

Abstract:

The study focuses on the role of community media in peace building. It examines various views by authors on their perception on the role of media in peace building. It also looks at the strengths of community media and how the strengths can be utilized for peace building. However it is noted that in everyday life, mass media and community media cannot exclude each other. This is because the cultural values of people are incorporated in the programming of mass media. The study further explores the rationale for community media, which is community participation. Participation is seen as both a means and an end in itself. The advantage is that this medium allows parties to voice their concerns and engage in dialogue about how to solve any new conflict that may arise, as well as how to sustain peace. Studio Ijambo is the case study of this research. Search for Common Ground (SCG) helped establish the independent Studio Ijambo in Burundi in March 1995 as a way of responding to the need for balanced and anti-inflammatory broadcasting during one of the worst periods of the civil war in that country. Studio Ijambo was therefore founded with the explicit goal to remedy this situation, and to create a renewed dialogue between the groups. The study concludes that Studio Ijambo sought to address issues that the mainstream media did not address and by doing so it changed the nature and discourse in Burundi. In conclusion the study brings out the fact that the power of Studio Ijambo has been recognised due to its strategy of having all sectors of society participates in its programming. It has also been recognized for its contribution and potential for bringing about concretization, and facilitating the process of peace building for social and political change. It has been seen as a means of transforming cultural values through their reinforcement in peace building. The study therefore recommends that the nature of the conflict and the concerns of those affected are important. Different people in the community require different information. The information must be relevant to each of these problems; and that information must be clearly spelt out. The flow of information within and from outside are necessary aspects of any dialogue process. But the concern is the dimension of meaning and values of peace building, the process through which meanings and values are created, shared and contested within the system, and of which information is but only one of the components. Therefore intensive horizontal communication within and among the groups and communities is essential in the dialogue process.