities to determine program content through their chosen discourse. He says considering what communities have been able to achieve with this participatory format of rural radio, *Kanthu N’khama* can therefore be considered to be a ‘citizens media’ because it is framed around local needs and the aspirations of local men and women, who are interested in describing events for themselves. Commenting on the DBU’s work, the then Minister of Information, Hon Ken Lipenga is reported to have remarked: “The DBU’s work serves as an example of the way in which...MBC should produce its programs by opening up and involving local communities.”⁷¹ It is clear, therefore, that the approach employed by the DBU defies the top-down, one-way traditional journalism approaches that have always viewed rural people as just

⁷¹. Documents on background, programs and mission of the DBU, DBU offices, Blantyre

audiences, to whom information can be marketed. It is clear again that the DBU's participatory strategy casts the spotlight on the needs of users and their own diagnosis of their problems. The emphasis in the DBU's approach is thus in line with the *problem-solving* model as well as Guy Bessette's concept of participation which focuses on empowering local people to have confidence and conviction that they are not permanent victims of any situation, but that they can change things for the better. Does this mean that the DBU's work and approach is all rosy? The answer is no. There are several hurdles that impinge on the DBU's efforts to empower masses across the country. Manyozo (2005) gives five challenges facing the DBU's participatory radio project namely prioritising infrastructural development rather than policy; lack of appreciation of the concepts of participation and consultation; lack of coverage of minority cultures and languages; donor dependence and centralisation of the Radio Listening Clubs project; and differential representation and participation between men and women. The subject of this study is not to discuss these challenges but it is worthy noting that language has been the major drawback in terms of ensuring effective communication of the issues raised in the episode analysed in this thesis.

Although Malawi has different languages and cultures, Chichewa is the only language used in all the Radio Listening Club generated programming that the DBU produces into programs. Some Malawians who speak *Yao, Sena, Tumbuka, Ngonde* and *Lomwe* may not understand let alone converse in the Chichewa language proficiently. The program analysed in this study is a clear testimony to this point. Although the program was produced in a *Tumbuka* speaking district, the language used was *Chichewa* with

some community members switching to *Tumbuka* now and again. The switch in language shows that the people were not comfortable to converse in Chichewa throughout the program. Some of the Chichewa segments were also not clear. This can be attributed to the fact that the community members could not effectively express themselves in the language. For example, when introducing the discussions, the Radio Listening Club's announcer said: '*Kusowa kwa engine kukulepheretsa mthilira ya msongole*,' – 'lack of an engine is curtailing....' But what is *mthilira ya msongole*? Is it the name of an area? Or the person was trying to say that 'lack of a water pump is curtailing irrigation farming at *Msongole* or may be *Mthilira*.' This example and several others in the program do not clearly communicate the intended message. This lack of clarity can be attributed to the language issue. The best approach would have been to use *Tumbuka* to enable the community members to freely express themselves. Such a program would have served best the *Tumbuka* speaking people in the north, as clearly indicated that those who did not understand *Chichewa* missed the Chichewa segments and those who did not know *Tumbuka* failed to understand the *Tumbuka* songs and discussions, as was the case in the FGD's in Chigumula, Goliati and Nsanje.

Limited number of Radio Listening Clubs can also be considered a major drawback in the DBU's efforts to empower local communities across the country. The *Ndizathuzomwe* project, which involves production of *Kanthu N'khama*, has 30 Radio Listening Clubs across the country, *Ndife amodzi Tigwirane manja* project 20 and *Nzotheka* 16, bringing the total to 66. Initially, each Radio Listening Club had 12 people but the figure was increased to 60 to accommodate more members. This means that

only few people are being empowered. 3960 members or 66 Radio Listening Clubs in a country with over 12 million people is pathetic. Interviews with several DBU staff showed that the unit has the confidence of donors so much so that funding is not a problem. To this effect, the DBU intends to break away from MBC to become an NGO. Ironically, the staff cites lack of funds to increase the number of Radio Listening Clubs. The best strategy would be to ask the same donors for funds to increase the number of Radio Listening Clubs and have the programs aired at the various radio stations that have blossomed since the introduction of multiparty politics 13 years ago if there is limited air time at the national broadcaster. But when all is said and done, this author believes that the DBU is doing a good job and a lot more can be achieved if coverage was extended to minority cultures and languages for the DBU to effectively fulfill its objective of giving marginalised groups a voice.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter has explored how development radio broadcasting in Malawi has evolved to its current form. The first part shows that the major pre-occupations for MBC from 1964 - early 1990's were to establish a unique identity as an African radio, free of any influence from the colonial past and to be a tool in the task of nation building. Cultural programs took center stage in this endeavor and government invested the country's limited resources to make radio a more effective tool in the fight against poverty, hunger, ignorance and disease.

In the early 1990's, Malawians ushered in a neo-liberal form of multiparty politics, which centers on media diversity, freedom of expression and participatory development. The new dispensation led to the emergence of several radio stations but the coming in of the DBU marked a new era in development radio broadcasting in Malawi. The DBU employs participatory forms of broadcasting by generating program content with communities. A critical analysis of one episode of the DBU's *Kanthu Nkhama* shows that the unit gives communities access to radio to discuss issues affecting their lives and are then linked to service providers for action-oriented dialogue. This is clearly in line with Guy Bessette's concept of participation because he conceives dialogue amongst the stakeholders i.e. community members and service providers as crucial for defining and achieving development. On this basis, one may be inclined to say that the DBU is doing a good job but a lot more can be achieved if coverage was extended to minority cultures and languages. Only then can the DBU effectively fulfill its objective of giving marginalised groups a voice.

Does MBC generate development content with the masses the way the DBU does? If not, is the problem due to political interference, which has been a symbol of broadcasting in Malawi since independence? Or is it due to traditional top-down or linear journalism practices that have characterised development reporting and programming since the colonial era? Or indeed is it due to lack of requisite training, funds and policies conducive for effective practices in development broadcasting? In the next chapter, the thesis looks at the issue of policy.

Chapter Three

INSTITUTIONAL POLICIES GOVERNING PRODUCTION OF DEVELOPMENT MESSAGES

3.1 Introduction

MBC is a public broadcaster and its presenters take pride in this and more often than not remind people that it is a station for the people; a station that produces programs to ensure food security, health society, and HIV/AIDS free Malawi that is gender conscious and ready to protect the environment. However, Melkote (1991) points out that even if governments in some developing countries actively promote a pro-development content in their mass media, it has to be viewed from the perspective of the total program structure and the total time allotted to each type of program.⁷² Consequently, this chapter analyses MBC's programming structure to determine the nature i.e. area of focus, and time allotted to development content. The chapter also focuses on policies governing production of the development messages at MBC and Ministry of Health and Ministry of Agriculture. The first part of the chapter focuses on the quantity and nature of the development messages and the second part dwells on institutional policies on production of these messages.

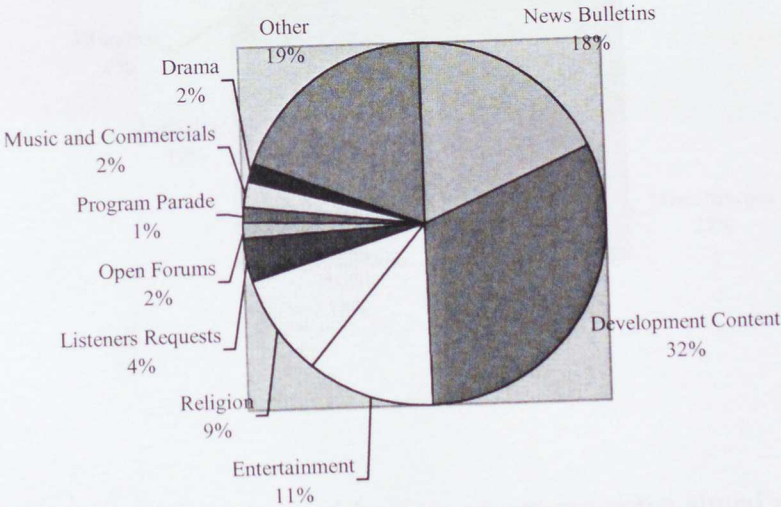
3.2 Quantity and Nature of Development Programs

Broadcasting at MBC Radio 1 starts at 5 am and ends at midnight, an output of 19 hours daily. This daily output is minus 15 minutes that is devoted to the call sign and Morning Prayer, which is from 4:45 am – 5:00 am when official broadcasting starts with a programs parade. The 19 hours adds up to 133 hours of weekly programming. The

⁷². Melkote, 1991, p. 151

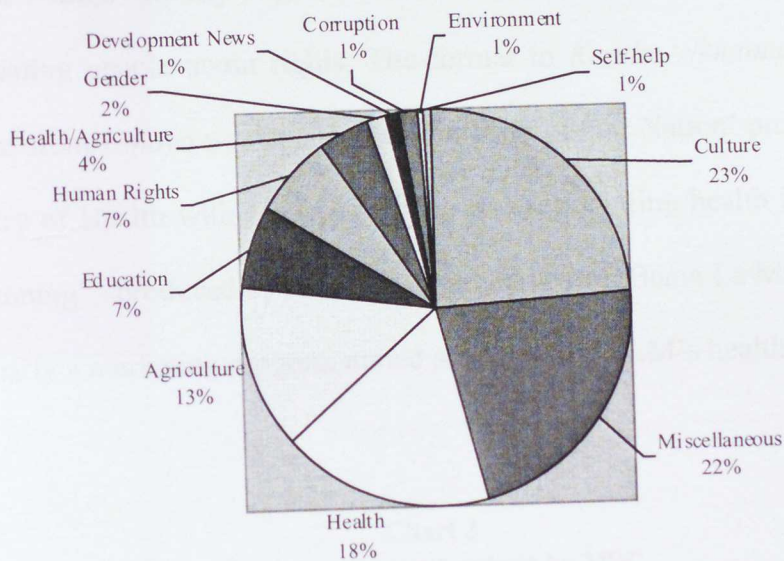
results presented and discussed in this section are for the weekly broadcasts. The total amount of time devoted to development content and other programs presented in this thesis are from the programming schedule effective September 17, 2007. Chart 1 below shows the amount of time allotted to development content and other programs.

Chart 1
Weekly Quantity of Development Programs at MBC



As will be noted from Chart 1, out of the 133 hours of weekly broadcasting output only 32 % contain content aimed at promoting national development, which clearly shows that the amount of time allotted to development content at the MBC is less than the total time devoted to other content. The following summary of results refers only to the content aimed at facilitating change. The time spent on development programming covers different issues and topics which are broadly classified into 11 focus areas including Culture, Health, Education, Human Rights, Gender, Corruption and Self-help.

Chart 2
Topics in Development Programs



As Chart 2 shows, the lion's share of the time covers programs aimed at cultural revival as in the days of president Banda, followed by miscellaneous development content - content that focuses on a variety of issues and cannot be identified by one key word. Health comes third followed by Agriculture, Education and Human Rights respectively. But not all the development programs shown in Chart 2 above are initiated, produced and packaged by MBC staff. This is clearly the reason behind the unique and distinct features in the formats, style and treatment of messages broadcast by the station. Some programs such as those from the DBU - *Kanthu N'khama* 'Hard Work Pays' for instance - attempt to use participatory approaches in program production which is even made clear at the beginning of the program by the presenter: '*Pologaramu yathu yalero anakonza ndi a gulu lomvera walesi la 'Mwayiwanthu' ku Nkhotakota.*' 'Our program

today was produced by “Mwayiwathu” Radio Listening Club (RLC) in Nkhotakota.’ This approach can clearly be distinguished from the monotonous studio based approach in *Ndi Ufulu Wanga* ‘Its My Right’ - produced by MBC staff that mostly features a lawyer educating people about rights. The format in *Kanthu Nkhama* can further be distinguished from *Umoyo wa Mtundu Wanthu* ‘Life of Our Nation’ produced by MBC with Ministry of Health with focus on advice on cross cutting health issues or *Tilele* ‘Family Planning’ - produced by MBC in conjunction with Banja La Msogolo (BLM) – which is clearly a marketing program aimed at promoting BLM’s health services.

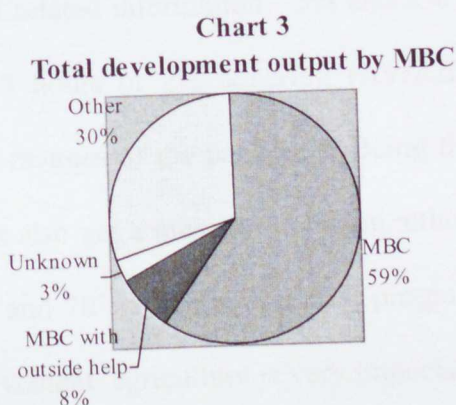


Chart 3 above shows the programs that are produced by MBC staff; MBC with expert guidance from outside institutions and those that are produced and packaged by organisations other than MBC. As will be noted in Chart 3, MBC produces the bulk of the development content broadcast at the station as development programs. Of the 42 hours or 32 % of development broadcast time, about 25 hours cover content initiated, produced and packaged by MBC staff. About 3 hours cover content produced by MBC with expert guidance mostly from the Ministry of Health. The remaining 12 hours go to

development material produced by other institutions notably the Ministry of Agriculture, Story Workshop and the DBU.

Three preliminary observations can be made from the data presented above. First it is safe to argue that there is generally less time covering pro-development programs when compared to the total time spent on other content - 32% of weekly programming covers development programs. Second, most of the pro-development content aired on MBC focus on culture with very little time devoted to such critical areas as health and agriculture. Only 7 hours a week covers health related issues and about 3 hours of this time focus on HIV/AIDS related information - 5% and 2% of the total program time a week respectively. The 3 hours or 2% covering HIV/AIDS issues is pathetic for a country reeling from the ravages of the pandemic. Being the backbone of the country, the agricultural programs also get a meager allocation although this is an improvement compared to the 1960's and 70's when agricultural programs used to cover 4 hours a week. Despite the improvement, agriculture is very important for the nation and 5 hours - 4% of total broadcast time a week - is not enough to effect any positive change. In addition, the time spent on corruption is even more alarming given the fact that the current administration is emphasising zero tolerance on graft. Only 30 minutes or 1% of development content a week - 0.3% of total broadcast out put - is devoted to raising awareness as well as seeking views from people on how best to curb the malpractice. It is clear that there is generally little development oriented information flowing to the people and this is one of 'the major reasons why development projects and programs

have over the years failed to bear any meaningful fruits.’⁷³ MBC has the widest coverage and listener-ship than any other radio in Malawi. This is also a station that prides itself with promoting and supporting national development and one which has been used by government since independence to promote change. Giving the example of India, Melkote (1991) describes such a scenario as an anomaly:

“Although the government in India is committed to rural development and carries rural programs which are clearly pro-development, the percentage of such programs is very low. In ‘home-service’ radio programs, only 5.8% of total program time was devoted to rural programs while 40% of broadcast time was claimed by music and 24.8% by news. There is here the anomaly of rural programs being pro-development but the total time accorded to such programs being rather insignificant,”⁷⁴

Like in India, the government of Malawi has always been committed to rural development and has used MBC in that endeavor. But as in India again, there is the ‘anomaly here of programs being pro-development but the total time accorded to such programs being rather insignificant.’ For example, 0.2% on Self-help or 2% on HIV/AIDS is insufficient to effect any meaningful changes.

The third observation is that over half of the 42 hours – about 25 hours – cover content initiated, produced and packaged by MBC staff, followed by the Ministry of Health and finally Agriculture. The next section of this chapter dwells on policies governing production of development content at these three institutions.

⁷³. Melkote 1991, p. 151

⁷⁴. Ibid

3.3 Policies Governing Production of Development Messages

This section dwells on only those institutions whose content takes up more airtime or work hand in hand with MBC staff to produce development programs. Ministry of Health qualified because health programs come second after culture with the most airtime but also because some of the health programs are produced in conjunction with MBC staff. Ministry of Agriculture qualified because Agricultural content comes third after health and culture. It should, however, be noted that only the Ministry of Agriculture provided a copy of its policy. The information on the Ministry of Health and MBC is based on interviews with staff from the two institutions.

3.3.1 Policy on production of development content at MBC

MBC has no policy governing production of development messages. In principle, MBC is supposed to operate in line with the provisions of the Communications Act (1998), in which Section 87 says: "MBC shall produce well-balanced content to educate, entertain and inform...and reflect the wide diversity of Malawi's cultural life."⁷⁵ In practice, however, MBC is always biased in favor of the government of the day and MACRA may seem independent on paper - Sec 4(3) - its board members and chair are appointed by the president (section 7(1)) and section 9 gives the Minister of Information the powers to appoint the Director General and his/her deputy.

In simple terms, therefore, MBC operates the same way it has always operated since Independence *vis-a-vis* government control and promotion of the policies and ideals of the government of the day. The manner in which this is done is purely based on the

⁷⁵. Communications Act p. 43

creativity of the staff or policies of a sponsoring institution in the event that the program has sponsorship. For example *Tilele* – Family Planning, produced with support from BLM, which provides money for MBC staff to travel to various areas across the country to gather data. Currently, the guiding principle is for the station to promote national development and support the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). These programs are supposed to be produced by visiting the people on the ground. This is emphasised in the station's self-promotional jingles and inserts. For example, the station is currently asking people and organisations to sponsor any of its health, cultural, environmental and gender programs because of the skimpy K1 budgetary allocation from parliament:

“MBC is a public broadcaster...operates to develop the nation...by producing programs aimed to ensure food security, health and HIV/AIDS free Malawi. We also produce Education programs...We help and work with government to promote the Millennium Development Goals. We are partners in development. To produce these programs we need to visit various areas across the country. Adopt a radio program and show you care.”⁷⁶

In a nutshell, MBC is asking well wishers to meet travel expenses and talent fees. This shows that the programs are supposed to be produced by use of field interviews. Whether the field trips focus on experts or ordinary people is not clear; whether the field trips engage the masses in dialogue to define their own development is also not clear but the analysis on MBC's health, cultural and self-help development programs later in this study reveal the communication approach the station employs.

⁷⁶. Promotional insert on MBC Radio 1 frequently aired after parliament had given the station and Television Malawi K1 as subvention for the year 2007-8 because of alleged propaganda and biased coverage in favor of the government.

3.3.2 Policy on production of development content at Ministry of Health

The Ministry of Health is the only ministry that produces development material with MBC staff, notably with producer Chrissie Popphiwa. These programs include *Dokotala wa pa Wailesi* 'Radio Doctor' and *Umoyo wa Mtundu Wathu* 'Health of our Nation.' These two programs together with *Uku ndiko Kudya* 'This is how we eat' and *Umoyo M'Malawi* 'Health in Malawi' are paid for annually by the Ministry of Health.⁷⁷

As with MBC, however, the Ministry of Health has no policy governing production of health messages.⁷⁸ Interviews with three health officials in Blantyre and Lilongwe show that if anything the ministry follows unwritten guidelines when embarking on short term or long-term information campaigns with emphasis on experts. Mostly, health experts note a problem through research or observations and then come up with messages to curb the problem. After the messages are produced, they are pre-tested in various communities to find out if people will be able to understand them. This is clearly what the district Information Education and Communication officer for Blantyre, Mrs. Kachala, said:

"We have problems which must be addressed using communication...The only time that we involve the community is when pre-testing the message. We try to see if the people understand the message. But we disregard what they say if our experts think otherwise. There is no policy...on production of these messages."⁷⁹

Ministry of Health's policy or guidelines to development message production is thus clearly supportive of a top-down operation in terms of problem and solution

⁷⁷. Interview with Kamkwamba H, producer, Ministry of Health's Education Unit, Lilongwe, 26/10/07

⁷⁸. Ibid; Interview with Mrs. Kachala, IEC officer for Blantyre District Health Office, 17/10/07

⁷⁹. Mrs Kachala, IEC Officer, Blantyre District Health Office, 18/10/07

identification. This is clearly seen in programs such as *Uku ndiko Kudya* – This is how we eat - in which a health expert talks about the types of food people should eat to have a health life; *Umoyo wa Mtundu Wanthu* – Life of Our Nation - whereby health experts provide advice on different health issues without necessarily responding to specific needs or questions as is the case with *Dokotala wa Pa Wailesi* – Radio Doctor which, unfortunately, is also more often than not based on questions from health experts themselves on topical issues they feel listeners are not focusing on.⁸⁰

3.3.3 Policy on production of development content at Ministry of Agriculture

The Ministry of Agriculture produces *Ulimi wa Lero* (Modern Farming); *Zokomera Alimi* (Farmers Requests); *Ulimi Sabata ino* (Farming this week) and *Dziwani Za Irad* (Know about Irad).⁸¹ These programs are produced by The Agricultural Communication's Branch (ACB), which operates in line with the policy guidelines for Agricultural Extension Services adopted in 2000. Titled, *Agricultural Extension in the New Millennium: Towards Pluralistic and Demand Driven Services in Malawi*, the policy calls for dialogue between agricultural specialists and farmers to facilitate the evolution of demand driven services. The argument in the policy is that 'centrally controlled and standardised extension approaches have failed to respond to local priority needs and have been less efficient in the use of scarce resources.'⁸² Guiding Principle 5.1 reads:

“Farmers are...clients or customers of extension services, implying a reorientation in the relationship between farmers and extension services.

⁸⁰. Interviews with Kamkwamba and Mrs. Nadzanja, Ministry of Health, Lilongwe 26/10/07

⁸¹. Excel Zidana, producer, Agricultural Extension and Communication's Branch, Lilongwe, 26/10/07

⁸². *Agricultural Extension in the New Millenniums*, Policy Document, p. 26.

Farmers are to be in control of extension service relationships...Extension services will...need to respond to...demands farmers will make. There is need to transform staff, communities and farmers to enter into dialogue...”⁸³

Such an approach, according to the policy, calls for more vibrant and dynamic farmers or farmer organisations – farmer groups, clubs, co-operatives and associations – that can adequately represent the interests of farmers by gaining control over their own development. The mere fact that the policy calls for extension services to respond to demands farmers will make suggest a bottom up, two-way decentralised approach to extension services provision. Such an approach and the call for dialogue as well as farmers to gain control over their own development comes in line with the idea of participation championed by Guy Bessette (2004), who believes that dialogue or participation is crucial to the task of defining and achieving development. But the question is whether the programs produced by the Ministry such as *Ulimi wa lero* ‘Modern Farming’ follow what is in the policy.

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter has critically examined policies governing production of development messages aired at MBC as well as the quantity and nature of such programs. Most of the development programs at MBC are initiated and produced by MBC staff, followed by the Ministry of Health and finally the Ministry of Agriculture. However, only the Ministry of Agriculture has a policy on development message production. This policy calls for dialogue and bottom-up participatory approaches to extension services. MBC and the Ministry of Health operate based on unwritten guidelines and their approach is

⁸³. Ibid. p 22

clearly supportive of a top-down operation in development programming. This is a challenge both MBC and the Ministry of Health need to take up to formulate a policy on communication.

Apart from focusing on policies, this chapter has also critically analysed MBC's programming schedule to determine total time allotted to development content. MBC has since independence been utilized to facilitate national progress but the overall time allotted to health, agriculture and self-help among other development content is insignificant to effect any meaningful change. In other words, there is little information flowing to the masses and Melkote, (1991) had singled out this aspect as a major reason why development programs and projects have over the years failed to bear any meaningful fruits.

Melkote had also observed that much of the information flowing to the masses is not relevant to the needs, concerns and problems of the people. Could this second aspect also apply to MBC's development content? What could be the possible characteristics of MBC's development messages i.e. the quality, sources, actors and geographical focus to ensure effectiveness? The next four chapters grapple with these questions.

Chapter Four

RADIO HEALTH PROGRAMS

4.1 Introduction

The Malawi government has, since independence, made reduction of poverty a priority. The importance of health in this endeavor cannot be overemphasised, especially in a country where productivity of the labour force is dependent upon the health status of the population. This is particularly so in Malawi because a 'large majority of the people depend on low technology/intensive labour in agricultural production as a source of subsistence and income.'⁸⁴ There is virtually universal acceptance of the fact that poor health is a key cause of poverty.⁸⁵

It is on this basis that MBC has since independence, been used as a tool to raise the health status of all Malawians, especially the severely affected groups who live in the rural areas where radio is often the only mass medium available. 'The objectives of the information campaigns' on radio 'have been to fight challenges facing the health sector such as maternal mortality rates, infant and child mortality rates and low life expectancy at birth.'⁸⁶ One of the programs that tackle these ills is *Uchembere wa Bwino* – Safe Motherhood. The purpose of this chapter is to examine *Uchembere wa Bwino* in terms of the format, content and structure and appeals deliberately employed for effect. People's perception of *Uchembere wa Bwino* also forms part of the chapter.

⁸⁴. Qualitative Impact Monitoring (QIM) of the Poverty Alleviation Policies and Programs in Malawi Survey Findings, 2002, p. 33

⁸⁵. Ibid

⁸⁶. Ibid

4.2 *Uchembere wa Bwino* Development Radio Program

Uchembere wa Bwino is a 15 minutes health development program that is aired every Monday at 10:45 hours in the morning. The program aims at promoting safe motherhood practices across the country with a view of reducing 'maternal mortality rates (1,120 per 100,000 live births in 2000 – up from 620 per 100,000 in 1994), infant and child mortality rates and low life expectancy at birth.'⁸⁷ Specifically, the program tackles issues of Mother to Child Transmission of HIV Virus (MTC), Traditional Birth Attendants and Exclusive Breast Feeding (EBF) amongst others. *Uchembere wa Bwino* is one of the few health programs produced by MBC with material from the rural areas and was readily available. The program analysed here was authorised for broadcast on 15th July, 2007.

4.2.1 *The Program*

Sign-tune: Traditional Yao Song

The song fades for a brief moment for the presenter to announce the program. Then the announcer welcomes listeners and highlights the purpose of the program namely to discuss cross cutting safe motherhood practices to promote health living in Malawi.

Talk 1

Interviewee: Mrs. Kayange (Health Expert from Balaka District Hospital)

Topic: Proper feeding for babies

Content: Mrs. Kayange talks about the importance of Exclusive Breast Feeding (EBF) during the first 6 months; importance of a balanced diet for babies to avoid malnutrition and what the hospital does to help malnourished babies. She gives components of a

⁸⁷. Ibid

balanced diet and signs and symptoms of malnourishment such as measurements and statistics associated with malnutrition e.g. '75 cm, weight for height, F75, NFP' and that 90 % of malnourished babies are HIV positive.

Advice: The health expert says: '*Kwa azimayi amphwayi...bwerani ndi ana kuchipatala mwansanga. Ndikuno kokha komwe mungamve malangizo abwino komanso an anu kulandira chithandizo moyenera...*' – 'To women with a laissez-faire attitude...bring your malnourished babies to the hospital in time since its only here at the hospital that you get proper knowledge on how to look after your babies as well as have them treated.'

Presenter: Repeats and summarises the major points raised by the health expert such as a balanced diet to avoid malnutrition and reminds people that they are listening to *Uchembere wa Bwino* from MBC Radio 1. The presenter introduces the next discussion namely traditional midwifery.

Talk 2

Interviewee: Calista Nyasulu (Health expert from Mwanza District Hospital)

Topic: Traditional Midwives

Content: Nyasulu defines traditional midwives as rural based low-tech birth attendants. She talks about types of patients who can be treated by the traditional midwives as well as characteristics of an ideal traditional midwife and the tools they require. She emphasises the importance of hygienic practices by the midwives.

Closing

Presenter: Repeats and summarises what Calista Nyasulu was saying namely the importance of hygiene and delivering at the hospital. The presenter also reminds people that they are listening to *Uchembere wa Bwino* from MBC Radio 1 and says: "From me Vyalema Mwaliambwireee! I say thank you for being with meee! And I say a healthy woman! A healthy baby! And a healthy nation! Thank you."

Sign-tune: Traditional Yao Song.

4.2.2 Radio Approach and Format

Uchembere wa Bwino is produced within the conceptual understanding of educational radio, which is the use of radio to provide knowledge and instruction on specific issues. Educational radio can be used for formal education – as in the MCP era when MBC used to broadcast curriculum based education programs for primary, secondary and teacher training purposes - or to provide informal instructions for practical purposes. Such programs, according to Mefalopulos and Kamlongera (2004), are usually written and prepared by subject specialists after having investigated and assessed the issue in question.⁸⁸

Uchembere wa Bwino falls within educational radio because the idea behind the program is to impart knowledge and instruction on different health issues by using experts in the field. The drawback or difference between Mefalopulos and Kamlongera's conceptual understanding of educational radio and how *Uchembere wa Bwino* is produced is on the genesis of the program. Mefalopulos and Kamlongera state

⁸⁸. Mefalopulos and Kamlongera, 2004 p. 51

that educational radio programs are usually written and prepared by subject specialists after investigating and assessing the issue in question. *Uchembere wa Bwino* is not based on any prior research or expert scripting. The program content and focus is based on what the producer decides to focus on. The producer asks the questions and the expert provides the answers. For example, in the opening sequence to the episode above the producer says:

“This is Vyalema Mwaliambwire with *Uchembere wa Bwino*. This is the time that we discuss different good issues to promote our livelihoods. Today we will start by reminding each other about what a baby should eat and the importance of such food...” when introducing the second discussion, the producer said, “...I have also decided that we should remind each other about traditional midwives...”

Clearly, the producer decided upon the topic and area of focus. She could have decided on any other issue as long as it is connected to *Uchembere wa Bwino* or her definition of safe motherhood and child health. This is also clearly in line with what the Controller of Programs, Geoffrey Kazembe, said in an interview:

“The approach is simple. The producer decides what to focus on. It’s like we throw things at the listeners. In future all the programs will be research based. We will use our research section more.”

It is clear again that MBC’s health programs are not research based. What the Controller of programs means in the quote above is that MBC personnel decide what the listeners need. Whether such programs appeal to listeners or have content relevant to the people’s needs and aspirations is a different matter but the data under “Peoples’

perception of *Uchembere wa Bwino*," shows that the content may not necessarily be what the people need. In the above episode for example, it is safe to assume that the people would have loved to get advice on signs of malnutrition in a clear and simple language and what they should do to have healthy babies and not what the hospital does which is clearly the thrust or focus of the episode above.

Uchembere wa Bwino employs an interview/discussion format. This format requires more than a single person or opinion to be aired. Such a format can be an interview with a member of a community or the recording of a group discussion about an issue of concern. *Uchembere wa Bwino* is based on an interview with health experts and apart from the sign-tune at the beginning and closing; there is no other song to make it an info-tainment or edutainment program. It therefore falls in the top-down bracket because there is no space allowed for comment, feedback or any other involvement of the beneficiaries in the creation and broadcast of the program.

4.2.3 Content and Structure

The content in *Uchembere wa Bwino* is largely dependent on the whims of the producer. Nevertheless, the content is well organised with a good opening that tells the reader what the program is about. The opening also has a clear explanation on the purpose, objectives and issues tackled in the program. Similarly, there is a good ending that summarises most if not all the crucial issues raised by the health experts in the program.

The problem, however, lies in the language and treatment of the issues tackled in the program. In other words, the program is not presented in a simple and straight forward manner. The producer and the health experts presume sophisticated literacy and numeracy skills on the part of the listeners thus using words, phrases and figures which merely leave the listener confused:

“For us to know that the baby is malnourished...we measure...and if the baby is ‘75 cm’ or ‘weight for height is less than 65 cm’ then the baby is very malnourished. If the ‘weight for height is less than 80’ we give the baby...but if the ‘weight for height is less than 60 we give them milk.’ We also give them ‘F 75 milk’ and if there is an improvement we continue with ‘F75.’ If there is an improvement we go to ‘phase two.’ The first one was the transitional phase...Afterwards the baby is taken to NFP where it is given Likuni Phala...90% of the malnourished babies are HIV positive.”

Unchembere wa Bwino is a Chichewa program and the quote above has been translated except the words in italics. In other words, the instructions in italics were not in Chichewa, they have been quoted verbatim. The content in the quote above is a clear manifestation of pro-literacy bias, which Melkote (1991) defines as the ‘tendency of a source of communication to encode messages in terms of symbols, either written, printed, or verbal, which imply literacy and numeracy skills on the part of receivers when they are known to lack both skills.’⁸⁹ The majority of rural folk do not have the knowledge or expertise to understand the messages or instructions as those in italics above. In other words, the content above is not completely accessible to the ordinary Malawian in the village. The emphasis in the program is also on what the hospital does and therefore merely serves as a public relations exercise for the institution concerned.

⁸⁹. Melkote, 1991, p: 218

The content is about what the hospital does and not what people ought to do if confronted with a problem such as a malnourished baby.

4.2.4 *Technical Factors and Appeals*

Uchembere wa Bwino largely deals with issues to do with women. It is therefore not surprising that the producer is a woman and both the sources i.e. the health experts, are women. This is not mere coincidence but a deliberate attempt by the producer to come up with a program that is not only appealing to women but one that is also credible. 'Gender is an important factor to ensure source credibility. For instance a woman is more likely to give higher credibility to another woman talking about breast-feeding practices than to a man.'⁹⁰

Although the program has good source credibility, logical presentation of the facts and information with a clear beginning and ending there are no special sound effects to clearly give the impression and feeling or mood that the interview really took place at a hospital as the presenter claims. A baby crying, ambulance sirens or the usual noise associated with a hospital would have been ideal to create a hospital atmosphere. There are no sound effects or appeals apart from the sign-tune at the beginning and ending.

Lack of appeals does not mean that the program is boring. The two discussions and the summaries make the program seem short. 15 minutes is not long if the time is divided into several segments as is the case with the episode above. If it were not for the segments, summaries and discussion, the program would have been boring.

⁹⁰. Mefalopulos and Kamlongera 2004, p 54

4.2.5 *Peoples' Reception of Uchembere wa Bwino Health Program*

As with all the programs analysed in this thesis, the above episode was taken to three sites namely Chigumula in Blantyre, Goliat in Thyolo and Marka in Nsanje. The researcher conducted three FGDs in each site comprising females ages 18-45.

4.2.5.1 *Presentation of the Program*

There was a general agreement from FGD participants that the program was well put together and presented. One of the participants from Chigumula remarked: "*Pologalamuyi ayikonza bwino. Poyamba anena zomwe atakambe komanso... amabwereza zina mwazomwe ma dokotala aja amanena*" – "This program was well put together. The announcer clearly explained at the beginning what the program was all about and closed the segments with summaries of the issues tackled by the nurses."

Most of the participants from Thyolo were also familiar with the producer and presenter, Vyalema Mwaliambile. One of them said: "*A Vyalema akuonetsa kuti nkhani za amayi akudzitsata...mapologalamu ambiri akulera...ndi okhudza amayi amapedzeka kuti akonza ndi iwowo,*" – "The producer, Vayalema, seems to be knowledgeable about issues to do with women...she produces...programs to do with women or family planning..."

Some participants from Marka and Goliat, however, said the program does not contain songs by well-known Malawian artist to make it more interesting and captivating. One of them said: "*Pologalamuyi ikanakoma...ndi nyimbo ngati za Mkasa kapena Joseph*

Tembo” – “The program would have been interesting with songs by Mkasa or Joseph Tembo.” Those from Marka also said the program should have been in Sena to make more sense. One of them said: *“Ife wailesi tilibe. Tikamvera kuti mapologalamu amenewa,”* – “We have got no radio. Where are we going to listen to the programs?”

4.2.5.2 Content and Clarity

In all the three sites, participants felt that the program contained content that was relevant especially the segment on traditional birth attendants. For example, those from Goliat said: *“Nkani za a zambazo ndi zonthandiza. Kuno aliyense amapita kwa azamba...kanji chipatala chilikutali. Ndiyesa zamveka”* - “The information about traditional birth attendants is useful because the hospital is far here. I think we have heard for ourselves.”

There was, however, lack of understanding and appreciation of certain words used by the health expert from Balaka regarding nutrition. The participants started asking the researcher what ‘Weight for height means as well as F 75, and NFP’ and other concepts which the nurse or doctor alluded to. One woman from Marka jokingly said: *“A dokotala amafunika munthu adzitanthauzira mu Chisena,”* – “the nurse needed a translator for the program to be in Sena.” Those from Chigumula insisted that the producer should have asked the nurse to explain what she meant: *“Mtolankhani anakafunsa anesiwo kuti amasulire zomwe anena,”* – “The journalist should have asked the nurse to explain.”

Some women from Marka and Goliat also pointed out that Exclusive Breast Feeding and six-part balanced diet were for town people who have money and not for people like them. They queried where poor mothers would get enough milk to breast feed a baby for six months or get money to provide a six-part balanced diet. One of them remarked: "*Mwana amafunika chakudya chapadela monga phala akafika miyezi isanu*" – "A baby needs extra food such as porridge at least by the time it is four months old."

4.3 Lessons from *Uchembere wa Bwino*

It is clear that *Uchembere wa Bwino* follows an educational radio approach but it is not research based. The script is also not written by an expert, as is usually the case with educational radio programs. The producers decide on the issues and type of advice the masses should be given and then use health experts as sources and determinants of the right remedies to the assumed needs and desires. Programs that are not research based risk-containing content, which is not relevant and appealing to the local populace who are the ultimate beneficiaries of the development programs. For example, the FGD participants believed that Exclusive Breast Feeding, which is a major area of focus in *Uchembere wa Bwino* programs, is for town dwellers and people with money not the rural women whose own nutritional status is poor. In fact, despite messages on exclusive breast-feeding, participants still believed that babies need more than mothers' milk, at least by the time the child is four months old. One respondent from Goliat even remarked: "*Kale amawayambitsa phala akadali akhanda, chochitika panalibe*" (in the past infants were being given porridge without any problems). This clearly shows that there is less impact on the ground, which may be due to lack of needs assessment.

Thus, according to the field research, the *Uchembere wa Bwino* episode analysed in this chapter does not necessarily respond to the needs and interest of some members of the target group. The content raises more questions than answers, as the people tend to question where they would get a balanced diet to feed their babies and also the milk for the mothers to embark on a 6 months exclusive breastfeeding exercise. The program also tends to focus on the activities of the hospital instead of what people ought to do.

Apart from the above observations, there is also lack of clarity because of inclusion of English words, which in Malawi is for the educated. The program is also laced with complicated words and concepts, which only health experts can understand. Concepts such as 'weight for height' 'F75' and '75 cm' among others do nothing to impart health instructions to the masses apart from confusing people. The producers also do nothing to have such concepts and words clarified or simplified for the poor and illiterate man and woman in the rural areas. An analysis of 8 *Uchembere wa Bwino* episodes spaced over a period of one year reveals the same approach, format and style of presentation except that the other programs contained a single area of discussion unlike the one above which had two segments namely Exclusive Breast Feeding and Traditional midwives. The programs analysed focused on Mother to Child Transmission (MCT), Traditional midwives, Family planning and Exclusive Breastfeeding amongst other topics. All the sources and actors were female health experts from different district hospitals across the country as in the episode above. In terms of geographical focus, the programs were predominantly semi-urban and urban without any input from ordinary women or traditional birth attendants even where the topic of discussion concerned

them. Although *Uchembere wa Bwino* is based on content generated in the field, the format and approach is thus not different from programs produced and packaged in the studio, such as *Ndi Ufulu Wanga* (It's my Right) which features lawyers talking about the statutes or operations of the judiciary.⁹¹ This approach is also not different from *Umoyo wa Mtundu Wathu* (Health for the Nation) on which a health expert provides advice on different health issues without necessarily responding to specific needs or questions as is the case with *Dokotala wapa Wailesi*.

Such programs cannot be considered to have been initiated in response to articulated problems or needs of the masses to come in line with the propositions of the *problem-solving model*. They can also not be considered participatory. Guy Bessette's (2004) participation is a collective praxis of decision making, in which communities are involved in identifying and planning their own development problems, in seeking solutions and in making decisions on how to implement them. Clearly, *Uchembere wa Bwino* or the other health programs mentioned in this chapter do not meet these propositions. The programs are purely top-down and seek to achieve overall government national objectives to reduce fertility rate, which is currently estimated at 6.7; high maternal mortality rate; high infant and child mortality rates, malnutrition and low life expectancy at birth. But as seen under 'People's perception of the *Uchembere wa Bwino* program,' it would be safe to assume that little is being achieved on the

⁹¹ 'Ndi Ufulu Wanga' is produced with funding from the Inter-ministerial Committee on Human Rights and Democracy, the same committee that funds DBU's rural based, participatory human rights programs. MBC's program is however studio based and far from participatory the way *Kanthu N'khama* - produced with sponsorship from the same committee - is produced.

ground because of the nature and treatment of the messages. There is need for research based programs which should also be delivered in simple and straight forward language.

4.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, it is obvious that MBC produces *Uchembere wa Bwino* in line with Ministry of Health's policy to reduce maternal mortality as well as improve the nutritional status of mothers and babies by providing instructions and advice on the same. However, this is done without conducting any assessment of the needs and capacities of the target groups. The ministry's policy also seems to support this top-down approach to development programming as was clearly obvious when one of the IEC officers said: "The experts develop the messages...The only time that we involve the community is when pre-testing the message. We try to see if the people understand the message. But we disregard what communities say if our experts think otherwise."⁹²

Uchembere wa Bwino programs are well structured but less entertaining because they are laced with pro-literate terms and concepts which seldom communicate the desired messages. The producers assume literacy and certain skills on the part of the listeners, which in most cases is not often the case. The majority of the people, especially the women who the program targets, are illiterate and such treatment of messages do very little to change their lives or how they perceive things.

⁹². Interview with Mrs Kachala, IEC Officer, Blantyre District Health Office, 18/10/07

Chapter Five

SELF-HELP PROGRAMS ON RADIO

5.1 Introduction

Self-help projects instill a sense of independence in people. Since 1964, 'MBC has devoted considerable air time to self-help projects designed to instill a spirit of self-reliance in the rural community.'⁹³ President Banda emphasised and fostered a spirit of hard work and self-reliance across the country. 'Programs such as *Chitukuko M'Malawi* - 'Development in Malawi' highlighted projects in which villagers themselves took the lead in initiating a self-help project which benefited the community before asking the central government to help.'⁹⁴

Nkhata (1993) says that communities would build a clinic and appeal to the government for drugs and medical personnel to man the hospital. Because the government always responded favorably to such requests, coupled with the broadcasting of such messages to other rural communities, the result was that of a domino effect. Realising the importance of such programs in promoting self-reliance, MBC has continued to produce and broadcast self-help initiatives albeit on a small scale compared to president Banda's era. This chapter critically analyses one episode of *Tili pa Ntchto* (We are at Work) – the only self-help program currently aired by the national broadcaster. The idea here is to look at the format, content and structure as well as appeals deliberately employed for effect.

⁹³. Geoffrey Kazembe, Controller of Programs, MBC 1. (18/0907)

⁹⁴. Ibid

5.2 *Tili Pa Ntchito* Self-Help Development Radio Program

Tili pa Ntchito – ‘We are at Work’ is a radio program which can be considered people-centered. The program comes out every Tuesday at 15:45 hours and focuses on self-help development activities in various areas across the country. The aim of *Tili pa Ntchito* - which may be self-explanatory - is evident in the name of the program. *Tili Pa Ntchito* symbolises the community speaking that they are at work, i.e. ‘we,’ meaning the people in the program/community are at ‘work’ i.e. ‘Ntchito’ thus ‘*Tili pa Ntchito*.’

5.2.1 *The Program*

Sign-tune: Welcome our visitors

Opening: The program starts with the sign-tune and then announcement of the program. The presenter greets listeners and goes on to say that *Tili pa Ntchito* focuses on self-help development activities people undertake across the country to uplift their livelihoods. The presenter then says: “I recently went to Nsipe Primary School in Ntcheu where I found that parents had moulded... I wanted to know what they wanted to do with the bricks...”

Talk 1: Focus Group Discussion

Speakers: deputy headmaster – Richard Kadwala; Parents Association representative Rackson Chikhosi and school committee chair Eddie Buleya.

Content 1: History and current status of Nsipe Primary School – Input from the headmaster and the school committee chair.

The Headmaster, Richard Kadwala, says the school is very old with inadequate classrooms and houses for teachers. He says: "We moulded bricks to build two houses for the teachers...we are planning to construct classrooms because some pupils learn in a church hall and some teachers live in sub-standard houses far from the school."

The committee chair, Eddie Buleya, says they held discussions with parents and resolved to contribute K56 each to embark on the project. He says: "We managed to raise K60,000 and burnt the bricks and building of the houses is about to start."

Content 2: Input from the parent's representative

Chikhosi says the parents decided that the teachers should stay close to the school and every child's parent from standard 1-8 donated K56. He says they held a meeting with the school committee and prioritised construction of the teachers' houses. After raising the money they met to plan on how to use it.

Content 3: Future Plans

The headmaster says he intends to ask parents to contribute more money because they needed 18,000 bricks but only managed to mould 12,000 because of funds. "We have not yet asked for funds from anybody but we intend to ask the District Commissioner, NGOs and the parents." He says most pupils from the school make it to Secondary Schools and would like to ask all the alumina who have made it in society to help renovate the school. He finally appeals to well wishers and NGO's to help renovate the school saying parents in the area do not have money but nevertheless managed to raise

K60, 000 for the project. He says people should learn from what the community at Nsipe have done and should visit the area to see for themselves.

Presenter: “Richard Kadwala headmaster of Nsipe Primary School in Ntchue...closing our program... (Sign-tune starts to play in the background) Until next week when I come again with yet another program of *Tili pa Ntchito*. You were with me Baxter Chikopa.”

5.2.2 Approach and Format

Tili pa Ntchito intends to report and provide testimonials on aspects of community life, specifically community initiatives. Such an approach falls within the broad category of Documentary and Cultural Radio. Mefalopulos and Kamlongera (2004) point out that journalists, social researchers and communications practitioners are the ones that usually produce this type of program often adopting a participant observation approach in order to document the issues accurately and objectively. Such programs can be addressed to other communities having similar problems, as well as to the management of development organisations or to policy makers.

The *Tili pa Ntchito* episode described above focuses on a community initiative in Ntcheu. The community decided to mould bricks and raise money to build teachers houses and classrooms. The people had reached a point where they needed help from government, well wishers as well as the schools' alumnus: “I am appealing to all well wishers, NGO's and former students to help renovate this school,” the headmaster,

Richard Kadwala, said towards the end of the program. Clearly the main aim of the program was to appeal to development organisations or policy makers to help but would also in the process inspire other communities facing similar problems to do something.

The producer decided to appeal to these broad target groups by conducting a focus group discussion/interview with the community members. Thus the program has an interview/discussion format, which is already interesting to follow due to the fact that it involves more than one person. An interview/discussion format can be an interview with a member of the community as well as the recording of a group discussion about an issue of concern and 'can be used to generate a two-way flow of information as in participatory radio.'⁹⁵ The program above dwells on a community initiative to construct teachers' houses and revolves around views of the people concerned namely parents and teachers.

5.2.3 Content and Structure

The focus of *Tili pa Ntchito* is on community initiatives to change livelihoods. Consequently, the content of the program depends on the initiative in question. The current episode focuses on a community project to construct teachers' houses. The program therefore dwells on why the parents decided to mould the bricks, where they got the money to pay for some of the costs incurred and progress or lack progress so far. During the discussions, the headmaster said: "We decided to mould bricks to construct

⁹⁵. Mefalopulos and Kamlongera, 2004, p. 51

teachers' houses. We raised K60, 00 but we will ask parents to contribute more money because we needed 18,000 bricks but only managed to mould 12,000 due to funds."

The people concerned provide these views i.e. the parents and teachers. Such content is relevant and helpful because it explains why the parents embarked on the project, how they raised MK60, 000 and how the money was used. In addition there is no denying that the content is accurate and real because the speakers are the beneficiaries themselves. Anyone listening to the radio can hear them speak. This means that policy makers or development organisations willing to help would not doubt the relevance or accuracy of the content because the program focuses on the views of the people or beneficiaries concerned. The program is also presented in a simple and straightforward manner without any jargon or complicated treatment of concepts. It has a good opening in that the presenter clearly announces the program, its objectives and current issue of focus with the sign-tune in the background.

The program, however, suffers from lack of an ending that makes listeners reflect upon the main message or issue. The entire program has no summaries or repetitions of the crucial issues or message the program is trying to address. It is usually good practice to repeat more than once the crucial points your program wants to get across. The presenter should have featured a song and summarised what the community members had done to raise K60, 000 and how they had used it. A segment could have followed this with the people explaining the kind of help they are looking for or their plans for the future since the money they had raised was finished. The closing segment could

have benefited from a summary of the main points from the two segments for listeners to reflect upon the issues and possibly take some action. The program also needed musical slogans reflective of the program and the issues it tackles. 'Musical slogans or jingles serve to identify a certain program, message and product to promote and reinforce a certain idea or message.'⁹⁶ *Tili pa Ntchito* has no such slogan and the sign-tune is out of sync with the program and the issues it addresses. The sign-tune is about welcoming visitors and yet the program is about self-help projects and hard work or self-reliance.

5.2.4 *Technical Factors and Appeals*

Tili pa Ntchito has good sound quality with well-balanced sound and music levels. The sign-tune at the beginning is well raised and lowered to enable the presenter announce the program and its objectives. The sign-tune then completely fades for the presenter to introduce the subject under discussion.

The program, however, has no special sound effects to make it appealing. The discussion allegedly took place at the school but the program has no pupils making noise in the background or vehicles whining in the distance because the teachers say the school is along the M1 road. The program also lacks any descriptive language to enable listeners visualize the dilapidated state the school is in. The teachers explained that the school needs a facelift but the presenter does not provide any description of the school to let listeners have a picture of the school and get even more touched by the program. In other words, the program does not make listeners act or do something.

⁹⁶. Mefalopulos and Kamlongera, 2004, p. 53

5.2.5 *People's Reception of Tili pa Ntchito*

Unlike the other programs analysed in this study, *Tili pa Ntchito* was taken to only one site in Blantyre namely Chipendo Village, T/A Machinjiri. The site was chosen for convenience purposes. The FGDs comprised three men and women ages 21-45

There was a general agreement amongst the participants that the program lacked appeal. One of them said: "*Pologalamu iyi imafunika nyimbo...munaona kuti pologalamu yopanda nyimbo? Chipanda anthu angapo kumakambirana bwenzi nditagona*" – "This program needed music...where have you seen a program that does not feature songs? I could have slept if it was not for the discussions."

Some of the participants seemed to be inspired by the program, though. One of the participants remarked: "*Iwowa ngati anakwanitsa kusunzika K56 aliyense mpaka K60, 000, ife chingatilepheretse ku sonzika K50 kapena K20 kuti timange Police Unit ndichani?*" – "If these people managed to raise K60, 000 after contributing K56 each what can stop us from contributing K50 or K20 each to build a Police Unit for this area?" Clearly, the program inspires some community members to do something for themselves, which is one of the objectives of the program.

5.3 *Lessons from Tili Pa Ntchito*

A critical analysis of *Tili pa Ntchito* shows a community that has refused to be a permanent victim of any situation. This program shows local people who have collectively defined problems affecting their lives and are working to solve them. The

local community at Nsipe defined and prioritised the problems affecting their lives and then decided on a possible plan of action, which was to mold bricks and build teachers houses. The need for communication in this case is purely to link the communities to well wishers or development agencies as well as for other people to know what their friends are doing so that they may be challenged to do the same. The episode above as well as five other *Tili pa Ntchito* programs this researcher analysed supports this contention. The programs involved local communities constructing roads, bridges and molding bricks for various projects. Other programs focused on projects which were stalling due to lack of funds whilst others focused on activities which had reached their completion point.

It is on this basis that *Tili pa Ntchito* may be considered people-centered. The program gives communities across the country a channel to voice out their needs and aspirations. Apart from inspiring other communities, *Tili pa Ntchito* empowers communities where the initial recording was done. The communities in question freely speak out on issues affecting their lives because radio acts as an instrument of intercession. This is clearly in line with Guy Bessette's idea of participation because the producers are not the ones who determine content but the communities in question. The producers merely provide a channel for the community to voice out its initiatives, concerns and problems. The broadcasts then link the community with development organisations, policy makers as well as inspire other communities facing different problems to defy odds and do something for their lives. In this case the local communities become stakeholders or key players in development planning and in determining solutions to problems affecting

their lives, all ideals Bessette emphasises in his conceptualisation of participation. Thus only *Tili pa Ntchito* comes close to *Kanthu Nkhama* as a participatory program of all the other programs analysed in this paper. But unlike *Kanthu Nkhama*, *Tili pa Ntchito* lacks descriptive language, summaries and a sign-tune that reflects the focus of the program.

5.4 Conclusion

To conclude this chapter, it may be safe to say that *Tili pa Ntchito* is one of the few programs produced and packaged by MBC staff, which is participatory and people-centered. The *Tili pa Ntchito* programs this researcher analysed were participatory because the programs focused on local initiatives and the local people's views on issues.

In other words, the people owned the programs and felt empowered because they were given a channel for communicating issues affecting them, not only as local people, but also as stakeholders in development. These people probably feel more empowered when they realise that other people listening to the program may be challenged or inspired to emulate. However, apart from lack of a proper sign-tune and songs, *Tili pa Ntchito* only comes out once a week. Actually, the program only takes 0.6% of the 42 hours devoted to development programs a week. One *Tili pa Ntchito* program may also be rebroadcast for several weeks, not as a strategy to ensure maximum impact, but due to a concatenation of factors, which are discussed later in this thesis.

Chapter Six

CHARACTERISTICS OF CULTURAL PROGRAMS

6.1 Introduction

Culture can be defined as the 'customs, beliefs, values, ideas and practices as well as the material artifacts, objects and instruments handed down from one generation to another',⁹⁷ or associated with a particular group of people. Since independence, MBC has been regarded as a tool for reviving and maintaining cultural heritage. 'This was a critical and conscious attempt in the years immediately after attaining independence to reverse the trend in colonial times which was to discourage anything traditional.'⁹⁸

Currently, there seems to be a shift in emphasis and orientation as far as cultural programs are concerned. Whilst Chewa beliefs, values, art and language dominated airwaves during president Banda's reign, contemporary cultural programs include interviews with *Yao, Sena, Tonga, Tumbuka* and *Ngonde* among other Traditional Authorities (T/As). In other words, the emphasis and promotion of the 'Chewa' as the 'real' founders of the Malawi nation seems to give way to a recognition that the *Chewa* are but a group in a nation with diverse customs, beliefs, and values. The 'need to reflect the wide diversity of Malawi's cultural life'⁹⁹ is one of the obligations of MBC under the Communications Act (1998). This chapter centers on one episode of *Mfumu Yanthu* – 'Our Chief,' a program that seeks to reflect the wide diversity of Malawi's cultural life through interviews with chiefs. The purpose of the chapter is to examine the program in terms of the format, content and structure, as well as appeals deliberately

⁹⁷. Thompson 1990 p. 129

⁹⁸. Nkhata, 1993, p 18

⁹⁹. Communications Act 1998 p. 43

employed for effect. A segment on people's perception of the program also forms part of the chapter.

6.2 *Ndi Mfumu Yanthu Development Radio Program*

There are more than 12 cultural programs at MBC including *Mwambi wa Sabata ino* - Proverb of The Week, *Kuli Gule* - There is a dance, *Za Kwanthu* - From Home and several other programs on local music, dance and drama as was the case during Dr. Banda's era. However, only one involves travelling to the rural areas - *Ndi Mfumu Yanthu*, a 27 minutes program that comes out every Tuesday from 11:03 to 11:30. The program mostly features T/As or Paramount Chiefs, with focus on the origins, lineage as well as the threat of modern ways of living to a people's cultural heritage. The episode analysed below was broadcast on 11th September, 2007.

6.2.1 *The Program*

The program starts with a slight cough, then: '*Wawa Mfumu yanthu wawa*' - Greetings our chief greetings,' followed by a traditional song. The song fades for a brief moment for announcement of the program.

Presenter: "My nephew Geoffrey Kazembe went to Lilongwe recently and bumped into T/A Malili. He asked him to tell us about Chewa traditions."

Talk 1

Speaker: T/A Malili responding to questions from Geoffrey Kazembe.

Topic: Chewa Traditions and Malili Chieftaincy

Content:

The chief talks about the origins of Chewa names such as *Nkhoma*, *Chulu*, *Dzimhiri*, *Kwenda*, *Banda*, *Phiri* and adds that his lineage is that of the *Kwenda*. He says Malili Chieftaincy dates back to the time of *Makewana's* wrangles with Chimphangwi. He also talks about Chewa Traditions such as *Gule Wamkulu*. He reluctantly points out that: "Women started *Gule Wamkulu* and if *Njobvu* – elephant – comes to a funeral of a Chewa means that the deceased was a very important individual."

The chief further talks about Christianity and traditional beliefs. He says: 'Early Christians made a mistake dismissing traditional beliefs as useless instead of mixing the two as the Roman Catholics have done now to lure *Gule wa Mkulu* members.' He also talks about types of initiation rites and the relationship between education and traditional values. He says early missionaries wanted to change people's beliefs overnight, which only led to resentment of the former and their work by the later. 'The process should have been gradual because school is important. I went to school and...work for Telecom Networks Malawi as a technician,' he says.

Kazembe: Chuckles and says: 'Thank you.'

Presenter: 'You have heard my nephew Geoffrey Kazembe talking to T/A Malili in Lilongwe. Next week we will know more about other chiefs in the country. You were with me Before Gumbi.'

Sign-tune: Traditional Chewa Song.

6.2.2 Approach and Format

Ndi Mfumu Yanthu is based on an interview/discussion with a chief. As stated earlier, an Interview/Discussion format can be an interview with a member of a community – in this case the chief – as well as the recording of a group discussion about an issue of concern. This format is already interesting to follow because it involves more than one person. However, the *Mfumu Yanthu* episode analysed in this study is captivating and easy to follow not because of the nature of the format or special appeals, but rather the information and the informal interactive nature and simplicity of the interview/discussion, which easily flows from one point to the next.

6.2.3 Content and Structure

Every program needs to have clear objectives, which must be stated in the program. However, this is not the case with the episode above. There is no mention of the program's aims or objectives in the entire program but listening to five episodes of *Mfumu Yanthu* shows that the content revolves around the diverse Malawian cultural beliefs and values by focusing on the origins of tribal chiefs and their distinct beliefs and practices. Therefore, apart from merely fulfilling MBC's legal obligation to reflect the wide diversity of Malawi's cultural life, the program aims to enlighten the young generation on their customs and traditions at a time when the majority are abandoning such beliefs in favor of western 'modern' ways of living.

These two objectives determine the content. The questioning has to probe the origins, beliefs and distinct practices of a particular group of people. In the episode above for

example, Kazembe says: "*Gogo paja munangoyamba kufotokoza za mbiri ya Malili... ufumu umenewu unayamba bwanji?*" – "Grandfather...you just started explaining about the origins of Malili...can you explain how it started?" Kazembe also asked questions like: "*Mwati Nkhani za Gule ndizovutilapo...koma tandiuzenipo pang'ono, a Chewa akati mzinda mumatanthauza chiani?*" "...you said issues of *Gule* are sensitive...but can you just explain a bit on what the *Chewa* mean by '*Mzinda*'?" With such probing, the chief went on to talk about the origins of *Gule Wamkulu* and initiation rites. The interviewer normally has a set of questions ready to solicit such answers although at times the questions are mere follow-ups on what the chief has said. In other words, MBC producers adopt a semi-structured interview format – the producer has a set of questions but may ask other questions depending on the nature and flow of the interview. In this way, the content is to a large extent based on the objectives of *Ndi Mfumu Yanthu* program as well as the creativity of the producer. The content in the case study above focused on the origins of Malili Chieftaincy, Chewa names, beliefs and practices – e.g. *Gule Wamkulu* cult and initiation rites – as well as the relationship between some Chewa traditional beliefs and western 'modern' education and Christianity.

The opening of the program is creative. There is a slight cough followed by: *Wawa gogo chalo wawa* - Greetings granny of the land greetings - before the program is announced. This opening tries to create a picture of the producer approaching the chief. The closing is however flat and fails to offer any summary of what the program was all about. The entire program in general lacks any repetitions and summaries of the crucial

points such as the relationship between the *Nyau* cult and Christianity or the effects of some cultural beliefs on education. A good closing makes the listener reflect upon and remember the main message or issue discussed in the program and the episode above fails to do. A half an hour interview, which is the standard time the program is supposed to take, needed summaries within the program and at the end to make it more interesting.

Unlike other programs analysed in this study such as *Uchembere Wabwino*, *Mfumumu Yanthu* is presented in a simple, informal and conversational manner. The interviewer asks for clarification every time the chief uses high-sounding Chichewa words:

“Chief...I do not understand you...please explain what you mean by *Pathala* most people might think you are referring to a tarmac road,” Kazembe asked every time the chief said something unfamiliar.

The chief in the above example went on to say that *Pathala* means ‘seating room.’ Kazembe also sought clarification for such words as *Kuduma* – getting pregnant when you are not married; *Mphwanga* – nephew; *Chamber* – hiding place; *Dewera* – clothes made from tree barks. In other words, the program was kept simple and straightforward.

6.2.4 Technical Factors and Appeals

The *Mfumumu Yanthu* development radio program analysed in this study has clear recordings without any hissing sounds. The sound levels were also well balanced. Another important element to note is the use of the T/A as the source of the information

in the program. The use of the T/A is a deliberate attempt to establish credibility for the information in the program. Chiefs, especially those of the rank of T/A are held in very high esteem in the country and they are quite often than not addressed as *Gogo wa Chalo* - 'Granny or owner of the land.' This shows that such people are held in very high esteem and the MBC producers realise that people or listeners are more prone to listen or follow the advice of somebody they hold in high esteem rather than some unknown person.

The program, however, lacks any special sound effects to grab and sustain the interest of listeners. Such sound effects could have included the sound of *Gule Wamkulu*, which could not have been a problem given the numerous *Nyau* songs and recordings the station has. The program could have also benefited from traditional Chewa Songs to ensure that the program is more lively and interesting. A 27 minutes program that lacks songs and other attention grabbing devices becomes boring. Apart from the sign-tune at the beginning and ending, the program has no music inserts or any attention grabbing devices or slogans to lure listeners to listen to the program for the entire 27 minutes. An edutainment format would have been ideal.

6.2.5 People's Reception of Ndi Mfumu Yanthu Radio Program

Ndi Mfumu Yanthu was taken to one site in Blantyre. This was largely based on the fact that the program largely targets young men and women in the urban areas who are susceptible to western ways of living. The site was Mboma village, T/A Kapeni. The

researcher conducted three FGDs comprising three young men and women ages 15-25.

Two male participants had dropped out of school.

All the participants seemed to like the program although none of them had ever listened to it before. The school going participants said the content was relevant because some of the issues are covered at school. One of them remarked: *'Nkhani za Gule, Chinamwali ndi Chichewa chimene akugwiritsa tchito...ukhoza kumvera pologalamu yonse...Timaphunzira ku sukulu'* – “The information on *Gule*, initiation rites and the complex Chichewa is enough to make you listen to the end. We learn these things at school. It is like revision.” However, the participants who had dropped out of school said the program was not that important but you could still listen to it if you do not have other better things to do. One of them said: *“Ngati ukufuna kudziwa za miyambo ya makolo ako...kungopita kumudzi kwa agogo basi”* – “If you want to know about your traditions you can always go to the village and ask your granny.”

One person said the program was too long and boring. He said it starts off well but does not force you to listen to the end. He said 30 minutes of mere talking was too long to keep your attention focused. He said: *“Pologalamuyi ndiyabwino koma yatalikitsa. Ndamvera yonse chifukwa munandipempha. A Mfumuwanso akusakaniza chi Zungu ndi Chichewa kwambiri”* – “This program is too long. I have listened to the end because you asked me to. The chief is also mixing English and Chichewa too much.” Most of the participants said the chief should have used Chichewa only and that it was not proper for him to talk about *Gule Wamkuku* on the radio because the Chewa regard it as

a secret art. “*Achewa ena atha kukwiya nazo zimenezi*” - “Some Chewa people might feel offended.”

6.3 Lessons from *Ndi Mfumu Yanthu* Radio Program

A critical analysis of 5 *Mfumu Yanthu* episodes, spanning a period of 5 months, show the same trend as the program analysed above. The typical actors and sources used are senior chiefs who are held in high esteem as the custodians of a people's culture. The chiefs in the five episodes included T/A Chimaliro in Thyolo, Makanjira in Mangochi, Mbwana in Nkhata Bay and Nyachikhadza in Nsanje. The major thrust of the programs was on the origins and distinct practices and beliefs of the people whose chiefs are mentioned above.

Clearly, apart from fulfilling its legal duty to reflect the wide diversity of Malawi's cultural life, *Ndi Mfumu Yanthu* promotes cultural heritage by enlightening young men and women on their indigenous beliefs and traditions. And going by the content of these programs as well as the responses from the FGD participants, one would also be inclined to argue that *Mfumu Yanthu* is not only informative, but also educative. These two aspects also form part and parcel of MBC's public service obligations under section 87 subsection 1 of the Communications Act (1998).

Going by the format, content and structure and the responses by the FGD participants it would be safe again to say that the duration of the program does not suit the interview/discussion format the program takes. The program can best serve its purpose

by incorporating songs and slogans and be divided into two or three segments like *Kanthu Nkhama*, or *Uchembere wa Bwino* episodes analysed in this study. *Kanthu Nkhama* is also a 27 minutes program like *Mfumumu Yanthu* but it is divided into three segments. *Uchembere wa Bwino* is a 15 minutes program but it is divided into two segments. These programs seem short because of the way they are structured and *Mfumumu Yanthu* could be more alluring if it was treated in the same way. In other words, the program would be more captivating if conceptualised as an edutainment program.

Apart from these observations, it is obvious that only *Mfumumu Yanthu* involves going to the rural areas. The geographical setting in all the five episodes this researcher analysed was rural based, where the chiefs are located. In fact, unlike in the past when MBC staff would go to the rural areas to talk to wise 'men' and 'women' of the land on proverbs and correct use of language mostly Chichewa, no such programs exist anymore and programs that focus on wise sayings such as *Mwambi wa Sabata ino* are studio based. The producers have become the experts on proverbs and adage of a people's cultural heritage. It is therefore safe to say that only *Mfumumu Yanthu* attempts to engage the masses in dialogue and participation around development issues, in this case cultural heritage, but such engagement is only limited to the representatives of the people who are the chiefs.

This researcher believes that the participation of the chiefs on cultural discourse in the programs is merely a means to an end. The end result is for MBC to fulfill its obligations as a public broadcaster and not to give the chiefs a platform to voice out

critical issues and problems that affect her/his people. This researcher further believes that MBC can modify its format and approach to ensure that the chiefs as well as the people in the community are engaged in meaningful dialogue around development issues from a cultural perspective. Nugdalla (1996) writes:

‘The specific contribution of broadcasting to cultural revival is in the fields of arts: music, songs and drama’ and that broadcasting has made such artistic fields popular as well as ‘given them a touch of respectability because it is in the sphere of artistic production that broadcasting becomes more of a cultural than an ideological or propaganda institution.’¹⁰⁰

The majority of MBC’s cultural programs are already on local music, dance and drama. This author however believes that *Mfumu Yanthu*, can still have songs or drama inserts that focus on cultural beliefs and values with a blend of critical issues affecting the masses. These songs or drama can be recorded during the interview with the chief. The songs or drama inserts would spice up the program but also give the masses a channel to voice out their views and concerns from a cultural perspective as is the case with a *Tonga* program *Pa Mphala*, which focuses on traditional *Tonga* dance and music - the presenter emphasises on the same - whilst talking to different people on crosscutting issues of agriculture, health or the *Tonga* values and beliefs.

6.4 Conclusion

To conclude this chapter, it is obvious that MBC is operating in line with the Communications Act (1998) as far as reflecting the wide diversity of Malawi’s cultural

¹⁰⁰ .Nugdalla, 1986, p. 105

life is concerned. The station produces *Mfummu Yanthu* by featuring different T/As across the country, which was not the case during Dr. Banda's era. The T/As are featured deliberately to ensure credibility for the information that is presented in the programs.

Apart from *Mfummu Yathu*, cultural programs have however done little to engage the masses in dialogue and participation around development issues, although the programs have popularised local music, dance and drama which form the bulk of the cultural programs at the station. This is ideal for expressing and promoting indigenous talent besides engaging the masses on dialogue around development issues and problems through the same dance, drama or music. What could be the bottlenecks preventing production of more cultural programs, which are rural based and participatory in nature to afford rural ordinary people an opportunity to express their views on development? The next chapter examines these bottlenecks.

Chapter Seven

FACTORS AFFECTING PRODUCTION OF EFFECTIVE DEVELOPMENT MESSAGES

7.1 Introduction

More than ninety years after the world's first radio station was founded, radio is still the most pervasive, accessible, affordable and flexible mass medium available.¹⁰¹ In rural Malawi, radio is often the only mass medium accessible. It is on this basis that the primary argument of this study is based. This chapter and the thesis as a whole argues that radio is a very effective instrument in facilitating rural development but that little has been achieved so far despite production of pro-development programs since the colonial era. This chapter examines the context within which these programs are produced. In other words, the chapter looks at the factors that affect production of effective development programs. The idea is to see how these factors influenced the characteristics of the development programs as revealed by the analyses of the health, self-help and cultural programs. These factors are analysed at three levels namely societal, communicator and organisational. Societal-level factors will include an examination of the way government-media relations, development broadcasting traditions and journalism education affect development program's content; Identifying ways communicator-level factors affect development content will include areas such as journalists role conceptions and level of education; Finally, the organisational-level factors will include an examination of ways organisational policies, as well as financial resources influence development program's content. Although these factors are

¹⁰¹. Giraldo 2003, p. 10.

interrelated, effort has been made to discuss them as outlined above. Societal level factors are tackled first.

7.2 Societal-Level Factors

7.2.1 Government-Media Relations

The effects of the government's control of the MBC on development content and MBC's position as a public broadcaster, relying on government subvention, are examined in this section. The most important thing to note here is that since its inception, MBC has operated under strict government control.¹⁰² From the time of independence in 1964, to the early 1990's, the country was ruled with an iron fist and radio, being the powerful medium that it is, was misused and abused by the authorities for propaganda purposes. The trend has continued to this day although Malawi attained multiparty politics in 1993.

As a result of the government's control of MBC, content is added or dropped according to political criteria instead of relevance to national development. Recently introduced programs include *Makiyolo Basi* - a radio cartoon aimed at discrediting opposition political candidates - and *Mizwanya* - which includes 'expert' views on comments made by the opposition especially those perceived to be negative on the part of government. Programs are also more often than not rescheduled to accommodate presidential activities. This is normally at the expense of content aimed at promoting development.

¹⁰². Article 19, p.12

Government control and interference has also meant lack of criticism and in-depth coverage of development projects, plans and policies. A lot of people have paid dearly and still do so for broadcasting content perceived to be against the government.¹⁰³ Development news and programs, in part, requires investigative, critical reporting of development projects, issues, problems and policies. These policies are almost always drawn up by the government. Thus reporting on development involves reporting on the government, which is a sin at MBC very few people would want to commit. For example, 70 % of responses to a question asking development journalists to rate how important it was to be an adversary of the government by being skeptical of government actions felt it was not necessary or important. This clearly explains why there is total absence of content critical of the government, development policies, issues and plans.

Another dilemma connected to the above point is reliance on government subvention. All the money government allocates to MBC has to be approved by the legislature, where opposition parliamentarians halve it or withhold it altogether on the pretext that MBC is biased in favor of the government. It is a fact that MBC always favors the government of the day – it was the case with the MCP, the UDF and now the DPP – but in the words of an Assistant Controller of Programs at MBC, Responsible for Library and Archives: ‘Insufficient funds or no funds at all brings the engine of MBC to a halt.’ The results of such a situation on development content are manifold. In the first place, the station cuts on expenditure. One of the areas affected is travelling to the rural areas to gather program material, which is one of the key fundamentals of effective development programming. With fewer costs devoted to travelling to get materials,

¹⁰³. See Article 19, 2000, pp 13-15.

MBC cannot afford to send out producers on a regular basis to the rural areas to gather program material. The fewer development programs involving MBC staff travelling to the rural areas as well as frequent rebroadcasts or repetition of the development programs produced by MBC personnel support this contention. For example between September 2007 and October 2007, MBC had been alternating two *Tili pa Ntchito* programs. One contains material gathered in Thyolo about construction by rural folk of a bridge and another gathered in Ntcheu about moulding of bricks by villagers to build teachers' houses for a local primary school in the area. Although repeating a program is normal, especially to ensure effectiveness, this particular case and numerous others are attributed to lack of funds for effective production of development programs. For example, the producer of *Tili pa Ntchito*, Baxter Chikopa once remarked: 'With the K1 budgetary allocation I do not think I will be travelling to gather material. I might be re-broadcasting the same old programs.' And the producer of *Uchembere Wabwino*, Vyalema Mwaliambwire said: '...the most important thing is to ensure that all the speakers in a program are alive. With the limited funds there is little that can be done apart from re-broadcasting the same programs.'

To totally blame the relationship between government and MBC for lack of quality development programs would be to ignore the influence of traditional development broadcasting and journalism practices as well as individual influence and perception over content. The discussion below looks at these factors.

7.2.2 Development Broadcasting and Journalism Traditions

President Banda's priority in the 30 years that he ruled this country was to foster unity, and eradicate poverty, ignorance and disease. Development broadcasting during this era thus centered on production of programs to tackle these ills and they included those on agriculture, health and education. However, programs aimed at cultural revival took centre stage because MBC's pre-occupation was to establish a unique identity as an African radio free of any influence from the colonial past. Cultural programs included Malawian and African music, plays and drama. Today, 45 years after independence with the country facing new challenges such as the HIV/AIDS pandemic, MBC is still following the same old pattern set by Dr. Banda 40 years ago. The content analysis shows that cultural programs still get the lion's share, about 10 hours of broadcasting a week compared to the 7 and 5 hours on health and agriculture respectively. Programs on human rights, corruption, and gender get negligible allocations and these are programs, which were not there during Dr. Banda's era. The content analysis revealed that human rights programs, gender and corruption cover 0.7%, 0.6% and 0.4% respectively in relation to the other programs covering the entire 133 hours of broadcasting a week.

Another point related to the one above is the top-down communication approach adopted at MBC since independence. MBC staff and experts from either the Ministry of Agriculture or Health developed the programs without participation from the local people across the country. This was being done in the studios without going to the field to analyse the needs of the people. It was a top-down/one-way mode of communication considered detrimental to development: As Schramm (1964) rightly observed:

"An efficient use of the mass media for development...should be as local as possible. Their programs should originate...from their audiences...and means should be available for the audience to report back to the media."¹⁰⁴

Development communication scholars content that communication for development should be in response to the needs and interests of the beneficiaries. In other words, communication should be a bottom up, two way affair. MBC did not adopt this strategy. Even the UDF during its campaign in 1994, linked the widespread poverty in the country to the fact that the MCP government had maintained a one-way, top-down management development system in which the needs, hopes, ambitions and aspirations of the people were not recognised and their voices respected or given an appropriate place in the grassroots development discourse.¹⁰⁵ What it means is that problems were being identified and solutions offered at the higher levels of the government. MBC was then given the task of channeling the information down to the local communities. This was clearly in line with the dominant thinking at the time that 'considered participatory or autonomous development by local communities as being slow, inefficient and more often than not, unlikely.'¹⁰⁶ This tendency and practice has however continued and data from both the analyses of development programs and interviews with development journalists support this point. For example, the content analysis of *Uchemere wa Bwino* shows that all the sources in the programs were experts. Furthermore, in response to a question on the influence of listeners over content, the Assistant Controller of Programs wrote: "None. We dictate. But I wish the listeners had a stake." In a different interview, the Controller of Programs, Mr. Geoffrey Kazembe said: "A producer comes up with an

¹⁰⁴. Schramm, W. 1964, p 123

¹⁰⁵. Chinsinga 2003, p: 198

¹⁰⁶. Melkote, 1991, p. 58

idea and follows it up. It's like we throw ideas and messages at the people. But the whole approach will change. We will start using our research department more so that our programs are people-centered." In essence, this suggests that the ordinary people are still not given a voice in issues that affect their lives, which is clearly against current calls for a bottom up, participatory approach to development communication.

Apart from the top-down nature of development programming and emphasis on culture, the period between 1964 and the early 1990's centered around 'stenographic reporting' - which results from lack of analysis or contextual linkages.¹⁰⁷ This distinct characteristic of journalism during Dr. Banda's era continued to be a problem during the 10 years Dr. Bakili Muluzi was president and continues to be a problem today. During Dr. Banda's era, news centered on his speeches; come Dr. Bakili, news centered on political speeches, political infighting and personalities behind the 1993 and subsequent coming in of multiparty politics. The political infighting and speeches still take centre stage today without any critical and in-depth analysis of the issues and possible effects on national development. Although reporting on development means reporting on government, the nation today has over 100 NGO's operating in the development sector but few or no development news items are critical of NGO's projects, policies or plans. Investigative reporting is not just about government, but rather all things that affect the well being of people as well as relevance to national development. Analysis, contextual background and investigative-style reporting was not there during Dr. Banda's era, Muluzi's era and data from interviews shows that there still may not be such a tradition or practice. In response to a question only 30% felt it was important to be an adversary

¹⁰⁷. Article 19 p. 15

of the government and the NGO's by constantly being skeptical of their plans and activities.

These findings suggest that the tradition in Malawi is to report things on the surface without much research, in-depth and investigative-style reporting advocated by development scholars. The tradition in development broadcasting at the station is also to avoid critical, controversial issues just like 20 years ago and to focus on culture, health and agriculture - which can best be described as a change without transformation.

7.2.3 Development Journalism Training/Education

Shah (1990) observes that if old journalism traditions are an obstacle to producing development content, then new reporting methods may be required. Formal journalism and development communication training in universities and private institutions would be ideal to teach investigative, analytical and participatory reporting strategies required for reporting on and writing about development issues. Journalism training and education is however, a new phenomenon in Malawi. The country had no journalism schools in the 30 years that Dr. Banda was in power. Today, there are over 10 formal Journalism training institutions including The Malawi Institute of Journalism and the University of Malawi's Polytechnic, whose first degree intake was in 1999. However, few schools offer degree programs. Those that purely focus on Development Communication are even fewer. Currently only Chancellor College has a program on Media for Development. The Polytechnic has just reviewed its Journalism curriculum but is yet to implement it and its not clear to what extent this new syllabus focuses on

development communication. The first curriculum offered a course in Development Journalism in Second Year.

However, Shah's observation that most journalism teaching institutions are characterised by problems such as poor facilities and insufficient staff is just as true for Malawian universities as it is for India. Without adequate staff, facilities and equipment it is difficult to teach development reporting and writing, let alone teach the special skills required for production of effective development programs. The problem may be worse for Malawi because of lack of formal development communication training institutions as well as limited access to institutions of higher learning that offer such courses such as Chancellor College. The consequences of such a situation are production of half-baked development content, which is also laced with pro-literate terms and concepts.

7.3 Communicator-Level Factors

Bessette (2003) emphasises that participation is central to the task of defining and achieving development. 'Participatory development communication - which can be practiced through development broadcasting - is the most powerful tool to facilitate this process.'¹⁰⁸ Travelling to the rural areas to talk to the masses is the only best way of ensuring participation. Even the early African broadcasters at CABS realised the relevance of visiting rural areas:

"Teams of broadcasters were constantly being sent out to rural areas to collect folklore, memo rates, narratives and above all, music and songs for

¹⁰⁸. Bessete, 2004, p.1

incorporating into CABS's programs. Broadcasting thus became very much a two-way affair. One contemporary estimate is that over 80% of CABS's broadcast material consisted of music and stories from recording tours across the federation."¹⁰⁹

Although organisations need to ensure that producers have adequate facilities to perform their duties effectively, the producers themselves should be willing to travel and stay in the rural areas for days or weeks collecting as well as interacting with the rural masses to produce content which is people centered and reflective of the people's needs and aspirations. However, data from interviews shows that 50% of the development producers and journalists interviewed regard working out of station for days or weeks a boring and risky affair. 20% consider it extremely exciting and 30% exciting. This might mean that half the staff would go to the field, do a quick program and report back as soon as possible, as The Controller of Programs, Geoffrey Kazembe rightly observed: "The problem is content. It leaves a lot to be desired. The content is not quite satisfactory because some people do the work just to fulfill a function. They do not probe enough. The programs are shallow based."¹¹⁰

Generally, such programs cannot meet the high quality criteria required for development programs to be effective. This lack of willingness to travel and stay in the rural areas for days or weeks is also clearly seen in the lack of depth and critical analysis of development projects and activities by NGO's as well as the government, which can only be done if the producers compared claims for success with actual work

¹⁰⁹. Kerr, 1998, p. 118

¹¹⁰. Geoffrey Kazembe, Controller of Programs Radio 1. (Interview on 20/07/07).

and interactions with the masses on the ground. Sometimes rural folk open up after seeing a person for a couple of days, thus a day or two in the rural areas would afford the producer an opportunity to interact with the masses and come up with high quality programs in terms of reflecting the needs and interests of the target group.

Another important issue the study has revealed is the level of education for most of the development producers and reporters at the station. Although willingness to stay for days in the rural areas may be behind the poor quality of programs at MBC, inadequate training might also be a contributing factor. Only 10% of the respondents have a degree. 90% did three month's journalism training or possess a diploma in education. Only 40% of the respondents have undergone training in development communication or a related field such as business or economics reporting. This clearly comes in line with what Kariithi (1995) said:

"African journalists lack the 'Scientific Outlook' necessary for objective reporting of development and other issues. No wonder they report events rather than processes of the events, and personalities rather than the issues raised by these personalities...Many African journalists do not understand...issues well enough to effectively report on them to facilitate national development."

Lack of training has profound effects on the quality and subsequent impact of a development program. A poor quality program would definitely lack appeal and the producer would less likely appreciate the value and relevance of ensuring participation. The analysis of the cultural, health and self-help programs has revealed several weaknesses including lack of summaries and repetitions, appeals such as music and slogans or sign-tune that reflect the focus of the program. The programs also lack

proper endings that make listeners reflect upon the main message or issue. Most of the programs are also laced with figures, measurements and complex concepts, which the producers probably deemed proper and ideal for the target group and a medium that caters to the human ear. These problems may be due to lack of training in development communication and appreciation of the nature of radio as a medium of communication.

Lack of training is also supported by responses to some of the interview questions. 60% of the respondents defined development in purely infrastructural terms and yet development is an all-encompassing word which involves notions of freedom, equitable income distribution, political openness, access to education as well as media diversity. The first step to achieving it is people's conviction that they can change things for the better and the refusal to be permanent victims of any situation. The role of communication in this endeavor is to facilitate participation, which as seen in this paper, clearly lacks in MBC's development programs, which predominantly featured experts as sources in content intended to benefit the rural people.

7.4 Organisational-Level Factors

A discussion of the context within which development content is produced will be incomplete without an analysis of the role of the organisation itself. Apart from motivating staff, organisations need to have good policies as well as provide enough resources to ensure production of quality programs. These factors are discussed below.

Generally, organisations need to have policies or guidelines stipulating what ought to be done and how it ought to be done. Although MBC has been promoting national development since 1964, the organisation's policy is silent on the specific role the station should play in that endeavor. It is also silent on the communication approach that should be taken. According to the Controller of Programs, the policy only stipulates that MBC is a public broadcaster and that it shall provide balanced coverage to facilitate national development without having a specific clause on the same like in its recently adopted Gender Policy in which clause 4.4, titled 'Gender Programming,' says: "MBC will operate to assist in the creation of gender conscious society through delivery of gender sensitive radio programs and news bulletins...To mainstream gender with the general programming of MBC"¹¹¹ According to interviews with three senior staff, MBC's editorial policy has just been revised to incorporate gender and HIV/AIDS clauses but none of them seemed willing to elucidate as regards the role of the station in facilitating development. Actually, 50% of the respondents pointed out that MBC has a policy but they have never seen it. The other 50% wrote nothing. Further interviews with senior staff, however, revealed that the station has a policy but it is not adhered to. None was willing to provide a copy. Basically, results of this study show that MBC staff do not work based on any policy formulation but rather on the basis of tradition which includes loyalty to the government of the day. It is very unlikely that the just adopted gender policy will make a difference by influencing producers and reporters to use equal men and women as sources in the programs and bulletins.

¹¹¹. MBC Gender Policy, August 2007.

Apart From policies, organisations need to provide sufficient resources as well as motivate staff to produce quality and effective development messages. The data from interviews clearly showed that MBC does not score highly on this practice. 100% of the respondents expressed concern over lack of resources for recording machines and transport to collect material in the rural areas, as one respondent remarked:

“Development programs need a lot of travelling to get information from the horse’s mouth and witness development activities taking place...such trips are minimal with the financial hiccups.”

Lack of resources is clearly having a negative impact on the production of effective development messages. Data from the interviews also support this contention. 80% of the respondents are not satisfied with the programs that they produce, citing financial constraints, lack of Internet facilities and recording gadgets as major obstacles for effective production of development messages. 60% of the respondents are also not satisfied with the time allotted to development content, arguing that Malawi is a poor country and as such it is important to give enough time to development issues.

Lack of resources may be blamed on lack of funding. Funding is therefore one of the serious factors curtailing efforts to develop effective development programs at MBC.

7.5 Conclusion

This chapter has examined societal, communicator and organisational level factors in an attempt to explain MBC’s development content characteristics. The data shows that the

characteristics of development content, such as focus on culture, complex treatment of messages and concepts, lack of appeals and slogans etc cannot be attributed only or mainly to a single factor or set of factors. Most likely, as Shah (1990) also observed when he analysed India's Three Daily Newspapers, the societal, communicator and organisational factors interact within and between the levels to affect production of effective development programs.

This chapter and the study as a whole has revealed that MBC still operates under the principles and tradition set by the MCP as far as content and characteristics of development messages and programs is concerned. The major difference is that president Banda provided all the necessary resources for MBC to operate effectively which included establishing a unique identity as African radio, free of the colonial past and to provide quality programs to promote change. Motivated by the prevailing theoretical belief of the time, these programs were, however, produced in a top-down, traditional linear journalism approach, which did much to render them ineffective.

In spite of evolution in development theory and understanding of development, the MBC still initiates programming content in a top-down manner. However, this has combined with lack of willingness by producers to travel to the rural areas for days or weeks, inadequate training and financial constraints or lack of funding, which were not there during Kamuzu's era. All these factors combine to curtail production of high quality development programs to promote national development.

Chapter Eight

CONCLUSION

8.1 Introduction

One of two trends in the field of development communication is an approach that favors large-scale actions and relies on the mass media. Development broadcasting falls within this trend and radio is the most appropriate tool for this work in the rural areas where it is often the only channel of mass communication available. This study has examined societal, communicator and organisational level factors that affect production of effective development messages for broadcasting using radio, MBC Radio1 to be specific. Among other research questions, the study critically interrogated MBC's programming schedule to determine the quantity of development content in relation to other programs such as entertainment and religion. The study then narrowed down to focus on a sample of health, self-help and cultural programs to appreciate the impact of these factors on content. This chapter summarises the crucial observations made in the thesis and attempts to offer recommendations to make radio a more effective tool in facilitating change.

Melkote (1991) argued that even if governments in the developing world like Malawi actively promote a pro-development content in the mass media, it has to be viewed from the perspective of the total time allotted to such content. This study has revealed that there is generally less time covering pro-development programs at MBC Radio 1, which is one of the major reasons why development programs have failed to bear meaningful fruits over the years. Only 32% of the total broadcasting output a week covers

development oriented programs. Most of this content is cultural oriented with critical areas such as health and agriculture getting 7 and 5 hours a week respectively. MBC staff produce most of this content but unfortunately, the station still follows a top-down approach in development communication by attaching more weight and importance to experts as determinants of the people's needs and desires. All the programs on health are produced in line with the Ministry of Health's policy to tackle specific challenges dogging the health sector such as high maternal and infant mortality rates. But the ministry, like MBC, follows a top-down approach in development communication and even disregards views of the masses when pre-testing development messages if the health experts think otherwise.

Theoretically, therefore, the health programs are produced based on the understanding that the rural masses are not better judges of what would benefit them. Problems are identified and solutions offered by producers and health experts without any input from the local communities. This is clearly in line with the prescriptive, top-down nature of the modernization paradigm which considers participatory development as slow and inefficient. In other words, the health programs are not produced in line with current theoretical propositions of the *problem-solving* model or Guy Bessette's idea of participation whose emphasis is on the local people as stakeholders in development planning and implementation.

This study critically analysed one episode of *Uchembere wa Bwino* 'Safe Motherhood', whose objective is to reduce maternal and infant mortality rates. The producers decide

on the issues and type of advice the masses should be given and rely on experts to provide solutions to the assumed problems affecting people. Unfortunately, the masses have their own way of viewing things. For example, the FGD participants believe that exclusive breast-feeding is for town dwellers and people with money not the rural women whose own nutritional status is poor. This shows that there is less impact on the ground, which may be attributed to lack of needs assessment. In addition, *Uchembere wa Bwino* is laced with complicated words and concepts, which only health experts can understand. Concepts such as *weight for height* and *F75* merely confuse the layperson instead of imparting health instructions. The producers also do nothing to have such concepts and words clarified for the poor and illiterate people to understand.

Tili pa Ntchito is the only program that may be considered people-centered. This program gives communities across the country a channel to voice out their problems. The communities in question engage in dialogue to prioritise problems affecting their lives and determine the right solutions, which may include moulding bricks or construction of a bridge. The radio programs link these communities with policy makers, NGOs or other communities who may be inspired to defy odds and also do something to improve their lives. This is clearly in line with Guy Bessette's idea of participation because the producers are not the ones who determine content but the communities in question. The producers merely provide a channel for the community to voice out its initiatives and problems. In this case the local communities become stakeholders or key players in shaping their future, which is an essential component in Bessette's concept of participation. On this basis, therefore, it may be argued that only

Tili pa Ntchito comes close to *Kanthu Nkhama* as a participatory program among the programs analysed in this thesis except for the fact that *Tili pa Ntchito* comes out once a week - takes about 0.1 % of total broadcasting output - and lacks descriptive language, summaries and a slogan or sign-tune which reflects the focus of the program.

Lack of summaries and appeals such as songs and descriptive language are also the problems that dog cultural programs analysed in this study. Cultural programs have also done very little to engage the masses in dialogue but they are presented in a simple and straightforward manner unlike programs such as *Uchembere wa Bwino*.

In summary, therefore, the critical analysis of MBC's programming schedule and the health, self-help and cultural programs show that: *'Poor quality and quantity of radio development programs affect the effectiveness of MBC's development messages.'* Clearly, MBC's development programs have been less effective not only because of use of Chichewa in a nation with several other languages, but also due to the poor quality of the messages. The pro-development instructions and messages are needlessly complex for the ordinary rural folk and lack allure to keep listeners interested enough to come in line with radio as a medium that caters to the human ear. This is outside the fact that MBC and other development agents, such as Ministry of Health consider participatory or autonomous development unlikely hence produce programs that tend to be prescriptive and top-down without any input from the intended beneficiaries. MBC as well as the Ministry of Health also lack communication policies which would impact on how the programs are produced and delivered.

8.2 Recommendations

The poor quantity and quality i.e. relevance, design and treatment of the development messages is due to a combination of factors emanating from societal, communicator, and organisational level strands. These factors include political interference, whose basis can largely be attributed to loopholes in the Communications Act (1998); lack of funding, adequate training and motivation for staff to travel to the rural areas to stay for days or weeks; and development broadcasting and journalism traditions such as the belief and reliance on experts as sources and better judges of what would benefit the masses which results in a top-down approach in development planning and implementation. It is from these observations that the recommendations outlined below should be understood.

8.2.1 Recommendation One: Need for Training

This study has revealed that most of the staff at MBC is ill equipped for the task of promoting national development. Only one of the 10 development producers this researcher spoke to has a degree. Three underwent a course in a development related field such as economics. This may explain why some of the programs lack appeal and are laced with complicated concepts and phrases. Therefore, the first important element would be to equip the producers with the relevant skills and expertise to produce high quality development programs, which are not only relevant and appealing, but also in line with the nature of radio as a medium that caters to the ear.

8.2.3 Recommendation Two: Need for Funding

Lack of funding is a serious factor curtailing efforts to develop effective development radio programs in Malawi. As a public broadcaster, MBC is supposed to get funds from government but the past 10 years have been financially hectic for the station due to its bias in favor of the government of the day. Due to inadequate funding, MBC has been commercializing most of its programs to generate income. This has meant less time for development programming in favor of content that appeals to the corporate world.

Lack of funding is thus not only effecting production of effective and quality development programs but also forcing MBC to switch its attention from content that foster national development to one that appeals to advertisers. Therefore, MBC needs to appeal to development organizations and agencies such as UNICEF, UNFPA, and World Vision among others to sponsor specific development programs. This would help MBC to come up with content that promote national development and not sell products.

8.2.3 Recommendation Three: Coverage of Minority Languages

Coverage of minority cultures and languages is a very crucial issue, which should not be underestimated. This study has proved that some people in Nsanje cannot understand or speak Chichewa fluently. The Titemwane Radio Listening Club in Rumphi also failed to converse in Chichewa throughout the *Kanthu Nkhama* episode analysed in this thesis. Clearly, if development programs are to bear any meaningful fruits, it is absolutely necessary to cater to minority languages and cultures. MBC has already diversified by producing programs in *Yao, Tumbuka, Sena, Tonga, Lomwe* and *Nkhonde*

yet the majority of the programs are still in Chichewa especially crucial programs such as those on health and agriculture. It would also be necessary for institutions such as the DBU to let people produce programs in a language ideal to them.

8.2.4 Recommendation Four: Need for Policy Changes

MBC and the Ministry of Health need policy guidelines that clearly support a bottom-up and participatory approach to development programming like is the case with the Ministry of Agriculture. If the Ministry of Health had a policy on communication it would impact on health programs aired by MBC. Currently, MBC has no policy and producers operate in line with the whims of the government of the day. There is also need for the Civil Society and other stakeholders to lobby Members of Parliament to amend the Communications Act (1998) so that MBC is free from political interference. An end to political interference would make MBC staff more creative and critical of government policies and plans to promote national development.

8.2.4 Recommendation Five: Need for Needs Assessment

Melkote (1991) argues that it is possible for development workers and communication practitioners to work within structural constraints and help reduce widening socio-economic and status gaps between people. This means that MBC can still facilitate national development without any changes to the structural constraints such as the legal framework. This can be done by assessing the needs of the lower socio-economic status audiences and tailoring messages to the needs and capacities of these groups and overcoming pro-literacy bias – *Uchembere Wabwino* for example.

This study has revealed that MBC does not use its research department to come up with development programs that are research or needs based. Thus if MBC staff is to produce effective development messages, there is need to use the research department more and then use effective strategies such as those outlined above. Once this is done, it may be possible to achieve beneficial social outcomes.

8.3 Conclusion

This study has examined societal, communicator and organisational level factors that affect production of effective development messages at MBC. These factors include lack of a communication policy; political interference; inadequate training and motivation for staff to travel to the rural areas; and development broadcasting and journalism traditions such as the belief and reliance on experts as better judges of what would benefit the masses. These factors probably combine to make production of effective development programs a cumbersome affair. But this researcher believes that radio remains to date the most effective tool to facilitate change in developing countries. With policies that support a bottom-up participatory approach, coupled with increased funding, training and skills for development producers, MBC can still become a citizen's media by producing content based on the problems, issues and aspirations of local men and women.

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APPENDIX

FACTORS AFFECTING DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMING AT MALAWI BROADCASTING CORPORATION (MBC RADIO 1)

Questionnaire for Development Journalists

Instructions

You are required to tick where appropriate and explain where necessary

1. Sex: Male ☐ Female ☐

2. Age group? a) 15-24 ☐
 b) 25-34 ☐
 c) 35-44 ☐
 d) 45 + ☐

SOCIETAL AND COMMUNICATOR LEVEL FACTORS

3. What is the last grade of school you completed?

- a) Primary Education ☐
b) Secondary Education ☐
c) Tertiary Education

(Specify).....

4. What is the highest course in formal media that you have attended? ☐

- a) No formal journalism training ☐
b) Attended three months journalism course ☐
c) Completed diploma course (specify).....
d) Completed degree course (specify).....
e) Other (specify).....

5. Did the course you attended contain any material on development reporting/
communication? If yes what kind of material? (Explain) if no go to question 7.
.....

6. How long have you been working for MBC?
7. What is your position?
8. What do you understand by the term development?

.....

9. What about communication for development?

.....

10. Do you focus on any material to promote national development? *(This question is merely there to confirm what literature says about MBC's role in facilitating development)* a) Yes ☐ No ☐ *(If no proceed to question 14)*

11. What are the sources or actors used in your programs or stories and why?

- a) Subject experts
- b) Government officials
- c) Rural people concerned
- d) Urban people
- e) Other (specify).....

Reasons.....

.....

12. What is the normal focus of your development programs/stories i.e. urban, rural, regional or international? *(Should provide reasons)*

.....

13. How do you feel about working out of station for days or weeks?

- a) Exciting
- b) Extremely exciting
- c) Boring
- d) Risky
- e) Other (specify).....

14. As a development producer are you satisfied with the programs that you produce? ☐ b) No ☐

a) Yes

Explain.....

15. Do you think it is important to carry out investigative programs/ stories pertaining to government and development NGO's claims for success in development projects?

a) Important ☐

b) Extremely important ☐

c) Not important ☐

d) Other (specify).....

16. Is it important to be an adversary of the government by constantly being skeptical of government actions and policies?

a) Important ☐

b) Extremely important ☐

c) Not important ☐

d) Other (specify).....

17. What is the influence of government over content taking into account the fact that it is a major source of revenue for MBC in terms of subvention and adverts?

18. How has the influx of radio stations impacted on MBC's programming content?

19. What is the influence of listeners over content?

ORGANISATIONAL LEVEL FACTORS

20. Does MBC have an editorial policy? (If no go to question 27)

Yes ☐ No ☐

21. Are you aware of its contents? (If no ask why and proceed to question 23).

22. What does the policy say about MBC's role in promoting national development?

23. Do you adhere to your editorial policy?

24. Has this policy changed over the last 15-20 years? (If yes how)

25. Are you satisfied with the policy especially where development issues are concerned?

.....
26. If no, what are your suggestions as a development producer?
.....

27. Are you satisfied with the amount of time allotted to development content?

a) Yes ☐

b) No ☐ (If no why)

Reasons.....

28. Are you given adequate support to carry out quality development programs/stories?

a) Yes ☐

b) No ☐ (Explain)

.....
29. Are there any other problems that affect your work as a development producer?
.....

END OF QUESTIONNAIRE

Note: This questionnaire is for development journalists.

FACTORS AEFECTING DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMING AT MALAWI
BROADCASTING CORPORATION (MBC RADIO 1)

Questionnaire for Development Journalism Educators

Instructions

You are required to tick where appropriate and explain where necessary

1. Sex: Male ☐ Female ☐
2. Age group? a) 15-24 ☐
 b) 25-34 ☐
 c) 35-44 ☐
 d) 45 +
3. What is the highest course in Development Communication that you have attended?
a) No formal Development Communication/Journalism training ☐
b) Attended three months Development Communication/Journalism course
c) Completed diploma course (specify).....
d) Completed degree course (specify).....
e) Other (specify).....
4. Are you satisfied with the development content broadcast at MBC?
 a) Yes ☐ b) No ☐
- Explain.....
5. Does your institution have the capacity – equipment, staff size etc - to equip aspiring
development journalists with the necessary skills to tackle development issues
effectively? a) Yes ☐ b) No ☐
Explain (Give examples of facilities, equipment etc).....
7. What mechanisms have you put in place to produce quality development journalists?
.....
8. What are some of the problems that affect your endeavor to produce quality
development journalists?

END OF QUESTIONNAIRE