

Survey Report:

Community Participation at Local and Community Radio Stations

An explorative study in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Pacific

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Summary

This report presents the main findings of three regional surveys on participation at local and community radio stations in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Pacific. The studies examined the involvement of the radio stations' communities in programming, management, ownership and funding. The results are not representative, but will provide a basis for further in-depth research and lead to a practice oriented publication.

Participation of the community is an important feature of almost all stations participating in the survey. In all regions, involvement in programming is strongest. Results show that “traditional” forms of listener involvement, such as participation in talk shows or call-in programmes – which can also be found at public or commercial radio stations – are most frequent in local/community radios. Participation in management, ownership and funding are less common.

Whereas the ranking of the various areas of participation is similar throughout the regions, differences exist in their importance: Latin American radios top participation in programming, but they are far below average in management and ownership. In Africa, the level of participation in financing and ownership is comparatively high. In Asia, participation in management plays a crucial role.

The majority of the stations generate revenue through multiple sources. In Latin America, advertising is of primary importance, in Africa, sale of airtime and funding by foreign and local donors are relatively significant, while in Asia, governmental support plays a bigger role than in the other two continents.

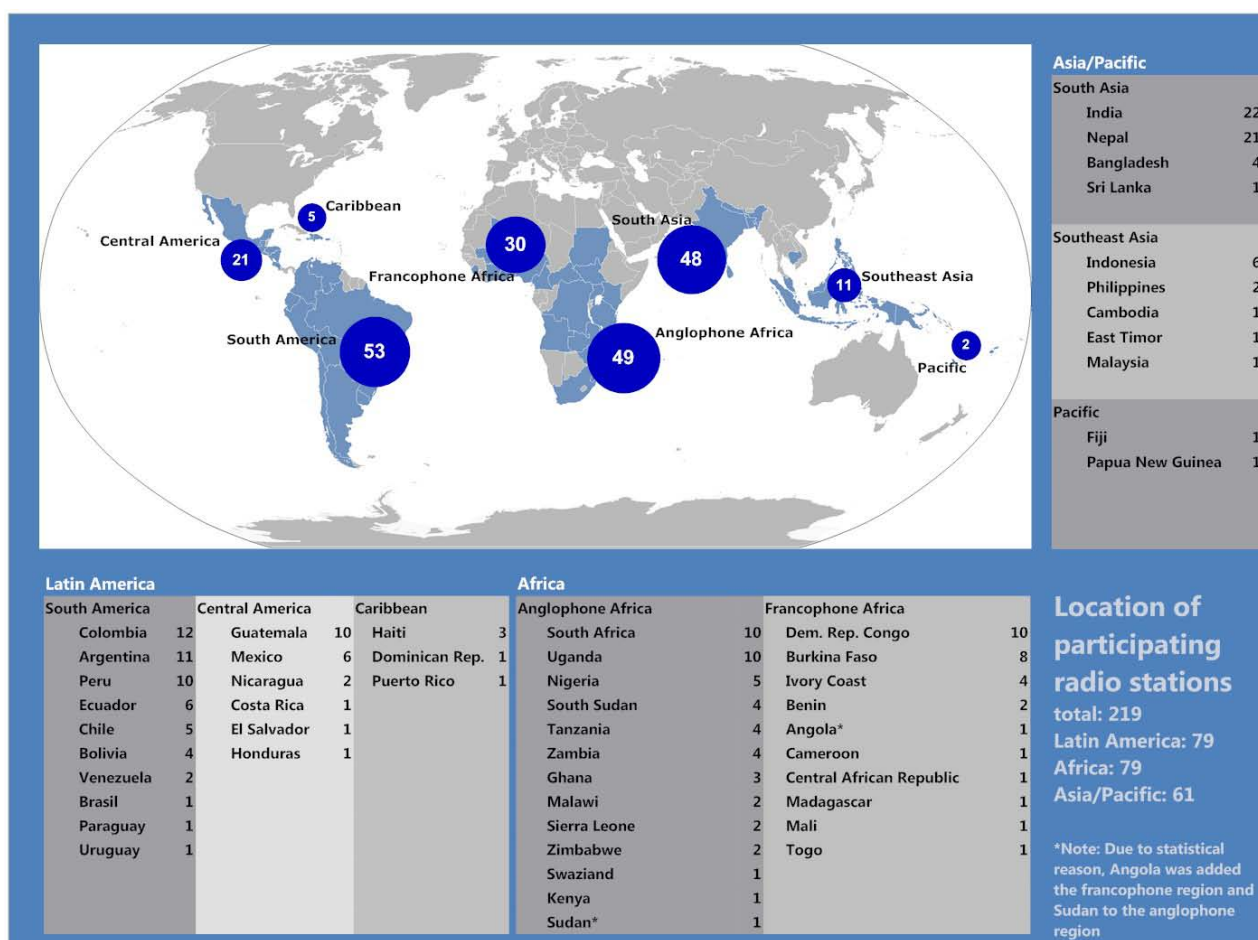
Lack of funds is seen as the most severe constraint for an increased participation of communities in all regions covered by the survey. An early involvement of the communities (in the planning and implementation phase) and their organisation in listeners' clubs are two factors that lead to stronger participation.

This report summarises the findings of three explorative surveys, conducted by CAMECO between September 2011 and January 2012, among radio stations in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Pacific.

An initial survey was conducted in English in Asia and anglophone Africa. It was followed by a French survey in francophone Africa and the Caribbean, and a Spanish survey in Latin America. The findings of this research should by no means be considered representative, but will serve as a basis for further in-depth research, leading to a practice oriented publication, as part of the CAMECO "Practice Series". Different models for integration of the communities in the stations' programming and management – including supervisory tasks, ownership and fundraising – will be documented.

To gather first data on community participation, a questionnaire was forwarded directly to approximately 850 stations. Additionally, it was shared among the members of the regional branches of the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC), the Asociación Latinoamericana de Educación Radiofónica (ALER), World Association of Christian Communication (WACC), as well as distributed by national community radio networks and media training institutions. Thus, the number of stations reached by the questionnaire cannot be precisely determined. However, it can be assumed that the different ways of distribution may have reached about 1,500 radio stations, of which 271 participated in the survey, 219 completed the entire questionnaire and were included in the assessment.

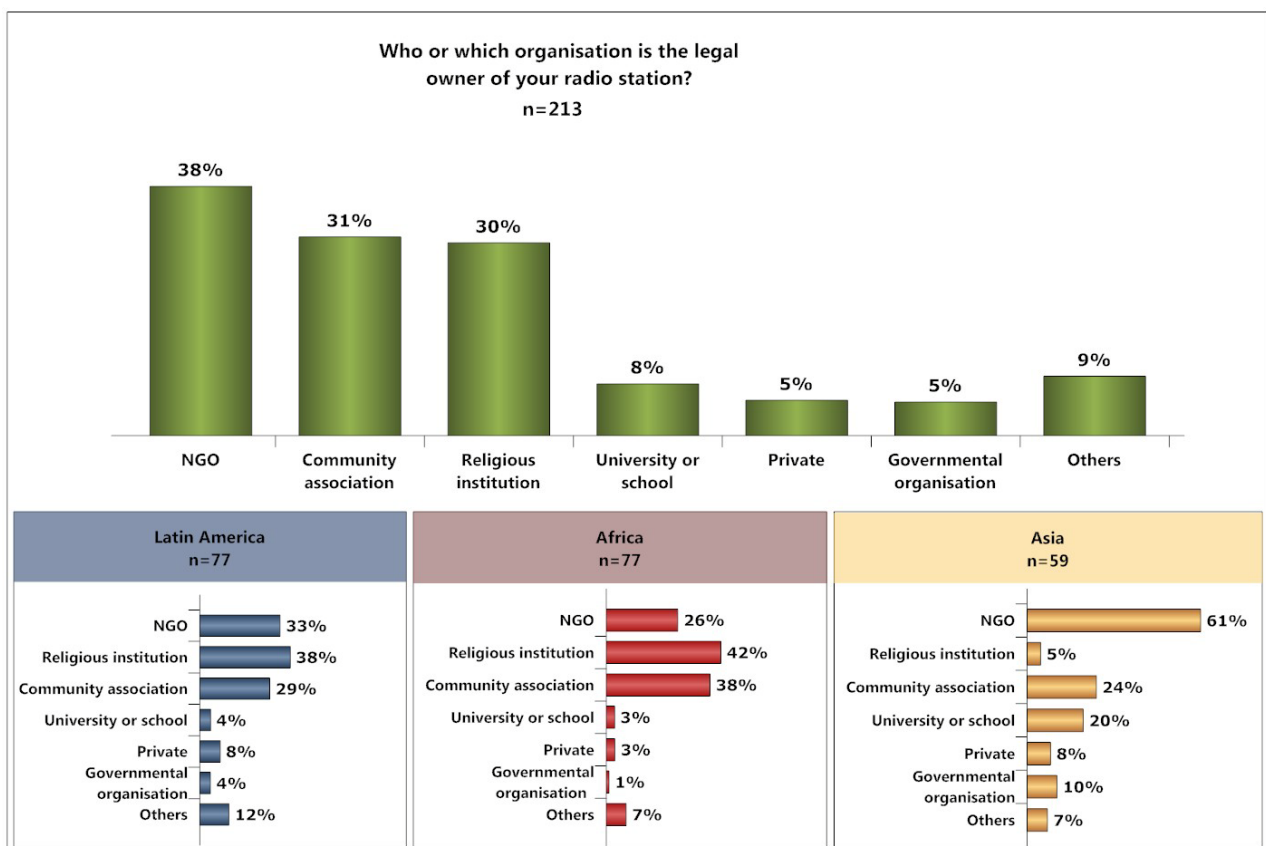
Seventy-nine responses (36%) came from Latin America, seventy-nine (36%) from Africa, fifty-nine (27%) from Asia and another two from the Pacific region. For a detailed overview, please see the graphic below.



Legal Ownership

Three types of legal ownership are most common among the radios that participated in the survey: 38% belong to an NGO, 31% of the stations are owned by a Community Association, and 30% are affiliated to a religious institution or church body. Other ownership models are less frequent. In Asia, radios affiliated to universities or schools (20%) or to governmental institutions (10%) are a notable characteristic; and the high presentation of NGO-owned stations is striking.

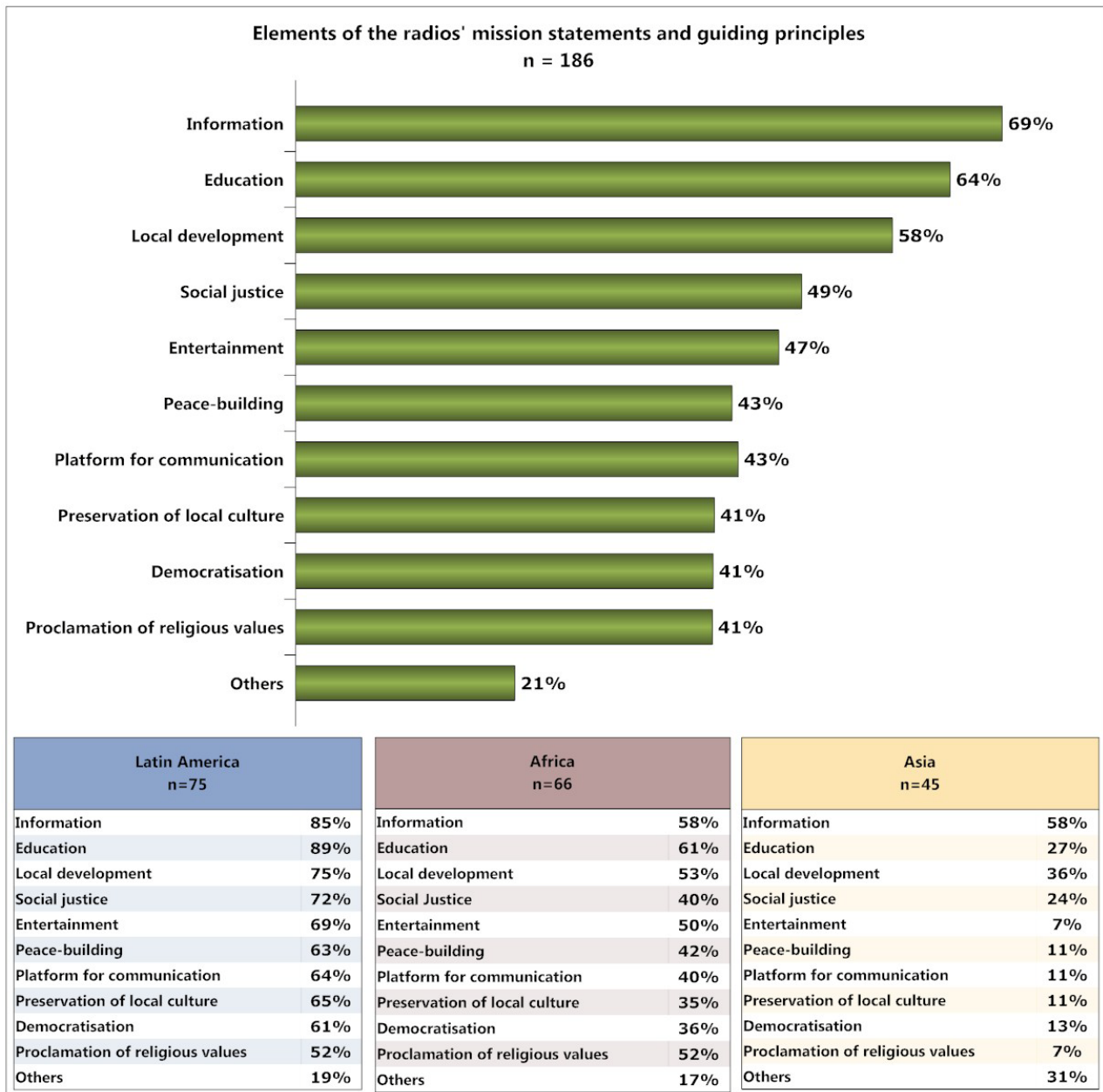
Several respondents chose two or more ownership options. It can be assumed that these stations either belong to several partners or that the multiple choices reflect an ambiguity in the owners' legal status (e.g., both non-governmental and community associations might be owners, or a non-governmental organisation with a religious affiliation). The "other" option was used by 9% of the respondents, often to state more precisely the type of organisation they had ticked before.



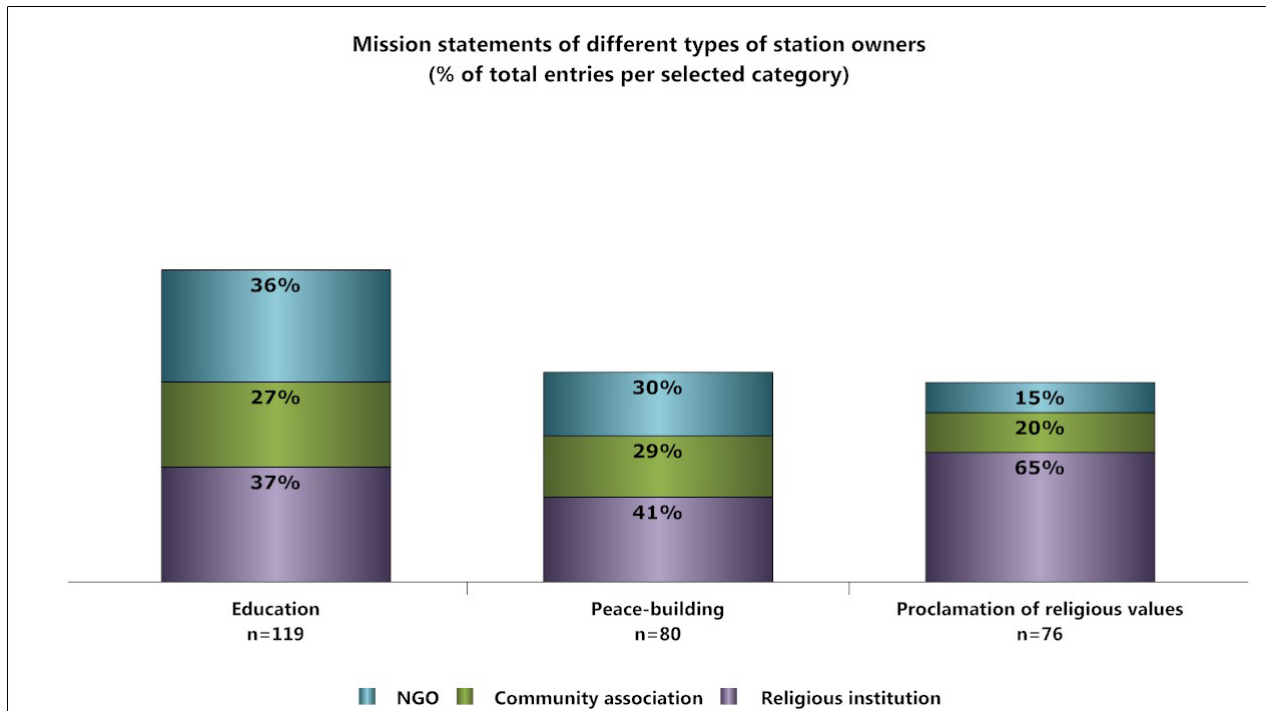
Stated Mission

The classical functions of the media, to inform (69%), to educate (64%) and – to a far lesser degree – to entertain (47%) or used in the service of local development (64%), could be regarded as the main mission of a vast majority of the stations. Almost half of them (between 41 and 43%) made an additional commitment towards societal issues, such as "advocacy for social justice", "contribution to peace-building", "providing a platform for communication", "preserving the local culture", "fostering democratisation" and the "proclamation of religious values".

The question on objectives was an open question in the initial English survey (sent to anglophone Africa and Asia), while the French and Spanish versions offered multiple choice options. Unsurprisingly, the number of options chosen was higher when ticked in the multiple choice version. Consequently, the results for different continents, as shown below, should only be analysed with regard to their relative value (ranking). Even so, the insignificance of entertainment as part of the mission among Asian stations is peculiar (7% in comparison to 69% in Latin America and 50% in Africa), while social justice seems to be far more important for Latin American stations, where it was named by 72% of the stations, compared to 40% in Africa, and 24% in Asia.



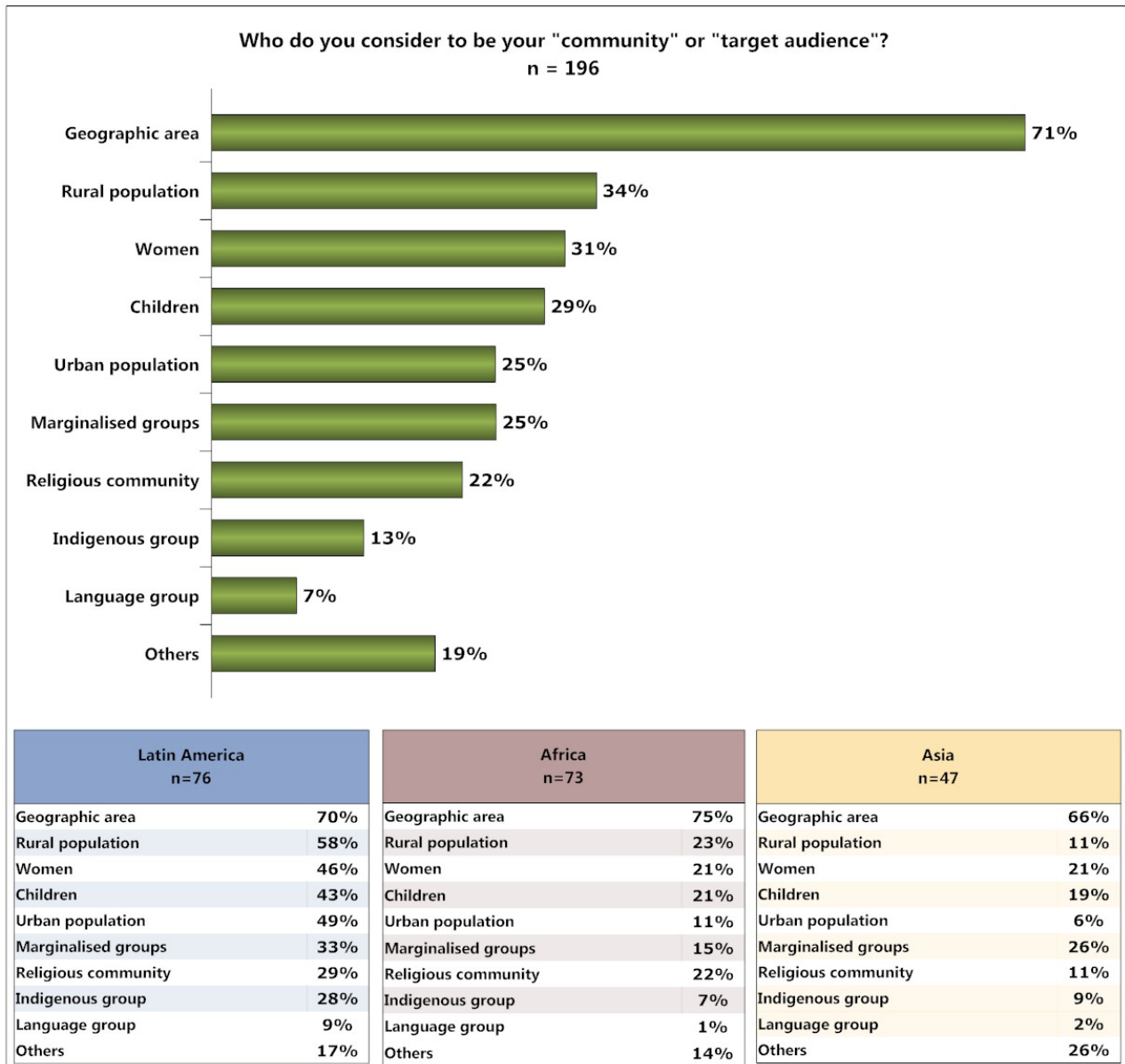
Most guiding principles are equally shared, no matter whether a radio is owned by a religious institution, an NGO or a community association. Only the objectives "proclamation of religious values" and "contribution to peace-building" shows a bias on stations owned by religious institutions (see figure below).



Specification of Communities / Target Audiences

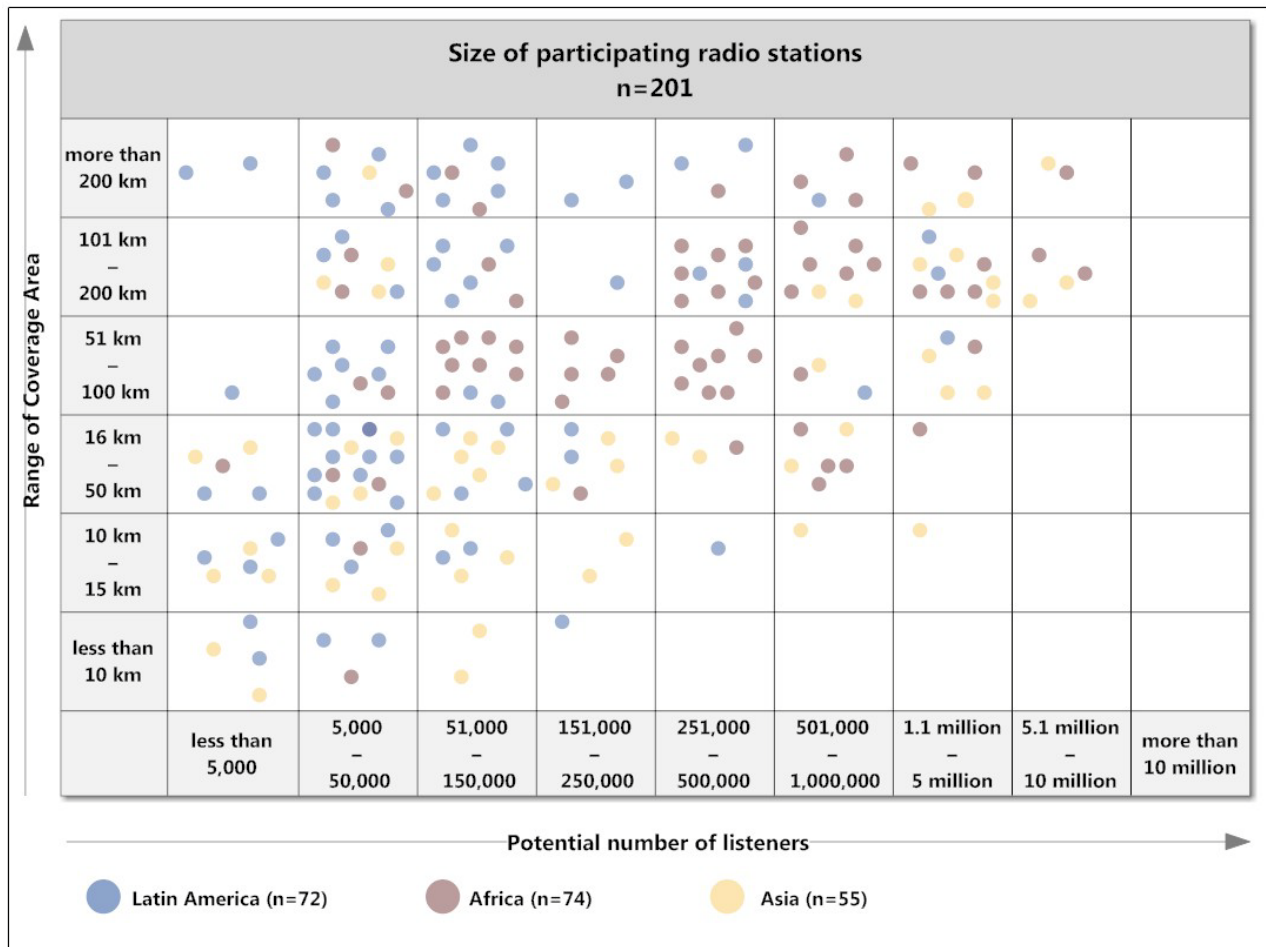
Most respondents defined their "community" by territorial or geographic characteristics (71%), e.g., region, city, coverage area, or as the rural (34%) or urban (25%) population. Women (31%) and children (29%) are named as a target community in almost one third of the answers. Some radios define their community by additional social criteria, for example as marginalised (25%), indigenous (13%) or language groups (7%). Even though 30% of the radio stations participating in the survey belong to religious or church institutions, only 22% consider a religious community as their specific audience. The 'other' answers, which made up to 19%, were used to name concrete groups like youth, students of distant learning, fishermen, immigrants, the peace-building community, etc. In general, there is a weak correlation between the stated mission of a radio and the perception of their communities or listeners.

As in the case of the mission statements, the results of the different regions are not qualified for a comparison, because the question was put as an open question in the English survey and formulated as a multiple choice question in the French and Spanish surveys. Nevertheless, some regional characteristics can be accentuated. About half of the stations in Latin America focus on an urban population (49%), compared to only 6% of the Asian radios and 11% of African stations. The representation of religious stations is weak in Asia (11%), compared to Latin America (29%) and Africa (22%). Indigenous groups are relatively important for the Latin American radios (28%) compared to African (7%) and Asian stations (9%).



Coverage Area and Number of Potential Listeners

The "average" station covers an area between 16 km and 100 km, and reaches between 5,000 and 150,000 listeners. But the stations which participated in the survey vary greatly concerning their coverage area and potential number of listeners. While the smallest radios have a range between 10 and 50 km and a potential audience of fewer than 5,000 listeners, the transmitters of the 6 biggest stations reach a radius of more than 200 km with a potential audience between 5 and 10 million listeners.

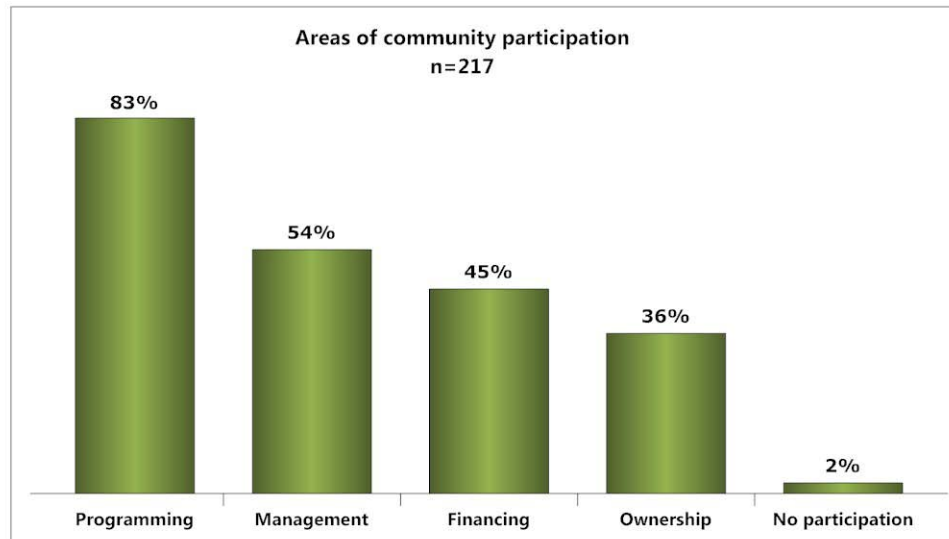


On average, Latin American stations have a smaller potential audience than radios in the other continents. While African stations tend to cover larger areas, the size of their potential audience is comparable to Asian stations with weaker transmitters.

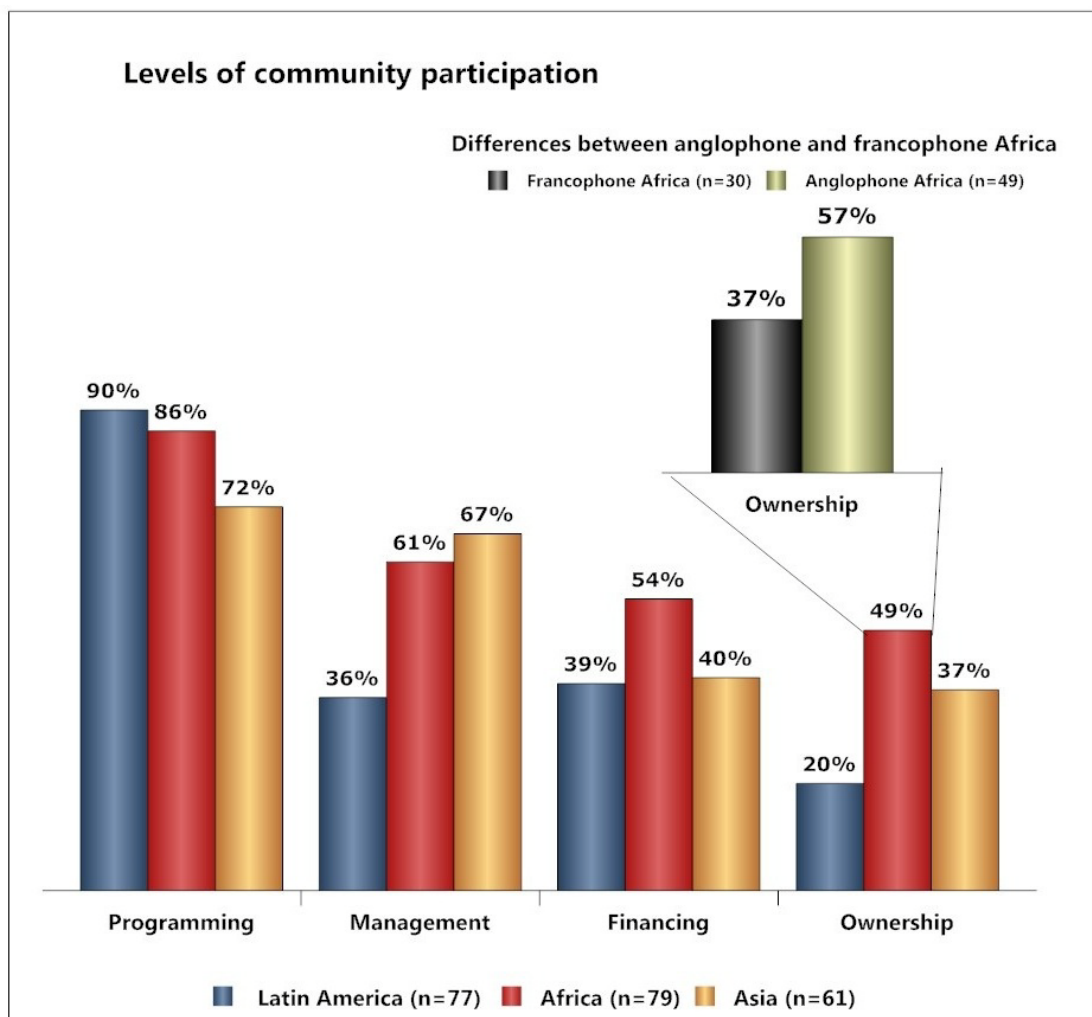
General Level of Participation

Predictably, nearly all stations (98%) which completed the questionnaire consider participation as a crucial element of their station's identity. As said before, these results are not considered representative. It can rather be assumed that "non-participatory" stations did not take part in the survey.

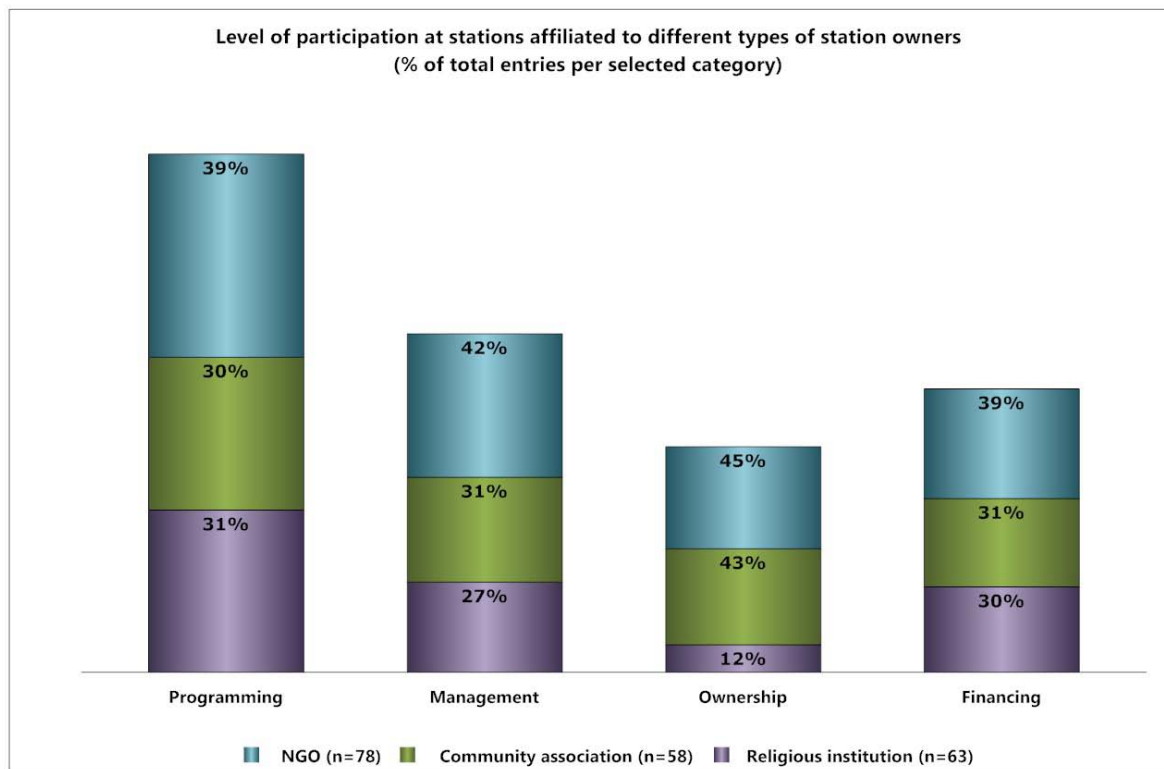
At the majority of stations, participation is strongest in programming (83%). Still a significant number of stations (54%) consider the participation of their communities in management or supervisory bodies as crucial. Financing was named by 45% while about a third of the stations incorporate their community in the ownership of the station (36%).



Whereas the ranking of the different areas of participation is similar in all regions, big differences exist in their importance: Latin America tops participation in programming (90%), but is far below average in management and ownership. In Africa, the level of participation in financing (54%) and ownership (49%) is relatively high; participation in ownership is more common in anglophone countries. In Asia, participation in management plays a crucial role (69%).



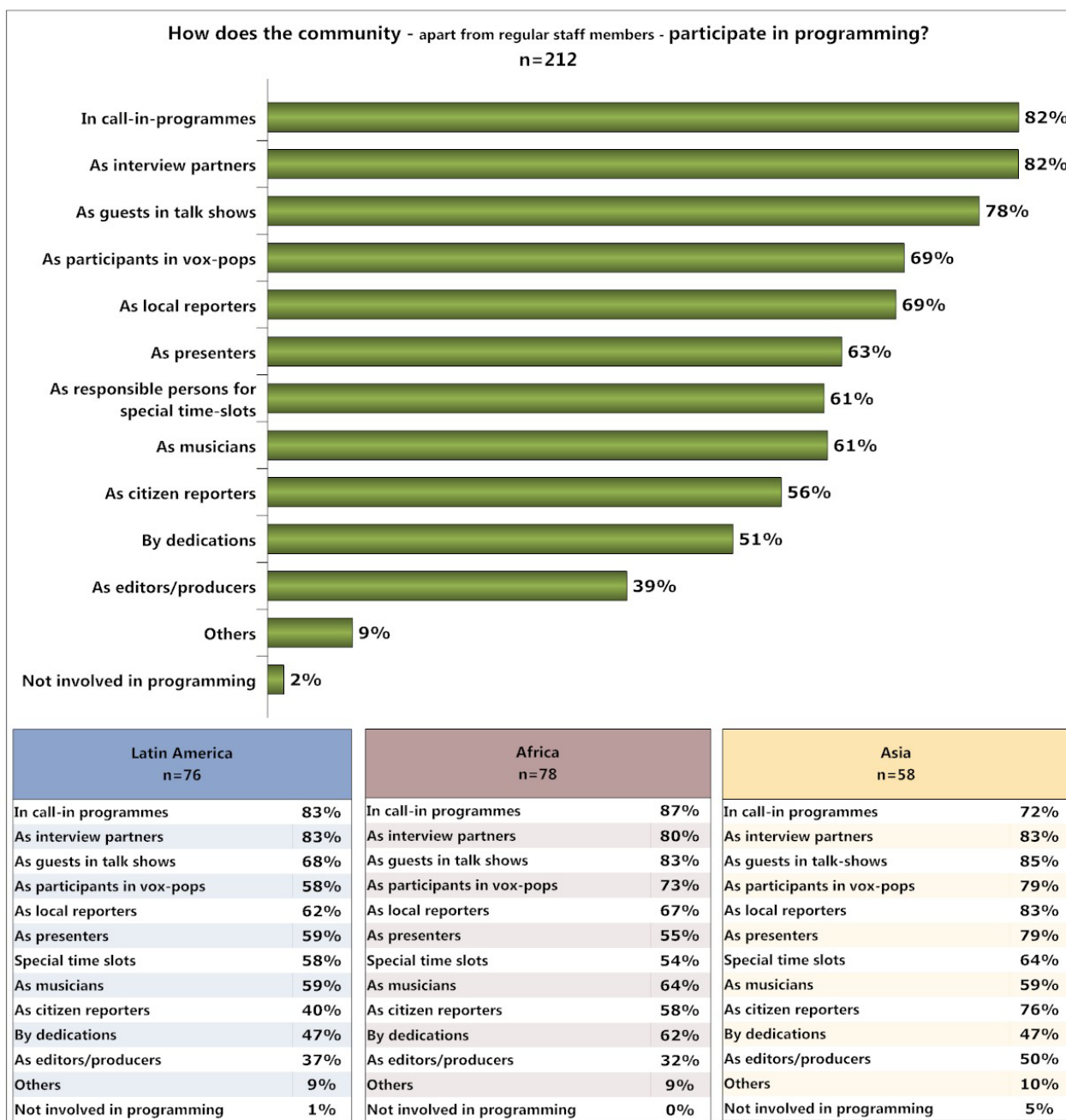
The type of station owner does not influence the strengths and levels of community participation, with one exception: Stations affiliated to a religious or church institution have lower participatory ownership structures (see graphic below).



Community Participation and Programming

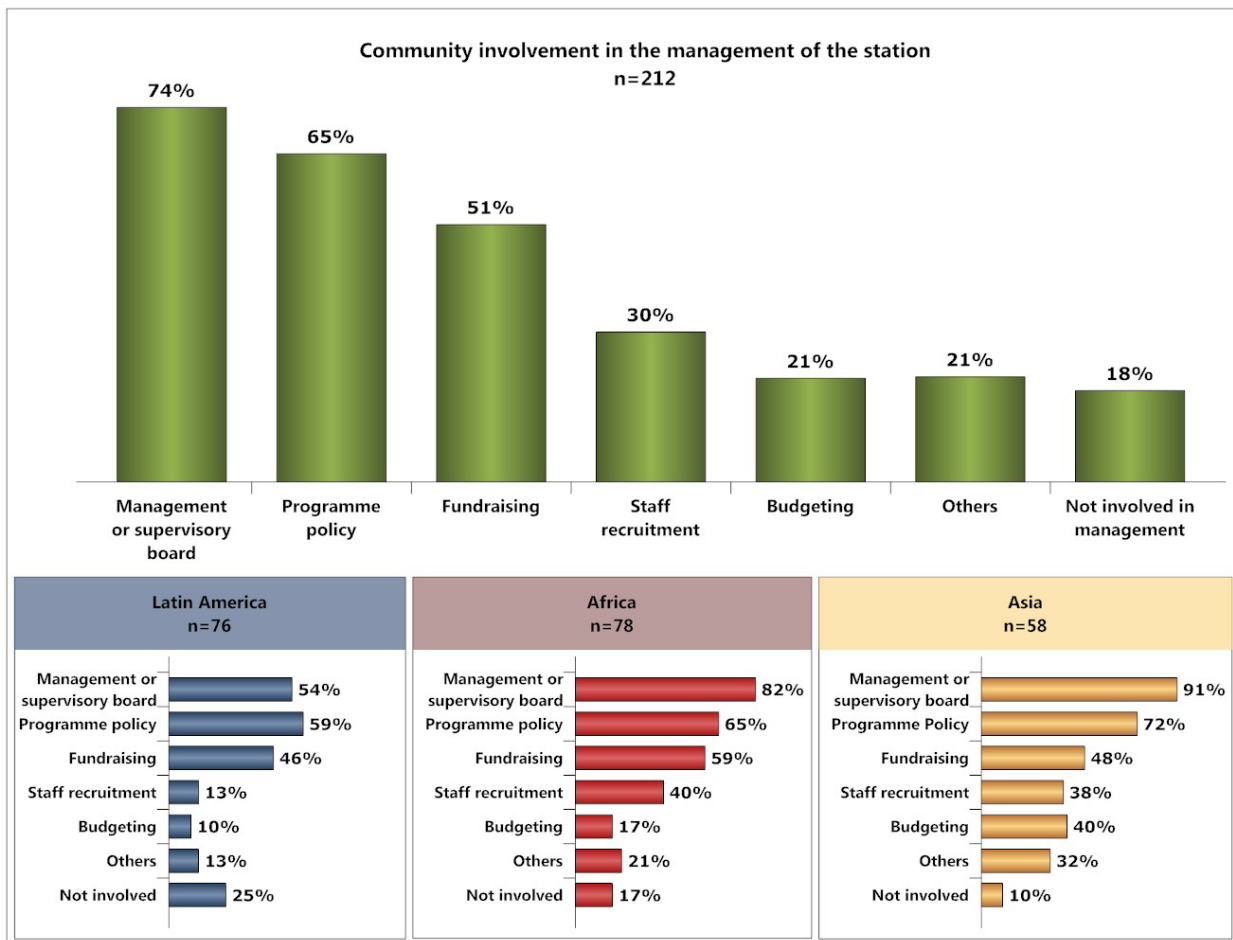
As mentioned earlier, programming is the field with the strongest community involvement. The results show that traditional forms of listener participation – which can also be found at most public or commercial radio stations – are also most frequent in local/community radios: Community members participate in call-in programmes, are interview partners (both 82%), guests in talk shows (78%), or recorded for vox-pops (69%), and, less often, announce dedications (51%).

The number of radio stations where community members play a greater role in production, presentation or journalism is still rather high: Community members function as local reporters (69%), work as presenters (63%), are responsible for special programmes/time slots (61%), and are musicians (61%), citizen reporters (56%) or editors/producers (39%). The number of radio stations where community members bear a higher responsibility for programme contents, i.e., as editors, producers or presenters, is generally higher in Asia (see graphic below) than in Africa or Latin America.



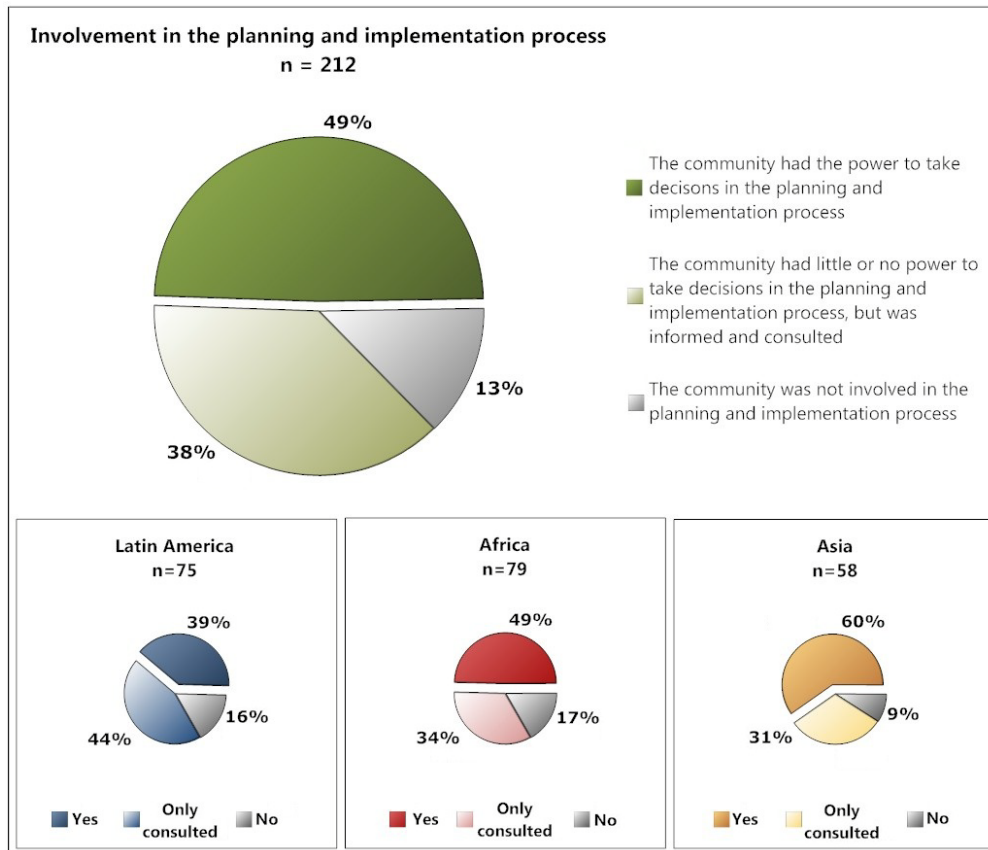
Community Participation in Management

Decision making on the programme policy (65%) and on fundraising (51%) are the most important dimensions of community participation in management. Less relevant is the inclusion of communities in decisions on staff recruitment (30%) and budgeting (21%), especially in Latin America (13% involve the community in decisions on staff recruitment and 10% in budgeting). In Asia, communities are more often represented on supervisory and management boards, and a higher number of stations involve their communities in decisions about programme policy and budgeting issues. African stations seem to include their community slightly more often in staff recruitment (anglophone Africa 43%/francophone Africa 33%) and fundraising (anglophone Africa 56%/francophone Africa 63%).

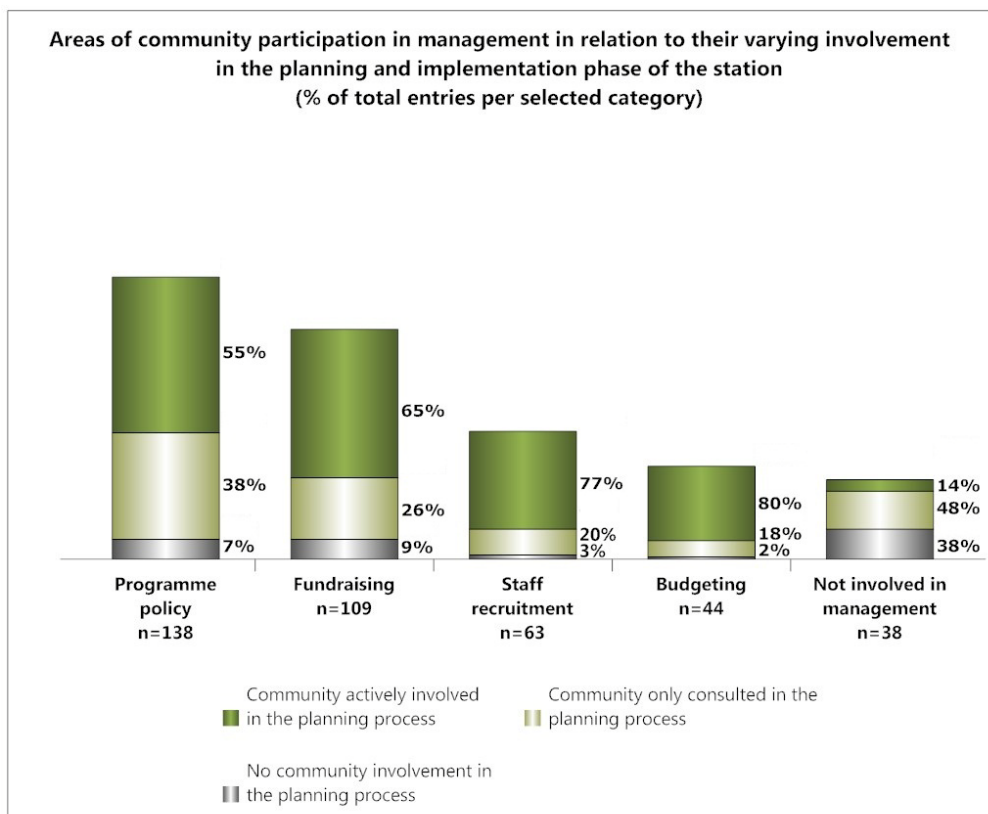


At most radio stations (86%), the community was, to some extent, already involved in the planning and implementation process, during which 48% of the communities had the power to take decisions, another 38% were at least informed and consulted. Only 13% of the survey participants stated that the community was not involved in the planning and implementation phase of the radio.

Asian stations – generally showing a stronger inclusion of communities in management – also involved their communities more often in the planning and implementation process of the station (60% in Asia, 49% in Africa and 38% in Latin America).



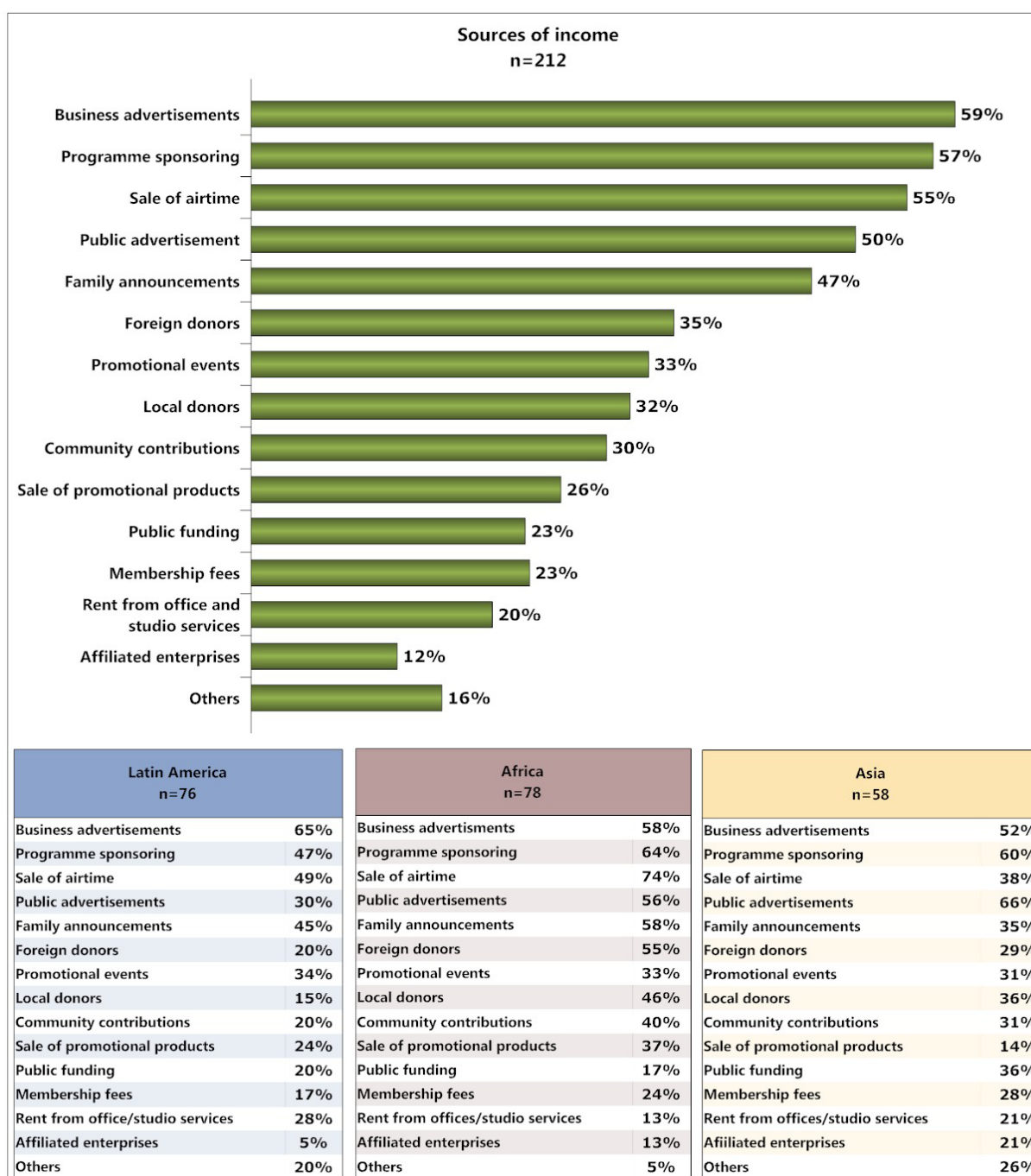
Where the community had the power to take decisions in the planning and implementation phase, participation in programming and management is kept at a much higher level in the duration of the stations (see figure below):



Sources of Income

Most stations generate income through multiple sources. On average, participants of the survey ticked four different revenues, a mixture of commercial earnings supplemented by additional income from donations.

The five revenues most often mentioned are business advertisements (59%), programme sponsoring (57%), and sale of airtime (55%), public advertisements (50%) and family announcements (47%). Donations were raised from foreign donors (35%), local donors (32%), community contributions (30%) and public funding (24%). Some stations diversify their income through promotional events (33%), the sale of promotional products (24%), membership fees (23%), rent from offices and studio services (20%) or income from affiliated enterprises such as internet cafés or copy shops (12%).



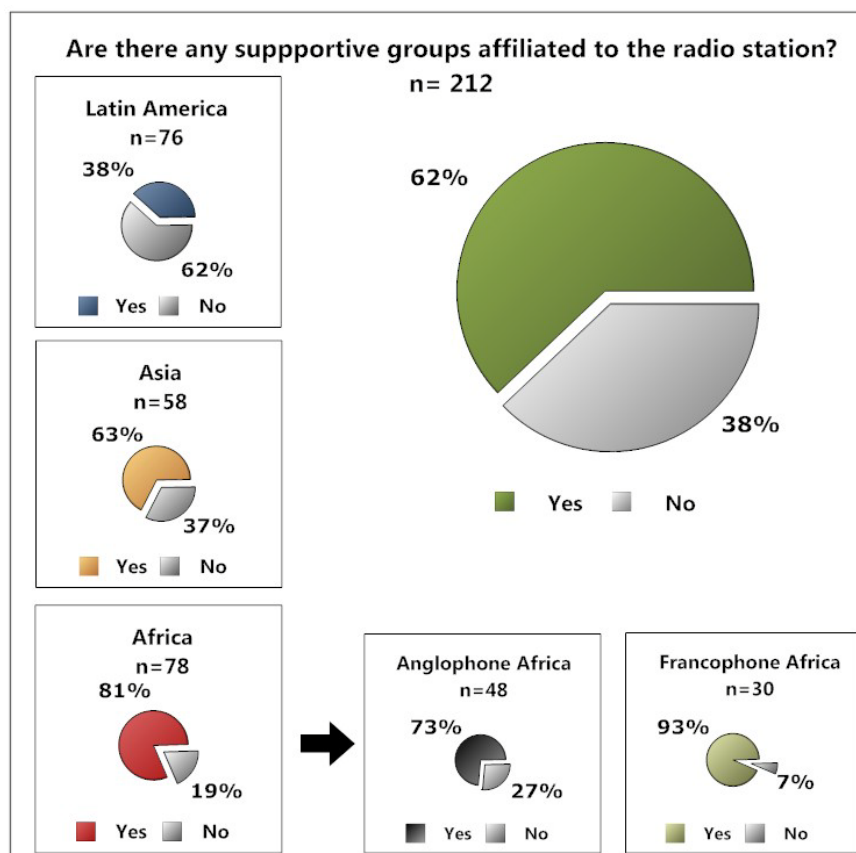
The composition of the overall income varies between the continents. In Latin America, commercial financing models prevail and the reliance on donor grants is lower than in Africa and Asia. Contributions from the communities are less frequent.

In contrast, African stations profit exceptionally from local and international NGOs, either directly through donations (55% from foreign donors and 46% from local donors) or indirectly through programme sponsoring (64%) and sale of airtime (74%). The importance of direct community contributions (40%) is also characteristic for the African radios that participated in the survey.

In Asia, regional and national government bodies play a considerable role in the financing of the radio stations. Public advertisement (66%) is the most important single source of income, and more than one third of stations mention public funding (36%).

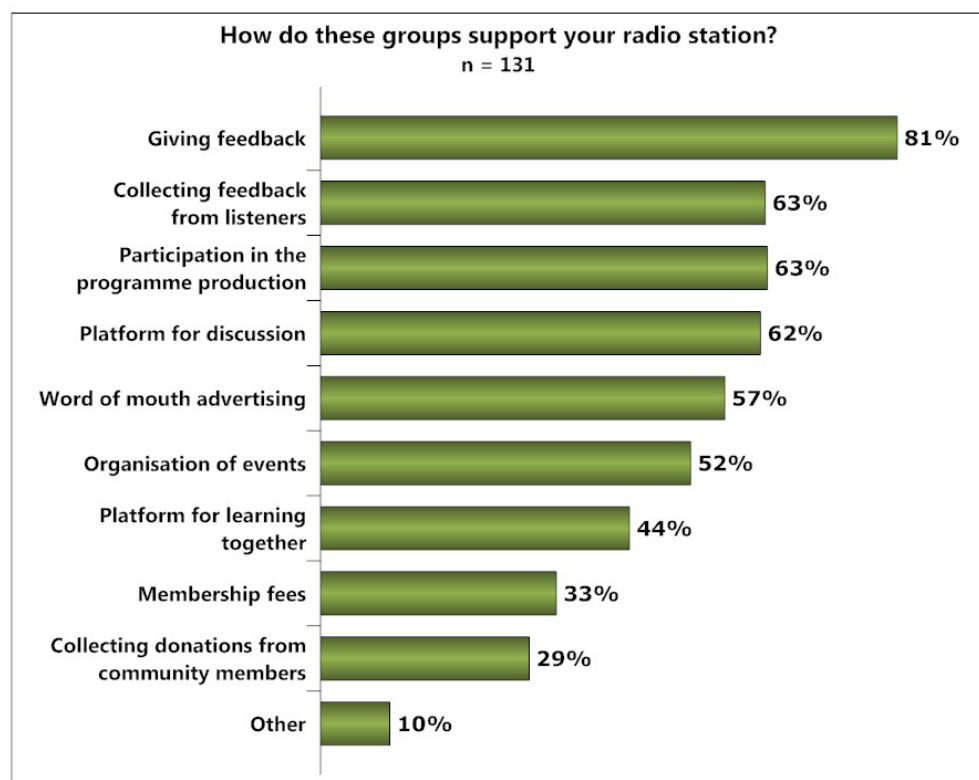
Involvement of supportive groups

Nearly two thirds (62%) of the radios participating in the survey are supported by affiliated groups such as listeners' clubs, fan clubs or "friends of the station". But there are significant differences between the continents: In Africa, 81% of the stations have established such clubs (in francophone Africa even 93% of respondents), whereas listeners' clubs seem to be less prevalent in Asia (63%) and least common in Latin America (38%).

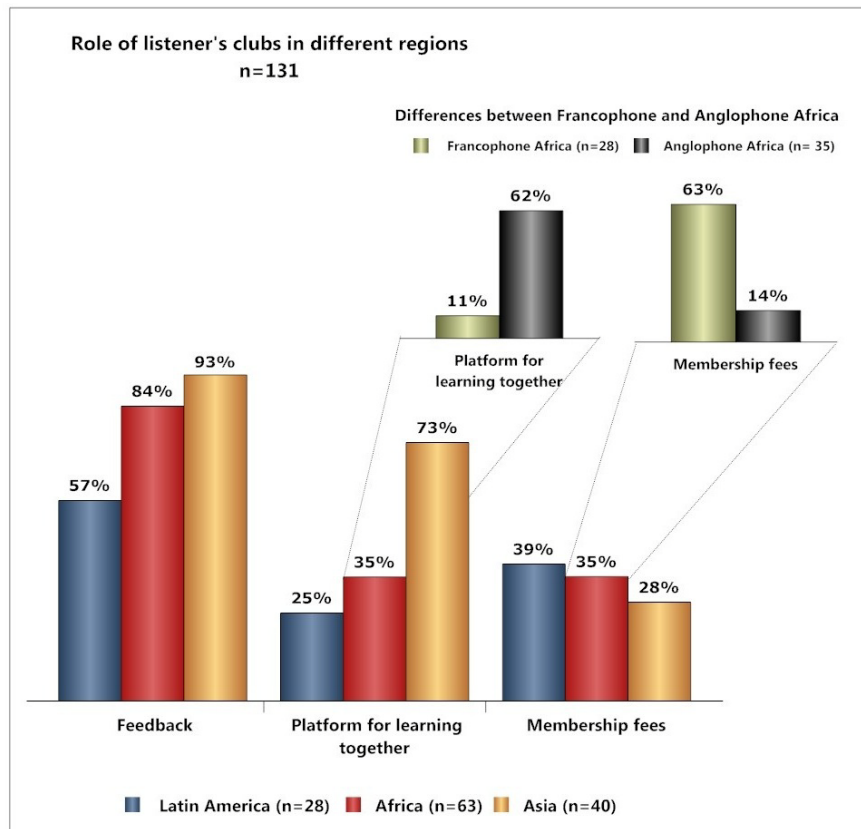


Clubs affiliated to stations vary substantially in number and size. Five (Latin American) stations established only one or two listeners' clubs with less than twenty members; other radios, mostly African, have formed more than ten supportive groups amounting to more than five hundred members in total.

Listeners' clubs mainly support their radio stations by providing direct feedback (81%) and by collecting and sharing feedback from other listeners (63%). They participate in the programme production of 63% of the radios. They are regarded as a platform for discussion (62%) and shared learning (44%). Furthermore, members of listeners' clubs support their radio by word of mouth advertising (57%) and help in the organisation of events (52%). At 33% of the stations, listeners' clubs contribute to the budget through membership fees or by collecting donations from community members (29%).

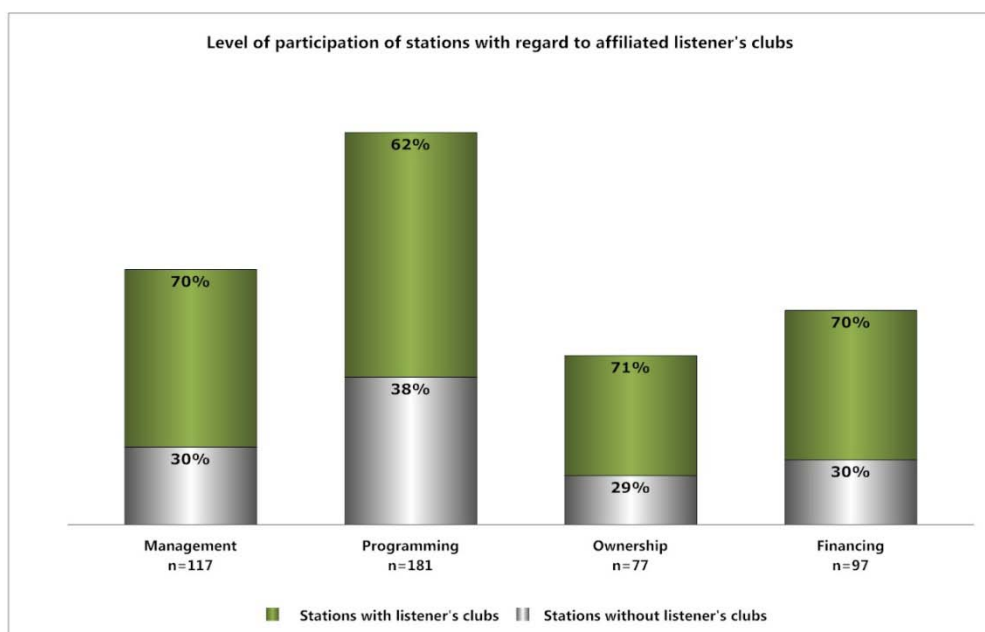


The feedback function of listeners' clubs and their role as a platform for discussion/mutual learning, are more prominent in Asia than in the other regions.



In francophone Africa, listeners' clubs play a considerable role in the financing of the station by collecting membership fees (63%) or donations from the community (44%). In anglophone African it is far more widespread to consider listeners' clubs as platform for common learning.

The existence of listeners' clubs and community participation are strongly interrelated: Where a radio station gets support from a listeners' club, the community participates more strongly in management, ownership and financing.

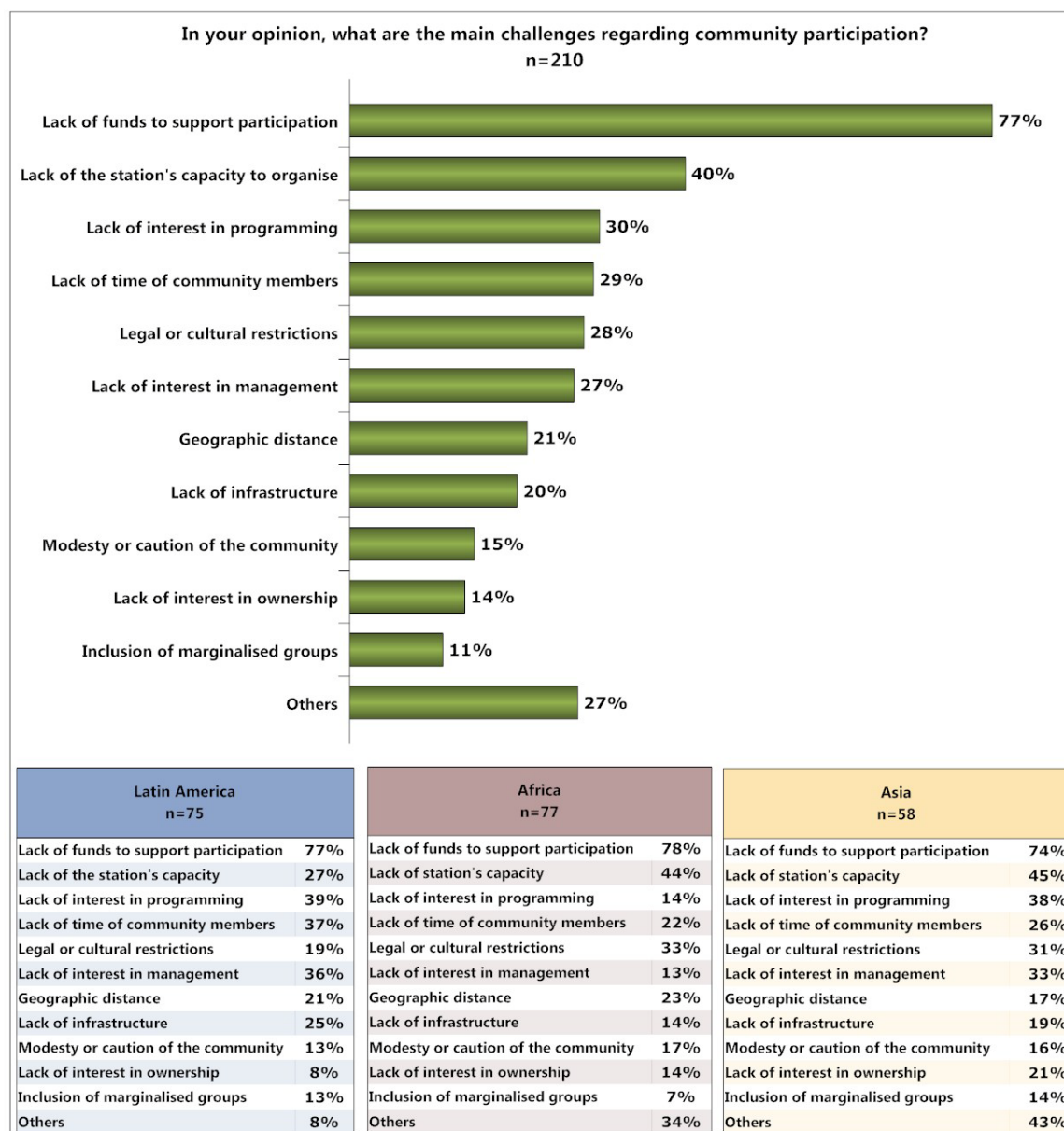


Constraints to participation

Lack of funds is referred to as the main challenge regarding community participation. 77% of the stations complain about insufficient revenues, which caused the failure of participation strategies. Besides financial constraints, radios often lack the capacities to organise and preserve regular community participation (40%).

Communities are presumed to have little interest in participating in programming (30%), management (27%) or ownership (14%), or lack the time to participate (29%). Legal or cultural restrictions are mentioned by 28% of the stations, and the geographic distance between station and listener is seen as a barrier for participation by 21% of the radios; lack of infrastructure, (such as public transport or regular power supply) also limits community participation (20%).

The answers showed no difference whether stations are legally owned by an NGO, a community association or other body. Legal and cultural restrictions seem to be less important in Latin America (19%) than in Asia (31%) and Africa (33%). Lack of interest in programming and management was stated as a problem by more stations in Latin America (39%/36%) and in Asia (38%/33%) than in Africa (14%/13%).



Successful and failed participation strategies

A total of 155 respondents shared participation strategies which they experienced as either “not very successful” or “very successful”.

The overall picture provided by the examples from the different regions is ambiguous. Participation strategies that produced positive results at some stations – such as the establishment of listeners’ clubs or fundraising among the community – were described as failures by others.

In all three regions, most negative experiences were related to insufficient funding. Some radio stations reported that they started with an attractive programme, but could not maintain it due to lack of money. Either the person responsible for the promotion of participation efforts could not be financed, or the workload became too heavy for regular team members and an additional position could not be created, or the radio could not cover the expenses to invite community members. One station director from Burkina Faso illustrates this problem: *“The station organised regular meetings with their listeners to discuss the management and the programming of the station, but*

because of lack of funds to pay for the expenses of the participants of the meetings, they do no longer reply to our invitations."

Some strategies have been described by radio stations from different regions as equally successful. In Africa, Asia and Latin America, off-studio broadcasting bridged the geographic distance between radio and listeners, and thereby enhanced the level of community participation, as described by a station from Latin America: *"We tried to have a community radio from the studio without going outside to the street. But this did not work. People want to see, feel and touch the radio station"*.

The organisation of different types of events, like festivals, radio marathons for charity purposes, contests, marches and community works, were indicated primarily by Latin American stations as attractive means to include more listeners and to generate income. Kinds of open microphone programmes were described as another attractive way to include more listeners' opinions in the programming.

One radio station in Peru organises monthly field days in outlying towns, with the assistance of physicians, lawyers, regional politicians, etc. The most pressing issues of the community and their possible solutions are discussed with community members and transmitted to the whole region.

A positive experience was reported by a station in Burkina Faso, where a "Plan Intégré de Communication" (PIC) was implemented, which linked listeners' clubs and programming to a campaign against female genital mutilation. Whereas the programme followed a mass media behaviour change communication strategy, the radio clubs were used for peer group consulting and the organisation of events, such as theatre plays or public viewings of educational films.

The importance of regular meetings, panels and discussion groups was often mentioned as a successful way to enable the community to participate in the station's programming and management in all three regions.

Others informed about difficulties to open the management for community members, or reported that illiteracy of community groups limits the opportunities for their involvement.

Stations from Latin America and Asia reported positive results in the inclusion of different groups in programming, by offering training for youth or marginalised groups.

Fundraising among the community and sale of membership cards were highlighted as a success mainly by African stations, as one example from the DR Congo shows: *"The fundraising for the purchase of fuel: In one month, the listeners' clubs collected an equivalent of 2,000 US-\$ which permitted us to buy three barrels of diesel, which kept the station running for three months."* Asian and Latin American stations mostly reported that such attempts to generate income did not work.

The involvement of listeners' clubs in the organisation of celebrations – equally used for fundraising and marketing – was mentioned by a couple of respondents.

Efforts to enhance the appeal of listeners' clubs by organising income generating activities and services for their members – like micro-saving associations or farming projects – were described as failures by two stations.

Aachen, March 2012