



HFCC - International Broadcasting Delivery

Shortwave Radio in International Broadcasting

The HFCC is a non-governmental, non-profit association registered as a regional co-ordination group, and a member of the radiocommunication sector of the International Telecommunication Union. The HFCC manages and coordinates global databases of international shortwave broadcasting. Further information can be found at <http://www.hfcc.org>.

Background

While a number of shortwave broadcasting services have recently been cut or completely phased out, this distinctive medium remains relevant for a large critical audience interested in programming that focuses on both regional and international affairs and is broadcast from the perspective of different communities around the world.

Shortwave radio is important for travellers and isolated people and it reaches across the digital divide to the most disadvantaged and marginalised societies. This is in keeping with the declaration and action plan of the World Summit on the Information Society.

The HFCC has become a partner of the UN agency UNESCO for the preparation of World Radio Day celebrated in 2013. UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon had this to say in his message to the World Radio Day celebrations: "From short-wave to FM to satellite transmission – radio connects people wherever they are. In conflict situations and times of crisis, radio is a lifeline for vulnerable communities. "An interactive, and continuously updated, global shortwave schedule can be accessed from the [UNESCO website](#) or from [here](#).

The server *www.globalissues.org* reported in 2013 that almost half the world — over 3 billion people — live on less than \$2.50 a day. Their first choice of communication devices will be a mobile telephone, a radio or both. The huge number of people around the globe emerging from poverty continue to represent an important potential audience for direct content delivery from shortwave transmitters.

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies has supported the basic aspect of the HFCC effort to provide information to the most vulnerable in their 2013 World Disaster Report: It has noted that with only 6 percent of people in low-income countries using the internet in 2011 the digital divide is still stark, and access to low cost media technology is really the key. Joelle Tanguy, the IFRC's Under Secretary General for Humanitarian Values and Diplomacy, pointed out that the aid community is still only beginning to deploy technology effectively. "Our message is to take it on with a principled humanitarian view - understand its limitations, and make sure you are not forgetting the most vulnerable."

The role of radio in emergencies is not limited to marginalised societies. During a 2012 Symposium held on the role of media and communication in the Great East Japan Earthquake of 2011 terrestrial wireless radio was on top of the list of useful media and information sources. A call for a multi-channel flow of information was also made at the symposium: "The more diverse the media striving to relay information is, the higher the possibility that essential information will be communicated "¹

1 "Earthquakes and Media" by M.Sugaya (MIC-ITU symposium on disaster communications, Sendai, March 2012)

The future of shortwave radio is digital and the digitisation of AM broadcasting is already in progress. The globally standardised DRM (Digital Radio Mondiale) system is a high-quality replacement for current radio broadcasting in all AM bands.

Shortwave Broadcasting and New Distribution Technologies - Competition or Synergy?

- The presence of broadcasters across all distribution platforms is important for effective worldwide delivery. Audiences are able to personalise their choice depending on their context situations.
- There is evidence that radio is best for live listening - especially for news, current affairs and sport programmes. Authentic experience is enhanced by listening live to long-distance shortwave radio stations and their programmes.
- Radio has a strong emotional appeal. This appeal of radio has been even more typical in shortwave broadcasting. Enduring bonds and contacts between listeners to shortwave stations and broadcasters have existed long before the advent of social media.
- New delivery platforms and technologies are ideal for enriching and improving the experience of listening to shortwave radio. The spoken word and music can be enriched by audio on demand, images and video clips.
- Social media platforms can be used to strengthen communication and dialogue between shortwave broadcasters and their audience. This in turn can help develop communities of listeners that can promote the station and its content.
- New technologies are ideal for the collection of user-generated content, irrespective of the distance between the source and the core broadcasting station.
- The internet is an ideal medium for keeping track of schedule and frequency changes and for promoting direct listening to shortwave stations.
- Shortwave transmitters around the world complement new distribution platforms and are a vital communication tool during major emergencies caused by natural or man-made disasters. An immediate flow of information to affected populations is most needed after the disaster strikes. The need to communicate comes later.

Present Developments

The HFCC - International Broadcasting Delivery association, in co-operation with the Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union (ABU) and Arab States Broadcasting Union (ASBU) are now working on a comprehensive system that has been missing in the world community. A global frequency database of shortwave broadcasting and an online co-ordination procedure of frequencies, managed in accordance with International Radio Regulations has been suggested for the purposes of the [International Radio for Disaster Relief \(IRDR\) project](#).

South and East Asia is the largest disaster-prone region of the world. The Media Summit on Climate Change, ICTs and Disaster Risk Reduction is planned from 4 to 5 June 2014 in Jakarta, Indonesia. The management of the HFCC has decided to organise a trial of the IRDR project via coordinated shortwave transmissions in cooperation with the Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union. The analysis of the HFCC Global Schedule has indicated that transmission facilities from 16 countries - including those of the IBB - could provide coverage of the target region.

The ABU organises a series of roadshows on Emergency Warning Broadcast Systems with the support of UN ESCAP (Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific) and its Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction later in 2014. This is very near to the HFCC's International Radio for Disaster Relief Project. The HFCC has registered with the Prevention Web of the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) with the aim of recognising shortwave broadcasting as a tool for disaster risk reduction.

There is work under way in the Radiocommunication Sector of the ITU on the new "Report on the Importance of Terrestrial Broadcasting in Providing Emergency Information to the Public" that has been initiated in part by the National Association of Broadcasters in North America and supported by other members of the ITU.

The described developments relating to the humanitarian aspects of shortwave terrestrial radio are not a guarantee yet that it will be firmly placed on the agendas - and possibly also on the budgets - of UN and other global institutions in this field. It is therefore important that the decision-makers do not prioritise local or regional changes in media consumption that may not be permanent over the enduring unique properties of this distribution technology that is present world-wide.

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