

Full Length Article

Open Access

Code 2729

**Assessment of the Performance of Jimma University Community Oriented Radio****Beyene Tadesse<sup>1</sup>, Getachew Tilahun<sup>2\*</sup>, Tesfaye Gebeyehu<sup>3</sup>**

**Citation:** Beyene Tadesse, Getachew Tilahun, Tesfaye Gebeyehu. (2021). Assessment of the performance of Jimma University community oriented radio. *Ethiop.j.soc.lang.stud.* Vol. 8 .No.2, pp.71-86.

eISSN: 2408-9532; pISSN: 2412-5180. Web link: <http://journals.ju.edu.et/index.php/ejssls>

**Publication history:** Received in revised form 10 Nov 2021; Accepted: 28 November 2021; Published: 29 December 2021

**Subscription (electronics): Submission fee:** Free of payment; Accessing fee: Free of payment

Copyright: © 2021 Jimma University. A first publication right is granted to the journal. Jimma University makes the publications to be made available freely (open access).

License: Published by Jimma University. This is an open access article under the CCBY-NC-ND license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/BY-NC-ND/4.0/>).

## Abstract

This study examined the performance of Jimma University Community Oriented Radio (JUCOR) to identify how it discharges its role as a platform to bring sustainable social change through community participation. The study chose Case study design as a method of inquiry. It employed in-depth interviews and secondary document analysis as methods of data collection. The population of the study is JUCOR General Assembly members, board members, station managers, journalists, and volunteers. Purposive sampling was used to select key informants. Of the 150 General Assembly members, eight were contacted, and of the board members, six were interviewed. Two managers, two technical heads, three journalists, and six volunteers working for the station were interviewed. The collected data were meticulously listened to, transcribed, thematically categorized, analyzed, interpreted, and discussed. Findings reveal that the radio's performance as a platform to bring about sustainable social change through community participation is very low. This was mainly due to problems related to the station's administrative structure, shortage of human power, financial constraints, and technical problems. These problems have significantly discouraged volunteerism and affected community participation in program production and presentation. The community's role in accessing, managing, owning, and controlling the station has also been significantly compromised. The finding indicated that the performance of the radio is not in line with the principles/characteristics of community radio; hence, the station did not fulfill its anticipated role of contributing to social change in/for the society in which it has been established. The study forwarded recommendations to improve the station's performance.

**Keywords:** /Communication for Social Change/Community Oriented Radio/Participatory Communication/Volunteerism/

\* Corresponding author; Assistant Professor, Department of Media and Communication Studies, Jimma University. The detail of the authors is found at the back of this article.

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Background of the Study

Radio is the medium of choice for Africans mostly for its accessibility, inexpensiveness, easy operation, portability, need for partial attention, that its signals reach remote areas and for its flexibility (UNESCO, 2011; Kombol, 2014). The basic reasons that brought the evolution of community radios in the world were poverty and social injustice (UNESCO, 2011). Moreover, in developing countries, in particular, the high illiteracy rate and lack of basic infrastructures mostly necessitate the existence of community radio. Browne (2012) argues that community radio should be a medium of community voice, education (formal and informal education), information, entertainment, and empowerment of the community it serves, particularly for people living in rural areas (Wabwire, 2013).

Of the three tiers of broadcast media – commercial, government/public, and community media – community broadcasting is the most democratic (participatory), economical, and socially relevant journalism. Community radio is particularly effective for empowering vulnerable groups, the poor, and the marginalized sectors of the community. Hence, it gives access or presence in the media for people to air their unheard voices (Carpentier, 2011). This high level of participation allows the community to contribute to social change by exposing weak governance, and corruption, and encouraging open dialogue and transparency of administration at a local level (CRSC/NEFEJ, 2011). The definition of community radio that was given by AMARC Africa (World Association of Community Broadcasters) reflects this reality:

Community Radio is media in which the communities participate as planners, producers, and performers and it is the means of expression of the community, rather than for the community. This is because current media emphasis has been on the use of mass communications, with messages flowing from the capital cities to the periphery, where feedback from communities has been limited (AMARC, 1998, p.9).

Therefore, community radio is not only a medium that fulfills the information needs of a marginalized group of society but is also the main tool for the democratization of communication. Encouraging and representing communities in the democratization of communication paves the way for them to participate in social change and development. Coronel (cited in Jemal, 2013), asserts that “addressing poverty requires not just a transfer of economic resources to the needy but also making information available to the poor so that they can participate more meaningfully in political and social life” (P.6). Eradicating poverty, avoiding political suppression, and transforming the societal way of life for betterment are the agendas of policymakers in developing countries.

Community radio brought decentralization, democratization, and deregulation to communication. These reflect the inherent characteristics of the radio. Additionally, the core principles that make community radio as a facilitator of participation and enhancer of social change are: it is owned and controlled by the community it is working for, and its information sources, as well as, receivers are the community themselves (Myers, 2011).

Furthermore, community radio is a means of transferring knowledge and technology; it facilitates social transformation through participation. The participatory communication approach to development ensures communities’ participation, access, and self-management in development, and social change (Servaes & Malikhao, 2012). This paves the way for the public to involve in the administration of the station, in the planning and production of programs, and to be accessible to interact with the media. This could be realized through a board of governors or directors with members representing various interests within the community, by

supporting their station with cash or in-kind, supplying the building the station is housed in, and contributing their own establishment budget to build it (UNESCO, 2011).

Jimma Community Radio (JCR, henceforth) was established by the collaborations of Jimma University and Media Action, the Netherlands-based non-governmental organization. In establishing the station, the University has taken its role as part of its community service scheme and assisted the radio in a variety of ways. The station was located on the main campus of Jimma University with almost all of its expenses being covered by the same, and is administered by a board elected among the inhabitants of Jimma town and the University. During the first three to four years of its establishment, the station had two professional journalists and two technicians all hired by Jimma University, and over a hundred active volunteers. These practicing journalists had produced about 26 regular programs in Afan Oromo and Amharic. The programs focused on health (like HIV/AIDS and malaria), education, agriculture, environment, sports, legal matters, music, and the arts. The radio had a strong non partisan position holding a policy of no coverage of contents of religious and political inclinations and held a motto of giving voice to the voiceless. It had a large number of listeners in Jimma town and the neighboring areas, including people from the Dawro Zone of SNNPRS. However, due mainly to resource and budget constraints and a lack of proper management, it was not able to stay regularly on-air hence it was interrupted for up to over six months.

Following the Ethiopian Broadcasting Authority's (EBA)<sup>1</sup> community radio regulation 04/2004 that encouraged Ethiopian Higher Learning Institutes to possess their own community radio, JCR was re-established as Jimma University Community Oriented Radio, mainly in line with the university's philosophy of Community Based Education, to address administrative, resource, and manpower problems the station had experienced. According to this regulation, the station has to be governed by a council made up of the University community and the surrounding inhabitants; hence, the community radio council members were expected to be representatives from the university's administration and student union, from the councils of local administration, from the community, and from representatives of associations in the community (EBA, 2016).

## 1.2 Statement of the Problem

At the time of its inception, JCR was established to serve as an alternative and participatory media for people in Jimma town and the surrounding areas. It also played a role as a means of communication for bringing social change to the community (Kassahun, 2012). However, the station's practice did not show any development; instead, it deteriorated over time due to different factors. Financial problems, lack of trained journalists, and lack of technicians and materials were the major factors (Kassahun, 2012). Due to these financial and management-related problems, and a lack of skilled human power, the station was closed for six months, according to Kassahun (2008)<sup>2</sup>. Later, as the preliminary study interview conducted with one of the board members indicates, the station's ownership was transferred to Jimma University, and the University took over the responsibility of running the station beginning in 2013, resulting in a name change also: Jimma University Community Oriented Radio (personal interview, 2017 with JUCOR Board Member).

---

<sup>1</sup> Formerly, it used to be Ethiopian Broadcasting Authority (EBA). Since last year (April 2021), however, it has been renamed by proclamation no. 1238/2021 as Ethiopian Media Authority (EMA).

<sup>2</sup> This is a document located in the radio station. Kassahun Kebede has been a PR expert at JU who had been assigned by the University to closely oversee the function of the station. The report indicated here as (2008) was accessed from the station as indicated – in his name.

Even though the University hired professional journalists and equipped the station for a better service, according to a preliminary assessment conducted in 2017 by the researcher, it was doubtful if the radio could meet the role that an ideal community radio should have played (personal interview, 2017 with JUCOR Board Member). The question is how the sustainability of the radio and its role could be ensured without compromising the basic tenets of the community concept. Recommendations made by a UNESCO-led international seminar held in Paris in 2015 on the sustainability of community media indicate that it is necessary to take “legal, financial, and administrative measures to achieve a free, independent and pluralistic media environment, with due consideration to relevant international human rights treaties and obligations” (UNESCO, 2015). As Tucker (2013) also discusses, the normative conceptions of community radio are access, participation, training, not-for-profit, community-owned, volunteer-run, and local.

It is claimed that following the change (from JCR to JUCOR), community participation in owning, controlling, producing programs, and even listening to its programs is not as it was earlier (Journalists, Volunteers, and General Assembly members, personal interview, 2017). Therefore, this study was conducted to assess why the station fell short of playing the role it should have played as community radio, i.e., community participation to bring about social change in the community. This could be achieved by examining practitioners’ (journalists and volunteers) performance, and by overviewing the station’s administrative structure and practices of the people managing the station.

To the best knowledge of the researcher, there has been only one research conducted on this radio, an MA thesis conducted in 2012 by the then Addis Ababa University student, Kassahun Wodajo, and the main objective of his study was to examine the role of Jimma Community Radio in promoting social development. He identified major challenges confronting the station such as financial problems, lack of trained journalists, and lack of technicians and materials. His study overlooked examining the station’s administrative performance which could have been the reason for the problems he listed, and most of all, it could be the main hindrance for the community not to participate properly. After the study was conducted (in 2012), other changes have also been observed: ownership was changed, audiences deteriorated, and volunteerism declined. Moreover, the radio’s transmission station has been moved from the main campus of the University which is relatively at the center of the town to the Campus of Jimma Institute of Technology, which is on the outskirts of the town; technical problems worsened, and most of the volunteers abandoned the station. Therefore, as a case study, since there is no similar research in Ethiopia or elsewhere that investigated the performance of Jimma University Community Oriented Radio in the aforementioned context, this study has been conducted to assess the performance of the station in the context it is in.

The general objective of the study was, therefore, to investigate, given the context the radio is in, what role, if any, the station was playing as an instrument for social change through the participation of the community of Jimma Zone and Jimma University. The study specifically aimed at:

1. Examining the community’s participation in the administrative structure and function of JUCOR;
2. Assessing how JUCOR practices participatory processes to get active and sustainable volunteerism from Jimma Zone and the Jimma University community;
3. Identifying means as to how JUCOR could be sustained by alleviating the financial, human, and technical problems it has been experiencing;
4. Investigating the station’s role in contributing to the social, economic, and cultural development of the Jimma Zone community.

## 2. Research Methods and Materials

**Research setting:** The study was conducted on JUCOR, a community radio owned and run by Jimma University. JUCOR station is located on the Jimma Institute of Technology (JIT) campus of Jimma University which is far away about 350 km from the capital, Addis Ababa.

**Research design and approach:** The case study research design was employed to evaluate the performance of JUCOR. As Creswell and Poth (2016) stated, a case study is the intensive study of a single case that is conducted when the purpose of that study is to shed light on a larger class of cases (a population). The qualitative research approach is adopted for this study as it is helpful to dig into attitudes, behaviors, and experiences to understand and solve societal problems through methods like interviews and focus group discussions (Creswell, 2016). As Babbie (2010) also stated, qualitative research is concerned with subjective assessment of attitudes, opinions, and behavior, which produces results either in non-quantitative form or in forms that are not subjected to hard quantitative examination.

**Methods of data collection, population of the study, sample size, sampling technique, and data analysis:** In this study, in-depth interviews and document reviews were used as data collection instruments. The radio's administrative body (the current and the former), journalists, and volunteers working for JUCOR were the main sources of information. In other words, the 150 members of the General Assembly of the station, the former board members, the present board members (7 in number), all three hired journalists and all six volunteers currently on work, the managers of the station (former and current) and the technical heads (former and current) are the general population (sample frame) of the study.

However, from the members of the General Assembly, only eight people were selected purposively to make the data collection and analysis more convenient. These people were picked from the Jimma community and the Jimma University community by snowball sampling. Apart from this, six former and current board members, two managers, and two technical heads of the station were selected purposively to be informants for the study. The three hired journalists and six volunteers were also interviewed. Generally, 27 people were interviewed. The researcher spent an average of 28 minutes with the interviewees by leading and audio recording the interview sessions. The interviews were conducted in Afaan Oromo and Amharic languages based on the respondents' preferences. The collected data have thoroughly been listened to repeatedly, taking notes, and important sections of their talks were, when necessary, transcribed and translated into English.

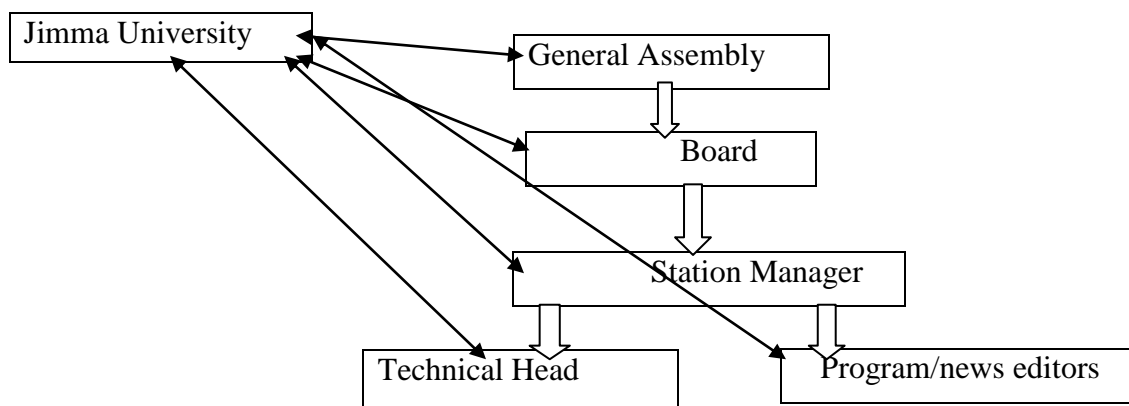
Thematic analysis has been used to come up with important themes in accordance with the set objectives. Documents analyzed include available station's reports such as EBA guideline የኢትዮጵያ ብሮድካስትባለስልጣን(2004ዓ.ም), EBA regulation የኢትዮጵያ ብሮድካስትባለስልጣን (2006ዓ.ም), editorial policy for the community radio and other published and unpublished researches conducted elsewhere. Ethical clearance was secured from the Research and Post Graduate Coordinating Office of the College of Social Sciences and Humanities of Jimma University. Participants of the study also gave their oral consent.

### 3. Data Presentation and Analysis

#### 3.1 An Overview of the Administrative Structure and Functioning of JUCOR

At the dawn of its operation, Jimma Community Radio's administrative structure was arranged as per the principles and characteristics of community radio even though there was no independent financial department for the station. This assisted the station in organizing its functions and activities. It also made the station's management decentralized.

However, through time, Jimma University's role as the sponsor (financial and material supporter) of the station and the Jimma community's role as managers and decision-makers of the station's function and wellbeing made the organizational structure and work procedures quite complex. There was no clear rule that could indicate the mandate of both parties. As shown in Figure 1, the station's administration seemed to have fallen under the overlapped authority of Jimma University and the Jimma community which is represented by the General Assembly.



*Figure 1:* Administrative structure of Jimma Community Oriented Radio adopted from secondary documents and key informants' interviews

Figure 1 shows that Jimma University's role is so significant in the management structure and functioning of the station. The University assisted the station by financing, hiring human resources, housing the station, installing the station's studio, and equipping the station with the needed logistics. As one board member of JUCOR stated, the University recruited volunteers and hired three journalists, a secretary, the station's manager, and a technical head (Interviewee 1, Board Member, personal interview, 2017). Another board member also revealed that "JU supported the station's operation by purchasing equipment, covering water and electricity bills, hiring employees including guards, and distributing 3,000 radio sets for listeners which it had gotten through donation" (Interviewee 2, Board Member, personal interview, 03 April 2017).

Additionally, the figure depicts that the relationship between the University and the radio station's governing bodies is blurred. This idea was also reflected in one of the station's short-term performance evaluation reports for the Board. The problem of the chain of command and ambiguous relationship between the University and JCR board was indicated On the first page of the report under the challenges sub-topic (JCR Board, 2000 E.C/ጅማ ማኅበረሰብ ሬድዮ ጣቢያ ቦርድ, 2000 ዓ.ም).

### 3.2 The Role of the Community in Ownership and Controlling of JUCOR

After the introduction of community-oriented radio in the country by the Ethiopian Broadcasting Authority's Community Radio Proclamation No. 04/2012, Jimma University has taken ownership of the radio station. In fact, according to this newly introduced structure, JUCOR is claimed to have been owned and controlled by the Jimma University community and Jimma Zone community. It is thus reorganized as if the station was administered by 150 General Assembly members elected from both communities, and in particular by the 7 Board Members selected from this General Assembly. The demography of these representatives is somehow fair. There are women, men, youngsters, elderlies, and students in the General Assembly and Board of the station. The question is the extent to which these people were participating in determining the overall performance of the station. All key informants from the General Assembly stated that apart from the day they were elected, they did not meet to discuss issues related to the station's operation. A member of the General Assembly (GA) confessed:

*I think the General Assembly and the Board did nothing after they were elected. We have not been contacted. We have not evaluated the performance (of the station) yet. For me, there is no work done that is worth reporting for evaluation. The University did not call us for the last 2 or 2 and half years (Interviewee 3, GA member, personal interview, 24 April 2017).*

The Board members also indicated that due to poor participation and repeated changes of the members, Board meetings have been ineffective (Interviewee 1, board member, personal interview, 10 May and 19 April 2017). Consequently, this problem not only hindered the communities' participation in ownership and control of the radio station but also affected the station's day-to-day activities. A journalist at the radio station described the problem as follows:

*The station does not have any owner. I have not seen a committed person make use of this station for the community. The University took the station as a foster family. The foster family does not assist the child as the biological father does. However, they only assist in the child's upbringing. It is like that, not like fatherhood, I think so (Interviewee 4, personal interview, 24 March 2017).*

### 3.3 JUCOR's Programming

Based on the available documents and key informants' interviews, data on the station's programming were obtained and analyzed. The programs at the station are broadly grouped into two categories: informative/educational and entertainment. The informative/educational programs dealt largely with specific subjects like health, agriculture, education, etc., not necessarily linked with current events (like news and current affairs). Programs in this category include those dealing with education, health, legal matters, and other issues related to development. The entertainment programs include music and narrations and discussions of novels, short stories and poems.

Although JUCOR is a full-day transmission – half-day in Afaan Oromo and half in Amharic – it has only 13 regular programs each week; others are irregular. They were transmitted one week and disappeared the next. This is due to different factors. A journalist working for the station has summarized the causes of the

irregularity as: “Our programs are not permanent. This is because of human resource and transportation facility problem; the absence of incentives for volunteers, and the station is not well organized” (Interviewee 5, personal interview, 24 March 2017).

On the other hand, one participant from the members of the General Assembly explained that JCR (before the change was introduced) was reporting events and situations in Jimma town like traffic safety, good governance, art, and programs related to business or market which were not being covered by other media institutions at that time (Interviewee 2, Personal interview, 10 April 2017). Such programs addressing the pressing concerns of society did not seem to have been heard following the change.

Another informant who is also a member of the General Assembly attributed this problem to the lack of sufficient human power in the station and the reluctance of volunteers to work on program production due to the absence of incentives for them. He added that their programs are mostly music and other programs focusing on pressing social issues and have the tendency of appearing this week and disappearing the next (Interviewee 1, personal interview, 10 April 2017).

The other challenge of the station is the fact that it is dependent on only the electric power from ELPA for its operation. When there is power it existed on air, whereas during a power blackout, which is a common experience in Jimma town, the station disappears. It could even be closed. This was another reason for journalists and volunteers to become hesitant about their jobs.

### 3.4 Volunteerism in JUCOR

Volunteers are the stamina and the reflexive mirrors of community participation in community radio. They are from the community the radio station is meant to serve, with a good understanding of the community’s needs and preferences. Volunteerism in the days of JCR (before the change was introduced) had significantly been encouraging for a number of reasons. The station was used to encourage and manage volunteers. Volunteers used to get training on journalism and different social issues, and professional journalists had been supervising them closely. Volunteers were free to produce programs of their interest and that of the community (Interviewee 6, personal interview, 27 March 2017). Incentives were paid to volunteers in the interval of three months by the then Board (Interviewee 7, personal interview, March 30 2017).

However, the number of volunteers working at the station decreased gradually. This was partly due to the change made to the station’s working area from the Main Campus of the University to Kito Furdisa Institute of Technology; it was very inconvenient for volunteers as it is far from the center of the town and from the Main Campus where most of the volunteers learn and work (Interviewee 8, personal interview, 27 March 2017). Others left the radio station when they were employed with attractive salaries by other broadcasting media (Interviewees 1, 2, 6, 7, and 8, personal interview, March to May 2017).

Currently, when this study was being conducted, the station had a few (not more than ten) volunteers. In fact, the regular ones were only six. Consequently, the lack of volunteers led the station to have fewer programs. Additionally, formal trainings were not given to volunteers and journalists did not frequently get on-job trainings; hence, the volunteers did not have any idea about journalism and how programs could be produced (Informants from Volunteers, personal interview, 28 March 2017).



### 3.5 Accessibility of Jimma University Community Oriented Radio (JUCOR)

Accessibility refers to the availability of various and important programs, having the means to react towards it for improving them, getting the chance to participate in media program production, and generally, using media for public service (Servaes & Malikhao, 2012). It also includes the station's transmission coverage and transmission signal quality, the station's facilitation for community participation, sustainability of receivers' and broadcasters' interaction, and the nearness of the station's office to the community (UNESCO, 2015).

Due to signal interruption and distortion, audiences of the station are frustrated to participate. Transmission quality decreased and because of this and lack of attention by the governing body, the community's participation became minimal (Interviewee 5, personal interview, 24 March 2017). Phone call is the only main way in which members of the community participate in JUCOR's programs to give their opinions. As the transmission equipment had been repaired, again and again, its transmission capacity efficiency has decreased gradually. This in turn became the reason for signal interruptions and the diminishing of transmission quality (Interviewee 7, personal interview, 30 March, 2017). Additionally, the station is not easily accessible geographically. It is not convenient for most of the University's community to participate in program production, let alone for the Jimma Zone community.

Through observation, it was discovered that the station had limited access to make continuous interaction between producers and audiences of the programs. The accesses to reaching the station were not sufficient enough; the only medium was a phone. Though the station had a postal address, it did not receive more than two letters per week from the audience. It did not have a reception room for guests, nor did it have new-age communication systems like email, Facebook, webpages, blogs, Twitter, etc.

## 4. Discussion of Key Findings

### 4.1 Participation

JUCOR has a General Assembly of 150 members comprised of people of different backgrounds. Hence, one could understand that there is some element of community engagement in the administration of the radio. However, the Assembly did not make any formal meetings to make decisions on matters concerning the Radio. Moreover, participation includes not only having discussions with the public in decision making, but also involving the public in the production, management, and planning of communication; generally, it is a higher level of public involvement in communication systems (Servaes & Malikhao, 2012). As far as JUCOR is concerned, let alone the higher level of participation, involving the community in the program production process by itself has not been yet realized. The only way in which the community participated in program production was through phone calls. Certain individuals from the community would give their opinions through the phone for the station's programs as feedback, and a few others would participate in the program production as guests on live talk shows.

Formerly, some of the programs of JCR were produced by volunteers, by certain groups from the community (like Clubs from Jiren High School and Oromo Culture, History and Language Promotion Club (GDASAO) of Jimma University students), and by the station's journalists. However, currently, these kinds of community participation could not be observed. The volunteer journalists and hired journalists designed and produced their own and transmitted them. This implies that the community had limited access to participating in its own media. Such a performance would make the radio station equivalent to a public or government-owned radio station rather than community radio.

Participation is one major characteristic of community radios that paves the way for the community to own and control the station. It seems that the station is mainly owned and controlled by Jimma University, and not by the larger community of Jimma Zone. The community is represented in the station's program production and management aspects by only six volunteers and by phony representation in the structures called Board and General Assembly which in reality did not have any engagement.

## 4.2 Communication for Social Change

Community radio is the means for initiating society towards development. It allows one to have information, education, and entertainment that is pertinent to the day-to-day activities and the social settings of an individual. Since its inception, JUCOR claimed to have been working in line with the concerns of society. But given the data, it is impossible to confidently say it has contributed to the anticipated change in the society, mainly because the station has been struggling with different challenges. According to one Board member, the station had been struggling with administrative, human power and technical problems rather than solving societal problems. This does not mean that there was no contribution by the station. For instance, as another participant stated, the station developed volunteer journalists' capacity and enhanced the experience that enabled them to get positions in other media institutions.

However, communication for social change is about "how social change can happen through a process of community dialogue leading to collective action that affects the welfare of communities as a whole as well as their individual members" (Figuroa, Kincaid, Rani, & Lewis, 2003, p. ii). As could be evidenced in the discussion section, such a practice did not appear in JUCOR. Hence, given the number of volunteers (who were above 100 and the variety of programs they produced), it was at the phase of JCR, before the change was introduced, that the station tried to contribute to social change. The finding supports Kassahun (2012), who confirmed that the Jimma Community Radio safeguarded the voiceless and the vulnerable members of the community by facilitating dialogue, and by serving as a forum for dialogue on diverse views and opinions among the community and the local government.

To ensure communication for social change, local control is essential. Community radio "favors a bottom-up" approach, placing ownership, access, and control of communication in the hands of the affected communities", rather than focusing on "top-down" persuasion and information dissemination (Dagron & Tufte 2006, p. 819). However, JUCOR still used the top-down approach of persuasion and information dissemination. Its administrative structure is practically an advocate of the top-down approach. There was not enough participation from the community, both from the University's and that of Jimma Zone, in program production and management of the station. The pro-community characteristic of community radio thus far has not been fully implemented in JUCOR. The community service characteristic, which favors the promotion of the community's culture, economy, and social life for their enhancement, is at its infancy stage as indicated by the data collected from key informants, observations, and documents.

Finally, this study may not show the full picture of the practice of community-oriented radio which EBA introduced in its regulation (EBA, 2016) and has been adopted by Jimma University. There is no similar research conducted on universities or other institutions in Ethiopia or elsewhere that adopted this modality, as far as the search for evidence showed. This could be counted as a shortcoming of this research undertaking. If further research, a mixed-research, quantitative and qualitative, were conducted bearing this issue of the community-oriented radio concept, better insight could be gained.

## 5. Conclusions and Recommendations

### 5.1 Conclusion

As it could be understood from the findings of the study, the station's performance as an instrument of social change was very limited. The role that the station could have contributed to the social development of the community has been crippled mainly because of its administrative, financial, material, and human resource problems. These problems have emanated from different factors, as indicated by the key informants and documents. The technical problems with the station were the result of obsolete equipment that the station used. They were imported from abroad, and some of them were imported without accessories and/or spare parts. Improper use of the existing equipment and the lengthened financial procedures of the University for buying new equipment or spare parts have worsened the problem.

Moreover, the financial issues and human power problems are directly related to the problems associated with the organizational structure of the station. The station does not have separate departments for finance and for volunteers' coordination. Jimma University's reluctance to strengthen the management of the station also contributed to these financial and human resource problems. Lack of fund-raising mechanisms and mismanagement of incomes collected from sponsors of the programs have also been identified. The main cause of human resource constraints is the high turnover of experienced volunteers and journalists to other media institutions operating in Jimma and elsewhere in search of better salaries and working conditions. The existing volunteers are not encouraged by the station. There is no logistics support and other facilities like transport and incentives for the volunteers to work efficiently for the station.

Additionally, the station has not encouraged the community to get involved in its administration and program production to bring sustainable change in society. To bring about change in the economic, social, and cultural lives of the society via the radio, it was crucial that the community understands the role the community radio could play for social change. It is also essential to make the administrative structure of the radio in such a way that it allows a higher level of community participation. These two important issues have not been met by JUCOR. The main characteristics of community radio, like community service, being pro-community, community ownership and control, being not-for-profit, and participation are not found to be exercised in the actual practices at JUCOR. The communities' participation in programming, designing, and producing programs is very much limited. The only way in which the community participated in the program production was through phone calls, and it was limited to giving feedback, comments, and criticisms. The community did not own the task all by themselves.

Furthermore, the administrative structure of JUCOR does not fully reflect a typical community radio management structure. During the establishment of JCR, the University assisted the station by financing, hiring human resources, housing the station, installing the station's studio, and equipping the station. This had made the University the prime sponsor of the station. However, it seems that the station became totally dependent on the University, resulting in an administration system (Assembly/Board) that had a vague role. When representatives from the community in the form of the General Assembly and Board took the responsibility of governing the station, and when the University limited its financial and other assistance, the work procedure became more complex and the functioning of the station more problematic. Moreover, the organizational structure of given community radio is a lot to do with processes of decision making, designing and implementing editorial policy, motivating workers, controlling and ownership, and support. However, as the findings confirmed, JUCOR's administrative structure lacked these all; in fact, it seems that it did not have a clear long-term vision, mission, goal, objectives, and programs. It did not develop clear news and program

policy and an administrative procedure that ensures transparency and ease of communication within the management system. Finance and community coordinating departments were not in place to enable the station to sustain on its own. The weakness of the administrative wing of the radio station affected the communities' participation in management, program designing, producing, and transmitting.

Additionally, volunteerism in JUCOR has gradually deteriorated. As this study identified, there were over a hundred energetic and committed volunteers in the station who were producing 26 programs per week at the phase of JCR. Moreover, the station, on its part, was used to encourage and manage the volunteers. Volunteers used to get training on journalism and different issues with closer supervision and professional assistance from qualified journalists, and they were producing programs of their interest and of the community's freely. Incentives were being paid to the volunteers at the interval of three months by the Board. Lately, in 2013, when the management of the radio station became weaker and when the studio/transmission center was changed from the Main Campus of the University to Kito Furdisa Institute of Technology Campus, volunteerism significantly decreased. The radio station became an inconvenient place for many of the volunteers since most of them were working and learning at the Main Campus, and since Kito Furdisa is too far from the Main Campus and the center of Jimma town. Moreover, some of the volunteers left the station to other stations in the town and elsewhere to work. Others were discouraged because of the recurrent signal interruptions which decreased their audibility to the community. Hence, the fading away of volunteerism from JUCOR has resulted in having few programs in the weekly transmission of the station, and inconsistency of the available programs.

In a nutshell, JUCOR has failed from performing its function in accordance with the standard and principles of community radio. Inconveniency of the administrative structure, financial problems, technical constraints, and lack of sufficient and skilled human resource hindered the station from encouraging community participation to bringing about sustainable social change. Hence, it might be necessary for EBA to revise the regulation for establishing community radio that could function in accordance with the principles of community ownership, engagement, and administration so that the radio could contribute to social change and development.

## 5.2 Recommendation

For the improvement of JUCOR to be a platform that voices concerns and interests of the community in Jimma Zone and Jimma University, the authors/researchers (principal researcher and his advisors) recommend the following:

- Re-adjusting the organizational structure of the radio station by making clear the role of the General Assembly and Board members of the station in such a way that the Zone and University communities could get a real chance to participate in the ownership and control of their radio. This assists the station to be owned and managed by the community. It also helps the radio station to plan and stand on its own feet and serve the community based on the principles and guidelines of community radio.
- News/program manager, financial, and volunteer coordinating departments should be put in place. That makes the station financially and socially sustainable.
- The physical accessibility of the station should be reconsidered. The University has to relocate the station to the center of the town so that the University community and Jimma Zone community could get better access to participate in their station's daily functions.
- The station's editorial policy, guidelines, and principles should be prepared based on the model adopted as per EBA's regulation, and the management of the station should strictly adhere to it.
- The management of the station should make programming, program design, and production to be open for the participation of the communities. Different ways of contacting the audience have to be explored; additional means of communication like e-mail, Facebook, webpage, telegram, and other online means should be introduced to the station.
- Human resource of the station needs to be addressed by Jimma University. Editors for news and programs in Afaan Oromo and Amharic languages should be hired. Reporters and sound technicians have to be hired to increase the number and quality of programs.
- The station's management should encourage volunteerism. Assisting the current volunteers and attracting new ones may encourage volunteerism and participatory communication at the radio station.
- Jimma University and the station's management must devise the means of raising funds and income-generating mechanisms to sustain the station and to make its performance effective.
- The University must also solve technical and resource-related problems. Equipment, such as generators, studio materials, UPS computers, voice recorders, and so on, should be provided as soon as they are needed. There should also be strict management of equipment and materials so that their durability is ensured.
- Program evaluation mechanisms should be planned by the management of the station apart from the existing ones. For instance, having daily morning or afternoon briefing sessions and conducting audience surveys need to be exercised.

### Acknowledgements

The authors would like to acknowledge Jimma University for funding this research project. They acknowledge JUCOR general assembly and board members, managers, and employed and volunteer journalists who have contributed as informants and document providers. The research could have been so incomplete had it not been for their help. We would like to thank JUCOR volunteers and journalists in particular for the hospitality they gave the principal investigator while he was conducting the research on their organization. We are also grateful to the reviewers and editors of this manuscript who gave us insightful comments.

### Authors' affiliation

<sup>1</sup>M.A, Department of Journalism and Communication, Ambo University

<sup>2</sup> \* Assistant Professor, Department of Media and Communication Studies, Jimma University; email: [getilahun@gmail.com](mailto:getilahun@gmail.com); [getachewtil@yahoo.com](mailto:getachewtil@yahoo.com)

<sup>3</sup>Associate Professor, Department of English Language and Literature, Jimma University; email: [tesgeb00@gmail.com](mailto:tesgeb00@gmail.com)

### Authors' contributions

Author <sup>1</sup>: Prepared the proposal, collected and analyzed data, prepared the draft manuscript

Author <sup>2</sup>: Advised author1; polished and enriched the manuscript

Author <sup>3</sup>: Advised author1; critically commented and edited the manuscript

### Competing interests

The authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

### Consent for publication

We have agreed to submit for Journal of Social Sciences and Language Studies and approved the manuscript for

submission. Corresponding author's signature:  \_\_\_\_\_

**Funding:** The corresponding author disclosed that the project received funding from Jimma University for an MA Thesis.

### Publisher's Note

Jimma University is neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published figures and institutional affiliations.

## References

- AMARC. (2013). *AMARC Annual Report 2012–2013*. Montreal, QC, Canada: World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters.
- AMARC. (1998). *What is community radio? A resource guide*. Lusaka: AMARC & Panos Publishers.
- Babbie, E. R. (2010). *The practice of social research*. Belmont, Calif: Wadsworth Cengage.
- Browne, D. R. (2012). What is 'community' in community radio? A consideration of the meaning, nature and importance of a concept. In J. Gordon (Ed.), *Community radio in the twenty-first century, Frankfurt/Main: Peter Lang, 153-173*.
- Carpentier, N. (2011). 'The concept of participation: If they have access and interact, do they really participate? *Communication Management Quarterly*, 21, 13-36.
- Community Radio Support Center (CRSC)/ Nepal forum of environmental journalists (NEFEJ with UNESCO (1<sup>st</sup> Ed.). (2011). *Community MHz: Assessing community radio performance in Nepal: A pilot assessment of 15 stations*. Kathmandu, Nepal: Rabin Sayami. [https://nefej.org.np/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Community\\_MHz\\_final.pdf](https://nefej.org.np/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Community_MHz_final.pdf)
- Creswell, J.W. & Poth, C.N. (2016). *Qualitative inquiry and research design. Choosing among five approaches*. 4<sup>th</sup> Ed. SAGE (Pub): London.
- Dagron, A. G., & Tufte, T. (Eds.). (2006). *Communication for social change anthology: Historical and contemporary readings*. CFSC Consortium, Inc..
- EBA. (2016). *Report about the community radio in 2016. Ethiopian Broadcast Authority, Addis Ababa Ethiopian community radio list*. Addis Ababa: (Unpublished).
- Figueroa, M.E., DI, K., Rani, M., & Lewis, G. (2003). *Communication for social change: an integrated model for measuring the process and its outcomes*. The Rockefeller Foundation and Johns Hopkins University. New York Center.
- Kassahun Kebede (2008) ለጅም ዩኒቨርሲቲ ማህበረሰብ ተኮረ ሬድዮ ቦርድ የቀረበ ሪፖርት፣ ከጅም ማህበረሰብ ሬድዮ (ጅማሬ) እስከ ጅም ዩኒቨርሲቲ ማህበረሰብ ተኮረ ሬድዮ (ጅዩ ማተሬ)፤ ጅማ።
- Kassahun, Wodajo. (2012). Community radio for social development: The case of Jimma community radio. Unpublished MA Thesis, AAU: Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
- Kombol, M.A. (2014). Potential uses of community radio in political awareness: A proposal for Nigeria. *New media and mass communication*, 24, 12-24.
- Jemal, Mohammed. (2013). Challenges and opportunities in the use of radio broadcast for development in Ethiopia: Secondary data analysis. *Online Journal of Communication and Media Technologies*, 3(2), 1.
- Myers, M. (2011). *Voices from villages: Community radio in the developing world*. Center for International Media Assistance.
- Servaes, J., & Malikhao, P. (2012). Advocacy communication for peacebuilding. *Development in Practice*, 22(2), 229-243.
- Tucker, E. (2013). Community radio in political theory and development practice. *Journal of Development and Communication Studies*, 2(2-3), 392-420.

- Wabwire, J. (2013). The role of community radio in development of the rural poor. *New Media and Mass Communication*, 10, 40-47
- UNESCO. (2015). *International seminar on community media sustainability: Strengthening policies and funding*. 14-15 September 2015 UNESCO, Paris Accessed from <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/media-development/community-media/community-media-sustainability-strengthening-policies-and-funding/>
- UNESCO. (2011). *Community media: a good practice handbook*. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization 7, place de Fontenoy, 75352 Paris 07 SP, France: Buckley, S.
- ጅማ ማህበረሰብ ሬዲዮ ጣቢያ ቦርድ (2000 ዓ.ም). *የጅማ ማህበረሰብ ሬዲዮ ጣቢያ ከ15/9/2000 ዓ.ም እስከ 17/10/2000 ዓ.ም) የአጭር ጊዜ ሪፖርት። ጅማ፣ ኢትዮጵያ።*
- የኢትዮጵያ ብሮድካስት ባለስልጣን / Ethiopian Broadcasting Authority (2006 ዓ.ም). የማህበረሰብ ሬዲዮ አደረጃጀትና መዋቅር፡ ኤዲዮሪያል ፖሊሲ፣ የሰጪ ኃይል አስተዳደር (መመሪያ፣ የፋይናንስና ንብረት አስተዳደር መመሪያ፣ ሞዴልነት እንዲያገለግሉ የተዘጋጁ። አዲስ አበባ፣ ኢትዮጵያ accessed from: <http://www.eba.gov.et/index.php/2013-11-03-08-02-32/2013-11-03-08-16-10/2013-11-03-08-25-54>
- የኢትዮጵያ ብሮድካስት ባለስልጣን (2004 ዓ.ም). የማህበረሰብ ሬዲዮ መመሪያ። አዲስ አበባ፣ ኢትዮጵያ accessed from: <http://www.eba.gov.et/index.php/2013-11-03-08-02-32/2013-11-03-08-16-10/2013-11-03-08-25-54>