

Radio Mampita – the powerful voice of rural people



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In Madagascar, where about 80% of the population is rural, access to timely and reliable information and to the services of governmental and non-governmental organizations has been a major challenge. Now, rural communities have been connected by an independent farmer-owned radio station, Radio Mampita, which also supports knowledge and information exchange, and renders rural development more demand-driven.

A local correspondent interviews members of a women's group, Madagascar (E. Gabathuler)

Radio Mampita in the Haute Matsiatra region, one of the few rural-based Malagasy broadcasting stations, aims to empower rural communities by enhancing rural communication and giving rural people a voice. These people have been isolated owing to difficult topography and limited road access. They have lacked access to information and means of communication.

Before launching Radio Mampita in 1997, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) invested several years building the necessary skills and a functioning organizational structure to ensure continuity. This began by providing five journalists with multi-media training to develop skills for communicating with, and informing about, the issues of rural people. Next, an awareness-raising campaign was initiated about the possibility of having a farmer-owned radio station and the need to establish a farmer association that could take over the ownership. Finally, villagers who volunteered to act as local correspondents in their communities were trained in collecting information, conducting interviews and facilitating public debates, and in sending the registered material to the radio station, where the broadcasts are produced and broadcast. In 1997, the Association Mampita, consisting of farmer organizations, was established as a non-commercial, politically independent and religiously neutral institution (Figure 1).

Broadcasting from the city of Fianarantsoa and covering a perimeter of 70 km in the Haute Matsiatra area, Radio Mampita reaches approximately 1 million people. Initially, fully dependent on donor funding, it steadily increased its revenues until it became financially independent in 2007. The sale of broadcasting time to institutional partners generated 30% of the revenues in 2010, while airing of personal messages and announcements amounted to 70%. Today, Radio Mampita



"We, the female artisans, regularly contribute to Radio Mampita's programme called 'What about us, the women?'. That's why we and our products are widely known and we recently received a lot of orders. In addition, we are often invited to present and exhibit our handicrafts at national fairs."

Joséphine, a local artisan

Lessons learned



Radio Mampita plays a dynamic role in Haute Matsiatra and is highly appreciated by both its target audience and actors in rural development. Key factors of success are the following.

- Its identity as the farmers' radio owned by farmer organizations and strongly anchored in the rural world. It strictly broadcasts in the local dialect (Betsileo), and 90% of all programmes are directly related to the rural world.
- Its political and religious independence is very much appreciated by development actors. Due to its strict neutrality, Radio Mampita has survived several political crises.
- Its local correspondents, being villagers themselves, know exactly the needs and concerns of the rural people in the highland.
- Its manager and staff, being themselves of rural origin, are highly motivated and committed to the mission of Radio Mampita.

addresses the entire rural population, i.e. men and women, adults and children, and covers issues and debates with an educational or information focus (13% of broadcasting time) including health, agriculture, market information and civil rights; news (36%) including news from the villages and announcements from service providers or of family events; and entertainment (51%) such as music, radio plays and greetings.

A study conducted in 2010/2011 credited Radio Mampita with a number of changes in the area (1):

- rural people's access to relevant information, e.g. on agricultural techniques, laws and civil rights, etc., had strongly improved
- Radio Mampita had become a widely recognized mouthpiece of the rural population
- the negotiation power of producer organizations had improved and rural economies were supported through better access to timely market information and by linking producers and buyers, thus eliminating intermediaries
- rural people's interaction with service providers had become more self-confident and proactive, resulting in a positive competition among development organizations and more demand-driven support activities
- communication among communities and family members had become much easier and cheaper
- security had improved as, in the case of a criminal act, a message over radio enabled fast reactions to unusual incidents.

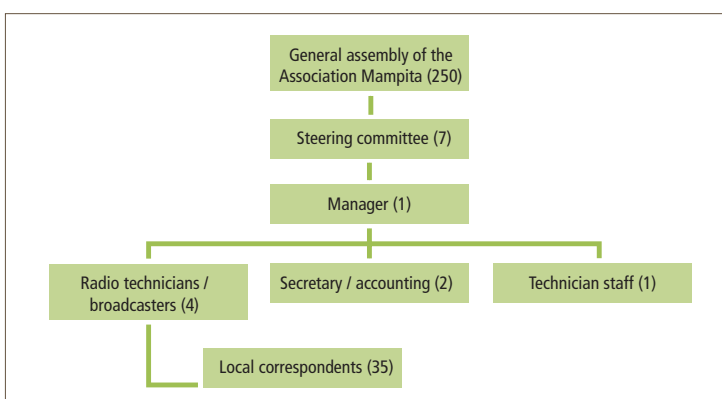


Figure 1: The organizational set-up of Radio Mampita (brackets: number of members) (1)