

Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa

Promoting Broadcasting for Development: The OSISA Experience

By

Sam Phiri

Media Programme Officer

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1. Introduction

The Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa (OSISA) was established six years ago with the objective of supporting programmes that speeded up the process of opening up societies in southern Africa. Among its focus areas is the development of the media.

But like all institutions, it has its own policy goals and objectives. OSISA intends to influence practices and policies in recipient countries and “generally support values and objectives considered important”¹ by its founder, George Soros.

The overall vision of OSISA is the emergence of an era of vibrant but inclusive societies where people are free of material wants and where people are able to democratically “participate in all spheres of life”²

As a funding organization, OSISA’s mission, therefore, is to support programmes, organizations and movements that promote, among other things, the “free flow of information” in the pursuit for open societies³

In terms of the media, OSISA believes that the democratic project in Angola, Botswana, Namibia, Zambia, Malawi, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Lesotho and Swaziland will be stunted without the adequate and parallel growth and development of the media sector to enable the media play their functionalist role in society.

The goal of the OSISA Media Programme therefore, is to empower marginalized communities, including women and the youth, to develop the capacity to communicate effectively among themselves and the rest of the world. It is also to ensure that the marginalized have access to and control of the various channels of communication that would, in the immediate term, enable them voice their opinions and also to challenge the dominant paradigms promoted by those in power and authority.

OSISA believes that development is a dynamic and dialectical process of social change. The form and manner which that process takes differs from society to society. For instance, before globalisation, ancient Iraq developed differently from America, and so did Africa.

In that sense, OSISA is not keen on promoting singular models of development. Instead, OSISA believes that ‘good’ development projects involve the full participation of all the people. It should address, among other things, issues of self reliance, community values, community self management and the effective participation of the people, in the decision making activities, at all levels of society

¹ Tjonneland, EN. 2001. Supporting Democracy in Africa: What are Aid Donors Doing? *Global Dialogue* 6. (1). Pg. 4.

² OSISA Strategic Plan and Budgets; 2003, pg 2

³ *Ibid.*, pg 2

However, OSISA appreciates that this ideal is unrealizable without bringing into play a communication process that does not only raise issues of concern, but also be a process whose agenda is the promotion of the exchange of ideas and views; creation of social relationships that lead to new and more participatory (as differentiated from mere democratic) social institutions and practices.

Ideally, this process should not only be supportive of development, as we know it, but should promote interactive, horizontal and participatory dialogue especially at the grassroots level.

2. Areas of Support

So, OSISA has sought to focus its funding and initiatives in the following areas:

Media Policy

Objective: Create an enabling environment for the development and sustenance of free expression through the media

Activities:

Policy advocacy campaigns based on need.

Partners: MISA, SACOD, ARTICLE 19, FXI, SAJA, FAMW, AMARC, Gender Links

Open the airwaves campaign and the re-definition of the concept of public service broadcasting

Partners: MISA, SACOD, ARTICLE 19, AMARC

Increased local content on SADC's radio, television and cinema networks

Partner: SACOD

Constitutional making in Swaziland and Zambia

Partners: Local media institutions, MISA, etc

Community Ownership and Control of the Communication Process

Objective: To promote the creation of an environment that would enable various communities to own, control or generally have a stake in the communication process

Activities:

Supporting the establishment of new community radio initiatives programme

Partners: AMARC, FAMW, SAMTRAIN

Some of the new stations are in Tete Province of Mozambique, Women only community radio stations in southern Malawi (Dzimwe) and in Maputo (Muthiana).

Strengthening community radio stations

Partners: AMARC, FAMW

These include Lubombo Community Radio Forum in eastern Swaziland, Muthiana in Mozambique, Dzimwe in southern Malawi, and Chipata FM in eastern Zambia

Promote the establishment of new community print media initiatives

Partners: Media Trust Fund (MTF) Lubombo Community Radio Forum (LCRF), Lubombo Development Initiative

Establishment of 2 local language news sheets for Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia growth triangle in Nyanja language that cuts across borders; and another in Swazi and Shangaan languages for the Lubombo development triangle> The two languages cut across the borders of Swaziland, South Africa, Mozambique with Shangaan spilling over into the southern parts of Zimbabwe. These sheets will be linked to already existing community radio initiatives such as Chipata FM in Zambia, DBU in Malawi, Tete in Mozambique and Lubombo Swaziland.

Promote media initiatives for the clearly marginalized people

Partners: Deaf Power (Swaziland), Kgeikani Kweni – The First People of Kalahari (Botswana and Namibia)

Supporting people centered and participatory communication initiatives

Partners: DBU in Malawi, FAMW

The Development Broadcasting Unit (DBU) uses the Malawi Broadcasting Corporation to broadcast programmes made by the people in the villages.

The Development Through Radio (DTR) initiative is a flagship project of the Forum for African Media Women (FAMW) in southern Africa. They include radio listeners clubs that already exist in Zimbabwe, Malawi, Zambia, Namibia and other countries.

Media Professionalism

Objective: To promote professionalism in the media, particularly independent or community radio, and the printed press

Activities:

Support the 'Women in Media Leadership' Master's programme

Partners: Rhodes University's Journalism and Media Studies department

At least 15 potential women leaders in both radio and print will be trained in media leadership and management skills at Masters level at Rhodes University in South Africa. This is a direct response to research findings that showed that women occupy less than 5% of leadership posts in the media.

Promote media workers' skills-upgrading initiatives

Partners: SAMTRAIN, AMARC, MISA, SACOD, SAIMED, Gender Links

This is to support specific skills upgrading programmes for media personnel in both the broadcasting and print media.

Promote gender sensitivity and awareness through gender training
Partners: SAMTRAIN, FAMW, Gender Links, SAIMED, SACOD, AMARC

For example, a recent OSISA supported study showed that only 17% (as opposed to the world average of 18%) of news sources were women. Besides the representation of women in the media is not always favourable. The idea, therefore is to change this and other gender insensitive factors expressed in and by the different media, including development oriented media

Media Defence Fund

Objective: To defend media freedom and protect the rights of media workers

Activities:

Support the creation of a framework and fund that responds quickly and facilitates emergency support to media workers under pressure from governments.

Partners: SAJA, MISA, National Associations, ARTICLE 19, SACOD, SAMDEF.

This mechanism was tried out in Zimbabwe in 2002. OSISA would like it replicated in all countries. Currently, SAMDEF is building a similar fund in Zambia through the MISA national chapter. It is also hoped that OSISA could pioneer the formation of this fund in Angola and Zimbabwe this year.

Media Monitoring

Objective: To produce and document intelligent but independent and expert observation and commentary on media performance. Watching the Watchers.

Activities:

Continue supporting current media monitoring activities

Partners: Media Monitoring Projects in Zimbabwe and Namibia

Currently, the Zimbabwe and Namibian projects are operational. It is hoped that new ones could be started in other countries. Presently we are looking at Swaziland, Botswana, Mozambique, Malawi and Zambia

Media Pluralism

Objective: To promote Private media ownership, media pluralism, divergent interests and independence: Building the capacity and numbers of the watchdogs.

Activities:

Continued support for SAMDEF

SAMDEF provides soft loans to media institutions. These include The Post in Zambia, Daily News in Zimbabwe, and Sahara communications in Tanzania

SAIMED – The Southern Africa Institute for Media Entrepreneurship Development teaches entrepreneurship skills for the independent media.

OSISA Communication Strategy

Objective: To enable OSISA and OSISA grantees to use the media more effectively.

Activities:

Develop communication and media components in OSISA funded projects

This is to promote development-support media skills in OSISA-supported projects so that the projects are able to utilize the media and participatory communication skills more effectively. It is hoped that this would maximize the various projects' and OSISA's impact in southern Africa.

Gender Justice

Objective: To promote gender equity and equality in the media, and the fair and equal access, representation, definition and modeling of women in the media

Activities:

Strengthen organizations that promote gender equality in the media

Partners: Gender Links, FAMW, Women for Change, WLSA, national women's organisations

Support research activities on media and gender issues

Partners: Gender Links, FAMW, MISA, AMARC, and SACOD

The recent Gender in the Media Baseline Study is a case in point. The results of the research have just been published.

Build gender-in-media regional networks

Partners: Gender Links, FAMW, MISA, AMARC, SACOD, national media associations

As part of OSISA's support, the Gender in Media (GEM) network is being formed within the SADC region. The network offices will monitor gender relations in the different countries.

Gender is crosscutting and mainstreamed in all OSISA programme. But beyond that, OSISA feels that additional and special attention should be placed on gender issues without allowing them to be drowned under the excuse of "mainstreaming".

So, special gender based activities have been supported and these include the Gender in Media Baseline Study recently concluded by MISA and Gender Links. It also includes gender training and the publication of the training manual "Getting Smart: Strategic Communications for Gender Activists in southern Africa".

Conclusion

These are just some of the projects supported by OSISA. The list includes projects that are directly related to broadcasting and development while the rest are cross cutting with the development element mainstreamed in them. All in all, they all have an impact on, and share the principle of using broadcasting, particularly community broadcasting, for development purposes.

This 'brief' took the liberty of elaborating on the characteristics of some of the listed projects for purposes of illustrating and suggesting potential areas of partnerships with other organizations. In the main, OSISA is a very flexible institution and would be happy to hear from others.

Abbreviations

1. AMARC - World Association of Community Radio Stations
2. FAMW - Forum for African Media Women
3. FXI - Freedom of Expression Institute
4. MISA - Media Institute for Southern Africa
5. OSISA - Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa
6. SACOD - Southern African Communication for Development
7. SAIMED - Southern African Institute for Media Entrepreneurship Development
8. SAJA - Southern African Journalists Association
9. SAMDEF - Southern African Media Development Entrepreneurship Fund
10. SAMTRAIN - Southern African Media Training Network
11. WILSA - Women and Law in Southern Africa

