

Community Communication: The Journey of Radyo Tacunan

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ABSTRACT: This paper describes the experiences of Tacunan residents in running a Community Public Address System particularly the trials and triumphs of Tacunan rural folks in setting up their organizational structure and in operating this community radio. This article also describes the benefits that the residents gained from operating this facility, specifically technology transfer, travels, training opportunities and development and progress in their barangay. This paper, moreover, probes into the facility's sustainability amidst the rapidly changing landscape of Tacunan and the younger generation's waning interest toward this community radio. This paper recommends the reorganization, review of policies, retooling, reestablishment of ties with partner agencies, and resource mobilization for its sustainable operation.

KEYWORDS: Radyo Tacunan, community communication, community public address system, community audio tower, community radio

Introduction

Radyo Tacunan in Barangay Tacunan, Tugbok District of Davao City, is in essence not really a radio station but a set of community audio towers. Once called *Radyo Baktas*, Radio Tacunan's present name has been adopted by the barangay residents and its management to demonstrate participation as well as ownership. The system was set up in 1992 by the Philippine Council for Agriculture Resource Research and Development

(PCARRD) when it used the barangay as its pilot site for Food and Agriculture Organization Development Support Communication's (FAODSC) model of development (Egargo 2008).

As a set of audio towers, Radyo Tacunan could be considered as "low technology." Despite this, Radyo Tacunan has gained recognition both in the local and national settings. Locally, it became a means of achieving a solution to the water problem faced by the village. It also helped the stakeholders succeed in their efforts for barangay electrification in 1994 (Egargo 2008). In the national setting, the success of Radyo Tacunan inspired the United Nation Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) to launch its own version of community communication system called ComPAS or Community Public Address System. The prime objective of the ComPAS is "for communities to use this narrowcasting technology for community communication and social development" (Egargo 2008, 70).

Radyo Tacunan aims to disseminate information and engage the community in the barangay's developmental efforts. Guided by these objectives, Radyo Tacunan's management and staff maintain at least a one-hour program per day to broadcast issues related to health, farming and agriculture, current events, public service announcements and spiritual topics that are discussed by pastors and religious leaders from different sects and denominations.

The community claims that Radyo Tacunan has contributed a lot in the development of their barangay. However, the same technology that has helped improve their barangay is confronted by serious threats. The rapid urbanization and the development projects of Davao City have changed the terrain and demography of this formerly laidback barangay. The once considered agricultural area has now gradually turned into a residential community and a tourist destination. Among its known tourist attraction is the Deca Wake Boarding facility which was installed in 2010 when the Deca Homes Resort and Residences was opened.

Since 1992, Radyo Tacunan has been an agent of unity and progress for the community, making information available to its farthest residents. But the development it has brought to the community threatens its very existence.

The use of the "videoke," television, and the digital communication gadgets draw away its target audience from their prepared programs. In effect, the management changed its program schedules. For instance, the Radyo Tacunan begins its broadcast at four o'clock in the morning to ensure that it does not compete with other communication facilities. However, some residents who are not aware of Radyo Tacunan's rationale raise their complaints, claiming that they are disturbed by the system's "noise." The management is also now forced to relocate its towers to lessen the said disturbance and has moved the program broadcast to a much later hour, either at five o'clock or six o'clock in the morning.

This paper aims to describe the experience of Tacunan residents in operating a community communication facility amidst the sprawling urbanization in the rural area and the rising use of digital communication. As it describes the trials and triumphs in the use of this technology, it shall also look into its sustainability.

This study is anchored in the coordinated management of meaning (CMM) theory of Barnett Pearce and Vernon Cronen (West and Turner 2010, 93) which primarily asserts that "people communicate on the basis of rules... (that) help not only in our communication with others but also in our interpretation of what others are communicating to us." CMM has three assumptions, namely: 1) That "human beings live in communication; 2) human beings co-create social reality; [and] 3) information transactions depend on personal and interpersonal meaning" (West and Turner 2010, 95). The first assumption acknowledges the "centrality of communication" in human society. However, unlike the positivists who view communication as having a direct effect to the target audience or the society, CMM argues that "social situations are created by interactions." This is the premise of the second and third assumptions on the co-creation of social reality and the personal and interpersonal transactions as a factor in meaning creation. These assumptions are appropriations of the social constructivist theory. With Lev Vygotsky as one of its strongest proponents, social constructivists assert the collaborative nature of making meaning activities.

In the context of mass communication, this social constructivists' perspective in making meaning has become the anchor for CMM. Melvin De Fleur (2010) admits "mass communication being a new science has to stand on the shoulders of the giants of earlier sciences to explain its processes and effects." The constructivists assert that "there is no automatic or direct transfer of meaning but a negotiation between what is offered and what a receiver is inclined to accept" and that there is "the power of the media and the power of the people to choose" meaning (McQuail 2010, 459). This media effect theory recognizes the existence of continuous negotiation between the text and the target audience whose understanding of the text is influenced by the surrounding realities.

This study made use of CMM in assessing how the stakeholders view Radyo Tacunan's existence. It investigated whether or not the meaning of this community radio to them, as individuals and as a community, is still the same as it was when the facility was initially established. Their perspectives on the facility's relevance were also explored *vis-à-vis* their efforts in sustaining its operation.

Methodology

This study is a qualitative research which utilizes the case study methodology. John Creswell (2007, 73) considers this method as a "single program or with-in site study," making use of multiple sources of information. In the context of this paper, the case is Radyo Tacunan, a community-owned communication facility that has been operating for more than twenty-two years.

The participants of this study were the residents of the first ten *puroks* of Barangay Tacunan. The eleventh purok has been excluded because the residents there are homeowners of the subdivision established twenty-three years after the installation of Radyo Tacunan. The said purok is still being organized and, as such, its members did not meet the defined criteria in selecting the participants and informants.

The residents invited for the focus group discussions (FGDs) were at least eighteen years old, have lived in the barangay for not less than five years, and

are in their houses or within the vicinity of the barangay for at least four days during the week. The other FGD participants included the past and present management staff of Radyo Tacunan, the sectoral representatives, and stakeholders. The FGD participants were generally a combination of residents and sectoral representatives since the FGDs are gathered through the help of purok leaders.

For the in-depth interviews, the informants included the following: The barangay captain, the chair of the committee on communication, the present and past managers of Radyo Tacunan, the present and past radio technicians, and two purok leaders. All in all, there were fifteen interviews and ten FGDs conducted.

Data collection was done after the free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) has been secured. Data from the in-depth interviews and FGDs were recorded electronically, and thereafter, transcribed and coded manually. The research results were subsequently presented to the representatives so as to elicit further data validation. The participants were asked if the responses quoted were correct. After the validation, the research result was also utilized since the community requested the researchers to help facilitate the organizational diagnosis and planning for the sustainability of Radyo Tacunan. The community also tapped one of the faculty researchers, together with his students, to address one of the identified problems. The community requested him to train their young broadcasters who will help sustain the radio's operation.

Results and Discussion

Tacunan before the radio project. Prior to 1990, Tacunan was a remote and mainly inaccessible barangay. Though it is only approximately eighteen kilometers away from the Davao City center, it had no electricity and no efficient water system. The main roads were unpaved, and the trails to the inner sitios of the barangay were either passable by carabao-drawn carts or by foot. This situation, in effect, limited the mobility of its residents. As a farming community, its poor road conditions rendered the farmers helpless

in dealing with the enterprising traders who usually bought their products at low prices.

One of the informants revealed that if they do not have heavy loads to carry, they would rather walk to and from Mintal, the town center five kilometers away from Tacunan. The other informants reported that there were only two available passenger jeepneys that plied from Mintal to Tacunan (and vice versa) with only a maximum of two trips per day. So if one missed the scheduled trip in the morning, s/he would opt to walk rather than wait for the next possible trip in the afternoon. During market days, like Saturdays and Sundays, passengers would patiently wait until the jeepney would be filled up to its hood and roof, so that the fifteen-minute ride would require the residents to spend a half-day waiting for the jeepney to finally bring them to their destinations. A pioneer broadcaster commented: *Kung nagdali ka, pagbaktas na lang* (If you're in a hurry, you had better walk).

Tacunan was also hardly reached by the government basic social services. The artisan well or manual water pump set up by the National Water Sewerage Authority (NAWASA) in the 1960's has long been non-functional, so the residents depended on either rainwater collected on tanks for their drinking water and the deep wells for other daily water use. There was also no electricity. While there was an elementary school, the graduates of this school often had difficulties in getting a secondary education. High school students had to walk at least four kilometers everyday in order to attend their classes because the nearest secondary schools were in Mintal and Tugbok. While there was already a health center in the barangay, the residents seldom availed of its services, either because of the its distance or because of the people's lack of awareness on what they could get from the barangay hall. The barangay leaders, likewise, expressed their difficulties in gathering for a meeting of barangay members whom they described as *borong* or shy and passive.

However, when Radyo Tacunan was established in 1992, Tacunan gradually transformed from its isolated status into a developing and dynamic community. One of the councilors recalled how Tacunan was selected as the beneficiary of this Community Communication Project (CCP) of the

Department of Agriculture (DA). A lady *kagawad* narrated that Tacunan was competing with a barangay in Bunawan for this project. However, the absence of infrastructure and the impoverished living conditions of Tacunan residents (who were mainly farmers) resulted in Tacunan being considered the strongest contender to benefit from the project. Thus, on 16 August 1992, Radyo Tacunan was launched under the *Development Support Communication* (DSC) for *Selected Agricultural Technology Transfer Project* (SATTP).

Setting up the technology: Structuring the organization. Radyo Tacunan is, in essence, a CompAS. A set of amplifiers was installed in Barangay Tacunan being the beneficiary and pilot site of the "rural agricultural development project...[of] the Philippine Council for Agriculture, Forestry and Natural Resources Research and Development (PCARRD)" (Egargo 2008, 69).

With the financial support of United Nations Development Program (UNDP), Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) and PCARRD as the partner agencies in the Philippines, the project dubbed as DSC-SATTP was implemented through Southern Mindanao Agriculture and Resources Research and Development Consortium (SMARRDEC).

The DSC project implementers initially conducted a rapid rural appraisal (RRA) to establish the profile of Barangay Tacunan. Thereafter, it organized the different sectors in the community together with the members of the barangay council and conducted a series of workshops for problem tree analysis, goal oriented project planning and the livelihood programs, among others.

The problem tree analysis revealed that Tacunan residents were beset by the following problems: Bananas infested with bunchy top, coconut trees threatened by rhinoceros beetle, lack of electricity, lack of water and the residents' lack of knowledge in controlling farm pests. The problem tree analysis further revealed that at the heart of these problems is the lack of technology information (see SMARRDEC documents). The project implementers subsequently acted upon the project's primary objective to have technology transfer as one of the means of resolving the identified problems. It subsequently established the community communication facility—the CompAS.

The ComPAS technology consisted of “two microphones jacked into a karaoke playback system connected to a 20-watt amplifiers and four or six cone speakers mounted on small towers” (Dagron 2001). In the case of Radyo Tacunan, it had twenty-four speaker cones; six of these were mounted on a seventy-foot tower while the others were initially spread in strategic locations in the barangay for a wider reach of its service. In 2009, SMARRDEC provided Radyo Tacunan a console, a DVD player which replaced the karaoke, and a tape deck. These facilities were then housed in a cottage which served as a radio station located near the barangay hall.

The broadcasters, management and staff of this community radio were purposively selected from the barangay officials and sectoral leaders. The selection was done by the project implementers upon the recommendation of the barangay officials. They were considered pioneering volunteers because they had no salary. These volunteers consisted of five representatives from the following sectors: Women, youth, cooperative, health, farmers, religious and the barangay council. Of the five representatives, only two were sent for the training on radio broadcasting.

Having been equipped with organizational skills through trainings, the sectoral representatives designed the organizational structure and vision-mission (VM) of Radyo Tacunan. They elected their officers and drew the policies for the operation of their ComPAS. Community members established the makeshift station in the barangay hall and installed the other cone speakers in strategic locations of the seven different puroks of the barangay. The ComPAS or Radyo Tacunan was launched on 16 August 1992.

The primary objective of the project was technology transfer. This was realized by giving seminars and skills training among the members and officers in farming, health and cooperativism, among others. The technology and insights learned by the participants in these seminars were then broadcasted through Radyo Tacunan for the other residents to emulate or replicate.

Coping with challenges. A pioneer broadcaster of the religious sector recalled the process that he had to go through in order to air his program every Sunday. His house was about three kilometers away from the barangay

hall where a cottage, a makeshift radio station, was also located. He had to leave his house at dawn, bringing with him a gallon of gasoline for the generator set that supported the radio station. His program aired every Sunday at five o'clock in the morning. Thus, the broadcasters had the added task of bringing gasoline and turning on the generator set every time they reported to the station for their programs.

Managing the radio station was another challenge confronting the volunteers of Radyo Tacunan during the early years of its operation. The past and the present technicians narrated that at first they had the two towers installed in strategic areas of the seven puroks of the barangay. This was to ensure that the programs would reach their target listeners. However, this move had its downside. Other residents complained that with the towers nearby, they were often disturbed by the early morning programs. The management also said that they had a problem with the safekeeping of the equipment, particularly the speakers that could be stolen easily. In fact, some of the speakers were indeed stolen so that of the twenty-four sets, only eight of these are left at the present inventory. They had to relocate the main tower twice and the latest was to move this within the vicinity of the barangay hall itself.

Still focusing on the management and operation of Radyo Tacunan, the informants revealed the usual organizational problems, mainly conflicts in decision-making. One informant recalled that a broadcaster once abandoned his task simply because he was slighted by one of his colleagues during a meeting. Another instance was when members bickered over money issues. As a result of these incidents, the members felt that the organization was veering away from its original objectives. Fortunately, the conflict was settled before it inflicted serious damage to the organization.

With the women's group having their own program, the female informants also had their stories to tell. Though they now recall it with humor, they said that their service in Radyo Tacunan, was at some point, a source of conflict even among the family members. In one instance, a lady broadcaster admitted that she was met by her husband in a fit of anger and jealousy when she went home late at night accompanied by other male

broadcasters who wanted to see her home safely. The informants said that others did not quite understand the nature of their job so that this kind of reaction sometimes happened.

Lastly, the pioneering broadcasters, management and staff disclosed their limitations as they started their operations. They said that they initially had difficulties in dealing with the other demands of operating Radyo Tacunan. Beside the time that they have to spend in the community radio, outside their other tasks as family persons, they also had other responsibilities as officers of their barangay. They further shared that they were once given a computer unit for the station. However, at that time, not one of them was capable of operating the said equipment. Thus, they had to give it to the barangay council for optimum use. They also did not have any public relations skills. They were shy and most often passive. But when Radyo Tacunan was noted as one of the success stories in community communication, it became a showcase for the City Agriculture's Office. In effect, the broadcasters, management and staff had to deal with local and international visitors who came and interviewed them. This did not only test their ability to relate with people, but also required them to manage their time wisely.

Enjoying the Ride: The Benefits of Radyo Tacunan

While Radyo Tacunan does not have a transmitter that can air its programs regularly and efficiently, its role and function in the community goes beyond what any commercial radio can offer. As revealed by the informants, Radyo Tacunan boosted the morale not only of its leaders but their residents as well. Furthermore, it paved the way for the delivery of several basic social services from the government and non-government sectors and the forging of linkages with local, national and even international organizations.

Gaining confidence to lead others. In the FGDs conducted among the pioneers of the Radyo Tacunan management and staff, the informants have shared the following:

Kaniadto walay mga pagpakabana ang mga tawo. Wala sila maporma, wala nalig-on apan sa dihang diha na nagsugod ang Radyo Tacunan, nagsugod usab ang kalig-on sa matag sector. [In the past, people were apathetic. They were not organized, they were not strong. But when Radyo Tacunan started to operate, the different sectors started to get stronger].

Mao jud na nasinati namo diri, kalisod. Kalisod kung unsaon pagkuan sa mga tawo, pagtapok kay ug duna poy tapok-tapok diri kasagaran man gud ang motapok mga babaye, dili lalaki, kay ang lalaki nagatrabaho man gud sa farm so ang babae kay naara sa ilang balay. [That exactly was our experience. Difficulty. Difficulty in organizing the people, because if there was an assembly, oftentimes it was the women, not the men [who attend] because men were working in the farms while the women were just in their households].

In another interview done with the Department of Education (DepEd), the teacher informant had this to say about Radyo Tacunan:

Ma-associate jud nato siya sa, kana ganing oneness gani sa kuan gani maam sa katawhan, kay makita man gud nako diri maam kung sa kanang kung ang radio na gani ang mupasibaw sa ilahang information on-air so ang mga tawo is murag, maminaw gyud gani sila maam, specially kana ganing mga farmers ana, kung unsa itanom dapat karon, so naa na silay guide. [We can associate this with oneness among the residents, because we can see that when the radio airs information, the people will listen, like for farmers on guide to planting their crops].

From these testimonies, one can say that Radyo Tacunan has become an agent of unity for its residents. It served as an impetus for the different sectors of the barangay to get organized. At the start of its operation, there were sectoral groups duly recognized in the barangay, namely: The youth, women, farmers, health, cooperative, and religious. Years after, the other sectors were added, namely: Senior citizens, transport and the peace and order groups.

The DepEd youth were led by teachers who mentored the pupils belonging to a club called the *Munting Tinig ng Kabataan*. The members of this club

comprised the junior and senior broadcasters for Radyo Tacunan. The junior broadcasters were the grades 1-3 pupils while the senior group belonged to grades 4 to 6.

The other youth group is composed of the youngsters aged thirteen and above—in school or out-of-school youth. This also had a sub-group whose members identified themselves as the gay youth group.

Senior citizens are composed of all the sixty years-old-and-above residents. As their program indicated *Ayaw'g Ingna Tiguwang na Ko* (Don't Say that I'm Old). They preferred the term *edaran* (elderly). This sector looked into the activities and welfare of the elderly members of the community. Their radio program provided its listeners insights in living life to the fullest.

The health sector is the group of barangay health workers, barangay nutrition scholars and other residents inclined toward health and wellness. They have been active in promoting health programs and in disseminating latest information on health and wellness.

The women sector has until now an existing organization called NagKabaTa (*Nagkahiutang Kababaihan sa Tacunan*) or the United Women of Tacunan. They have linkages with governmental organizations (GOs) and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) whose primary concern is also women. The officers of this organization apprise the members and other women residents on the rights of women and various opportunities for them, that is trainings, livelihood programs, and personal growth activities.

The farmers sector is composed of men and women who are actively engaged in farming and related livelihood projects. Their current engagement is the Progressive Farmers' Association of Tacunan (ProFAT). Some other members are engaged in vermiculture, while others are tending their backyard nursery for fruit-bearing trees seedlings. They now have a strong linkage with the City Agriculture's Office which often extends to them livelihood opportunities.

The cooperative sector provides credit services among the residents. Its program then was centered in educating the members on their roles and responsibilities as cooperators. They provide financial education like budgeting their limited income or increasing their income potentials through entrepreneurship.

The religious sector has been represented by the different religious groups. These groups have played a key role in keeping Radyo Tacunan operative. They have been most faithful in airing their program and, to date, three religious groups have regular programs: Catholic on Sundays, Seventh Day Adventist, and the One Way Outreach.

The transport sector represents the drivers of tricycle, *trisikad* (pedicab), and public utility jeep. The members and officers of this sector have never been active in radio broadcasting because they did not have a representative that could devote time for the programs. However, they have been duly recognized to make representations for their issues and concerns.

Peace and order is the organization of the Civilian Volunteer Officers (CVO) who focus on the peace and order of the barangay. Like the transport sector, they have also not been active in radio broadcasting.

The barangay council has taken the role of overseeing all these sectors through its committee chairpersons. The barangay council's program in Radyo Tacunan was dubbed as *Tingog sa barangay*. At the time of interview, the members admitted that their program has not been sustained. However, they expressed the need to revive it and to find means to implement the plan of broadcasting again.

The setting up of sectoral organizations greatly helped in enhancing the confidence of community residents to likewise lead others in exploring and developing their potentialities. It is noteworthy that the incumbent barangay captain is himself a product of Radyo Tacunan. As the former *Samahan ng Kabataan* (SK) chairman, he was then one of the youth broadcasters. He was also among those who participated in the capability-building trainings which he admitted helped him in performing his roles and responsibilities as a barangay leader.

A lady barangay kagawad shared the same experience, that is, initially reluctant in serving the community for lack of training and background in leading others. However, with the opportunities and challenges that Radyo Tacunan demanded from her as a broadcaster representing the women sector, she had noticeably overcome her initial insecurities. She now proudly says that the voice everyone hears the moment Radyo Tacunan airs on is hers.

Having been voted as barangay kagawad for several terms, she claimed to have boosted her confidence in dealing with visitors, both local and foreigners, who usually come to inquire about their projects.

A new era of development. The residents who have witnessed the birth and growth of Radyo Tacunan would attest to the benefits this technology has brought into their lives by editing interesting images or analogies. For one, the technician explained that because of Radyo Tacunan, the barangay has become like a *kahibulungan nga bulak kung diin gisiba sa nagkalain-laining mga langgam* (a mysterious flower whose nectar is sipped by the different types of birds). He said that the birds he was referring to were the different agencies and entities which visited Tacunan either to learn from the various experiences in operating the community radio or to provide other development projects. Another participant viewed Radyo Tacunan as the *pultahan sa kalamboan* or door of development, that is, alluding to the different projects and programs they received.

Indeed, Radyo Tacunan has become a pivotal mechanism for government and non-government agencies alike in delivering basic social services and opportunities for livelihood projects.

The most tangible development that they first experienced in the barangay was the installation of the water system. This was done through several phases with the first phase implemented in 1993. Another problem identified in the Goal Oriented Project Planning (GOPP) was the lack of electricity. This was addressed in 1996 when Barangay Tacunan finally had its own lighting system. The other problems identified which included the menace of rhinoceros beetles on coconut trees and the Bunchy Top banana infestation were directly addressed by the skills training attended by sectoral representatives. This information on technology was then relayed to the other farmers through the programs of Radyo Tacunan and through the conduct of a forum and film-showing activity among residents.

The informants also believed that the success of Radyo Tacunan had resulted in the community being a frequent beneficiary of various NGO outreach programs, like the medical mission where residents were given free

medical and dental assistance. Other NGOs mentioned were the ZONTA International, Managing Alternative Group Incorporated (MAGI) and the Soroptimists who helped them strengthen the women sector.

Radyo Tacunan has also strengthened the linkages with government offices, particularly the DA. Through the DA, SMARRDEC and PCARRD, Radyo Tacunan was closely assisted to develop efficient and effective managers of their community communication facility. The informants also recalled being recipients of the community communication management training conducted by representatives from the Cultural Center of the Philippines (CPP) and the University of the Philippines (UP).

One of the livelihood projects provided to the community was the Cow and Goat Dispersal Program of the DA. Initially, they were given cows to tend but this was later expanded into another income generating project (IGP) dubbed as Dairy Cow's Feeds Processing. This project commenced in 2003 with funds provided by the DA-Bureau of Agricultural Research (BAR) the purpose of which was to train the farmers on feed mixing and formulation. Tacunan's dairy farming, through its Tacunan Dairy Farmers Cooperative (TADAFCO), was a success and in fact was the highlight of DA's press release in its online Official Gazette which claimed that "(d)airy farming has successfully transformed the rural folk in Barangay Tacunan."

At the time when this research was conducted, the farmers were engaged in the ProFAT program of the DA. This enabled the farmer beneficiary to raise dairy cows, with the hope of coming up with small-scale milking cow industry. The Barangay Information and Community Communication Office (BICCO) chair himself is now enjoying the income he earns from his vermiculture—one of the technologies that he learned from partner stakeholders.

Technology transfer. The informants and interviewees also admitted that Radyo Tacunan has continuously pursued its original objective of serving as a venue for technology transfer. The informants remembered their farm visit to Guihing (in Davao del Sur) to understand the scientific way of dealing with the rhinoceros beetle, which is a menace to the coconut farmers of Tacunan. They

reechoed their learning experience to the residents of their barangay through a forum. They believed that what they learned benefited not only their fellow farmers in Tacunan but also those who came from Matina Biao and Tugbok who participated in the forum initiated by the farmers sector of Tacunan.

A purok leader testified how he and his fellow farmers benefited from the radio programs aired by the farmers sector. He said that Radyo Tacunan educates its listeners on the latest technology in farming and livelihood. The technology he was referring to was the calendar for organic farming that guides the growers on the best crop to plant in a particular time of the year. Furthermore, he asserted that Radyo Tacunan provides information that helps the listeners increase their production and eventually augment their income.

The concept of technology transfer in the context of Radyo Tacunan is not only limited to its barangay. The pioneer broadcasters, technician and staff were invited as resource persons in barangays that attempted to replicate the management of a community radio like that of Radyo Tacunan. They conducted a training for aspiring broadcasters in Maragusan and in Kapalong.

Indeed, the barangay that used to be described as a “depressed area” whose residents were initially shy and insecure is now a dynamic and progressive community, with new housing projects, entertainment facilities and tourist attractions. With the articles published about Radyo Tacunan, both in print and online, and through the Google map and other search engines, one can say that Tacunan has become visible both in the national and international levels.

Getting connected to the world and beyond. Radyo Tacunan has helped the barangay leaders reach out to and communicate with community residents. They have lessened the difficulty in disseminating information and announcements. Radyo Tacunan has allowed the leaders to call for emergency assemblies or enjoin each resident to help whenever necessary at a faster rate than in the past.

Before the radio was installed, they followed a tedious process of relaying information to the purok leaders who had to conduct house-to-house visits in spreading news or announcements. Their cooperative that offered the

dayong (mortuary fund) as part of its service had difficulty in informing its members about the latest death in the community. But with Radyo Tacunan airing daily, there is a faster information dissemination process.

“Lost and Found” notices have also become easier among residents. In one instance, a farmer resident found his lost carabao because he went to the barangay hall and asked the broadcaster to announce the missing carabao. On the same date, the said carabao was returned to him by the one who found it, who heard the announcement over the radio. One informant narrated that they were once spared from the disease that plagued their chickens because they were alerted about this epidemic by Radyo Tacunan. Lastly, through the greetings read on air, such as birthday, wedding and anniversaries, they were able to share the goodwill and happiness throughout the community.

The success of Radyo Tacunan’s operation has resulted in Barangay Tacunan cited as being a model for ComPAS projects. The broadcasters, management, and staff were thus invited to places they would never have visited given their affiliation with Radyo Tacunan. Their “world” has thus widened through the field trips and trainings offered by their partner stakeholders.

They traveled to places like Manila, Baguio, Cebu, Maragusan, Zamboanga, and Guimaras in Iloilo. These travels were among the most valued incentive reward for their service to this community radio. They said that “Lakbay Aral” offered them a different learning experience as well as an opportunity to improve relationships with fellow broadcasters.

Another interesting information shared by the informants is their claim to fame. A barangay nutrition scholar believed that her service as a sectoral broadcaster of Radyo Tacunan earned her the respect of her fellow health workers. In fact, she became one of the regional winners of the search for outstanding women in 2003 and was also nominated in the national level. She believed that her being part of the radio’s operation had given her an edge over the other contingents.

The station manager also reported that he was awarded as a regional winner of the *Gawad Saka* in Large Animal Category in 2004. Their youth broadcasters, likewise, won in the Bombo Radyo broadcasting competition. The incumbent barangay captain was awarded second place in the region’s

search for outstanding youth when he was serving Radyo Tacunan as representative of the *Sangguniang Kabataan* (SK).

Furthermore, the leaders and residents of Tacunan claimed that the radio must have made them visible in the map. While their lives in the past revolved solely around their own community, they have now visited other places. In addition, several visitors have come to their barangay after the installation of Radyo Tacunan. People from other communities have suddenly become interested in them. Local and foreign visitors, for example, the World Bank (WB) and the European Cooperative Association (ECA) have come to inquire about the management and operations of their audio towers. Academicians and student researchers from the University of the Philippines (UP) and the University of Southeastern Philippines (USEP) have asked them about the best practices of Radyo Tacunan. Several articles about Radyo Tacunan itself may already be surfed in the internet. Alfonso Dagon (2001, 85) says: "So far, Tacunan has been the most successful experience" among those who engaged in community audio tower projects.

Overall, the informants' testimonies and other data revealed how Radyo Tacunan has served as an agent for development and progress, technology transfer, empowerment and cohesion among the barangay residents and constituents. Moreover, Radyo Tacunan has become the bridge of the barangay to the outside world.

Sustainability Issues

According to Leslie Paul Thiele (2013, 7), sustainability comes from the Latin word "*sustinere*, which literally means to hold up." He further considered something as sustainable "if it endures, persists, or holds up overtime." With this definition, one has to look at several factors that would help a project enduring. In the case of Radyo Tacunan, there is a need to assess its financial, material and human resources, including the sociopolitical and environmental realities for the continued operation of this technology.

Financial resources. It has been established that Radyo Tacunan is strongly supported by the barangay council with volunteer broadcasters, management and staff responsible for the operational cost. While the barangay is expected to earmark 10 percent of funds through the Barangay Development Council (BDC), the barangay's income is small and therefore not sufficient to fund the needs of Radyo Tacunan. Unfortunately, the informants cannot provide any document or record certifying the existence of the funds from the barangay council for the operation of Radyo Tacunan.

In 1992, the operation of Radyo Tacunan was initially funded by the project implementers, even as they helped find means to make the facility become self-sufficient. One of the moves the officers and members of Radyo Tacunan agreed on was to collect monthly dues that would help sustain its operations. This system, however, did not last long and, in fact, discouraged some of the members to remain in the organization.

The informants recalled that they tried engaging in IGPs in the past. In one instance, they had a demonstration farm planted with bananas. The income from the farm helped defray the operational costs of Radyo Tacunan. This demonstration farm does not anymore exist at the time of the research because the area was already built with residential houses.

At the time of the interviews, the management and staff claimed that Radyo Tacunan does not have sufficient funds to purchase new equipment and supplies. They also had no budget for salary and honoraria.

The broadcasters and the technician live near the radio station and need not spend for their transportation fare. But again, this commitment could not be imposed on everyone. The informants admitted that a token honorarium might encourage others to continue their services to Radyo Tacunan. Such sentiment is understandable and it simply reaffirms Thiele (2013, 142) who asserted that "human enterprise must be economically viable to persist."

Equipment and other material resources. The project implementers provided Barangay Tacunan a set of two microphones jacked into a karaoke playback system connected to two 500-watt amplifiers and six cones (four

500-watt and two 200-watt units) that were first mounted on a seventy-foot tower. There were also fourteen speaker cones mounted on wooden posts in the seven different puroks of the Barangay.

The present inventory of equipment revealed that only eight of the twenty-four cone speakers remained. These eight speaker cones are those that were mounted near the station or barangay hall. When the barangay had a road construction project, this seventy-foot tower had to be relocated which meant cutting the tower. However, since the relocation occurred twice, the height of the tower has been significantly reduced, affecting the performance of the facility in sending sound signals.

Informants also revealed that the other speaker cones have been destroyed, and since there are limited funds for a new set, they have to fully utilize the remaining functional units.

In 2009, Radyo Tacunan received a console and a DVD player. The DVD player is still functional, but since it is attached into an analog player (a cassette recorder) program airing sometimes experiences “dead air.” In broadcasting, a “lag” or dead air is considered a serious problem.

While Radyo Tacunan was regarded to be the most successful among the different community audio tower projects, the informants nonetheless believed they would have done better with improved facilities. Others expressed their interest in converting the towers of Radyo Tacunan into a transmitter, that is, similar to that in Maragusan (in Compostela Valley) which also started with a community audio tower. However, they likewise realize that it is both costly and more demanding in terms of operations and management.

Human resources. Radyo Tacunan started with two representatives from each of the seven original sectors working with the barangay council for its operations. A few years later, the number of sectors increased to ten, but only eight of these have available broadcasting slots in Radyo Tacunan.

It has been observed, further, that the adult members during the time of its installation are now mostly of retirement age. The former youth members have grown up. Three of them have fortunately been elected in the barangay council—one as the barangay captain and the others as councilors. The

informants believed that as formerly trained broadcasters, the three barangay leaders might be a major factor for the continued existence of Radyo Tacunan.

For health reasons, the original technician has been replaced by another volunteer technician who is, likewise, of retirement age. At the time of this research, the informants admitted that they still have to identify the next technician upon the retirement of the incumbent staff. They also have not trained a new set of broadcasters. While there are new names listed in the program, they have not been formally trained in the craft of radio broadcasting.

The new station manager presently works without any staff for the communication and other clerical tasks. He is, likewise, an active leader in TADAFCO and ProFAT so that he often has to manage his time between Radyo Tacunan and the organizations he is affiliated with.

Like the station manager, most of these remaining active members of Radyo Tacunan have to master the art of multi-tasking. For instance, the BICCO chair who has been tasked to oversee the operations of the radio is, likewise, a barangay councilor, an active officer of ProFAT and 4H (Head, Heart, Hand and Health). A lady barangay councilor who is the broadcaster for the women sector also serves as a chair for Health Committee, Committee on Ethics and is active in the NagKabaTa. This kagawad admitted that she can no longer act as a volunteer broadcaster for the health sector given her various community involvements.

The youth group has also not been actively involved in Radyo Tacunan. The *Munting Tinig ng Kabataan* airs only occasionally. The adviser said that they send children to Radyo Tacunan whenever they have speaking competitions. However, given their other school-related tasks and activities, they cannot have a regular broadcasting schedule.

The dilemma of development. The installation of Radyo Tacunan spurred the barangay's development. Unfortunately, the same desired development is now threatening the existence of this technology.

In the past, Radyo Tacunan was the primary source of information, entertainment and spiritual formation for its residents. It aired twice a day during the week. After two decades, this airtime has been reduced drastically,

that is, only the religious program is aired on a regular basis. The segment for entertainment (*Karambola*) has been removed from the chart. The other sectors, for example, the senior citizens, the women and the farmers, only air once a month or as the need arises.

The informants themselves admitted that they now face stronger competition, since more than 80 percent of the residents own other communication facilities like the more sophisticated multimedia players and television. Commercial videokes also abound in the barangay. In addition to these facilities, cellular phones are very popular for both young and adults.

In the past, the residents had fewer options and concerns, that is, they either tended their livestock or their farms. The teenagers could hardly afford to enroll in high school and thus had more time to tune in to Radyo Tacunan.

As a result of the different development efforts in Barangay Tacunan, there are other employment opportunities like paid labor, direct selling and the like. The establishment of a new high school building within the barangay has likewise encouraged children to pursue higher education. The concrete roads have improved the transportation system within the barangay. Community residents are thus more mobile. Indeed, the rapid changes within Tacunan are now threatening the very survival of the community communication facility.

Radyo Tacunan: Prospects and Challenges

Tacunan residents were asked how they envisioned Radyo Tacunan ten or twenty years from now, the majority of whom expected it to continue its operation. They, however, differed on the images of the radio's existence.

One informant believed that Radyo Tacunan would still exist as a landmark of the barangay while another feared it would become an artifact. When asked to elaborate their answers, they explained that they wanted to see Radyo Tacunan as a tourist destination—a living testimony of their success. These images suggest a sense of resignation among the informants

relative to the diminishing relevance of the facility. While they referred to Radyo Tacunan with a sense of pride, they viewed it in a static sense, that is *handumanan* or as a mere memento.

On the other hand, other informants were more pragmatic in their vision of Radyo Tacunan. They strongly believed that it would still exist, but it has to improve its equipment, operations, program format, and organizational setup.

From the perspectives of the informants, the future of Radyo Tacunan lies in the continued commitment of its broadcasters and management as well as the financial support from the barangay council and other stakeholders. They also pointed out other important issues which include reorganization, reformatting of radio program, retooling, and reestablishing ties with partner agencies.

Reorganization. As mentioned earlier, the barangay council has renamed the committee in-charge of Radyo Tacunan, that is, from Communication Management Council (CMC) to BICCO. However, the informants also believed that they need to reconstitute the different sectoral representatives. As a result of the discussions, they identified the need for representatives who are young and willing to serve the radio. They also said that they need to choose those who have fewer responsibilities in other organizations or committees. In this way, they can reduce multi-tasking among the volunteers and prevent the fast turnover of human resources.

As part of the reorganizational process, the new core group now recognized the need to reconstruct important documents like their vision, mission, goals and objectives as well as their constitution and by-laws. Furthermore, they also expressed the need to go beyond reorganization. They agreed to observe the good practices in the past that had strengthened their organization, that is, conducting regular meetings and feedbacking and evaluation activities. They also saw the need to reimplement the filling out of program logs.

Program reformatting. The informants recognized the different changes taking place in the barangay and admitted that Radyo Tacunan has to be ready for the subtle shifts of priorities among its target listeners.

For instance, during the interview conducted in Purok 8, one lady informant suggested that Radyo Tacunan should strengthen health-related programs so that Tacunan residents are free from illnesses. To illustrate, giving health tips to the listeners like staying safe from tuberculosis would make the program more relevant. Farming tips are still needed, but with more people living in the barangay, she anticipated the vulnerability of the residents to different diseases. This would be one aspect that Radyo Tacunan can look into.

The need to improve the program format was also affirmed by another interviewee, for example, the program for senior citizens because there is a growing number of elderly in the barangay. Since they are the ones who are usually left at home, they would have more time to stay tuned to their radios. In an interview conducted among the residents of Purok 10, one informant expressed his desire to hear current events and commentaries from its broadcasters. He said that it may not exactly be like the local Bombo Radyo, but he wanted to hear the views of his sector or barangay leaders on political and social issues.

Retooling and capacity-building. Retooling in this paper refers to skills enhancement of the current pool of broadcasters and management staff. Retooling would also mean reequipping the station itself. Capacity-building refers to the training that could be given to the prospective members of the organization.

The equipment used by the broadcasters is still analog. It was noted that the technician has been solely responsible for the equipment to ensure its maintenance. However, he has not trained anybody to take his place.

The informants expressed the need to improve the said equipment to make it more responsive to the needs of its listeners. One concern raised is that of the station being dependent on the weather. With fewer cone speakers

and a shorter tower, listeners reported that they hear certain sounds, but they do not understand the message.

Some residents wished to have the station “transmitterized.” This, however, is less viable. The reasons are varied: Firstly, because of its operational cost; secondly, because they could not compete in the new communication terrain if the station is transmitterized; and thirdly, because it contradicts their original objective of being a community communication facility providing information and entertainment to Barangay Tacunan.

The most viable improvement they could work on is to replace their analog equipment with a digitized one. A researcher once proposed using podcasting as a channel for its program in order to sustain Radyo Tacunan (Bulaong-Europa 2010). With the analog system and the capability of its human resources, the proposal was not considered by the management and staff of Radyo Tacunan.

The existing analog system can also be viewed as one reason for the lack of interest among the youth in managing and operating Radyo Tacunan. It is considered outmoded compared to the digital gadgets that the young are familiar with. Aggravating this situation is the fact that it does not offer efficient service since it often takes time to operate, resulting to “dead air.”

On a positive note, the current group of broadcasters and the technician have expressed their willingness to learn the modern way of operating the station. They admitted that even if the computer units are not yet available, they are willing to undergo a training if retooling themselves would mean keeping their radio relevant to their target audience.

The youth representatives, likewise, expressed their enthusiasm to learn the requisites in broadcasting. It should be noted that some of these young representatives may only need retooling since they have already been trained with the old system of operating the facility. If they received training on the digitized operation and acquired the computer set, their dream of a “hi-tech” system would be realized and there would be young people who could ensure the continued existence or sustainability of Radyo Tacunan.

Implications

From the foregoing, it is believed that the findings and insights from the informants can be utilized by various stakeholders.

This experience might be considered by the community project implementers particularly in matters of helping the community work independently. Five years of training might not be enough to totally leave the community on its own, especially for big community development projects, considering that the first two to three years is usually spent in social preparation, organizational structuring, and capability-building. One possible way might be to turnover projects in phases. This means that after setting up a project on its first phase, the implementers must devolve the tasks and responsibilities to the community with their close supervision. This second phase must take a period of another one to two years, in order to properly assess the capability of the community to sustain the project. The third phase must be for exit implementation strategies, that is, setting up structures, processes and protocols that would guide the community in the years that follow. Embedded in this structure is the linkage with the local government unit or an agency who can monitor and evaluate their performance. In this way, the existence of the project will not be *co-terminus* with their implementers or funders.

For sustainability, the barangay officials are envisioned to eventually handle the operations of Radyo Tacunan. As explained by the pioneer officers and staff, the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) (which was not available at the time of the research) provided that the barangay council include in its budget allocation the funds for the operations of Radyo Tacunan. To continue the effective and efficient operation of its communication facility, the council must strictly earmark a percentage of its annual income for the funding of Radyo Tacunan. This fund must be used solely for the operations of Radyo Tacunan and for the maintenance or improvement of its equipment. The same fund should be properly audited and reported annually to the community. It should also urge its BICCO to draw out a concrete plan of action for

resource mobilization which may be included in their plan of establishing ties with old and new partner agencies.

The chair of BICCO should also look into the clear definition of its organizational setup. S/he should avoid the tendency of giving too many positions to one person so that the manager of Radyo Tacunan together with the officers and members could fully perform their duties and responsibilities. Furthermore, s/he should observe the usual practices like holding regular meetings, so that the officers and members will have opportunities for regular inventory, evaluation and planning.

The academe could help respond to challenges of Radyo Tacunan for sustainability by acting as one of the resources for capability-building of its broadcasters, management and staff.

Finally, other researchers interested in community communication may also explore ways for Radyo Tacunan to adopt various changes due to advances in information technology. In this manner, future researchers might help this facility sustain its operations despite the changing landscape and demography within the barangay.

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