



## Community radio in rural development in Northeastern Ghana: the experiences of radio Gaakii in the Saboba district

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Available online at: [www.isca.in](http://www.isca.in), [www.isca.me](http://www.isca.me)

Received 17<sup>th</sup> February 2018, revised 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2018, accepted 9<sup>th</sup> May 2018

### Abstract

*This research paper draws on the theory of development communication to explore the relationship between community radio broadcast and community development in Northern Ghana. It traces the history of development communication practice in Ghana and its application in Ghana's rural development efforts. The study draws attention to the special role of radio in development work by analysing the programming styles and formats of Radio Gaakii and its impacts on the community's development drive. The paper also explored areas of community concern most addressed by radio Gaakii broadcast. The study adopted the qualitative approach in its design and employed in-depth interviews in its data collection. One significant findings of this study is that, the general programming style and format of Radio Gaakii's broadcast contents are practically aimed at responding to the felt needs of the communities it serve. Socio-cultural issues were found to be the primary concern of the listening community that the Station has addressed most since its inception in 2011. The station also made giant strides in the areas of agriculture, health and sanitation, women and youth empowerment. A key recommendation the study made is that, Ghana's Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development should take steps at mainstreaming CRB model into Ghana's local government system by supervising the setting-up of CRS in every district capital (especially those considered rural and without community radio stations) in a non-partisan manner, with coverage reaching all communities within the district. This, it is believed will facilitate social communication and development among rural populations of Ghana.*

**Keywords:** Radio Gaakii, rural development, development communication, and community radio.

### Introduction

As far back the 1950's, scholars in the field of development practice had underscored the critical role of the mass media in development processes<sup>1-4</sup>. Lerner for example notes that communication systems are both indicators and agents of social change. According to him, the mass media teach new skills, attitudes and behaviors and are therefore a "mobility multiplier" with the capacity to simultaneously communicate to large groups of people<sup>1</sup>. This is because of the powerful effects of the media in communicating messages and changing attitudes<sup>5</sup>. For Schramm, the mass media serves as agents of social change in the course of national development. Schramm notes that the media are expected to motivate people to adopt new customs and practices and in some cases different social relationship<sup>3</sup>.

Even more recently, scholarly works in the field of development have shown that the mass media still play crucial role in the development process of underdeveloped areas of the world<sup>6-12</sup>. For instance, Karikari posit that development communication recognizes the reality of underdevelopment and the fact that development is a valid social goal that the media must actively pursue. He stresses that, the main characteristic of development communication is the deliberate and active role of the media in pressing for social change<sup>6</sup>.

According to Nigussie, media provided people with information critical for making enlightened decisions and choices on socio-economic issues. In addition, media provided mechanisms for feedback from the citizens on matters that affect them. Nigussie notes that the media's role in nation building is often linked to promoting socio-economic development on the premise that without national consensus, it is not possible to mobilize a society for national development<sup>12</sup>.

In Ghana, many media and development scholars expected a more active participation of the media in development following the liberalization of the airwaves in 1993. However, Asante regretted that little efforts were made by Ghana's media institutions to accelerate and sustain national development. For Asante, some scholars are particularly concerned about the media's failure to promote the development of rural communities. He found that circulation of Ghana's state owned and most widely read newspapers are limited to the major cities to the detriment of rural communities<sup>13</sup>. Similarly, Bofo suggests that only a small and insignificant number of newspaper copies penetrate rural communities<sup>14</sup>.

Indeed, the combined effects of poverty and lower levels of literacy place a limitation on the use of certain media such as

newspaper and TV in Northern Ghana. Under such circumstances, radio remains the most accessible, effective and appropriate medium of communication for development purposes for the people of Northern Ghana.

Media researchers as far back the 1930s recognized the significance of radio to communication for development purposes. Cantril and Allport for instance recognized this unifying role of radio in the following remark:

*“When a million or more people hear the same subject matter, the same arguments and appeals, the same music and humour, when their attention is held in the same way and at the same time to the same stimuli, it is psychologically inevitable that they should acquire in the same degree common interests, common tastes and common attitudes. In short, it seems to be the nature of radio to encourage people to think and feel alike”<sup>15</sup>.*

Radio, in spite of the growth in other forms of mass media (especially social media and the internet) continues to gain popularity worldwide. Radios’ unique characteristics of having immediacy in content delivery and its capacity to break many barriers of communication including illiteracy, economic status, age and even sex, positions it as a versatile medium of mass communication particularly in Third World Countries. Habib Sy remark that radio is a very effective medium for scientific education, political enlightenment and socio-cultural progress. Additionally, radio can be use to empower the disenfranchised through the use of national languages and their promotion as official languages<sup>6</sup>. For Rosalynde Ainslie, the focus of broadcasting is changing from its entertainment role, which Europeans attributed to the medium, to the educational and developmental function of radio<sup>16</sup>. For Africa, radio remains the most critical mass correspondence medium among rural dwellers.

In Zimbabwe, for three decades prior to its political independence in 1980, radio was being used by national liberation movements operating from outside the country like elsewhere in Africa as a tool for political communication. According to Mosia, Riddle and Zaffiro, radio then was used to denounce exploitation, discrimination and minority rule that came with colonialism. The denunciation was achieved through political education that mobilized people to unite and rise up against colonial rule. Although largely undocumented, the lessons learnt on the use of radio then informed the enthusiasm with which the government of independent Zimbabwe used radio to reorient its citizenry from the pain of colonialism to the nation building project that demanded reconstruction and development<sup>17</sup>.

Tanzania perhaps presents one of the best African examples of the successful application of radio for health education. In 1993, a radio soap opera entitled, “Twende na Wakati” (Let’s Go with the Times) commenced in Tanzania. The programs were created

for dual purpose: to inform the population about the different ways to deal with the AIDS problem and also educate the public about family planning techniques. The programs were successful in reducing the problem of population explosion in Tanzania<sup>18</sup>.

In Ghana, Bosompra examined the effectiveness of Ghanaian health information campaigns designed to inform and encourage changed behavior with regard to cholera, immunization, oral rehydration therapy, and AIDS in two rural Ghanaian communities and concluded that respondents relied almost equally on conversation with family and friends on one hand and radio on the other, for information on the selected health topics<sup>19</sup>. Similarly, Brydon and Legge study on the Programs of Action to Mitigate the Social Impacts of Adjustments (PAMSCAD) and the Economic Opportunities for Women in Development (ENOWID) reports from their survey response that the Ghanaian government uses radio as an information tool than newspaper<sup>20</sup>.

For decades, radio remained the primary tool that enhances rural peoples’ involvement in decision-making on development activities at the community levels<sup>21</sup>. Community Radio (CR) in particular has played pioneering roles as the most reliable and most inclusive medium of communication, guaranteeing rural communities’ active participation in communication processes and decisions that affects them<sup>22</sup>. Since the emergence of the concept of CR as a discipline of study and a field of practice, communication scholars have published several research works around that field, either extolling its significance and impact in the listening communities or exposing the lapses inherent in CRB. This study therefore seek to add to the body of literature that exist in support of the contributions of CR to national development by examining the impacts of Radio Gaakii (A community-based radio station in the Saboba District in North-eastern corridor with broadcasting coverage reaching fourteen (14) administrative districts of the present Northern Region of Ghana) broadcasting services in the development drive of the communities it serves.

This study specifically is therefore aimed at: i. Analysing the programming styles and formats of Radio Gaakii and the impacts it has made on the community’s development drive; ii. Identifying the areas of community concern most addressed by Radio Gaakii broadcast content and iii. Establishing stakeholders’ views about the contributions of Radio Gaakii broadcast to behavioural change and/ in influencing the allocation of physical development projects in the community.

**Theoretical Framework and Literature Review:** This research is guided by the theory of development communication. The theory hinges on the use of communication or mediated communication to facilitate social development<sup>23</sup>. Although, development communication as a field of practice commenced in the 1940s, it was not until after the Second World War that the concept became widespread when it was

engaged in resolving key development challenges that emerged from the war. Pioneer communications theorists like Wilbur Schramm and Daniel Lerner encouraged the use of radio and television in the world's most disadvantaged countries to bring about dramatic progress. These scholars based their arguments on the apparent success of World War II propaganda, which was possible mainly through academia and film. Development communication as a theoretical framework gained currency in the second half of the twentieth century. The works of Lerner<sup>1</sup>, Schramm<sup>3</sup> and Rogers<sup>2</sup> brought to the fore the need for communication to serve the development needs of Third World Countries.

Generally, communication has an essential role to play in development. Development communication in particular engages stakeholders and policy makers, assesses risks and opportunities and establishes environments that are conducive to promote information exchanges to bring about positive social change via sustainable development. Development communication techniques include information dissemination and awareness creation, behavior change, social marketing, social mobilization, media advocacy, communication for social change and community participation<sup>24</sup>.

Mowlana discloses that between the 1940s and 1970s, research into communication and development were based primarily on three main approaches. One of the approaches he gave is the utilitarian or cost-benefit approach. This approach according to Mowlana emerged in the 1940s and was used in examining the role of communication technology in development policies. The utilitarian approach analyzed the cost-benefit effects of investments in communication technologies. By the 1960, as the role of communication technologies became apparent to many countries, efforts were made in maximizing its benefits and at the same time, minimizing its negative effects on local cultures<sup>25</sup>.

Over the past couple of decades, several other models of communication and development have emerged in scholarly debates. One of such model that is of interest to this study is the Marxist model. The Marxist emphasizes propaganda, organization, mobilization and self-criticism as essential and primary functions of communication channels, especially the mass media. In this model, the role of interpersonal and group communication is relevant to the conception and implementation of development plans and strategies. The model assumes that awareness, social change and revolution results in media participation, that is a situation where the people are involved in the production and distribution of cultural messages. In this regard, communication aims at raising awareness, creating self-consciousness and mobilizing people for political change leading to socio-economic development<sup>26</sup>.

**Emergence of Development Communication across Continents:** For Latin America, development communication can be traced to the emerging histories of Colombia's Radio Sutatenza and Bolivia's Radio Mineras in the 1940s. These

advocacy radios used participatory and educational approaches in empowering the marginalized and advocating for better conditions of service. Paolo Freire's theories of critical pedagogy and Miguel Sabido's enter-educate method were popularized in the 1960s and emerged as important elements of the Latin American development communication scene. Other researchers who contributed to this school of thought include Juan Diaz Bordenave, Luis Ramiro Beltran and Alfonso Gumucio Dagron<sup>27</sup>.

India's attempt at development communication was in 1940 when indigenous languages such as Hindi, Marathi, Gujarati and Kannada were employed in rural radio broadcasts. By the 1950s, India focused at using communication to accelerate community development projects that were initiated by the union government. Following socialist ideology, the first generation of politicians started massive developmental programs throughout the country and employed field publicity in educating the largely non-literate population<sup>27</sup>. The field publicity of the Indian government was in the form of interpersonal communication and radio for mass education. Development communications became very useful for India since the majority of its people are rural dwellers who largely depend on agriculture for their subsistence. Moreover, poverty levels in the country remained very high. Thus, many Indians needed support from the government, which often assists its citizens with development messages. Aside the traditional modes of communication, the government organized public information campaigns and public shows in remote areas where information on social and developmental schemes were given<sup>25</sup>.

The pioneering scholarly works of Nora C. Quebral marked the beginning of the concept in the Philippines when in 1971, she coined the term "Development Communication". Mowlana reveals that the African school of development communication emerged out of the continent's post-colonial and communist movements in the late 1960s and early 1970s. He observed that while development communication in Anglophone Africa involved the use of radio and theatre for community education, adult literacy, health and agricultural education, radio was being developed as a means of promoting rural development in Francophone Africa, with sponsorship from the Bretton Woods institutions<sup>25</sup>.

**Community Radio and Development:** Community Radio as a concept of practice and a tool for development does not limit itself to a single and complex definition. Various communication scholars in this field of study have defined the concept to suit the focus of their study. According to Girard, "each CRS is a hybrid and unique communication process shaped by several over-arching characteristics underpinned by the distinct culture, history, and reality of the community it serves"<sup>28</sup>.

Community Radio as a social process, afford members of a social system the opportunity to participate collectively in program design and to an extent, even serve as producers of

such local content programs. In so doing, the beneficiary community members tend to direct discussions surrounding their own development priorities. Community members fully understand the significance of using CR as the primary medium to drive their own change agenda in a more democratic manner. In essence, community members view CRB as a participatory communication process that empowers them and afford them the opportunity to dialogue and arrive at self-fulfilling and sustainable development intervention and not merely an imposition of an external or dominant view on the beneficiary community. It is about the community speaking to each other and acting together for common goals<sup>10,28</sup>.

According to the Ghana Community Radio Network-GCRN, CR is "... radio that is about, for, by and of a specific, marginalized community whose ownership and management is representative of that community, which pursues a participatory social agenda and which is non-profit, non-partisan and non-sectarian"<sup>29</sup>. In Ansah's view, CR is a kind of radio administration that takes into account the interest of an area, broadcast content that is famous to a local crowd yet which might regularly be neglected by business or broad communications broadcasters<sup>30</sup>.

For purposes of this research therefore, CR shall be classified and defined as "small scale decentralized broadcasting initiatives which are people centered, actively encourage peoples' participation in programming, and which include some element of community ownership or membership"<sup>31</sup>.

There is a strong belief that CR, if well managed, can fill the void left by the national media (*both public and commercial*). In his research into policy perspectives on CRB in Zambia, Banda described CR as "a communicative tool that can be used to mobilize communities in support of development initiatives, either those started by the government, the international aid agencies, or the local Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's)". Banda's view of CR presents it as a part of communication for development processes<sup>32</sup>. Furthermore, "CRS have the potential to promote good governance, transparency and accountability and to have the capacity to mobilize the people to take ownership of the developmental destiny"<sup>33</sup>.

According to Egargo, CR operators declared in 1994 during AMARC conference in Slovenia "*CR is the best tool to promote freedom of expression, freedom of information, freedom of formation of opinions and active participation of people in development activities*". This declaration spelt out objectives which an ideal CR ought to achieve: promote people's right to communicate; enhance the free flow of information and opinions; foster local talent; enable the minority, disadvantaged, the marginalised and socially excluded to get information and to participate actively in generating information; protect culture and positive traditional beliefs, inform listeners accurately and correctly; promote the right of reply to issues; and to recognise the role of volunteerism in development<sup>34</sup>.

CR exists to fill the void left by one way, non-participatory communication and to demystify mass media, making them more accessible to their audience. Egargo<sup>34</sup>, citing Moemeka<sup>35</sup>, observes that the departure of the dominant paradigm paved the way for a change in development strategy. The emphasis of the new strategy became rural broadcasting, which meant decentralisation of mass media and delegation of the responsibility of programs-production to the rural community members. In reference to Wilbur Schramm, Moemeka adds that the local media were seen as better positioned to serve the indigenous people better.

CR provide a 'voice for the voiceless', making possible diversity of opinions and stimulating people to begin to think critically in order to identify and provide solutions to their problems<sup>34,36</sup>. In order to perform these responsibilities successfully, the radio staff must understand the principles of CR; they have to be trained in community leadership and how to moderate discussions to extract valuable ideas from all participants<sup>37</sup>. Further, the staff ought to be trained on how to establish community-based organizations. There is the need to build in staff adequate skills needed to enhance participatory dialogue and debate on critical issues of concern to the larger community.

Rennie<sup>38</sup> tend to suggest that a CR's impact on development is most felt when it is part of a development project. In as much as this thinking may be true, CR has the potential to promote development in the absence of a project given that communication and the transfer of information play a fundamental role in development processes<sup>39,40</sup>.

## Methodology

This research adopted qualitative approach in its design and employed in-depth interviews in data collection. Using purposive sampling technique, Radio Gaakii was sampled for the study because it has a regular broadcast schedule and also because it is the only CR in Northern region with coverage extending to almost all districts in North-Eastern corridor of Ghana where more than half of the regions' population resides.

Three elected and two government appointed assembly members of the Saboba District Assembly were again purposively sampled because of their in-depth understanding and experiences of the contributions of the station to their community's development. In addition, the assembly members are directly involved with the radio station with some of them serving on the community radio council and others offering voluntary services to the station. In order to assist the research in examining the nature and formats of broadcast programs and the implications of such broadcast contents to the community's development, the Programs Director and the Station Coordinator of the station were also purposively sampled since they are the ideal personnel to provide first-hand information on broadcast contents and programming formats.

While the programme schedule of the radio station was a key component of our data source, 150 radio listeners were sampled through Simple Random Sampling procedure from 5 communities in the district and semi-structured questionnaire administered to elicit responses on the views of the community regarding the contribution of radio Gaakii to community development.

## Results and discussion

**Radio Gaakii's Programming Styles, Formats and Impacts on Development:** This aspect of the paper discusses finding related to the main objective set for this research. It examines the programming styles and formats of Radio Gaakii and analyses the impacts it has so far made in the community's development processes.

**Agriculture and the Local Economy:** Local economic development through increased agricultural productivity is at the heart of Radio Gaakii. An analysis of the stations' programmes schedule reveals the station has two regular programmes on agriculture namely; "Bikpaab ni Kisaak Ayoln" (*Farmers and Farming Time*) and Farmers Forum, that is broadcast twice each in a week and mostly in two local dialects (*Likpakpaaln and Dagbanli*). In an in-depth interview with the Programmes Director of Radio Gaakii, he disclosed that the farmers programs have being extremely useful to farmers. According to him, the 'Bikpaab ni Kisaak Ayoln' provides the platform for farmers to learn new innovations and technology as agricultural experts are often brought into the studios to help discuss and digest critical issues related to new farming methods, techniques and crop varieties.

*"Our farmers on this programme have not only benefited in terms of technology transfer but also in terms of market accessibility. This programme in particular has helped networked farmers to ready markets and also educated farmers on value addition to their produce. The story has being great in this regard and we hope to do more"*.

On the other hand, the Farmers Forum is a platform for farmers to share their experiences with other farmers, allay their fears in the adoption of new crop varieties and build their confidence in new technologies. According to the Programs Director, the Farmers Forum is often recorded on the fields with the farmers having direct access to the microphones, asking questions and narrating their experiences. It is broadcast twice weekly.

An assembly member recounts his personal experience on this programme during an in-depth interview with the researcher. He remarked:

*"I am a farmer by profession and always feared trying out new varieties and technology. But through this programme, I listened to a lot of farmers who give testimonies about different crop varieties and technology. This helped me to overcome my*

*fears and I started trying out some of these varieties. Today, I have increased my yields over the last three years"*.

Radio Gaakii also have two sponsored programmes on agriculture namely; SEND-Ghana Fostering Hour and SNV-MUYO Farmers on sesame production. The former, SEND-Ghana Food Security through Cooperatives in Northern Ghana (FOSTERING) is a project implemented under the Livelihood Security Programmes of the NGO with an objective of increasing sustainable, gender equitable food security for over 42,000 women and men in eight districts in the Eastern Corridor of Northern Ghana. This programme according to the Stations' Programs Director is broadcast once a week often on Tuesdays at prime time. The later (*SNV-MUYO Farmers*) on the other hand is sponsored by the Netherlands Development Organization and a local Farmer Organization in Saboba with the objective of helping farmers increase the production of sesame in the district. An Assembly member of the Saboba District Assembly disclosed during an in-depth interview that from their records, the production of Sesame has shot-up since 2013. He attributes the increase in production to the farmers' programmes on Radio Gaakii.

*"Until Radio Gaakii started a programme on sesame cultivation, our farmers did not know it! Mostly, they cultivate rice, soya-beans, bambara beans, groundnuts, yam, maize, millet and the likes but not sesame. Sesame was then a new crop to us"*.

He further asserts that since they adopted the cultivation of sesame in the district with regular capacity building and skills information from Radio Gaakii, it has improved the livelihoods of not only the sesame farmers but farmers in the area in general.

The Station Coordinator for Radio Gaakii indicated in an in-depth interview that the station considers agriculture as the backbone to the local economy of their listening communities (*the North-Eastern Ghana*) and therefore ensuring increased agricultural production would go a long way to improve the livelihoods of the community people. In view of this, the station puts a lot of efforts at ensuring that farmers are given adequate platform to discuss, learn, share and practice some innovative ideas, technologies and experiences.

**Socio-Cultural and Local Governance:** An examination of Radio Gaakii's programmes schedule reveals that social, cultural and governance programming forms key components of the station's broadcast. Religious broadcast such as morning dew, restoration, Islamic hour and hour of decision-making for instance are tailored at instilling religious and moral discipline in the youth so as to build a moral and just society. The station's cultural talk broadcast also aims at enlightening the community about its culture and preserving its cultural values and heritage. Gaakii News and Gaakii Hot Issues are the two main broadcasts that cater for the local governance needs of the listening

communities. The key milestone about these broadcasts is the use of local dialects that makes it possible for the majority of uneducated listening audience to follow the discussions and participate in the discussions usually through phone calls.

During an in-depth interview with the Station Coordinator, he disclosed that the socio-cultural broadcast is the foundation of the station and as such, a lot of efforts are put into it to ensure that audience participation is enhanced. He disclosed further that the station rely on persons who are well vest in the culture and tradition of the people as resource persons during cultural discussions. They do so with the support of the traditional authorities of the listening community. He is of the firm belief that the broadcast has rebuilt a sense of community consciousness in the traditional values of the people.

An assembly member observed that the rate of indiscipline and juvenile delinquency in Saboba has sharply declined over the last couple of years. He credits this development partly to the broadcast of Radio Gaakii's programmes on religious and cultural matters.

*"...as one of the oldest serving assembly member of this area, I have observed with excitement that children in my area no longer indulge in acts that are inimical to their growth and progress in society. In the past, you will often see the youth engage in indecent dressing all in the name of modernization. I feel that station has made efforts to campaign seriously against these indecent ways of dressing since they started broadcast".*

Another assembly member, who himself is a Pastor and represents the Local Council of Churches in the Saboba District Assembly as government appointee, in an in-depth interview praised Radio Gaakii's efforts at uplifting the religious values of its audience through the various religious broadcast. It was revealed that the 'Hour of Decision-Making' that he personally hosts on the Radio has not only created the platform for people to reflect on their religious lifestyles but has spiritually emboldened them. For him, such programmes have shaped the general life-styles of the listening community. He discloses further how his tribesmen who were once deep involved in idol worship are now shying away from that practice and now adopting the supreme religions.

*"The Hour of Restoration has impacted a lot on my kinsmen. When I was ordained as a Pastor, my biggest challenge was how to let my people appreciate the need to stop idol worship. My greatest tool for achieving this was through the radio and not the church building. For those who come to church are those who believe in Christ but the radio enabled me to reach those whom otherwise I could not have reach with the gospel".*

An examination of Gaakii Hot Issues- a political affairs programmes broadcast every Saturday morning between 7:00am to 10:00 am chronicles both local and national issues mainly in the local dialects for community consumption. The use of the local language in this broadcast particularly creates an

opportunity for the largely non-literate community members to understand and participate in a non-partisan manner, discussion on government programmes and policies that have direct effect on their personal livelihoods and the general community's development.

Giving his testimony in support of the impact of Gaakii Hot Issue programme to community consciousness, an assembly member disclosed during an in-depth interview how members of the assembly are careful in the manner they handle and execute community projects and other community related issues.

*"I told you earlier that I am one of the longest serving members of the Saboba District Assembly. My experience with Hot Issues is that, it has changed the assembly's work. Previously, assembly members had no regard for their communities because we felt they do not know what the work of the assembly entails. But ever since the radio station started focusing and discussing some of the negative things going on in the assembly especially in the language that the people understand, things have changed. Even assembly members who do not appear on the radio station programmes to give accounts of their work are seen not to be working".*

The Programs Director sums it up when he remarked: *"...we have realized the need to engage in a non-partisan manner, discussions on government programmes, projects and policies that have either direct or indirect effect on our communities. Gaakii Hot Issues was therefore designed to ensure that the local uneducated audience get a chance to question the rationale behind certain policies and programmes and to state their opinion regarding these policies. Since its inception in 2013, it has proved to be a successful broadcast in enhancing local governance issues in the listening communities".*

**Community Health and Sanitation:** Further analysis of the programmes schedule of Radio Gaakii discovered one regular broadcast on Health known as "Health Talk" and one sponsored broadcast on sanitation called "New Energy Sanitation". The study found out that both the regular and sponsored broadcasts use the panel-discussion format with call-in segments. Also, whereas the sanitation program is spearheaded by staff and experts of New Energy Ghana, an Environmental NGO based in Tamale and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the 'Health Talk' is locally produced with the community at the center of affairs narrating their health challenges and suggesting solutions to curbing some of them especially malaria, nutrition, safe motherhood and child health.

In an interview with the Programs Director during this research, he disclosed that "Health Talk" has been extremely useful to the local people's health.

*"...is about the most complex and yet basic health challenges of the community. The community members occasionally come up with a major health issue; they sit to discuss it and try to make suggestions as to how to resolve it. The District Health Monitoring Team often serves as facilitators and moderators*

*just to add the professional side to the issues on board. The programme for about two years now has proved very useful to the community and the health sector in general”.*

The Station Coordinator of Radio Gaakii recounted the instructive role the station played in 2014 during the Ebola virus outbreak.

*“One key impact of this station is perhaps its role in creating maximum awareness about this Ebola virus in 2014. Because Saboba is a border town whose borders are not well secured especially at the Ghana-Togo border, there were concerns and fears that the disease could penetrate the borders into the country. But fortunately, we stood up to the task by designing a special programme we called ‘Ebola is Near You’. This program used a combination of local languages, story-telling, questions and answers and call-in on weekly basis to create awareness on the Ebola virus especially among our neighbours in Northern Togo who often visit their families in Ghana. Our contribution yielded the desired dividends”.*

An assembly member recalls during an in-depth interview how Health Talk broadcast on Radio Gaakii has averted a number of still-birth as well as maternal and child death in his community.

*“Our community has no health facility, no CHPS compound and the nearest health facility is about 3 hours ride on motorbike. Before the start of Health-Talk on Radio Gaakii, our wives and sisters use to encounter still-birth; others even die at birth or lose their babies. It was very tragic to become pregnant or have a pregnant wife or sister close by. However, since the start of this broadcast two years ago, the situation is better now. Our women receive a lot of education and awareness about their own health during pregnancy and even how to care for their pregnancy. The program has helped us a lot. If for nothing at all, the program has educated us on the ideal time to see a doctor or visit a facility when labor set-in”.*

Another assembly member expressed similar gratitude for the broadcast of Health-Talk on Radio Gaakii and insisted his people have benefitted a lot from the programme. He disclosed how women in his area gather on Friday night to listen to their own voice on air. He described the excitement on the faces of the women as ‘healing therapy’ as the women listen to themselves sharing their experience and encouraging one another to seek for care especially during pregnancy. He was particularly excited about the use of local language in this broadcast that has made it very easy for the non-literate community women to participate and share their experiences.

*“Health-Talk is not just about health, but it is about the community in health care. Our women are particularly happy when they hear their own voices on Radio Gaakii. That excitement alone heals them and gives them hope about their health. They often express ignorance about certain issues but at the end of the day, they leave with proper knowledge. We the husbands are thankful to Radio Gaakii”.*

The Programs Director disclosed that the New Energy sponsored broadcast on Sanitation over the last one year has helped in meeting the sanitation needs of the listening communities. According to him, although the program is broadcast once a week, it’s being very impactful in the last one year of its broadcast. He disclosed that officials of Zoom-Lion Ghana and the Environmental Protection Agency are often used as panel members for discussions and sometimes include the preventive health professionals in the district. The Programs Director further disclosed that the broadcast has helped increase the number of household toilets in the target areas.

*“Now people are beginning to buy into the idea of building their own latrines at home. Unlike previous years when people even build complete compound houses without toilet facilities. Just do a survey around some houses in town and you will be surprised to see the number of household latrines we have now and also observe the number of houses with Zoom-Lion waste collection bins – you will realize that peoples’ attitude towards sanitation and personal hygiene has improved a lot”.*

These testimonies clearly demonstrate how CRS always strive to make an impact in community’s life. It points to the fact that CRB are mostly targeted at improving the general well-being of its listening communities especially in the areas of sanitation, hygiene, maternal and child health and therefore, programming is considerably built around the communities with a community focus.

**Women and Youth Empowerment:** A further examination of the programming style and formats of Radio Gaakii found three programmes tailored at women and youth empowerment. These programmes are; ‘Bipiib ni Nbem Ayoln’ (Women & Children Time); Tuma Saha (Work Time) and Youth Hour. These programmes forms part of the stations’ strategic and deliberate broadcast policy towards meeting and providing the platform for the vulnerable or marginalized groups of the society such as the concerns of women, children and the youth in community development processes.

It does not only empower and build in the women and youth the capacity to contribute to community decision-making, but largely for the women, it enables them to take economic decisions and improve upon their livelihood strategies.

For instance, in an in-depth interview, an assembly member disclosed that the Tuma Saha program which is broadcast in both Likpakpaaln and Dagbanli has created the needed conscientisation on why women should be involved in household decisions and in particular, how women can contribute to communal decision-making processes.

*“...this programme (Tuma Saha) particularly has exposed our women to issues of family decision making processes and how to effectively combine their economic work and family responsibility”.*

Similarly, another assembly member during an in-depth interview revealed how the women programme called 'Bipiib ni Nbem Ayoln' helped his wife to access a loan from an NGO with which she used as a start-up capital for her grains (*food crop*) business.

*"...my wife is part of the group that discusses issues pertaining to women and children on Gaakii every Saturday night. The station come into the community and records the women during their discussions. I heard it is supported by an NGO but I do not know the name of that NGO. One day, my wife told me that they gave her some money to start a business. I think that if Gaakii was not in operation, my wife and others would not have heard about that NGO, not to even talk of getting this money to start her business. The NGO still give them some training and capacity building through Gaakii on how to sustain and expand their businesses and how to save money for their children's education and other needs".*

The Programmes Director for Radio Gaakii disclosed that, programmes such as Tuma Saha, 'Bipiib ni Nbem Ayoln' and Youth Hour are all sponsored by various NGOs working within beneficiary communities of Radio Gaakii.

According to him, the station is partnering these NGOs in empowering and building the socio-economic capacities of rural women and the youth.

*"... through the broadcast of these programmes, our community has attracted a lot of NGOs over the last four years. These NGOs over the years have put not only money in the purse of our rural women especially the widowed, but also refilled their energies by empowering them economically and socially and even provided school classroom blocks to teach their children out of the vicious cycle of poverty, given them skills and start-up capitals in various extractive, agriculture and brewery industries, assisting them with farm implements and farming skills and other training and equipment.....".*

The study found out that the Youth Hour is a one hour programme devoted to the youth of the listening community. The programme is used to advocate for the welfare of the youth in terms of building their capacities. This programme was found to have very close ties with youth in agribusiness and vocational training. Also, the programme meet the needs of the educated youth since there is a platform for them to hold live studio quiz competitions weekly and non-partisan debate once every month on a topical issue related to their role in community development. This was found to be very effective and insightful in the Saboba district.

**Music, Sports and Entertainment:** Perhaps one area of programming that is essential to CRS broadcast is Music, Sports and Entertainment. For Radio Gaakii, such broadcast goes beyond the music to include an embodiment of the peoples'

culture and a point of reflection especially when local praise singers take to radio extolling the virtues of their rich history.

The Programmes Director during an in-depth interview disclosed that the station has over the years adopted creativity in the programming style of Music and Entertainment broadcast. He mentioned Work and Happiness, Gaakii Sports, Story-Telling ('*Toeli*'), Greetings, Konkomba Music and Music Mix as the leading broadcast segments in Music, Sports and Entertainment category on Gaakii. He disclosed that about 85% of broadcast in this category is programmed in the local languages mainly Likpakpaaln and Dagbanli with the remaining 15% in English and other languages.

**Areas of Community Concerns Most Addressed by Radio Gaakii Broadcasts Contents:** In identifying the areas of community concerns most addressed by Radio Gaakii broadcast content, the researcher sampled 150 community members using simple random sampling as explained at the methodology section of this paper. Of the sample respondents, 135 listens to Radio Gaakii and were therefore qualified to respond to questions related to this subject matter. The graph below presents the results of respondents view on areas of community concern most addressed by Radio Gaakii broadcast contents.

CRB essentially should aim at addressing key community development challenges. As part of the objectives of this research, the opinion of respondents were sought to identify areas or sectors of community concerns that were most addressed by their community radio broadcast. To do this, the areas of community concerns were categorized into 5 sectors and respondents asked to rank-score the sectors on a scale of 1-5 (1 being least addressed concern and 5 being most addressed concern).

From the findings, the socio-cultural sector of the community received the highest rank-score with 37% of rank-scores whereas local governance/politics received the least rank-score with only 4% of rank-scores. The implications of these rank-scores are that, the broadcast contents of Radio Gaakii in the community's view addressed the socio-cultural related challenges of the community more than any other concern. Also, the community's view is that agriculture and local economic issues are given considerable focus that has been extremely useful in addressing the challenges of the sector. Equally, it implies that in the view of the community, the radio has not sufficiently addressed issues of local governance and politics.

In separate interviews with the Station Coordinator and Programs Director of Radio Gaakii, they both alluded to the fact that socio-cultural development concerns were indeed the leading issues in programming at Radio Gaakii.

The Station Coordinator revealed that his team believes that the success of any radio development programme revolves much

around the culture of the listening community. He disclosed that before development can be achieved, the people must recognize that they are the change itself! The beneficiaries would have to define what their development is and how they prioritize such developments and should be seen driving the change themselves. He continued to point out that:

*“.....we at Gaakii recognize socio-cultural programming as the driving force for rural development and that explains why most of our programmes are developed around it. For example, women cannot own lands in this part of the country. Therefore, if we wish to enhance the productive capacities of women in this area, we have to first try to refine the cultural laws that prevent women ownership to land. Without this, any programmes targeted at women productivity may not yield the desired results. We do not consider this as a women issues but rather a cultural lapse”.*

The Station Coordinator contends that their programme dubbed “Our Culture, Our Identity” practically takes listeners back into history and traces the positive aspects of various stages of the Konkomba history that are relevant for present day development. He concludes that the observed number of phone-in calls during the broadcast of that program attest to the significance of the program in the community’s life.

**Stakeholders Views about the Contributions of Radio Gaakii Broadcast to Behavioural Change and/ in Influencing the Allocation of Physical Development Projects:** A five point Likert-scale was used to measure stakeholders’ views about the contributions of Radio Gaakii broadcast to behavioural change and/ in influencing the allocation of physical development projects in the community.

Figure-2 presents a graph that depicts the views of community members about Gaakii’s influence on behaviour change and development projects allocation in the district.

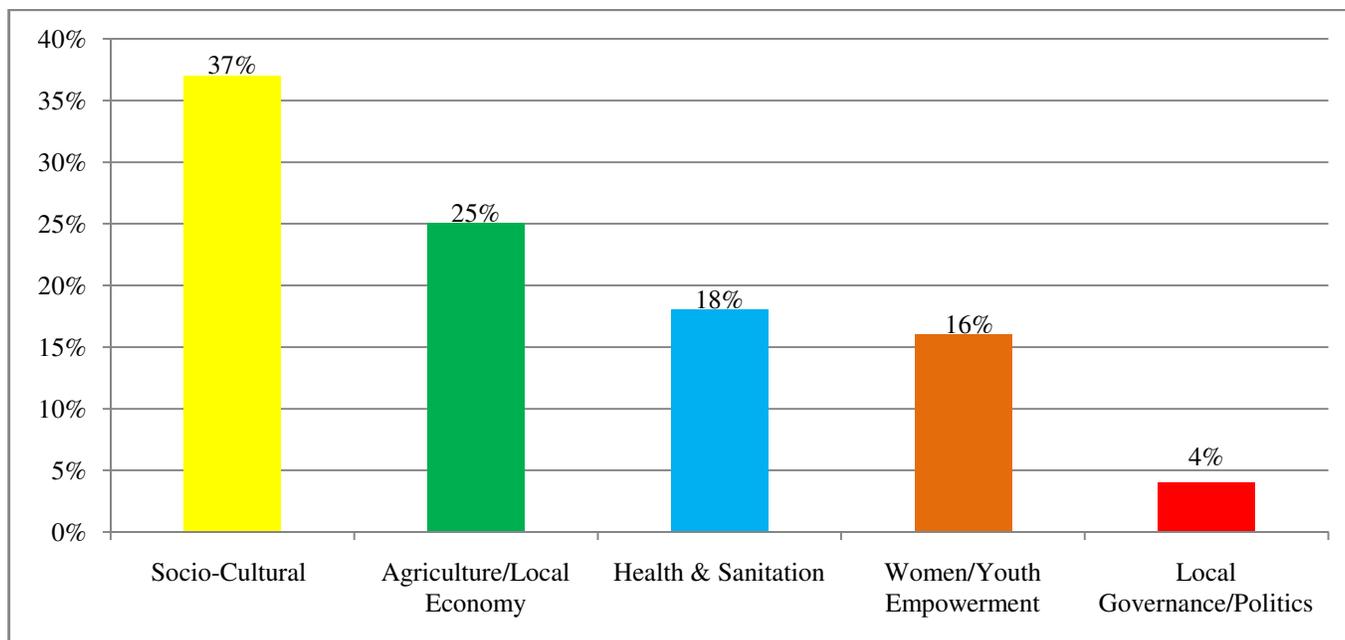
Generally, majority of stakeholders agree that Radio Gaakii play an influential role in behavioural change among community members in the community. There is an equally high consensus about the contribution of Gaakii in influencing the allocation of development projects in the community.

During an in-depth interview, an assembly member expressed his satisfaction with Radio Gaakii’s approach to behavioural change in the community. He asserts:

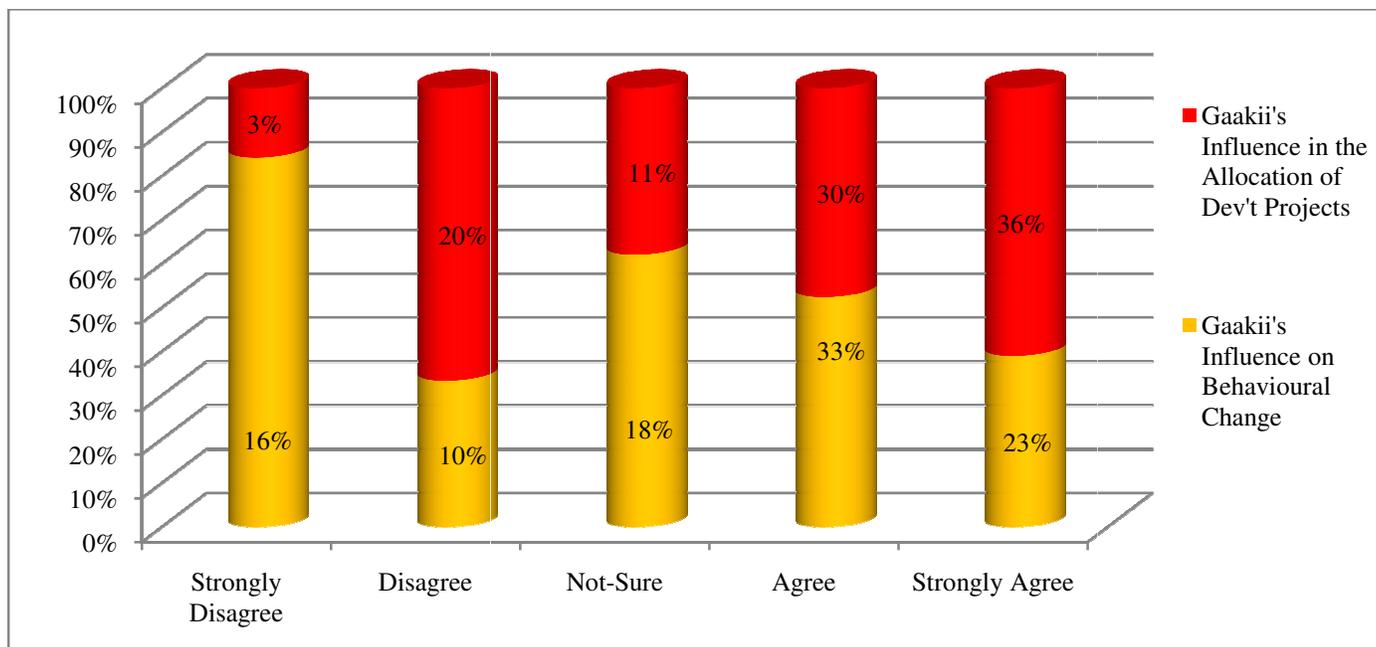
*“There is a remarkable attitudinal change among our people especially towards violent tendency, alcohol abuse, disrespect for cultural norms and religious values”.*

Similarly, the Programs Director of the station recounted how the station transformed an attitude, which was gaining currency in the district.

*“.....people use to dig man-holes around their homes even when they were not ready to build their household toilets. Incidentally, 5 kids got drown and died at various communities during the raining season last year (2014). Thankfully, the station made efforts to speak strongly against the practice. Honestly, we did not only use radio, we even visited communities to engage with them on this issue. Today, the practice no longer exists and our kids are safe playing at our backyards”.*



**Figure-1:** Respondents view on areas of community concern most addressed by Radio Gaakii broadcast contents.



**Figure-2:** Stakeholder's view of Radio Gaakii's contribution to behavioural change and/ in development project allocation.

The study found out that the most successful behavioural change campaigns prosecuted by Radio Gaakii are in the areas of drug abuse and haphazard bush burning. The Programs Director emphasized the stations role in bush burning in the following statement;

*“About three years ago, we committed to eradicating bush burning in Saboba so we deliberately produced a programme where farmers became the driving force and took over the microphones to tell stories about how their farmlands moved from fertile to barren lands that no longer produce much yields no matter the amount of fertilizer they apply on such farms. These farmers often mention how they burn the bushes in the farms during the dry season mostly for bush meat. These narrations were often followed by discussions with environmental experts, agriculture extension officers and the farmers themselves”.*

Adducing evidence in support of the stations' role in influencing the allocation of development project in the community, an assembly member revealed how the station aided him in getting the attention of the District Assembly to renovate a public toilet facility in his electoral area.

*“.....there are several development projects influenced by Radio Gaakii in this district especially communities in my electoral area. For example, one of their programmes on Sanitation influenced the clearing of refuse dump at the Zongo toilet and actually got it renovated. Prior to this, I had discussed it severally at our assembly meetings but there was no help coming. I engaged the station, and the help came just within 3 months. Now for me, anything I want the assembly to do, I run to the Gaakii and I get it done through them. I got a 3-*

*Unit Classroom Block for one community, a CHPS compound for another and a bridge for the other community. So you see, I discovered the power of the radio and it is working for me”.*

In an interview with the Station Coordinator, he disclosed that his station has for the past four years intervened and succeeded in getting a number of development projects for Saboba in particular and the other listening communities in general. According to him, the station does so through a number of strategies including the stations' corporate social responsibility programmes, mobilizing community members to initiate self-help projects, appealing to benevolent organizations for support and rising consciousness of the community to demand for such projects from government through the district assembly. The Station Coordinator recalled how the station barely a year ago intervened in a major development issue regarding the community water situation in the Saboba District.

*“The stations' broadcast influences both the allocation of development projects and peoples' attitude towards development. For the former, I can say that so much evidence abound in road networks, classroom blocks and women micro-credit facilities. ....see, just last year, we finally succeeded in resolving the perennial water crisis that hit our District for several years. Our broadcast and the participation of the community in revealing their sufferings due to this water crisis moved a church to procure water pump machine for the Saboba Community Water Committee. Now, the pipes are flowing and people are excited about this and we are also very proud of this success”.*

These field testimonies sums up the power that community radio broadcast wilds and how apt it is in facilitating

development and leading the charge in prosecuting successful behavioural and attitudinal changes especially among the youth in rural communities in Ghana.

## Conclusion

While community radio broadcast remain significant to rural peoples' information needs, Radio Gaakii for the past 5 years has made remarkable progress in the socio-cultural life of its listening community. There are empirical evidences from stakeholders and listeners of Radio Gaakii on the stations' impact in improving the livelihood strategies of the community through information sharing. It is refreshing and indeed highly commendable to learn that the general programming style and format of Radio Gaakii's broadcast contents are practically aimed at responding to the felt needs of the community. Indeed, from the aforementioned testimonies, community radio is in no doubt a significant and relevant tool for not only the sharing of agriculture information among rural households but also for the development of the listening community.

**Recommendations:** The Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development should take steps at mainstreaming CRB model into Ghana's local government system by supervising the setting-up of CRS in every district capital (*especially those considered rural*) in a non-partisan manner, with coverage reaching all communities within the district. By so doing, the Ministry will be harnessing the potentials of the radio for continues engagement with the communities in terms of educating them on developments in the political, governance and socio-economic sphere of the country. Government policies on development actions will therefore be discussed using the radio as a platform. In this manner, the community will feel part of the government development process and would offer support and show ownership of whatever initiatives they participate in bringing out board. These 'government-support' CRS would carry out dual functions of encouraging wider participation in the entire development process and also keeping the community informed and up-to-date about the activities and progress of the development action that they choose to initiate. It will also cut down on cost of engaging in civic education by the National Commission on Civic Education and actually enhance information delivery in rural areas of the country. All other sector ministries could rely on these CRS in carrying out their assigned duties to the state and people.

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