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From mouthpiece to public service: donor support to radio broadcasters in new democracies

Simon Milligan and Graham Mytton

The radio can help to stimulate better governance. However, state-run broadcasting organisations in the South are usually ill-prepared for their public-service role in new democracies. They are often poorly funded compared to their new, commercial rivals and often still bound by the same ‘rules of the game’ that governed them prior to the democratic era. Broadcasters typically remain accountable to government and not to their listeners, and promote the interests and agendas of the political elite. This paper focuses on the experiences of DFID support to a radio programme in northern Nigeria that sought to improve communication and debate between the government and the electorate. It argues that there are legitimate circumstances for development partners to engage with state-controlled media outlets, not least in rural areas where commercial broadcasters lack the financial incentive to establish stations and provide programming that has relevance to the poor. The authors critically examine the lessons learned from DFID’s support and identify measures that could assist similar initiatives in the future.

KEY WORDS: Aid; Civil society; Governance and public policy; Sub-Saharan Africa

The mass media as a catalyst for change

The potential for media to promote accountability, transparency and democracy is widely acknowledged. Speaking at a conference in 2004, the then UK Secretary of State for International Development commented that:

For both the media and governments in the South, there are real opportunities to use communications in the fight against poverty. Not just communication that secures column inches or airtime, but communication which educates and brings about better ways of doing things; which helps government talk to its citizens and vice-versa; and which puts the poorest of the poor at the centre of attention. (Benn 2004: 3–4).

New and diverse forms of mass media often emerge with democracy, with private radio and television stations often keen to contribute to civil society’s role in holding state officials and institutions to account (see Tetley 2002). As Roth writes:

In a democracy, a free press sees its first role as that of disclosure – often of matters which others would rather keep concealed. The role of the media in exposing fraud, corruption and malpractice and in championing the cause of the abused has been a major force for extending public accountability. (Roth 2001: 36)

However, state-run broadcasting organisations in the South are usually ill-prepared for their public-service role in the new, democratic era. They are often poorly funded, and still bound by the same ‘rules of the game’ that governed them prior to the democratic era. The voices that are heard, the interests that are promoted, and the ‘spin’ that is attached to various news items continue to closely reflect the agenda of the ruling party.

In a recent guide to media support in developing countries, Roth (2001) argues that there is need for good management, professional and technical skills, and policies that ‘clarify and facilitate the role of the public service media’ (Roth 2001: 3).¹ He advised that donor support for government media outlets be:

best avoided where government is restricting the freedom of the radio to operate, for example, by denying . . . other political parties equitable access to the media . . . [and] support to the established media should be approached with caution where the media are owned exclusively by the government. (Roth 2001: 8)

This paper argues that there *are* merits in providing targeted support to state-run broadcasters. Two key arguments underpin this position. First, the development of an appropriate legislative framework is insufficient because it, and the emergence of democracy, do not automatically trigger reform. As the case study will show, behavioural norms, systems of patronage, and power relations play a significant role in determining the content and style of state broadcasting in new democracies. In practice, new, improved ‘rules of the game’ can take many years to evolve. Targeted donor support to state broadcasters can help to break down the established practices that serve to restrict debate and fair and balanced reporting.

Second, people in many parts of rural Africa remain reliant on the state broadcaster, despite the rapid and widespread growth of the independent broadcasting sector since 1990. This may take some time to change, because the poor have little purchasing power. As a consequence, the poor can be ‘squeezed out’ of the programming content of commercial radio stations, and commercial outlets see little financial gain in reaching remote areas.

Drawing on the experiences of a DFID-financed radio programme in northern Nigeria, we promote targeted donor support to state broadcasters. This may enable development partners to address some of the structural and institutional constraints that enable poor governance, and allow for engagement with those actors that have the desire and ability to stimulate reform.

There are obvious merits to such an approach. Only two of the first 19 countries to participate in the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper process were described by Freedom House’s Press Freedom Survey as being ‘free’ (namely Bolivia and Guyana; see Hudock 2003). If citizens, and particularly those in more geographically and economically isolated locations, are to participate in policy processes and hold government to account, state broadcasters may remain a key means of supporting reform.

Nigeria’s turbulent political history

Nigerians have experienced civilian rule for only 19 years since independence in 1960. After only six years of civilian rule, a bloody military coup in January 1966 led to the suspension of the constitution and the installation of military governors in each of the states. By the end of the year, Nigerians had been subjected to a further bloody coup and a series of

violent clashes that left thousands dead and led to a three-year civil war that claimed the lives of over a million people.

Despite a brief return to civilian rule in 1979, the 1980s and 1990s saw a series of military administrations that eventually culminated in a transition to democracy under the guidance of General Abdulsalam Abubakar. In February 1999, General Olusegun Obasanjo (retired) was elected as President, with his People's Democratic Party (PDP) gaining a majority in both the House of Representatives and the Senate. Democracy was finally restored after 16 years of military rule that was characterised by economic crisis, widespread corruption, and an annulled general election.

Four years later, in April 2003, Nigeria successfully held its second consecutive elections for just the second time in 43 years. In 2007, Umaru Yar'Adua (PDP) was elected as President, albeit with international and national observers raising questions about the standards and credibility of the presidential and parliamentary polls.

The new administration faces considerable challenges. Some 90 million of Nigeria's estimated 144 million people live on less than a dollar a day (DFID 2004). Nevertheless, with the installation of a democratically elected administration in 1999, the level of public spending increased sharply, rising from 19.1 per cent of GDP in 1997 to about 40 per cent in 2002 (DFID 2004). This was widely regarded as a timely move, responding to a significant decline in the quality and extent of coverage of key social services over the previous two decades.

The donor community has been quick to support the government's apparent commitment to poverty reduction, with agencies recognising the overwhelming impact that positive change in Nigeria will have on Africa's ability to attain the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). DFID, for example, announced that it was increasing assistance from £35 million (US\$59 million) in 2003/04 to £100 million (US\$202 million) by 2007/08 (DFID 2007). Between late 2000 and mid-2008, the DFID-funded State and Local Government Programme (SLGP) sought to enhance the capacity and effectiveness of state and local government to formulate policy, manage resources, and support improved service delivery in the interests of the poor. It operated in five states and the Federal Capital Territory. SLGP worked with a state radio broadcaster in two of its focal states – Enugu and Jigawa – to improve governance, enhance accountability, and provide a voice for the poor and marginalised.

The Nigerian media

The 2007 Freedom House *Freedom of the Press* Survey generated some surprises for Western democracies, with Mali and Ghana, for example, being ranked 50th and 54th, respectively – several places higher than Italy (61st) and only just lower than Spain (46th) and Australia (39th). Several countries with democratically elected governments scored very poorly. Bangladesh (151st) and Ethiopia (170th), for example, scored more poorly than war-torn nations such as Haiti (126th) and Liberia (144th) (Freedom House 2007).²

Nigeria was ranked 117th of the 195 countries in the list. In 2004, Freedom House observed that:

criminal defamation laws remain in place under which several journalists were detained, arrested, or sued during the year in connection with stories on state-level government officials . . . Journalists, particularly those covering sensitive issues such as corruption, often run physical risks . . . Corruption is widespread in the media sector; many journalists and editors, though not all, accept payments to run or kill certain stories. While some media outlets discourage the practice, journalists report that the practice is actively encouraged at some others. Journalists are poorly, often sporadically paid and lack job security. (Freedom House 2004)

However, there are some reasons for optimism. Article 39 of the 1999 Constitution guarantees freedom of expression, 'including freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart ideas and information without interference'. Furthermore, Article 22 holds that 'the press, radio, television and other agencies of the mass media shall at all times be free to . . . uphold the responsibility and accountability of the Government to the people'. As Olutokun and Seteolu (2001) show, the print press can point to a number of occasions when they have played the watchdog role, including cases in which the Speaker of the House of Representatives and a former Senate President were eased from office as a consequence of wrongdoing.

On one level, the print press represents a vibrant actor in the media sector, with over 100 magazines and newspapers in circulation in the late 1990s. Nevertheless, the combined circulation of all newspapers was barely 500,000 in 1999. Moreover, several states in Nigeria have no local press and few outlets for national newspapers. *The Guardian* newspaper, for example, which is widely respected for its independence and journalist quality, has a print run of only 50,000–70,000 copies per day (Olutokun and Seteolu 2001). Though there are variances between the data – a problem that bedevils policy making and analysis in Nigeria – the limited 'reach' of the print press is recognised elsewhere. An Intermedia national survey of those aged 15 years and above in 2007 showed that the weekly reach of radio was 83 per cent. This compared to 49 per cent for television, 20 per cent for newspapers, and only 4 per cent for the Internet.³

Over 30 private radio broadcast organisations have emerged since the deregulation of broadcasting in 1992, but these are concentrated in Lagos and Abuja. Ten are located in the 19 states of the north, but only two of these are registered in rural states (namely Joy FM Limited of Benue, and Nagarta Radio of Zamfara). With the commercial imperative of such stations naturally drawing them to sources of revenue, the majority of Nigerians, particularly those in rural areas, depend on state-owned stations for news, information, and debate. There are now moves to create several non-commercial community radio stations, as has happened extensively in neighbouring Niger and Mali, and this development could be an important way for rural Nigerians to access alternative sources of information and debate about current affairs. However, it is not yet clear how these community stations will be managed. Will they be controlled and owned by local communities, or will they be offshoots of state political power? Rhetoric and reality may differ. For community stations to have genuine autonomy, they must be able to show that they reflect and represent local concerns rather than those of the prevailing political elites. For community radio to be a powerful and effective alternative voice, there needs to be a well-developed and confident level of local political and civil society activity.

The content of state-owned electronic media remains heavily state controlled, with limited opportunities for civil society or opposition political parties to express their views or to stimulate debate. State-owned radio and television in Nigeria have always been seen as a part of the apparatus of political power. The British bequeathed a system of broadcasting that was centralised and national. The then Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) was modelled on the BBC, created and managed by people seconded by the BBC. But while the BBC in the UK has maintained independence from political control, the same is not true for its many 'offspring' around the former British colonial territories. The NBC, and its successors – the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN) and Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) – can and do point to occasions when they have demonstrated some independence from government, but such independence is not commonplace, neither is it guaranteed or to be relied upon.

The FRCN and NTA, which perform a federally defined broadcasting function, do not have a monopoly of state broadcasting. There are state broadcasting companies in each of Nigeria's 36 states. These usually run both a radio and a television station, under the control of the respective state government. This has given rise to competing state broadcasting systems. Public-service broadcasting does not emerge easily from such a situation. And yet it needs to if the media are

to serve the requirements of the still new and fragile democracy. The embedded practices of political control, interference, and patronage have to be replaced by a different way of seeing the role of state radio. State radio and television at all levels, most of which continue to be run as government departments, need to be transformed into public-service broadcasting entities with independence from day-to-day government management. In the same way as other state-owned or state-managed institutions urgently need to be reformed to be accountable, open, and accessible, and to serve the needs of all people equally, so broadcasting in Nigeria also requires urgent reform.

Left to market forces, radio and television in the commercial sector will not provide services to all, but rather seek out those sectors that the advertisers wish to reach. Development priorities require broadcasting to be designed with everyone as the target audience. That is why the achievement of broadcasting services in Nigeria with a public-service commitment is so important. However, it is difficult to see how such services can emerge other than from within the existing state broadcasting institutions. The service of the public is, after all, what they are mandated to do.

Jigawa State

Jigawa State, which was created in 1991 by separating out a large part of Kano State, shares a border with the Republic of Niger to the north, and is located in the poorest geo-political zone of Nigeria. Up to 90 per cent of the state's 3.6 million inhabitants are engaged in agriculture, with approximately half of the population living in poverty (JSG 2005). Only 18 per cent of the state's population has electricity, compared to the national average of 55 per cent. Only 28.3 per cent of children aged 6–11 years attend school; a figure much lower than the national average of 61.5 per cent (National Bureau of Statistics 2006a, b).

Since Nigeria returned to democracy in 1999, Jigawa's political environment has largely been dominated by Alh. Ibrahim Saminu Turaki and the All Nigerian Peoples' Party (ANPP). During Turaki's first term as Governor (1999–2003), all 27 Local Government Chairmen, the three Senators, all the Representatives of the National House of Assembly, and all but one of the 30 State House of Assembly Representatives were members of the ANPP. As such, there was limited formal political opposition to the governing party. While the Governor left the ANPP for the PDP in the latter months of his second administration (2003–2007), the politics of patronage remained strong and the formal opposition weak.⁴ As a result of the 2007 elections, Alh. Sule Lamido of the PDP was sworn in as the new State Governor on 29 May 2007. Twenty-eight of the 30 State House of Assembly representatives are now from the PDP.

As in much of northern Nigeria, civil society in Jigawa is weak and poorly structured (Hashim and Walker 2002), and public deference to customary and formal political office-holders is commonplace.⁵ There are few bodies that have the capacity to generate and sustain demands on public authority, and to represent and empower the electorate in matters pertaining to, for example, policy formulation, service delivery, and budget execution. With the widespread poverty described above and only 39.5 per cent of the adults being literate (as compared to the national average of 65.7 per cent; National Bureau of Statistics 2006a, b), physical and financial access to television and print media is very limited. Newspapers are hardly ever seen on sale, and ownership of home television sets is very low.

Jigawa State lags behind the rest of Nigeria in access to, and use of, the media by its citizens. Whereas nationally the daily reach of radio is around 60 per cent, the equivalent figure in Jigawa State is only 37 per cent. In Nigeria as a whole, the daily reach of television is 30 per cent. In Jigawa it is negligible. In Nigeria as a whole, 90 per cent have a radio set in working order at home. In Jigawa State the figure is 69 per cent.⁶ Successive surveys in Jigawa State show that

radio is growing faster than all other media in audience reach. But even though Jigawa State is underdeveloped in media terms, this figure shows the leading role that radio has and its great potential as a communication medium capable of reaching most, if not all, of Jigawa's people. Radio has the potential to be a key medium for creating and establishing dialogue and debate between government and civil society.

Radio Jigawa, which is under the administration of the State Government, remains the state's number one radio station. A survey conducted in 2002 found that 26 per cent of interviewees had listened to Radio Jigawa on the previous day. That compared to 11 per cent for the BBC's Hausa Service – the second most popular station (Mytton 2002). A follow-up survey conducted in 2004 found figures of 31 per cent and 12 per cent, respectively, with the BBC's popularity having been overtaken by Radio Kano (the state-controlled station of the neighbouring state). In 2004, only 2 per cent of those surveyed had listened the previous day to the new private station, Freedom Radio, which broadcasts on FM from Kano city.⁷

Typical of many state-controlled broadcasting operations, Radio Jigawa has, since its creation under military rule in the mid-1990s, failed to provide a forum for civil society to hold government to account, while radio producers have been reluctant to air critical comment on government performance without prior approval from the relevant state government department.

The *Hannu Daya* radio programme

In March 2001, the Jigawa State Government constituted a reform team – later named the Bureau for State and Local Government Reform, and established in state law – to work in partnership with the DFID-financed State and Local Government Programme (SLGP). The Bureau is chaired by the Deputy Governor, and approximately two-thirds of the 15 members regularly participate in Bureau meetings. Of these, about two-thirds are senior civil servants (for example, Permanent Secretaries), with the remainder being Commissioners (for example, State Ministers).

In mid-March 2002, the Bureau tasked SLGP to identify the information needs of Jigawa's rural citizens, with a view to improving the government's ability to communicate with the electorate. While it was clear that people generally welcomed the return to civilian rule, the research team found that there were many concerns about patchy, slow, and one-way communication of information from the authorities. Moreover, it was also apparent that citizens felt that existing radio programmes did not provide the scope or have the legitimacy to air the views of 'ordinary people' regarding government, service delivery, or other topical matters (Abah *et al.* 2002).

Having presented these findings to the Bureau and staff of Radio Jigawa and SLGP in mid-March 2002, SLGP was invited by the Bureau to support Radio Jigawa production staff to make at least one regular radio programme in which the views and concerns of the electorate could be heard, and their questions and concerns answered by government. Recording of a 13-week pilot programme started on 26 March 2002 and, following further consultations with the Bureau, the first programme was aired on 20 April 2002.⁸

Hannu Daya means 'one hand cannot mount a thatched roof', a well-known Hausa proverb. Broadcasting twice a week for 30 minutes, *Hannu Daya* is essentially a phone-in programme for people without phones. The two presenters visit villages every week and interview residents, hearing their worries, concerns, hopes, and aspirations. They are encouraged to speak freely, and if they have complaints about government performance and service delivery, they are encouraged to air their views. The programme presenters then seek answers from the relevant authorities, with these being included in the second half of the programme.

Since its commencement in 2002, *Hannu Daya* has covered a broad range of sectors and issues, ranging from access to hospital care and universal primary education, to the supply of drinking water and fertiliser. Senior politicians, including the Deputy Governor, have presented the government's response during the programme to the issues raised by the electorate.

Outcomes

Audience surveys were conducted in 2002, 2004, and 2007, and all showed a high level of awareness of *Hannu Daya* (Hamza and Mytton 2007; Mytton 2002, 2005). By June 2002 (that is, two months after it started to air), around one in three adults in Jigawa State were aware of the programme – a level sustained in 2004. What had grown significantly was awareness of the programme among active radio listeners. By 2004, about one in three adults had heard at least one edition of the programme and well over half of active radio listeners had listened to the programme. A further survey of 499 adults in February 2007 found that the audience had risen to 60 per cent of the adult population, with that among adult women having increased from only 17 per cent in 2002 to 53 per cent in 2007 (Hamza and Mytton 2007).

Opinions about the programme have been almost universally positive. *Hannu Daya* is viewed by listeners, Bureau members, and staff of the radio station as a good example of openness and accountability where the voices of citizens could be heard, not least about so-called 'sensitive issues' (see Box 1). Furthermore, those who regularly listened had a more positive view of Radio Jigawa than those who had not heard or seldom listened to the programme. In 2005, spokespersons of NGOs and community-based organisations claimed that they saw the programme as being supportive of transparency and openness in government (Mytton 2005).

The production team has retained a high level of commitment to the programme. They have imaginative and creative ideas for its future direction, and continue to take a positive approach to the ideas of independence and openness. Moreover, the good practice demonstrated by the *Hannu Daya* production team has fed into other Radio Jigawa programmes, with producers more willing to air critical comment and to mainstream women's views. Managers, producers, and presenters in Radio Jigawa believe that the existence of the programme has emboldened others to allow critical and difficult issues to be covered. *Hannu Daya* has, they say, shown that people can talk safely in public about government performance and be critical of service delivery failures without getting into trouble with the authorities (Mytton 2005).

The programme has had an encouraging and welcome degree of independence from government. *Hannu Daya* is seen at various levels – listeners, civil society organisations, civil servants, Bureau members, and the media – as a positive achievement in a state institution showing genuine independence and accountability. There are examples of government taking action in response to complaints made on the programme. The former Deputy Governor, for example, responded to on-air concerns about the limited delivery of fertiliser, and successfully sought alternative means of delivery. However, there is very limited evidence of government developing or changing policy or strategy in response to the realities experienced by the poor, and as expressed by contributors to the radio programme. This raises the possibility that government has only adopted *ad hoc*, reactive measures in response to public embarrassment. Nevertheless, as Ikpeme *et al.* (2007) argue, *Hannu Daya* has put debate and the issue of accountability on the agenda, and that in itself represents a significant impact.

Box 1: Perceptions of democracy (June 2005)

Made to mark the sixth anniversary of the return to democratic rule, an episode of *Hannu Daya* in June 2005 focused on the dynamics of democracy in Nigeria, and specifically Jigawa State. It represented the first bi-partisan and open discussion on Radio Jigawa of such subject matter in living memory.

The production team conducted semi-structured interviews in the small market town of Gujungu. Discussion focused on five key questions:

- What do you understand by democracy?
- What do you think about democracy in Nigeria, Jigawa State, and its local governments?
- Are you benefiting from democracy? If so, in what ways? If not, why not?
- How do you compare the present political environment to previous attempts at democracy in Nigeria?
- Why do some people vote and others not?

Lively and open discussions ensued, creating a vibrant and thought-provoking programme that contained passionate and critical comment on democracy in Jigawa State:

The main feature of the democratic set-up is such that elected officials benefit from the system, but the benefits never trickle down. (Hajiya Barira)

Democracy is not practised as it should be. People are not free to air their views, and if you dare, you might risk being intimidated by political thugs, even where the government officials exercise restraint. What is required, however, is a respect of individual rights and freedoms ... The problem is that while the governor approves good programmes to be carried out, the funds are siphoned along the way. (Ado Abdullahi)

One of the contributors was critical of the apparent failure of government to honour its pledge to provide electricity to Gujungu:

We prefer a military regime to this democratic set-up, because we do not have light, no safe water and no hospitals [sic]. Our elected representatives do not heed our complaints. The elected representative ensured that there is electricity in his village, but it did not extend to our town. (Malam Mohammed Sagir)

The *Hannu Daya* team investigated this case and found that the presiding Chairman of Taura Local Government had apparently awarded the contracts, but had vacated his position midway through implementation, with the remaining works grinding to a halt. Suspicions emerged that the Honourable Member of the State House of Assembly failed to respond to the needs of his electorate once his own town had been electrified.

The *Hannu Daya* production team interviewed the Member, who sought to explain that two contracts had been awarded. He committed, on air, to resolving the matter so as to ensure that the unserved communities would be electrified in accordance with government commitments.

Hannu Daya did not monitor subsequent developments. Nevertheless, it is understood that since the edition aired an independent power generator has been installed at Gujungu and the town is now electrified.

Critical reflections

When considered in the light of its original purpose, *Hannu Daya* has been a success. It has aired since 2002, providing an avenue for government to convey policy and strategy on the one hand, and for civil society to question the government and to hold it to account on the other. So what lessons emerge from the initiative?

Securing financial and institutional sustainability: There remains a continued need to ensure the financial and institutional sustainability of the radio programme. In March 2002, only a couple of weeks after the radio programme was conceived and only one month before it started to air, SLGP committed to provide Radio Jigawa with production materials and logistical support. It also agreed to meet the airtime costs that were charged – albeit at a reduced rate – by Radio Jigawa. These commitments, which were originally intended for the 13-week pilot phase, have largely remained.

It is now evident that the momentum and interest generated by the successful completion of the pilot phase should have triggered the development of a realistic phase-out strategy. This should have been built on the notion of equal partnership, and an explicit statement of respective expectations, responsibilities, and obligations. It should have extended to include: a time schedule for the Bureau and/or Radio Jigawa to phase in financial (and other) assistance; identification of action steps to reach the stated milestones; identification of actors responsible for taking necessary action; and mechanisms and dates for periodic assessment of progress towards agreed milestones.

Efforts have been underway since the first quarter of 2006 to develop and implement such a strategy. There has been some success. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between SLGP, Radio Jigawa, and the Bureau in August 2006, and this has paved the way for the Bureau to take over responsibility for the programme. The Bureau paid airtime charges for January–March 2007 and July–September 2007, and Radio Jigawa has further reduced the airtime cost by another 30 per cent. However, momentum is (perhaps inevitably) slowing after five successful years – the political and personal⁹ need for *Hannu Daya*'s success has declined, and therefore the leverage and scope for a successful 'handover' is questionable. There is caution and less interest in the Bureau and Radio Jigawa.¹⁰ In part, SLGP is seen to be 'moving the goalposts' and perhaps renegeing on an understanding that it, and it alone, was responsible for providing financial assistance.

Identifying and building meaningful partnerships: The widely acknowledged broadcasting success of *Hannu Daya* has, in large part, been occasioned by the professionalism and commitment of the programme's production crew. While SLGP's partnership with these three or four individuals has paid obvious dividends, SLGP might have developed a more explicit partnership with the relevant institution, namely Radio Jigawa. Besides the obvious loss of commitment and knowledge should production crew members seek alternative employment, senior management in Radio Jigawa remain insufficiently engaged with and interested in *Hannu Daya*. Moreover, with SLGP focusing on the production crew, senior management may even resent the perceived 'benefits' made available to their (junior) staff. As a consequence, Radio Jigawa's institutional ownership of the initiative has remained questionable, and the extent of Radio Jigawa's partnership with SLGP and the Bureau has always been minimal.

It would be naive to assume that SLGP was once perceived as being wholly neutral and apolitical. Rather, it is probable that it has always been regarded as being the overall owner and driver of *Hannu Daya*. However, with enhanced engagement of senior management at Radio Jigawa, and by creating opportunities for them to share in the successes of the programme and to gain 'political capital' by being associated with an initiative that is widely

known and appreciated, it is more likely that senior management would have taken a more active role in efforts to sustain the initiative and to champion its cause among key figures in government.

Understanding the agents and drivers of change: The *Hannu Daya* production crew has adopted a professional and technically sound approach to the initiative. However, as the DFID-financed 'Drivers of Change' studies have shown, for successful reforms to emerge it is imperative that the actor or institution driving the initiative has sufficient understanding of the framework of rules and behavioural norms that structure and influence how people behave. Put simply, reforms will only be successful if their champion – a government ministry, donor-funded programme, or state governor, for example – understands and begins to address these frameworks and the wider structural constraints (for example, high levels of illiteracy) (Heymans and Pycroft 2003). With hindsight, more attention at the design stage might have been paid to the politics of decision-making processes and the identification of possible sources of constraint, change, and reform at Radio Jigawa and within the Bureau and government.

The scope of *Hannu Daya* to stimulate enhanced policy and strategy has been constrained by one critical factor. Operational and spending decisions in state government are often taken by senior political figures (most notably the Governor), and not by civil servants or Commissioners of line ministries. As a consequence, those government officials interviewed by the production team may not have the power to influence change, the information to provide to the electorate, or the authority to provide it (Ikpeme *et al.* 2007).

With patronage politics predominating, maintenance of 'good' relationships with senior political actors becomes a significant determinant of an initiative's 'success'. As this implies, key individuals and organisations may champion change, and therefore targeted support to and through them provides development partners with entry points for governance reform. Consequently, SLGP continually sought to lobby key Bureau members to ensure certain issues were raised, not least concerning the financial sustainability of *Hannu Daya*. However, this sometimes overburdened the 'champions of change' – individuals who are similarly recognised as being skilled and well-connected actors by others in government and other donor-financed programmes. This may have led to occasions when they have felt uncomfortable about declining requests for assistance, and their relationships with senior government figures were compromised.

The need for complementary activities: The degree of impact that citizen feedback can have is limited in an environment where there is an absence of effective horizontal accountability mechanisms, such as audit bodies, a functioning legislature, and free and fair elections (Ikpeme *et al.* 2007). However, *Hannu Daya* has always maintained realistic, yet modest ambitions. It was neither expected nor designed as a complete 'package' to address weaknesses in the governance environment. Consequently, SLGP sought to support parallel reforms and complementary initiatives that sought to enhance the policy and strategy framework, improve service delivery, and enhance vertical and horizontal accountability. These included, among others, the introduction of service delivery charters and the development of a computerised budget preparation system.

SLGP's experiences have shown that complementary activities should have at least two facets. First, they should be properly phased and sequenced. Theories of change, pathways, and milestones should be discussed and agreed, and then continually revisited by the partners in light of the changing political environment and lessons learned from experience. Such an approach better enables all partners to think explicitly about behavioural norms and the political environment, to reflect on the speed and extent of progress, to identify remedial action at an early stage, and to enable lesson learning within and beyond the immediate location.

Second, sufficient attention should be placed on supporting measures that help to break down aspects of the institutional and organisational environment that stifle reform. Weak capacity is

not necessarily the main constraint to reform, and therefore capacity-building measures may not always be required. For example, the *Hannu Daya* production crew were not provided with external training and only benefited from on-the-job training provided by SLGP consultants. This does not mean that capacity-building activities do not have benefits. Indeed, they are often valuable in earning good will and for addressing capacity constraints. However, there should be recognition that governance may not improve by simply supporting a suite of capacity-building activities, and there may be benefits in only providing these if or when there is evidence that there is sufficient scope for change in the institutional and organisational environment.

Conclusion

In this paper, we have sought to argue that there are legitimate circumstances for development partners to engage with state-controlled media outlets. It remains to be seen if *Hannu Daya* and its editorial independence will outlive SLGP. Nevertheless, for a low-cost, 'quick-win' initiative that was only conceived as a pilot 13-week programme, it has not only fulfilled its original objective, but has gone on to become an established feature of radio listeners' weekly schedule. It has gained standing and respect for its achievements in enabling the electorate to question government action and to hold the political class to account.

But what lessons can be gleaned from the experience? The analysis shows that, where possible, appropriate and clearly defined sustainability strategies are needed that outline the specific responsibilities and obligations of the various partners. Similarly, activity streams should be properly phased and sequenced, and complementary activities that enable improved vertical and horizontal accountability should always be considered and, where possible, supported.

SLGP's experience with *Hannu Daya* has also pointed to the need for realism, patience, and flexibility. *Hannu Daya* only emerged as a by-product of an SLGP input on civil society's informational needs, and the window of opportunity for the radio programme to gain traction may only have been small. As this might suggest, politics are unpredictable, and development programmes must be structured and allowed to operate in such a way that they can be opportunistic and exploit opportunities and momentum as the political environment permits. Moreover, the importance of permitting key actors to gain 'political capital' from an activity should not be underestimated.

Ultimately, the success or otherwise of an initiative will largely be influenced by the extent to which agencies understand the framework of rules and behavioural norms that structure and influence how key actors behave. Technically sound initiatives that encompass capacity-building activities may only generate partial impacts. Rather, attention must be paid to understanding and tackling the norms, systems of patronage, and power relations that play a significant role in determining the content and style of state broadcasting in new democracies.

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Notes

1. Similar arguments are made by Benn (2004).
2. Freedom House gives countries a total score from 0 (best) to 100 (worst) on the basis of a set of 23 questions divided into three subcategories: legal environment, political environment, and economic environment.
3. Intermedia is an independent market-research company that carries out regular media measurement surveys in all parts of the world. These Nigerian data have been provided for our use with their permission.
4. It is commonly believed that Turaki moved to the PDP near the end of his second term so as to better align himself with the ruling party and position himself for political appointment under the new President.
5. Civil society is defined as the body of institutions and organisations that falls outside the state, private sector, and family. It therefore includes social networks and extends to voluntary associations, trade unions, community-based organisations, religious groups, NGOs, and other more formalised groups and organisations.
6. National survey by ORC Macro for Intermedia Survey Institute (September 2004), and survey for SLGP in Jigawa State, August 2004. Other figures come from an earlier survey for SLGP in 2002.
7. This is expected to increase as Freedom Radio becomes more established and as its FM signal extends to other areas of Jigawa. Although privately owned, it has powerful political backers and for this reason may be extending its reach into areas that would not be of so much interest to a purely commercial radio company.
8. Graham Mytton was engaged by SLGP as a short-term consultant to help design the programme. He subsequently visited the State on a number of occasions to conduct audience surveys and liaise with Radio Jigawa and the government about improvements. Simon Milligan became SLGP's third State Programme Manager in Jigawa in April 2005.
9. In this context, 'personal' refers to the individual needs of some Bureau members. This could relate to perceived career progression that may have stemmed from being linked to a widely recognised initiative or a personal obligation to friends within SLGP.
10. It is too early to determine the impact of the new state government on *Hannu Daya*, but the new Governor may be unwilling to let a popular radio programme fail so early in his administration, thereby enduring continued political interest in the short to medium term.

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