

Divine Word University

Abstract

THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
POTENTIAL OF CHURCH BASED RADIO
BROADCASTING IN THE WESTERN
HIGHLANDS PROVINCE

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This research is the result of a case study into church based radio broadcasting and its potentials in contributing to community development in PNG. The paper is of great significance to the communication research in the country because of the different roles that Churches have played in providing basic services such health and education.

The poor management of Papua New Guinea's social, administrative, political and economic welfare, coupled with rugged geographical terrain, has caused more than 80 per cent of an estimated 5 million Papua New Guineans to live in rural, isolated areas. An alarming number of the adult population are non-literate and cannot speak English, the main language of education and administration. Rural dwellers are mostly subsistence farmers and rely on agricultural activities to cater for basic goods and services.

The Churches have created an extensive network in the country, allowing them to initiate communication systems such as radio stations. These radio stations are currently providing invaluable services to rural communities. As they go on air they now have the capacity of reaching these isolated communities. Communication practitioners, government officers, health extension officers, education instructors and NGOs can use these radio stations to disseminate vital information.

The research is based on an extensive audience analysis survey on selected communities in the Western Highlands Province of PNG and Church based radio stations in an effort to identify the potential of these radio stations. This paper also emphasises the need for a community media, a concept relatively new to the country.