



South Sudan Community
Radio Audience Feedback
Study 2012-2013

A qualitative analysis of the opinions and information needs of listeners in Leer, Malaulkon, Turalei and Nasir



Internews
Local voices. Global change.

Acknowledgements

This research would not have been possible without the commitment and tremendous hard work of scores of people across South Sudan. Much appreciation to Internews Monitoring and Evaluation Officer Lazaro Akon Agok, who organized and led all of the focus groups in 2013. Appreciation also to Emily LeRoux-Rutledge, a Ph.D. research student at the London School of Economics, for her assistance in 2013. The moderators, translators and research assistants across both years and in all four communities were an invaluable resource. And most especially, our gratitude to the community members of Turalei, Leer, Maluakon and Nasir, who gave so freely of their time, knowledge and opinions about the significance of radio in their lives.

About the authors

Nina McMurry served as the Monitoring and Evaluation Officer for Internews in South Sudan from June 2011 to July 2013. Under Nina's leadership, the team has interviewed 4,381 survey respondents; conducted 282 leader surveys and key informant interviews; and held 73 focus group discussions with 584 participants to better understand and adapt to the needs of communities in regards to their radio station. Nina is currently at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in Cambridge, Massachusetts studying for her Ph.D. in Political Science with a research focus on governance and political accountability in post-conflict countries.

Chris Lockhart has conducted and published scores of research assignments throughout sub-Saharan Africa, Western Australia, and North America, and has worked on a wide variety of community based projects in media, education, health care, cultural heritage, and environmental conservation. He has a Ph.D. from the Joint Program in Medical and Cultural Anthropology at the University of California, Berkeley and San Francisco, and is the Founder and Director of The Speaking Earth Institute, a non-profit organization dedicated to supporting the revitalization of indigenous knowledge around the world.

All photos by Camille Lepage, for Internews



Internews is an international media development organization whose mission is to empower local media worldwide to give people the news and information they need, the ability to connect, and the means to make their voices heard. Through our programs, we improve the reach, quality, and sustainability of local media, enabling them to better serve the information needs of their communities. Formed in 1982, Internews is a 501(c)(3) organization headquartered in California. Internews has worked in more than 70 countries, and currently has offices in Africa, Asia, Europe, the Middle East, and North America. Internews' work in South Sudan is funded by the United States Agency for International Development.

Administrative Headquarters, PO Box 4448, Arcata, CA95518 USA
+1 707 826-2030

Washington, DC Office, 1640 Rhode Island Ave. NW Suite 700, Washington, DC 20036 USA
+ 1 202 833-5740
www.internews.org info@internews.org
www.facebook.com/internews
www.twitter.com/internews

Contents

Introduction // 3

Purpose and Objectives // 3

Methodology // 4

Key Findings Part 1: General Themes // 6

A. The importance of community context // 6

The special case of violence and insecurity // 6

Other chronic problems of a fragmented community // 7

B. Information needs // 11

1. Governance and development // 11

2. Security and the promotion of peace // 12

3. Crime and punishment // 12

4. Putting youth on the right track // 13

5. Livelihoods // 13

6. Health // 14

7. Group rights issues // 14

8. Local-global connections // 15

9. Local community topics and announcements // 15

C. The role of community radio // 16

1. Community radio meets the practical needs of local people and communities // 17

2. Community radio is proactive and oriented towards programming that has a potential social impact // 17

3. Community radio is an integral part of development // 17

4. Community radio unifies people // 17

5. Community radio plays a watchdog role // 18

6. Community radio supports the disenfranchised and people on the margins of society // 18

D. Information sources and access problems // 19

Information sources // 20

Information access problems // 21

Key Findings Part II: Station Specific Summaries // 23

Naath FM (Leer, Unity State) // 23

Sobat FM (Nasir, Upper Nile State) // 25

Nhomlaau FM (Malualkon, Northern Bahr el Ghazal State) // 26

Mayardit FM (Turalei, Warrap State) // 27

Recommendations & Considerations // 28

Introduction



Internews launched its community radio project in Southern Sudan in 2006, less than a year after Southern autonomy was established with the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) and the Government of Sudan. Today, seven years after the project's inception and just over two years into South Sudan's existence as an independent nation, the community radio project includes a network of four radio stations that bring vital information to people who have known little beyond violence and insecurity for much of their lives. The stations (and their locations) include: Naath FM (Leer, Unity State), Sobat FM (Nasir, Upper Nile State), Nhomlaau FM (Malualkon, Northern Bahr el Ghazal State) and Mayardit FM (Turalei, Warrap State – which also broadcasts in the disputed border region of Abyei). Together, these four radio stations have an estimated listening audience of over 570,000 people.

By all accounts, the community radio stations have had a remarkable and positive impact on the communities they serve. From early on, they have been a source of tremendous pride, even serving as a symbol of independence itself. Radio is not only widely cited as the primary source of information in these areas, but as the most trusted one as well. Individuals often describe the community radio stations in particular as “bringing light” to otherwise “information dark” communities. For many people, it is the first time in their lives that they have heard news and information broadcast in their own language.

The overwhelmingly positive response to community radio is reflected in the number of people who are aware of each station in their respective broadcast areas. In all but one instance, Internews' community radio stations rank as the most recognized (and the fourth station – Nhomlaau FM – ranks a close second behind a locally based Christian station). These rankings are telling given that South Sudanese who become aware of a station tend to be both loyal and frequent listeners.

In order to maintain and build upon the initial successes of the community radio project, it is critical to have a continuous and up-to-date understanding of the communities themselves. While audience feedback on programming and performance is the bedrock of community radio, it is particularly important along the border regions between South Sudan and Sudan. Since Internews stations are located in all but one of South Sudan's five border states with the North, the communities they serve have experienced the full force of the decades-long civil war. Subsequently, the problems are enormous: the potential for widespread and ethnic-based violence remains high, there are tens of thousands of returnees and internally displaced people, and the trauma and emotional distress of prolonged warfare have all created an uncertain and fluid environment. Moreover, the communities are remote and inaccessible by car for much of the year, contributing to their marginalized status in terms of development activities, which are centered for the most part in and around the capital city of Juba.

The challenge for Internews' community radio stations is to remain both attentive and responsive to the information needs of communities where such needs are pivotal for maintaining peace and rebuilding a healthy, vibrant society in the wake of Africa's longest civil war. The 2012-13 Audience Feedback Study is an important part of these efforts.



Purpose and Objectives



The purpose of the 2012-2013 Audience Feedback Study was to assess the current information needs of the populations served by Internews' network of community radio stations in South Sudan, and how the stations are meeting those needs. Specific objectives include the following:

- to highlight the information needs and access problems of individuals and how they might vary in terms of age, gender, and other factors;
- to gain a better understanding of the interplay between information needs/access problems and local conditions;
- to gather feedback from individuals on the impact and role of their community radio station;
- to gather feedback on the preferences and opinions of listeners with respect to specific radio programs, including suggestions for improvement;
- to identify the various ways that individuals interact with their community radio station (or what might prevent them from doing so).

It is important to note that the Audience Feedback Study was conducted during the same general timeframe as the South Sudan National Audience Survey, a nationally representative survey commissioned by Internews with a similar purpose and objectives. While the national survey was a sweeping, quantitative description of the media landscape across South Sudan as a whole, the present study was a more intimate affair; it brought together small groups of individuals to discuss their opinions and information needs in a more open-ended manner. The resulting qualitative feedback from this study provides an invaluable and more in-depth understanding of many issues that are highlighted by the national media survey. Each survey project should be viewed as working in conjunction with the other.

Methodology



Data collection was conducted during 2012 and 2013, and included a combination of focus groups and individual interviews with key informants. All focus groups were conducted in the towns where the four community radio stations were located: Nasir, Leer, Malaulkon, and Turalei. Individual interviews were conducted in the same locations with the exception of Upper Nile State during 2013, when some interviews were conducted with key informants (traditional authorities) in two villages approximately 20-30 kilometers from Nasir Town (but still within the broadcasting range of the community radio station). In general, both focus groups and interviews occurred in an even distribution across all four geographic locations.

Focus groups were conducted in the local language (either Dinka or Nuer) by experienced, South Sudanese moderators who were fluent in that particular language. Participants were selected in consultation with community leaders and local authorities, according to specific demographic criteria (specifically age and gender). Discussions were recorded with the consent of participants, and they were informed that their responses would be confidential. Participants were given a small token (either snacks or 10 SSP of phone credit) to thank them for their participation.

A total of 45 focus groups were conducted (30 in 2012 and 15 in 2013). Each focus group consisted of 10 people, giving a total of 450 focus group participants. Focus group discussions were recorded, transcribed and translated. Table 1 provides a breakdown of focus group participants based on their age cohort and gender.

Table 1: Focus group participants: gender and age cohort

	16-25 years	26-35 years	36-45 years	46 and above	TOTAL
Males	11%	13%	13%	7%	44%
Females	16%	13%	16%	11%	56%
TOTAL	27%	26%	29%	18%	100%

Interviews with key informants were conducted in either the local language or, in some cases, English or Arabic. Key informants included a mix of community leaders, traditional authorities, government officials, and staff who worked at community based organizations (CBOs) and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

A total of 77 interviews were conducted (48 in 2012 and 29 in 2013). Of these, 44 were conducted with traditional authorities, 29 with staff of CBOs, and 4 with government workers. The vast majority of key informants were men (with the exception of 6 women) due in large part to gender discrepancies associated with traditional authority status as well as with most CBO and government positions in South Sudan.



Key Findings Part I: General Themes



A. The importance of community context

In every discussion and interview that was held as part of this study, individuals clearly defined their information needs (including everything from information sources and access problems to specific programming preferences) in very personal terms. For most people, information and the role and impact of radio were inseparable from the issues and happenings that they confronted in their households and communities on a daily basis. Therefore, it is important to step back and take a closer look at how South Sudanese who participated in this study spoke about their lives and communities.

Overall, the most pervasive theme for people – despite location, demographic characteristics, or group affiliation – centered on the various challenges and obstacles they faced personally and in terms of building healthy, vibrant communities. In short: life was a struggle. As they discussed their information needs and the role of radio in their lives and communities, individuals did so against a general backdrop of adversity and sense of powerlessness.

The special case of violence and insecurity

Among the many challenges identified by study participants, those associated with violence and insecurity were notable because they were also discussed at great length by everybody regardless of location or demographic characteristics. This is not surprising; the general region where the community radio stations operate has experienced a great deal of conflict in recent years, and people understandably expressed concern over the circumstances surrounding the conflicts and specific acts of violence that had occurred in recent years. People were worried about the ongoing tension and intermittent fighting between the Sudan People's Liberation Army and Sudan Armed Forces (which erupted in Unity State during data collection activities in 2012), the uncertain situation in the contested Abyei region (as reflected in the destruction of Abyei Town in 2011, the killing of the paramount chief of the Ngok Dinka in 2013, and Misseriya threats of war over the referendum process, also in 2013), and the internal conflict between the Murle people and the South Sudanese government in Jonglei State (which was of particular concern to residents of Nasir Town and surrounding areas). In addition to these wider conflicts, individuals pointed to a sharp increase in youth gang activity and the chronic problem of inter-tribal cattle raiding, both of which resulted in frequent and deadly clashes.

Together, these conflicts and acts of violence made for a volatile and dangerous environment:

The country is not very clear. There are even some rebels. So when you go and do your own thing like cultivating, so you may be caught up there and take somewhere where you might end your life. So it is very hard for people to go to the rural area to cultivate there.

-Female FGD participant, aged 16-35 years, Leer

We heard that the cattle were raided in Ajak Kuac, [an administrative payam]. They killed people including my uncle, and our cattle were all raided, [they] have taken them all. Our lives are depending on cattle and crops that we grow. This is what has made us weak because our cattle are being raided. If it is the cow that you bought for your daughter to be married and the cow is raided from you, it will not be good.

-Male FGD participant, aged 26-45 years, Malaulkon

There are so many problems with us here ... People become so tired of it all the time. The news keeps flowing all the time that a person was killed. People don't feel anymore that people are really dying, it sound like the death of any animal. We have a weakness caused by the issue of conflict that is affecting us badly.

-Female FGD participant, aged 16-25 years, Turalei

Now we have bad people and good people because there are cattle raiders and people who are hijacking things because we are still killing ourselves. So the government is not actually functioning the way it should be. Now we don't walk to places like the way we used to go where we need to go because there's no protection from the government side.

-Male traditional authority, aged 40, Nasir

There was a general sense that violence could erupt at any time and one simply had to accept that as a fact of life. In fact, people in all four locations discussed violence in a similar manner: as something that was eruptive and hard to predict, both in terms of timing and location. In many ways, then, it was the potential for violence that was of greater concern because it was ever-present and created a high-risk environment for most people. It also had the greatest impact on people's lives because it led them to take daily precautions and security measures. The most common among these involved limiting one's movements and daily routines. This had important consequences, one of which was a heightened need and appreciation for information generally as well as specific types of information (which will be discussed in the following section).

Other chronic problems of a fragmented community

Individuals from all locations identified a long list of problems and challenges beyond violence (though in many instances they were described as overlapping with violence or in terms of a causal relationship). Most other problems were chronic in nature; individuals described them as ongoing, persistent issues that undermined community wellbeing and made their daily lives much more difficult. Primary among these were:

- lack of educational opportunities;
- lack of jobs and the high cost of living;
- health-related issues;
- food insecurity;
- the rural-urban divide (in terms of uneven development);
- the decline of tradition;
- problems associated with specific groups, especially youth, women, and returnees.

Unlike violence, the significance of these issues varied in terms of location, demographic characteristics and/or group affiliation. In fact, the significance of these lay in part in how they revealed the fragmented and heterogeneous nature of the communities themselves.

Women were the most notable group in this regard. Generally, women from all four locations had similarly strong opinions of their plight. They tended to define most problems in terms of gender and were often highly articulate in doing so:

We really know that South Sudan is independent as a country. And other counties are not like Twic, the county is very small, and there is nothing that has been placed here for women, not even like education for uneducated women. That is why we are saying that the country gained her independence but there is no women's rights now; women are still depressed. Women during the struggle contributed willingly by pounding grain and carrying food to the frontline. We do really believe that it is really our country but the result has not been felt by women.

-Female FGD participant, aged 16-25 years, Malaulkon

Now we don't have our rights, and the reason why we don't have our rights is because we are not educated. If we were educated we would be able to claim our rights. What brought weakness was the war. Because of the war the girls have been prevented from going to school. [And also] because they had a lot of things to do at home, like taking care of the cows. The girl is the one who has to sweep the compound, fetch water, cook at home, and do all the housework. Then there was not a good place to fetch water. People went to very far places, but now there are hand pumps near us. People used to carry water with pots, not even jerry cans, so this was the reason why we did not go to school.

-Female FGD participant, aged 16-25 years, Turalei

In contrast, men (particularly older men) were far less likely to raise the topic of women's issues or to associate any problem in their respective communities with women specifically. Even when explicitly referring to the plight of women, there was a tendency among men to frame the issue as one having to do with the decline of tradition. Specifically, the war years combined with modern influences have led to a breakdown in traditional culture, which undermined a woman's position in the household/community and made her vulnerable to bad behaviors. Men framed other problems in terms of cultural decline as well, particularly those related to youth issues, food insecurity, and returnees.

A major concern with respect to children and youth involved access to schools and decent educational opportunities. Yet many parents identified a host of obstacles that prevented them from helping their children receive an education. Women in particular expressed considerable frustration in this area since they held the customary role and responsibility of raising children in the household. The overall result was that problems involving a child's education brought up a whole host of issues from gender inequalities to lack of jobs and the high cost of living:

...for a very small child, you pay 2,000 per year. Why is that? This is not a school at all. This is not the peace of mind that they promised us. If you just want to take your small child to school, you should have to pay less than that. Now that we have independence, we are going to put our country in a worse situation by raising school fees, because some families cannot afford it. School now is like a market. It's not a school anymore because you pay too much money. The teachers are just like traders. Women are also left behind. They don't have the chance to go to school. What they do is just educate their children. They have to be traders themselves in order to take their children to school, because that's too much money for children. Leaving children uneducated is not good, so women are struggling to take their children to school. If a man is married to three women, from that kind of situation, two will leave and then he will be left with one struggling to take the children to school. If they want to improve the situation of the country, they have to lower the price of school and maybe they can educate women as well. Even if a woman is a trader, she can still maintain her house in order. Like I mentioned before, some people have cars and some people are walking. Some people have their fields of crops. What are they doing? They are trying to improve their life. And then when they get back home and they hear that their child has been suspended because of school fees. Is that independence? The child is out of school because there is no money. And then everybody will judge the woman because her children are out of school. They will call her a "trader" because they will say she is taking the money for school fees and using it for something else. But women have nothing to do with that. Independence is not just having a stable house with your door locked, it's about having peace of mind when you go to sleep, without thinking of what you should do tomorrow.

-Female FGD participant, aged 16-25 years, Malaulkon

Individuals from all four locations highlighted problems associated with children who were not attending school. It was clearly one of the most 'visible' issues for people because they associated it with a notable increase in the number of street kids, youth gangs, and children who simply "loitered" in the central market place. As a result, it was relatively easy to associate youth issues with other community problems, particularly violence and the decline of traditional culture.

Another important challenge that was widely identified and discussed involved returnees and their integration into the community. The returnee issue was particularly evident in Turalei and Malaulkon, where many people acknowledged that tensions between returnees and the host communities were high. Returnees themselves were strongly unified around these issues, so much so that they viewed most problems through the lens of being a returnee. Their overall concern was a lack of assistance in helping them to integrate into the host community:

Now since we were in Khartoum, we were really knowing that our country was under referendum. That is why we came back. We were actually staying in the good life. When we came here, we started suffering. Why? Because our children are not in school. So now, they are just staying, no education, no proper feeding for them, even though there is no fighting.

-Female FGD participant, age 16-35 years, Turalei (Majak Aheer)

So the life situation currently is worse, because there are differences between us and the host community we found here. When we came back from Khartoum, when we were living there, we were making our life through manual works...But when we came here, it is very difficult to get manual work. And last year, those who were able to get support from their relatives are not able to get it this year because when you go back to the relatives or your brother to ask for something, if he has a goat or a cow he will tell you last year I gave you something so this year I should not give you anything. Let your government support you and those who followed you from Khartoum. So our relationship with them is really hard. There are differences.

-Male FGD participant, aged 35 and above, Malaulkan (Kanajak)

Community members who were not returnees (at least not recent returnees) often viewed returnees as an external threat and a fundamental reason for the overall decline of traditional culture:

But the way they behave is not the way we behave in our culture...they take some ladies and girls to the hotel and that was not there before in our culture. It was not there in our culture to be taking a woman or a girl to the lodge. Now they teach some other ladies bad manners. You can get a woman moving from this man to this man while she is not married. Before you cannot get a woman moving from this man to this man. You can just get a woman sitting in her place. For them now, they take it as an easy thing. And therefore they may get sick very fast. Now they take them to the lodge and if you get it [HIV], it will not be easy for you.

-Male FGD participant, aged 16-25 years, Maluakon

While non-returnees tended to frame returnee issues in these terms, they also highlighted more fundamental factors leading to an increase in tension between returnees and the host community. In most cases, these were similar to things that returnees themselves identified, including a lack of job opportunities and community services combined with limited access to key resources such as land and boreholes.

A final issue that individuals from all four locations discussed involved the uneven development between the capital city of Juba and their own rural communities. They often pointed to the high cost of living in this respect:

About business also and about people who sell in the market, it is being discussed on a regular basis because the price of commodities was very expensive and this area is far from people who are living – it is Juba where goods reach early but it will take time to come from Juba to here, transport will be very difficult and if the trader brings goods he will assign prices according to costs and expenses spent. In this case, it will be a problem and these are the things that are being discussed and I like them because the trader has right, and the buyer has his right and there is a need for comparison. It is better to be discussed as that is the solution...so if you see that you have a commodity that has not cost you money, you can reduce the price so that those with little money can afford it and there will be an understanding.

-Male FGD participant, aged 26-45 years, Turalei

It was apparent that all communities faced similar problems related to their remote locations and distance from Juba, all of which were reinforced by South Sudan's lack of infrastructure.

People also pointed to a similar kind of urban-rural divide between the four towns where the community radio station was physically located and the outlying villages surrounding them. As one individual from Maluakon put it when describing this more localized form of uneven development: "...if you walk around outside towns, you will really see what is happening." This was evident in Upper Nile State when discussions were held in several villages located approximately 20-30 kilometres from Nasir Town. Here, lack of access to essential services was a particularly acute and overriding problem:

This is one of the problems in this village because if the woman is trying to deliver we have to carry her to the nearest town like Nasir or Ulang. This might take one hour for us to carry a woman so we want to be helped in that situation.

-Male FGD participant, aged 35 and over, Nasir (Ulang County)

Outlying villages were unique in other ways as well. Individuals were less concerned about jobs and food security issues, possibly because so many were involved in subsistence farming as well as grazing and fishing activities. In addition, communication problems and limited information sources were highlighted as major issues alongside other problems (this will be discussed in greater detail in the following sections).

In general, individuals and communities in all four locations faced enormous challenges. Most people described their problems as significant enough to undermine their personal livelihoods, household security, and the overall wellbeing of their community. The exuberance that many South Sudanese felt at independence was being overshadowed by unrealized expectations related to security and development in a post-independence environment. Yet these problems were not evenly distributed across the various cross-sections of society or in terms of location; individuals' emphasized different problems and/or viewed similar problems from unique perspectives. This is key for understanding how they defined their information needs and the role and impact of community radio.

B. Information needs

Not surprisingly, the information needs of people from all four locations were extensive. They are summarized here into nine general areas: governance and development, security and promotion of peace, crime and punishment, putting youth on the right track, livelihoods, health, group rights issues, local community topics and announcements, and local-global connections. While these areas overlap, they were separated into different topics here because people tended to discuss each one at length and as having relatively unique features.

1. Governance and development

People from all locations expressed a need for more information on governance and development. In general, they tended to associate the two areas, discussing democracy and governance as one:

We appreciate Mayardit FM. While they talk about democracy and governance but our people here – since we came here – we don't see that there is improvement about democracy and governance. Our people are suffering very much here. Sometimes we appreciate Mayardit FM because they give advice. If we apply that it can support our life. We don't see that people are really following democracy and good governance.

-Female FGD participant, 16-35, Majak Aheer

Individuals also saw this area as one where they could hear directly from government officials, as well as engage directly with them (via radio shows with a call-in format, for example). They expressed considerable interest in having government representatives discuss what could be complex concepts and ideas involving democracy, how it is actually implemented, and the role of local community leaders. They were also interested in holding leaders accountable for what was widely thought to be a lack of development in their respective areas. They believed this to be a distinctly poor example of governance and democracy.

2. Security and the promotion of peace

As with governance and development, almost everyone viewed national and regional security issues as a critical area for information. This included delivering timely updates on any outbreaks of violence, large-scale movements of troops/people, and the current status of peace negotiations, the referendum process, and related efforts to foster stability. Developing various media-based, proactive strategies to promote peace was considered a significant part of this area.

Like when we have the bombing that was there, people are so keen to listen to news to hear what is going to take place: how are we supposed to move? Is there going to be an evacuation? Is there going to be another attack? ... So the radio becomes a source of key information for them. When there are these border conflicts, people always turn to their radios because they know the information will be passed to them from there.
-NGO worker, Leer

So these people also need to be told not to fight. This information is still also a gap... People need to be told if we need development, we don't fight... Conferences can also be held where a youth group can sit and discuss. So I feel those are still gaps. People need to learn of course from the past. Because they have lost most of their relatives. Why should they again need to kill themselves and they don't need anything from these people. They can just live in peace so they can develop their country.
-Community leader and government worker, Leer

In general, there were two aspects to the information needs associated with security and peace. The first included immediate and up-to-date notifications on outbreaks of violence – which spoke to the eruptive aspect of violence – and the second involved long-term and more pro-active strategies to reduce the overall potential for violence.

3. Crime and punishment

People from all locations defined crime and punishment as an important information need. The crimes themselves were local ones and similar in nature: public intoxication, prostitution, petty theft, and assaults/fighting. In most instances, the central marketplace in the main town was viewed as the hub of criminal activity (though theft and assaults taking place on roads leading out of town were also mentioned – particularly as occurring at night). Again, this was an information area where it was considered important to hear directly from government officials. In the case of crime and punishment, however, people generally wanted to hear from the local commissioner and police (this was also considered a means of holding them accountable). People also highlighted the significance of information in this area as a possible deterrent to future criminal activity. Specifically, they wanted to hear instances in which a crime occurred, the criminal was caught, and a swift (and usually harsh) punishment was meted out.

When there is local justice taking place people will hear it from the radio. If there's no radio people want to know that local justice is being carried out. Because there are radios around so this is very good to have and that is why people know that there is a functional government around. We say that the government commissioner and the police should put laws and regulations in this area. So those who are committing crimes can be dealt with. Other thieves who are attempting to commit crime will be scared.
-male FGD participant, aged 35 and older, Nasir

Most people focused on crime as a youth problem, often speaking of it as if it were synonymous with youth issues. Subsequently, crime and punishment were directly related to another information area: 'putting youth on the right track.'

4. Putting youth on the right track

People from each location were extremely concerned about the youth. Youth were not only viewed as the major force behind criminal activity, but as generally having lost their way in terms of understanding and adhering to traditional notions of morality, respectful behavior, and proper conduct. For this information area, people felt it was important to hear directly from elders, traditional authorities and other community leaders, as well as those youth who could serve as good role models.

Every representative or chief from those counties should come together to the radio station and talk about their problems in their villages on the radio so everybody can know what is happening and Elders can talk about it so the kids may be discouraged from doing bad things.

-male traditional authority, aged 37, Nasir (Ulang County)

Again, radio was viewed in a proactive manner and as part of an overall strategy that could provide guidance to young people. As a platform that connected youth with other individuals – elders and traditional authorities in particular – it could serve as a kind of moral compass and have a potentially strong social impact on local issues.

5. Livelihoods

Livelihoods was another important and commonly cited information need. People specifically mentioned the need for advice on subsistence agriculture and how to establish a small business (for example, a tea shop in the central market place). Relatedly, some individuals suggested the need for information and advice involving personal financial management and small-scale investment. This information area was strongly infused by ideals involving self-sufficiency and individual responsibility, which were themselves positively associated with both “traditional culture” as well as the post-independent environment of South Sudan.

I never heard about [agriculture] on the radio, but I like to hear about this... but the one in charge is the person who really would be dealing with this announcement about agriculture. For example the one in charge for agriculture in the government... I think there is a department of agriculture... So those who are dealing with the problem of crops, how to plant crops, how to maintain them, how to use the soil. So these people, they have never come to the radio to announce this policy of maintaining crops. I only heard that those who are taking care of animal like one of the organizations in Leer, VSF, so when there is an outbreak of disease that mostly affects the animal...

-Male FGD participant, 35+, Leer (host community)

About business, people actually talk about it but there are no qualified people who have gone through business process. Now day you can just sell your cow or goat and open and later on money will just lost and go like this. So there is a need for special training to know how to manage business.

-Male FGD participant, 16-35, Majak Aheer

Additionally, women frequently discussed the livelihoods issue under the general rubric of gender equality, viewing information in this area as an important means of empowering women as a whole. In this vein, several women discussed the need for information on how to establish joint business ventures amongst themselves, especially agricultural co-operatives.

6. Health

Information involving health issues was also a popular and widespread topic of discussion. Individuals recognized the essential role of radio as a public health tool, and appreciated its use in disease prevention efforts and health-related reporting. As with other information needs, people placed particular value on the role of knowledgeable persons from the community who could directly address the public. In the case of public health, people identified staff from local non-governmental organizations:

They come and tell us what is going on at the MSF hospital. If they are talking about measles, they tell you how many people are suffering from measles, and how many people have been killed by measles, and how you can prevent yourself from getting measles. They talk about the symptoms of that disease. I like that one most, because they give those people from the hospital a time to talk.

-Female FGD participant, aged 16-25 years, Leer

Women frequently highlighted the importance of maternal and children's health issues. In general, however, both men and women expressed equal need and appreciation for public health information and education.

7. Group rights issues

In keeping with the two groups who tended to define community problems as issues particularly relevant to them, women and returnees placed a strong focus on information needs in terms of their own plight. They often situated these needs in an overall framework of empowerment and equal rights.

I listen to many things. I like Wednesday because they usually talk about the role of women, so I always listen to women's programs, because they are bringing up the development of women, and I always like something that can develop us. If the topic is about education or school, or about women, I always like listening to it. If something that is hard for women to do, I also like listening to that, because you have to do something that can help you.

-Female FGD participant, aged 16-25, Turalei

When we came back from Khartoum it was through the government and we also like to know and hear the procedures – the process or the way – the government is organizing for us. It is like if an official from the government has gone to the studio in the radio station to talk and touch about the situation of the IDPs or the returnees. That information will make us very happy because it put in mind that the government is considering us. Though we are suffering we can still suffer and hope that the government will do something for us.

-Female FGD participant, aged 35 and above, Kanajak

While many information needs expressed by individuals here overlapped with other areas – development, education, hearing directly from government officials, etc. – the overwhelming desire was for information that could help affect change for women and returnees themselves.

8. Local-global connections

News and information from other parts of South Sudan and around the world was another important information need, which might be better described as a need for making local-global connections. A key factor here involved people's desire to receive national and international news that was applicable to local issues or that could be informative or useful to their situation. In this sense, people thought of reporting on news from other areas as a kind of comparative research endeavor:

We like to hear what is happening there. If it comes to South Sudan, we need to be hearing what is happening in other states like western Equatoria, Eastern Equatoria, Jonglei State, Central Equatoria and all the states in South Sudan; Kenya and Uganda so that Mayardit can do research and tell people about what is happening there but if we say that we need to be getting things that are happening here only and we don't know what is happening outside, there will be nothing good that we understand completely.
-male FGD participant, aged 26-45, Turalei

People expressed particular interest in comparison-based news on development and security/peace issues in particular. In general, the primary interest was for national and international news through the lens of local needs and issues. Again, there was an accountability component to this area; individuals wanted to measure their progress relative to other regions as a means of evaluating the performance of their own community leaders and government officials.

While news was highly valued by most people, few asked for more or less news coverage on national and international topics and events, indicating that the amount of time dedicated to the topic was satisfactory. Greater emphasis was placed on ensuring that a connection was made between local events and the outside world.

9. Local community topics and announcements

Another information area that people prioritized involved locally relevant topics and community announcements. Examples here included reporting the high prices of goods in the local market place (and possible price tampering by local traders/merchants), promotional events, visits by dignitaries, and giving local non-governmental organizations the opportunity to discuss their missions and particular programs. But the most iconic and frequently mentioned topic in this area was to set aside airtime for a community-wide lost and found program whereby announcements could be made regarding lost cows, children, and/or items like wallets and cell phones.

But the thing which is very important in this community is announcements. Like maybe someone lost something like a cow and he informed those people from Nhomlaau that I lost my cow. When they announce these things, it is good for all people to get this information. Thus I would like the announcements to be repeated at around 10 or 9:30 pm so the elders can get this information about lost things. The community cannot know all about news. What is important is about losing cows and losing children, because the population is now big. That's what I want you people to talk about and if some people are going to the station to give his name and say "I lost a child" or "I lost a cow." That's what I want you to try if you could manage, to add time for that.
-Male FGD participant, aged 16-25 years, Malaulkon

While the community radio stations already made these announcements, many individuals thought the need was so great that it required increased airtime and/or more regular time slots. In fact, people identified and expressed more appreciation for the lost and found announcements than perhaps any other program. It was often the first thing people talked about when discussing the positive impacts of the community radio station in their area.

It might be easy to dismiss an information need that includes airtime devoted to lost cows, but it would be a mistake to do so. The lost and found announcements are popular because they touch upon some of the most fundamental and widely appreciated aspects concerning the role of community radio. Perhaps the most important of these were people's expectations that their radio station respond to the day-to-day and decidedly practical needs and problems of community members, however mundane those needs may seem. In remote communities of South Sudan – where there are many threats and few resources to deal with them – those mundane needs might have significant consequences.

C. The role of community radio

People discussed the role and impact of the community radio stations in overwhelmingly positive terms. In this respect, their descriptions of the stations contrasted sharply with the problems and challenges they associated with their communities in general. While positive, the role that community radio played for people was also multi-faceted. This section summarizes that role by describing six core themes that ran throughout most discussions on the topic.



1. Community radio meets the practical needs of local people and communities

Clearly, people expected their community radio stations to focus primarily on local issues and information needs. While those needs were varied (e.g., health, criminal justice, governance, security, etc.) they all tended to be of a practical and applicable nature. In what could be a harsh and unforgiving environment, people simply wanted basic information that could help them confront the problems of everyday life. Thus, a defining feature of community radio involved meeting information needs that were both local and practical.

The local/practical role of community radio was so pervasive that it was even reflected in peoples' musical preferences. Interestingly, not a single person expressed a desire to hear more music. In fact, those who did mention music either wanted less because they felt it was impractical and a waste of airtime, or expressed a desire for local music with an educational or social message.

2. Community radio is proactive and oriented towards programming that has a potential social impact

People never discussed community radio solely in terms of news reporting (i.e. as simply reacting to information by reporting it after-the-fact). Instead, they accepted that community radio had a distinctly proactive role to play. It was assumed that the purpose of community radio was to have a specific social impact, which was reflected in those areas where information needs and behavior change overlapped (e.g., health risk prevention, crime prevention, promotion of peace, livelihoods, putting youth on the right track, etc.).

At the same time, the proactive role of community radio was discussed in ways that often reinforced traditional roles and responsibilities. This idea was reflected in people's desire to hear social messaging from elders and/or traditional authorities.

3. Community radio is an integral part of development

Many people associated a dramatic increase in their access to information as a result of community radio with independence, progress, and development. This idea was most clearly reflected in their need for more information on governance and development.

The connection between community radio and development also had deep and very meaningful historical roots. People consistently compared the existence of community radio with the war years and a time when reliable and consistent information was almost non-existent. Because the community radio project coincided with the Comprehensive Peace Agreement that ultimately led to independence – when 'development' became part of the public discourse – people regularly described the stations themselves as both a platform for, and example of, development. Hearing local news and information in their own language was frequently cited as a clear indication of progress in its own right. Several individuals even mentioned how accessing information "by foot" or "face to face" was fruitless because "we are not ancient people" and doing so "will not bring up our society." In this context, community radio and development went hand in hand.

4. Community radio unifies people

Community radio's ability to unify people was also considered an important part of its role. This idea was evident in people's information needs regarding the promotion of peace, which was particularly emphasized with respect to the contested Abyei Region. People also discussed this role of community radio in terms of reducing ethnic tensions and having leaders from different tribes come together to speak about their issues. At the local level, community radio was viewed as an important means of facilitating communication between the various cross-sections and group affiliations that made up each community. This was especially important given that individuals experienced tensions based on gender, age, remoteness, and other factors (such as returnee status) on a daily basis whereas wider conflicts and outbreaks of violence were periodic in nature.



5. Community radio plays a watchdog role

Many discussions centered on the role of community radio as a government watchdog. The emphasis here was reporting on government corruption and malpractice, particularly at the local level but also in terms of exposing empty promises and wrongdoing that could impede regional development. For many people, dedicating programs that allowed government representatives to speak about different issues and/or answer questions posed by listeners was directly related to the watchdog role of community radio. Information needs involving good governance were also related to this area since many people viewed democracy as the ideal by which development should proceed (i.e., as an even distribution of development projects). The watchdog theme was particularly strong in the four locations since residents were frustrated with the uneven development they felt existed between Juba and their own communities.

6. Community radio supports the disenfranchised and people on the margins of society

The final theme underlying the role of community radio was the idea that it should support people who were disenfranchised and living on the margins of society. In one way, everybody who saw their community as being marginalized due to its isolation and remote location drew upon this theme. But the advocacy role of community radio was much stronger when it came to the rights of women and returnees. These groups embraced and specifically encouraged community radio to fill this role in their communities by exposing the inequalities they experienced on a daily basis. They also looked to community radio to provide them with the necessary information to overcome those inequalities.

D. Information sources and access problems

This section discusses the primary information sources and access problems for people from all four locations. It is important to note that the South Sudan National Audience Survey (the companion survey project to this one) provides a more comprehensive set of baseline data in these two particular areas. Therefore, the focus here is on individuals' experiences and beliefs surrounding information sources and access problems.

Information sources

In terms of information sources, the findings here support those from the South Sudan National Audience Survey: radio is the most trusted and accessible source of information for the vast majority of people. What is worth highlighting here is the degree of trust people placed in radio as a source of information, particularly when compared to personal communication:

Before they brought the radio, we didn't listen to anything. All those things – we could not hear them. I like it because it advises people and before, when there was no radio, we did not hear anything. We could hear things through people, face to face. When you hear something from someone's mouth, maybe it will be a lie. But when you hear it on the radio, it is the truth. People will know that one is true.
-Female FGD participant, aged 16-25 years, Leer

People often referenced their experiences during the war years as an underlying reason for distrusting personal communication as a source of information. While it was likely to be the only source of information for most people during this time, it was often steeped in false rumor, unreliable gossip, and misinformation. As a result, many people had come to distrust personal communication as a source of information, a lesson they continued to apply to this day.

Some people related the popularity of radio vis-à-vis personal communication to violence and the general security situation. Specifically, radio was a more secure source of information than personal communication because the latter might entail walking in areas where security could be an issue:

Now it's good because you guys came. That's why it's one of the reasons the government is there. To me, if somebody send me to carry information to go to anyone's village, maybe you could get into trouble by going back and forth. What people might say is what are the reasons why this person is getting in trouble and who is to blame for this matter...but now it doesn't happen any more like that because there's technology...so we don't use walking like we used to.
-Traditional authority, aged 40, Nasir (Ulang County)

This sentiment was especially evident in areas where recent outbreaks of violence had occurred. However, many people restricted their movements because they felt the overall potential for violence was high, which created a wider appreciation for radio beyond those who had direct experience of violence.

One interesting aspect to radio as an information source was when people associated radio itself (or all radio programming generally) as being only for one cross-section of the community. In these instances, individuals said they chose not to listen to radio because they were not part of that particular group. For them, the issue here had more to do with choice than access. While this was not discussed widely, it was mentioned by a few individuals who saw themselves as marginalized in one form or another; namely: women and returnees. In each case, individuals chose not to listen to radio because they associated all programming with men and non-returnees respectively. The implication was that radio was biased in favor of the 'other group.' One traditional authority had an interesting take on this issue:

People differ and things depend on interest. ...some of these mothers they don't want to fall in the change – the current change which is taking place – they have not developed the interest of listening on radio.

-Male community leader, age 35 and above, Malualkon (Kanajak)

In other words, some women chose not to listen to radio because they saw the device/technology itself as counter to their traditional identity. This idea was also reflected in comments made by several older individuals, who felt that radio was a modern device “for the younger generations.”

A final issue worth mentioning here was the actual device used to listen to the radio. Specifically, several youth in particular indicated a preference for using their mobile phones to listen to the radio, which was possible on certain models by connecting a separate enhancement/headset piece:

And all this information which we are getting, we don't have radios, we use our headsets and listen on our phones. Sometimes you may live somewhere far, like you are using your motorbike and it's time for news. You cannot go where there is a radio, but you can use your phone and listen when it is the time for news. When you are moving and you can see it's time, you just put your headset and listen to the radio.

-Male FGD participant, aged 16-25 years, Malaulkon

It is likely that the practice of using mobile phones to listen to radio will become more common as cellular/mobile phone networks expand across South Sudan. Subsequently, it should be considered by organizations and funding agencies who might be planning radio distribution programs similar to ones that have been done in the past.

Information access problems

It was clear from most discussions that two groups – women and returnees – experienced the most problems involving information access. An additional problem was the spatial diffusion of information – including radios and other information sources – beyond the main town where the community radio station was located.

Women in particular faced a number of problems around information access, the most common being that they simply did not own a radio. Several women also pointed out a more fundamental issue: men had more purchasing power in the household (including control over cash and decision-making over household needs). Even when women did have cash, they indicated that their first spending priorities included food or school fees for their children.

Women also mentioned that, even when there was a radio in the household, men had control over it. It was clear that customary divisions of space between men and women (in both Dinka and Nuer culture) underpinned control over household items. In the private realm of the boma and tukul, something as important as a radio tended to circulate in the male space only:

Because the issue here is that men only buy radio for themselves, they don't buy radio for women. And men and women don't sit together, so it is like when you have one radio in the house, you are listening with your boys on the other side, and the wife and the girls, they are not listening from the other side.

-CBO worker, Nasir

Women's access to information was restricted further by men's domination of public spaces. Several women commented on how it would be almost unthinkable to listen to the radio in a public space since such places were mostly for men.

Another challenge for women was that they were simply too busy with household duties and responsibilities to listen to the radio. Their daily schedules were packed with all of the activities necessary towards maintaining a household in a rural setting with limited resources and services. These included such things as fetching water, obtaining food, gathering firewood, cooking, cleaning, taking care of children, attending to health care needs, and addressing any household crisis and daily emergencies. In an overall context of rural poverty and marginalization, such daily responsibilities could be particularly stressful for women:

The other factor is that they are hungry. Because something in the stomach can drive you to do other things and to let you have interest in other thing. So the first people to be affected on the issue of hunger are the mothers. Because when they wake up in the morning, what they always wake up with in their mind is what will be eaten by children during the day. So much of their time and interest and mind is focused on where to get food.

-Community leader, aged 35 years and above, Malaulkan (Kanajak)

We are very busy because we are running for the food. So there is no time for us to go and listen to the radio and what and what. The attention is running for the food for the children.

-Female FGD participant, aged 35 years and above, Nasir

When combined with male dominance of information sources and access avenues, the daily responsibilities of women in households under varying degrees of stress created serious information access problems.

Returnees also expressed difficulties around accessing information. Again, these issues appeared to be more intense for returnees from Turalei and Malaulkan, many of whom claimed to have sold their radios during the migration process:

We have difficulties in accessing information because some of us don't have radios to listen. Some few have. And some could just go in the market and may hear some information being broadcasted. Actually we don't have radios. If one has one and he is suffering, he may sell it out.

-Male FGD participant, aged 16-35 years, Malaulkan (Kanajak)

We came from Khartoum with radios and we sell them now because of hunger. We love actually the way people of Mayardit are talking but because we don't have the radios – that is the main issue we [have] here.

-Male FGD participant, aged 35 and above, Turalei (Majak Aheer)

As with women, information access problems arose as more fundamental needs became greater. Several returnees traced this to the overall challenges of integrating into their host communities. This was supported by the situation of returnees in Leer; they expressed fewer concerns about integrating into their host communities (possibly because they had arrived earlier than in other areas) while also appearing to have far fewer information access problems. Several notable exceptions here involved women, where their status as female returnees appeared to make life and access to information particularly difficult:

There are many challenges in the community here, you may find that one has got no comfortable place where he can use to enjoy news from radio, so he may just be moving, keep moving since to earn the life here is very terrible. All people, they are moving, no time for listening to information from radio.

-Female FGD participant, aged 35 years and above, Leer (returnee)

Female returnees often expressed the dual concerns associated with being both a woman and a returnee as being especially difficult in terms of integrating with the host community. Unfortunately, this seemed to increase their information access problems while simultaneously lowering its place in their hierarchy of daily needs.

An additional information access problem involved the spatial diffusion of information beyond the main town where the community radio station was located. This problem was discussed to various degrees in all four locations. Part of the issue involved the actual distribution of radios:

I cannot ask for the government to help us, but I can ask the organizations because organizations are the ones with such power of providing the small radios. Even if they don't provide radios to people who live in the town, they can still give radios to those who live in the highlands. For those who are in the town, some are rich and can buy their own radios, but those who live in the highlands are very poor and cannot afford radios. They only think about food. If someone gets money, he will just go and buy food to eat. He will not think of buying a radio. That is the end of my words.

-Male FGD participant, aged 16-25 years, Malaulkon

As one individual related, the need for information in these areas was so great that they altered their daily schedules when possible to meet that need. This often led to very long days:

So there are many things we are facing, like the lack of radios. There are some people who spend a lot of time in the market, waiting for information, but if they go home they will not be able to hear what was said. And people are very concerned about having access to information. One can spend time in the market until he is able to get information. Taking myself as an example, I spend a lot of time in the market and I will not go home until I get information, like news from Juba. So I stay here until 12 o'clock [at night] and I will go home. Where I'm living is called Mathiang and it is about one and a half hours from Warawar. So if I go back in the daytime I think I will miss what has been said on the radio. That's why I stay here and I wait here until the news is finished. After the news is over, I go home. I don't have time to go home during the day and then come back to listen to the news. If I had a radio at home, I could turn on the radio and listen to Miraya FM and Nhomlaau FM to hear what is happening today, like what happened in Juba, they send [information] here.

-Male FGD participant, aged 16-25 years, Malaulkon

Several people highlighted information access problems in the cattle camps as well, which are a central part of both Dinka and Nuer society. The camps are also vulnerable to cattle raids and violent attacks between ethnic groups, which reinforces the need for reliable information.

Key Findings Part II: Station Specific Summaries



This section summarizes the many comments and suggestions from station listeners and local stakeholders in each location. These are grouped into four general areas: programming, broadcast time suggestions, stakeholder relations, and other issues.

The stations continue to make adjustments to radio programming based on audience feedback to better serve their listeners. These findings below summarize two years of listener feedback and as such, many of the comments have already been successfully addressed by the stations. However, this summary is included here as it is interesting to note the areas that have been of importance to listeners.

Naath FM (Leer, Unity State)

Programming

- Listeners were generally satisfied with local and national news. Many requested that national news cover more security issues. Others requested that journalists make a greater effort to move around the community to cover important local issues.
- Health programming was among the most appreciated by listeners in general. Many individuals discussed MSF's weekly program featuring hygiene promotion.
- Few listeners mentioned hearing programming on agriculture and livelihoods.
- When asked about business programming, several listeners identified a spot featuring traders advertising their goods, which they found helpful because it informed them of local prices on goods.
- In general, listeners identified program preferences by topic rather than by specific program.

Broadcast time suggestions

- Many listeners requested that broadcasting be extended to around 11:00 pm or midnight. While several individuals requested that broadcasts should begin earlier in the morning, extension of evening hours seemed to be a higher priority.
- Many listeners and community leaders also requested that Naath FM should extend its broadcast schedule to include the weekends.

Stakeholder relations

- Staff from local NGOs and CBOs viewed Naath FM as an essential means of communicating with beneficiaries. Several individuals expressed an interest in collaborating further with the station.
- NGO staff said they would be willing to pay for broadcast programs in the future, but only if the terms were clear and consistent.
- NGO and CBO workers were generally satisfied with their interactions with station staff. Individuals from one health NGO claimed that they had seen improved health outcomes in the community since working with staff to develop and air a weekly health program.
- Local government officials expressed some concern with media coverage of political and security issues in general, but did not mention a specific event or issue. The following suggestions were made: politicians from every party must receive approval from local authorities before speaking on the radio, security incidents should not be reported without an official statement from government, and a spokesperson from the commissioner's office should be appointed to interact with the radio station.

Other issues

- Some women reported that they were being actively prevented by their husbands from visiting the radio station and requested that it broadcast messages persuading their husband to allow them to visit and speak on the radio. Several men supported this claim, admitting that they prevented their wives from visiting the radio as a form of punishment.

Sobat FM (Nasir, Upper Nile State)

Programming

- Listeners were generally satisfied with local and national news. However, they emphasized that local news should focus more on corruption, malpractice, and wrongdoing in Nasir.
- While listeners were interested in international news, some said they did not hear it regularly on Sobat FM. They specifically requested successful examples of development, peace, and democracy in other countries.
- Men (but no women) recognized a weekly program called Together on the Move. Men who had listened to the program remembered hearing about security issues, business, and health care.

Broadcast time suggestions

- Listeners from a local cattle camp reported that they did not have time to listen to the radio during the day because they were out tending cattle. Their preferred listening time was early in the morning starting at 6:00 am.
- Many women from Nasir reported that they did not have time to listen to the radio at all. For those few who did, their preferred listening times were early in the morning beginning from 5:00-6:00 am until 10:00 am. They also identified the evening hours from 9:00 pm on.
- Men from Nasir reported being able to listen at most times during the day and whenever the station was broadcasting.

Stakeholder relations

- NGO and CBO staff said that Sobat FM had helped them to improve communications with beneficiaries by allowing them to reach a greater number of people in a shorter amount of time.
- NGO and CBO staff expressed ongoing interest in formal collaboration with the station. They were particularly interested in developing regular radio programs in various areas, including health, hygiene and sanitation, mine risk reduction, and youth programs.
- NGO and CBO staff were positive about their interactions with station staff, and reported that they were cooperative and serious about their work. They also said that station staff consistently followed up on important issues.

Other issues

- Older individuals – both men and women – suggested that the radio station should make a greater effort to reach out to the elderly.
- Some women who were resettled in the area as IDPs wanted to use the radio in order to pass information to family left behind. However, they had not done so because they were new to Nasir, were not familiar with the radio station, and were so preoccupied with meeting daily survival needs that they did not have time.
- Listeners from outlying payams and communities strongly urged Sobat FM to make a greater effort to report on news in their areas, rather than focus only on Nasir Town.

Nhomlaau FM (Maluakon, Northern Bahr el Ghazal State)

Programming

- Health programming was among the most appreciated by listeners. In particular, people mentioned messages on maternal and child health, hygiene, HIV/AIDS, immunizations, and the location of health facilities.
- Listeners requested that news be broadcast more frequently and at regular intervals. Returnees in particular requested that the station air news in all three languages (English, Arabic, and Dinka), rather than airing news in each language at a separate time.
- Community leaders and other individuals felt that the local news on Nhomlaau FM did not go into sufficient detail, especially when it came to local and national politics. They also wanted to hear more from government representatives. Some individuals – returnees in particular – suggested that local news bulletins on Nhomlaau FM focused on “soft” news rather than more substantive issues, and attributed this to government pressure. Several individuals also felt that local news focused too heavily on Maluakon and the immediate vicinity, and did not make an effort to report on news in areas further out.
- Few listeners could recognize specific programs that were regularly broadcast on Nhomlaau FM. They explained that they did not follow programs by name because they were not aware of their exact broadcast times. Their “favorite programs” were more often identified by topic (i.e., news, health messages, etc.) rather than by specific program name or presenter.
- Two programs on Nhomlaau FM that were mentioned by individuals were “Lor ku kac kua” (“Welcoming our People,” a program about returnees), and “Ping ku rol diaar” (a women’s program). In each instance, individuals spoke positively about the program, could remember specific program content, and had discussed the show with others.

Broadcast time suggestions

- Many listeners requested that Nhomlaau FM run earlier in the morning and later in the evening.
- Individuals – including community leaders and local government representatives – requested that the station broadcast during the weekends, even if it were for a few hours each day. Such requests were often due to concerns that a security issue could erupt during the weekends.
- Overall, local government officials viewed the radio station in positive terms and as being especially useful for passing announcements to the community, as well as receiving news from outlying payams.
- Some government officials seemed to expect that local government should exercise a degree of control over the actions of Nhomlaau FM journalists. They suggested that there should be increased monitoring and control of topics that could potentially damage the reputation of the government and its representatives.

Stakeholder relations

- Staff from local NGOs and CBOs viewed Nhomlaau FM as an essential means of communicating with beneficiaries. They were generally satisfied with their interactions with station staff. Several expressed an interest in further collaboration.
- Several NGO/CBO staff suggested that journalists from Nhomlaau FM would benefit from training on how to cover specific issues. They specifically mentioned training around the proper use of health terminology and procedures associated with family tracing and reunification (FTR).

Other issues

- While returnees in particular wanted to call or visit the station to talk about their issues, they had never done so because of uncertainty or apprehension. They requested that the station make a greater effort to reach out to them.
- NGO and CBO staff were very supportive of extending the broadcast range of the radio station because it would help them to reach additional beneficiaries in areas that were particularly challenging to access.

Mayardit FM (Turalei, Warrap State)

Programming

- Listeners to Mayardit FM were generally satisfied with the content of local, national, and international news. They were particularly impressed with news coverage of security issues across South Sudan and the ongoing negotiations/discussions regarding Abyei.
- Few listeners were able to recognize specific programs by name. Again, individuals expressed programming preferences in terms of topics and general content rather than by identifying specific programs or presenters.

Broadcast time suggestions

- Some listeners requested that the news be repeated before the radio station shuts off at noon.
- Listeners – including community leaders – strongly suggested that Mayardit FM add weekends to its broadcast schedule. These requests were often due to concerns that a security issue could erupt during the weekends.
- Many listeners requested that Mayardit FM run later in the evening, though a few did mention that the station should also begin broadcasting earlier in the morning.
- Many listeners requested that the station extend its broadcast range to reach outlying areas.

Stakeholder relations

- Staff from local NGOs and CBOs viewed Mayardit FM as an essential means of communicating with beneficiaries. They had used the radio to inform the community about their various programs, deliver public service announcements, and to summon participants for trainings and other events (e.g. vaccination campaigns). They were generally satisfied with their interactions with station staff.
- NGO staff said they would be willing to pay for broadcast programs in the future and expressed an interest in more structured collaboration with the station. In order to do this, they suggested that the radio station provide information about the station's reach, audience profile, and its broadcast schedule.

Other issues

- Many people mentioned that leaders should speak on their behalf when it came to discussing community issues. They felt that other individuals should consult with or receive permission from leaders prior to speaking on the radio.
- Returnees generally felt that attempts by leaders to discuss their situation or speak on their behalf were not effective in helping them get assistance.

Recommendations & Considerations



There are multiple recommendations and considerations associated with this study. They are divided below into several, general categories.

The basics: meeting the information needs of communities

- Clearly, the most fundamental recommendation that can be stated here is that the community radio stations must continue to meet the information needs of their listeners. While those needs have been described at length here and in other reports by Internews, it is also important to recognize that they are constantly evolving. As anywhere, information needs in South Sudan are shaped by a wider set of conditions and circumstances that are themselves in a perpetual state of flux. It is important to maintain a consistent and sustained focus on both information needs and the conditions that shape them at the local and national level (and international level with respect to specific issues).

Anticipate and prepare for growing tensions regarding the role of community radio

- While community radio stations must be flexible and willing to adapt to future conditions, they must also anticipate and prepare for potential tensions/issues in terms of the expectations various stakeholders will place on them. These conflicts speak to the role of community radio (including its organizational culture) and they will almost certainly become more intense in the near future.
- It is almost inevitable that the community radio stations will face increasing pressure due to the different expectations placed on them by their listeners on the one hand and the South Sudanese government on the other. Listeners/community members clearly see the role of community radio as a government watchdog and in terms of social advocacy. Not surprisingly, several government officials who were interviewed for this study viewed the role of community radio as a mouthpiece for government itself, even suggesting that increased monitoring of program content was necessary. This has already led to heightened tensions on occasion between local government officials and individual radio stations. In addition, some community members expressed fear of speaking out on the radio due to repercussions on the part of government officials.

- Community radio stations may also face increased tension as they try to find the right balance between advocacy journalism (e.g. being proactive, educational, preventative, etc.) and traditional journalism (reporting on news and events in a largely reactive manner). This dichotomy seems especially relevant in South Sudan since community members/listeners were so strong in their expectations that stations should promote an advocacy approach. When not met, strong expectations like these could easily devolve into a sense of disappointment among listeners.
- Related tensions could arise with respect to reporting on violence and security issues. The community radio stations will need to balance a conflict resolution approach to journalism (promoting peace by highlighting the wider, structural causes of South Sudan's various conflicts) and a more traditional, descriptive journalism that reports on violence, conflict, and security issues in what can often be a simplistic and narrow manner (which reinforces most government messaging on violence and conflict).
- One or all of the above tensions will almost certainly become greater in South Sudan as the exuberance of independence gives way to the day-to-day frustrations associated with progress, modernization, and development. They could also grow as a result of the ongoing conflicts in Abyei and Jonglei State, inter-ethnic cattle raiding, and the growth in crime. If frustrations with progress, development and security grow, community members will expect more from their community radio stations in terms of being a government watchdog and advocating for the socially and economically disenfranchised. Government officials, on the other hand, will have their own expectations involving media compliance.

Combining research with implementation to resolve information access problems

- Community radio stations will need to more clearly identify the information access problems among people from outlying payams and villages in their respective broadcast areas. Research on this localized form of the rural-urban divide should then be used to directly inform future radio distribution programs. According to many people from these areas, past radio distribution efforts – which did not work in conjunction with the community radio stations – were poorly planned and plagued with problems, and the radios did not reach outlying villages.
- It is also important to clearly identify the information access problems of specific groups – namely, women and returnees. In addition, it might be better to adopt an “action research” model in which the various strategies to overcome information access problems are tested and refined based on the suggestions and direct participation of women and returnees themselves.
- The same problems associated with getting information out to the more rural/remote villages also prevented news and information from coming in to the radio station itself. As a result, it might be useful to establish a volunteer network of “rural correspondents” who are able to call or send in news and information from outlying areas on a more regular basis. Traditional authorities, teachers (and students), and community leaders could also be included as part of this program. Engaging community members/leaders in such a manner would also have the dual effect of increasing listenership, since people might more regularly tune in if the information was about their area and they had more direct engagement with their community radio station.

Programming considerations

- The community radio stations will have to maintain the right balance between programs geared towards development/modernization and those that reinforce traditional roles and cultural norms. This might become a more important issue if modern influences and their perceived negative impact (particularly on the youth) become an increasing concern within the community. This is particularly relevant with respect to lifestyle choices and preferences among different age groups.
- For the vast majority of listeners, program topic was more important and recognizable than specific programs and/or presenters. Therefore, marketing strategies geared towards promoting the names of specific programs/presenters may be less useful and effective than those that focus on actual program content. Promoting individual shows/presenters may be a marketing strategy more appropriate to western audiences/settings.
- The popularity of the community lost and found announcements should never be underestimated. In fact, each radio station should consider making them a more regular and consistent part of programming. If people knew the various times during the day when community announcements were made, they might tune in more frequently and keep the radio on/tuned in to the station, thus increasing listenership generally and, more specifically, for programs that follow the announcements and/or are sandwiched in between.
- Community radio stations must continue to develop their relationships with local CBOs/NGOs. More formal working relationships/collaborations could result in potential income and more informed programming. They would also help CBOs/NGOs fulfill their missions and meet objectives, most of which address the most basic needs (including the information needs of the communities). Collaboration of this kind (or continued collaboration) will also ensure that information is appropriate and applicable to the particular issue at hand, as well as being easily addressed by the CBO/NGO given their particular resources and capacity. Not only do the radio stations want to put out correct information, but they also want to ensure that it is information that people and local organizations can enact or implement in a resource scarce environment.

Measuring social impact

- Given that a fundamental role of community radio stations is to make a positive social impact, it is important to refine and develop more sophisticated ways (quantitative and qualitative) to assess and measure radio's impact in areas like public health, gender equality, civic awareness, conflict resolution, etc. In the end, awareness of an issue is rarely ever enough; positive and sustained behavior change is the ultimate objective. Getting to such a point might include working in closer collaboration with the appropriate NGO/CBO on developing evaluation and monitoring activities that revolve around a specific radio program and topic (e.g., combining media and communications research with epidemiological methodologies and approaches to better assess the impact of radio programs in the area of HIV/AIDS prevention).

