

Module 4: Transformative Potential of Community Radio

Session 1: Radio Studio Operation 101 (Enhancing Media Skills)

Duration: Two hours

Introduction:

In Community Radio many of the broadcasters are volunteers, so knowing how to operate radio studio enables them to do their programs independently. However women seldom have access to studio operation and depend on male technicians. Training women in studio operation is part of the empowering potential of Community Radio. The workshop seeks to equip the participants with the effective use of this technology. Radio Studio Operation 101 is the first of four sessions that aims to strengthen the participants' skills in radio production. This two hour session will share the basics of radio studio operation by familiarising participants with a make shift radio studio, at the end of the session the participants would have been able to:

- Operate basic radio equipment
- Identify the path of sound that help solve technical problems
- Mix and record their own productions
- Know how the different devices of a studio are connected

Session Topics:

- The Basic set up of a radio studio
- The Mixing Console and all the equipment connected to it.
- The Radio Process (Path of Sound)
- The Mixing of a radio program

Infrastructure/Venue:

A radio recording studio or a mobile recording studio set up at the training venue with at least a mixer, Microphones, CD/player, speakers, headphones and a computer to record on.

Session Plan:

Topic / Activity	Duration	Teaching Aids/Equipment

Topic: Radio Studio Operation and its Equipment (Lecture and Demonstration)	40 min	Studio and CDs, MDs, Cassettes, radio plugs etc. <u>Text for trainer</u>
Activity 1: Mapping out the Path of Sound	20 min.	<u>Photocopies of the studio set up</u> colored transparent markers or crayons, <u>radio scripts (doc file)</u>
Activity 2: A Mini Radio Program (Hands on Exercise)	60 min	Studio, CDs, Mds or MP3s

Topic: Radio Studio Operation and Its Equipment (Lecture and Demonstration)

This session takes place in the studio so it is advisable to work in a smaller group (6-10). If the training is for a bigger group, one group will work in the studio, while the other group should have a different workshop or be given some exercises. Distribute the handouts at the beginning of the session, so that participants can take notes. Explaining how the mixer and each equipment are connected to it is being operated by demonstrating it in front of the participants. Link: Text for trainers (doc file).

The Radio Equipment (with user guide)

1. The mixer is the center piece of every studio. It is divided into a part for input and another for output.
 - 1.1. Input: Each equipment is connected to a track on the input section of the mixer.
 - 1.1.1. Each track has a set of bottoms and knobs of a track. Explain them starting with the fader.
 - 1.1.2. The equipment connected to the input section of the mixer creates some kind of sound, such as: the microphones, CD player, Computer etc. How are they operated?
 - 1.1.3. Mix different sound sources together, do cross fading.
 - 1.2. Output: The output of the mixer is connected to different equipment are connected to this part of the mixer.
 - 1.2.1. The headphones, speakers, the recording devices, transmitter etc.
2. Monitoring the meters of the mixer is crucial for quality recording.
3. Record something on the computer and save it on Audacity. (Editing is explained in the Digital Sound Editing with Audacity session)

4. Produce a microphone/speaker feedback. Why did this happen and how it can be avoided? (E.g. if microphones and speakers are in the same room, by turning of

- the speakers and using headphones).
5. Let participants ask questions and answer them as simple as possible.
 6. Do not explain every single button but only those that are relevant for the radio production.

Facilitator's Note:

Operating a studio might look complicated but we know that basic studio operation is easy and can be learned by almost everyone. It is the facilitator's task to ease people's fear or respect for the 'technical' by using simple language that is familiar to participants. Examples:

- Compare mixing a radio show to baking a cake. How much of each ingredient do you add (input) and to whom do you give the finished cake (output).
- Feedback is when a circuit of sound is produced, because the same sound that comes into the mixer, is being recorded and comes into it again at the same time. This looping creates a high pitched frequency that comes out as disturbing noise.
- Explain important terms such as fade in/fade out, cross-fading, dead air, feedback etc. by actually showing how it works.

[Text for the trainer](#) (doc file)

Activity 1: Mapping out the path of the sound

The objective of mapping out the path of sound is for the participants to identify how one equipment is linked to another. For example to identify how sound from the microphone gets to the computer where it is being recorded or from the CD player to the speaker where we can hear it. Understanding the path of sound makes easier to assemble a studio, identify certain technical problems and how to solve them (ex: if the wrong fader is opened). Instructions to the activity are as follows:

- Break the participants into groups of two
 - Distribute short scripts of radio programs [Link: Seven radio scripts for this exercise](#) (doc file)
 - Following the radio program they should be able to identify the path of sound [Link: Studio plan for this exercise](#) (pdf file)
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- Ask participants to draw the path of the sound on their plan with a colored pen and indicate which faders need to be open or closed.
 - Ways of strengthening this exercise is to execute one or two samples in the studio. This is a good way to warm up into the hands-on exercises.

(Links to Additional Documents)

[Scripts for the mapping out the path of the sound exercise](#) (doc file)

[Mobile studio plan](#) (pdf file)

[Mobile studio plan](#) (for adaption to your studio set up) (Open Office Draw file)

Activity 2: A Mini Radio Program (Hands on Exercise)

A maximum of 10 participants in the studio to ensure that each participant gets a chance to operate the equipment and play the host or radio guest. Depending on the number of participants each participant has 5 – 10 min. Instructions to the activity are as follows:

- Have radio plugs and music CDs ready
- Each participant is going to record on the computer a sequence of a plug as intro, a 1 minute talk between a host and a guest, fade in music and fade out the music.
- Pick one participant as technician and ask two others to be the host and the guest.
- While the technician is preparing for the recording the host and the guest can discuss their talk.
- Instruct the technician on how to prepare the equipment but let her do it.
- The other participants can watch and be prepared for their turn.
- Rotate until every participant had her chance to operate the studio. (The recordings may be used as hands-on material for the next session on digital sound editing)

Facilitator's Note:

Be patient and encourage each participant that she can do it. Sometimes they are nervous if the trainer stands right besides them. If so you might ask one of the participants who already had her turn as technician to assist the next participants. This is also a way of monitoring if the participant actually understood the process.

Airtime is valuable, so it is important to plan out things two to three steps in advance. Here are some helpful tips to remember:

- Plan out your show
- Identify the materials you will be using
- Cue the plug and the music
- Make a sound check with the talents
- Prepare the recording before you start
- Monitor the meters to assure quality recording, if it is too loud or too low, record it again.

Synthesis Points:

- Learning to operate the radio studio is easier than it looks. We sometimes just need the time to familiarize ourselves with the equipment just as we learned to use basic household appliances or tinkering with these machines (car, motor, and computer) for the first time.
- Studio work is a way of seeing to all aspects of radio production, and the technical aspect is not always familiar terrain with the women. This is a way of reclaiming the technology and using the knowledge of it to further issues that

are important to us and our community

- The two hour session will never be enough to make each and everyone feel confident in operating a studio. The best way to further practice during the training, is to let the participants come together in buzz groups to produce a real radio interview or feature
- Operating the studio is only one aspect of radio production. The next session on Interview techniques is another aspect of the work that allows us to tap into people's knowledge and resources through an empowering interview process

Hand outs: Link: [Summary of studio explanation with illustrations](#)
(Print two slides on pages as hand outs) (Ppt file)

Additional Resources:

SACBA Training Resource Kit (available on CD)
By South Australian Community Broadcasters Association
Order from Radio Adelaide, Australia
<http://www.radio.adelaide.edu.au/training/#resources>

UNESCO Community Radio Handbook
By Fraser, Colin & alt. - 2001, 106 pages
UNESCO 1, rue Miollis 75732 Paris Cedex 15, Tel (331)45 68 40 25, Fax (331)45 6855 85
Email: i.panevsdka@unesco.org
[as pdf:](#)
http://www.amarc.org/documents/manuals/UNESCO_Community_Radio_Handbook.pdf

Internet

Training Materials: Learn About Audio Online and Community Radio
APC – The Association for Progressive Communications
<http://www.apc.org/english/capacity/training/radio.shtml#Audio%20Online%20-%20Basics>

Community Radio: Tools

A selection of equipment with reviews of products and price estimates.
<http://www.transom.org/tools/index.php>

Low Cost Radio Broadcasting

By Rammath Bhat, Voices and Rukmin Wijemanne, Asia Pacific Broadcasting Union, India
Primer, 19 pages, downloadable at
<http://www.communityradionetwork.org/leftlinks/technology-options>