Community Journalism in Zambia: The Case of Chikuni Radio

Vincent Tilimboyi Nchimunya
Marquette University

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COMMUNITY JOURNALISM IN ZAMBIA: THE CASE OF CHIKUNI RADIO

By

Vincent Tilimboyi Nchimunya
Communication and Media Studies
Marquette University

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ABSTRACT
COMMUNITY JOURNALISM IN ZAMBIA: THE CASE OF CHIKUNI RADIO

Vincent Tilimboyi Nchimunya

Marquette University, 2021

Community journalism is steadily gaining prominence in most African nations. It is a conduit through which different communities develop social interaction. It is also a platform through which the public create connections among themselves to identify and resolve local and national problems that affect citizens. The goal of this study was to examine how community journalists at Chikuni Radio practiced their craft in an effort to build a sense of community in southern Zambia. The study presents a qualitative thematic content analysis of in-depth semi-structured interviews with three Chikuni Radio editors and six journalists. The journalists’ community journalism experience ranged from three to fourteen years. The findings of this study indicate that journalists helped build community by participating in and enabling problem-solving in the community, engaging community radio audiences as active collaborators in reporting, and explicitly advocating for the community. These findings suggest that community reporters at Chikuni Radio are invested in the success of the community they cover and see community engagement as part of their professional journalism practice. Examining journalism practices in community media is, then, significant for it contributes to the understanding of the characteristics and role of journalism in understudied geopolitical environments.
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Vincent Tilimboyi Nchimunya

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Introduction

In Zambia, community radio is among the widespread media channels for disseminating information, informing, educating, and entertaining the audience. It plays an important role in the Zambian society, especially in the rural parts of the country. Radio may be referred to as the voice of reason because of the integral work of helping people to participate in the governance of the nation (Kivikuru, 2006).

According to Zambia’s Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) Act of 2002, the purpose of community radio is to “reflect the needs of the people in the community which include the cultural language and demographic needs” (cited in Chirwa, 2010, p. 47). Particularly, the IBA stated that community broadcasters should focus on four things: 1) issues not predominant in the mainstream media, 2) be informative, educational, and entertaining, 3) highlight grassroot issues pertaining to development and general education concerning the environment, culture, and international affairs, and 4) promoting the development of a sense of common purpose and improved quality of life (cited in Chirwa, 2010). The essence of the IBA guidance is to allow people to be part of the radio station through participation. Similar to the IBA, Jankowski (2003) argued that the goal of community radio is “to provide news and information relevant to the needs of the community members, to engage these members in public discussion and to contribute to their social and political ‘empowerment’ (p. 8). For example, if a community is experiencing problems with the education system, the community radio station should provide a platform for people to debate and find solutions. Community radio, therefore,
provides a platform for citizens to be engaged in matters that concerns the local community.

Communication scholars have laid out arguments about the purpose of community radio. Banda and Fourie (2004) stated that one of the tasks of any community radio should be to “elevate the power of the communities and influence their own development through communication” (p. 70). Myers (2011) argued that radio platforms has become “central to communities, not just as a way to receive news, but as a way to participate and speak out on issues that matter” (p. 22). Furthermore, marginalized people often find a voice in community radio. For instance, women and the youth are sidelined in society, but community media provides a space for them to express themselves (Myers, 2011). Manyozo (2009) added that community media are forums to “facilitate human development” among local citizens (p. 6).

Many people in Zambia have access to at least one radio station. The recent *African Media Barometer: Zambia* (2018) reported that Zambian has experienced a significant increase in the number of community radio stations in the country. In 2000, Zambia had only 12 community radio stations which later increased to 26 in 2005 and 48 in 2008 (Banda, 2006; Habeenzu, 2010). The *African Media Barometer: Zambia 2017* reported that the country now has 105 community radio stations. Due to the increase in radio stations, the ownership of radio sets among citizens also increased. Chirwa (2010) stated that 87 percent of the Zambian households own at least one radio set. The majority, 94 percent, of those are urban whereas 84 percent are found in the rural areas of the country.
Chikuni Radio, located in rural southern Zambia, is one of the newest stations that began broadcasting in the year 2000. One of Chikuni Radio goals is to give a voice to the voiceless, the marginalized, and disempowered in society (www.chikuniradiozm.org). In 2014, Eva Georgia, a consultant from the German media development organization DW Akademie, described Chikuni Radio as a voice of ordinary people in society, allowing them to articulate their personal stories, and build their own identities. She observed that Chikuni Radio’s way of connecting with the local community is by “provid[ing] its rural communities with a safe and productive platform for social dialogue.” Georgia (2014) further said that the radio station has woven itself into the community by practicing community journalism that help people remain connected to one another within their various communities.

Similarly, Jyde Hamoonga, a community journalist and former station manager at Chikuni Radio, argued that “radio is changing lives, developing minds and bringing people together in an environment based on their own needs and on their own terms” (cited in Mulinda, 2014). This made Chikuni Radio a platform where people exchanged innovative ideas to improve their livelihood.

Considering the relevance of community journalism for building and empowering communities (Reichman et al., 2015), this thesis investigates the case of Chikuni Radio to examine how community journalists contribute to community building, specifically in southern Zambia. The study presents a qualitative thematic content analysis of in-depth semi-structured interviews with three Chikuni Radio editors and six journalists. Studying Chikuni Radio journalists provides an opportunity to understand how journalists who practice community journalism contribute to building a sense of community. The findings
of this study indicate that journalists helped build community by participating in and enabling problem-solving in the community, engaging community radio audiences as active collaborators in reporting, and explicitly advocating for the community. These findings suggest that community reporters at Chikuni Radio are invested in the success of the community they cover and see community engagement as part of their professional journalism practice.

**Significance of the Study of Community Journalism**

In young democratic countries like Zambia where free speech and freedom of the press is steadily developing, the mainstream media, predominantly owned by the ruling government, does not consistently report on events happening in communities located away from the main cities. Hence, community journalism is increasingly influencing different facets of life in society as it plays a key role in building and empowering communities (Reichman *et al.*, 2015). It is also through community journalism that topics that are important to ordinary people are recorded and reported. The insufficient news supply from some parts of the country contributes to why community journalism is pertinent in the lives of people. Journalists in community media settings also adopt a way of practicing journalism different from the dominant and Western-centered definitions of professional journalism (Skjerdal, 2012). Examining journalism practices in community media is, then, significant for it contributes to the understanding of the characteristics and role of journalism in understudied geopolitical environments.
Literature Review

This section gives a context and the media environment from which this study was carried out. It is divided into three sections. The first discusses the three stages of Zambia’s political development within which media is understood. The second one looks at the profile for Chikuni Radio to give an understanding of a platform where community journalism takes place. The third explicates the concepts of community and community journalism.

**Zambian Media System**

“Media systems are shaped by the wider context of political history, structure, and the culture,” according to Hallin and Mancini (2004, p. 46). Indeed, to comprehend sub-Saharan African media and community journalism in its current form, one needs to look at the years after African countries attained independence because media reforms coincide with the countries’ political progress and development. After Zambia attained independence on October 24, 1964, its media system evolved in three phases (Hamusokwe, 2019): The First Republic which is the period immediately after independence, the Second Republic when Zambia was a one-party state, and the Third Republic when a multi-party system of government was introduced. The Third Republic is essential to the development of community journalism since it was when the government liberalized the media industry allowing community media like radio to be established (Hamusokwe, 2019).

The First Republic – from 1964 to 1972 – was the shortest. Gero Erdmann and Neo Simutanyi (2003) argue that the First Republic “started as a democratic system
characterized by a dominant one-party system in which the United National Independent Party (UNIP) was the major political force” (p. 3). During the first eight years, the control and ownership of the media were dominantly private. The government did not interfere with running the media (Hamusokwe, 2019), and the political environment permitted critique of the government (Kasoma, 1986).

In contrast, the Second Republic, which lasted nineteen years, from 1972 to 1991, experienced what Hallin and Mancini define as the instrumentalization of the media. Outside actors, such as political parties and politicians, took control of the media to “use them to intervene in the world of politics” (Hallin and Mancini, 2004, p. 37). Zambia’s founding Father, Kenneth Kaunda, declared the Second Republic a one-party state in which there would be a “one-party participatory democracy” system (Erdmann and Simutanyi, 2003, p. 4). This system of governance has been described as a dictatorship due to the “reduction of toleration for internal dissent and a general contraction of civil liberties” (Gewald, Hinfelaar, and Macola, 2008, p. 16). The reduction of free speech and intolerance of opposing views were the preamble to government’s control of the media. During this phase of Zambia’s political history, all except one media organization were nationalized. The National Mirror, a defunct newspaper that was owned by the Council of Churches in Zambia (CCZ), was the only private medium (Hamusokwe, 2019). Despite being the only independent newspaper in the country, Francis Kasoma (1986) observes that the National Mirror was still critical of the government. To silence the newspaper, President Kaunda “ordered a ban on all government advertising in the church-funded biweekly National Mirror, which for 18 years has sniped at the country’s leadership” (Ham, 1991). Since advertising is the main source of revenue for media
organizations and the Zambian government was the largest advertiser, this action resulted in the increasing financial struggles of the *National Mirror* (Kasoma, 1986). Though it continued its operations, the *National Mirror* collapsed in the first decade of the Third Republic.

Kaunda governed the country by an ideology known as humanism that, to some extent, was a tool to control the media. Cherry Gertzel and Carolyn Baylies (1984) define Zambian humanism “as a set of philosophical guidelines rooted in the Zambian cultural heritage, intended to unite the country in the common task of economic, social and political development” (p. 9). Embedded in humanism philosophy was the idea that ownership of property was to be entrusted in the hands of the government. As a result, private property ownership was not allowed in Zambia. This led the historian Andrew Roberts (1976) to argue that the philosophy of humanism ridiculed the idea of citizens owning private property as there was a fear that private ownership would result in social class conflict. To prevent it, the government through humanism ideology nationalized all privately owned companies (Burdette, 1988).

Media organizations were among the private companies that were nationalized. The government policy had an impact on the media institutions that were run by private citizens. Zambia’s ideology of humanism, in this case, was used as a weapon against the press, which became less independent under government control. According to Twange Kasoma and Greg Pitts (2017), humanism defined the role of the press during the Kaunda era as a mouthpiece of the government. Ultimately, political instrumentalization (Hallin and Mancini, 2004) became prevalent in Zambia with the media arguably serving the people in authority. Remmy Mushota (1989) argues that:
One of the most disturbing aspects of our society is the way in which the mass media has, unashamedly, been manipulated to the exclusive monopoly of a small clique of the leaders at the top and how the views of the ordinary citizen who wishes to criticize our policies constructively are blacked out (p. 42).

Further indication of President Kaunda’s control of the media was observed at the official opening of the Zambia Institute of Mass Communication, a state-sponsored institute for in-house training of local journalists. Kaunda said that “the journalist profession... must develop as an integral part of Humanist transformation of Zambia just as those who practice it are an integral part of its people” (Kasoma, 1997). Therefore, in Kaunda’s view, journalism was a developmental tool for “national community” instead of an independent voice of the people of Zambia. On the contrary, Mushota (1989) argues that press freedom is “one of the most significant freedoms in the process of establishing and sustaining a free and democratic society.” He further stated that free press is “essentially constitutive of democracy itself, since it is through it that people’s wishes… can be discerned” (p. 36). Therefore, Mushota’s sentiments reflect the importance of a free press that allows people to have uninterrupted public discourse. President Kaunda, however, still believed that the media had to be controlled, and that their roles were to be defined by the state.

In the pretext of humanism, Kaunda took over two national newspapers: Zambia Daily Mail and Times of Zambia. The only nationwide broadcaster, Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation (ZNBC) was also nationalized (Kasoma and Pitts, 2017). Additionally, the government appointed the directors of these media organizations. Such government appointments meant that there would be no guarantee for editorial
independence (Siyauya, 2013). At this point, the media system in Zambia could be described as “politics over broadcasting system,” where appointments of head of media corporations entail political control, and that journalists were identifying “newsworthiness” of an event by political criteria as opposed to journalistic judgement (Hallin and Mancini, 2004, p. 108). Therefore, the instrumentalization of the media in Zambia by politicians result into the absence of journalistic professionalism. Hallin and Mancini (2004) discuss three indicators for journalistic professionalism in a country. The first is the extent to which journalists, as a group, enjoy professional autonomy. The autonomy of journalists can be restricted either by outside forces such as politicians or insiders like the owners of the media organisation. The second indicator for journalistic professionalism is the ability of journalists to establish distinct professional norms. For example, a code of ethics such as a set of shared norms like keeping the confidentiality of news sources. The third is the degree to which journalists are oriented toward an ethic of serving the interest of the public. The absence of these three journalistic professionalisms leads to the instrumentalization of journalists by external forces like those with either economical or political interests. From the discussion, the media in Zambia is instrumentalized by the state.

The Third Republic, which started in 1991 after Zambia’s first democratic elections, came as a result of a change of government from Kaunda’s dictatorship to a multi-party democracy system of government (Erdmann and Simutanyi, 2003). The country voted out Kaunda and his UNIP party. A new party and the only opposition party founded in July 1990, Movement for Multi-party Democracy (MMD), under Frederick Chiluba, took over the country’s leadership (Hamusokwe, 2019). The change of
government raised hopes among citizens and media corporations that the new government would enact friendly media laws that would free the media from being controlled by those in power. Isaac Phiri (1999) states that:

The transition was thought to mark the end of the media’s repression and the beginning of an era in which the media would be an autonomous contributor to the country’s social, political, and economic life. There was “optimism that the state-run media (the *Times of Zambia*, the *Zambia Daily Mail*, and the Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation) would stop serving as the ruling party’s mouthpiece and become a vibrant forum for the objective discussion of public affairs (p. 54).” People were optimistic that the government would liberalize state-owned media and revert to privately-owned media. In fact, the Movement for Multi-party Democracy (MMD) manifesto in 1991 stated that the party was committed to liberalizing the media so that the media would be independent. President Chiluba said that free press and people’s right to access to information are basic human rights (Phiri, 2000).

Furthermore, while addressing the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., President Chiluba said that the Zambian government had “decided that press freedom must not only be observed [but it] must also be promoted so that whatever we are trying to bury under the carpet [...] will not escape the notice of society” (Chirwa 1997, p. 13). Despite the free press promises, Banda (2000) argued that the MMD rhetoric was not translated into actual action of liberalizing the press. The media environment still remained under the steady control of the government.

Panter-Brick (1994) further argued that as much as the transition to multi-party democracy was a significant achievement in the history of Zambia, the allegation that
President Chiluba was “following in Kaunda’s footsteps [...] are not entirely groundless” (p. 244). Phiri (1999) observed that “the state-run media have neither been privatized (to allow media to act independently) nor granted editorial autonomy. They have continued in more or less the same vein in which they operated under the one-party state” (p. 60). The state also retained its powers to appoint individuals to head media institutions in the country. Phiri (1999) concluded that “the media had not emerged as a significant influence in Zambia’s democracy” because it was still under the control of the government (p. 55).

A journalist whose career dates back to the First Republic had the following observation about media reforms promised by MMD government:

From 1991 when the MMD came into power, they came on the platform that they were going to reform the media and also to free the government owned media. That way it was envisioned that they were going to provide competition, and when there is competition, they were going to raise the standard of journalism in the country. That has not happened. Successive governments have followed that trend (cited in Hamusokwe, 2019).

Hamusokwe (2018) argued that different governments in the past 29 years of the Third Republic have opposed suggested media reforms promoted by groups, such as the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) Zambia and the Press Association of Zambia (PAZA). The previous and current governments have continued with the “previous hegemonic system” that prevents media independence (Jakubowicz and Sükösd 2008, 29). Hence, the liberation of media that people hoped for after Kaunda’s UNIP era ended was not implemented by the governments following the Kaunda regime. Kasoma and
Pitts (2017) stated that the introduction of multiparty democracy in 1991 paved way for success democratic elections held in 1996, 2001, 2006, 2011, and 2016. The MMD was in power until 2011 when a new party, Patriotic Front (PF) under Michael Sata, was elected to office.

Despite the opposition to media reforms by the MMD government during its term in office (1991-2011), the government enacted the Radio Communications Act in 1993, allowing private radio ownership in the country (Lingela, 2006). The first community radio to be established was the Catholic-run Radio Icengelo in Zambia’s Copperbelt Province (Banda, 1998). Zambia has now more than 100 radio stations (*African Media Barometer: Zambia 2017, 2018*).

According to Kasoma (2001), one other factor that contributed to the introduction of community Radio station across the country was the concern that the national radio provided by the government-owned Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation (ZNBC) was technically not able to serve people in all corners of the country. Kasoma (2001) outlined the inadequacies of the national radio as follows: 1) the radio signal was not strong enough to reach most rural parts of the country, 2) the content from the radio shows were not relevant to some of the citizens, 3) the national radio was not able to cater for all the 72 indigenous languages and dialects, 4) specific issues to a particular place could only be addressed by community radio, and 5) community radio was believed to have the potential of creating a sense of togetherness in a community. Against the backdrop of shortcomings by the national radio, community radio stations continue to increase in number to cater to communities. Therefore, the mushrooming of radio stations provides a context for the study of community journalism in Zambia.
Like the MMD government before introducing favorable community media policies, the Patriotic Front government, which formed in 2011, continued the promises to promote free press (Hamusokwe, 2019). For example, the Michael Sata administration initiated a task force to look into the Freedom of Information (FOI) Bill which, if enacted, would give the media and citizens the right to access information from public institutions. The FOI bill was never laid out in parliament citing technical problems on the part of legislatures entrusted to officially introduce it.

In 2015, President Edgar Lungu of the Patriotic Front Party was elected after the demise of President Michael Sata in 2014. In 2018, Lungu promised that he would support the Access to Information Bill which would give citizens the right to access information held by the government. Despite the president’s support, the Minister of Justice, Given Lubinda, announced that the government would not table the bill in parliament because it had many other bills that needed to be tabled (Mwenya, 2018). Two years earlier, the Minister of Information, Chishimba Kambwili’s comment that the government has “no choice but to regulate the media” diminished the country’s hope for an independent media (cited in Hamusokwe, 2019). By now, the Access to Information bills seem to be a promise that successive governments in the country are not willing to keep. As Harbeson and Rothchild (2009) observed in *Africa in a world of politics: Engaging a changing global order*, the ongoing struggles in Africa regarding media reform bills is an indication that governments are yet to stop restricting the media.

**Criminalizing the Press**

“The state plays a significant role in shaping the media system in any society,” according to Hallin and Mancini (2004, p. 41). In Zambia, the state is the sole provider of
licenses for those who want to establish and own media organizations. As earlier alluded to, the state nationalized and now owns all the national media organizations. The private media as well as the public ones are subjected to follow media laws enacted by the state. Most laws that were put in place by the state criminalizes the press and limits what journalists can do. For example, the Zambian constitution, like those of many sub-Saharan African countries, dates to the colonial era. The penal code criminalizes the media’s attempts to uncover the president’s corrupt practices as sedition or character defamation. Section 53 of the Zambian constitution gives the president powers to censor any information that he thinks is not of the public interest. The result of such draconian laws is that journalists and the media, in general, are vulnerable to harassment, intimidation, threats, and physical violation in African countries such as Zambia, according to Bratton, Alderfer, and Simutanyi (1997).

Similarly, Section 69 of the Penal Code criminalizes the defamation of the president, and the offence carries a sentence of up to three years imprisonment. Additionally, the State Security Act (1996) categorizes official government documents as national security. Had successive government enacted the Access to Information bill, public documents would not have been protected by the state laws.

Finally, the African Media Barometer: Zambia 2017 (2018) reported that the government has harassed journalists and shut down of some media institutions. It also outlines the radio and television stations whose licenses were discontinued, and equipment seized. At the same time, according to the African Media Barometer: Zambia 2017 (2018), Zambia has “a policy that is facilitative of the creation of media [institutions]” even though the government expects media institutions to “praise the state”
Consequently, government’s grip on the media reflects its unwillingness to have an independent media in the country.

In summary, the media system in Zambia is greatly influenced by media laws and policies from the time of the one-party system of governance and the strict laws restricting the press that have been carried on by successive governments. Each president that comes into office promises to introduce media reforms, but such sentiments have not been translated into tangible results of enacting media laws that would allow free press and freedom of information. Nonetheless, the Movement for Multi-party Democracy (MMD) is still credited for enacting laws allowing community radio stations to operate in the country. Here is a profile for Chikuni Radio before I look at the theoretical framework for this study.

**Chikuni Radio Profile**

Chikuni Radio is a Jesuit-owned community radio station founded by a two Polish Jesuit priests, Frs. Andrew Lesniara and Tadeusz Świderski, in 1999 (Juutinen, 2008). It broadcasts on 91.9 FM covering a radius of 155 miles. The official website indicates that, although Chikuni Radio is focused mainly on serving the districts of Monze and Gwembe, the radio signal also covers five other districts that include Choma, Mazabuka, Kafue, Siavonga, and Namwala. These districts are all situated in the southern province of the Zambia. The region is occupied predominantly by both local and commercial farmers.

Fr. Lesniara writes that he and his colleague established the radio station to deal with missionary challenges they encountered while working in the rural parts of Zambia. He recalls his early assignment in 1994 as a missionary in the district of Namwala, 122
miles away from Chikuni village where Chikuni Radio is presently located. Due to impassible roads during the rainy seasons, he and Fr. Świderski sought to establish what Fr. Andrew calls “some sort of radio connection (walky-talky)” (personal communication [email], February 23, 2021). According to Fr. Lesniara, some equipment for installations of walky-talky was acquired although they were not mounted because both priests were moved to another place known as Chikuni Jesuit Mission.

Like the district of Namwala, Chikuni Jesuit Mission also had challenges that needed a forum where the community could come together to share opinions on how to improve their living standards. Coincidentally, the local Catholic bishop of Monze at the time, Paul Lungu asked Fr. Lesniara, who was an electrical engineer by training, about the possibility of establishing a radio station for the whole of the diocese. Unfortunately, however, the Monze diocese did not have the financial resources for a station to reach the whole diocese, which covered most of the districts in the Southern Province of Zambia. Nonetheless, Frs. Lesniara and Świderski worked to fulfill the bishop’s request. Unable to reach listeners in Bishop Paul Lungu’s entire diocese, the two Jesuit priests founded a radio station for the local community in Chikuni and the surrounding areas. The goal of the radio station, according to the Chikuni Radio website, is to “give the community the chance to create, participate in and listen to programmes that affect the community [life] at large.” The focus of a community radio station is to encourage discussion regarding the handling of the many challenges facing the community.

Two key problems in southern Zambia that could be addressed by a community radio station, according to Frs. Lesniara and Świderski are: 1) developmental projects in the area were not successful due to the long distances local people had to travel to meet
and share ideas. 2) few schools made it impossible for children to attend formal school because they lived beyond walking distances. According to Fr. Lesniara, the most affected children were girls because of the prevailing cultural norm that girls were only meant to take care of the homes, farm on the land, and bear children if they were to earn respect in society. A radio platform could change these cultural attitudes and limited perspectives so as to provide hope for the young girls to aspire to more than simply being a wife, a mother, and a domestic worker (Fr. A. Lesniara, personal communication [email], February 23, 2021).

The radio station originated as a community project; members of the community helped construct the building for Chikuni Radio. Different local communities donated building materials, resulting in Chikuni Radio’s advertising slogan, “the radio of the community by the community.”

The radio station has a local audience that averages around half a million people. Since the spread of Internet connection and the radio’s decision to provide online streaming, its overall audience is estimated to have doubled to a million people. The radio broadcasts in two main languages: 1) Tonga, the local language in southern Zambia, and 2) English, the official language of the country.

Chikuni Radio programming is guided by the three goals: to educate, inform, and entertain. The radio station helps the community by providing educational broadcasts and advertisements, discussions and phone-in programs, religious broadcasts and entertainment through music and drama, sponsored programs, news, and current affairs. Similarly, Manyozo (2004) argued that radio broadcast should “communicates scientific
and technical knowledge to largely illiterate and poor people through culturally relevant, informative and educative content” (p. 8).

In addition, Chikuni Radio provides a platform where local people can discuss issues that revolve around the development of the community. The goal is to “create and run a radio station that enables the community to be fully developed in all aspects of human life” (Chikuni website, www.chikuniradiozm.org). The radio station focuses its programming on social justice issues in the community, such as education, health, and unemployment. The radio station believes that its role in society is to “help people to be fully alive” by promoting “development in ones’ spiritual, political, academic,” social and economic well-being (Panos Southern Africa, 2002, p. 21-22).

To summarize its vision, Chikuni Radio uses the snail, a familiar symbol to the Tonga people. Legend has it that if you see snails in January, the month right in the middle of Zambia’s rain season, then it will be a very good rain season. So, the snail became associated with good tidings and good things to come (Karrus Hang’andu and Ferdinand Syanyuka, personal communication, February 24, 2021). Therefore, the building of Chikuni Radio also became associated with good tidings such as the opportunity to learn, to discuss, to remember, and to be entertained on a radio platform.

Chikuni Radio is considered an example of a community journalism platform because it is structured in such a way that local people are part of the public discourse (Bwalya, 2008). Bwalya (2008) pointed out that the radio station-initiated media clubs (groups of local people trained by Chikuni Radio to record radio shows that highlight issues in each community where the club is located) in different communities to encourage participation. Chikuni Radio website lists the clubs that include: 1) radio
listening clubs, 2) news gatherers, and 3) young people on internship whom they refer to as volunteers or media scholars. Through these groups “nonprofessional media makers are encouraged to become involved (participation), providing individuals and communities with a platform to express their views (access)” (Rennie, 2006, p. 3). In this way, citizens are not just passive consumers of media content but are actively involved in identifying and communicating the content. Mulinda (2014), citing a staff member of Chikuni Radio, said, “Radio is changing lives, developing minds and bringing people together in an environment based on their own needs and on their own terms” (p. 27).

Additionally, Chikuni Radio is also changing people’s lives by providing elementary education to poor and vulnerable children who are not able to access formal education. Fr. Lesniara revealed that the radio station provides education through a radio show known as Interactive Radio Instruction (IRI) (personal communication [email], February 23, 2021). Interactive Radio Instructions (IRI) is a system of “education that combines radio broadcasts with active learning to improve educational quality and teaching practices” (Trucano, 2010). Michael Trucano (2010) argued that Interactive Radio Instructions (IRI) shows “require teachers and students to react verbally and physically to questions and exercises posed by radio characters and to participate in group work, experiments, and other activities suggested by the radio program.” For all these activities to take place, radio plays a key role in providing an education platform. Thus, Chikuni Radio provides a decent and affordable education to its audience through the IRI program.
Chikuni Radio Funding

Community radio stations in sub-Saharan Africa face significant financial challenges (Tomaselli, 2001; Mtimde, Bonin, Maphiri, and Nyamaku, 1998). UNESCO acknowledged that “many of the existing and emerging community radio stations across the world do not possess the economic, technical and human resources required for sustainability” (Boafo, 2000, p. 5). Community radio stations are normally established in poor areas which have no economic power to help the radio financially sustain itself. Hart Thomas Bongani (2011) states that the scarcity of resources and the decline of donor money have financially constrained community radio stations. Hadland and Thorne (2011) contended that calls for self-reliance in terms of subsidizing may be a commendable goal, but that it is unreasonable to expect the foremost marginalized sectors of the populace to fiscally support the community radio stations that cater to them. Girard (2007) stated that the status of community radio as being non-profit radio stations does not imply that they cannot generate income through marketing and advertising. He argued that it simply “means that any surplus it makes is reinvested in the station and the community” (p. 7). A community radio station ought to have the capacity to create an income to sustain purposes of its offices and its commitment to serving and creating a specific community.

Chikuni Radio, as a community radio station situated in a rural part of Zambia, is not immune to financial challenges. To a certain extent, it survives on the generosity of its audience. For example, the station got its electronic equipment thanks to the donation of an Australian nurse who read a leaflet which talked about Chikuni Radio as she waited for spiritual direction at one of the Jesuit houses in Australia. Furthermore, the station got
its solar panels through a grant from Manos Unidas of Spain. This allowed Chikuni Radio to cut its energy costs and to operate without relying on the area’s undependable power grid.

To sustain the radio station, Fr. Lesniara said Chikuni Radio ventures into three revenue generating activities: 1) advertising, which fetches a small amount of money (being in a rural area, less people are keen to invest in advertisement), 2) sponsored radio shows by companies like Media Institute for Southern Africa Zambia (MISA), Zambia Environmental Management Agency (ZEMA), Ministry of Health, Churches Health Association of Zambia, and BBC Media Action, and 3) to a lesser extent, the promotion and selling of local music. Currently, the music business is less viable (Fr. A. Lesniara, personal communication [email], February 23, 2021).

Apart from these revenue generating activities, the biggest source of income which helps the radio station remain self-sustaining and focused on its vision are funds from the Society of Jesus, commonly known as the Jesuits. Being independent from government funding has resulted in the autonomy of Chikuni Radio in regard to the content of the radio shows.

The radio’s journalistic works have been recognized by various organizations in the country. Chikuni Radio won the best Ngoma Award for the promotion of traditional music and culture. Journalists at the radio station have also won numerous awards sponsored by various organization. These include best report the Effectiveness of the Farmer Input Support Program (FISP) Electronic Voucher system sponsored by Policy Monitoring and Research Centre, best report on effect of climate change on agriculture, sponsored by Zambia Environmental Management Agency (ZEMA), and best report on
the importance of rural connectivity to the national power grid sponsored by Rural Electrification Authority (REA). Other awards include the best community journalist reporters on Inclusive Education, and best radio documentary on ‘Radio Saves Lives’ (Karrus Hang’andu and Fredinand Syanyuka, personal communication, February 24, 2021). The awards were granted as a result of how Chikuni Radio offers a platform for people to discuss the many local issues that affect them.

In conclusion, this section has elaborated on the political changes that happened since Zambia’s independence in 1964, and how such political changes had an impact on the media. Once Kaunda’s government nationalized the media, the practice of journalism changed. The media became the mouthpiece of the government. It also lost the editorial independence. However, it was during the Third Republic (1991-todate) that community journalism platforms, such as community radio stations, were established allowing voices from the grassroots in different communities to discuss local political, economic, and social issues. And one such radio station is Chikuni Radio, the study case for this research.

**Theoretical Framework**

**Community Journalism**

The core of community journalism is building up a community by allowing people to share their own stories. In the same vein, Chikuni Radio has been connecting people by encouraging the locals to tell their stories and discuss the issues that affect them. Since community journalism is essential in connecting people, it is important to look at its definition.
Reader (2012) defined community journalism “as a specific practice of gathering, packaging and distributing news in predominately small, distinct geographic markets, with an emphasis on local news and information about community life” (p. 4). In this case, community journalism prides itself in being grounded in the local community. Byerly (1961) stated that the press’s proximity to the people is vitally important for the success of community journalism. He further argued that being near the people affords citizens the opportunity to easily access local journalists, which in turn increases reporters’ commitment and a sense of accountability to the community.

On the other hand, Louie Tabing (2005) described community radio as “in the community, for the community, about the community, and by the community (p. 9). Participation defines a community radio: “everyone has a right to be on community radio” (Siemering, 2000, p. 374). With this definition, community radio is considered to be a platform upon which community journalism is takes place.

Some studies have shown there are three ways in which to identify if the media is community oriented: 1) how much media cover and explicate community’s political, social, and economic structures to the local people, 2) the level to which community media listens to what local people say, and 3) the degree to which community media guides the local people in a better direction (Lowrey, 2011; Lowrey et al., 2008). Though not exhaustive, these tenets help in understanding community journalism’s orientation towards the community.

In Reader and Hatcher’s (2012) *Foundations of Community Journalism*, community journalism is considered as occupying “a prominent place in a community’s life and conversation” (p. 4). Community is viewed as a “place of inquiry” (p. 4) for
which “connectedness” is cardinal to the building of the community (p. 3). Anderson, Dardenne, and Killenberg (1994), in The Conversation of Journalism: Conversation, Community, and News asserted that “viewing community as a place of inquiry asks journalists to consider what messages and dialogues are necessary to increase the perception of commonalities” (p. 101). Local people within community news coverage are frequently engaged in the community procedures by suggesting or even being in charge of content.

The idea that a community is a “place of inquiry” (Reader, 2012, p. 16) resonates with Habermas’ (1991) public sphere: a space “made up of private people gathered together as a public and articulating the needs of society with the state” (176). Similarly, communication theorist. Hauser (1999) defined public sphere as “a discursive space in which individuals and groups associate to discuss matters of mutual interest and, where possible, to reach a common judgment about them” (p. 61). In local areas, the forum for these public conversations is community journalism where citizens discuss a range of issues.

Lowrey and George (2017) argued that “inquiry” and conversation “help the community maintain itself, informing the community’s normative boundaries, helping people decide what’s OK and what’s not OK… what the community is about, what it values or rejects, what is important or irrelevant” (p. 337-8). In aiding the community through conversations, community journalists also help to “create and re-create the community and influence shifts in its boundaries” (Lowrey and George, 2017, p. 337). Lowrey and George (2017) added that for the changes to occur in the community, the journalists should also aid people to understand political structures through which local
governance takes place. Understanding local political structures helps the community to effectively communicate amongst themselves and with the local establishment. Therefore, opening up of communication channels lead to improved participation of local people in the running of the community.

Other scholars like Lowrey, Brozana, and Mackay (2008) depict community journalism as “intimate, caring, and personal; it reflects the community and tells its stories; and it embraces a leadership role” (p. 276). Therefore, community journalism shapes the thinking of the community by helping its members become fully engaged in the social, political, religious, and economic life of the community. Focusing on local community issues results in telling relevant stories that would not have been captured by the mainstream media. Killenberg and Dardenne (1997) maintained that community journalism is relevant for capturing the news of local communities:

We know that by approaching people in their neighborhoods and gathering places and writing about what we find there we can provide interesting, provocative, and valuable content that doesn’t fit the forms of traditional news coverage. Our approach includes stories about good deeds by average folks and about institutions and organizations that seem to be working, and it brings more voices and perspectives to the news (p. 56).

Additionally, Wilson Lowrey and George L. Daniels (2017) observed that:

Communities benefit most when journalists are authentically embedded within their communities and when citizens believe they themselves play a legitimate role in not just having conversations, but in shaping agendas and communicating
pertinent, everyday information about their community’s structures and processes” (p. 337).

The symbiotic relationship that exists between the community and journalists is significant to bringing people together in the community to discuss important issues affecting them. Nyirubugara (2014) added that community journalism reflects viewpoints “from the bottom” and the “unspoken words” from the marginalized communities. Thus, community journalism mainly focuses on the community rather than the national media agenda or the needs of political masters.

Many scholars have looked at the connection between media and the community. Park (1922) and Morris (1967) proposed that community journalism assisted local people re-envision their community and helped them agree on how to build their community. Stamm (1985) suggested that people’s “ties” to their local area could be fortified by means of an interactive connection between residents and the local news, and the other way around. McLeod (2005) and partners have recommended that macro-level factors, for example, local area security and media markets empower or debilitate networks for public conversation; thus, conversation shapes residents’ contribution to public discussions in the community (Friedland and Shah, 2005).

In the African context, Ate and Ikerodah (2012) argued that community journalism is embedded in people’s lives because of its strength in giving people a common identity by providing a forum where local people participate in the governance of their communities. According to Kurpius (1999), journalism that connects people in the community benefits the locals in various ways: “increased diversity, greater depth and context of the news coverage, and a stronger understanding of the various communities
that make a particular viewing area” (p. 3). Community journalism is a platform where people identify priorities and concerns that are of great importance to the community. Due to its role of bringing people together in most rural parts of Africa, Ate and Ikerodah (2012) argued that community media is considered by many people as a “soothing balm for advocacy and developmental journalism” (p. 54). Hence, it is through forums such as community radio that people are able to talk about developmental projects to the community.

Definition of Community

One of the prominent concerns for Chikuni Radio is its relationship with the audience. In more general terms, Chikuni Radio is more focussed on how the two concepts, journalism and community, are related to the station’s vision and mission. Scholars in journalism, anthropology, and sociology have asked many questions regarding the term “community.” Four prominent questions keep recurring: (1) How do you define a community and who says it does exist? (2) What is journalism and to what extent should journalists concern themselves with community matters? (3) Who is a journalist particularly in the context of local journalism? (4) Finally, is it really necessary for people to tell their stories in their community? All these questions are pertinent to community media like Chikuni Radio. Responses to these questions will reveal whether the services of the local media are relevant to their audience.

Bruhn (2011), stated that the term community “generally implies that there are relationships between a group of people, in a certain geographical locale or in cyberspace that go beyond casual acknowledgement” (p. 12). These groups of individuals create a community because they share common values, goals, and to a larger extent communal
responsibility. It is in such an environment that community journalism is experienced and conducted.

Peck (1987) suggested that the use of term community should be restricted to “a group of individuals who have learned how to communicate honestly with each other, whose relationships go deeper than their masks of composure, and who have developed some sufficient commitment to ‘rejoice together, mourn together,’ and to ‘delight in each other, make others’ conditions our own’” (p. 59). Loewy (1993) supplemented Peck’s suggested meaning of community by stating that “in true communities, members share a common belief in community itself as a uniting value. In such communities suffering is held to a minimum, solidarity is firm, and purpose is strong” (p. 234). From this we can deduce that Peck’s and Loewy’s characterizations of community portray social networks that sociologist Bruhn (2011) calls “tight,” “strong,” or “closed.”

Not all communities exclude non-members, but most do guard their boundaries so as to uphold the uniqueness of their culture and the affinity of individual members – religious and tribal communities, for example. Sometimes this watchfulness requires that individuals who violate the customs of the community be ostracized. Members of a religious order, for example, may be punished for violating vows. Nonetheless, the point is that a community consists of people whose aspirations are guided by shared norms and values.

The definition of community raises the question of what features a network must have to qualify as a community. Nyirubugara (2014) in his volume, Mobile Community Reporting identified “mutual knowledge among the members’ face-to-face contact and
communication, and the members’ sense of belonging to the community” (p. 23) as features upon which any community is built.

Without mutual and intimate knowledge, a community has no basis on which to identify itself as a community. As anthropologist Murdock (1949) puts it, “every member is ordinarily acquainted more or less intimately with every other member and has learned through association to adapt his behavior to that of each of his fellows” (p. 82). The identified close acquaintance here does not end at knowing the names and ages of siblings, dads and mums of community members. The relationship goes beyond that, as everyone’s life is interwoven in the larger community life. This entails that each member’s joyful and sorrowful moments are known by other community members. Hence, one’s joyful and sorrowful moments become those of the whole community as well.

In brief, “community” alludes to a gathering of individuals living within restricted geological zones, knowing each other well, and supporting face-to-face, incessant contact and communication. Community entails mutual language, common habits and customs, and shared interests and values that effect a sense of belonging, solidarity, and unwavering fidelity to the members of the community. Therefore, the description and definition of the community depicts an environment that can be augmented by community journalism to facilitate a platform where people can discuss issues in the community.

**Community Media as a Platform for Community Journalism**

Phiri-Chibbonta (2015) wrote that in Zambia, like most other African nations, community media like radio is the most important community journalism source.
Karikari (2000) argued that community media denotes any media that are “devoted to the social, political and cultural interests and aspirations of identifiable groups resident in particular geographical areas within a country or within its provinces and/or sharing common specific social economic cultural or political experiences and interests” (p. 47). In this case, Chikuni Radio is a community media that was established to serve the people in the Southern Province of Zambia.

Like Phiri-Chibbonta (2015), Moore and Gillis (2005) in “Transforming Communities: Community Journalism in Africa” argued that the future of community journalism in Africa is reliant on community media such as radio. Appolus (2003) argued that radio as the platform for community journalism “is the basis for popular participation by the majority of people [for they] are able to articulate their development, cultural and socio-economic needs” (p. 12). She adds that community radio provides a forum that allows people’s opinions to be heard and ultimately contributes to establishing a community among dissenting people.

Juutinen (2008) stated that community radio is significant to African communities because people primarily get information through radio. Moreover, it is how people can participate in topics that regard the development, upholding, and promoting culture in the community (Wanyeki, 2000). Therefore, discussing community journalism in Africa involves talking of community media like radio stations that are common platforms connected to specific communities in the country.

Mhlanga (2009) argued that, as a type of radio broadcasting, community radio gives the preeminent stage to locally based developmental projects that are socially and locally characterized. Opubor (2008) argued that for a locale to develop itself there
should a platform for it to “exchange initiatives, information and meanings in the process of defining, creating and maintaining a group identity and interests for survival within a specifiable geographical and/or cultural space” (p. 779).

A community radio provides an ideal platform for people in the community to participate in public discussions and decision-making processes. For Fraser and Restrepo-Estrada (2002) the development and success of any local radio broadcast are dependent on the local people’s “sense of internal cohesion and consciousness” on the challenges the community faces and its ability to solve such problems through community discussion and participation (p. 71). The community’s participation is key to the continued existence of any community radio. In turn, individuals in the community are able to encounter, communicate with, and come to know one another. The World Association of Community Broadcasters (AMARC) (1994) ascertained that it is essential to “recognize that community radio is an ideal means of fostering freedom of expression and information, the development of culture, the freedom to form and confront opinions and actively participate in local life” (p. 16) In this way community radio is regularly seen as assuming a significant function in socially sensitive and locally based development. In turn, community radio is firmly connected to local people’s participation in the everyday life of their community.

Rosemary Day (2003) argued that it is within the framework of community radio that people exercise free speech and freedom of information. With such freedoms, Day (2003) argued, local people become active participants in public life. It is by being active participants that citizens without outside influence are able to hold each other accountable in regard to their common life together. Boafo (2000) observed that “Community or
Participatory Broadcasting is initiated and controlled by members of a community of interest, or a geographical community, to express their concerns, needs and aspirations without outside interference” (p. 45). Bwalya (2004) also stated that community radio is “A social process or event in which members of the community associate together to design programs and produce and air them, thus taking the primary role of actors in their own destiny” (p. 17). The concept of community radio is summarized by Zane Ibrahim: “community radio is ‘10% radio, 90% community.’ It is a case of the community moving into broadcasting rather than broadcasting moving into the community” (Lewis, 2008, p. 13).

Moore and Gillis (2005) said that community radio in Africa is the voice of the voiceless. Furthermore, it motivates community journalists to report concerns about community initiatives that would empower the local people. The national media rarely cover issues that happen in some small places because the media are focused on political issues that benefit those in power (Nyirubugara, 2014). Sam Phiri (2017), in “End of an era and the debacle of cross-border media building projects in Africa,” observed that the national media, which are mainly under the control of the government, are biased towards those in political positions. As such, the voices of many communities are largely left out in the public forum discussions.

For Karikari (2000), community journalism “present an alternative discourse from the communication agenda set by the dominant socio-political or even cultural order” (p. 47). Largely, community journalism provides a talking platform for people whose voices do not frequently feature in the mainstream media. Similarly, Harcup (2003) stated that “Whereas the mainstream has a tendency to privilege the powerful, [community] media
set out to privilege the powerless and the marginal; to offer a perspective” (p. 371) that reflects the feelings and concerns of the local people.

Jock Lauterer (1995) argued that by giving local people a platform to engage with others in the community, community radio facilitates an “affirmation of the sense of community, a positive and intimate reflection of our sense of place, a stroke for our us-ness, our extended family-ness and our profound and interlocking connectedness” (p. 9). Thus, local people feel empowered when they participate in the betterment of society through community journalism.

Clemencia Rodriguez (2011) argued that community media may be a forum that facilitate unity among people. She contends that “the role of [community] media is to go beyond journalistic coverage and to focus on the communication needs and daily realities of the people in their communities” (p. 233). Thus, community journalist’s ability to establish good relationships among local people allows the media to take the role of community building. As this thesis explored which approaches and practices Chikuni Radio journalists use to create that sense of community, the relevance of problem-solving and advocacy became relevant. Therefore, the following sections delve into solutions and advocacy journalism and how they connect to the work of community journalists.

**Solution and Advocacy Journalism**

Solution journalism is a way of reporting where journalists are asked to identify possible solutions to problems being reported (Curry and Hammonds, 2014). In most instances, journalists report on many social ills in society that are not acted upon. Walth, Dahmen, and Thier (2019) argued that reporting of problems alone “does not fulfil the
journalistic role” in the modern world (p. 179). Kovach and Rosenstiel (2007) contended that journalists have a duty of going beyond mere reporting of problems:

The press should recognize where powerful institutions are working effectively as well as where they are not. How can the press purport to monitor the powerful if it does not illustrate successes as well as failures? Endless criticisms lose meaning, and the public has no basis for judging good from bad (p. 174).

In a similar way, Schudson (2011) argued that journalists have a mandate to monitor which policies are producing positive results and those that do not have an impact on people. In the quest to move to action, Amiel and Powers (2019) argued that solutions journalism take a step further in finding solutions to the problems that are reported by “accurately and dispassionately highlighting efforts to address such ills” (p. 233-4). The key to solution journalism is covering news stories that are solution-oriented as opposed to problem-oriented.

Despite scholars using the term solution journalism since at least the 1990s (Benesch, 1998), it is only recently that solution journalism was defined (McIntyre, 2019). The Solutions Journalism Network, an organization located in New York that promotes solution journalism, indicates that this kind of news coverage “investigates and explains, in a critical and clear-eye way, examples of people working toward solutions” as a way to “provide valuable insights about how communities may more effectively tackle serious problems” (Solutions Journalism Network, 2017). Walth, Dahmen, and Thier (2019) argued that there are four traits to solutions news: “a response to a well-established social problem, evidence of results, insights about why solutions work, and the limitations of success factors for possible response replication and response
limitations” (p. 180). These four attributes guide journalists in the practice of solutions journalism as they strive to contribute to the improvement of lives among people.

Apart from the practice of solutions journalism to aid citizens, journalists also contribute to community development by practicing advocacy journalism. Waisbord (2008) argued that the aim of advocacy journalism is to “raise awareness, generate public debate, influence public opinion and key decision-makers, and promote policy and programmatic changes around specific issues” (p. 371). According to Janowitz (1975), advocacy journalists cast themselves as spokespersons of citizens who are not able to speak for themselves or seen as disadvantaged people in the face of those who hold political power. Advocacy journalism seeks to address the power balance between the government and its citizens by raising social ills that need to be addressed. The journalism of advocacy stresses more on the “why” rather than the traditional journalistic “5 Ws” (Barnhurst and Mutz, 1997; Salgado and Strömbäck, 2012). Bill Moyers argued that it is “not because you’re trying to tell people what to think, but because you hope the viewer will find a new way of framing his thoughts about a particular subject” (quoted in Hirsch 1991, p. 191).

Fisher (2016) stated that “advocacy is about pleading another’s cause or arguing in support of an idea, event, or a person” (p. 712). This kind of journalism demand reporters to seek accountability on behalf of those who are perceived as voiceless. However, the objectivity required by journalists is not necessary applied in advocacy journalism. McQuail (2013) argued that professional objectivity demands that journalists should be “neutral and detached recorder of ‘reality’ producing a fact-based, reliable account of events for the reader” (p. 210). In contrast, journalists have turned from being
“independent interpreters of events” to “brokers in symbols” (Carey 1965, p. 137).

Journalists’ focus goes beyond the duty of reporting as they advocate for change in the communities.

**Research Questions**

Both the literature review and theoretical framework discussed the community as the focus of community journalism. Journalists play an essential role in providing a forum for the dissemination information to their audience. It is through such forums that the community often finds means of developing itself. At the same time, community radio is situated within the larger political structure of the country in which it is located which, in turn, plays a role in how community journalism plays out. Against this backdrop, this study addresses the following broad research question:

RQ1: What specific journalistic practices do Chikuni Radio reporters employ to build the community?

Considering the potential incorporation of solutions and advocacy journalism approaches and practices to community journalism in Chikuni Radio, this study proposes the following sub-research questions to narrow the focus of analysis:

RQ1a: What is the role of advocacy journalism in Chikuni Radio’s community building efforts?

RQ1b: What is the role of solutions journalism in Chikuni Radio’s community building efforts?
Methodology

To answer this question, I conducted a study of Chikuni Radio journalists to examine how community journalism contributes to community building in rural Zambia. I conducted interviews with nine - past and present community journalists from Chikuni Radio in order to find out how their journalistic work and practices contribute to community building.

Jaber F. Gubrium and James A. Holstein (2002) argued that interviews have been used to get information and have now become “an integral, constitutive feature of our daily lives” (p. 11). Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (2000) stated that in interviews, researchers endeavor to gain individuals’ perspective on a subject being studied. The goal of interviews is to allow people to talk so that one can get insights of people’s experiences that cannot be gained by observation.

Meanwhile, Judith L. M. McCoyd and Toba Schwaber Kerson (2006) described the method of data collection through interviews as “the gold standard” (p. 400) and “the most productive mode for producing narrative data” (Holt, 2010, p. 113). Therefore, this study uses an in-depth semi-structured interview based on the community journalism research questions. According to Robyn Longhurst (2009), an in-depth semi-structured interview is a verbal exchange where one individual, the interviewer, endeavors to acquire data from someone else by asking questions. An in-depth interview helps an interviewer to get information beyond yes or no answers. Carolyn L. Mears (2012) state that the goal of the interview is “to discover and record what [the interviewee] has
experienced, what he or she thinks and feels about [the topic], and what significance or meaning it might have” (p. 170). Through interviews, this study draws the experience of interviewees regarding community journalism in Zambia.

Fergus Lyon (2012) notes that since carrying out interviews is a personal way of collecting information, there is a need to develop a certain level of trust with interviewees. To establish a relationship with Chikuni Radio community journalists and editors, I sent them informal messages through WhatsApp, Facebook, and emails. Since most of the journalists are former workmates, their responses were forthcoming. The one-on-one interviews took place via Microsoft Teams, a technology that is available and accessible to Chikuni Radio journalists. The journalists interviewed included two females and seven males. The journalists’ community journalism experience ranged from three to fourteen years. Of the nine, seven worked between five and fourteen years, while only two journalists had an experience of three years working at Chikuni Radio. Five of the interviewed journalists are still working at Chikuni Radio while four have moved on and are employed elsewhere. Of the four, two are media trainers at BBC Media Action in Zambia, one is a broadcaster at Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation (ZNBC), and the last one works as a communications and outreach advisor under the German Development Agency called GIZ. The interviews ranged from 50 to 80 minutes in length, with an average of 65 minutes.

**Thematic Content Analysis**

This study uses thematic content analysis to analyze the data in the interview transcripts. Vaismoradi, Jones, Turunen, and Snelgrove (2016) state that the goal of thematic content analysis is to identify themes and patterns in the collected data.
Qualitative data derived from interviews start as raw and descriptive words that a researcher transforms into classifiable themes and patterns through analysis (Aronson, 1994). The analysis is inductive as themes are not forced upon by the analyst but arise from the collected information.

Braun and Clarke (2006) and Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest six steps in the process of thematic analysis: 1) transcription of the interviews, 2) coding of data, 3) identification of possible themes, 4) reassessing the codes in connection with the themes, 5) characterizing and identifying of themes, and finally, 6) writing of the analysis. For Braun and Clarke (2006) the first stage involves what is called open coding where the analyst finds themes which s/he ascribe a code with the goal of reducing the collected information into smaller categories. In the second stage, axial coding, the analyst classifies the coded data into groups and after that s/he makes associations among the stipulated themes for easy expounding of particular concepts and topics within the coded data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The identified themes and concepts guide the researcher to write the findings and conclusions.

For this study, I transcribed the interviews and then coded the data. Then, I categorized the themes before I looked at how they are related to each other, making assessments in light of my theoretical framework and the research question. During the interviews, I also jotted down themes that I thought were emanating from what I was hearing from journalists and editors. I continued to jot down themes during transcription. That way, I became familiar with the data and some of the prominent themes that were coming out during the interviews. When I finished the transcription, I read through the
transcribed interviews and continued the process of theme identification. Finally, I merged all the related themes to avoid duplication of topics.

Findings

The purpose of this study was to examine how community journalists at Chikuni Radio practiced their craft in an effort to build community in southern Zambia. To achieve its purpose, six community journalists and three editors from Chikuni Radio in Zambia were interviewed to determine how their journalistic practices contributed to or hindered community life for their audiences. Considering the participants’ responses, two themes that contain an array of distinct journalistic practices emerged: 1) Community radio audiences as active collaborators, 2) Advocacy as part of community journalism. The following sections provide an analysis of these themes and some of the data excerpts that support each of these findings.

Community Radio Audience as Active Collaborators

The analysis of interviews revealed four practical ways through which Chikuni Radio journalists treated its audience as active agents and collaborators in newsmaking: (a) engaging in ‘legwork’ reporting, (b) local citizens as newsmakers and news consultants, (c) local citizens as authoritative sources, and (d) culturally responsive storytelling.

‘Legwork’ Reporting: Journalists in the Community

Participants defined ‘legwork’ as the routine of physically visiting places within the community that Chikuni Radio serves. Jyde Hamoonga, a journalist and former Chikuni Radio manager now working as a Communications and outreach advisor under
the Germany Development Agency GIZ, said that the aim of ‘legwork’ was to “establish a mutual relationship by having a face-to-face conversation with the people who listen to the community radio station” (Jyte Hamoonga, personal communication, March 12, 2021). Vanessa Nchimunya Mweemba, a another former Chikuni Radio journalist but now working as a Media Trainer at BBC Media Action Zambia stated that “establishing a mutual relationship allows journalists to have first-hand information about the local people and the issues that they are facing in the community” (Vanessa Nchimunya Mweemba, personal communication, March 8, 2021). This is consistent with Reader and Hatcher’s (2012) argument that a community is a ‘place of inquiry’ for those who want to understand their local environment to have a solid link to the area. Reader and Hatcher (2012) also assert that having a solid relationship with the community allows journalists to occupy “a prominent place in a community’s life and conversation” (p. 4). Therefore, legwork helps the reporters to have a broader knowledge of their audience and the issues that pertain to the community.

Mweemba said that practicing community journalism requires reporters to connect with their audience. She further said that the connection between the community and the journalists “creates an environment that allows reporters and citizens to share relevant information that benefits people in the community” (Vanessa Nchimunya Mweemba, personal communication, March 8, 2021).

Mweemba made a link between knowing one’s audience and being a relevant journalist. She argued that as a journalist, “one needs to know the audience because that will allow the radio programming to respond to the needs of that particular audience” (Vanessa Nchimunya Mweemba a, personal communication, March 8, 2021). In turn, the
content on the radio platform would reflect the needs of the people as local people’s voices are encompassed in the programming of the radio station.

Wellington Moyo, now a broadcaster at Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation (ZNBC), added that working in the community is about “treating every individual as a newsmaker or as newsworthy, making the local population the primary source of news” (Wellington Moyo, personal communication, March 7, 2021). This resonates with Nyirubugara’s (2014) assertion that community journalism should reflect “what the bottom thinks” (p. 44). Thus, as opposed to national media that aim at getting voices of prominent people in society, reporters at Chikuni Radio are “focused on researching stories from ordinary citizens to bring out voices that are rarely captured” (Jyde Hamoonga, personal communication, March 12, 2021). To some extent, everyone in the area becomes a potential news source.

Additionally, the involvement of “ordinary citizens as newsmakers is a way of empowering voices that have been marginalized by the national media” (Wellington Moyo, personal communication, March 7, 2021). Karrus Hang’andu, the deputy news editor at Chikuni Radio, said that journalists tell the stories that matter “without paying attention to news determinants like prominence and eminence where journalists want to chase the official voices of government authorities” (Karrus Hang’andu, personal communication, March 10, 2021). What is essential for the journalists at Chikuni Radio is “to engage in news stories” journalists described as “authentic voices of ordinary people” (Vanessa Nchimunya Mweemba, personal communication, March 8, 2021). Mweemba describes the journalism that involves ordinary people as an “extension of what democracy entails, thus, by the people, of the people, and for the people” (Vanessa
Nchimunya Mweemba, personal communication, March 8, 2021). Therefore, citizens are greatly encouraged to be “involved in the everyday activities of the community broadcasting platform” (Karrus Hang’andu, personal communication, March 10, 2021).

Local Citizens as Newsmakers and News Consultants

According to participants, Chikuni Radio journalists developed two strategies to allow people to use their voices to participate in the local news and programming: 1) training citizen journalists to become voices of the radio station in the community, and 2) training citizens to be eyes and ears of the radio station in the community. In a way, this is an extension of journalists’ practices of treating ordinary community members as collaborators.

To include local voices on the radio platform, Chikuni Radio journalists trained young people, mainly local farmers, to write news stories from their areas. Before citizen journalists begun working, the reporters invited them to attend workshops to “learn news writing, learn about defamation, about slander and just the journalism ethics” (Vanessa Nchimunya Mweemba, personal communication, March 8, 2021). According to Moono Hamasukwa, the Chikuni Radio news editor, the week-long workshops for citizen journalist are funded by the Chikuni radio station. The program has served 32 volunteers from selected villages (Moono Hamasukwa, personal communication, March 11, 2021). Hamasukwa noted that the workshops are held three times a year. After the initial workshop, Hang’andu said that the citizen journalists begin their duty of collecting news in their communities. At the radio station, these stories “are edited, verified, and run on a radio show called Cuundu Acisi Coonse, which simply means community news” (Karrus
Hang’andu, personal communication, March 10, 2021). The journalists observed that community news makes the people feel that they are part of the community radio station.

Fredinand Syanyuka, the programmes manager at Chikuni Radio, said that the journalists’ goal in engaging citizen journalism is to “reflect the local news content and current affairs within the radio station’s daily broadcasts” (Fredinand Syanyuka, March 12, 2021). This practice is in line with the argument that citizen journalism allows “citizens to play an active role in reporting, analysis, or distribution of news” in the community (Holton, Coddington, and Zúñiga, 2013, p. 721-22). By training citizen journalists, the reporters allow the local people to be the station’s voice. In addition, the interviews with journalists reveal that the news that is “people-oriented” and “location-specific news” help the community to be informed about local events in their area. Without the help of citizen journalists, such news may not be covered.

Furthermore, reporters during the interviews argued that journalism in a community setup should be a conversation among citizens where people assume responsibility of telling a story from their perspective. That is consistent with Nyirubugara’s (2014), observation that the philosophy of community journalism is to allow people in the community to “tell their own story from their perspective” (p. 16). In this way, community journalism is at the center of community activities where local values are promoted and preserved. Therefore, citizens contributed to bringing out the voices of fellow community members on Chikuni Radio.

Additionally, Chikuni Radio journalists trained some citizens to participate in radio listening groups to become proficient sources and providers of story ideas (Jyde Hamoonga, personal communication, March 12, 2021). Hamasukwa said that Chikuni
Radio has 55 radio listening groups spread across its catchment area in southern Zambia. “Each group consists of 15 to 20 members,” allowing Chikuni Radio journalists to have an average of a thousand people “helping to identify local issues needing discussion” (Moono Hamasukwa, personal communication, March 11, 2021).

Matongo Maumbi, a media producer at BBC Media Action Zambia, said that Chikuni Radio reporters helped to equip the listening clubs with audio recorders to record radio shows. These groups also come up with their own radio shows when they realize that they have a series of topics that need to be discussed. They are “mentored and trained by the radio station journalists to tell stories from the community in the best way that they can” (Matongo Maumbi, personal communication, March 11, 2021). This is one way of encouraging community members to use their voices by participating in the news. Rennie (2006) argues that non-media professionals should be encouraged to express their views on community issues. That way, citizens are not just passive listeners, but they also add their voices to community discussions.

Furthermore, Maumbi said that the “radio listening clubs provide feedback to the radio journalists regarding the relevance of some topics discussed on the radio forums”. The clubs are a source of effective feedback because the listeners also live among the people who listen to the radio station (Matongo Maumbi, personal communication, March 11, 2021). For example, Hamoonga said that if Chikuni Radio reporters invited health experts to “discuss Covid-19 vaccines on a radio show, the clubs would listen to the show and later record another show to respond to what they heard. Often, they would pay attention to the language used by experts. Was it simple enough to be understood by ordinary people in the village?” (Jyde Hamoonga, personal communication, March 12,
Hamoonga noted that some experts would “use terms that the local audience can potentially misinterpret. In such cases, the listening clubs help the radio station find alternative ways to explain the issue” (Jyde Hamoonga, personal communication, March 12, 2021). Hence, listening groups help “bridge the information gap allowing the radio station to broadcast relevant information to the masses” (Jyde Hamoonga, personal communication, March 12, 2021).

The listening clubs can also “suggest topics to be discussed on the radio platform depending on pertinent issues they observe in the community” (Moono Hamasukwa, personal communication, March 11, 2021). When the radio listening clubs suggest stories, Hamasukwa, the news editor, said that such stories are routinely picked up by journalists for further investigations. He adds that most of the suggested stories were headline news stories. In short, radio listening clubs play a key role in “ensuring that the news flows from the community to the radio station” (Matongo Maumbi, personal communication, March 11, 2021).

In summary, citizen journalists and radio listening groups were trained to identify and collect news in the villages, thereby strengthening the local people’s voices on the radio. Chikuni Radio journalists also considered these groups as the “first point of contact” in the community. They pointed to the citizens’ concerns (Matongo Maumbi, personal communication, March 11, 2021). As a result, local voices became prominent throughout the radio discussions.

**Local Citizens as Authoritative Sources**

Mweemba asserted that reporting news starts with “finding authentic community voices, credible enough on a particular issue” within the community (Vanessa Mweemba
Nchimunya, personal communication, March 8, 2021). For example, while reporting on
the lack of clean water in a particular area, Mweemba would use members of that
community as the main sources for the story. Mweemba said journalists need “an
authentic recording of people’s voices talking about their experiences of fetching unsafe
water from the wells.” She added that reporters should also ask people about “their health
challenges” regarding the water that might cause “waterborne diseases” among the local
population (Vanessa Mweemba Nchimunya, personal communication, March 8, 2021).
For Mweemba, the authentic voices consist of people who are directly or indirectly
affected by a particular issue. Similarly, Maumbi, a subscriber of an adage “nothing for
us without us,” argued that:

If journalists want to talk about disabilities, they should bring someone who has
a disability. If they want to talk about women, then they bring a woman onboard.
If they want talk about the youths, then they bring a youth onboard so that they
speak for themselves, as opposed to letting them just to be listeners (Matongo
Maumbi, personal communication, March 11, 2021).

Maumbi believed that the inclusion of local voices was cardinal in community media
because it is a “source of credible voices on topics under discussion” (Matongo Maumbi,
personal communication, March 11, 2021). Mweemba asserts that the critical part of
community journalism is to “ensure the voices are authentic and that they reflect the
community issues” affecting the people (Vanessa Mweemba Nchimunya, personal
communication, March 8, 2021).
Culturally Responsive Storytelling

The professional practices of Chikuni Radio reporters and editors cater to the particular customs, practices, and ways of communicating that define their audiences. This was a deliberate effort to effectively communicate to people using the traditional channels they have used for centuries to tell their stories. This practice resonates with the notion of cultural responsiveness – developed in education and sociology scholarship – which determine that the use of cultural characteristics, experience, and perspective of diverse individuals is conducive to better education, communication, and social outcomes (Dogini, 2016).

Hamasukwa said that “local people have an oral culture through which norms and traditions are relayed from the older to the young generation” (Moono Hamasukwa, personal communication, March 11, 2021). Specifically, Syanyuka noted that one way people passed information from one generation to the next was through music (Fredinand Syanyuka, March 12, 2021). According to Maumbi, songs tell a story of “what kind of event is taking place depending on the traditional music being played.” He said that there is music for “a birth in the family, initiation for either a boy or girl, wedding ceremony, or a thanksgiving celebration” (Matongo Maumbi, personal communication, March 11, 2021).

Among the Chikuni Radio audience, music and drama were the traditional ways through which people communicated among themselves. The journalists and editors explored music and radio dramas as journalistic practice to disseminate information. Music and radio dramas also became a practice through which journalists advocated for better health, education, agriculture, and political services.
The journalists who were interviewed believed that music plays a key role in sharing and promoting cultural stories in the community. Mweemba started that Chikuni Radio station has a “mandate to reflect cultural values in the daily broadcast and challenge the cultural aspects that are no longer relevant in the modern world” (Vanessa Nchimunya Mweemba, personal communication, March 8, 2021). For example, during the early days of HIV/AIDS epidemic, “the local custom of sexual cleansing of people who had lost spouses was challenged. Artists would sing about the culture of sexual cleansing¹ that significantly contributed to the spread of the HIV.” The songs against such a culture “highlighted the danger of holding on to some customs” (Vanessa Nchimunya Mweemba, personal communication, March 8, 2021).

Additionally, Hamoonga said that music artists also shed “light on issues, such as violence against women, child abuse, defilement, and rape” (Jyde Hamoonga, personal communication, March 12, 2021). The local news also prompted artists to sing songs against culturally irrelevant norms that were reported to be putting people’s health at risks. For example, if certain vices like child abuse were rampant and frequently reported on the news, the “local band composed a song about it to ensure that the community knows that this is not right or this is wrong, or we can no longer live like this, even if this is our culture” (Vanessa Nchimunya Mweemba, personal communication, March 8, 2021). Mweemba further said that through music, the culture was used to challenge itself and evolve to suit the contemporary world.

¹ Sexual cleansing is an African tradition practice where a woman is required to have sexual intercourse as a cleansing ritual after she is bereaved. Surviving widows are considered “unclean” and must undergo sexual cleansing rituals after the death of their husbands.
Additionally, people in southern Zambia use music to express thoughts they could not make public otherwise. Music among local people is embedded in their “community structure as a talking space” (Karrus Hang’andu, personal communication, March 10, 2021). Hamoonga added that music “broadens the platform through which the voices of the people are heard, because those who cannot speak can actually sing” about issues affecting them in the community (Jyde Hamoonga, personal communication, March 12, 2021). Journalists incorporated music in their journalistic practices to give further opportunities for people to discuss issues through music.

Since music allows people to freely express themselves and share both controversial and non-controversial issues, Chikuni Radio journalists decided to hold a yearly music festival on their airwaves. According to Hamoonga, the songs “are not mere songs, but they always have a very fundamental message that reaches to the heart of the people”. He further said that such messages included a campaign for “children’s rights, a fight against corruption, promoting education, peace, and unity” (Jyde Hamoonga, personal communication, March 12, 2021). Hang’andu also stated that the songs are a “reflection of what is transpiring in the community. Local artists highlight issues that alert political leaders who might want to respond to the local issues” (Karrus Hang’andu, personal communication, March 10, 2021). Again, at the heart of the revelation of local issues were Chikuni Radio journalists who identified music as a mode of communication among local people.

Apart from music, study participants asserted that radio drama series are also effective in attracting the community’s attention to grasp a complex idea or concept. Maumbi said that radio drama series make people laugh, but it also:
Help[s] break the barrier of talking about so many things in the community. And when designed in radio drama form, people are able to relate to it in real life. It becomes easy to understand and as such provoke a discussion in the community (Matongo Maumbi, personal communication, March 11, 2021).

For example, Maumbi said that topics surrounding child defilement perpetuated by close family members hinged on community taboos and were not to be discussed in public. To help people talk about it, journalists designed a radio drama series where the public would generally talk about such topics (Matongo Maumbi, personal communication, March 11, 2021). Chikuni journalists also explored gender norms through drama series and how the power struggles influence sexual relations between men and women, and inclusivity of women in elected offices.

**Advocacy as Part of Community Journalism**

The aspect of advocacy became salient as Chikuni Radio journalists and editors indicated that they engaged directly in practices and campaigns to help local people solve problems and demand results from civic and government leaders. This is consistent with the argument that advocate journalists cast themselves as spokespeople for the public who might have less leverage to speak to authorities (Janowitz 1975). The role of advocacy among Chikuni Radio journalists manifested itself in two ways: 1) as collaborative problem-solving, and 2) pedagogical efforts.

**Collaborative Problem-solving as Community Journalism Practice**

Chikuni Radio reporters deemed it important to provide listeners with a forum where people were encouraged to speak about problems and possible solutions to the community’s issues. Through what they call a public debate radio show, Mweemba said,
the journalists provided a platform to the Chona community to discuss the shortage of teachers in their local school. The journalists also invited Vimbi Mateke, the district education board secretary (DEBS), who promised to send a teacher to Chona Community School. In a later interview, Mweemba confirmed that the DEBS assigned a trained teacher to the school (Vanessa Nchimunya Mweemba, personal communication, March 8, 2021). Hamasukwa also added that “when journalists went on the ground, they were also able to confirm that the DEBS did what he promised” (Moono Hamasukwa, personal communication, March 11, 2021).

Maumbi said that the interaction of the local community and the education officer on a radio show illustrates “how journalists encourage communities to solve problems using the station as a platform.” This is supported by Carey (1965), who argued that advocacy journalists have turned to be power brokers in society for they advocate for better public services for the people. Maumbi added that the local people feel empowered in that their voice helps them actualize hidden potentials necessary for their development (Matongo Maumbi, personal communication, March 11, 2021).

Advocacy and problem-solving became central as the community struggled with the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the early 2000s. Chikuni Radio journalists produced content that not only informed about but advocated for the needs of the community. Maumbi said that HIV/AIDS was one of the “worst challenges facing the rural communities.” He observed that HIV/AIDS patients were unable to afford costs for antiretroviral drugs. Journalists, then, spearheaded a “campaign to pressurize the government to make the antiretroviral therapy free to public” (Matongo Maumbi, personal communication, March 11, 2021). The campaign resulted into the government “putting up a policy that the
antiretroviral therapy will be provided free of charge” for all citizens (Matongo Maumbi, personal communication, March 11, 2021). This campaign resonates with the idea that solutions journalism makes an effort to address problems in the community (Amiel and Powers, 2019).

These experiences signal that community journalism platforms like Chikuni Radio are spaces that enable local empowerment. By “providing a forum for citizens to meet their community leaders for checks-and-balances” (Jyde Hamoonga, personal communication, March 12, 2021), advocacy became the community journalists’ responsibility. Hamoonga also said that there was an improved engagement between citizens and the local authorities which resulted “in some governance issues being addressed” (Jyde Hamoonga, personal communication, March 12, 2021).

Like many other radio stations in Zambia, Chikuni Radio journalists have experienced government persecution for their work. For instance, Maumbi said that he and his colleague, Hamoonga, were arrested for allegedly threatening national security. Maumbi attributed their arrest to the advocacy work in which reporters were involved in helping the community to come together to resolve community problems (Matongo Maumbi, personal communication, March 11, 2021). Maumbi revealed that they were advocating to address the rampant murder cases that were happening in the community. The police considered the reporters’ advocacy as inciting and perpetuating violence (Matongo Maumbi, personal communication, March 11, 2021). This resonates with the report by the *African Media Barometer: Zambia* (2018) that reporters in Zambia are harassed and at times their workplaces shut down due to censorship by the state.
Pedagogical Efforts as Community Journalism Practice

Chikuni Radio journalists tried to provide a forum to particular groups in the community. From the forums for people to discuss ideas, journalists started to advocate for the local people to find solutions regarding issues such as health and education. From the analysis of the interviews, there are two pedagogical efforts that Chikuni Radio journalists used to engage the public for community development: 1) specialized forums for specific interest groups, and 2) Interactive Radio Instructions (IRIs).

According to Hamoonga, to properly address its diverse listeners, Chikuni Radio journalists segmented the audience to ensure that “each group or each demographic had content that spoke to their reality” (Jyde Hamoonga, personal communication, March 12, 2021). Hang’andu said that the segmentation pointed to a recognition of the particular needs of local farmers, the youth, men, and women. He also stated that respecting and paying attention to “the diversity of the audience is one of the fundamental tenets” in the success of community journalism (Karrus Hang’andu, personal communication, March 10, 2021). This is consistent with Chirwa’s (2010) argument that community journalism content provides a mirror of what is happening in the community based on demographic needs.

Chikuni Radio journalists developed forums for farmers to encourage them “to adapt to resilient climate agriculture by just speaking to other farmers who were practicing sustainable agriculture at their home states” (Vanessa Mweemba Nchimunya, personal communication, March 8, 2021). Radio shows, in this case, became a space where people could share ideas and exchange vital information regarding farming.
In the context of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, Syanyuka revealed that journalists addressed many other challenges apart from faulty policy. Issues ranged from “stigma in the community to food insecurity and HIV/AIDS patients shying away from taking antiretroviral medicine for HIV/AIDS patients” (Fredinand Syanyuka, March 12, 2021). “People didn’t want it to be known that they had the virus” because it was associated with promiscuity (Fredinand Syanyuka, March 12, 2021). Additionally, some infected people shunned the HIV/AIDS drugs because of a local conspiracy theory that asserted that the drugs were too risky (Matongo Maumbi, personal communication, March 11, 2021).

Facing stigma and misinformation, community journalists started educating people by inviting HIV/AIDS patients to share their experiences on the radio. “The goal was to highlight how the patients benefited from the drugs so that others who doubted the effectiveness of the drug can relent and start the medication” (Jyde Hamoonga, personal communication, March 12, 2021). According to Hamoonga, the testimonials changed the community’s mindset. He adds that in the following years – 2005 and 2006 – “many people came out freely to test, find out their HIV status, take on medication, and most importantly adhere to the guidelines of the treatment” (Jyde Hamoonga, personal communication, March 12, 2021).

Additionally, Maumbi said that the HIV/AIDS stories led to the formation of a support group known as Positive and Living Squads (PALS). Through PALS, people living with HIV started “telling their stories, encouraging others, learning the side effects of antiretroviral drugs, and getting strength from others who are in a similar situation” (Matongo Maumbi, personal communication, March 11, 2021). Maumbi further said that radio journalists partnered with experts from the local hospital to ensure that right
information was disseminated about the HIV/AIDS epidemic (Matongo Maumbi, personal communication, March 11, 2021).

Journalists also revealed that they addressed the stigma that disabled people and their families faced in the community. Hamoonga said that disabled people had a “radio show that allowed them to voice out their stories of hope and resilience” (Jyde Hamoonga, personal communication, March 12, 2021). Hamoonga believed that “voices of people with disability had the potential of changing the community’s negative attitude towards them.” He added that journalists talked to mothers who had children with disabilities, who were able to inspire other mothers to not hide their children and seek the medical care they needed (Jyde Hamoonga, personal communication, March 12, 2021).

Journalists’ formative radio shows, as illustrated, were instrumental in educating the various interest groups in the community. This educational process is in line with what the literature review revealed about community journalism being solution-oriented as opposed to problem-oriented (Amiel and Powers, 2019). Chikuni Radio journalists’ focus on social justice issues such as education and health also resonates with findings of studies on community, advocacy, and solutions journalism (Panos Southern Africa, 2002).

Apart from programming, Chikuni Radio reporters and editors deployed their platform as an educational tool to help address education gaps in the area. The journalists’ radio show, Interactive Radio Instructions (IRIs), provided school-age children with audio lessons, solar-powered radio sets, and mentoring networks to complement their learning experience (Matongo Maumbi, personal communication,
March 11, 2021). This is in line with Trucano’s (2010) argument that IRIs provides “improved educational quality and teaching practices through radio broadcasts.”

In partnership with the ministry of education, experienced primary school teachers and radio broadcasters designed 30-minute lessons for topics taught at primary school. Hang’andu said that each lesson contained “activities to be done and some silence in between to allow pupils and their teachers to perform given tasks” (Karrus Hang’andu, personal communication, March 10, 2021). Additionally, journalists helped communities to find mentors for the students. The “mentor should have attained a higher level of education to interpret the lessons in the local language for the children” (Jyde Hamoonga, personal communication, March 12, 2021). With the help of the journalists and mentors, Mweemba said, the children learned how to read and write and then go to a state school to pursue their high school education (Vanessa Mweemba Nchimunya, personal communication, March 8, 2021).

Hamoonga said that some of the early students of the IRI schools have graduated from colleges and became teachers. “Many of these teachers have gone back to their communities to help teach in the same radio interactive schools that accorded them access to formal and affordable education” (Jyde Hamoonga, personal communication, March 12, 2021). Therefore, radio for education is beneficial and relevant to the community Chikuni Radio journalists are serving.

**Discussion**
The goal of this study was to examine how community journalists practice their craft in an effort to build community. Furthermore, the study explored the role of solutions and advocacy journalism in the ethos and practice of community journalism by Chikuni Radio journalists. Considering the findings, three points can be drawn from the study. First, the journalists’ description of their work and motivations suggests that they see themselves as advocates of their community. They are not simply informing what is going on, but they help their audience to achieve tangible results in the community through advocacy. As Fisher (2016) puts it: advocacy is about fighting the cause of another individual or group of people hoping to see positive change in their lives. Journalists stepped in roles that are not traditionally theirs and actively accompanied the community to address state failures.

Journalists sought accountability from civic leaders on behalf of their audience. Janowitz (1975) argued that advocacy journalists cast themselves as spokespersons of citizens who are perceived to be disadvantaged in the face of those in authority. Due to advocacy from journalists, political leaders were compelled to address challenges that local people faced.

Additionally, journalists negotiated the allocation of resources with regional and national power brokers. The negotiations were done by interfacing with the citizens and their elected officials. Civic leaders were held accountable to the electorates regarding the social and infrastructure development in the communities. The interactions between citizens and their leaders led to allocating resources towards projects, such as building road infrastructure, educational facilities, and plenishing of teachers in elementary
learning institutions. Journalists provided checks and balances in the running of government affairs.

The community journalists did not only report about the status of problems but also pointed to how people could solve them, effectively practicing solutions journalism as defined by Curry and Hammonds (2014). Instead of just highlighting failures and criticizing elected leaders, journalists pointed to how people could solve their local challenges. Furthermore, Chikuni Radio journalists got directly involved in crafting solutions for the community. For example, the Radio Interactive Schools (IRI) initiative was a solution to the lack of formal schools in the community. The IRI schools indicate that journalists focused on solution-based stories and practices instead of only reporting on problems that citizens were facing.

Additionally, Chikuni Radio journalists were teaching skills and communal values. The skills taught to the community included agricultural skills that helped people produce food, journalistic skills that aided citizen reports and news sharing, and pedagogical skills to educate the local population. Editors and reporters employed their cultural competence and knowledge to further incorporate music and radio dramas to better inform about relevant yet challenging topics. Furthermore, these practices were a way to lean in the community’s oral culture. These traditional values and customs potentially contribute to keeping the community functional and united.

The journalists also enabled profitable community networks. The networks among citizens made it possible for people to contribute to the well-being of the community in areas like education, public health, and agriculture. This approach is consistent with Lowrey, Brozana, and Mackay (2008), who argued that community journalism makes
people aware of ideas they could share with others. They added that people were encouraged to be open about sharing information for the development of the community.

In summary, journalists’ work as advocates for the community meant that the journalists were not simply reporting on what was happening. Instead, they were imparting actionable knowledge and skills to people, reproducing and challenging communal values and practices, enabling profitable community networks, contributing to public health campaigns, and negotiating the allocation of resources with authorities. These journalistic practices went beyond how journalism is traditionally defined, especially in Western literature where journalists are called to present facts without attempting to interpret or act on them (McQuail 2013). The journalists became the spokespersons for the citizens, especially when the community needed accountability or action from their political and civic leaders. As a result, journalism and media theorists have to take note that the epistemologies and practices of community journalism in Africa are informed by different legacies that scholars ought to pay attention to.

The second point derived from the findings is that community journalism, as practiced by Chikuni Radio journalists, re-imagines the relationships between audiences and journalists. Contrary to traditional journalism, where journalists are detached from their audience, community journalists have a close relationship with the people they are serving. Chikuni Radio journalists work closely with the community to produce journalism work. Journalists see themselves as part of the community fabric, not just observers. Professional detachment was not a priority or a goal in the pursuit of journalistic duties. The journalists’ relationship with the community helped them get
privileged access to information. The findings suggest that, in community journalism, closer relationships with news sources enable a more proficient journalism practice. Human relationships come first.

Once journalists got involved in advocacy work as part of their media practice, the aspect of neutrality diminished. As a technique of gathering information, journalists became an interested party in the community. Instead of being detached, journalists sided with the people. Reporters and editors did not shy away from showing a point of view towards facts that were being collected from the local people. By taking a stance regarding community news, the journalists re-imagined the aspect of journalistic objectivity in their line of duty. Journalists in community journalism, therefore, do not necessarily strive to be neutral and detached from their news sources and the information they gathered. Moreover, there is always a collaborative and horizontal engagement between journalists and listeners. For instance, the journalists’ programming at Chikuni Radio involved news stories produced by the local citizens. This is consistent with Boafo (2000), who argued that community broadcasting should help the community reveal their needs, concerns, and aspiration by telling their own stories. The involvement of the local community was to allow the inclusion of local knowledge in solving people’s concerns. Citizen journalists and radio listening groups were essential in the collaborative and horizontal engagement of the citizens in the community. This approach allowed community members to be active participants in local discussions.

Journalists also played an instrumental role in the creation of entertainment education through music and radio dramas. Entertainment education is “the process of purposely designing and implementing a media message to both entertain and educate, in
order to increase audience members’ knowledge about an issue, create favorable attitudes, shift social norms, and change the overt behavior of individuals and communities” (Singhal and Rogers 2004, p. 5). This definition outlines the goals that entertainment education aims at impacting among the citizens: social norms, knowledge, people’s attitudes, and behavior. At Chikuni Radio, editors and journalists impacted people through entertainment education by incorporating music and radio drama in their journalistic practices.

The editors and journalists also established that entertainment education fosters collective action among citizens. For example, through entertainment education, the audience at Chikuni Radio was able to demand for better educational, social, political, and health services. It also encouraged people to replace or abandon some social norms that are irrelevant to the community in the 21st century. For instance, citizens stopped the traditional custom of sexual cleansing of widows and widowers due to the prevalent HIV/AIDS epidemic.

Despite the great journalistic works by community journalists and editors, their counterparts in mainstream media frown on them as unprofessional. Most journalists and editors in Africa’s mainstream believe that the closer journalism tenets are to the way journalism is conducted in the Western world the more professional its journalists are viewed (Mutsvairo, 2018). On the contrary, community journalists focus on what Edem Djokotoe (2004) referred to as “issues-based journalism” – a kind of reporting that is focused on the grassroots and highlights issues affecting citizens in community. According to Djokotoe (2004), issue-based journalism allows journalists to hold against the traditional journalism practices to allow other practices that help to deliver
information to the people community journalists are serving. For instance, practices embraced by Chikuni Radio reporters and editors reflect the commitment journalists must have in bringing out issues that influence and affect society. Additionally, they invested time to identify issues that are pertinent, engaging, and relevant to their audience. They tell stories and use storytelling techniques that resonate with the community’s culture and lifestyle.

**Conclusion**

The respondent journalists appear to consider community journalism a platform for educating the local people, supporting development in the community, and advocating for social change. Journalists felt they had an obligation to transform the communities for the best. Journalists operate as advocates of their community, disregarding neutrality as they became proponents of community ideas and values. Janowitz (1975) described the act of journalists being advocates of the community as professionals having a break from the professional journalistic etiquettes and “in part a political act” (p. 621).

By going beyond the traditional journalism practices, Chikuni Radio journalists, and community journalists at large, are inviting and pointing to a redefinition of journalistic professionalism and the injection of new philosophy into the DNA of the newsroom. They are inviting us to a deep engagement with the community, the primary source of community news. This approach suggests that journalists should not remain neutral and detached from the community. Journalists are to interpret the facts in the news so that they can help the community find solutions to their problems. Going beyond
the mere reporting of facts, as in the case with Chikuni Radio journalists, led to advocacy and solutions journalism.

Additionally, the practices by the community journalists suggest that journalism should be collaborative. Journalists and citizens should network in the production of news. This approach promotes the philosophy of journalism with citizens as active participants – an idea that stipulates that journalist may not be the only people who have questions that can make headline stories in the world. As a result, journalists in the newsroom are encouraged to move from looking at citizens as consumers to seeing them as partners. In some ways, the suggestion to redefine professional journalism turns the traditional story cycle upside down, enabling reporters to know the relevance and how impactful the story is prior to publishing it.

In summary, this study of community journalists in Zambia is calling us to improve and expand the notion of professional journalism where deep engagement with the community, collaboration, and advocacy become the golden rule of good journalism.

**Limitations of the Study**

Moreover, in-depth interviews are time consuming. They are one-on-one basis interviews that requires enough time to conduct all the selected interviewees. In addition to conducting interviews, the researcher needs to transcribe, analyze, report the data, and in some instances translate the interviews. All these aspects were time consuming during the time of the study of Chikuni Radio editors and journalists. The interviews were also conducted virtually as opposed to in-person. A few of the interviews were postponed due to technical problems.
The sample size of journalists and editors was also small. This raises concerns regarding the validity of the study. The study also is prone to biases on the part of the editors and journalists.

Finally, thematic analysis that was used in this study does not allow a researcher to draw conclusions from the use of language by participants (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The analysis and interpretation of the use of language by editors and journalists could have deepened the understanding of community journalism.

**Future Research**

More studies of community journalism in the African context are needed. Of particular interest could be newsroom ethnographies where researchers observe and talk to journalists as they go about their everyday tasks in the field. That could help to document community journalism practices and culture which will in turn open an understanding of news production and communications in understudied geopolitical contexts. Additionally, researchers could also look at the ‘invisible’ structures within community journalism that enable or constrain journalists from performing their duties.

In this research, conclusions were drawn from analyzing the interviews with journalists and editors on how community journalists practice their craft to build community. The voices of the community were mediated through community journalism. Considering that media professionals frame stories according to their editorial guidelines, it may be worthwhile to include the unmediated voices of the local people. Future studies could focus on the audiences of community radio stations to reveal whether the community radio journalists served the local people as stipulated by journalists and
editors in their interviews. The audience will ascertain how connected the radio station reporters are to their communities and find out if the community radio is involving members in the community to discuss local issues.

Finally, research could be conducted to find out if the audience at Chikuni Radio perceives journalists as part of the national and regional power structure or as equal partners in the pursuit of community betterment. This would help map the position of community journalists in the community’s struggles and their impact in community life.
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