PROVISION FOR POST PROJECT EVALUATIONS FOR THE UNITED NATIONS DEMOCRACY FUND

Disclaimer

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Effectiveness was affected however by the scattered nature of the activities across the country and the one-size-fits all capacity building approach. ACORAB's members themselves are extremely diversified and their needs varied considerably. There was also an extremely low participation rate for women in the project activities even though ACORAB had previously worked with UN Women to developed a gender and social inclusion (GESI) policy. The Community Information Network (CIN) seems to have played an active and useful role through the continuation of its work to edit, package and distribute its own and its member radios reports through the ACORAB network. The hearings held under the project were seen

including community radios, means that in some areas they compete for the same audience, advertisers and funding. ACORAB also has some restrictive rules on the type of advertising stations can accept. This includes a ban on "junk food" commercials from potentially lucrative advertisers such as Coca Cola or the instant noodle makers as ACORAB worries about liability issues and being perceived as endorsing unhealthy foods. Some stations have found alternative ways to raise funds, such as a food coop or open

Develop more systematic links with government agencies/programmes and NGOs at local level to ***provide the follow up*** to broadcasts and for the issues discussed in public hearings. This can help increase the impact of the radio work and make it more relevant and useful for their communities.

Increase efforts to address the financial sustainability issues of stations by commissioning an in depth financial viability assessment of ACORAB members. This should take a hard look at the stations' balance sheets, issues such as the proliferation of stations, advertising policies and audience statistics.

Undertake professional market research to determine the actual reach of community radios, their audience share and programming impact. This should be factored in the viability assessment and in targeting future assistance efforts.

Pay more attention to gender and social equity in training programmes and for the promotion of women and social minorities into decision making positions within community radio.

II. Introduction and development context

(i)   The project and evaluation objectives

*Institutionalizing Social Accountability of Community Radio in Nepal (*UDF-NEP-10-387) was a two-year USD 275,000 project implemented by the Association of Community Radio Broadcasters Nepal (ACORAB). USD 25,000 of this was retained by UNDEF for monitoring and evaluation purposes. The project ran from 1 June 2012 to 30 September 2014 including a four-month no-cost time extension. Its main objective was to increase the capacity of community radios to more effectively represent the interests of their constituencies and promote social accountability in Nepal It intended to do this through: 1) improving the community radios' internal governance, oversight, financial and operational management; and, 2) supporting their efforts to promote transparency, equity and social accountability across Nepal.

The evaluation of this project is part of the larger evaluation of the Rounds 2, 3 and 4 UNDEF-funded projects. Its purpose is to "contribute towards a better understanding of what constitutes a successful project which will in turn help UNDEF to develop future project strategies. Evaluations are also to assist stakeholders to determine whether projects have been implemented in accordance with the project document and whether anticipated project outputs have been achieved".[1]

(ii)   Evaluation methodology

The evaluation took place in December 2014 - January 2015 with field work done in Nepal

(ii) ***Logical framework***

IV. Evaluation findings

(i) Relevance

The project was directly relevant to the mandate of the grantee, ACORAB which is to represent the interests of its more than 200 community radio station members. These members are located throughout Nepal (Figure 1). The project activities contributed to ACORAB's institutional vision and mission which is to promote, protect and strengthen the

(ii) Effectiveness

ACORAB undertook the series of activities as outlined in the project document and delivered the expected outputs. The effectiveness of the effort however was affected by the scattered

amount of time available to follow up activities and monitor their implementation. The biggest constraint for the stations themselves to fully participate in the project were the number of hours they could operate a day because of the intermittent electricity, their low level of resources which made staff retention and follow up to project activities difficult, and the weather which could hamper travel and damage their equipment.

ACORAB provided timely and complete reporting on the project.

Figure 4
Project expenditures (USD)
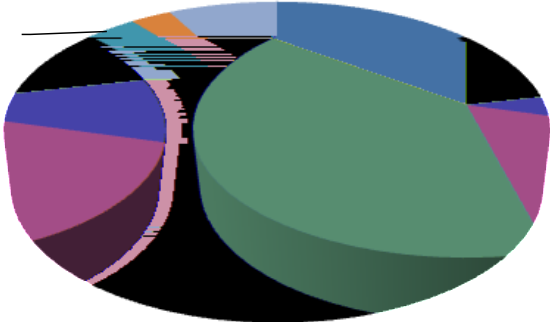
that training or of the new policies to improve their functioning and reporting, or on the other activities undertaken. It also commissioned the survey that served as a baseline for the project, but did not repeat it at the end so the extent of any changes or improvements over that baseline is unknown. The stations also lacked market research on their programming, so the reach and effect among listeners of their news programming, public hearings or PSAs is unknown. The stations themselves believed they had a good idea of their reach from the e-mails, text messages and calls received but this data was not systematically tracked or tabulated. It is also too anecdotal in nature to be able to replace market-based research.

Potential impact was also affected by the limited follow up to hearings and other activities. Attribution for results to this project is also extremely difficult given the large amount of assistance that the community radio sector has received since its inception. In addition, many stations were already engaged in these types of activities. As an example, the baseline survey found that CRs were already airing PSAs in more than 30 local languages and that the number of social audits and public information notice boards had been increasing among community radios.

However, from the anecdotal information gathered, it is likely that this project:

> ***Reinforced the vision of community radios as agents of social and democratic change.*** Although many community radios already had this vision, others reportedly acted more on personal, commercial or partisan interests. Having activities focused

they then accomplished with them to improve their management and programming is unknown since this was not tracked.

Increased the level of understanding among participants on the issues raised by the project. This was documented by the pre and post testing of participants which showed significant improvement in levels of understanding and knowledge. For example, awareness on the importance of human rights rose from 39 percent to 71 percent, understanding the norms of good governance rose from 17 percent to 83 percent, and understanding that ethical journalism was the key to journalist safety rose from 39c6(ng)- 658.9 Tm[pe)3(r)-3(cen)3(t)6(2156(un9-8-3(cen)3(t)-4(9 Tm[pe)3(r)-i)-4(pa)4(nt
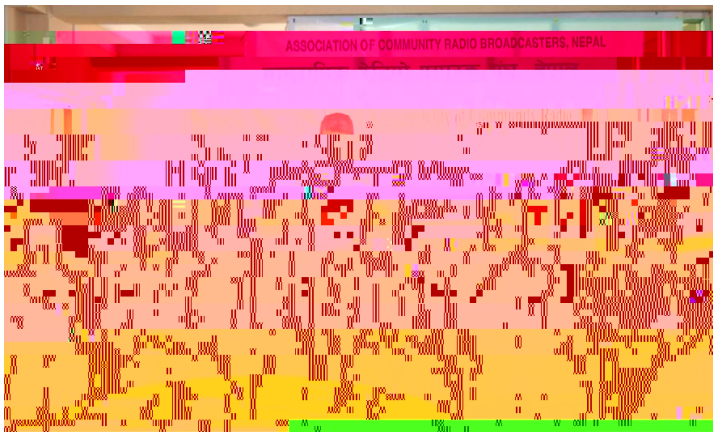
Promoting social accountability of the stations.
ACORAB photo

create a separate category for community radios. This they hope will provide them with the opportunity for more government funding for development messages and tenders than for the commercial stations. However, this is not enough to make up for the lack of advertising revenues.

Some stations are able to get contracts from local governments to air the public hearings that the governments are required to hold annually on the allocation of their budgets. Others receive funding to develop and air PSAs for government agencies and development programmes.

Some stations have found ingenious ways to generate income outside of broadcasting. This includes Radio Gandaki that borrows money commercially that it then loans to its listeners for a slightly higher percentage than what it costs them. Another station, Sagarmatha FM, owns a food cooperative and, yet another, Radio Udaypur, runs an internet café. The team only heard about one station that had enough community support to fund its operating costs. This was Madan Pokhara where the community provides a percentage of their crops to the station each year which the station then sells to finance its operations.

IV. Conclusions

Based on the evaluation findings, the team concludes:

> ***(i) Community radio can serve an important development***

V. Recommendations

To strengthen similar projects in the future, the team recommends:

(i) Continue to reinforce CR efforts to improve their internal governance and to fulfill their informational and public watchdog role. In particular, ACORAB should continue its efforts to ensure the consistent application of CR principles and policies. Low cost efforts can include regular updates by ACORAB to its members on the accomplishments of good performing stations or with tips for improvements. Seeking additional support from the media assistance providers within Nepal could also help keep these issues in the forefront of CR discussions and a focus for CR operations and programming.

VI.   Overall assessment and closing thoughts

Right to Information is the backbone of democracy and the media is one of its most important pillars. It ensures that people have access to information and have the means to monitor and question their government and its policies. This promotes the accountability of government and public officials, the transparency of their operations, the inclusivity of their policies and can help expose corruption and malpractice.

FM radio is the most widespread and inexpensive source of information in Nepal. For some isolated and disadvantaged communities it can be their only source of information. This raises the importance of community radios

VIII. ANNEXES

Annex 1: Evaluation questions:

DAC criterion	Evaluation Question	Related sub-questions
Relevance	To what extent was the project, as designed and implemented, suited to context and needs at the beneficiary, local, and national levels?	Were the objectives of the project in line with the needs and priorities for democratic development, given the context? Should another project strategy have been preferred rather than the one implemented to better reflect those needs, priorities, and context? Why? Were risks appropriately identified by the projects? How appropriate are/were the strategies developed to deal with identified risks? Was the project overly risk-averse?
Effectiveness	To what extent was the project, as implemented, able to achieve objectives and goals?	To what extent have the project's objectives been reached? To what extent was the project implemented as envisaged by the project document? If not, why not? Were the project activities adequate to make progress towards the project objectives? What has the project achieved? Where it failed to meet the outputs identified in the project document, why was this?
Efficiency	To what extent was there a reasonable relationship between resources expended and project impacts?	

Kirshna Poudel	adio i t r a d taxi driv r
Indra Arayal	adio i t r a d taxi driv r
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