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**Abstract:**

“Making Local Voices Count” examines the process of engaging all stakeholders in communication for sustainable development. The simple procedures have proven to be effective in including local residents, beneficiaries who have never had a voice, as well as government officials, elected politicians, NGO staff. The methods have been field-tested in West Africa with dozens of communities who now sustain low power FM radio stations. Sustainability requires that everyone share information in ways that are transparent and accessible to those with and without literacy or formal education. Indian populations will instantly recognize the Participatory Rapid Analysis (PRA) techniques that enable diverse community members to share their ideas and wisdom. The process begins with a community meeting where everyone joins a large circle. Within just two hours, participants have gained new communication skills that will help them create good short radio programs, regardless of previous experience. They then use their new skills to determine when the next meetings will be held so they can continue the learning as part of their daily lives. The most important feature of this process is that people can gather and present information without ever having held a pencil. Everybody who participates learns by doing, and demonstrates their knowledge the same way, in a dialogue that is easy to replicate and continue. Therefore it is appropriate and inclusive, regardless of language or formal education experience. “Making Local Voices Count,” offers proven tools that enable all community members to contribute to the development of sustainable local radio.

**WORKSHOP**

**OPTION**

This interactive workshop builds skills in universal communications techniques that have empowered citizens to sustain more than twenty-five African community radio stations. The inclusive process relies on local knowledge and voices, not literacy, to establish media that motivate diverse populations to work together. Liberians who heard their own voices and dialects broadcast for the first time after fourteen years of war said they were no longer “living in darkness.” This session highlights critical stages in community mobilization with marginalized and displaced populations. We’ll use simple exercises to engage participants so they can share their experience and have the opportunity to model very basic styles of communicating that surmount language and culture. “Making Local Voices Count” demonstrates methods that effectively engage people and access local wisdom. It incorporates anecdotes the presenter and participants to tailor outreach for all stakeholders, and was presented in April 2007 at OURMedia 6 in Sydney, Australia. Attendees were

primarily from the Southern hemisphere, including Columbia, East Timor, Nepal and Sri Lanka, among other countries.