



*Overall number of projects:*

The project support arm of our organization, EMW (Protestant Association of Churches and Missions in Germany), is not organized regionally but according to four fields of activity, one of which is communications. Hence the Communications Desk deals only with projects in media. We receive about 150-200 applications a year, some of which are sent on to us by sister organizations in the AG KED (Association of Church Development Services of the Protestant churches in Germany). The number of applications reaching us has increased markedly over the past three years, while our funds have been decreasing.

Struggles to attain some degree of sustainability are common to almost all regions, along with the need for capacity building and strategic planning. Community radio is a dominant vehicle of grassroots communication in Latin America, and it is becoming increasingly important in southern Africa as well. Additionally mobile video and film are being used more and more there as tools of education, community building and cultural awareness.

*Enough consideration given to media projects?*

Again, since we do not work regionally, our perspective is different from that of other "donor agencies". Certainly we see that the Churches – in our case predominantly Protestant Churches – often fail to recognize the need to enhance their communication skills, though communication forms the essence of the Churches' task. In addition, while church people may throw up their hands in horror at the effects of western media on the culture and morals of their society, they rarely embark on programmes of media awareness to enable their parishes to deal critically with the issues involved.

Another problem is that some donor agencies are prepared to support programmes of NGOs and Churches or ecumenical bodies in the fields of women, the environment, agriculture etc. but do not support communication projects, which may well be essential to all other programmes. Some project holders shape their programmes at least partly according to what the donor agencies will support - and in so doing they exclude communications.

*Role of media in evangelisation, development etc.*

EMW has been supporting communication projects for some 20 years now because it recognizes the role to be played by media initiatives in evangelisation, democratisation and development. In the eighties, for example, EMW supported initiatives set up to channel information about the struggle against apartheid in South Africa to the outside world, while at the same time ecumenical bodies were able to start skills-building projects in disadvantaged communities, albeit not



Source: FAO: DevCom Case Study No. 12

without difficulty. Today in many countries, women are assisted in gaining skills needed to play an active part in the media world and in lobbying for their rights using various means of communication.

The impact of a media project is not as easily demonstrated as that of a well-digging or tree-planting initiative. In Zimbabwe a women's mobile video project went into a village and used video as a tool in a process uniting the community – especially the women – to consider ways of solving their water problem. The villagers eventually gained the confidence to approach the local authorities, and after some time a well was dug near the village.

There is still a need for instruments to assist in measuring the impact of communication initiatives, and there is a great need for project holders in this field to build monitoring steps into their projects from the start. Do we know that a particular measure is really serving the needs of the target group adequately, for example? The more participatory a project is, the more input the target group gives continually.

*Successful/unsuccessful media projects:*

I would class the example just cited (women's video project in Zimbabwe) as a successful project. At the same time, the organization itself is struggling with questions of viability. How does one measure success? I think too of a weekly paper in Papua New Guinea which faces court cases due to its investigative journalism in cases of corruption. This may well be a measure of success!

Unsuccessful projects would include print media initiatives that cater only for a small literate minority, show photos of important males but hardly ever of women and rarely of anyone from the grassroots. Some Church papers are like this. They are wasting resources and opportunities. Or a project in radio or video which was not properly thought through – or has been inadequately advised on – its equipment needs, so that in the end the goals of the project cannot be fulfilled and the equipment sits idle. CAMECO can play a crucial role here in helping to guard against such failures.

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