



**HFCC**

**HFCC - International Broadcasting Delivery**

## **International Broadcasting - Challenges and New Opportunities**

Changes in the delivery of media content have created an increasingly challenging multi-platform environment during the last decade with exciting new possibilities. There is no reason for disadvantaging international radio in this process or for interpreting the cuts or even closures of services as the inevitable outcome of technological changes. This distinctive media is alive and its audience should be able to keep on receiving programs and other content both on traditional and new platforms. The fact that radio has infiltrated into all new platforms can be seen as a confirmation of its strength and future resilience.

### **New Listeners and Content Consumers**

- Differences between distribution of broadcasting for home and international audiences may seem to lose importance in the present digital world of an ever increasing number of channels present on multiple delivery platforms. Broadcasters are trying to find a place in the crowded and highly competitive market, with specialised content and musical formats, or local and other narrowly specialised genres.
- International radio has a new opportunity in this environment, with its offer of a fresh and immediate mix of news and other content, broadcast from - and focussed on - a specific country or region, or on global affairs, and it is capable of being accepted as a service of relevance for a large critical audience.
- The prospect of rising affluence in many world regions is going to create an increasing demand for this type of informative and entertainment content. Three billion people - or 50 per cent - of world population lives below the poverty line on less than 2.50 USD a day.<sup>1</sup> Their first choice of communication devices will be either a mobile telephone, or a radio, or both, and listening to a local FM or community station or an international broadcast will be a more affordable media source than a computer, TV set or a video or CD player.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.statisticbrain.com](http://www.statisticbrain.com), March 2012

## **Important Segment of the Global Information Society**

- International radio was a powerful media tool during the decades of ideological conflicts of the last century. The remit of international radio today is frequently defined rather as an indispensable means of public or cultural diplomacy, presenting the perspective, views and values of a country to foreign public and to its representatives and leaders.
- International broadcasting could help solve contemporary challenges brought about by the need to bridge the gap in knowledge about other civilizations, cultures and societies that have entered into frequent contact with one another due to globalisation. International broadcasting is capable of motivating dialogue among peoples, mutual understanding and respect, and the exchange of ideas.
- An increasing penetration of community radio into many regions provides a tool and platform for (local) community debate and dialogue and supports democratic processes within societies. International broadcasting is capable of playing the same role for regional and global communities. Broadcasters will be able to enter into partnerships with the local media, supply and exchange media content and enhance the intercultural dialogue.
- Due to its unique propagation properties, shortwave radio can easily cover all regions of the world. This is important where other platforms such as satellite, FM or Internet are unavailable because of high cost, geographical location, lack of infrastructure or due to restrictions or disasters. Receivers are inexpensive and there are no fees for access to the medium that distributes media to travellers and isolated people and reaches across the Digital Divide to the most disadvantaged and marginalised societies. This is in keeping with the Declaration and Action Plan of the World Summit on the Information Society.

## **New Technological Developments for Traditional Delivery**

- The presence of broadcasters across all distribution platforms is very important for the effective delivery of international broadcasting. Different technologies do not compete, but complement and strengthen each other. The audiences consume content at the time of their choosing and from a platform that depends on their context situation, e.g. location, personal preference, social position, availability of a device, etc. It is therefore counterproductive to exclude one technology from the distribution palette - traditional wireless radio, for example, just because the funding is limited.

- The future of radio is digital and the digitisation of shortwave and other broadcast bands is already in progress. The globally standardised DRM<sup>2</sup> (Digital Radio Mondiale) system is a high-quality replacement for current AM radio broadcasting. There is no obstacle to a speedy introduction of DRM. There is a big difference between the quality of reception of AM broadcasting and the digital DRM standard, and the improvement is immediately obvious.<sup>3</sup>

- The need for a huge amount of receivers for the countries with high populations will lower still further the prices of shortwave receivers. Wind-up receivers and those fitted with solar-powered devices make it possible to listen to radio for free.

- A new Study Question has been launched by the ITU Radio Communication sector early in 2012 on the setting out of technical characteristics of multi-standard broadcast receivers that will be used for the future implementation of world-wide broadcasting roaming. This should make the global multi-platform distribution of international broadcasting easier still.

### **International radio in Disaster Risk Reduction and Mitigation.**

- Poor information flow to disaster regions has been identified as a source of dissatisfaction, and even anger and frustration, among people affected by a disaster. At the moment when local and even regional communication and information networks are needed most, they are destroyed or overloaded and the affected population suffers from an information blackout. Long distance wireless radio remains the only source of emergency information. However, a comprehensive and dedicated global relief system has been missing.

- The HFCC - International Broadcasting Delivery association, in close co-operation with the sister co-ordination groups: the Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union (ABU) and Arab States Broadcasting Union (ASBU) is now working on a disaster risk reduction project for the world community. A global frequency database of shortwave broadcasting and an online co-ordination procedure are already in place. The system has been designed for a quick launch on frequencies managed in accordance with International Radio Regulations.

-The DRM consortium and Fraunhofer Institute from Germany have developed a DRM Emergency Warning System, which employs an alarm signal that can switch a

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2 *Digital Radio Mondiale TM (DRM) is the universal digital system for all broadcasting frequencies, including LW, MW, SW, and VHF bands I, II and III*

3 *In contrast, the digitisation of domestic FM radio globally has been hesitant and incomplete since the change in quality and other benefits were not obvious to everybody*

receiver to an emergency broadcast, or switch the receiver on automatically, so that the emergency broadcast can be received. In addition, headlines and detailed emergency information may be sent to the receiver's text screen. Textual information can be made available immediately in multiple languages.

- The use of high-quality digital transmissions, as a wireless long-distance feed of programme material is another interesting possibility. The received programme can be relayed by a local community radio station that has survived or via a local low-power "Radio-in-a-Box" device that has been developed with the assistance of UNESCO in co-operation with the Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union.

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