# Community radio

Community radio usually is a short-range, not-for-profit radio station or channel that caters for the information needs of people living in a particular locality, in the languages and formats that are most adapted to the local context. Community radio stations can be mobilized for campaigns, for example by announcing campaign events, hosting talk shows with campaigners, or playing the campaign radio jingle and songs.

**Advantages:**As community radio is usually run by volunteers using low-cost technology, it tends to be easy to obtain free or inexpensive air time. It offers an opportunity for contributions by people whose voice is not much heard on national radio – e.g. “ordinary” women and youth – which can be highly empowering. Community radio reaches a large section of the locality it covers, as listeners tend to be interested in local issues. It is also an excellent way to communicate with communities whose main language is not the official national language.

**Examples:**

In Nepal, the NGO [Equal Access](http://www.equalaccess.org.np/), with support from the United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence against Women, in partnership with General Welfare Prathistan, trained rural women as community radio reporters. They collected stories from other rural women to create a radio program, “Changing our World”, which reached two million listeners. It covered issues relating to women’s human rights, peace-building, and violence against women. In parallel, sixty community listener groups were established to encourage grass-roots leadership and changes in attitudes and behaviour (UNIFEM, 2007: [*Women Building Peace*](http://www.womenwarpeace.org/webfm_send/362)).

See the [impact assessment](https://www.endvawnow.org/uploads/browser/files/equal_access_impact_assessment.pdf) and watch a [video](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D2oSLj_G9gQ) on this initiative.

The [World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC)](http://www.amarc.org/index.php?p=home&l=EN) brings together a 4000-strong network all over the world, and supports the community radio movement. Information on radio stations, and events and conferences related to community radio can be found on its website in English, Spanish and French.

**Bear in mind:**

-      In rural areas of low-income countries, it is often the adult men in the household who control radio ownership and use in households (UNIFEM, 2007: [*Women Building Peace*](http://www.womenwarpeace.org/webfm_send/362)). In that context, you need to reach out to women by using other channels, picking the times of day for broadcast when women are likely to be alone at home, or by recording and playing radio programs at places where women meet, e.g. as part of women’s self-help and micro-finance group meetings.

-      If you consider creating your own radio station, e.g. for a community campaign lasting several years, find out about local regulations and organizations that can provide the necessary training.

**Feminist Radio**

This is women-centered radio programming that promotes non-sexist communications, non-stereotyping and focuses on issues affecting women and girls. Many feminist radio organisations are community-based, broadcasting increasingly over the internet as well to reach a wider audience. Examples of feminist radio organisations include: [Women’s International News Gathering Service (WINGS](http://www.wings.org/)) (Canada), [Feminist International Radio Endeavour (FIRE)](http://www.fire.or.cr/indexeng.htm) (Costa Rica, in English and Spanish), the [Women’s Radio Fund](http://www.womensradiofund.org/) (USA), [Mama FM](http://www.umwamamafm.co.ug/) (Uganda), [Radio Al-Mahabba](http://www.radioalmahabba.com/) (Iraq), [Nisaa](http://www.radionisaa.net/) (Palestine) and the [AMARC Women’s International Network](http://win.amarc.org/index.php?p=home&l=EN) (hosted by AMARC, global). A list of feminist radio organisations can be found at the [Women’s Institute for Freedom of the Press.](http://www.wifp.org/DWM/Radio.html)

**Tools for community radio:**

The Straight Talk Foundation (Uganda), offers a crisp, 33-page manual <[Using Radio to Help Communities Talk: A Manual for Community Dialogue](https://www.endvawnow.org/en/tools/view/645-using-radio-to-help-communities-talk-a-manual-for-community-dialogue-2006.html), 2006> on the essentials of community radio, including basic guidance on technical issues.

The [**Community Radio Toolkit**](http://www.communityradiotoolkit.net/) is a website providing links to resources on practical issues related to community radio such as station management, sales and advertising, programming, research and evaluation and engaging volunteers.

**UNESCO** has published a series of guides on community radio (CR):

i.         The 100-page [*Community Radio Handbook*](http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001245/124595e.pdf) covers all aspects of community radio and includes fairly extensive case studies from different continents.

ii.        How to do [*Community Radio. A Primer for Community Radio Operators*](http://www.communityradiotoolkit.net/wp-content/uploads/2010/03/Unesco_HowToDoCR1.pdf) by Louie Tabing (UNESCO, 2002) gives detailed technical guidance (in 70 pages).

iii.        [*CR: A user’s guide to the technology*](http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0015/001561/156197e.pdf) by N. Ramakrishnan (UNESCO, 2007) is the most up-to-date and comprehensive UNESCO technical guide on community radio (275 pages). It covers all technical aspects, including almost 100 pages on equipment. Although the document is chiefly targeted to Indian and South Asian audiences, it contains valuable general information applicable to other audiences.

The Indian organization [**Gram Vaani Community Media**](http://gramvaani.org/) (2008) provides an extensive on-line guide on community radio, with a particular focus on India. It includes strategic and technical guidance, information on costs and a host of useful links, which are also valid in other contexts.

The **World Association of Community Radios (AMARC)** offers comprehensive information on how to use [audio, video and print media](http://www.amarc.org/index.php?p=content_development_gender_documents); how to conduct [evaluations](http://www.amarc.org/index.php?p=Community_radio_evaluation&l=EN); provides links to media networks in all regions; and a collaboration space for members.  The website is available in [English](http://www.amarc.org/), [French](http://www.amarc.org/index.php?p=home&l=FR&nosafe=0) and [Spanish](http://www.amarc.org/index.php?p=home&l=ES&nosafe=0).

* The AMARC site hosts the [**AMARC Women’s Network**](http://win.amarc.org/index.php?p=home&l=EN) on a special page which includes links to major international campaigns and events on women’s rights.
* The colourful guide on [***Creating Participatory Radio with Children***](http://www.iwtc.org/ideas/21_radio.pdf) by Community Media for Development Productions (South Africa, 2004) explains how children can be involved in producing radio programmes such as drama.