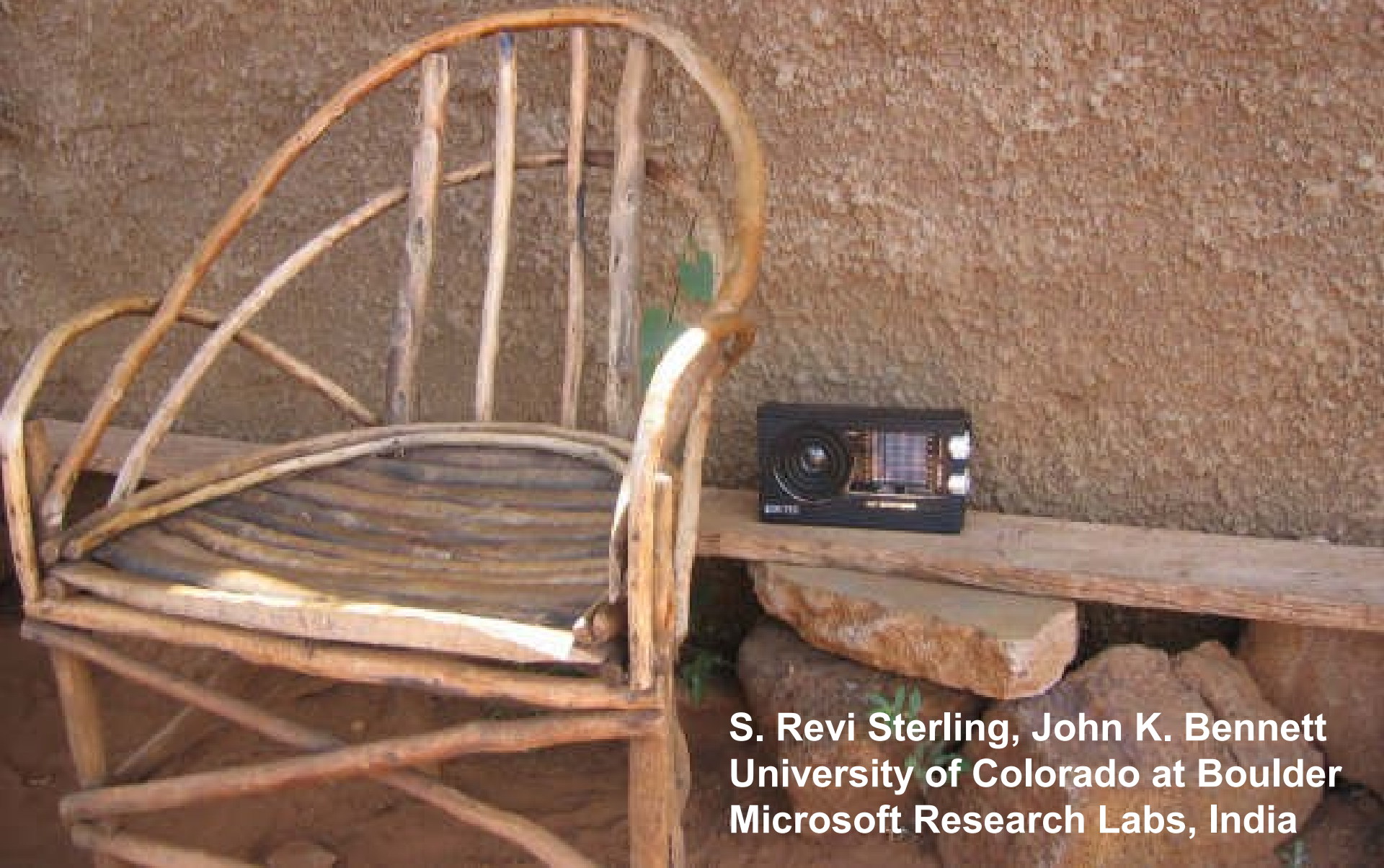


**Out of the Margins:  
Lessons from Africa in the Participation of Women in Community Radio**



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This could be any street-side vendor...

## Community Radio: Africa's Internet

Millions of people are still off the electrical and cellular grids

Phones may be the new "PC", but not yet:

- Even in areas of cell access, women don't/can't own/use
- Men take or resell the phones
- No money for minutes, recharging
- Who to call?

*Example: Mary calling the station on the birth of her grandson;  
Queues at Kibaale hospital to use only phone in town*

Few barriers to listenership/access:

- Existing radio tradition – Internet viewed irrelevant (as of now)
- Portable – radios go everywhere
- Language and issue specificity
- Only available "entertainment," even though development content

Not a panacea:

- May perpetuate gender imbalances
- Only one-way flow of information
- Sustainability and participation



## Community Radio: most accessible ICT for women

### Why Community Radio?

- Commercial and public stations do not represent community
- Trust the people who look, act, sound like you
- Few barriers to women's access, unlike other ICTs
- Community radio enjoying renewed interest around the world
  - Huge penetration and access base (98% in India)
  - Cost effective
  - Can serve niche communities *appropriately*
  - Can scale to WW, ties into other ICTs

### Why a particular focus on women?

- Women's education is significant indicator of comm. development
- Bridge economic and education divides through informal education
- Women absent in most ICT programs
- Can't wait for women to passively benefit from the myriad development projects – empowerment does not trickle down



## Community Radio: whose voices?

*What's missing & what to do about it?*

“Push model”

- Unidirectional – yet represented as the “voice of the community”
- Who gets to speak? Top down directives, content

Look at “Post” models

- Citizen journalism: communities have important info too!
- Participation, esp. for women, is key to info access and *exchange*
- *Educate women, educate communities*

“We want women's voices to be heard, we are telling our stories directly and we are giving a voice to the voiceless. We found we were always downloading and never uploading... There is so much knowledge in rural communities, and we have to let people know about what happening.”

- Jennifer Sibanda, FAMW



## Involving Women: what has worked

*90% of women listen to the radio*

*20% have made a positive change due to programming*

*Less than 5% have ever contacted a station*

How high can this 20% climb?

- Women's only stations
- Women's specific focus groups
- Involvement of women in all aspects of CR
- "Narrowcasting" as a readiness technique
- Listening clubs: DTR example
  - recording
  - educating
  - income generating
- IRI, Edutainment (serialized shows), local "reality shows"
- Drop ins welcome
- Women-focused "interactive" programming



## Promoting Participation

All can be positive interventions... an objective look at common issues from trial, success and error

Call-ins and drop-ins	Access to technology/station, time, cultural issues
Focus groups and interviews	Time consuming, pulls women + station staff from work
DTR/listening clubs	Tape recorder/tape issues, sustainability clubs
Narrowcasting + splicing	Reach, creating content takes time
Women's only stations/programs	Getting women-focused content is hard; Men do not listen
Edutainment and local serials	Sustainability, content
Highlighting men	Cultural barriers
Interactive devices	Tech issues, station partnerships



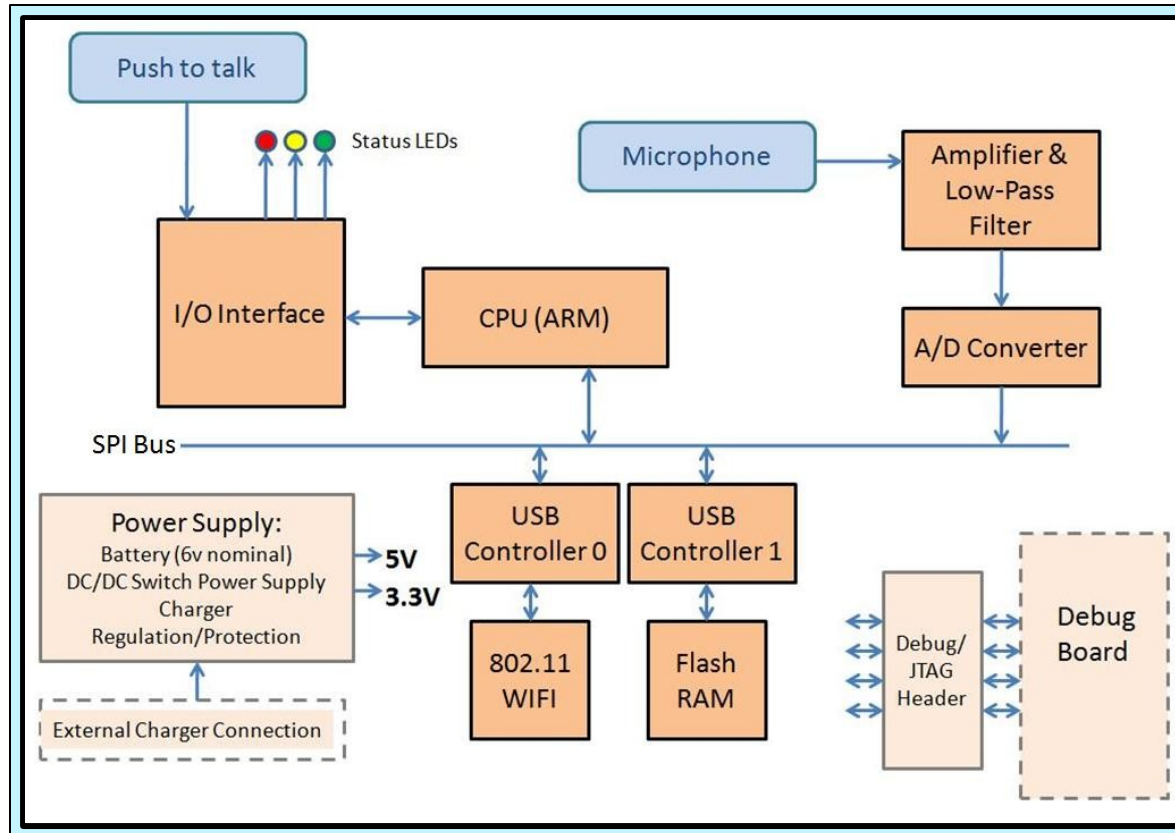
## AIR: Advancement Through Interactive Radio

Participation-driven project to integrate women's needs, issues and feedback into CR – Kenya

- Station: Radio Mang'elete
- 2 programs in conjunction with AIR
- Deploy devices to *mwethya* (self-help groups)
- Look at participation levels, content, and station response to programming/mgmt feedback



# AIR Programmatic Features



- Very low power design – 7day operation
- Very simple operation
- Portable solar recharge stations
- Swappable USB fobs for wireless and flash memory allow flexible configuration
- Frequency response for female voices – high fidelity (150hz -6 kHz)
- “Voicemail” software client on radio station PC

## The India Scenario – unlimited potential

Feminizing the airwaves so that ALL people benefit:

- No dearth of gender-focused NGOs, many seen as int'l models
- More support for NGOs to acquire standalone license/equipment
- ALL ICTs for dev should be appropriate, sustainable and equitable

Strong Technology sector:

- CR is a ripe platform for interactivity – voice, Internet, other
- Easy design for replication + extension
- Digital content: many applications, permanence

What the naysayers say:

- Men won't listen
- Women won't talk or tune in
- Radio is old - cell phones are “around the corner”

Proving this wrong:

- Potential pilots with VOICES, India
- Extension into other uses where it is necessary to get information from a community (health, credit) rather than push to them



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