

UNICEF's Youth Broadcasting Initiative (YBI) in Somalia

Background

In the East African region the development of better broadcasting as a means for creating dialog among different communities is essential to building more effective practices of human rights and people led development. As the UN Children's agency, UNICEF's role is one of support directly to children and youth. In Somalia the youth broadcasting project was developed to broaden the scope and reach of broadcasting in Somalia. The two main aims set out for the project were to support Somali youth to produce radio programs and to develop support for youth broadcasting in Somalia.

In Somalia youth groups have formed to meet many social, economic and environmental demands. Youth in Somalia have poor access to education, are vulnerable to the violence and abuse brought about by the ongoing civil war, are vulnerable to poverty, poor access to health care and a range of child rights issues. Today UNICEF has identified 200 youth groups throughout Somalia. UNICEF is working with these youth groups to implement community mobilization for polio vaccination, awareness raising on female genital mutilation and other activities. The UNICEF/ 'Youth Group' partnership provides them with leadership training, support to carry out their development goals and helps them achieve a leading voice in their communities.

As an oral culture the regard Somali's have for radio and now video is a reflection of their traditional reliance on forms of expression, poetry, drama, songs and debate to provide news and information across the expanse of the country. While local radio coverage does not reach the majority of Somalis the importance of local voices speaking about local development issues is critical to begin debates that will spread throughout the country. Despite the receptiveness of audiences and the need to provide local level broadcasting to reach the diverse developmental, economic and demographic groups in Somali society, very little community based programming has been developed. Local broadcasters have been trained in news journalism rather than specific skills to produce local programs on community development topics. Specialized training and support is required to build the skills of Somali producers, bring about accurate & in-dept exchange of information about development issues, and foster an appreciation for community based dialogue on a range of issues effecting women and children.

Media in Somalia

Somalia posses a shockingly underdeveloped media compared to the importance of that media in the lives of the local people. Where else in the world does a whole nation stop to hear the evening news broadcast? The reach of radio has been stifled by politics or lack of infrastructure. In NWZ (Somaliland) there is only one functioning radio station, in NEZ (Puntland) there are three functioning stations in two towns, in the CSZ (south Somalia) there are many more stations but the coverage is limited. While there is no reliable media assessment to gauge coverage of these stations one can safely assume that the reach includes the area of the town and in some cases a radius closely surrounding the town (20K?). Claims by stations are often inflated and the assessments that have been made are outdated or in some cases unreliable due to questionable data. It is claimed that radio broadcasts are recorded and brought into the rural areas but the extent to which this takes place and the preferences of what is recorded cannot be

verified. The lack of a recent and reliable media assessment in Somalia means that radio coverage is a matter of speculation. Nevertheless we can observe that local radio is an influential and important means of reaching diverse audiences and socio-economic groups in the places where it is functioning.

Recently Somalia has seen the proliferation of a new kind of media that requires less investment, gets less attention from authorities, is accessible to almost anyone but has spread to towns throughout the landscape where other mass media has not reached. Video centers are private businesses where viewers pay about \$.05 to watch a movie on a television screen with other customers. A video center survey was carried out in the last quarter of 2002 by the UNICEF communications department revealing that in all zones, video centers attract the same demographic and are similarly widespread. Largely attended by audiences from 14-28 in age, video centers provide a little accessed media opportunity to reach the youth of Somalia. The income level is broad as the admission fee is extremely low, in some cases it was noted that even street children attend. The low operating cost of video centers and the reliability of video centers to withstand political influence in communities makes it a good way to bring media into the villages where radio does not reach.

The research on video centers determined that large towns like Hargeisa have up to ten video centers and smaller towns like Gebiley have up to five video centers, with similar distribution as per population of towns throughout NEZ and NWZ. The seating capacity of most video centers ranges from 20-60 with larger centers seating up to several hundred. The average audience size at peak broadcast time was 35 persons. The peak broadcast time was reported to be morning, 11:00 AM when school is not in session and during the school year at 2:00pm on Thursday and Friday. For the most part video centers attract males, age 12-25 with a ratio of 3/1 boys to girls.

The audience expected at rental stalls is girls (14-20), women and families. It is likely that people who rent the video will watch it with their neighbors and children as private television and video is limited.

Audiences reached by radio & video broadcasts

The "target audience" for the youth broadcasting project is 1) youth with gender balance, 2) the community and 3) the media. The project will reach these audiences through the production of media, through the broadcast of radio and video productions, and by enhancing the information required for youth group activities.

The activities youth undertake to produce a video or radio program on a topic will require that they become proactive in the community where they make the production. The youth producers will work with UNICEF to determine the technical information about issues, uncover local understanding, address advocacy needs and harmonize local constraints and customs with regard to topics. The youth producers will be significantly engaged to understand topics of broadcast and they will involve their communities. The youth producers were trained with a gender balance so the decision-making should be shared in the production process. It can be expected that these youth groups will carry out other community-based activities according to the program topics they most identify with; dramas, dance with song, circus, etc. In this regard the youth broadcasting communication strategy reaches youth, with a gender balance, and communities in the places of production.

The video productions will be distributed to a clearly youth audience through video centers. The challenge is to reach youth who are female as video centers have an audience that is predominantly male with a 3:1 male to female ratio. After the videos have been shown at the video centers several times they will be redistributed to video rental stalls. It is expected that the videos will reach more girls through rental stalls as it has been said that more private showings should attract more girls. Through monitoring this assumption should be checked. In this regard the youth broadcasting communication strategy reaches youth in the places of video distribution.

The community and media will be reached most directly through radio broadcasts. The number of people who can be reached through radio broadcasts will best be determined through the baseline assessment. Nevertheless radio is clearly a media that reaches a broad cross section of the community and remains the most influential mass media in the areas where it is available. In this regard the youth broadcasting communication strategy reaches all audiences in the communities of radio broadcast.

Role of Youth Producers

The youth of Somalia face an uncertain future. While they have grown in this uncertainty they have motivations and attitudes not dissimilar to other youth from anywhere. Youth in Somalia have formed more than 200 youth groups country-wide (all zones) to interact, to play sports, to have a place to go which is just for youth. What is different is that youth groups in Somalia have tailored their activities to serve their communities in some of the most challenging environments where UNICEF works worldwide.

While youth groups in Somalia could be compared to 'the scouts' in the developed world, the issues they take up are perhaps more outstanding, female genital mutilation, disarmament of militia, community mobilization in a civil conflict where infrastructure is routinely destroyed, HIV awareness in a society that will make no public references to sex.

Providing youth groups with a means to express their work through media gives them a clear, louder and more informed voice on issues they are already tackling from communities UNICEF does not always have access to.

The youth broadcasting project partners with 20 youth groups country-wide providing much desired training in a vocational skill and supports radio & video production on the condition that programs be designed to prompt local discussion on the key issues being targeted by all sectors of the UNICEF Somalia country program.

Lessons learned from the Hargeisa Youth Broadcasting Pilot in 2002 determined that peer-to-peer support, a dedicated local resource person/producer in a location, along with regular production are important to establishing a system among youth producers. During the initial workshops to set up the project peer-to-peer training was used, bringing in the youth who were involved in the pilot project. The 'style' of the productions was discussed as a function of making them recognizable countrywide and to make sure they are designed to meet the objectives of the project. The three key points youth producers were asked to focus on were 1) the importance of producing media that is technically accurate according to the topics, 2) programs incorporate a youth perspective and 3) programs are entertaining from a local perspective.

The youth groups who have been trained to carry out the production of videos and radio programs will be assisted by a local resource person/local producer who will work with up to 3 youth groups in a location to oversee the quality and management of productions at the local level. The local resource people who will work with the youth for the duration of the project were also brought into the workshop as trainers for different aspects of production.

There are a total of twenty youth groups who have been trained to carry out the project

NEZ

(2) Bossaso, Radio
(1) Galkayo, Radio

NWZ

(2) Hargeisa, Radio
(2) Hargeisa, Video
(2) Borao, Video
(2) Boroma, Video

CSZ

(1) Jowhar, Video
(2) Mogadishu, Radio
(3) Mogadishu, Video
(2) Marka, Video
(1) Marka, Radio

The Youth Broadcasting Initiative Strategy Design

The locations for implementation of the youth broadcasting communication strategy were identified with consideration of many factors (see 'Role of Youth Producers' in this report) including a needs and availability assessment. The UNICEF zonal officers were asked to consider the topics and locations UNICEF should consider for programs. The communication officers were asked to identify the locations where media professionals would be available to assist youth broadcasters on an ongoing basis and were asked to clarify the locations where the radio stations are functioning.

In NEZ and NWZ all functioning radio stations, only three, are being utilized for the project. In the case of video, the places where functioning television stations can be found were favored for production because trainers are available to work with the youth producers part time on an ongoing basis. There were exceptions where in Marka and Jowhar the communication officer proved that it was feasible to expect a video producer from Mogadishu to work with the groups. The distribution of video productions is limited to five locations in each zone. This limited broadcast means that each video still reaches 15 video centers but opportunity for expanding videos to other locations is great. As needs and opportunities develop the locations for production, broadcast and distribution of videos should be reevaluated through ongoing monitoring and the final project assessment to best address the situation on the ground.

• **Radio**

The production and broadcast of programs will take place in the following locations, Hargeisa, Bossaso, Galkayo, Marka, Kismayo (rebroadcasts) and Mogadishu (x2).

It has been proven time after time that local radio programs are an effective means to prompt wide discussion and engage audiences to change knowledge, attitude and practices. Where this technique has been used most successfully a specific target group has been identified, a common culture has been identified and the program has been designed with substantial input from the target group/culture. In addition a means for linking the program to the local people through on the ground techniques has been

important to design programming that responds to local needs and interests. The youth broadcasting project is built on this basis. Youth groups are seen as agents of change as they are the producers of the media that is broadcast in their communities. In addition the youth groups whole play a role in the strategy will be better informed to carry out the community work they already carry out. In the case of a youth group in Marka, they made a song about FGM for their video, they were so pleased with the song that they said they would use the song and design a drama to perform in their community for greater awareness of FGM.

- **Video**

The project has built in a production component to see that videos feature different locations, rural and urban lifestyles. The places for production include Hargeisa, Borao, Borama, Mogadishu, Marka and Jowhar. The places of redistribution are numerous, about 15 locations per zone.

The function of video as a tool of communication for development is to show technical information and feature Somali lifestyles in a recognizable way. The equipment is more expensive and production of video more rigorous than radio. The extended value of video is great as it can be an efficient way to educate local groups and NGOs in video led discussion based training or as a more informal offering of technical information when a training cannot be organized. The lack of Somali videos on the market should lead to greater popularity of these videos. Video engages audiences to a much greater extent than radio or print so the redistribution and broadcast of video to places where the video was not produced is great.

Five locations and about fifteen video centers have been selected in each zone for primary distribution based on the video centers survey and consultation with the communication officer in the zone. The proposed locations of distribution, as follows, correspond to the places surveyed and places that can be easily accessed/ monitored.

In NWZ distribution should be to six locations, to 2-4 video centers within those locations for a total number of 18 video center distribution points in NWZ. The video center locations identified for NWZ are (5) in Hargeisa, (2) Gabiley, (3) Berbera, (3) Borao, and (3) Boroma

In NEZ distribution should be to five locations, to 2-5 video centers within those locations for a total number of 15 video center distribution points in NEZ. The video center locations identified are (5) Bossaso, (2) Burtinle, (3) Galkayo, (3) Garowe, (2) Gardho.

In CSZ distribution should be to five locations to 2-5 video centers within those locations for a total number of 17 video center distribution points in CSZ. Baidoa (3), Jowhar (4), Mogadishu (5), Kismayo (2), Merca (3).

After the videos are broadcast at the video centers they will be given to video rental stalls where they will be available to other audiences.

In addition to video centers and rental stalls it has been considered that videos be shown on local television stations. There is no provision in this project to show videos on television stations because the attention that may come from television broadcast might

disrupt the initiative. The audiences with access to television are policy makers and leaders. While the project is still in a preliminary stage it would be prudent to hold off on television broadcasts until a strong working routine, relationship with the media and standard of production is set up. Once these are in place the UNICEF communication officer in the zone and the youth producers would be in a better position to respond to local leaders and policy makers.

The management of the project is designed to empower youth as agents of change, lead to productions that represent local people and their information needs, minimize the amount of production involvement necessary from UNICEF and keep overall UNICEF coordination of the project at the zonal level.

The design and training for the strategy to date has been carried out with consideration of these points. The youth groups have been introduced to a broad range of production requirements from planning, to interviewing, recording and editing. At the same time local producers were brought in to work with the youth to produce a video or radio program during the training. The ongoing training of the youth groups and 'day to day' management of productions will be done by these local producers.

The youth groups were trained to produce programs according to a standard *program format* that lends to efficiency and allows the audience to recognize the programs as they are produced on an ongoing basis. The production schedule that was discussed with youth groups and a step-by-step weekly *production schedule* developed ensure that productions are designed, managed and carried out by the youth groups with minimal support from UNICEF.

The UNICEF communication officer in the zone is in correspondence with the groups and local resource person at four important stages in the production process. The points at which the communication officer corresponds with the group are those points that the technical information in the program will be determined. This is at the onset of production, after a production is designed, to monitor the final production and to coordinate the distribution and broadcast.

The UNICEF sectors at the zonal level are asked to fill out a *briefing sheet* that has 7 basic questions about the topic. If the youth group requires further technical information it is their responsibility to contact the sectors by email, phone or in person. Before productions begin the youth group is required to submit a production outline with a word for word summary of the technical information they will provide in the introduction and closing, a list of the people they will interview and plans for where they will go. The communication officer sees to it that the sector looks over the production plan especially to see that the information is accurate. Before the final production is broadcast the communication officer will see to it that the sector approves the program as technically accurate.

The communication officer in the zone and the zonal officers from the field keep the Nairobi office updated in each monthly report summarizing the productions that are underway, those that have been completed and those that will be undertaken.

