



19. Case Study

FM Addis 97.1

FM Addis 97.1 is an innovative, and very popular radio broadcasting station in the country. It provides the people of Addis Ababa, and the surrounding area, with an alternative media outlet. It is a young radio broadcasting institution, established in 2000 by the government to address urban-related social and economic issues affecting the people of Addis Ababa. It was mainly established to focus on the day-to-day social issues of the people, but has also broadcasts music and entertainment, live local and international news, and has enhanced the awareness of people's awareness of relevant issues.



Figure 1: Founders of FM Addis 97.1

(L to R: **Kitaw Negussie**, **Yared Belayneh**, **Gorfneh Yimer**, **Fessaha Tegegn**, **Selome Desta**, **Dagmawi Tariku**, **Martha Tsegaw**)

FM Addis 97.1 started operating with three women and four men as permanent, motivated journalists. Now there are an additional five workers, one of which is a woman. Out of the 12 workers, only three have degrees. The remaining nine have diplomas and certificates. The station started with seven permanent, motivated staff members.



Figure 2: FM Addis 97.1 journalists



Figure 3: Veteran, as well as new journalists working for FM Addis 97.1

When it started, a staff member was supposed to work continuously on four programmes without any break. Because it was not planned and it started abruptly, there was no structure to the station. The final structure proposed was approved only in late 2005. This is thought to have affected the morale and motivation of journalists working for the station. There was a chronic shortage of manpower. There were also constraints regarding facilities, such as telephone access. It was conceived to operate mainly on live transmissions, but this was not a simple obstacle to overcome because of the lack of equipment.



Figure 4: Family members listening to a popular FM Addis 97.1 radio serial entitled *Yeken Kignit*⁹

FM Addis 97.1 was basically designed to be different from the format employed by the national service, although both shared the same administration and all the staff of the new FM Addis 97.1 station came from the national service. In other words, FM Addis 97.1 was a part of Ethiopian Radio. There was no fundamental difference in their editorial policies. The FM Addis staff were not given any special training. However, FM Addis 97.1 was on air for longer hours than the national service. It also focused on urban issues while the national radio focused on rural areas and development activities being undertaken in these areas. Of course, the national service would include urban issues believed to be relevant on a national scale.

⁹ *The Effect of Radio Serial Dramas on Reproductive Health Behavior: Key Findings from the Evaluation* conducted by Population Media Centre, 2005, splendidly explains the effect of FM Addis 97.1 radio drama serials on listeners, such as the ones indicated here.



Figure 5: FM Addis 97.1 – members of the Engineering Department in discussion

FM Addis 97.1 is currently on air for 18 hours daily, and 126 hours weekly. It has a specific list of items categorised under morning (6am to 12pm), day (12pm to 6pm) and evening (6pm to about 12am) to broadcast on a daily basis.



Figure 6: FM Addis 97.1 – prominent journalists

(L to R: **Gorfneh Yimer**, **Elizabeth Samuel**, **Abebe Feleke**, **Yiftusira Tuji**)

There are specific programmes that broadcast on specific days. On Mondays, health issues, specifically on HIV/AIDS and programmes for the youth are broadcast. On Tuesdays, social issues, specifically family issues, press review and local development issues, are presented. On Wednesdays, programmes focusing on women and children and health are broadcast. On Thursdays, programmes on women and general knowledge are highlighted. On Fridays, science and technology, state revenues and highlights of the week are presented. On Saturdays, programmes focusing on the city, children, youth, food and health are broadcast. On Sundays, a variety of issues dealing with health, general knowledge and the like are presented.

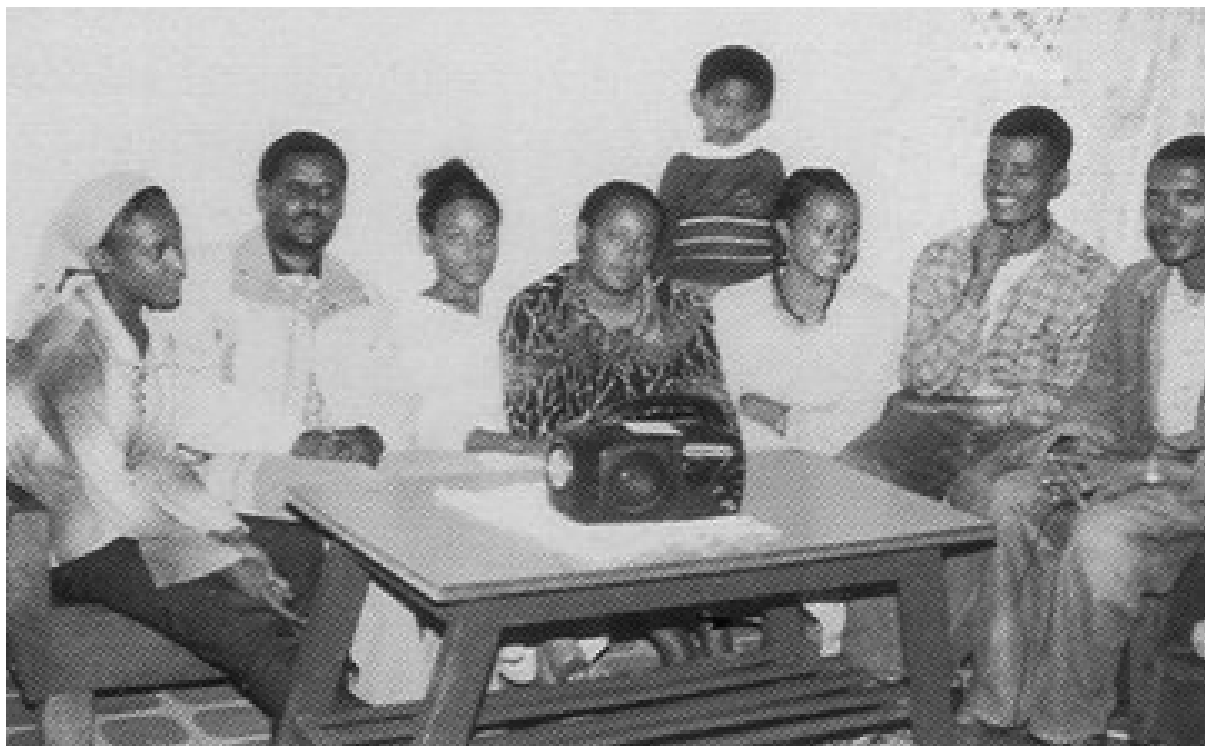


Figure 7: FM Addis 97.1 listeners

In addition to its own programmes, FM Addis 97.1 engages itself in outsourcing. Major partners include Panos – Ethiopia, the Population Media Centre, Propride, Adey Ababa and Tensae Promotions, among others.



Figure 8: FM Addis 97.1 technician with her mentor

What makes this broadcasting attractive is not their topics, as these topics are quite familiar with the listeners of the national radio, but their presentation and formatting. Most of the programmes are participatory. People are invited to call in live and their voices are broadcast live without any editorial cuttings or modifications. People appreciate using this outlet because it enables them to share their experiences and voices. The outlet is shaped in such a way that it facilitates this process. The national radio broadcasting channel is often criticised for its use of only traditional formats. FM Addis. 97.1 however, shuttles between the conventional and formal and the innovative and informal formats.



Figure 9: A busy FM Addis 97.1 technician

Regarding listener participation, FM Addis 97.1 is very popular and is participatory. A significant section of the people of Addis Ababa participate in the programmes, although no research has been conducted to establish their number.



Figure 10: FM Addis 97.1 in action

(**Abebe Feleke**, FM Addis 97.1 journalist, interviewing a guest)

At the moment, other FM stations have learned lessons from the successes of this station, especially in enhancing listener participation through phone-ins. The fact that it is government-run has helped it not to worry about costs, because it is entirely subsidised by the government. In fact, some claim that it has been able to generate as much money as required to run its programmes. Its constraint is usually attributed to the fact that it has to share the management established to run the national radio, and it has no separate management structure. It has no specific strategic guidelines for its running of programmes or for expansion. At the moment, it has to promote programmes as per the editorial policy of Ethiopian Radio national service.

The fact that the station has been able to address social issues and involve people in discussing these issues without any constraints has helped enhance the station's popularity as well as the degree of popular participation. The station has played an exemplary role for all other FM stations in transmitting live programmes and enhancing listener participation. A major lapse is the absence of audience research to help as a base line for initiating new programmes and phasing out unnecessary ones.



Figure 11: FM Addis 97.1 female technician in action

Case Study Interviewees

Selome Taddese, former Head, Ethiopian Radio and Ethiopia Television

Kitaw Negussie, former Journalist and Founder of FM Addis 97.1

Other members of FM Addis 97.1