

# The role of community radio in information dissemination towards youth development in Ghana

Youth  
development  
in Ghana

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – Community radio attempts to place the power of communication in the hands of community members, particularly the youth, so that they can create and broadcast materials that address local community issues. The purpose of the study is therefore to look into the potential impacts of community radio and the function it plays in youth development.

**Design/methodology/approach** – This study employed a qualitative research approach to investigate the role of community radio in information dissemination towards youth development in Ghana. Two community radio stations were selected for the study, and through the use of semi-structured interview, qualitative data were collected from 42 participants comprising two programme managers, four radio producers and 36 youth. The qualitative research approach enabled in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of the study.

**Findings** – This study found that both community radio stations aired youth-centred programmes that were beneficial to the development of the youth within the stations' coverage communities. The results further reveal that community radio offers the opportunity and platform for the youth to engage the political authorities for development and also entertain themselves.

**Originality/value** – The authors consider this study original both in conceptualization and design. The main question being interrogated stems from identified gaps in the literature, and this study intends to fill these knowledge gaps. This study's originality also stems from the fact that there is a paucity of information on the subject of study in the context of Ghana.

**Keywords** Community radio, Development, Information dissemination, Participatory, Programme, Youth

**Paper type** Research paper

## Introduction

Radio is a powerful tool for the purpose of disseminating information. According to Woodard (2014), radio is the most appropriate medium for disseminating development messages because in developing countries, over 75% of households own a radio set with about 95% of people across the globe having access to radio. This makes radio one of the most accessible means and medium of communication. The advent of community radio has further empowered members of community with the needed communication tools to generate conversations and carry them through radio technology that they are familiar with.



The concept of community radio is aimed at generating discussions within community, about community and for community. The concept is aimed at ensuring that issues pertaining to communities are raised, discussed and solved within community. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) categorized community radio as a “medium of the people, by the people and for the people”. Community radio has come in to fill the gap created by public and commercial radio which are detached from the grassroots people (Diedong and Naaikuur, 2012).

As a community participatory tool, community radio offers the means through which community members become active participants in development issues that affect them. Through participation, affected stakeholders are given the opportunity to make meaningful inputs into interventions that would eventually affect them as the lack of participation by beneficiary communities in all phases of development remains a factor that results in failed development interventions (Faisal and Alhassan, 2017; Baines-Johnson, 2018; Naaikuur and Diedong, 2015).

The concept of participation as defined by the World Bank with reference to development is that it is “a process, through which stakeholders influence and share control over development initiatives and the decision and resources which affect them” (World Bank, 2007). Siochru and Butler (2020) indicated that community radios are special because they do not just serve the interest of the community but they engage with the community directly and the community engages with them. They further noted that community radio is not about capturing the attention of listeners, but more about listening to the community, being part of the community by engaging in activities, amplifying the voices of diverse groups in the community among others (Siochru and Butler, 2020, p. 6). Particularly, and within the context of this research, community radio provides the forum for marginalized youth to discuss issues that are significant to them and their community and in doing so, they obtain first-hand knowledge. Youth who were previously disengaged from dominant societal discourses can be empowered and positioned inside such discourses through community radio. Community radios have been acknowledged as sites of informal education and serves as a platform for young people at risk of social exclusion (Wilkinson, 2015). Community radio therefore affords the opportunity to divergent views and approaches to handling development at the local levels in a way that prevent conflicts while encouraging inclusivity.

In Ghana, the concept of community radio was first mentioned in 1995, when Radio Ada, Radio Progress and Radio Peace applied for broadcast frequencies with the then Ghana Frequency Registration and Control Board. The Ghana Community Radio Network, an umbrella organization of community radio stations in Ghana, was successfully inaugurated on 4 December, 1999 following a seminar in September 1999 where the International Community Media Specialist trained these three pioneers of community radio in Ghana (Faisal and Alhassan, 2017).

Currently, data from the National Communications Authority (NCA) indicate that as at the third quarter of 2019, there were a total of 477 radio stations authorized to operate in Ghana which are made up of 31 public radio stations, 5 public foreign radio stations, 73 community radio stations, 21 campus radio stations and 347 commercial radio stations with 96 not in operation (National Communication Authority, 2019, p. 4). The records from the NCA also show that by the third quarter of 2019, there were 59 community radio stations in operation out of the 73 authorized to operate in various communities across the country.

### **Problem statement**

Community radio has the potential to disseminate information that promotes development by raising awareness and changing people’s behaviour and attitudes. Through the

information they disseminate to community people who serve as listeners, community radio has a significant potential for improving family health and nutrition awareness. This is because community radio is associated with the culture, needs and interests of the local community. Community radio is preferred by rural residents over other forms of traditional media because it is based on local culture, needs and interests.

Development encompasses democracy and freedom of expression in addition to economic progress and technological advancement through community engagements and information sharing. Community radio disseminates information that has been shown to empower persons who have previously been disempowered, enabling them to take charge of their own fate through ecosystems. Community radio attempts to put the power of communication in the hands of community members, particularly the youth, so that they can create and broadcast materials that address local community issues. Unfortunately, it remains unclear the specific role community radio play towards youth development in Ghana. As a result, it is critical to look into the potential impacts of community radio and the function it plays in youth development in Ghana. The paucity of literature on this phenomenon in Ghana made this study compelling. This study employed the development communication theory (Pierce and Corey, 2009) to look into the role of community radio in information dissemination towards youth development in Ghana. The theory stresses the employment of mediated communication (in this case community radio) to enable development (Qureshi, 2019; Sharma, 2016). The purpose of the study is achieved through these research objectives:

- ascertain youth-centred information services and programmes provided by community radio in Ghana;
- investigate community radio's contribution towards youth development; and
- look into ways to improve on youth-centred information services and programmes on community radio.

## Literature review

### *Conceptualization of community radio*

Community radio is considered a broadcast technology that is deployed into the hands of grassroots people to aid in their information sharing abilities. It is the only medium available for use in creating and broadcasting community-based programmes that reflect the culture and life of people living within those communities (AMARC International, 1998; Atutiga, 2020). Khan *et al.* (2017) defined community radio as a non-profit agency which is considered to serve specific local communities; thereby broadcasting contents which are relevant to the community and with organizational structures that represent the community the radio station work for.

In Ghana, the NCA which is the regulatory body for radio stations define community radio as “a non-profit broadcasting service provided for a specific marginalized community by a radio or television station whose ownership and management are representative of the community for which the service is provided”. This is in tune with the African Charter on Broadcasting (2001) definition of community broadcasting which means broadcasting which is for, by and about the community, whose ownership and management is representative of the community, which pursues social development agenda, and which is non-profit

These definitions clearly show that community radios are expected to possess all these three features: a non-profit activity; owned and controlled by the community; and

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community participation. Some key areas of coverage by community radio stations include local news and current affairs content, educational programmes, promotion of accountability of local government and private sector actors, information about local economic issues and information about social development. As a non-profit media organization, community radio operates to serve the interest of the community without the motive to post profit. Even though some revenues may accrue from running local adverts on community radio stations, the revenues are expected to be used for the operation of the radio station including the use of same to resolve community challenges.

As the definitions suggest, community radios are expected to be independent media, operating from the perspective of the community, owned and funded by the community. Particularly, community radio stations are immune from directions from external sources. In effect, it simply provides the opportunity for community members to have control over the radio station on what it does and how it serves the interest of the community. Community radios are therefore expected to serve contents to members of communities which commercial radio does not necessarily provide (Al-hassan *et al.*, 2011).

It is important to reiterate that because community radio has the potential to develop unique programmes that reflect the culture, language and the general aspirations of community members, it has a high tendency of being accepted by community members. Because the members own it and its programming, it becomes easy to get the community members to take responsibility over their own output on the station. Community-based radios are normally found to be hybrid as well as distinctive communication media shaped by numerous characteristics that are reinforced by the unique culture and history of the communities that they serve (López Franco *et al.*, 2020; Meadows, 2013).

#### *Benefits of community radio*

Because community radio stations represent the interest of community members, it is the effective rallying tool for community development (Kapoor and Chandran, 2020). This makes community radio an essential tool for rural and community development. Some key benefits of community radio as noted by Siochru and Butler (2020) include serving the interest of marginalized groups, enhancing employment through skills training and provision of confidence and reinforcing community identity, access to information around the community, access to local and global issues because of access to divergent viewpoints, promoting collaboration and engendering community sense of identity and cohesiveness.

The roles played by community radios help in boosting community participation by enabling community members to participate in radio programming and production (Naaikuur and Dombo, 2021). Certainly, they improve media pluralism by decentralizing media in a bid to strengthen media freedom and access to information within communities. Community radios are found to strengthen social and economic development since they offer avenues that allow rural communities to identify problems, share ideas around the problems and find solutions to the problems confronting their immediate communities. They further provide the platform for local businesses to advertise to reach potential customers which helps in boosting economic activities within communities.

Community radio exudes the passion of local people since it affords the platform for members of the community to represent their full culture and music, storytelling, their social relations, among others. This enhances cohesion as a result of a communication that serves the interest of the community (Nafiz, 2012). Moreover, the operations of community radios are noted to encourage tolerance and peaceful coexistence by allowing diverse groups of people to have a platform to share culture and bond together in a way that enables them to understand each other (Rimmer, 2021). They maintain cultural, traditional and ethnic

identities as a means through which culture, language, food, identities are preserved as the platforms provided by community radios allow the older generation to pass their traditional values to the younger ones in a language they can best understand (Ummah, 2021; Reuter *et al.*, 2019).

### *Challenges of community radio*

In spite of the benefits that community radio brings to rural and marginalized people, their operations are marred by challenges which bother mainly on funding which if resolved, could lead to community radio stations realizing their full potentials (Laker, 2020). Sullivan (2007), opined that even though a community radio strengthening project was undertaken in Haiti, just months after a capacity building project ended, about a quarter of 40 community radio stations supported in the programme began experiencing serious challenges leading to the closure of eight(8) of the stations. She noted that the key factors militating against community radio was the “lack of financial sustainability and the inability to maintain equipment” (p. 12). Tavhiso (2009, p. 60) identified some sources of funding for community radio to include grants, sponsorships, donations, advertising and government support. It can be envisaged that these sources of funding, once they are not regular, would not be able to sustain the operations of community radio (Ogenga, 2020). For instance, because of the rural nature of their operation, little can be charged for advertisements carried on community radio stations for local businesses which may not be able to cover the operational cost. Sullivan (2007) outlined some measures to address some of these issues that community radio stations face, including financial sustainability solutions, such as a well-coordinated pooled funding source or a microcredit loan system for community radio development, suggesting alternate funding strategies and development models that encourage sustainability. She further recommended that donors should give grant recipients thorough training to help them remain sustainable even in situations that change, as well as provide equipment and technology assistance appropriate for the local environment (p. 19).

### *Community radio in developed vs developing countries*

Operation of community radio is not only peculiar to developing countries. Even though community radio stations operating in rural areas in developing countries serve as breeding grounds for participatory development and participatory communication, the phenomenon of community radio operation in developed countries could serve as appropriate platforms for advocacy and preservation of culture and educational activities (Doliwa and Rankovic, 2014). Community radio in developed nations is active in urban rehabilitation of the less affluent neighbourhoods in developed countries as well as efforts to increase awareness for issues relating to migrants and minorities, according to UNESCO (2019). In terms of ownership, the majority of these community radio stations are founded by a group of individuals in industrialized nations, who typically adopt the legal parameters of an organization over time. For instance, many of these community radios in Portugal are associated with student organizations for higher education that are associated with communities for higher education (Midões, 2021).

Although community radio's potential has not yet been fully understood and appreciated in South Asia, it has been demonstrated to be a reliable communication medium during natural disasters or tragedies (Sen, 2020). For example, during the COVID-19 outbreak, community radio was a useful instrument for local communication and decentralized information access in Southeast Asia (Pavarala *et al.*, 2022). Even though licences for the operation of community radio is granted under strict regulations in South

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Africa, it is interesting to note that community radio stations have helped encourage public journalism in several communities in the country (Davidson, 2010).

Community radios have been shown to mobilize and educate people on how to share resources in an effort to minimize disputes, despite the fact that they have been sources of violence in some developing nations like Rwanda (Ogenga, 2020; Oluoch, 2020; Laker, 2020). Community radios, in particular those developed in developing nations, have been demonstrated to promote human development and understanding for the benefit of their communities (Awoshakin, 2010). As maintained by UNESCO (2019), community radio stations in both developed and developing nations face difficulties and fierce rivalry from commercial radio stations, but those in developed countries are finding creative ways to overcome these difficulties in comparison.

#### *Role of community radio in development*

Community radio is a valuable instrument for enlightening the public about topics that are important to the community's members' livelihoods. It has been discovered to be a tool for dispute settlement as well as a social change agent. Community radio stations provide venues for underprivileged and vulnerable groups to raise their voices, focus on their issues and convey their modern, revised ideas and perspectives for the betterment of their communities and nations as a whole (Rimmer, 2021). It plays an important part in community development by focusing on agriculture, education, clean water and sanitation, recreation and social issues in a target community.

Particularly, community radios have played important roles in amplifying the voices, ideas, challenges and concerns of those who lack access to mainstream community and media. They aid the flow of developmental information by facilitating the rights to information, promoting the rights to communication and facilitating the rights to communication (Naaikeur and Dombo, 2021). Furthermore, they have been proven to communicate a community's hardships and sorrows, as well as its obstacles and constraints to policymakers. Community radio supports sustainable development and constructive social change for minority groups by focusing on specific community concerns and facilitating discussions on solutions and mobilizing collective action. It also ensures and promotes democracy by allowing rural populations to voice and share their opinions.

Community radios' programming is aimed at encouraging community development and social empowerment among its listeners as well as employed for educational purposes (Prahmana *et al.*, 2021; Laskar and Bhattacharyya, 2021). Through active engagement, the community may attain inclusiveness and define socioeconomic development. They serve to unite local communities by focusing on their daily concerns and assisting in the realization of local needs and ambitions. In this way, it aspires to improve the livelihoods of the community's residents through materials made by and for the community's residents. They are also the ideal platform for dealing with internal social issues since they have the potential to resolve internal conflicts, such as inter and intra conflicts centred on political, socioeconomic, border and administrative structure, among other things (Alemayehu, 2018).

#### **Methodology**

The study employed the qualitative research approach to investigate the role of community radio in information dissemination towards youth development in Ghana. Data from the NCA indicated that as at the third quarter of 2019, there were 73 community radio stations in Ghana with 59 in operation. The Central and Upper East Regions play host to nine and eight community radio stations, respectively (National Communication Authority, 2019). Two community radio stations were selected for the study based on geographical location,

experience, coverage, access (because of COVID-19 restrictions) and purpose of study. The two stations were Radio Peace and Radio Builsa. Radio Peace, located in the southern part of Ghana specifically Winneba in the Central Region, is one of the pioneering community radios in Ghana. Radio Builsa on the other hand is a community radio located in the northern part of Ghana specifically Sandema in the Upper East Region and rated as one of the best stations in the northern part of Ghana. Radio Peace covers areas such as Gomoa East, West and Central, Nfantsiman, Ekumfi, parts of Agona West and Ewutu Senya Districts with a population of over 740,000 according to the 2010 Population and Housing Census of the Statistical Service of Ghana whose ethnic background is mainly Akan. The station run programmes in the Fante, Efutu and English languages with the mainstay of the population being farming and fishing. Radio Builsa covers across the Builsa North and South, Kassena Nankana East and West and parts of the Sissala East Districts with a population of about 330,000 according to the 2010 Population and Housing Census of the Statistical Service of Ghana whose ethnic backgrounds are mainly Builsas and Kasenas. The station programmes in the English, Buli, Kasem and Kantosi languages with the mainstay of the population predominantly farming.

Through the use of semi-structured interview, the qualitative research approach was used for in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of the study. The in-depth interview enabled the study acquired both formal and informal data that helped draw information regarding the respondents' views on the role of community radio on youth development (Roller and Lavrakas, 2015).

A total of 42 participants were selected for interviews through the use of purposive and convenience sampling techniques. The two programme managers and four lead producers of youth-centred programmes from the two selected stations were purposively sampled. This was to enable the research to ascertain from the managers and producers how their stations fashion and carry programmes targeted at the youth in their catchment areas since they are in control of decisions and production of such programmes. The purposive sampling technique facilitated the deliberate choosing of participants whose feedback were more likely to provide useful data for the research study. The remaining 36 participants were youth residing in the communities that the two radio stations covered. The youth were sampled through the use of convenience sampling. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, data were collected from 28 of the participants through telephone interviews after they were initially identified by a representative of the researcher and the remaining 14 were through face-to-face interviews. The interviews were conducted in both the English and Twi languages. The interviews conducted in Twi were transcribed and with the aid of an expert, further translated into English to ensure the credibility and validity of the data obtained. Thematic analysis, specifically the inductive approach to thematic analysis was used to analyse the data collected under appropriate themes developed during the study in line with the research objectives. Thematic analysis according to Braun and Clarke (2012, p. 2), is systematically identifying, organizing and offering insight into, patterns of meaning (themes) across a data set. An inductive approach to data coding and analysis is driven by what is in the data. The codes and themes are derive from the content of the data themselves which are matched by the researcher during analysis of the data (Braun and Clarke, 2012). The study identified key patterned responses in relation to the research questions within the data set. The responses that reflected on the specific research questions were put together and analysed under the various themes developed during the study. This form of analysis provides rich description of the overall data and a more detailed analysis of some aspects of the data (Braun and Clarke, 2012).

## Results

The study employed a qualitative research approach which was inductive in nature and useful in the application of thematic analysis. The thematic analysis technique enabled the study to appreciate the data, carry out preliminary data coding, group and revise common themes as well as conduct assessment and reporting of themes. Eight themes emerged after the thematic analysis of data collected from participants.

These themes were formed based on the objectives and research questions for this study. The analyses of the results show that 32 (76.2%) of the participants were male and the remaining 10 (23.8%) were female. The participants were coded from P1 to P42 (Table 1):

*RQ1.* Youth-centred information services provided by community radio.

### Youth centred programmes

Community radios are found to disseminate information that help in the progress and development of their communities. Key group of people expected to benefit from community radios are the youth through youth-centred programmes aired by these radio stations. The study was interested in ascertaining youth-centred programmes aired by the selected community radios for this study and the results from the interview attest to the fact that both stations aired youth-centred programmes. Radio Peace aired *Dwene Wo Daakye* which was carried on Mondays between 5 p.m. and 6 p.m., while Radio Builsa aired two youth programmes: *Who Is Responsible* carried on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays between 1 p.m. and 2 p.m. and *Boiling Pot* which aired on Fridays between 1 p.m. and 2:30 p.m.. Based on the responses obtained from the interviews, the radio managers outlined the youth centred programmes that their stations air:

We air two programmes, “Who Is Responsible” and Boiling Pott” which are targeted at the youth. The programmes are carried three times a week on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays for a one hour duration from 1PM to 2PM each day. Who is Responsible airs on Mondays and Wednesdays while Boiling Pot airs on Fridays. The programmes pick on issues affecting the youth and then provide opportunity for the youth to discuss the issues affecting them either in-studio, or through dedicated phone lines that we open for contributions from the youth in the community (P1 stated).

We have one programme called Dwene Wo Daakye. We are solely purely for youth. It lasts for a period of 1 hour and we air it only on Mondays from 5PM to 6PM. And we do this programme because we want to secure the future of the young adolescent ones in the community because we know that they are vulnerable and need to be guided to focus on building their future (P4 indicated).

It was further revealed by the programmes’ managers that the target age group for the youth-centred programmes on the community radio stations were between the ages of 12 and 35 years. The responses to the interviews show that the information disseminated by the community radios through their youth-centred programmes were determined around topical issues within the two communities.

The programme is targeted at the youth particularly young girls and young boys from 18 and above up to 35. These are the kind of people the programme is targeted at (P12 provided).

The programme is targeted at the youth from 12 years up to 30. Why are we starting from 12 years? 12 years, they are young. Catch them young, and they shall be yours forever. So when we catch them young, we can talk to them and shape them for a better future (P30 opined).

Participants	Age	Gender	Profession	Education	Years at radio station	Years lived in community
1	26	Male	Producer	HND	3 yrs	26 yrs
2	44	Male	Programmes' Manager	NVTI	19 yrs	44 yrs
3	30	Male	Producer	SHS	5 yrs	22 yrs
4	40	Male	Programmes' Manager	Diploma	8 yrs	12 yrs
5	27	Male	Producer	Diploma	4 yrs	27 yrs
6	38	Male	Producer	SHS	12 yrs	38 yrs
7	23	Male	Student	Degree	N/A	23 yrs
8	22	Male	Student	Degree	N/A	22 yrs
9	22	Male	Student	SHS	N/A	15 yrs
10	24	Male	Tricycle Rider	SHS	N/A	10 yrs
11	20	Male	Self-employed	JHS	N/A	20 yrs
12	32	Male	Tricycle rider	Degree	N/A	32 yrs
13	31	Male	Teacher	Degree	N/A	10 yrs
14	25	Male	Footballer	SHS	N/A	25 yrs
15	30	Male	Entrepreneur	SHS	N/A	30 yrs
16	33	Male	Self-employed	HND	N/A	33 yrs
17	21	Male	Fisherman	JHS	N/A	21 yrs
18	29	Female	Trading	SHS	N/A	12 yrs
19	22	Male	Trading	SHS	N/A	8 yrs
20	19	Male	Unemployed	SHS	N/A	19 yrs
21	29	Male	Self-employed	Degree	N/A	18 yrs
22	32	Female	Entrepreneur	Degree	N/A	32 yrs
23	28	Male	Barber	JHS	N/A	28 yrs
24	23	Female	Student	Degree	N/A	3 yrs
25	30	Female	Student	Degree	N/A	3 yrs
26	27	Female	Student	Degree	N/A	3 yrs
27	25	Male	Fisherman	JHS	N/A	25 yrs
28	30	Female	Unemployed	JHS	N/A	30 yrs
29	22	Male	Trading	JHS	N/A	22 yrs
30	29	Male	Teacher	Diploma	N/A	20 yrs
31	27	Male	Trading	JHS	N/A	12 yrs
32	18	Male	Student	SHS	N/A	18 yrs
33	24	Male	Barber	SHS	N/A	24 yrs
34	26	Female	Student	Degree	N/A	3 yrs
35	19	Male	Unemployed	SHS	N/A	19 yrs
36	20	Female	Student	SHS	N/A	20 yrs
37	28	Male	Civil Service	Degree	N/A	7 yrs
38	22	Male	Trading	JHS	N/A	22 yrs
39	19	Male	Student	SHS	N/A	19 yrs
40	20	Female	Unemployed	SHS	N/A	20 yrs
41	25	Female	Hairdresser	JHS	N/A	5 yrs
42	21	Male	Unemployed	JHS	N/A	21 yrs

**Notes:** NVTI = National Vocational Training Institute; SHS = Senior High School; JHS = Junior High School; HND = Higher National Diploma

**Table 1.**  
Profile of participants

The topics are always selected from the happenings, the recent happenings in the community in relation to sports, education, agric, etc. Unemployment issues also feature prominently in our youth programme. (P23 remarked).

The purpose of these youth-centred programmes as revealed from the interviews was to disseminate information to the youth with the aim of helping them set their priorities right

for self-growth and development. Particularly, most of the youth who participated in the study through the interviews, corroborated that the youth-centred programmes aired by the two community radios do meet their needs as youth.

*Yes, Radio Builsa helps us to know what is going on in the Builsa District and beyond. Such as the education about teenage pregnancy, the bad roads networking, armed robbery cases and many more which are carried on the programme Who I Responsible (P20 asserted)*

*Yeah, there's this programme, I know, it has some local name, I just forgot, and I am very much interested. A man, like advising the youth concerning their future, how they should live, and plan. They should not think of only today, but also tomorrow, how they should invest in education, take their education seriously. I quite remember that programme. I do listen to that programme a lot but only that I've forgotten the name of that programme. Yes, yes, yes, yes. Dwene Wo Daakye, Dwene Wo Daakye, that is the name (P27 said)*

### **Youth engagement and entertainment**

Community stations are uniquely positioned in their ability to engage audiences on a hyperlocal level. Involving local community members in the creation of content can be a rich source of social interaction and cohesion that can create enormous benefit. It is also a platform that promotes inclusion and participation at the programming and broadcasting stage. The results from the study attests to the fact that, the two community radios through their youth-centred programmes offer the opportunity and platform for the youth to programme, engage, broadcast and entertain themselves. The information disseminated by the radio stations through their youth-centred programmes were found to be crafted in a manner that catches the attentions of the youth:

There is a programme where the host has to bring issues that has to do with the development of the youth and, let's say the community as a whole. So the opportunity is given for the people to express their opinions on how the youth of this community or this town can be developed (P13 remarked).

Yeah, phone lines are activated for listeners to participate and tell us what the cause of this misbehaviour or this misconduct are and for which solutions, necessary solutions are found to them. So basically, listening to the radio station and also having opportunity to contribute to the programme is a kind of privilege (P20 stated).

That is what I mostly listen to. Because you see, it's based on the youth and Winneba in general and very entertaining. So that's what I mostly listen to (P27 asserted).

#### **RQ2. Community radio contribution towards youth development**

This objective sought to obtain the impact of community radio in the lives of youth through their youth-centred programmes. As a result, questions were posed to respondents to ascertain whether or not, Radio Peace and Radio Builsa's youth-centred programmes have contributed to their development. The results from the interviews show that almost all the participants had benefitted from the information disseminated on the youth-centred programmes of the two community radios. The data from the study attest to the fact that the youth programmes have helped the youth to implement their ideas, helped them to avoid crime, brought benefit to the youth through the infrastructure projects that they advocated to be completed, encouraged and provided information for business start-ups as well as shaped and expanded existing businesses of the youth, provided a motivation for the youth

to live decent lives, provided a direction and sources of livelihood, as well as helped the youth to pursue higher education.

### **Education and health development**

Education has been found to be a major key to youth development. Thus, the need to disseminate educational information to the youth cannot be overemphasized. The results from the interview show that the community radios were providing key information on education and health to the youth in the two communities. The participants maintained that the youth-centred programmes on education and health aired on the two radio stations have contributed to their educational career and well-being. Majority of the participants indicated the usefulness of the programmes and how they have impacted positively on their academic careers and well-being:

Yes, they do. There was a time I listened to one of their youth programmes on education. So from that programme, I gained a lot of information from the studio guest which made me to start distance education (P22 stated).

Actually, we receive information on health. For example, they will talk about coronavirus, and also this harmattan that comes with its effect like CSM and other things. And also they do talk about drug abuse and its negative impact on the youth (P16 opined).

### **Infrastructure, business and skills development**

Analysis of responses obtained from the interviews on how the community radios have contributed to the development of the youth also revealed that the programmes have brought a number of infrastructural developments to the two communities. The participants were of the view that the infrastructure have positively contributed to their growth as youth. Moreover, it was clear from the interview that the youth-centred programmes aired on the two community radios have positively impacted on the youth's business and skills development.

It has contributed to our development because in some cases, government infrastructure that were abandoned, because of such programmes on Radio Builsa, we were able to bring them to the attention of the authorities. Some of these projects have been completed and we are benefiting from them as youth of this area (P18 said).

How it contributes to our development is that they help us to know the way forward. Things that we will do to help us in the town. They educate us on how to do business, how to farm, and how to rear animals (P12 remarked).

Yeah, of course. Let me say, it has broadened my knowledge about eerm, entertainment. At first when you are into music, they will be like, it's not a good job for you to put your whole into it. But you listening to Radio Peace and understanding what music and fashion is about, you get to know that you can do music to sustain your life. And you can also enter into fashion to sustain your life (P36 provided).

### **Life coaching**

Community radios create platforms for experts to share and hold great discussions that can help people of all walks of life. These experts' advice and discussions go a long way in helping listeners to shape their lives in manners that are positive towards their growth. The results from this study show that the two community radios through their youth-centred

programmes invited guests that were expressive and creative persons, who shared great life information that connected to the passion of the youth within the two communities in a professional manner.

You know, there are certain things in life that you do that you might not know that they aren't good. So, in most cases, listening to these people on these programmes on Radio Builsa, it gets to reveal the actual fault in these kinds of acts. So, let's say, knowing that a certain act is not good, you that would not want to be wanted in any crime, you will definitely have to stop whatever you are doing (P12 stated).

It has contributed to my development because most of the things they talk about, we try to implement them in our own lives and in return, we've been learning a lot (P37 retorted).

If you look around, you would see there are no jobs in Winneba. So when it happens like that the youth gets frustrated. Radio Peace usually focus on that aspect and bring in people to handle these issues more than any other thing. That's what makes me listen to them (P27 stated).

### *RQ3.* How to improve on youth-centred programmes on community radio

In an attempt to obtain the ways youth programmes on community radio can be improved, the research sought to ascertain from respondents some of the information services they would prefer to hear through community radio which they are not getting currently. From the data analysed from respondents, the data show that some of the respondents were satisfied with the information services they receive from the two community radio stations that are centred on the youth. The data also show that others preferred additional information services. On the other hand, managers of the two radio stations outlined infrastructure challenges and lack of sponsorships (commercials) that affect the running of the youth-centred programmes.

#### **Programmes on health**

Community radio can deliver unique benefits in the way that health and social care services are delivered. They are used to disseminate information on health-related issues that raise awareness on health along with any relevant resources or advice. Although, a number of the participants outlined how the radio stations have contributed to their health and well-being, most of them called for improvements in the health segments aired by the two community radio stations through their youth centred programmes. For instance, some participants suggest that some of these health programmes are carried on radio regularly while others were of the view that experts on nutrition, sanitation and hygienic living conditions are brought into the studios to provide the youth with appropriate education in this regard.

Okay, programmes that if I get they would do always is health care. If I have a chance, they should add it to their everyday programme from Monday to Saturday. They should always talk about the hygiene, sanitation and, it shouldn't be just a day job (P25 opined).

Sometimes, they should invite other people like they sometimes do to educate us on medical aspect; food we should eat and food we shouldn't eat. Sometimes, they should do those programme on health, nutrition and those things. It will help us to avoid certain things (P30 stated).

#### **Educational opportunities**

Furthermore, it was revealed from the interviews that, improvements in academic related issues discussed on the youth-centred programmes especially information on scholarship

opportunities and tertiary admissions would be beneficial to the youth. Some participants prescribed that community radio can serve their educational needs especially for those in rural communities who may be interested in seeking tertiary admission by providing them with information on tertiary educational institutions which have opened the space for admission of new students.

Actually, information I need from them especially, is on students' admissions from universities which they don't give from that place. So if they can do research and ascertain when universities are open for admissions and scholarships, they can give that to the youth and I think it would be useful (P9 indicated).

### **Infrastructure**

The research sought to ascertain from the radio managers the challenges they faced in producing youth-centred programmes. From the data, infrastructural challenges such as the challenge in transportation and lack of sponsorships negatively affect the airing of youth-centred programmes. Key of the issues obtained bothered on the unavailability of means of transport to readily move staff of the radio stations to the field to collect information right from source. In addition, their situation is further exacerbated by the lack sponsorships to their youth-centred programmes.

Data is a challenge, and transportation too is a challenge. Sometimes you pick information about something that youth are engaged in a particular community that you would have to travel there to have first-hand information about the issue so that you can come and talk on it. Transporting yourself to and from is always a challenge, because fuelling and all that is always difficult (P3 indicated).

Because we are a community radio, sometimes we need transportation and because nobody fund or support the programme, we use our own money for transportation. And sometimes, when the issues come up that we need to resolve and we need to meet the MCE or DC, we find it difficult to get access to them. Sometimes we find youth who are ready to go to school and need support, obtaining that support from the duty bearers becomes a major challenge for the youth (P4 stated).

The research further sought to look into possible solutions to the infrastructural challenges that hinder the community radios with the aim of improving youth-centred programmes. The data analysed indicated among other things that adequate funding and sponsorship would improve the infrastructure needed for youth-centred programmes. Some of the suggested means of resolving some of these challenges included the need for sponsorship as well as the provision of information & communication technology (ICT) backed infrastructure as well as the provision of a motorbike to meet the current trends in radio production.

The only way I think it can be improved is when the programme is being sponsored. Sponsorship would improve the programming greatly (P2 suggested).

Yes. I think now we are in an ICT world and we have traditional media and that of the new media which we need to compliment. . . I also think smart movable cameras would help and motorbike can also be procured for that particular programme so that at all times, this motor will be on standby to help movement around the communities (P6 suggested).

### **Discussion**

Community radios are pro-people media that play essential roles in facilitating social change and development in communities (Guo, 2017). They mostly deal with issues facing the community and development initiatives. The findings from this study confirms that the

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selected radio stations meet these requirements since the content of their programmes deal with issues facing the community. Particularly, the two community radio stations were found to air youth-centred programmes that were targeted at the needs and aspirations of the youth within the community they served. It could be deduced from the findings of the study that the approach of these community radios in airing youth-centred programmes have direct links to development communication. As maintained by [Kim \*et al.\* \(2020\)](#), the development communication concept has disengaged from its earlier role of mass dissemination of essential information to a focus on a participatory communication process, which is not only more dialogical but also more community-based. Importantly, participants of the study asserted how engaging the youth-centred programmes aired on the two community radios were. The two stations were therefore providing the needed platforms for the youth in the communities to engage in their community's social as well as economic development ([Odartey-Wellington \*et al.\*, 2020](#); [Nangooba \(2020\)](#)). This finding is also in support of findings in Portugal, where college students through their associations employ community radio as platforms to contribute to development ([Midões, 2021](#)).

Community radio is currently receiving significant recognition as essential instruments for advancing developments and social changes within the community ([Olurunisola \*et al.\*, 2020](#)). It has been found that community radio gives a voice to the voiceless through political participation towards development and empowerment, especially with the emergence of new media the youth are able to participate in radio-call-in programmes to interact and share their opinions on fundamental issues of community development ([Fombad and Jiyane, 2019](#)). The results of this study corroborate these findings since most of the participants indicated the developmental progress and results in relation to infrastructure achieved within their communities through the platforms provided by the two community radio stations to the youth to participate and engage with the political authorities.

Since their inception, community radio stations have focussed on empowering community participation in numerous development programs, thereby enhancing the capacities of the local people to work together to tackle a range of social inequalities such as discrimination and marginalization. It is evident from this study that, community radios help mobilize the youth around community-related issues, in addition to providing a forum where solutions to those problems can be derived ([Melkote and Leslie Steeves, 2015](#); [Conrad, 2014](#)). Certainly, it is also clear from the study that, community-based radio stations also form important forums where individuals can not only solve, but also define the issues affecting their communities. This study supports [Dunbar-Hester's \(2014\)](#) assertion that community radio gives "real people the tools to find their voice and use it in our democracy. Plus it will be a hell of a lot of fun!" (p. 49).

The community radio has the capacity and ability to educate and promote people's career and culture through their various cultural and academic oriented programmes. It has been a major tool for education in rural communities both within developed and developing countries.

For example, community radio has served as educational tool in Indonesia ([Prahmana \*et al.\*, 2021](#); [Inmayah, 2015](#)), Kenya ([Oluoch, 2020](#)), Japan ([Ningsih, 2017](#)) among others.

Moreover, it enables the construction of social identities by providing the youth with a distinct space of exchange, one that lies beyond formal educational structures ([Wilkinson, 2015](#)). The results from the interviews show that majority of the participants have acquired significant knowledge towards their academic, business, health and social developments through the youth-centred programmes aired on the community radios. The findings of the study attest to the fact that the experts and guests who served as resource

persons to the youth centred programmes aired on the two community radio stations provided useful and timely information towards the developmental needs of the youth (Abdulai *et al.*, 2020; Odartey-Wellington *et al.*, 2020).

The study has established that community radios create platforms for the youth in smaller communities to be heard and also contribute to the political discourse. This finding supports Pavarala's (2015, p. 14) assertion that community radios "expose hidden communities. It mirrors the political, economic, social and cultural diversity of the region". Many community-based radio stations are funded by the communities they serve and also from their listener subscribers (Bamigboye, 2020; Faisal and Alhassan, 2017). It was therefore not much surprising that the two selected stations were faced with funding challenges because the communities they served were under-resourced. These challenges can be assuaged by adopting the recommendations made by Sullivan (2007). In addition, the key measures adopted as postulated by UNESCO (2019) can be replicated in dealing with the numerous challenges facing community radio in developing countries particularly Ghana.

### **Conclusion**

The study looked into how community radio serves as information dissemination tool in youth development. The study has established that community radio plays essential role in informing or educating the community especially the youth about diverse strategies towards personal and social development. It is evident from the study that the two selected community radios aired youth centred programmes that offered platforms for experts to share and hold great discussions for the growth and benefit of the youth within the community. Particularly, the study has revealed that, youth within the catchment areas of community radios rely on the youth centred programmes aired by these stations for their health, education and career growth.

Importantly, the findings of the study have shown that the community radio serves as a very crucial tool to bring to light and the attention of political authorities the challenges of minority and marginalized communities that may be overlooked. The youth therefore rely and fully participate in developmental programmes on the community radio to ensure that their developmental needs are addressed by the political authorities. Nevertheless, the study has revealed that community radio is saddled with many challenges chief among them is funding. The community radio serves communities that are mostly deprived and underserved thereby making funding challenges a reality for them in Africa. The findings from this study highlights the funding challenges faced by the two community radio stations that impact negatively on their youth-centred programmes.

### **Implications**

In many ways, this study has broadened the theoretical horizon on community radio and youth development. For example, the findings of the study show that community radio serves as an important tool for enlightening the youth about topics that are important to their development. Importantly, the two community radios were found to play crucial roles in amplifying the voices, ideas, challenges and concerns of the youth within their communities which brought in positive results to the youth and the communities in general. Thus, the need to make deliberate effort to invest in community radio towards youth development globally.

In terms of practical implications, the study establishes the need for community radio stations to involve the youth in the creation of content as a source of social interaction and cohesion since the stations are well positioned in their ability to engage audiences on a hyperlocal level. To fully engage and integrate the youth in community radio, the study has

also established the need for the stations to complement the traditional media with the new media because of advancement of technology and the youthful nature of the new media. Furthermore, the findings from the study shows the need for funding and sponsorship from government in developing countries and other stakeholders to improve the infrastructure needed for youth-centred programmes on community radio. The need to employ creative ways to overcome challenges with the operation of community radios as highlighted in literature from developed countries is crucial for the survival of community radios in Africa. Again, efforts should be made to create more platforms for experts to share and hold discussions on topics that tailor the needs of the youth such as scholarship opportunities and tertiary admissions.

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