



EMPOWERHOUSE

FACT SHEET - EMPOWERHOUSE

EMPOWERHOUSE is an initiative by Birgitte Jallo, who has worked with community radio for more than 30 years in more than 60 countries. EMPOWERHOUSE aims to fill a crucial gap in the support available to community radios and to all who seek to enable and promote them.

Community radio potential and impact

A community radio is a radio owned and managed by the community; the programmes are produced by the community, and they deal with issues arising within and of relevance to the community. By definition a community radio emerges from within a community, as a grassroots initiative and an expression of the urge to have a voice, to have a community information and communication channel.

Since the first community radios emerged in Latin America and the United States in the 1940s, the phenomenon spread to the entire world in several waves, including the rural radio movement in Africa in the 1960s; in community radio stations emerging in Europe and Australia through the 1970s and 1980s, and the renewed surge of community radio stations in Asia and Africa taking place since the 1990s and 2000s.

While community radios are as different from each other as the realities in which they operate, they share a number of features which give them a unique potential for local development:

- Community radios are rooted in the community, and are borne by a community's own interest.
- Community radios help communities to identify all the different "communities within the community", with each their specific interests, needs and contributions to be made.
- Community radios have a strong potential to mobilise communities and become engaged.
- Community radios help communities preserve and celebrate their culture and language.
- Community radios help communities to analyse their own situation and identify and articulate their own priorities, and to transform from objects of somebody else's plans to subjects of their own development.
- Community radios have the potential to provide communities with a voice that is heard.
- Community radios can play a crucial role in strengthening the accountability of public service and protecting and promoting the rights of all groups.

In a number of **impact studies** of community radio, the findings document, that communities:

- have been **empowered** (through information on rights, transparency, dialogue and debate);
- have received new **choices** (by becoming subjects of their own development processes through receiving appropriate and accurate information and having a chance to debate);
- have generated **increased 'material wellbeing'** through resources being more readily available (in the form of improved livelihoods, income, health, security, etc.)

After Khoun radio, the first community-run radio in Lao PDR, had been on air for only one year, an impact assessment among others found that there was less abusive practices against women and greater attention to children's welfare; that 60-70 percent more ethnic women used health facilities when pregnant; that 50 percent more ethnic women had their children vaccinated; that diarrhoea-related diseases had decreased significantly.

Due to this unique potential, a number of development partners have identified community radios as **the missing link between development investments and the actual, intended positive impact being felt on the ground.**

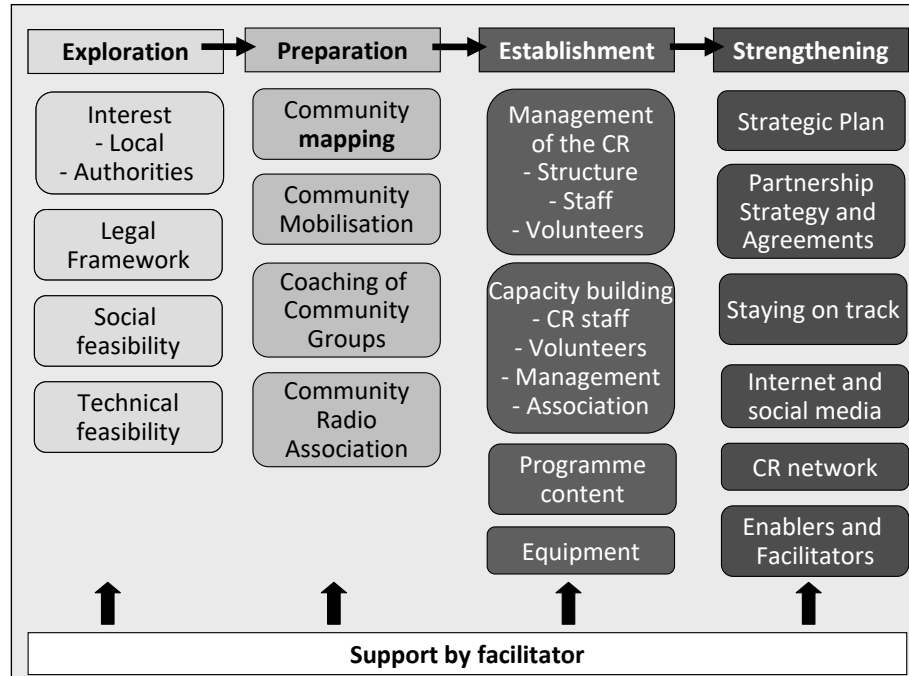
Community radio needs

Community radios that fully live up to their potential can be called empowerment radios. However, experience shows that many community radios do not manage to establish and sustain themselves as true empowerment radios. Instead, they often risk focusing on purely entertainment, commercial or partisan interests. In particular the need to ensure technical, managerial, participatory and not least financial sustainability has proven to be the single most important aspect for community radios to continue to play their strong empowerment role. A wide range of issues can pose a threat to this sustainability:

- Community radios are often located in more or less isolated rural areas, where few educated people live and financial resources are scarce.
- Community radios can become highly attractive for partisan interests (political, ethnic, etc.) and thus live under an inherent risk of being “hi-jacked”.
- Local authorities and other power actors may dislike the increased public control and demands of accountability fuelled by community radios and may thus want to hinder their operation.
- Community radio staff – managers, broadcasters, technicians – are often isolated from colleagues who are facing similar challenges, and may have difficulties in receiving the support and exchange they need to resolve permanently emerging problems.
- Donors and other supporters of community radios often have a short-term (project) horizon and a need to demonstrate quick results, reducing the time required for full community mobilisation and ownership to take root.

These aspects make community radios extremely vulnerable – in particular during the first phases of their establishment. At the same time, many of the most important traps for sustainable empowerment radios can be avoided, if the lessons learned and good practice identified over the past decades are known and applied.

To secure this, community radios need support through all phases of their development, as illustrated below:



For each of the aspects under each of the phases mentioned above community radios need to have access to knowledge and skills that will help them to avoid serious design flaws right from the start, to address emerging issues in an appropriate way, and to reduce their vulnerability by becoming part of a network of colleagues, experts and partners.

EMPOWERHOUSE services

EMPOWERHOUSE works with a number of different actors to support community radio development and sustainability, including

- community radios;
- host Governments (as the main enablers of community radios);
- donors and agencies interested in supporting community radios and
- academia involved in furthering the theoretical background for community radios and the potential of communication for development.

Community Radios <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Situation analysis• Coaching• Training• Strategic planning• Management structure• Partnership strategy• Networking• Crisis intervention	Donors and agencies <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Analysis of potential for mandate promotion• Policy development• Practical guidance• Screening of proposals• Evaluation and impact assessment• Training of staff
Host Governments <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Media mapping• Situation analysis• Policy advice	Academia <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Courses for students following communication for development curricula• Conferences, panels etc.

EMPOWERHOUSE provides its services in a number of different ways:

- EMPOWERHOUSE website provides direction on how to address important aspects of community media sustainability;
- EMPOWERHOUSE [newsletter](#) providing subscribers with more in-depth discussion and orientation on relevant topics;
- [EmpowerForum](#), an on-line, membership-based platform for networking, professional exchange, moderated discussion and ad hoc coaching;
- [Training courses](#), both on-line and on-site;
- Participation in [conferences](#), [seminars](#) etc;
- Articles, manuals and books reflecting accumulated experience in special areas, from time to time;
- [Ad hoc support missions](#) to assist community radios and networks that are facing serious difficulties;
- [Specific assignments](#) requested by clients (host Governments, donors, agencies etc.), either with an internal focus (e.g. policy development, screening of project and programme proposals, technical guidance and training of staff, etc.) or with an external focus (providing support to community media/radios or community media networks in all phases of their development, carrying out evaluations and impact assessments, etc.).

Not least, EMPOWERHOUSE also manages sponsorship arrangements for interested donors who want to support community radios and networks without having to create whole programmes and structures for this purpose.

About Birgitte Jallov

Birgitte Jallov, Danish national born 1956, holds a master's degree in mass communication and strategic communication as well as a bachelor in linguistics and civic movements and a diploma in adult education.

This formal education is complemented by professional training in radio production, documentary film production, management & leadership, and a series of training courses around working with and through social media.



Birgitte Jallov has worked with community radio since 1980, when she was deeply involved in the budding community radio movement in Denmark. In 1983, she was member of the board and co-organiser of the first meeting of the international community radio association, AMARC.

Between 1988 and 1992, Birgitte Jallov worked with the International Labour Office in Geneva, where she established and ran the organisation's first "Communication for Development" unit.

From 1993 to 1996, she was deputy director of the newly founded "Baltic Media Centre", which provided crucial support to the newly independent states of Eastern Europe, promoting the establishment of new, independent media that had previously not been permitted.

From 1998 to 2004, she managed UNESCO's to date largest media project, "Promoting Good Governance and Democracy through Independent Media in Mozambique" which supported a wide array of independent media, assisted the national radio station in its decentralisation efforts, and promoted the establishment of a Mozambican network of community radios.

Since 2004 Birgitte Jallov has worked as independent consultant, carrying out assignments for a wide range of clients, including UN agencies, bilateral donors, and non-governmental organisations. She founded EMPOWERHOUSE in 2011.

Birgitte Jallov has experience from more than 60 countries and is fluent in English, Portuguese, French, German and Danish, and also able to work in Spanish, Swedish and Norwegian.

Publications

Birgitte Jallov has published more than 30 articles in the area of community radio, community involvement, women's rights, communication for development, and impact assessment, many of which have become reference articles for international researchers and decision makers.

In addition, she has produced more than 15 documentary films and videos in the same areas. In 2012, she released her book "Empowerment Radio", which has since received overwhelmingly positive reviews from academics and media practitioners around the world.

Testimonials from customers and clients

"We recruited Birgitte, when we needed a thorough review of our community radio project... With her recommendations and suggested solutions we were able to bring things back on track quickly and efficiently... I would warmly recommend Birgitte's services, advice and support to community radio stations that are looking for inspiration, ideas from other radios elsewhere in the world, and for donors who wish to learn more about the changes that are happening at the ground level of these ... transformational projects."
Sarah Ransom, Programme Analyst, UNDP Lao PDR

"Birgitte's commitment to a cause and working for impact is what makes her stand out in the crowd... I would warmly recommend Birgitte as an adviser, coach and facilitator to other UN agencies ... particularly pursuing a communication for development agenda and also those working on women and gender issues."
Aida Opoku-Mensah, Director, Science and ICT, UNECA