Documenting the early days of the Wits Justice Show

Utilising community radio to disseminate information about accessing justice in Gauteng

December 2013
This report was made possible through funding by Canon Collins Educational and Legal Assistance Trust and the Joffe Trust. In 2013, the Wits Justice Project also received funding from the Raith Foundation and the Open Society Foundation for South Africa.

The Wits Justice Project team would also like to thank all the staff members of Alex FM and Thetha FM for their willingness to participate in this project.

All pictures in this report are credited to Kyla Herrmannsen and Palesa Manaleng.

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Executive summary

The Wits Justice Project (WJP) occupies a unique position in the spectrum of South African criminal justice stakeholders. As a team of journalists, lawyers and researchers, its independence is guaranteed; and its focus on investigative work reveals grassroots cases and examples of miscarriages of justice that other players do not have access to. Through rigorous academic research and investigative journalism, the WJP is able to collate information that affects the criminal justice system on a broad scale, while compiling detailed investigations into specific cases. 2013 marks WJP’s first entry into multimedia journalism, with the flagship Wits Justice Show airing on two community radio stations.

Community radio is an important broadcast player in South Africa, primarily due to its position as a low cost and accessible technology, with a direct responsibility to be relevant to listeners’ lives, and encourage listener participation. The WJP has developed partnerships with two community radio stations in Gauteng. The purpose of these partnerships is to produce a radio show that disseminates information so that ordinary South Africans can better understand their rights when interacting with the criminal justice system; and be better prepared with necessary procedural information on the criminal justice system’s operational processes.

Challenges to the implementation of the show include the fact that the Wits Justice Show has a mandate to focus on criminal justice issues and rights education that covers possible interactions with the criminal justice system. However, the justice issues communities want to discuss are broad-based and this could alter the focus of the radio show’s content. WJP’s radio show has also encountered the challenge of how to explain the best way to use the information the shows provide.

Finally, the idea of community radio as a non-profit venture is inextricably linked to the ethos of community broadcasting. However, this begs the question of where community radio can access funds and financing in order to operate effectively. This could raise a question regarding the role of the Wits Justice Show – which currently does not pay for the airtime it uses – in providing a financial incentive in exchange for the airtime. While the Wits Justice Show doesn’t offer any financial resources, however, it attempts to mobilise the network of the WJP in terms of contributing to the show content.

In terms of the impact of the show, the fact that the information is delivered in African languages is perhaps the simplest and yet the most powerful element of the show’s success. Access to WJP networks also improves show content and pathways of learning for station staff - for many aspiring media professionals, community journalism is a way into formal sector employment.

For the show to continue to grow and develop, however, planning and management of the show does need to be based within the stations themselves, with the WJP continuing to support the production and development of content.

The positive and encouraging responses to the Wits Justice Show are evidence of a community need, and an information delivery mechanism that works. 2014 will allow the show further growth opportunity, with the end goal of more communities able to better understand their rights when interacting with South Africa’s criminal justice system.
“Community broadcasting is broadcasting which is for, by and about the community, whose ownership and management is representative of the community, which pursues a social development agenda, and which is non-profit”¹ - The Windhoek Charter on Broadcasting in Africa

Introduction

Community radio is an important broadcast player in South Africa, primarily due to its position as a low cost and accessible technology, with a direct responsibility to be relevant to listeners’ lives, and encourage listener participation². Its importance can also be gauged by the sheer size of the sector: South Africa is home to over 170 licensed community radio stations, that support programming covering a wide range of languages, cultural and religious interests³. The listenership of community radio stations nationwide, over 7 days, is about 9.3 million people - a vast number⁴.

Previous research into community radio in South Africa has painted a picture of this sector as both entertainment and a reliable information source, particularly for South Africans who, due to the prejudicial apartheid regime, were less able to access information through conventional means.

Community radio in South Africa has been described as a good way for information and edu-tainment to move past language, education and cultural barriers. In South Africa it is also clear that the majority of the community radio stations are clustered in poorer communities and thus offer a platform for communities that might be otherwise marginalised or voiceless⁵.

Moreover, the growth of community radio since the advent of democracy in South Africa has been seen as proof of the “democratizing of the airwaves”, with radio stations that cater for ethnic and religious groups broadcasting alongside South Africa’s mass media offerings. Linked to this is the fact that community radio is something which a community can choose to create: the South African government has put various resources into developing this sector; these resources are quite well-

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⁴ Interview with Franz Kruger at the Wits Radio Academy offices on 25 October 2013.
⁵ Interview with Franz Kruger at the Wits Radio Academy offices on 25 October 2013.
known and thus, if a community is looking for a social platform, community radio is seen as being “within reach”\(^6\).

An integral part of community radio’s appeal as an agent of democracy – both in terms of access and information-sharing – is how community radio is designed to be rooted and located\(^7\). Community radio can be said to “enjoy a unique intimacy with its owners and audience... [and] gives listeners a sense of community and identity”\(^8\). Community radio is not only seen as offering information and programming to engaged listeners – a further part of community radio’s attraction is that community radio operates on a collaborative model that actively encourages the community to participate in the operation and decision-making of the station\(^9\).

Community radio can also be a mechanism to develop strong working relationships between non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and media initiatives. Evaluating their community radio projects, Search For Common Ground (SFCG), who have been working with community radio in West Africa for over 10 years, see evidence of a strong and meaningful relationship between community radio and NGOs. This is primarily through NGOs utilising community radio as a means of disseminating important information and mobilising communities to use this information to their benefit\(^10\). SFCG’s work provides evidence that sensitisation and awareness-raising radio content had a ‘demonstrable impact’ on attitudes and behaviours amongst listeners\(^11\).

Community radio can also be seen as method of encouraging social engagement and stimulating community organising\(^12\). Indeed, as Franz Kruger, Adjunct Professor and Director of the Wits Radio Academy at the University of the Witwatersrand, writes:

> [community radio’s continued growth in South Africa demonstrates the desire to] “create and build community broadcasters as an entirely new arena for public discussion, geared specifically for poor and marginalised groups”\(^13\).

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\(^6\) Interview with Franz Kruger at the Wits Radio Academy offices on 25 October 2013.


The Wits Justice Project initiative

The WJP has developed partnerships with two community radio stations in Gauteng. The purpose of these partnerships is to produce a radio show that disseminates information on how ordinary South Africans can better understand their rights when interacting with the criminal justice system; and be better prepared with necessary procedural information on the criminal justice system’s operational processes. The community radio model is an excellent information delivery mechanism for the WJP:

- Community radio allows the WJP to develop content in different languages and thereby reach a wider and as yet untapped audience;
- The use of radio is diversifying the WJP’s media portfolio;
- The community radio approach allows for live, on-air question and answer sessions that can provide specific legal information swiftly and clearly, in a language the listener can understand;
- In line with WJP’s goals of developing and supporting community initiatives, this intervention has the potential to develop the skills of community radio staff members; attract funding for the community radio station; and increase listenership if the shows are successful; and
- Increase community consciousness of ‘hidden’ issues, or issues that are not conventionally discussed or could be seen as shameful or embarrassing (such as how to contact a family member in prison; or what to do if you are arrested).

Paul McNally, the WJP radio journalist, explains the genesis of the Wits Justice Show at community radio stations:

“The WJP has a strong position in middle-class, English language media. This is despite the fact that the issues WJP deals with impact most on poor and disadvantaged communities. There was a feeling the WJP could do more to reach people most affected by dysfunction in the criminal justice system, and in doing so, branch out into a new type of media that WJP has not previously explored: radio.”

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14 Interview with Paul McNally at the Wits Justice Project offices on 23 August 2013.
What did WJP hope to achieve?

The Wits Justice Show’s aims were twofold: the show was aimed at the development of media and journalistic capacity at a community radio level; as well as focusing on information dissemination and public education.

A primary focus of this project was to encourage community radio stations to think about different kinds of radio content and broaden their idea of what they consider as content, mainly by introducing rights education as new form of radio show content. This speaks to the broader challenges facing more rural disadvantaged communities, as Paul McNally explains:

“Growing up close to Johannesburg or any other urban area, you are closer to the conversation on rights; for instance in Johannesburg, the Constitutional Court is just down the road. But for communities that are in less urban locations, there is no way for communities to ‘organically’ learn about their rights and responsibilities mandated by the Constitution”.

The WJP radio initiative was designed around encouraging stations to consider alternative content to dee-jaying, songs and call-in shows, and consider rights education as interesting story content. This is seen as one way of helping to fill the rights education gap through a media channel that has community development as a key component of its make-up (see the National Community Radio Forum Charter)\(^{15}\).

The WJP strategically operates in a niche, whereby the work done by the project is at the intersection between journalism, law, research and education. The WJP model is one that focuses on bringing diverse expertise to bear on criminal justice problems and as such, WJP has a wide network of criminal justice sector stakeholders. Experience working with a range of stakeholders has led WJP to understand that while many players in the justice sector have noble aims and ambitions for community education, few have the knowledge of how to operationalize these goals. Thus, this community radio project also had the aim of acting as a touch-stone – as a way of bringing bodies together – utilising WJP’s diverse network of contacts. Paul McNally explains:

“The community radio show provides a way for stakeholders to come together to discuss criminal justice issues. For example, Legal Aid has a mandate to deal with community education but doesn’t know how to go about it. The radio show provides this platform.”

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Which stations air the Wits Justice Show?
The two radio stations WJP works with are Thetha FM, broadcasting in southern Gauteng; and Alex FM, broadcasting in central/eastern Gauteng. It is important to note that both radio stations already air shows about the criminal justice system. In Orange Farm, Thetha FM airs a prisoners’ show, where people in prison can call in and talk to presenters, and the community can also call in and respond. However, prisoners in South Africa are not allowed cellphones – even though most do have access to them. As prison authorities have clamped down on the illegal use of cellphones in prisons, this show’s basis is tenuous at best. Similarly, Alex FM already aired a show that was sponsored and produced by a South African law firm. The premise of the show was to offer legal advice to Alex FM listeners, but the show’s success was limited by the fact that it was conducted in English only.

While neither of the justice-related programming on Thetha FM and Alex FM are both successful and sustainable, their presence indicates that both Alex FM and Thetha FM’s listeners are already interested and engaged on criminal justice issues; and both radio stations’ staff were very keen to take on more content relevant to the criminal justice system.

*Thetha FM: your soul connection*

- Chosen because it is in reasonable distance of Johannesburg, without being inaccessible;
- It has an excellent signal range and a large weekly listenership;
- Working in a community that is very different from urban Johannesburg is a good learning curve for WJP;
- Thetha expressed a lot of interest in the radio show, and was keen to work with Wits to develop the project.

Thetha FM had a challenging path to obtaining their license: after the idea to form a community radio station was developed in 1997, their first show was broadcast in 2005.

Charles Motaung, programming co-ordinator, explains the genesis of Thetha FM:
“In 1997, a group of young people living in Orange Farm thought that a community radio station would be a good way of addressing the many issues the area faced, like unemployment and a lack of basic education. With help from the ANC Youth League, they organised a radio station project and applied for a community license”.

It took 6 years of negotiation with the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA), but in 2003 Thetha FM was finally granted a license, although they couldn’t go on air without the financial support to develop a studio. This was a lengthy process as ICASA has certain standards and compliance criteria that have to be met. Motaung understood the delays:

“We understand this, because ICASA must know that the license will be in good hands. The primary problems with the granting of the license were that fact that we had no studio and therefore we couldn’t secure the radio frequency”.

After two further years of looking for sponsors, Thetha finally came on air in 2005 after the donation of a studio facility – a set of buildings at Isikhumbuzo Secondary school, donated by the school principal who strongly supported the idea of a community radio station:

“The principal of this school we are in now supported the idea of a community radio station and so offered the school as our base. Our license was renewed in 2010”.

Thetha has an impressively large listenership and broadcast area. The radio station was intended to broadcast to Orange Farm, but now has listeners as far afield as the Vaal Triangle and Parys. With such a large broadcast area, the idea of the community Thetha serves has also undergone change. No longer serving only the residents of Orange Farm, Thetha’s community is now seen as one that shares similar socio-economics, if not geography:

“Our listeners are from diverse communities and are from different racial groups and have different lifestyles. However, they all share the same issues of trying to make ends meet – this is not a rich area”16.

The diagram below maps the listenership of Thetha FM, which covers a large range of southern and south-western Gauteng:

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16 Interview with Charles Motaung at Thetha FM offices on 17 September 2013.
As a community radio station, Thetha is strongly focused on community development, education and support. Thetha FM employees explain, as an example, how the station can solicit funds on their shows for families that are unable to afford the high cost of burials, if a loved one dies. Charles Motaung explains:

“We are more than a radio station, we are community-based and focus on eradicating community problems”.

Thetha’s programming split is 60% talk and 40% entertainment, with broadcasting in isiZulu, seSotho. Xhosa, Tswana, Pedi, Tsonga and Venda, with a little English.
Chosen because the Alexandra township is a unique neighbourhood in Johannesburg, and has a strong sense of history and place, without being too much a part of the urban middle class;

It has an established connection with Wits, through the Radio Academy;

It too has a large listenership and a wide reach; and

Its peri-urban location is a good contrast to Thetha FM.

Alex FM celebrated its 18th birthday on the 1st of September 2013, and is a well-known community radio station serving one of Johannesburg’s oldest township communities. With a big listenership of 840,000 listeners a month, it is an established voice of the Alexandra community. Umbrella Towe, Marketing manager at Alex FM, explains:

“The station speaks the language and understands the culture of the community and aims to be a sustainable voice while promoting cultural diversity through education, information, entertainment and raising awareness17”.

Alexandra township is a very diverse community, as well as being a densely populated suburb. Alex FM recognises this and positions itself as serving an African community, as opposed to South African community:

“We broadcast in many diverse languages, which means we can serve a wide community. Thus, I would describe our radio station as a diverse station serving an African home. Alex is a historic township, very close to the hub of Johannesburg. Many people come to Alex township and even if they live outside of Alex, they take Alex FM home with them: they listen to Alex FM during the day at work, and they can listen at home too. Many people have friends and family connected with Alex, so the Alex community is really big18”.

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17 Interview with Umbrella Towe at the Alex FM offices on 4 September 2013.
18 Ibid.
Alex FM offer a 70% (education) and 30% (entertainment) programming split, with a broadcast area that covers central, eastern and parts of northern and western Johannesburg:
What is the WJP Show content?

The Wits Justice Show has a mandate to focus on criminal justice issues and rights education that covers possible interactions with the criminal justice system. The show’s content is focused on unravelling the seemingly mysterious and opaque workings of the system, which has led to shows such as “why do some cases go nowhere?” and “why do some people get released on bail immediately?”

The content also focuses on processes and administrative issues that are important to understand, such as “what happens when you get arrested?” and “what can you expect when you report a rape?” Thetha FM was the Wits Justice Show’s pilot project, and thus began airing content before Alex FM, which account for the higher amount of shows that have broadcasted from Thetha FM. The table below gives the shows names and dates.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thetha FM</th>
<th>Date aired</th>
<th>Alex FM</th>
<th>Date aired</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What should happen during an arrest?</td>
<td>30 April 2013</td>
<td>Has the case you opened with the cops gone nowhere?</td>
<td>6 August 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do you do if you can’t afford bail?</td>
<td>7 May 2013</td>
<td>What if a family member gets sick in jail?</td>
<td>13 August 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why do cases go nowhere?</td>
<td>14 May 2013</td>
<td>What should you expect when you report a rape?</td>
<td>27 August 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why do some people get released on police bail immediately?</td>
<td>21 May 2013</td>
<td>When are people from other countries being abused by the law?</td>
<td>3 September 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Could you forgive a criminal?</td>
<td>4 June 2013</td>
<td>When are foreigners being abused by the law?</td>
<td>10 September 2013</td>
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<tr>
<td>What if a family member gets sick in jail?</td>
<td>18 June 2013</td>
<td>Why do some people get released on police bail immediately?</td>
<td>17 September 2013</td>
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<tr>
<td>What can you expect when you report a rape?</td>
<td>2 July 2013</td>
<td>What is hate speech? And how do I use the equality courts?</td>
<td>1 October 2013</td>
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<tr>
<td>What can the police do to you at a roadblock?</td>
<td>8 July 2013</td>
<td>What can police do to you at a roadblock?</td>
<td>15 October 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Should the by-laws of Sandton be the same as Orange Farm?</td>
<td>23 July 2013</td>
<td>How do you get medical parole for someone in jail?</td>
<td>19 November 2013</td>
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<tr>
<td>When are foreigners being abused by the law?</td>
<td>30 July 2013</td>
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<tr>
<td>When will the courts call the Red Ants to evict you?</td>
<td>6 August 2013</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Date</td>
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<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>How do you spot a fake lawyer? Which lawyers can you trust?</td>
<td>13 August 2013</td>
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<tr>
<td>Who can protect you in jail?</td>
<td>27 August 2013</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Why is there no court in Orange Farm?</td>
<td>3 September 2013</td>
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<tr>
<td>What is the equality court and how can it help me?</td>
<td>10 September 2013</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>How do you get medical parole?</td>
<td>1 October 2013</td>
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<tr>
<td>What rights do traders on the side of the road have?</td>
<td>15 October 2013</td>
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<tr>
<td>How do you find your court records?</td>
<td>5 November 2013</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>How do we keep our children out of jail?</td>
<td>19 November 2013</td>
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How is content for the show developed?

Community radio has a responsibility to remain engaged with its demographic and produce content that is informative and relevant to listeners. In both stations, it’s very clear that the community, through listenership, influences the content of the station, to a certain extent. Paul McNally explains how the community responds to some issues better than others, regardless of the quality of the journalism:

“When we had a show about being beaten up by the police [on Alex FM], the station had loads of calls. But when we had a show about what to do if you or a family member are sick while in jail, there was significantly less response. The show about being sick in jail was, in my opinion, of a better radio journalism quality – but the community responded better to another theme.”

The reasons for this are not always easily explained. One suggested reason was that being beaten up by the police is not as humiliating as being in jail; police harassment is an everyday part of many Alex residents’ lives. However, being in jail or having a family member in jail could be seen as shameful and people would not want to talk about it or identify with it on a live radio show.

In this way, communities can influence the content of shows – subjects that are taboo or embarrassing will not receive a good response, and thus are less likely to be discussed at a community radio level. The issue of how to negotiate the necessary and valuable influence a community has on the content of community radio – without compromising on the Wits Justice Show’s obligation to provide information on the criminal justice system – is important to consider.

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19 Interview with Paul McNally at the Wits Justice Project offices on 23 August 2013.
What have the challenges been?

Content direction
Before embarking on a community radio show, the WJP had a specific mandate on what the project would produce media on (criminal justice issues; remand detention; prisons and miscarriages of justice). Moving into a community radio space has meant that WJP, to a certain extent, is no longer able to direct the content as much. The justice issues communities want to discuss on radio are broad-based and this could alter the focus of the radio show’s content. The blurring of the lines between what the WJP’s content ideas are, and how the community responds to these, was particularly apparent during a community feedback session, held at Orange Farm.

The WJP invited community members, members of the National Prosecuting Authority, a local Legal Aid South Africa office and Thetha FM to a townhall meeting, where attendees were invited to discuss their problems with the criminal justice system. However, the vast majority brought civil matters to the table. While civil justice matters are outside of the WJP mandate, the community had identified this opportunity as a way to deal with just such matters and the programme for the day was altered.

As the Alex FM Justice Show presenter Ramatamo Sehodi articulates:

“Listeners determine the destiny of the programme and we need to meet their needs.”

Using information
WJP’s radio show has also encountered the challenge of how to explain the best way to use the information the shows provide. Charles Motaung from Thetha FM explains further:

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20 Interview with Ramatamo Sehodi at the Alex FM offices on 4 September 2013.
“The only [negative] consequences I can think of is when people misinterpret the information we are giving them. Sometimes our listeners don’t understand the information we give out. So we are trying to educate our listeners further.”

Thetha’s solution to this problem is the development and support of listener clubs, who can then be provided with listener workshops, if funding can be found:

“We are trying to use the listeners club, called Thetha Together (they meet every month). We give them information about our programming plans, discuss problems and the like. We use them as a vehicle for communicating information. We are also trying to find funding for listener workshops, which will address the issues of how to listen; and how to pass on information from the radio.”

Alex FM uses show promotion as a way to prepare listeners for the upcoming subject matter, so people know what to expect from the content, and hopefully, how the upcoming show will impact their lives. Alex FM believes that not taking listeners by surprise is a good way to mitigate any potential misunderstanding of information aired.

In terms of show content, one interview respondent voiced his concern that show content could be hurtful to community members who have suffered or are suffering from trauma related to criminal justice issues:

“The only negative I can think of is that the issues we deal with in the show could open wounds, or trigger pain in our listeners. We could be bringing up subject matter or circumstances that people would prefer to forget.”

**Sustainability**

Funding for and finances of community radio are big issues. The idea of community radio as a non-profit venture is inextricably linked to the ethos of community broadcasting: “The ethos of community radio remains independence and responsibility to serve the community and not the advertiser.”

Indeed, the focus on benefiting communities rather than shareholders or other for-profit enterprises is a strong ideological stance in the community radio sector; and it is clear that the independence of a community radio station is directly related to their funding situation. However, this begs the question of where community radio can access funds and financing in order to operate effectively? Alex FM articulates this concern:

“We have no funding from any consistent source, apart from advertising. We get the local supermarkets to advertise with us, and other media companies come in and place advertising on our station. However, being a community radio station is difficult: there is a negative perception when you approach bigger companies for advertising. They say: “community radio? What value can you add?” They think that community radio means poor communication on email, late reporting, low infrastructure levels, and this discourages them from working with you. However,
here at Alex FM we report well, we air adverts on time, and we have a professional approach to correspondence.".

Franz Kruger echoes these concerns:

“Community radio is a vulnerable space, financially. A combination of diversity of funding sources could help protect this space...the problem is that advertisers want evidence that the advert has been flighted and often, stations don’t have the resources for that kind of administrative task.”

Zane Ibrahim, speaking from South Africa’s Bush Radio organisation, has mentioned funding as an issue; his concern was that as non-profit entities, community radio stations can become victim to external agendas outside of commercial and advertising spaces. It is not only shareholders and advertisers that require compliance and specific messages to be disseminated, but government, aid agencies and donors also have specific agendas to fulfil. Both Thetha FM and Alex FM receive advertising income from government communications departments, which brings the debate of financial independence – and sustainability – into focus. Franz Kruger explains the fragile balance between government revenue and independence:

“Community radio also suffers from capacity constraints as well as cautiousness in its approach to offending potential revenue, which includes government. There are attempts to protect radio from these kinds of influences via legislation, but...many of these provisions presume that a community is a conflict-free zone, which is not accurate.”

Both stations were very aware of the tenuous nature of their financial resources, and both reported the constraints this places on their programming:

“We receive money for advertising from the government communications department. If we could move to a more sustainable funding model, with a consistent covering of our baseline costs by some means that would be great, as funding is a real challenge.

This could raise a question regarding the role of the Wits Justice Show – which currently does not pay for the airtime it uses – in providing a financial incentive in exchange for the airtime:

“Potential challenges for Wits Justice is the fact that these are poorly resourced stations that will always be looking for funds, and selling airtime is a good way to raise money. Funding is an issue that people muddle along with, with arrangements being informal, unspoken and problematic.”

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26 Interview with Umbrella Towe at the Alex FM offices on 4 September 2013.
27 Interview with Franz Kruger at the Wits Radio Academy offices on 25 October 2013.
29 Interview with Franz Kruger at the Wits Radio Academy offices on 25 October 2013.
30 Interview with Umbrella Towe at the Alex FM offices on 4 September 2013.
31 Interview with Franz Kruger at the Wits Radio Academy offices on 25 October 2013.
What about the impact of the Wits Justice Show?
The Wits Justice Show is still in the pilot stage and as such, no significant conclusions should be drawn about the impact the show has made on the communities it provides information to. However, initial feedback on the Wits Justice Show has indicated that the potential impact of providing information on the criminal justice system could be significant.

Crossing language barriers
The fact that the information is delivered in a mixture of South African languages is perhaps the simplest and yet the most powerful impact of the show. Listeners can get information and advice about complex matters in a language they understand:

“What I most like about the show is it is giving information in our own languages\textsuperscript{32}.”

Producing content in African languages has been a priority for the WJP in 2013, and the positive feedback received from this pilot project should act as an incentive to continue to find ways to produce a diverse range of materials in languages other than English.

Placing the community radio station as a key access point for reliable information

The idea of community radio being centred on community development puts the radio station at the heart of a community, be it geographic or cultural. Thetha FM and Alex FM report that the Wits Justice Show is assisting the development of their community radio stations’ brands as a node of relevant and up to date information. Alex FM reports:

“It is hard to say as the show has not been going for too long. However, I can say that in the first month of the show (August 2013), we have had an increase in our listenership figures by 10 000. We can’t say this is due to the Wits Justice Show, but content relevant to the community will always up the listenership, as people will spread information about the show by word of mouth, if it resonates with them. This show has definitely added value to Alex FM’s listeners and our station\textsuperscript{33}. The call-in reaction tells you everything!\textsuperscript{34}”

Thetha FM share similar reservations about making statements based on such short air time, but they report evidence that the show is beginning to make an impact:

“As an example of the success of the show, go and look in our station reception. There are two guys sitting there, who have come to ask further advice based on the show last week. Last week,

\textsuperscript{32} Interview with Umbrella Towe at the Alex FM offices on 4 September 2013.
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid.
someone got in their car and drove from their home to the station, to ask more questions from the lawyer on the show".

Networking
Both radio stations reported a struggle to make the right kinds of contacts to develop the best kind of content for their stations. A lack of resources and know-how were the two key problems highlighted. While the Wits Justice Show doesn’t offer any financial resources, the Wits Justice Show attempts to mobilise the network of the WJP in terms of contributing to the show content.

“As a community radio station, we don’t have too many resources. So partnering with WJP lets us do this show on an important topic and you can call in the experts for us due to your networks. This show helps us to de-mystify these subjects.”

But it is not only partner and resource networks that the Wits Justice Show can mobilise. While the show is still in its pilot stage, Alex FM reported sharing show information amongst communities and colleagues as a key outcome of the show.

“As a community radio station our main aim is always to assist and develop our community. Here in Alex, there is a lack of knowledge on the criminal justice system. As our listeners learn more from listening to the show, so they share this information in their own communities.”

Staff development
Franz Kruger has highlighted the important fact that for many aspiring media professionals, community journalism is a way into formal sector employment:

“The benefits of community radio include the fact that for many, it is a stepping stone into the formal media employment sector.”

The presenters of the two Wits Justice Shows in Alexandra and Orange Farm articulated a feeling of empowerment and inspiration when presenting the show. The combination of de-mystifying criminal procedure and being the agent that delivers such information to their communities resulted in excitement and motivation:

“The impact of the show is amazing – I feel like it is what people have been waiting for. I can’t wait for every Tuesday now. For the first time, I can bring this kind of information to the community. It resonates with them – this is what they experience every day. What we discuss touches their lives.”

35 Interview with Charles Motaung at Thetha FM offices on 17 September 2013.
36 Interview with Ramatamo Sehodi at the Alex FM offices on 4 September 2013.
37 Interview with Umbrella Towe at the Alex FM offices on 4 September 2013.
38 Interview with Franz Kruger at the Wits Radio Academy offices on 25 October 2013.
39 Interview with Ramatamo Sehodi at the Alex FM offices on 4 September 2013.
The Wits Justice Show has also allowed some breathing room for producers and content managers, who explain that the Wits Justice Show has opened an avenue for content development that was previously closed, due to time and resource constraints:

“This show takes a weight off our shoulders, and helps the community. We have been stressing about building good and useful content and programming as a station, and this show is the station’s biggest achievement to date. The show helps place Thetha FM as a source of information, and helps us build trust with our listeners.\textsuperscript{40}\textsuperscript{40}

\begin{quote}
“Here in Alex, there is a lack of knowledge on the criminal justice system. As our listeners learn more from listening to the show, so they share this information in their own communities.”
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{40} Interview with Charles Motaung at Thetha FM offices on 17 September 2013.
Next steps for the Wits Justice Show?

The Wits Justice Show has been a success in the two stations it has been piloted in. For the show to continue to grow and develop, however, planning and management of the show does need to be based within the stations themselves, with the WJP continuing to support the production and development of content. This could be facilitated by a period of training and preparation on behalf of the radio station staff; and could free up the human resources within the WJP team to develop the show at more community radio stations.

This would also require a strategy that mitigates a kind of ‘learned helplessness’ that can be present in community-based projects that form partnerships with better-resourced organisations:

“When outsiders come into a community space with ideas and, importantly, human or financial resources to offer – it’s hard for those spaces to really take ownership. The idea of a ‘partnership’ is a good one, but it masks the fact that one side of the partnership does have more agency. As a result, some community projects will end up allowing better-resourced organisations to effectively take over projects. I have seen this in other community radio stations where community education shows, sponsored by an organisation, even bring their own presenters in.”

In terms of content, the WJP does need to manage how the direction of the show’s content moves. The WJP’s mandate includes criminal justice and specifically highlights prisoners and detention facilities as areas of concern. In 2014, the WJP hopes to develop a show that is directed at inmates.

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41 Interview with Paul McNally at the Wits Justice Project offices on 11 November 2013.
and their families that could run alongside the Wits Justice Show. Already, Thetha FM’s signal range reaches inside three correctional facilities and this parallel radio project could assist with a more precise matching of the WJP mandate to the WJP radio show.
Conclusion
The Wits Justice Show is the WJP’s first exploration of multimedia journalism, and using an alternative to print to further rights education and awareness-raising on criminal justice issues. The show has covered a wide range of issues pertinent to South Africans, including issues relating to bail, rape and police harassment.

The show has debuted on two community radio stations in Gauteng, and has been equally well-received in both environments. The key to this success is the WJP’s model of adapting show scripts to suit the individual radio station and its particular social geography – a fact demonstrated by the choice of both a semi-rural and peri-urban location as pilot sites for the show.

The challenges ahead for the Wits Justice Show include the question of how many stations should be included in the project for 2014; as well as how to remain focused on criminal justice issues, while still catering to listener preferences for content. Strategies on how to encourage individual stations to take ownership of the Wits Justice Show, and free up WJP human resources for further developing the concept of a community radio show on criminal justice issues, will be critical for the show’s sustainability going into 2014.

The positive and encouraging responses to the Wits Justice Show are evidence of a community need, and an information delivery mechanism that works. 2014 will allow the show further growth opportunity, with the end goal of more communities able to better understand their rights when interacting with South Africa’s criminal justice system.
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