

Kyela FM makes enormous contribution to its community (www.kyelafm.org)

Kyela FM (Tanzania) is an important factor in the lives of the residents in the Mbeya region and has become a part of the national programme to improve the quality of life of the community it serves. Kyela FM began its operation in November 2009 and was formally inaugurated on 27 October 2010 by Ms Vibeke Jensen of UNESCO. The Mission Statement of Kyela FM states that “..to stimulate rural development in the Mbeya region by facilitating access to and dissemination of information, learning resources and communication technologies. The station seeks to be “a voice for the voiceless”, offering its microphone to “marginalized” communities including the poor, women and children’s groups, the handicapped and HIV/AIDS sufferers”.

Mbeya, Southwest Tanzania, is one of the regions said to have the highest HIV/AIDS cases in Tanzania, mainly due to its location on the Tanzania-Zambia highway and large scale illiteracy.

The Genesis

The Kyela FM was born out of the dedication and sense of responsibility of Abas Mwakalinga the founder of Kyela FM and two Tanzanians, who are the Directors, who wished to make a difference to their community. Seeing the poverty and effects of the spread of HIV in the community, these civic minded individuals decided to establish a community center and community radio station to provide information, education and entertainment and thereby try to alleviate the suffering of the their people. Illiteracy and spread of HIV due to ignorance of how to protect themselves

has been the biggest concern for those who wished a better life for the people of this region.

Located in the Mbeya region in the Tanzania's Southwest, Kyela FM has a potential audience of 2 million in five regions around Kyela, namely Mbeya, Iringa, Ruvuma, Rukwa and the northern part of Malawi where there is hardly any coverage either on TV or Radio.

The three individuals, Messrs. Abas Mwakalinga, George Ambwene and Betram Kiswaga, decided to contribute as much as they could from their own pockets and started constructing a building to house the community radio station and as well as a Community Center (Kyela Community Initiative Services, KCIS-a grassroots NGO).



[Kyela Community Building under construction](#)

The Community Center building was designed to accommodate the radio station on the second floor, a library, a meeting hall and other facilities for the residents of the region.

The Tanzanian Office of UNESCO offered assistance to procure the necessary equipment and training for the intended community radio station. The radio station comprised of a production studio and a broadcast control unit with a 300W FM stereo transmitter.

The Australian company In a Box Innovations * was contracted to supply, install and train staff for this radio station.



Equipment arrives in Kyela

The installation was completed in Nov 2009 and the station was on-air. The 300W transmitter performed so well that the station was received over 100km away. The staff received phone calls from excited listeners from such distances. The formal inauguration was in October 2010.

The Services

Thus began a radio station that proved to be the best thing that happened to the Mbeya region. Since this time, the Kyela FM has been broadcasting a variety of programmes in line with their initial commitment to contribute towards the upliftment of the quality of life of the community.

A Board of Directors and the Station Manager ensure that the operation of the radio station and the programmes that are broadcast are always for the benefit of the community.

With a staff of 14 the Kyela FM broadcasts programmes ranging from health, agriculture, news and current affairs, education, sports and entertainment. Currently broadcasting from 5:00am to midnight, daily, the radio station has become an invaluable source of information, news, education and entertainment the region.

Local sports events are covered and recorded for later broadcast, whereas international sports coverage is taken from Internet based programmes.

The station also relays the Swahili segment of the BBC daily via satellite and use DropBox to receive the BBC's MediaAction programmes.



Staff under training



The first broadcast November 2009

The effect of Kyela FM programming has been to speed up development projects promised by the authorities. A specific case in point was the construction of a bus stand which has been promised by the district council but was being delayed. The trigger to speed up the construction was when Kyela FM discussed the issue with listeners on air.

Health issues are discussed with doctors invited by Kyela FM in addition to broadcasting health programmes from external sources. The visiting doctors are also given the opportunity to treat people from the community.

Other social issues that are addressed by Kyela FM are environment conservation, agriculture particularly rice and tea cultivation.

Feedback from their listening audience helps the staff to tailor the programmes to maximize the benefit of the radio station to the region. Feedback is received via sms and telephone calls during and after programmes. The staff also makes an effort to meet as many representatives of the listening audience as possible to obtain live feedback.

The operation of Kyela FM is financed with funds from several sources. They are:

1. Advertising
2. Sale of Airtime
3. Sponsorships
4. Selling greeting cards

Future

The rapid development of Kyela FM and its whole hearted acceptance by the people of the region and spurred the management and the staff of the community radio station to reach for higher goals.

Plans are been prepared to add more facilities to improve production capacity.

*About In a Box Innovations: An Australia based company that specializes in low cost radio broadcasting.

(www.inaboxinnovations.com.au)