

## Community-based Responses to HIV/AIDS in South Africa: An Evaluation of a Children's Radio Programme

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**ABSTRACT** Children community radio programmes are among the very few programmes in Southern Africa that seek to raise HIV/AIDS knowledge and awareness on children. These programmes are designed to enable children to learn useful life skills as well as contribute to broader public awareness on issues facing Southern African children in the context of poverty and the HIV epidemic. The idea of 'child-participation' forms the core of children radio programmes. It locates the child as having a fundamental responsibility in the response to HIV/AIDS. The assumption is that children need to be capacitated with HIV/AIDS information to build awareness. This article focuses on the results of a process evaluation of a children radio programme conducted in South Africa. The purpose of the evaluation was to gather information related to programme implementation and performance. For this evaluation, qualitative methods comprising semi-structured interviews, observations and document analysis were used. In this evaluation, inductive thematic analysis was employed to establish how the children's radio programme was being implemented. The results of the evaluation showed high levels of implementation fidelity.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The use of radio as a vehicle of empowerment is gaining currency in development and public health literature. Emerging evidence from different parts of the African continent suggest that radio is the most important source of information on HIV/AIDS (Karlyn 2001; Celeste Farr et al. 2005). Recent studies conducted in Tanzania, Madagascar, Zambia and South Africa have revealed that radio is an effective and reliable instrument for facilitating HIV/AIDS dialogue among citizens (Wellings and Macdowall 2000; Godwyll and Ngumbi 2009). Radio has the capacity to influence both behavioural and attitudinal changes which can leave citizens better placed to avoid HIV infection (Karlyn 2001; Vaughan et al. 2000). The overall goal of most community-based children radio programmes is to break the "culture of silence" on HIV/AIDS. Previous studies have shown that in many African societies parents are generally not comfortable to talk to their children on issues related to sexuality and HIV/

AIDS (Wellings and Macdowall 2000; Katende and Gupta 2004). Given this lack of communication of HIV/AIDS within African families, radio programmes seek to increase the general public awareness on HIV/AIDS especially among children and create high stocks of social capital that will equip children to face the challenges posed by HIV/AIDS (Bessinger et al. 2004). Community radio projects seek to provide a platform for children affected by HIV/AIDS to share ideas, document their experiences and acquire knowledge and information that will place them at a better position to prevent or fight HIV/AIDS infection (Misra and Agarwal 2005). There is emerging consensus in recent literature that suggests that community-based radio programmes provide easy access to appropriate and reliable information on HIV/AIDS, raising critical consciousness and encouraging HIV/AIDS conversations and discussions especially among children and youth (Adam and Harford 2001; Gahaku 2010).

The rationale behind most community-based children programmes is to achieve the idea of "HIV/AIDS literacy" in rural communities where there is a perceived lack of knowledge and education on HIV/AIDS (Skuse 2002). HIV/AIDS literacy is simply defined as "the capacity of individuals and / or communities to ob-

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tain, interpret and understand basic HIV/AIDS prevention, testing and care information, skills and services and the competence to use such information, skills and services to prevent HIV/AIDS infection and related stigma and discrimination..." (Schenker 2005:2). Community-based children radio programmes focus on advocacy and peer education. These programmes are based on the behaviour change communication model which focuses on changing the behaviour of children (or the youth) so that the chances of them engaging in risk behaviour are minimised (Adam and Harford 2001; Skuse 2002; Waeber and Orengo 2008; Gahaku 2010). The assumption is that the provision of information through drama, radio broadcasting and group work activities will result in HIV/AIDS risk reduction and the adoption of protective behaviour.

Community radio programmes are considered as creating an essential public social space allowing unrestricted public engagement and communication on HIV/AIDS (Agha 2003; Van Rossem and Meekers 2007). In other words, the dissemination of HIV/AIDS information is at the core of many community radio projects. Through these projects, children are provided with opportunities to use radio as a way of building critical awareness on HIV/AIDS. The overall and desired outcome of community-based radio programmes for children and youth is to build a higher level of awareness on HIV/AIDS and promote safer sexual practice (Wellings 2002). It is assumed that public dialogue is useful in building and consolidating HIV/AIDS awareness in children participating in the programmes. Children are given an opportunity to freely express themselves and also address silences in their immediate families and communities.

## 2. THE CHILDREN'S RADIO PROGRAMME AND ITS THEORY OF CHANGE

A programme theory is merely a clear explanation on how and why a programme is supposed to work. "It provides a logical and reasonable description of why the things you do your program activities-should lead to the intended results or benefits" (Hosley 2005:1). Weiss (2005) defines a theory of change as a theory of how and why an initiative works. Bas-

ing on these views, we articulated the theory behind the evaluated community radio programme for children. The programme makes an assumption that the provision of HIV/AIDS specific information through the participation of children in radio broadcasting and production will lead to the adoption of HIV/AIDS protective behaviour. Community radio is seen as a vehicle for building children's awareness on HIV/AIDS which will have a significant impact on the broader community as children will later disseminate the information (through various publications) to friends and families. Children's publications such as compact discs and leaflets distributed within the community will also help build awareness leading to behaviour change at all levels of society. In other words, child participation in the radio programme results in informed awareness, better decision making and the adoption of HIV/AIDS preventative behaviour. The theory of the programme can thus be articulated as follows:

- **If** certain sets of resources (such as radio equipment, staff, and productions materials) are available, **then** the programme can provide a certain set of activities or services such as radio-diary production and broadcasting activities to children participating in the programme.
- If these children receive these services together with a supportive peer structure and environment **then** they gain a better understanding of the relevant issues at stake (HIV and AIDS). Radio services will create social spaces for children's interaction, participation and information exchange where HIV/AIDS information, narratives and experiences are shared openly. Participation in the activities of the radio project will result in children gaining knowledge and understanding of HIV/AIDS. Participating in the radio project facilitates HIV/AIDS dialogue among the children. It is through dialogue that children will gain knowledge that will make them avoid HIV/AIDS infection.
- **If** the children change their knowledge and understanding of HIV/AIDS through dialogue and participation, **then** they will change their behaviour and adopt HIV/AIDS protective lifestyles or identities.
- **If** a majority of the radio programme participants change their behavioural practices

and lifestyles, then the programme may have a broader and effective impact on their significant others and friends or on the community as a whole.

- **If** the various materials and publications (audio material, recorded programmes and leaflets) that will be produced by the radio programme participants are widely distributed within the community and other parts of the province, **then** the majority of the citizens within the local community and other surrounding areas will gain awareness on HIV/AIDS and this will lead towards the creation of an HIV/AIDS enabling environment where there is on-going public communication on HIV/AIDS which facilitates HIV/AIDS prevention.

In Figure 1, the evaluators illustrate the theory of the programme as discussed above.

### 3. EVALUATION APPROACH

In doing a process evaluation of the programme, the evaluators adopted a qualitative evaluation methodology. The use of qualitative methods in programme evaluation is not unique and it is well documented in literature (for ex-

ample Patton 1997; Cuba and Lincoln 1989; Denzin and Lincoln 2000). There are several advantages that qualitative evaluation methods offer when doing a programme evaluation. Patton (1997) argues that the most distinct advantage of qualitative evaluation methods is that they tell the “program’s story” mainly through the capturing of the narratives and experiences of the programme participants and staff. The main reason why the researchers adopted a qualitative approach to evaluation is that qualitative evaluations are usually “naturalistic” and they do not tend to manipulate the setting of the programme (Patton 1997). The evaluators had to interact with both programme staff and participants in their own natural setting (Barbie and Mouton 2008). This was done for the purpose of giving the evaluators an “emic perspective” or “insider’s viewpoint” (Barbie and Mouton 2001) on all the activities of the project and its implementation.

#### 3.1. Participants and Sampling

The participants of this study comprised of ten beneficiaries (children) of the HIV/AIDS radio project aged between 8-14 years. All the

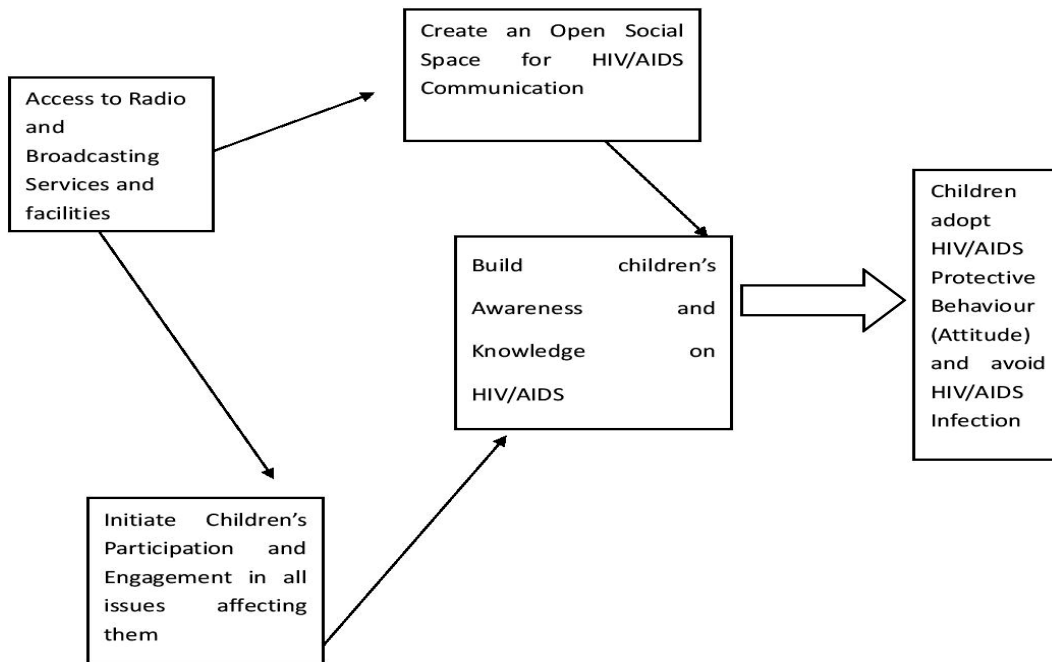


Fig. 1. Programme theory

children selected were under the care of a local non-governmental organisation focusing on providing educational and health services to mainly school-going children in different KwaZulu-Natal communities. The two evaluators purposively selected the ten (10) participants to become part of the study. In selecting study participants, the evaluators were assisted by the radio programme facilitators. In addition to the ten (10) participants, the evaluators also interviewed two (2) programme facilitators on aspects related to the delivery and implementation of the HIV/AIDS children's radio programme. The two (2) facilitators are the only full-time programme staff members employed by the organisation to oversee the children's radio programme.

### 3.2. Data Collection

The evaluators adopted the use of a mixed qualitative methodology (Patton 1990, 2003) where process information was gathered through the use of semi-structured interviews, observations and project documentation. The reason behind the use of such a mixed approach is best summarised by Patton (1990: 244) when he argues that "multiple sources of information are sought and used because no single source of information can be trusted to provide a comprehensive perspective on the program. By using a combination of observations, interviewing, and document analysis, the fieldworker is able to use different data sources to validate and cross-check findings". The use of several sources of data collection enhances the validity and reliability of the evaluation findings and thus the evaluators had to make use of a mixed methodology.

### 3.3. Data Analysis: Thematic Analysis

The data collected during process evaluation was analysed mainly through thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006). In this study, thematic analysis focused on identifying key words, phrases or narrative statements that summarised ideas conveyed in all the data collected. The data collected through interviews, observations and documents was analysed, coded and categorised into different themes and sub-themes. The main purpose of using thematic analysis was to allow the evaluators to identify, establish and collate the relationship between themes emerging from

different data sources (Braun and Clarke 2006). It is imperative to state that the themes were not imposed by the evaluators but they were simply emerging from the data gathered. Thematic analysis also enabled the evaluators to identify various anomalies or differences emerging from the different data sources used for the collection of process data. The analysis was done manually by the evaluators. Data collected was synthesised and used to make inferences or conclusions about the implementation of the radio programme.

## 4. EVALUATION RESULTS

This section highlights and reports on the key findings which were gathered from the evaluation exercise of the children's programme. These findings are based on the various aspects of the process evaluation conducted, which include intervention fidelity, coverage and dose. The narratives and perceptions of the programme staff and participants were used to illustrate and assess whether all the process aspects of the programme were being implemented. The evaluators also made use of field notes where necessary to accurately show any relationships or anomalies on the evidence gathered through the different sources used for the purpose of this evaluation. Below, the researchers discuss some of the key issues or evaluation findings that came out of this process evaluation.

### 4.1. Perceptions of Radio Programme Participants and Staff: Fidelity of Implementation

Anecdotal evidence gathered by the evaluators suggests that both programme participants and staff are satisfied with the way the project is functioning and also the way the various activities or programmes are being implemented. The results showed high levels of implementation fidelity mainly because eighty percent (80%) of the participants revealed that the programme is implementing everything as planned and all the activities which have been planned for the year have been done successfully. Asked about her overall assessment of the way the programme is running, one participant argued that, "*the project is running well and every activity brings excitement and new ideas*

*about life. I am more than satisfied with the way everything is being coordinated and facilitated. We do almost everything we are supposed to be doing whenever there is a radio workshop or meeting. I attend every session and it feels good doing all what would have been planned for the day. Every day brings new insights and knowledge. I am very satisfied”.*

Similar sentiments were also shared by the project officer responsible for studio activities who revealed that despite some challenges they face as an organisation, the programme is being implemented as they planned and their overall impression as an organisation is that the programme is going in the right direction. He stated that, *“I am quite confident and excited about the direction at which things are going on so far in this project. The project has done well to meet its objectives and everything is carried out as planned. We have implemented all the major activities for this year and this shows that there has been commitment from all the various stakeholders and partners in seeing this project work as initially planned and agreed upon. To me, this is a success story”.*

#### **4.2. Radio Programmes: Fidelity, Reach and Dose**

All the interviewed children participants (100%) revealed that they are being taught on how to use radio as a way of articulating their various needs and concerns. They also highlighted that the major focus of all the various activities they are involved in are on HIV/AIDS education and awareness. Out of the 20 major activities planned for the year 2011, the evidence gathered suggests that 13 were delivered as planned and the overall fidelity is 65%. Almost every participant revealed having received maximum support and attention from the facilitators especially in their initial stages of joining the programme when they did not have any experience or knowledge on radio recording or editing. A member of the project stated that *“...the only challenge I had at first was that I did not know how to operate the radio equipment. At first it was a nightmare and even the studio environment was new to me. It took me several days to be used to such. Look at me now, I can now record, edit and even air a programme on radio. The project facilitators and technicians assisted me in several ways and I thank them”.*

Evidence gathered by the evaluators also shows that the programme reached almost every participant. In other words, every activity or facility of the radio programme was accessible to every member at any time of the day. The process evaluation showed that almost every participant or member of the programme has got unlimited access to the studio and they are allowed to use recording and editing equipment whenever they want to use such facilities. Access to radio facilities has led to many children coming at their own times to record or edit anything they want to. One participant had this to say, *“...most of us we now spend our time in the studio. We are always here even if our facilitators are not available; we can still use the radio equipment and the facilities. Even the security guys at the gate they now know us and they simply allow us even on Sundays”.* Such a view from the participant was consistent with what the evaluators observed during fieldwork. In some cases, the studio was open until 6pm and the children were seen making use of the facilities. This is highly suggestive of the fact that the various programme activities and equipment were highly accessible to all the participating children as earlier highlighted from some of the narratives of the participants. The observations conducted by the evaluators also showed that over 65% of the radio workshop lessons were completely conducted and taught. In addition, these workshops were attended by nearly 87% percent of the children participating in the project. Such observational data is also supported by attendance records or logs. Thus, the overall fidelity of the programme was relatively higher and it was mainly measured through the semi-structured interviews conducted with programme participants and staff, in addition to the direct observations conducted by the evaluators.

#### **4.3. Project Relevance and Acceptability**

The majority (70%) of the interviewed programme participants and staff expressed satisfaction regarding the relevance and significance of the programme. Basing on the evidence gathered, the radio programme is perceived relevant for the children who are living in an area where there is no public communication on HIV/AIDS. One facilitator involved in the programme pointed out that, *“...this project is the only means through which children can begin to*

*share experiences and communicate those issues which they are not able to articulate within their families. It raises their understanding on HIV/AIDS given the lack of HIV/AIDS communication and education in this area. We need more projects of this nature as they help capacitate even families of these children participating in the project*". A majority (61%) of the children interviewed highlighted that they are satisfied with all the various activities of the programme and their relevance in helping them to understand HIV/AIDS and its impact on their families and community. One of the children participants was of the view that, *"everything that we do here is relevant to our lives and what we are going through. I take all these activities seriously because I know that we are not wasting time. The project has presented us with a learning platform to acquire HIV/AIDS education and awareness"*.

However, another participant in the programme argued that there are some activities of the project which he considers to be more important and relevant over others and performing them alone will help save time and effort. He stated that, *"I am of the opinion that we should only focus on studio work or activities such as radio recording and editing. These activities are interesting and challenging. For me, I do not enjoy life skill activities like drama because it takes us way from the studio environment. We should only stick to radio recording, editing and presentation"*. This assertion shows that there are some other programme participants who view other programme activities as more relevant over others. This indicates the presence of such a segment of participants in the target population. However, the collected evidence does suggest that the majority (70%) of the programme participants are generally satisfied with the relevance and significance of every activity of the radio programme.

In the following section, we assess the different views regarding the usefulness of the radio programme according to programme participants and staff who were interviewed in this study.

#### **4.4. The Utility of the Radio Project: Narrative and Ethnographic Accounts from Programme Participants and Staff.**

One major purpose of this study was to evaluate whether the programme was meeting the

needs and expectations of the beneficiaries. The key question asked by the evaluators on this regard reads as follows:

#### ***How Useful Are You Finding the Activities of the Programme or the Project Itself?***

Commenting on the usefulness of the programme, one of the participants revealed that since becoming a member of the programme, she has benefited in several ways and she considers herself much more knowledgeable on HIV/AIDS issues than before. She revealed that, *"...in this programme, we learn how to share our experiences with others and exchange ideas. Most of us are victims of HIV/AIDS as we have lost family members especially parents. This project has allowed us to talk about HIV/AIDS, how it is affecting us and how best we can deal with some of the challenges posed by HIV/AIDS. Every one of us is allowed to share / talk on everything we want without being restrained"*.

The majority (64%) of the radio programme participants revealed that they view radio as useful in communicating their concerns to the broader public. The evidence gathered suggests that this is mainly because children are not given a platform to communicate their needs or concerns in most rural families. A participant interviewed in this study stated that, *"the reason why I prefer talking about HIV/AIDS when I am on radio is that at home we do not often have a chance to talk and discuss issues related to HIV/AIDS. For most of us in this programme, radio is our only platform that we can use to let our friends and relatives know about HIV/AIDS and other community health issues"*.

As can be gathered from the views of the quoted participants, the project is reported to be useful in opening up social spaces of HIV/AIDS communication and awareness. Process data collected by the evaluators mainly through document reviews and observations also shows that the project gives the participants a chance to talk and engage on HIV/AIDS. All the various activities of the programme are focusing on the need to make the programme participants share ideas and knowledge on HIV/AIDS. Asked to share her views on whether the project is useful to the participants, a programme staff member revealed that, *"child participation and information exchange are at the core of this project and*

*the project is doing well in encouraging the children to participate in all matters of their social lives. The project is beneficial to the participants in the sense that it is allowing all the children to share ideas and knowledge on HIV/AIDS. There is no doubt that all the various objectives of the project are being met including the creation of an environment where children can effectively engage and share knowledge on HIV/AIDS”.*

In addition to the usefulness of the children’s radio programme in creating HIV/AIDS dialogue and education, some of the participants highlighted that the project is helping them to develop confidence to speak in front of an audience. A participant stated that, *“I have benefited a lot from the radio programme. Before being a member of this programme, I was so shy that I could not speak before an audience. Look at me now, I can now recite a poem, sing or even present a live programme on radio. I have also gained a lot of knowledge on how best we can avoid HIV/AIDS related infections. My family is also benefiting as I often discuss with them all I would have learnt during workshops. I am no longer scared to discuss issues with my sisters or even my mother. When I speak, they all listen to me”.*

The programme is considered by the majority of the participants as creating an interactive atmosphere where all the participants are equal and ready to learn from one another especially on the different behavioural practices that can predispose one to HIV/AIDS infection. One participant revealed that, *“...the radio programme has made me to become aware of the various behavioural practices that can predispose one to HIV/AIDS infection for example unprotective sexual activity with multiple partners. The best ever message that we preach in our project is that children and youth must wait until its time. Abstinence is the only message that we convey in all our radio programmes and publications. Hence, the project provides us with a learning platform where we acquire the much needed information on HIV/AIDS”.*

These evaluation findings have shown that the programme is useful or beneficial to the participants in several aspects. Process data collected mainly through semi-structured interviews shows that the project is useful in (i) creating an open and interactive social space of HIV/AIDS communication and education; (ii)

building participant’s awareness on the various behavioural practices that can predispose them to the risk of HIV/AIDS infection and (iii) equipping the participants with public speaking skills and building their confidence to speak or talk about any issue in public. On the other hand, the majority (68%) of the participants revealed that the most important benefit accruing from their involvement in the programme lies in the programme’s ability to create a platform for HIV/AIDS education. The building of public awareness on risk behavioural practices was also seen as the second most important benefit of participating in the children’s radio programme. Table 1 shows the various benefits identified by the participants in order of their importance.

**Table 1: Perceived benefits and degree of importance**

<i>Benefit(s)</i>	<i>Degree of importance</i>
• HIV/AIDS education	1
• Awareness on risk behavioural practices	2
• The building of participants’ confidence and public speaking skills and abilities	3

The above findings as reflected in the table above are consistent with the overall aim and purpose of the programme which is mainly centred on creating channels of HIV/AIDS education and communication. All the participants of the programme agreed that they are benefiting from the programme in several ways including gaining useful skills and knowledge. In Table 2, the evaluators present the various forms of knowledge and skills that the 10 respondents (programme participants and staff) identified and the number of respondents per each category.

**Table 2: Knowledge and skills being gained from being part of the project**

<i>Knowledge/Skill</i>	<i>No. of respondents</i>
Better knowledge on HIV/AIDS	4
Awareness on risk behaviours	3
Public speaking skills	2
How to work in a group	1

The overall conclusion that the evaluators made from the above table is that the programme is yielding important benefits to the programme beneficiaries. Both the programme participants and staff have indicated that the most impor-

tant benefit the programme is offering has to do with increasing the participant's knowledge on HIV/AIDS.

#### 4.5. Measuring the Extent to which Objectives of the Radio Programme are Being Achieved

The evaluators asked both the programme participants and staff to give their opinion on whether the project was meeting its initial and intended objectives. The respondents were asked to single out an objective which they consider to have been successfully met. The table below illustrates the views of the respondents.

Table 3 shows that the most successful aspect of the programme was thought to be its focus on creating an enabling context or environment for HIV/AIDS dialogue and communication. 60% of those interviewed considered the objective of creating an environment for HIV/AIDS communication as having been achieved. They agreed that the project had created an interactive platform for HIV/AIDS communication. As can also be seen from Table 3, 30% of those who participated in this evaluation study were of the view that the project is meeting its objective on equipping children with radio technical skills. This is suggestive of the fact that equipping children with radio technical skills is the second most aspect of the programme. However, it should also be stated that all the study participants were of the view that the project was not doing enough to meet its objective of ensuring "*the meaningful transfer of life skills to children so that they will be in a better placed position to fight HIV/AIDS and poverty*". Observational evidence gathered by the evaluators tends to show that the reason for this is mainly that a majority of the children seem to show limited interest in life skill activities such as drama and poetry. They are excited with the studio and everything that has nothing to do with studio work does not excite them.

#### 4.6. Challenges Facing the Children's Radio Programme

Process data from the different sources used by the evaluators highlighted several challenges that are being perceived as affecting the implementation and delivery of the various activities of the programme. Basing on the findings of

**Table 3: Respondents views on project objectives**

<i>Objective</i>	<i>Number of respondents considering the objective being met</i>
1. To equip a group of rural children with technical skills including broadcasting and reporting so that they will be able to articulate all issues affecting them through radio	3
2. To facilitate 'authentic' children's voices about their experiences, concerns and perspectives in programmes in order to provide improved insight into their experiences and circumstances	1
3. To create an HIV/AIDS supportive and enabling environment in which the children can safely talk about HIV/AIDS	6
4. To ensure the meaningful transfer of life skills to children such that they will be in a better placed position to fight HIV/AIDS and poverty	0

the evaluation, we look at these challenges below.

##### 4.6.1. Radio Equipment

A majority (70%) of the participants revealed that they often face difficulties while using radio equipment in the various radio workshops conducted by the radio technician and facilitators. For most of these children, the studio environment is completely new and using the equipment can be a daunting task especially in the initial stages of becoming part of the programme. One programme participant expressed concern on the challenges she faced in using or operating the radio equipment. She revealed that: "...it is not easy to use some of the radio equipment and I was frustrated for a number of days because I was so slow in mastering the art of using all the equipment during our radio workshops. I even failed to use the digital voice recorder because it was my first time seeing such a thing".

Besides the difficulties faced by most of the children in using the radio equipment, the project facilitators also revealed that most of the radio equipment is becoming old and obsolete. One of these facilitators clearly stated that the "...greatest challenge we are facing is that our radio equipment is becoming old and we are failing to secure funds to replace all equipment which is becoming obsolete. My worry is that



*this will affect the way we are going to work in the unforeseeable future because we risky having to do without some necessary equipment. We have tried without success to replace all ageing equipment".* It is quite clear from the views gathered from the different study participants that they were serious challenges posed by radio equipment and these challenges were seen as having the potential of affecting the effective implementation of the programme.

#### **4.6.2. Conflicting Interests between Programme Staff and School Teachers**

About 80% of the study participants revealed that there seem to be a conflict of interest between programme facilitators and the school teachers from the two partnering schools involved in the programme. This kind of conflict is seen as greatly affecting the way the programme is being implemented. A programme facilitator interviewed in this study indicated that, *"... it is difficult to meet these children during school days. It means that we cannot even monitor how the children are doing. It also makes it very difficult to even arrange meetings with them. Sometimes the teachers do not even allow us to be with the children during school days. There is a conflict of interest between school teachers and us. I think this is a big challenge in as far as the project's implementation is concerned"*.

The evaluators also captured similar views from the project participants themselves. One of the children participants stated that *"...my school teacher sometimes does not want me to put all my effort in the radio programme because she said that I am here to learn and not to involve myself in the various activities of the radio programme. It becomes difficult for me to openly show my commitment to the programme"*. A radio technician interviewed in the study also supported this claim when he argued that, *"...we have problems with school personnel when we go seeking their consent to allow us to work with the children during weekends and holidays. I recall one school principal from one of our partnering schools openly told me that I should come back after two weeks because she was busy with important school administration issues. She was not interested at all to hear my side of the story"*.

The evidence gathered in this study shows that there is a shared concern among programme

participants and staff that they are not getting enough support from school teachers and principals from the two schools involved in the radio programme.

## **5. DISCUSSION**

The process data gathered in this study suggests that the programme is being implemented with high fidelity. There seems to be a general agreement among programme participants and staff that the overall implementation and delivery of the programme is satisfying and encouraging. Basing on the evidence collected, the programme is considered as reaching all its intended beneficiaries. The study findings have also shown that the programme is working towards meeting or achieving all its core objectives with the exception of only a single objective which focuses on equipping the children with essential life skills. The creation of an HIV/AIDS environment or platform for HIV/AIDS communication has been singled out by the study participants as a key and essential aspect of the programme. This finding is consistent with those of previous studies that have shown that radio can provide an open space for HIV/AIDS communication and engagement (Agha 2003; Celeste Farr et al. 2005; Van Rossem and Meekers 2007). Project participants (beneficiaries) who were interviewed in this study reported having gained knowledge on HIV/AIDS from the various activities of the programme. Such reports indicate that the programme has been successful in achieving its major goal of encouraging HIV/AIDS dialogue and discussion among the children participating in the programme. The utility of radio programmes in promoting and encouraging critical dialogue on issues affecting society is not new in social science and public health literature (Karlyn 2001; Bessinger et al. 2004; Gahaku 2010).

It should also be stated that the study findings have also highlighted that among the various activities of the programme, the participants showed strong commitment and interest in only radio activities such as recording and live radio presentations. Although these radio activities were implemented with high fidelity, some activities were not completely implemented mainly as a result of a general lack of interest on the part of the programme participants. The activities implemented with less fidelity included drama, public speaking and life skills activities.

A lack of interest and motivation in some of these activities on the part of the project participants required the facilitators to do away with some of the intervention activities thereby affecting their implementation.

These study findings also suggest that reach was very high for virtually all activities of the programme. All children were exposed to the various activities of the project and all activities were well attended by the children. However, observational evidence and attendance logs tend to show that reach was very high for radio workshops while reach was low for life skill activities. As measured by process data, the programme intervention goals and objectives are being met though there are various challenges that are affecting the effective implementation of the programme. These challenges include conflicting interests between programme staff and school teachers and obsolete radio equipment. In conclusion, process evaluation results arrived at in this study indicated that the community-based radio programme was being implemented with high levels of reach and fidelity besides the various challenges being faced.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The evaluation of a community based children's radio programme has provided important insights into how the programme is being implemented. Process data gathered in this evaluation shows a higher level of implementation fidelity. In this study, fidelity was measured in different ways: (1) reach, (2) dose, and (3) service delivery. Fidelity in this context sought to measure the extent to which the implementation of the children's radio programme complies with its intended objectives. The evidence presented in this study shows that the children's radio programme besides being implemented with a higher degree of fidelity, the programme was faced with other challenges. This shows that programme evaluation serves not only as a measurement of fidelity but it also looks at challenges that a programme might be faced with throughout its lifecycle. There is conclusive evidence in this study that the community-based children's radio programme was meeting its initial intended objectives.

## 7. RECOMMENDATIONS

The researchers' findings in this study centralise the need for conducting evaluations

of community based programmes. Evaluation presents useful lessons that enhance improved service delivery and the effectiveness of the programme. This study recommends the need to make evaluation practice a core component of every community-based programme. Evaluation whether formative or summative presents a useful pathway through which programme goals and objectives can be achieved. This study has shown the relevance of external driven evaluations in community based programmes. As a recommendation for future studies, there is need to examine how internal forms of evaluation can contribute to organisational effectiveness and performance. The challenge that this presents will be on looking at credible sources of evidence and measures of fidelity that will show an accurate assessment of how the programme is performing.

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