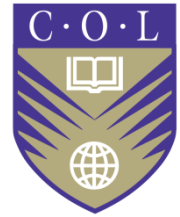


Community Media & Sustainable Livelihoods



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Transcript

First, let me say that I am really pleased to be here. My thanks of behalf of COL to Hara Padhy, UNESCO Kingston and the Curacao National Commission. Belated greetings for World Press Freedom Day!

I am a bit sad not to be able to see you all but given the vision and mission of the Commonwealth of Learning, it is very appropriate that I join you in distance mode. Fingers crossed that the technology does its part.

Hopeton, Kwame and Indi – it is an honour to “share” a panel with you. CARIMAC and UNESCO Kingston re both central partners for COL in the region. And we look forward to working more closely with Panos as we explore closer cooperation in Learning for Development in the region.

Let me give you a little background about COL.

The Commonwealth of Learning is an intergovernmental organisation created by Commonwealth Heads of Government in 1988 to encourage the development and sharing of open learning/distance education knowledge, resources and technologies. COL is helping developing nations improve access to quality education and training.

There are 12 Commonwealth countries in the Caribbean region.

The Commonwealth of Learning helps governments and institutions to expand the scope, scale and quality of learning by using new approaches. COL promotes policies and systems to make innovation sustainable and works with international partners to build models, create materials, enhance organisational capacity and nurture networks that facilitate learning in support of development goals.

COL helps developing Commonwealth countries to increase access to learning using distance education and appropriate technologies. Its work is grouped into two sectors of activity: Education and Livelihoods & Health.

Community media (CM) have a special place in COL’s work:

1. Our particular interest (and focus) is on the potential of CM as a vehicle for learning and communication
2. Mission: Address the learning, knowledge and information needs of citizens, especially those with limited access to other means...
3. Local: intimacy, familiarity; communication is not about technology or media productions but *relationships* and processes
4. How? Dialogue is at the centre of educational communication
5. The most critical point is that (real) CM are accessible to the genuine participation of the people that they aim to serve

What COL does with CM:

- We build capacities for better content creation and programme development
- We do this through training and mentoring – both F2F and distance – in programme planning, design, delivery according to a particular model and approach that we have evolved with our partners around the world

I did a little research and deliberation in preparing for this presentation, in particular as concerns the common understanding of these two fields. As you can see, there is a lot of crossover between the concept of sustainable livelihoods and how we conceive of community media.

In fact, perhaps a better way to title the right side of this image – which reflects the approach of community media -- would be “sustainable communication” approach

Of course that is all fine and well, but what does “sustainable communication” mean in practice?

Let me give you an example from the region.

Jet FM is a community radio in St Mary’s Parish of Jamaica, established in 2008 by the Jeffrey Town Farmers’ Association with the support of UNESCO

What is significant about Jet FM in the “big picture”...?

- Participatory approach starts with decision-making
- Jet FM was started by a local farmers’ association
- From the outset, the needs and circumstances of the target audience have been considered, in fact they are place firmly in the centre of the process.

What does this translate into programming at the ground level?

- Climate change, farming, environment; also maternal and child health

- As much as the technology and the content; Jet FM is about the relationships between people and groups and the conversations they have
- There is no question that Jet FM represents a challenge and struggle for JTFA; however it is a challenge that the group takes on from the “bottom up”, that relates directly to the challenges they face as farmers, as community members and citizens.

We have a tendency to think of CM as “media outlets”, but I’d like to look at a couple of definitions so that we can think a bit about what we mean by community media (not least because “media outlets” come with all sorts of technical and organisational headaches)

Just take a moment to reflect on these two definitions.

These are not actually definitions of “community media”, but they may as well be. These are Wikipedia definitions of social media. I tend to think that the people who say that community media were the first social media are right. The point here is that if community media is about sustainable communication we need to consider new approaches to media – without necessarily giving up on traditional forms.

In short, social media and mobile devices offer us a brave new world for both community-based approaches to media and participatory communication for development.

This is far from an exhaustive list. There is also:

- LIVES
- Frontline SMS
- Freedom Fone
- CGNet Swara
- [VoiceThread](#) - to tell your story with voice and pictures
- [Storybird](#) – to create art inspired collaborative stories
- [Create Your Own Comic](#) - a free comic creation website
- [Makebeliefcomix](#) - users can create their own comic strips.
- [Glogster](#) - enables students to create multi-layered, interactive, virtual posters with video and musical links on topical subjects.
- [Photopeach](#) - with PhotoPeach you can create a rich slideshows.
- [Slidestory](#) - tell a story, share your photos, narrate in your own voice
- [Kizoa](#) - an amazing and free program for creating and displaying slideshows, editing photos and adding music, audio, text.

- [Prezi](#) – storyboarding
- [Pivot Stick Figure Animator](#) - create stick figure animations that range from the simple to impressive

Let me share one example of how participatory communication content/programming can be reflected in community media process that uses new media, social media and mobile telephony.

CGNet Swara is a voice-based portal, freely accessible via mobile phone, that allows anyone to report and listen to stories of local interest. Reported stories are moderated by journalists and become available for playback online as well as over the phone. What's most fascinating is the degree to which CGNet Swara has been embraced by local farmers, activists, communicators, etc.

Thank you. I hope this might contribute to some discussion.