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The Role of Radio Tanzania Dar es Salaam in Mobilising the Masses: A Critique

by G. Moshiro*

Abstract

Tanzanians are turning inward now after dismantling most of the barriers to development — colonial mentality, colonial regimes in the neighbourhood, illiteracy and poor health. The rallying cry now is increased economic output through self-reliance. Radio Tanzania Dar es Salaam (RTD), as a medium of mass communication and mobilization, will have to get closer to the grassroots people, either on a social basis, which is possible now, or it will have to introduce smaller community-based stations which would have greater mobilizing power than any other establishment.

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Critique du rôle de la radio Tanzanienne dans la mobilisation des masses

Résumé

Aujourd'hui, après avoir démantelé la plupart des barrières au développement telles que la mentalité coloniale, les régimes coloniaux dans les voisinages, l'alphabétisation et la mauvaise santé, les Tanzaniens se replient sur eux-mêmes. La volonté commune vise la croissance du produit national à travers l'auto-suffisance.

Radio Tanzanie Dar es salaam (RTD) en tant que moyen de communication et de mobilisation des masses devra s'approcher des masses soit au plan social, ce qui est possible aujourd'hui, ou lancer des stations de radio destinées à de plus petites audiences communautaires, qui en l'occurrence auraient un plus grand effet mobilisateur que toute autre institution.

Introduction

The structural growth of Radio Tanzania Dar es Salaam (RTD) reflects a correlational symbiosis between the socio-political growth of Tanzania and the institutions of mass communication. The pre- and post-independence eras illustrate this fact. Radio broadcasting in Tanzania had its origins during the colonial period.¹ Introduced as an experimental service using an old ex-army transmitter in 1951, and serving only Dar es Salaam, the institution began to expand from 1955 into a country-wide service after new studios were built and powerful transmitters installed. The following year (1956), the colonial government established the Tanganyika Broadcasting Corporation (TBC)² under the Empire Services of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), with an objective of 'giving the service a more independent character'.³ Of the 45 or so major colonial public institutions, the TBC was described as 'the most important of all information services judged from the results of listener research...'⁴

After the establishment of this public corporation, which enjoyed 'considerable freedom of action'⁵, the next logical step was to mould it on the standards of its mentor — the BBC — in terms of structure and norms. Like all other colonial outfits, the best propagandists were seconded from the BBC to run the TBC. Similarly, at the close of the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s there were efforts to create 'dutiful offsprings' by attaching some Tanzanians to the BBC itself.

This first phase is mentioned here because broadcasting has a socio-political function in society, whatever the ideological inclination. If one examines the rationale for colonial introduction of radio broadcasting in Africa, one will find that the medium was introduced as a tool to assist the colonialists in governing the country. The period that broadcasting was introduced in Tanganyika is also the period the nationalists were intensely agitating for independence. The Tanganyika African Association and, later, the Tanganyika African National Union and the United Tanganyika Party, were active at this time, mobilising the people of Tanganyika against the colonial rule. Their principal aim was 'to prepare the people of Tanganyika for self-government and independence' and 'to work relentlessly for the establishment of a democratic form of government'.⁶ Nationalist mobilisation was done through public meetings and newspapers — forms of communication that are potentially effective, but given the poor infrastructure then, these forms could not compete with radio.⁷ Travelling out to meet the people was difficult due to the poor roads and lack of vehicles. Similarly, newspapers and newsletters could only reach the few literate people. The radio was embraced and developed tremendously to counter nationalism and foster colonial continuity. For a decade, the role of radio in

Tanganyika, whatever the output (information, education, entertainment), was to mobilize the people against nationalism.

Growth

Phase two begins with independence. The nationalist government inherited a radio that was normatively colonial in structure, form and content.⁸ Apart from the newspaper, *Uhuru*, the new nation did not own any other effective means of mass communication. The vastness of the country, and the need to rally the people for nation-building convinced the authorities that, although the Tanganyika Broadcasting Corporation was a parastatal organisation owned by the government, there was need to bring it closer to the government and the people. At this time it was felt there was urgent need to mobilize the people for self-reliance, national unity, anti-imperialism, and act as a mouthpiece of the government. In March 1965, Parliament passed a bill that again placed broadcasting directly under the control of the government.⁹ However, there was no attempt to re-state broadcasting objectives. The functions of information, education and entertainment were taken for granted, but with what motives, no one took the trouble to ask.

The new organisation was called Radio Tanzania Dar es Salaam, and it is still called so today. What is striking is the phenomenal growth of broadcasting that occurred within a decade later. Apart from the national service, a commercial service was established as a separate channel in 1967. Altogether Radio Tanzania Dar es Salaam had five channels, capable of transmitting simultaneously. Within the same decade, RTD built medium-wave booster stations upcountry to boost the national service signals from Dar es Salaam. By 1989, five stations were operational, and there are plans to put up three more. One feature that has remained unchanged from the colonial days is that all programmes are edited, sanctioned and transmitted from Dar es Salaam.

Functions

Each channel has a specific role to play in the overall scheme of broadcasting as a social institution. In the frame of the nation's superstructure, RTD is, of course, an instrument of socialization and propaganda. Although there is no document detailing what RTD should do, it is generally agreed that the following are its main functions:¹⁰

- a) To inform the people of what is happening in and outside the country, so that with an informed mind, Tanzanians can make rational decisions affecting their lives.
- b) To educate the people on effective ways of eradicating illiteracy, poverty and disease.
- c) To safeguard the independence, peace, security and unity of the nation.

- d) To mobilize and motivate the people in the implementation of the policy of *Ujamaa* and self-reliance.
- e) To participate in the liberation of Africa by supporting liberation movements and countering imperialist propaganda.
- f) To foster co-operation among African countries in the economic, social and political fields with a view to bringing about total African unity.
- g) To support the politics of good neighbourliness, non-alignment, and all efforts geared at creating new world economic and information order in the interest of poor nations.
- h) To promote peace and justice in the world.

These functions would influence the structure, form and content of RTD broadcasting. The National Service, for example, airs programmes that deal with national independence, *Ujamaa* building, the boosting of productivity in agriculture and other industries, and the promotion of the national culture. The External Service Channel is entrusted with programmes dealing with the liberation of Africa, good neighbourliness, support of African unity and to publicise Tanzania outside the country — a public relations function. The Commercial Service, unlike commercial broadcasting elsewhere, has a complementary function to the National Service. It informs the people of the various services and goods produced and available in the country, and educates them on how to consume and get the most out of them. In fact, it goes even further: it also educates the industrialists on ways and means of realising higher profits. It whets the appetite of the consumer. As the nation increases its turn-over so does advertising to find markets for the goods and services. The Schools Service does supplement the work of teachers in formal education and socialization of the young.

Effective Mobilization

To mobilize in this context means rallying a people for a particular cause, so that they act in a prescribed manner in achieving set objectives. This entails education, persuasion, agitation and even intense propaganda. The radio mobilizes the people by first making them aware of the situation, then through more information the people get interested or see the need to act, or act through fear of some kind. There are, however, key elements that determine effective mobilization: well thought-out objectives, message consumption and the receiver's interests.

Objective

The functions of Radio Tanzania do not guarantee that the people targetted will act according to the wishes of the communicator. In a communication situation, there must be an objective, and that is where programme planning starts. First, the objective as determined by communicator and listener needs. The question is: are RTD's programmes based on well spelt-out objectives? Are the producers conscious of these objectives whenever they prepare or sanction a programme for broadcasting? To be able to mobilize, the programme planning process, even at the macro level, must be able to answer the questions:

- a) information, yes, but with what objective?
- b) education, yes, but with what objective?
- c) entertainment, yes, but with what objective?

The three are but means of achieving mobilization.

Radio Consumption

Message reach is another criterion in any mobilization endeavour. Message reach is a function of receiver availability, adequate transmission signal and constant listening habit.

Receivers: No one can tell with accuracy how many radio receivers are in the country. It is, however, safe to assume that in towns at least every household has one or more receivers. A study done in the rural northern zone of Tanzania, found out that 60 percent of the rural population owns a radio set, although not all were functioning. These were either in disuse or lacked dry-cell batteries.¹¹ The average audience at peak hours was around two-thirds, which makes radio by far the most common consumed medium in the rural areas. It is assumed also that the other zones with a booster facility have similar audience behaviour. In fact, when the Southern Zone gets a booster facility, it will be safe to state that Radio Tanzania Dar es Salaam is well heard all over the country.

Audience Interests: A strong broadcasting signal is one of the incentives for radio listening. The other is programme appeal: the extent to which the overall station output relates to the lives of the listener. The distinction here would be between rural and urban areas, between geographical locations and between demographic differentiation.

Rural vs Urban: It is now a cliché to say that Tanzanian media, RTD included, are 'too urban-biased, too urban-oriented and too urban-looking to be of satisfactory service to the rural people.'¹² In recent studies (Mwaffisi 1988, Ullamaija 1986), broadcast output was found to

be predominantly urban, especially news stories. Dar es Salaam city alone, for example, is source to 41 percent of all domestic news items.¹³ The regions outside Dar es Salaam account for 56 percent, which, unfortunately—due to the urban-based reporters, are also urban-oriented. The rural areas and villages are rarely mentioned unless the 'big men' from Dar es Salaam or the regional headquarters tour them.

According to the study by Mwaffisi, there is a slight improvement towards rural coverage of news — Dar had dropped to 37 percent after RTD had decided to station production units in seven zones of the country, compared with the situation in 1986. But even this gain on the part of the regions may not mean much to the rural areas, since, as S. Hegga, a former programmes controller said: 'Because of the shortage of manpower we are forced not to do indepth reporting, but simply scratch the news to keep people abreast of what is happening in the rural areas'.

Another study by Ullamaija Kivikuru (1987) found out that news and information are by far the most popular talk programme format of RTD (27%); but due to factors like lack of communication and transport facilities, the need to promote national unity, manpower shortage and professional disorientation, 90 percent of this output is centred on speeches and activities of government and party leaders.¹⁴

Demographic and Social Groups

In studies done on the audience of RTD, all age groups listen to the station with the younger generation more addicted than others, although for quite different interests. The general programme preference profile is like this:

- Youth: News and current affairs,
Pop music and greetings programmes, Sports.
- Middle-aged: News and current affairs,
Death announcements,
Religious Programmes,
Music.

The older generation would add political programmes on the list to precede music. The average listening time is one hour to 1½ hours, and is slightly more in urban areas. Rural women in this study do not show any preferences of their own. However, they would like to see more programmes on women and children aired, although they themselves listen rarely on their own.

Mobilization as a conscious effort would tend to employ certain programme formats over others because through them elements of propaganda, education and manipulation can be deployed. Adult education, drama, songs, women and children's programmes are the

most ideal. The quantity of adult education programming over RTD is quite substantial (11%), while others are relatively small: drama (1%), women's programmes (1%), and children (2%).¹⁵

In adult education RTD lumps all social and special interest groups together. Since airtime and channel are limited, most programmes are 15 minutes long with single editions a week. As more institutions get more and more conscious of the need for mediated information, so will be the pressure over RTD for airtime. However, RTD should be cautious and devote airtime to institutions that are serious with crucial broadcast needs of the people.

Geographical Location

In a vast land mass like Tanzania, people have diverse living styles, social and economic differentiation. Of prime concern is the economic activities of the people: fishing, pastoralism, plantation, agriculture, cereals farming, civic and industry workers in cities and towns. Communication needs of these sectors are bound to be different, hence the need for a differentiated content as well. In single channel operations, as is the case with RTD, broadcasts for one sector may alienate audiences in another. Normally the following happens: switching off the receiver, turning to other stations, or just leaving it on, but paying no attention to it. In each case, the station loses popularity. This, to a great extent, does explain the popularity of foreign radio stations, especially in the border areas.

Broadcasting As A Major Development Tool

It is interesting to note that the architects of the Arusha Declaration (blueprint for developing Tanzania on socialist lines) rightly recognised the potential of radio in bringing about steady national development. All major means of mass communication were therefore nationalised.¹⁶ During the birth of this declaration, RTD was already a government department. The declaration drew the parameters and terms of reference under which broadcasting would operate.

We remember vividly the mass rallies that followed the promulgation, and which were broadcast live over Radio Tanzania. It was indeed a media event. No one can tell for sure what would have happened if radio was not used to mobilize the people during that critical time in the history of the country. The spontaneous mass rallies all over the country show what people can do if properly mobilized for a particular cause, unlike today where party leaders first get the orientation before a major policy is promulgated.

In 1967 it was only the few national leaders who knew about the

declaration. The rest of the country was left at the mercy of the media. It can, therefore, be said that since independence, the Arusha Declaration offered RTD a major opportunity for mass mobilization. In between independence and the Arusha Declaration, the political slogans were: 'independence and work', 'independence and unity', and for some years people's self-reliance and national building activities dominated broadcast themes of the RTD. It was necessary then for RTD to be concerned in various ways with rationalising, perpetuating and fostering loyalty or conformity to the new nationalist regime.

The biggest task then was the ideologization of the nation: from feudal-colonial-capitalist practice and mentality to a brand of socialism as expounded by the author, Dr. J.K. Nyerere. An enduring reminder of this task is the radio programme, *'Comment After the News'*, which came on the air right after the announcement of the Arusha Declaration. By using known episodes and popular folk tales, the programme captivated audiences the like that has never been before, and up to today it is by far the most popular among all current affairs programmes.¹⁷

Another wave of massive radio mobilization witnessed was during the villagization programme, when by the mid 1970s more than 13 million people had moved to 7,684 villages.¹⁸ Although it worked well theoretically as a democratic structure, there was a big gap of low political consciousness among villagers which radio and the other media had to fill.

Nyerere admitted in 1977: 'And the radio has been used as an educational (political) medium, for it reaches farther and more quickly into our villages than any other form of communication'.¹⁹ In fact, in the late 1960s, the Information Services had planned to provide radio sets to *Ujamaa* villages as part of a five-year development plan.²⁰ It was admitted then that 'the radio today is the only instrument of propaganda that can reach our people even in the rural areas directly and effectively. It is therefore a crucial instrument for mobilising the masses for development'.²¹

Radio was central in the operation villages campaign. Another campaign in which the radio played a crucial role is the literacy campaign that started in the early 1970s. First, it was a call for alphabetization in the 1960s, then to planned radio broadcasts to illiterates and their teachers. The Mwanza Literacy Project and the Universal Primary Education Campaigns owe their successes mainly to radio programmes which complemented other reading materials.

Another example of the use of radio for mass mobilization was the 1973 'Man is Health Campaign' (*Mtu ni Afya*). Through organised listening and discussion groups throughout the country and the extensive use of interviews and dramatic sketches in the actual broadcasts, people were moved into action, especially on environmental health.²² The writer of this critique happened to be a programmes

producer then at the RTD, and remembers well the efforts of RTD on its own in making the campaign a success. Every programmes officer was given a manual on the campaign prepared by the Ministry of Health. It was upon the producer to reproduce the messages contained in the booklet in his/her programmes. Music, drama, interviews, poetry and request programmes were loaded with hints, instructions, advice and plans of action on environmental health. In the announcers' booths of the various services, similar booklets were placed for announcers on duty to quote and cite messages appropriate for the occasion. It was also used as a filler between programmes. In this way, the airwaves were saturated with 'man is health' messages. Everyone admitted then that the success of the campaign in a big way could be attributed to RTD.

Food shortages hit the nation in 1973 and 1974, and it was the massive imports that prevented large numbers of people from dying. The disaster could have been lessened, if not averted, if the nation had more acreage under cultivation, used irrigation and practised better farming and crop management. These factors were within people's control, and therefore, what was needed was a fresh impetus in revitalizing the agricultural sector. A massive campaign was launched in what was known as *Chakula Ni Uhai* (Food is Life). In all, there were 18 radio programmes broadcast twice a week for 18 weeks.²³ One year after this campaign, Tanzania became a net exporter of food.

Then came the Kagera War in 1978. It is this war, more than anything else, that Tanzanians will remember always as an event that the media played a crucial rôle in determining its success. Of course, like any other war situation, media propaganda is a vital feature. Success, sometimes, if not always, is determined by the extent to which the media have mobilized the people for war, and on the enemy side, against the war. In this particular case, Radio Tanzania Dar es Salaam employed the services of announcers who could speak well the major languages of Uganda. RTD also beamed the broadcasts to the war zone and into Uganda generally. It also sent its cream of 'dramatic' reporters to the war front for daily reports. Commentaries, reports, news casts, songs and poetry on the war formed the main content of broadcasts in all channels of RTD.

Using classic propaganda tactics, radio, more than any other medium, made people aware of the invasion from Uganda in 1978. Through interviews, eyewitness reports and others the whole nation deeply felt the loss of life and property that the enemy had inflicted on Tanzania. Through commentaries and reports of further aggression, the message sunk, that the enemy was bent on destroying Tanzania just to please the aggressor's ego. Here was a psychic case: an aggressor who is demented, and no one could tell when he would stop his madness. The then president

of Tanzania, J.K. Nyerere, went on the air and delivered this famous statement:

We have the reason,
We have the resources, and
We have the will to fight him (Idi Amin).

His speech, rationalizing Tanzania's retaliation, was repeated as many times as possible, and the whole nation went into a frenzy: Idi Amin (the snake) must go. The success of Tanzanian troops was given such favourable and dramatic reportage that everyone supported it by either enlisting for the war or giving money, services and property that could help to pay for the war. When the hour of glory came, it was all too colourfully and cheerfully broadcast that those who lost their lives became lifetime heroes. In the process RTD became experts in warfare broadcasting. An RTD man remained behind in Uganda to advise on how to mobilize the masses through broadcasting for reconstruction after the war.

The war against racketeers was another opportunity when the radio was used to its maximum in mobilising the people (1973-74). The then prime minister of Tanzania, the late E. Sokoine, went on the air several times to outline the fight against racketeering. He created so much fear in the racketeers that they abandoned hoarded goods, threw them into the streets, rivers, the ocean and bushes. Radio Tanzania has never created such fear in the minds of the people before, and probably will not for a long time to come. Cheats, embezzlers and misusers of public office, irrespective of their status, could be reported through a letters' programme that disclosed them. The programme promised that high authorities would make a follow-up of the allegations aired. It is still a popular programme today in the villages because it is the only way the common man can attack high authorities without reprisals.²⁴

The Practice

What has been the structure and management of RTD in ensuring effective mobilization of the people all these years? It will be remembered that RTD was created four years after independence. This medium was assigned new roles to play in the development of the country towards socialism and self-reliance after the promulgation of the Arusha Declaration. This political role was matched by leadership changes in the system of the mass media. From the early 1970s the Party publicity secretary was also chairman of the Party's sub-committee on mass media and Minister of Information. This committee ensured that RTD activities were in line with the political orientation of that time. This was strengthened by the appointment of Paul Sozigwa as director. He

was a party stalwart, and the ablest political media propagandist the country has ever known. He will be remembered most as pioneer of the programme *Comment After the News*, which he started writing soon after the announcement of the Arusha Declaration.

Under Sozigwa, the power of radio as a mobilizing tool was unleashed whenever an opportunity arose. All senior officers in 1972 and 1973 were sent to party ideological colleges, and upon their return to duty, RTD underwent a content reorientation to become a formidable instrument of politicization, economic development and liberation of Africa. An attempt was made to plan radio programmes objectively. Every producer was required to show how the contents and theme fitted in the scheme of political programming. Programme committees were established to screen content and programme objectives. The writer of this article was involved in this re-orientation of RTD. The motto then was to politicise through education, information and entertainment. This explains why the role of RTD in the campaigns was crucial, because the whole of RTD machinery was already tuned to undertake such assignments.

Programme Structure

The common tasks of informing, educating and entertaining were not taken as an end in themselves, as had been the case before the 1970s. These functions were given a role: as means to fulfill the political objective through selective information, education and entertainment.

By 1975, music content of the National Service was 47 percent, compared with 60 percent of the 1960s.²⁵ In 1978 it had gone down to 46 percent. Adult education programmes were systematized and formed about 20 percent of all the broadcast output. Programmes on development were prepared by RTD staff, and others by experts from the various development agencies of the Party and government. Today, 20 such agencies have used radio to mobilize people towards various development objectives.²⁶

Of significance in the programming process is the formation of sectoral programme advisory committees. The committee members came from institutions that broadcast over RTD. The first committee (Adult Education) was formed in 1974. By the end of 1988, six of these committees were in existence: Schools Broadcasting, Christian Religion, Moslem Religion, Adult Education, Commercial Broadcasting and Music.²⁷ Directives and policies of the Party and government are discussed and translated into programmes through the committees.

Form, Structure and Content: The Task Ahead

Radio broadcasting has always had an immense role to play in the development of Tanzania, mainly because, compared with other media, it is the most appropriate, and reaches the most people. Even after the massive alphabetization of the country, the press is still negligible and will continue for a long time to be saddled with the scanty, costly newsprint, transportation and distribution problems and urban orientatedness of content. This leaves radio, almost alone, to communicate to the masses irrespective of geographical location and status of the people.

The Arusha Declaration made it clear that the national media are strategic resources and must be used for national development. A national mass media policy thus came into being. This was strengthened by proclamations by Dr. Nyerere, during the take-over of the Lomhro newspaper, *The Standard*, and also during the first Party-sponsored mass media seminar in 1973. These have since then formed the permanent guidelines of the media, RTD included.

The RTD then re-defined policies for its channel services:

National Service: To safeguard national independence, peace, unity, building of socialism, promotion of national culture and increase productivity.

External Service: Participate in the liberation of Africa, give support to the OAU, promote good neighbourliness and publicise Tanzania outside.

Commercial Service: Stimulate consumption of goods and services produced in the country.

Schools Service: Augment teachers' work and socialization of the young.

With this set up, guided by the greater national political objective, and managed by political cadres, RTD became a perfect mobilizing machine. This was achieved through campaign support and through adult education programming. The campaigns in which RTD played a critical role are the villagization of the country, literacy (including Universal Primary Education), Man is Health, Food is Life, the war against Uganda and the antiracketeering campaign. Some of those campaigns, like the racketeering one, have one programme still on the air, although it has lost much of its steam.

Adult education programming as a mobilising force has been through two main methods: intensified programmes for political awareness and outright propaganda, like the *Mazungumzo Baada ya Habari* (Comment after the News), *Ujumbe wa Leo* — (Message for Today), *Ujamaa Leo* (Ujamaa Today), *Fimbo ya Mnyonge* (Weapon of the Oppressed), *Dunia ya Mfanyakazi* (The World of the Worker), and others like Voice

of the Party, Youth, Learn Cooperatives, Call From the Regions, Poetry, Face to Face, Let us Sing and Self-Reliance (not on air now), were introduced expressly to reorientate and politicize listeners in various ways towards self-reliance and socialist democratic practice as the ultimate objective.

The other method was through education, leading to change in practice. The declared development goals after independence were the eradication of ignorance, poverty and disease. To accomplish these goals, it is the minds of the people that had to be affected through education — formal and vocational. That is why RTD, alone or in collaboration with development agents, broadcast programmes in the sectors of health, agriculture, animal husbandry, environment protection, and basic general education at the primary level. In fact primary school broadcasts are over the National Service, and are meant for everybody.

Radio broadcasting has always been a government undertaking, and few people have bothered to question the monopoly. The political explanation stems from the fear that opposition groups will easily get mass support if they get access to a radio station. Unfortunately, Africa of the 1960s and 1970s was bedevilled with coups and, in most cases, the battle for the possession of the radio station is all that determined the success or failure of the coup. Therefore, it was easier to physically guard one radio station than many flung around the country. Furthermore, station output could easily be controlled.

Tanzania has had a stable political system and national unity to an extent that the political maturity now prevailing in the country would make coup fears irrelevant, if not absurd. The chief engineer then, I Muhimbira, was the first official of RTD to publicly call for the decentralization of the broadcasting system in the country.²⁸ He uses two main arguments: first, the established booster stations would cover the whole country soon; second, it is now proved, through various scientific researches, that the effectiveness of the centralized RTD in local mobilization, especially in rural areas, is minimal.

The national development strategy of Tanzania now focuses on people within particular environments and stresses people's participation. For broadcasting to be effective in this context, there must be interaction between producers and consumers of programmes before they are planned and produced. This is important because it makes possible the consideration of the social, cultural and economic gaps that exist in the regions or zones. The second condition is that the development agents producing programmes must be those who are close to the people. The third, especially in instructional broadcasting, is that reception must be guided. If the above criteria are not operational, a dysfunction may occur, and RTD will fail in its function as a mobilizer.

Conclusion

Radio Tanzania Dar es Salaam has played a big part in transmitting information and elements of culture to the people, and there is no question about that. Based on studies in rural areas, RTD reaches about two-thirds of villagers everyday, whereas in urban areas the percentage could be closer to 100 percent. RTD's role as a vital resource in the development process has been underlined in various proclamations of the Party and government leadership. The Party Programme (1987/2002) is the latest to state what role the media has in the development process. In para 253, it is written (translations mine):

The main function of a Socialist Party is to propagate ideology and its decisions to the masses; counter false propaganda and expose the evils of capitalism and imperialist machinations. The mass media have a special role to play in this struggle.²⁹

This role has been performed by RTD over the years. There was introduction of special political programmes, involvement of the Party and its affiliates in producing radio programmes, ideologization of senior officers and embracing the dictum that broadcasting is propaganda.

In the area of development, RTD has played well its role in various national campaigns and general education of the masses in collaboration with development agencies. However, we must be cautious here in attributing whatever changes that have occurred to the RTD. According to research done in rural areas, the people admit that they rely on RTD for news and other information on the nation and outside the country. However, when asked about receiving information on their environment, and how this information has helped them better their living, the people gave negative answers. Development information for the majority of the people is not obtained from RTD, but elsewhere. The point is that national establishments like the RTD, normally cannot identify with the multiple needs and interests of the numerous communities of a vast country like Tanzania. General information always never arouses interest, and utility is low. This is why media specialists and sympathisers are calling for the decentralization of RTD, to give room to a broadcasting system that will facilitate access and participation in programme planning and production; and, above all, create units that will serve particular needs of local areas. Wilbur Schramm once wrote:

Local media are of great importance in social and economic development, not only because they are in a better position to know and serve the particular needs of local areas, but also because they make it easier for more people to have access to the media and therefore, to take part in public affairs.³⁰

Radio Tanzania Dar es Salaam would be facing the challenge of the 1990s if it started immediately using its booster stations to air local programmes. The historical and political climate that made mass

mobilization through radio possible in the past is no longer true today. Today Tanzanians are highly politicized, and have a social, cultural base on which to build a future. However, they need self-awareness of their potential in terms of ways and means of combating the immediate environment for a better living. This is a task for a broadcasting organisation that is closer to the people than present day RTD.

Over the years, a lot of congratulatory notes and remarks about the good work of RTD has emanated from national leaders, but we are yet to hear from the common man similar praises, which, in a way, says quite a lot about whose interests RTD is serving. The following handicaps, therefore, must be dealt with:

Development Communication: Development communication is being emitted substantially from RTD, but it fails to relate to group, sectoral and local environments. It is too general to arouse interest that will lead to action. Communicators in a way are forced to be general because RTD is national, hence the audience is Tanzanians — which culturally is an amorphous entity.

Community Participation: Booster stations (MW) are a welcome development towards zonalization of broadcasting. But better still, and it is not a far-fetched area, smaller stations could be more effective. Technological development has made sound broadcasting using frequency modulation economical. There are cases, as was with the Homa Bay experiment in Kenya, where the transmission equipment was wholly locally fabricated and assembled.³¹ In fact the closure of the station was due to its popularity and common man appeal, and this scared the leadership. Compared with the other bands (SW/MW), **frequency modulation** provides better sound quality and is less amenable to atmospheric conditions. These qualities are an incentive to continued listenership.

The Arusha Declaration is an alternative philosophy of development whereby the people are the key actors. The emphasis is on the needs of the people, self-reliance, endogeneity and ecological sustenance. In this respect, the focus is on the community as an autonomous entity, developing through utilization of resources at hand. The role of RTD in this, therefore, would be to be conscious of the situation of the rural population who politically live in legal communities already registered (villages). This would involve increasing the people's critical awareness, and motivating them to better themselves. RTD programmes, therefore, would feature people's needs, aspirations, their development potential, and their interaction with the environment.

Access and Participation: There are six expert committees that advise RTD on programmes of schools education, adult education, christian and moslem religions, commercial broadcasting and music. The experts

are the same persons that do the planning and production of their respective programmes. These committees, as the director of broadcasting, D. Wakati, once admitted, have mainly facilitated the handing down of directives from above (the Party and Government), and in turn, have given their opinions on the programmes of RTD.³² The committees are operating within the bureaucratic centralized system of RTD, and it is not people's or audience participation in this context.

Seven production centres have been operational since 1981. The hope was that this exercise would enable:

- a) listeners far from Dar es Salaam to more frequently participate in radio programmes;
- b) RTD to be closer to the people, hence know their needs, aspirations and their problems;
- c) RTD to broadcast development programmes from more regions than had hitherto been the case;
- d) RTD to involve the leadership (in villages and towns) in the planning and broadcasting of programmes.

These aims are in the right direction, only that the output of all the seven zones will be broadcast over a single channel RTD. The national character of RTD will further streamline the programmes, so that the audience is not the zone, but the whole nation.

So, unless a system is instituted whereby the public is involved in the programming processes (planning and production), and also in the management of the broadcasting organisation, the noble function of mass mobilization for development may elude the efforts of Radio Tanzania Dar es Salaam.

Notes and References

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