

The impact of community radio on rural socio-economic development: A case study of CDN-Ijwi Rya Cibitoke in Rugombo commune, Burundi.

Arnaud Gahungu

Department of Social Work and Community Development, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Université Espoir d'Afrique, Bujumbura, Burundi.

Abstract

Background:

In rural Africa, community radios are pivotal tools for information dissemination, education, and social mobilization. This study assesses the socio-economic impact of community radio programming on rural communities, focusing on Radio CDN-Ijwi rya Cibitoke in the Rugombo Commune of Cibitoke Province, Burundi.

Methodology:

A mixed-methods approach was employed, combining quantitative and qualitative data collection. A structured questionnaire was administered to a stratified random sample of 377 listeners across four hills in Rugombo Commune. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and Pearson's Chi-square test with IBM SPSS Statistics version 22.0 to measure correlations between radio exposure and the adoption of modern practices.

Results:

An overwhelming majority (97%) of respondents identified CDN-Ijwi rya Cibitoke as their primary radio station. Key development-focused programs like *Uburimiye n'Uworozi* (Agriculture and Livestock) were the most listened to (84%). A strong positive correlation was found between listening to specific programs and the adoption of modern agricultural (96%), livestock-rearing (93%), and entrepreneurial techniques (96%). The radio significantly contributed to knowledge on health prevention (84%) and management practices (92%). However, its impact on environmental protection techniques was limited (25%).

Conclusion:

The study confirms that Radio CDN-Ijwi rya Cibitoke plays a crucial role in the socio-economic development and empowerment of Rugombo's rural communities by disseminating practical knowledge that leads to improved practices and income generation. It functions as a genuine community radio station by addressing local priorities.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that the radio station diversifies its content further, strengthens strategies for environmental education, and secure sustainable funding. Policymakers should support the institutional strengthening of community radios and integrate them formally into national development strategies.

Keywords: *Community Radio, Socio-Economic Development, Rural Communities, Agricultural Practices, Burundi, Empowerment.*

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Corresponding Author: Arnaud Gahungu

Email: arnaudgahungu@gmail.com

Department of Social Work and Community Development, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Université Espoir d'Afrique, Bujumbura, Burundi.

Background of the Study

In developing countries, over 2.5 billion people reside in rural areas, with a significant majority in Africa relying primarily on agriculture and livestock for their livelihood [1]. These regions are crucial for national food security, yet often face challenges like isolation and limited access to information. Radio, due to its accessibility and reach, has remained a dominant mass communication tool, especially community radio, which aims to give a voice to

marginalized groups and support local development initiatives [2, 3].

In Burundi, community radios have emerged to bridge the information gap in rural areas. However, empirical studies evaluating their concrete socio-economic impact are scarce. Radio CDN-Ijwi rya Cibitoke, based in Rugombo Commune, explicitly targets rural development through its programming. This study was therefore conducted to analyze the impact of this radio station on the socio-economic development of its listener community, testing

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the hypotheses that it contributes to development, empowers the community, and that its development-oriented programs are the most popular.

Methodology

Study Design and Area:

A cross-sectional study was conducted in Rugombo Commune, Cibitoke Province, Burundi, from November 2023 to June 2024.

Population and Sampling:

The target population was listeners of Radio CDN-Ijwi rya Cibitoke in Rugombo. Using Raosoft's sample size calculator with a 5% margin of error and 95% confidence level, a sample size of 377 respondents was determined. A stratified random sampling technique was used to select participants from four hills: Cibitoke (156), Munyika I (74), Munyika II (74), and Kagazi (73).

Data Collection and Analysis:

A structured questionnaire was used to collect data on demographics, listening habits, and knowledge acquisition from specific radio programs. Data analysis involved descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages) to summarize demographics and listening patterns. Inferential statistics, specifically Pearson's Chi-square test, were used to determine the correlation between exposure to specific programs (e.g., *Uburimiye n'Ubworozi*) and the adoption of new practices in agriculture, livestock, and business. Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics version 22.0.

Results

Demographic Characteristics:

The majority of respondents were female (51%). Most were married (70%) and fell within the 36-45 age group (32%). The education level was predominantly primary school (40%), and the main occupation was farming (60%).

Radio Listening Habits:

Radio CDN-Ijwi rya Cibitoke was the most important station for 97% of respondents. The primary reasons for listening were its programs on modern agriculture (91%) and livestock (81%). The most listened-to programs were *Uburimiye n'Ubworozi* (84%), *Inkuru zigisha* (74%), and *Ubuzima butotahaye* (73%).

Impact on Practices:

The study found a high rate of adoption of techniques learned from radio programs:

- **Agriculture:** 96% adopted modern cultural techniques, 95% used composting, and 96% practiced crop fertilization.
- **Livestock:** 93% practiced modern livestock farming, 92% implemented herd hygiene practices, and 90% sourced veterinary products.

- **Business & Health:** 96% engaged in income-generating entrepreneurial projects, 92% used stress reduction techniques, and 84% gained knowledge on disease prevention.
- **Environment:** Impact was lower, with only 25% adopting environmental protection strategies.

Statistical Correlation:

Chi-square tests revealed a significant positive correlation ($p < 0.05$) between listening to the *Uburimiye n'Ubworozi* program and the adoption of most modern agricultural and livestock techniques, confirming the radio's direct influence on practice change.

Discussion

The findings strongly support the study's hypotheses. Radio CDN-Ijwi rya Cibitoke is not only the preferred source of information but also a critical catalyst for socio-economic development in Rugombo Commune. The high adoption rates of agricultural and livestock techniques broadcast by the radio demonstrate its effectiveness as a tool for continuing education and knowledge transfer in a context where formal education levels are low. This aligns with the theory of participatory communication, where media serves as a platform for community engagement and empowerment [4].

The success of development-focused programs highlights the radio's alignment with the community's needs, primarily agriculture, which is the main economic activity. This embodies the core principle of community radio: being *for*, *by*, and *of* the community [5].

The limited impact on environmental practices suggests a need for more targeted, practical, and compelling content in this area, possibly addressing perceived complexities and costs associated with these techniques.

Conclusion

This study concludes that Radio CDN-Ijwi rya Cibitoke significantly contributes to the socio-economic development of Rugombo Commune. It empowers the rural community by providing accessible information that leads to the adoption of improved agricultural, livestock, and entrepreneurial practices, thereby enhancing livelihoods and fostering development from within.

Recommendations

1. **To Radio CDN-Ijwi rya Cibitoke:** Diversify content to include more robust environmental programming. Strengthen community participation in content creation. Seek sustainable funding models beyond donor reliance.
2. **To the National Communication Council (CNC):** Develop policies that support the financial and technical capacity building of community radios. Integrate them into the

national development framework (PND) as formal partners.

3. **To Researchers:** Conduct longitudinal studies to measure long-term impact. Undertake comparative studies across different regions of Burundi.

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List of Abbreviations

ABR: Association Burundaise des Radiodiffuseurs (Burundian Association of Broadcasters)

AMARC: World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters

CNC: Conseil National de la Communication (National Communication Council)

PND: Plan National de Développement (National Development Plan)

SPSS: Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

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Author Contributions

Arnaud Gahungu: Conceptualization, Methodology, Investigation, Data Curation, Formal Analysis, Writing - Original Draft, Writing - Review & Editing.

Author Biography

Arnaud Gahungu is a Master's student in Community Development at Université Espoir d'Afrique, Burundi. He is also a media professional with experience as a journalist, producer, and presenter at Radio Voix d'Espoir-ijwi Riremesha. His research interests focus on the role of communication and media in community development.

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Contact: +257 6266 2725

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