

The Role of Vernacular Radio Stations in Enhancing Agricultural Development in Kenya; A Case of KASS FM

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Abstract : Communication and ICT is a crucial component in realization of vision 2030, radio has played a key role in dissemination of information to mass audience. Since time immemorial, mass media has played a vital role in passing information on agricultural development issues both locally and internationally. This paper aimed at assessing the role of community radio stations in enhancing agricultural development in Kenya. The paper sought to identify the main contributions of KASS FM radio in the agricultural development especially in rural areas, the study also aimed to establish the appropriate adjustments in editorial policies of KASS FM radio in helping to promote agricultural development related programmes in rural areas. Despite some weaknesses in radio programming and the mode of interaction with the rural people, the findings of this study showed that the rural communities are better off today than in the old days when FM radios were non-existent. KASS FM has come up with different developmental programmes that have positively contributed to changing the rural people's ways of life. These programmes include farming, health, marital values, environment, cultural issues, human rights, democracy, religious teachings, peace and reconciliation. Such programmes feature experts, professionals and opinion leaders who address numerous topics of interest to the community. The local people participate in the production of these programmes through letters to the editor, and phone-ins, among others. Programmes such as political talk shows, which feature in KASS FM, has become one of the most important ways of community participation. The interpretation and conclusions are based on the empirical data analysis and the theories of development advanced by international development communication scholars, as presented in the paper. The study ends with some recommendations on how KASS FM can best serve the interests of the poor people in rural areas, and helps improve their lives.

Keywords : agriculture, development, communication, KASS FM, radio, rural areas, Kenya

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