

“Sizoyi Chuna” Community Radio as a platform for community tourism development in South Africa
ABC Ulwazi, South Africa
Adele Mostert

Introduction:

The tourism sector in South Africa is expected to become one of the key drivers of economic expansion and employment over the next decade. The South African government has repeatedly expressed the hope that not only big business but also more specifically local people participate actively in tourism initiatives.

But while tourism is seen as the answer to South Africa’s economic problems, there is evidence to suggest that the notion of the “trickle-down” effect from macro-tourism projects to local communities is very suspect.

It is against this background that ABC Ulwazi; a radio training and production house based in Johannesburg South Africa, set about developing the radio series, “Sizoyi Chuna” and developing a model whereby community radio stations could act as centres of activity for their communities to develop initiatives of their own.

The term “Sizoyi Chuna” has its origins in isiZulu and has, in local South African township lingo, come to mean, “We can do it!” or “We can make it work!” The particular reference here related to tourism is in the programme’s tag line: “Make community tourism work for you!” and that really sums up what this broadcast and training project was all about.

Taking into consideration the many prospects for community tourism in South Africa, the countless communities who have a rich heritage and culture and are based in attractive natural surroundings, and who have at their disposal the potential for developing the tourism aspects of their communities; we felt that that we could not only provide community radio listeners with a better understanding of what community tourism is, but also could provide them with the means to learn basic business skills – all through the local station.

Looking at Sizoyi Chuna: An overview

This project took a multi-pronged approach and rolled out in set phases. After planning, the first major phase was the development and production of actual broadcast content. As a production house ABC Ulwazi set about developing radio programmes in a 26 part series that would be broadcast by radio stations across the country. Expert interviews, dramatizations, real testimonies and useful tips formed the part of the informative, pacey, youth focused programmes. In one community radio station in Rustenburg, 40 young people arrived at the station after hearing the programmes to join the project and participate in the training. The programmes aim to motivate young people and make them aware of business opportunities that exist for them and their communities in the field of tourism. (Specific criteria, such as age and economic background, were developed for recruitment of participants.)

Each episode has duration of 10 minutes. Episodes 1 – 4, one of which we will listen to shortly, are motivational and are produced as dramatized inserts. They are based on the success stories of young entrepreneurs who started their own community-based tourism initiatives. The Story of Bernard Merobe, which I have selected for today, features a number of valuable lessons and received tremendous response from listeners.

Episodes 5 – 26, consist of a collection of radio features that provide practical information on how to set up a community-based tourism enterprise. The features aim to build the confidence of young future entrepreneurs to a point where they feel comfortable to initiate their own activity. The programmes take the listener through topics on business management, financing, resources mobilization and training and are interspersed with young entrepreneur success stories. These are also useful eye openers to listeners who would like to understand the basics of business management and make excellent training aids.

To really use the unique strengths of community radio stations as centres of dialogue and activity in the communities, a training element was paired with the broadcast, to allow listeners to attend workshops that would reinforce key learnings from the series. As a central hub in this model, community radio stations activated listeners through

broadcast and follow up discussion on air, and then provided venues or co-ordination that allowed expert visitors to come and share vital information with interested parties.

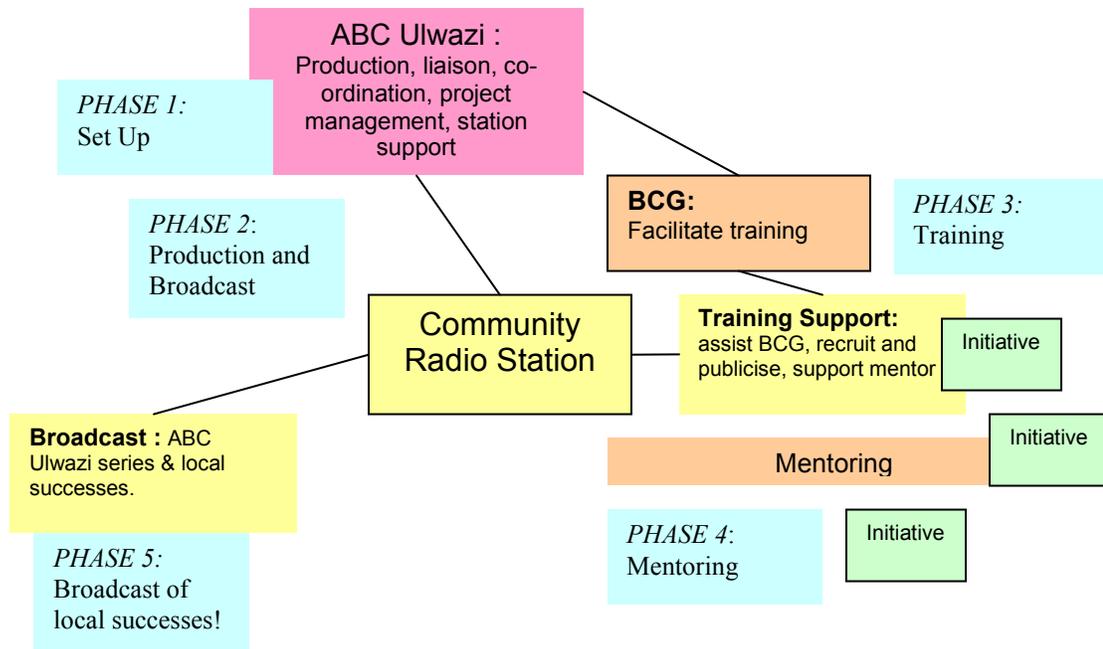
Actual training to young entrepreneurs interested in Community based tourism initiatives was provided by experts in the field from an independent consultancy. By partnering with the consultancy BCG (BEES Consulting Group), experienced in providing support to small, micro and medium enterprises, content for the series as well as a training plan that matched could be developed.

Another major component of the model is the community mentorship part. This allowed successful business people and community leaders to participate in the project by mentoring and supporting the young entrepreneurs, who had new ideas and were developing business plans with the support of the trainers.

“Sizoyi Chuna” project as a best practice guide:

The Sizoyi Chuna project was training and support programme that used community radio as a broadcast platform to inspire, encourage and activate communities to fully participate in community based sustainable tourism. It also encouraged community radio stations to develop their communities in ways that were not strictly broadcast focused.

The project can be described diagrammatically as follows:



Key successes are difficult to quantify but, the following is evident:

A wide range of South Africans were informed about what community tourism is about and how they can participate. This was predominantly through the broadcast of the radio series, but also through actual participation in the workshops.

Community radio stations were able to actively participate in training and contribute to job creation for their communities.

The training component imparted valuable business skills that were applicable to any small business – not only tourism focused enterprises. The community ‘metors’ themselves had their eyes opened to tourism potential as well.

Some of *challenges* to this model centered around the ability of some stations to excel over others due to resources / staffing etc. If a single stations was to embark on such an initiative with a suitable partner it could be more focused in its approach and hone in on its unique community and context. Working with many stations as was the case in this

instance, was less than ideal, as each community was unique and there was no 'one size' fit.

The "drop out" factor was also a problem. Young participants dropped out as the challenges of developing business plans and so forth became overwhelming.

The lack of subsequent funding after the Pilot project in Year 1 meant that the young entrepreneurs were left with very little follow up support and as a result, very few of the businesses are actually still in existence.

The Sizoyi Chuna project provides a useful model for how radio can not only provide 'coverage' of CBST activities, but through their access to a large base of listeners, act as a hub for creating an interested group of participants to develop their own initiatives. To conclude, let us listen to the story of Bernard Merobe to hear how powerful audio can be!