human mind is able to plan, and as in all other domains of our life only a well-planned undertaking promises the expected success, not only operationally but also financially. In order not to jeopardise operational success, its results (the data) should be protected like a treasure which is irretrievable once lost.

At this time and place we cannot mention all the problems which might arise in planning or operating a computer project. We would however be glad to share our knowledge, and advise all those planning computer projects, or offer addresses – as far as available – of skilled people in their area who might be of assistance.

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Readers' Forum

Since our edition 1/92 we have in mind to dedicate the last page as a corner for readers' reactions, proposals and forum to share information as well as experiences with other interested people in relation to subjects treated in the previous issue or, of course, any subject or other topic which you might want to share with us and other readers.

We would like to invite you now to send us any information in relation with good or bad experiences with computers, which could be of use and assistance to our readers worldwide. Primarily, experienced people who are disposed to share their knowledge with others on the move into the field are invited. Their addresses will not only be published in one of the forthcoming issues but they could also be given direct to project applicants from their region to get support on the spot. Thank you!

The Challenges Facing Christian Radio in Africa Today

ECUMENICAL CONSULTATION ON AFRICAN CHRISTIAN COMMUNICATIONS
LIMURU, KENYA (5-8 APRIL 1992)

Les premiers moments de démocratisation et de multipartisme sur le continent africain ont été accompagnés par un "printemps de la presse écrite" (voir le n° 2/1991 du CAMECO "Information Bulletin"). Mais aujourd'hui, c'est sur le terrain de la radio que se préparent des changements importants dans le "paysage communicationnel africain".

Le monopole de la radio/TV nationale est battu en brèche. Non seulement par des projets de radios nouvelles qu'elles soient privées, locales, communautaires, rurales ou éducatives, mais aussi sous la pression d'organismes internationaux tels que le Fonds Monétaires International ou la Banque Mondiale dont les exigences poussent les gouvernements à la privatisation des structures para-étatiques, dont la radio-télévision.

Ces développements dans le secteur de la radio et de la télévision auront des incidences considérables, notamment pour les Eglises.

Déjà dans certains pays, autour des stations nationales de radio et de télévision "en voie de privatisation" il est de plus en plus question de faire payer – ou de réduire drastiquement – les temps d'antenne jusqu'ici concédés pour les émissions religieuses. Auto-financement et rentabilité commerciale obligent !

Quant aux perspectives de dérégulation de l'audiovisuel elles provoquent une réelle explosion de projets de radio : c'est ainsi qu'en quelques mois, le CAMECO

a eu connaissance de plus de vingt-cinq projets de stations FM au sein de la seule Eglise catholique en Afrique.

Indice supplémentaire : la multiplication de colloques, séminaires, rencontres, symposiums... consacrés à la radio en Afrique. Dans ce contexte, avant de revenir plus longuement sans nul doute sur ce sujet dans un prochain numéro de notre "Information Bulletin", il nous semble opportun et utile de publier ci-après le communiqué final d'une consultation oecuménique qui s'est tenue en avril dernier à Limuru, Kenya, à l'initiative du Conseil National des Eglises du Kenya, avec le soutien de l'Association Mondiale pour la Communication Chrétienne de Londres (WACC, Grande-Bretagne) et de l'Evangelisches Missionswerk d'Hambourg (Allemagne).

Document

PREAMBLE

Africa is at the crossroads. Among the challenges is the rapid change toward "democracy" and "multi-partyism" in many African countries. One of those challenges is the use of Christian media, including radio, which have influenced and continue to influence the way people live and what they believe.

The Consultation was convened with the recognition that in Africa, radio is the most widely used mass medium, surpassing all other media in terms of audience accessibility and use in sub-Saharan Africa. How the Church uses radio in the new African context was the focus of the Consultation, which met at Limuru, Kenya, 5-8 April 1992 under the theme "Consultation on Challenges Facing Radio in Africa Today".

During the course of the Consultation, which drew nearly 50 Christian communicators from 16 countries across Africa, participants wrestled with such questions as: Does the Church move with the times electronically? Since radio is a very influential media tool that our people use each day, what messages do they hear? Is the voice of the Church heard among all other voices?

Consultation participants shared their radio work within the context of the political economic, social and religious situations in their respective countries.

Most reported that they worked within a "context of control" by governments. In many if not most places, all broadcast outlets are government owned and controlled. Typically, the stations give preference to Christian broadcasters whose programming reflects their belief that the Gospel addresses only the spiritual person and does not involve itself with the physical person, and especially avoids any "political invol-

vement" and thus any criticism of the government.

Christian broadcasters who believe the Gospel is for the salvation of the total person - and who, therefore, speak to the social and political issues of the day - encounter censorship, discrimination and even persecution from most African governments.

Often, the airtime available to these mainline denominational and ecumenical programmers is extremely limited and in some cases non-existent, and the programmes are subject to censorship. When time is available, the cost is often prohibitive.

It is an increasing phenomenon that Churches must pay for air time. In many of our countries, what used to be government broadcasting services have been turned into profit-making ventures which are supposed to be self-financing without getting any subsidy from governments. Much of this metamorphosis is occuring in response to requirements imposed by the International Monetory Fund and World Bank that para-statal bodies be "privatised". This means that the services they render, including most air time, must be paid for. This has effected most Christian programmers (except, perhaps, the well-financed televangelists) who find themselves unable to afford the high costs of buying air time for Christian programmes. Conference participants noted that in some cases government retains effective control even of so-called "privatised" stations. Thus broadcasters face the double bind of censorship and prohibitive cost of broadcast time.

DEFINITION OF "THE GOSPEL"

Conference participants affirmed that "the Gospel" according to their understanding has to do with all facets of life. That in-

cludes the prophetic role of challenging governments and others whose policies and practices adversely affect God's people and the environment. The biblical case of Moses being sent to liberate God's people from the oppression of Pharaoh is a case in point. Jesus himself often spoke to the political powers of his day, seeing himself as fulfilling the prophetic mission of the Church "to bring liberty to captives, sight to the blind, and to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord". Participants further affirmed that their message of communications must be that which brings life to the people in all its fullness, in not only spiritual but also physical, social, psychological, political and economic dimensions.

CONFERENCE RECOMMENDATIONS

1.0 PLANNING

1.1 Conference participants noted serious inadequacies in Church planning for communication (radio broadcasting included). They affirmed planning as being of critical importance, to include human resource development, programming and financing. Meaningful feasibility research, including analysis of audience needs, is an essential component of planning.

1.2 Participants urged that African Christian communicators engage together in planning at the national, regional and continental levels, with an eye to coordinating their efforts, carrying out common communication projects and sharing of programming and personnel.

1.3 Use of radio should be part of an overall communication strategy that involves an integrated multi-media approach in order to maximise its effectiveness.

1.4 Participants were encouraged to establish a "talent bank" to facilitate sharing of staff, programming and expertise across Africa, so that stronger communications programmes can support struggling ones.

2.0 POLICY

2.1.0 Internal Policy

"Privatisation" under multi-partyism poses a major challenge to the Church, forcing it to offer more competitive communication programmes.

2.1.1 The Church must ensure that it has enough manpower and financial resources to carry out its communications programmes. Participants recognised that evangelism plus development plus money equals successful Christian broadcasting.

2.1.2 Communications should be part and parcel of the Church's agenda rather than an incidental element.

2.2.0 Public Policy

2.2.1 Churches should mobilise to ensure that radio stations operate in the public interest, advocating laws to that end. For example, stations should be required to provide a certain amount of free air time for public service programming, including religious programming. An independent board, including representatives of the Churches and other community organisations, should be charged with reviewing stations' performance in the public interest.

2.2.2 Churches must interpret – and, where lacking, propose – relevant clauses in their national constitutions which point out the right to free and fair communications via the airwaves, including radio. The policy should be geared to protect the Church from the requirements of the "market force economy" of our time, which has an agenda that conflicts with that of "broadcasting for community".

2.2.3 Participants noted the growing influence of Islam in many of their countries. They recommended that Churches make representations with governments for full freedom of religion for all persons, with government not favouring believers of one religion over those of another. Churches should also play their part in cultivating a culture of tolerance among persons of different faiths. Participants further recommended that Christian communicators help in educating fellow-Christians in their faith, thus strengthening Christian believers.

3.0 CONTENT

3.1 Christian radio broadcasts can play an important role in countering the market force-based "New World Order" dominant ideology that sees the human being first as a consumer, and that seeks to relegate the African to the periphery on the international scene. They are urged to give voice to a more human ideology that draws insights from Christianity and from their African cultural heritage.

3.2 Similarly, they are encouraged to counter the school of Christianity that views the Gospel as dealing only with the spiritual, and not with the social, physical, political and sociological aspects of life. Participants noted that this view is held by many African governments. We urge them to uphold instead the understanding that flows from their African heritage which sees religion as part of all life.

3.3 Christian radio broadcasters were urged to be selective in their use of overseas programmes, refusing to use those programmes offered by electronic media evangelists whose messages offer an interpretation of the Gospel that is anathema to the African reality. It was observed that much such programming is on air in Africa because it is able to afford expensive air time, and because it justifies the unjust status quo. Churches were called upon to urge stations that carry such programmes to discontinue them.

3.4 Participants urged Christian radio broadcasters to make a contribution toward the democratisation of their countries; e.g. by promoting education for participatory democracy and a "culture of tolerance" to counter the present "culture of violence and intimidation". This will help to create the realisation of a just society.

4.0 TRAINING

4.1 Training should be part of long-term planning which includes a well-designed strategy on how to harness and utilise human resources.

4.2 Communications training should be part of the curriculum at theological schools in order for Church personnel better to serve as resource persons for communications, including radio.

4.3 Training should not be just technical, nor should it be based primarily on Western paradigms, but rather should reflect our African cultures and identities. Along these lines, we encourage the development of training resources to foster such inculturated communications. This should include training of Church communicators within their indigenous milieu (i.e. dans leur contexte).

5.0 FINANCING

5.1 Churches should see fund-raising - including that conducted in local congregations - for communications as being among their priorities of mission. This will serve to indigenise funding of communications programmes.

5.2 Churches were challenged to initiate long-term business ventures that would help sustain their own communications programmes. Such business ventures should be in keeping with the heretofore espoused wholistic mission of the Church.

5.3 Churches should look at the option of securing appropriate corporate sponsorship for programmes. However, they are cautioned to examine potential sponsors on the dimension of their corporate social responsibility.

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Bookshelf ——

* Melkote, Srinivas R.: COMMUNICATION FOR DEVELOPMENT IN THE THIRD WORLD, THEORY AND PRACTICE. Sage Publications, New Delhi/ Newbury Park/ London, 1991, 292 p.

This book is an excellent introduction into the history of thoughts in the field of "development of development" especially with regard to the role of communication in development. Starting with the theories of development communications since World War II, the book shows the much too optimistic expectations regarding the importance of mass media and development in the sixties and seventies in order to come finally to new alternative models of development and communication. The author describes intensively how and why almost all top-down models in the communication area did not meet the targets which had been concocted by idealistic but too academic blueprint people. What remains are the grassroot-strategies where people directly are involved and can participate in the whole process of their own development. Not only scholars, but everyone who is working in the field of development and