



# **RADIO ACTIVE!**

**THE STORY OF INTERACTIVE RADIO IN AFRICA**



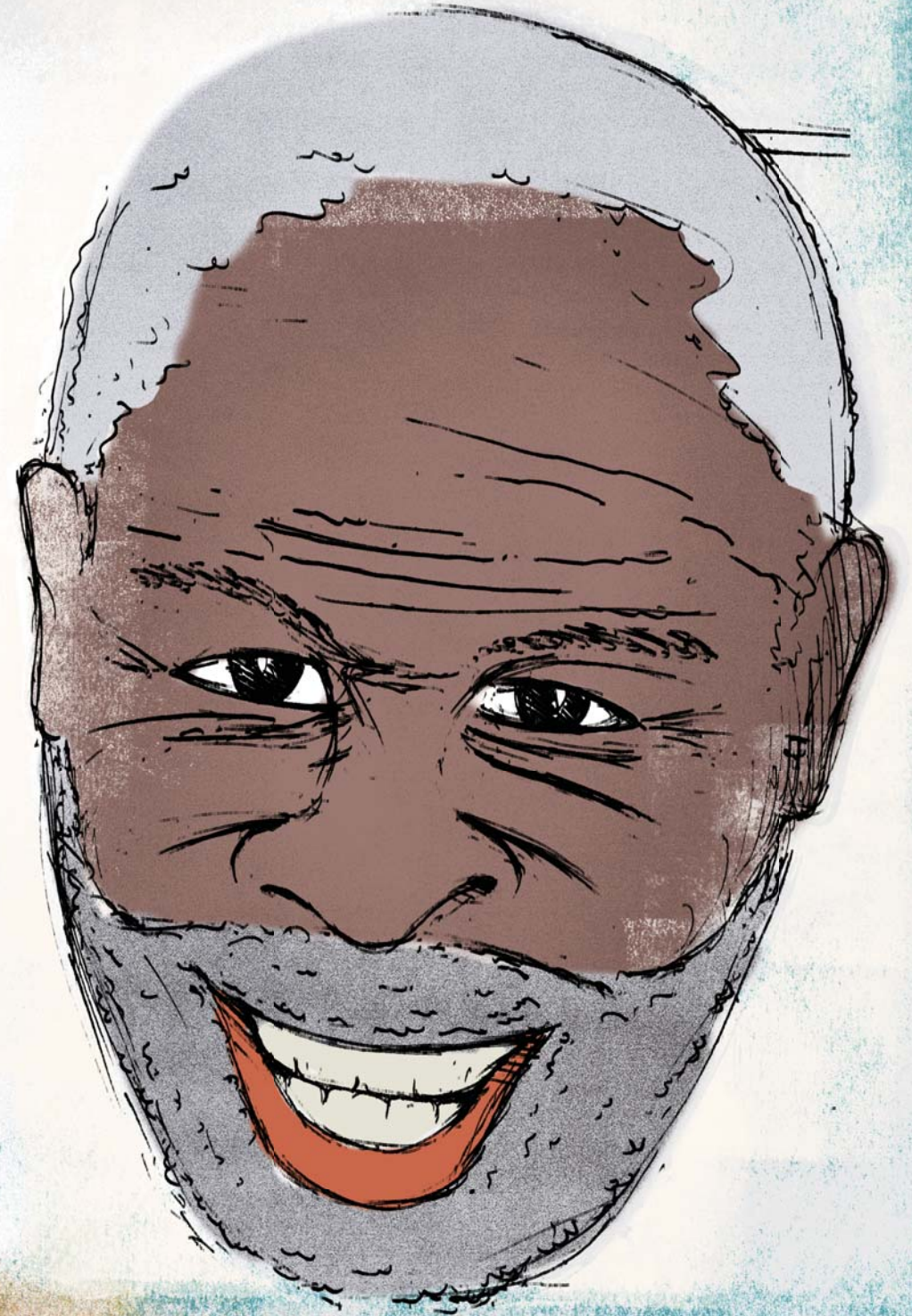
A FEW YEARS AGO IN THE SLEEPY TOWN OF CHIPATA IN EASTERN ZAMBIA, AN ELDER NAMED DACKSON NYWINGWE ARRIVED ON FOOT AT THE LOCAL RADIO STATION, BREEZEFM.

He had come from his village, one hour away. Born in 1915, Dackson had a lifetime of stories he wanted to share on the station.

**"BEFORE THESE RADIO PROGRAMMES, DURING THE ONE PARTY STATE, PEOPLE WERE IN THE DARK."**

Dackson had a great love for BreezeFM, especially the interactive shows with a host called Gogo (grandfather) Breeze. Listeners called, texted, and wrote letters to share concerns and debate the burning issues of the day. "Before these radio programmes, during the one party state," Dackson said, "people were in the dark."

At the end of the interview, full of colourful reflections and memories, Gogo Breeze asked Dackson if he had any final words. He proclaimed that at age 98, with 16 kids, he was still going strong. In fact, he was looking for a new wife!



ACROSS AFRICA, PEOPLE IN TOWNS LIKE DACKSON'S LISTEN TO INTERACTIVE RADIO SHOWS LIKE THE ONE ON BREEZEFM.

Dackson made a wonderful contribution, but he didn't need to travel so far to have his voice heard.

Many people call or text in to radio stations with a mobile phone. Through interactive shows, radio stations across the continent are involving people in exciting discussions that matter to them.

Through interactive shows, ordinary citizens are contributing to the governance and development of their country.



**AFRICA IS  
RADIOACTIVE!**



**DO  
YOU  
WANT  
TO...**

- engage audiences?
- bring broadcast to life?
- hear people's ideas?
- capture the attention of leaders?
- connect citizens and politicians?

**...GO  
WHERE  
THE  
PEOPLE  
ARE**

# WHAT PEOPLE USE

RADIO

88%

MOBILE

83%

TV

60%

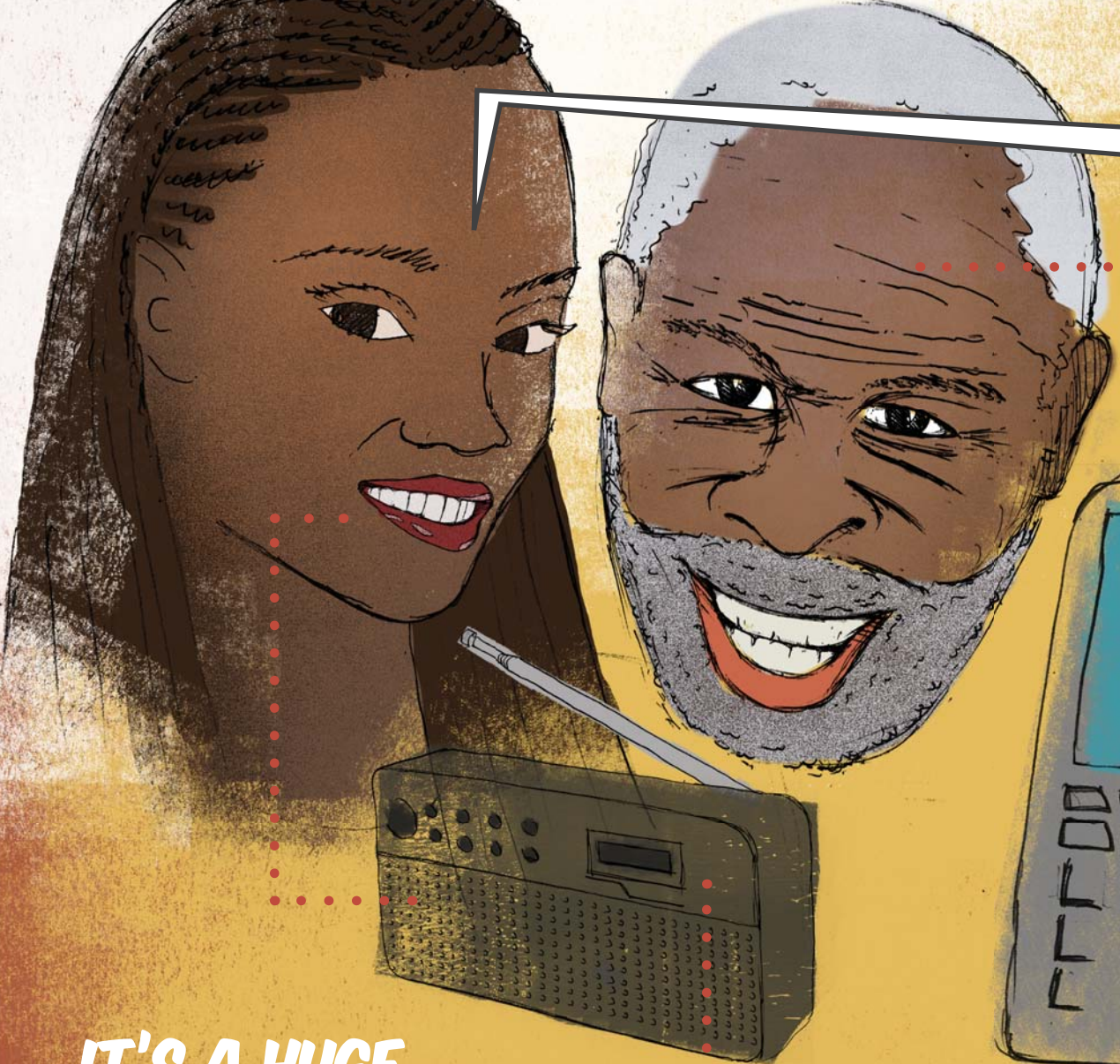
NEWSPAPER

41%

INTERNET

20%

\*Based on a 2013 household survey of 1448 individuals in rural and urban Kenya and Zambia (margin of error +/-5% for 95% confidence level)



Almost everyone listens to the radio. And almost everyone with radio access listens to interactive shows.

# PEOPLE LOVE INTERACTIVE SHOWS

## IT'S A HUGE OPPORTUNITY...

...for journalists, governments, NGOs, and donors. With a low cost and high benefits.



# INTERACTIVE RADIO IS... LISTENING AND CALLING

Engaged listeners bring shows to life. Shows have wide listenership because they are meaningful and exciting.

Shows offer personal interaction and drama. Listeners feel like they are 'right there' with the action.

The number of callers per show is limited. Difficult callers are hard to manage.

Not everyone has the money, courage or interest to call in. There are times when no one calls in.



INTERACTIVE RADIO IS...

# TEXTING AND SOCIAL MEDIA

## TEXTING...

- handles large numbers
- captures patterns in opinions
- allows anonymous participation

## SOCIAL MEDIA...

...draws in young people and social networks



## TEXTING...

- is a short, simple, one-way message
- is less personal and dramatic

## SOCIAL MEDIA...

...is rare - most people in Africa don't have access

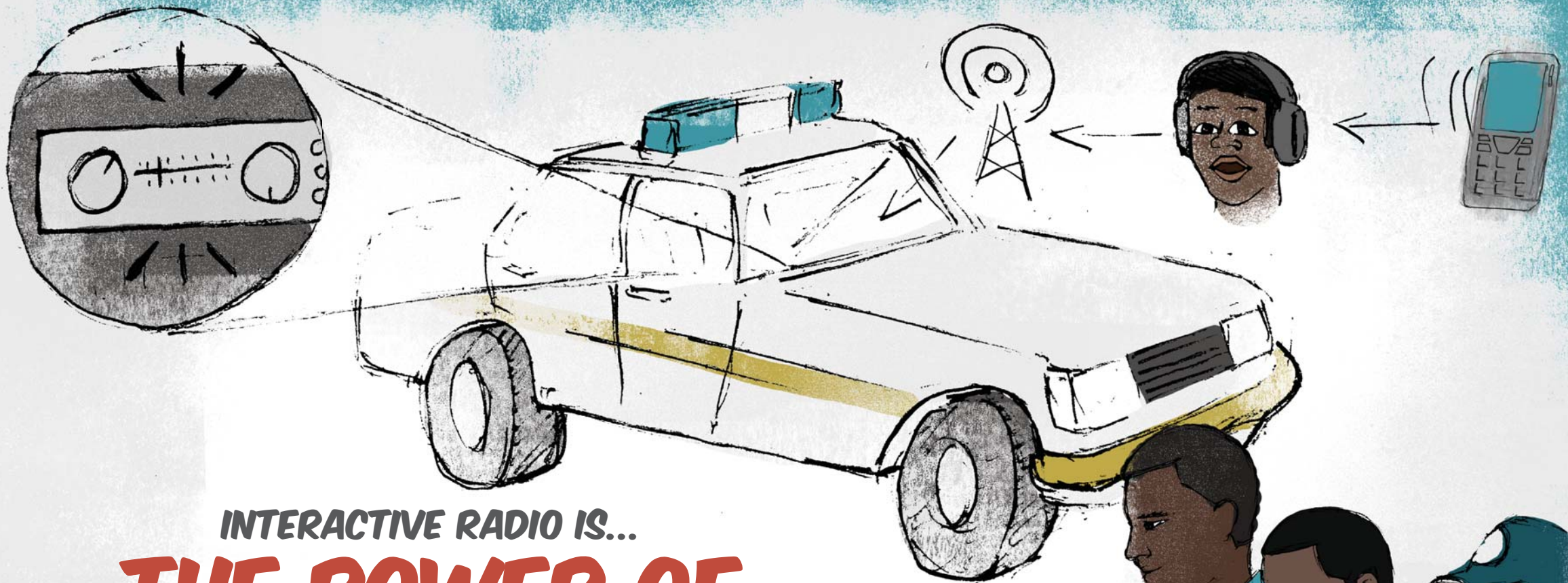


**INTERACTIVE RADIO IS...**  
**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

INTERACTIVE RADIO IS LIKE A PUBLIC MEETING WHERE THE COMMUNITY CAN COME TOGETHER TO THINK THROUGH AN ISSUE. People are consulted and diverse voices are heard.

Audiences feel that interactive programmes give people a public voice, even when their positions clash with those of leaders and experts featured on the show.





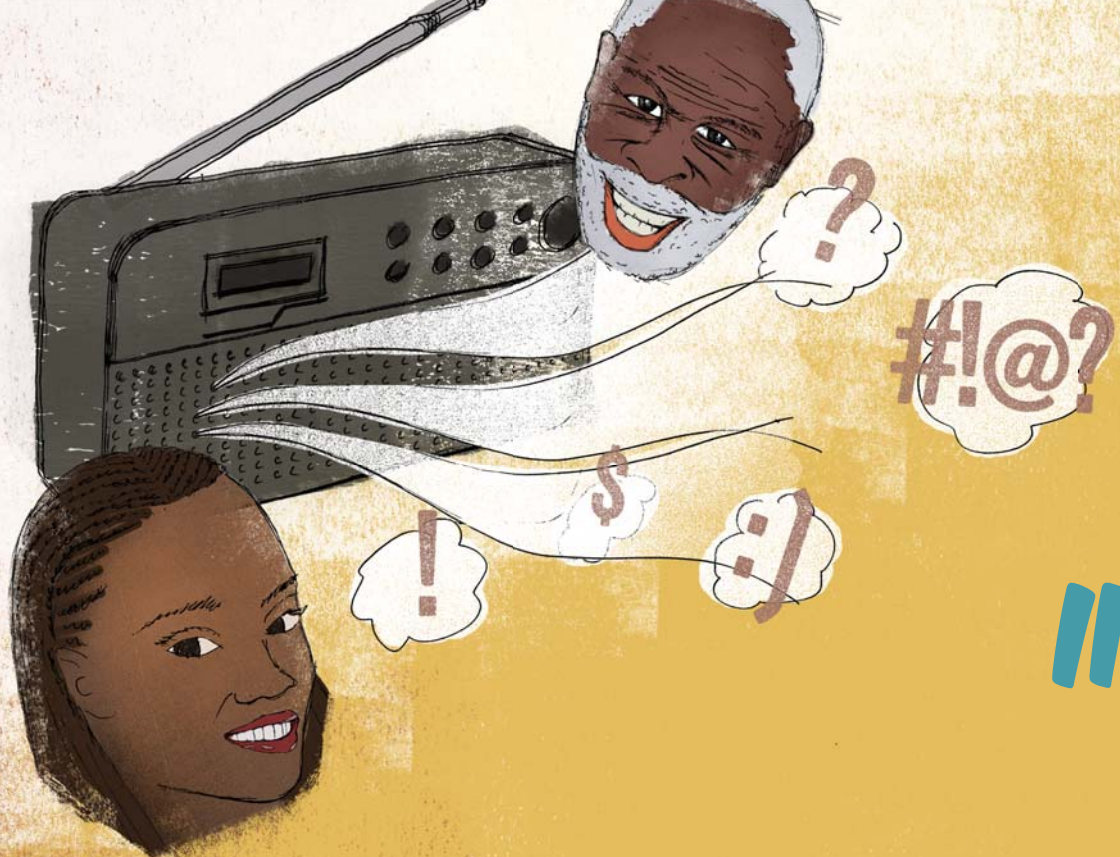
**INTERACTIVE RADIO IS...**  
**THE POWER OF  
AMPLIFIED VOICES**

INTERACTIVE RADIO CAN TAKE UP KEY ISSUES OF THE MOMENT AND HAVE NOTICEABLE IMPACTS IN THE COMMUNITY.

People - together with the media - can be watchdogs of local politicians and service providers.

In Kenya's Rift Valley, Radio Citizen had a show focusing on deteriorating security in Trans-Nzoia. A listener called in with an alert: thugs were raiding a home. Within ten minutes, police were at the scene. The talk show host believes that the radio conversation pushed the police to act.





INTERACTIVE  
RADIO IS...  
**MORE  
INCLUSIVE  
POLITICS**



MORE AND MORE IN AFRICAN POLITICAL AFFAIRS, POLITICIANS ARE REALIZING THAT PEOPLE'S IDEAS NEED TO COUNT.

They also see that they need to seek the public's support for their own ideas. Interactive radio offers new voices, opportunities to be heard, and lively discussions.

- Leaders often engage with interactive radio
- Callers can speak directly with leaders
- Public opinion is formed and may influence politics

Globally, more countries are moving towards citizen participation in governance. People use multiple channels to hold their governments accountable.

Interactive radio can be a powerful, hyper-local channel for accountability.



# INTERACTIVE RADIO IS... **LEARNING**

LISTENERS SAY THAT INTERACTIVE RADIO EDUCATES THEM ABOUT A BROAD VARIETY OF TOPICS: DEVELOPMENT, AGRICULTURE, POLITICS, RELIGION, AND OTHERS.

Listeners say they are educated by:

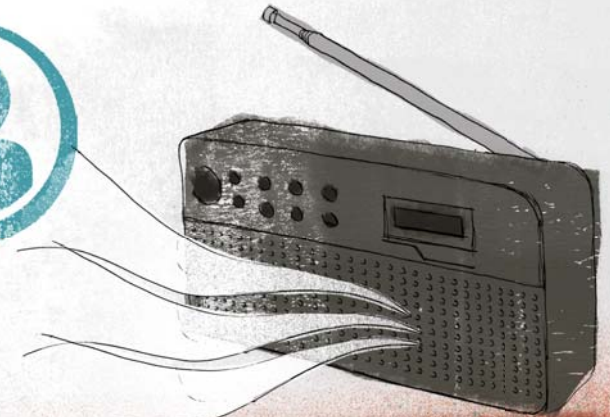
- Hearing others' opinions
- Learning about issues
- Learning about different viewpoints



# INTERACTIVE RADIO IS... **ENTERTAINING**

WHETHER THE TOPIC IS POLITICS OR MUSIC, SPORTS OR FARMING, QUIZZES OR DEVELOPMENT, PEOPLE LOVE INTERACTIVE RADIO.

People enjoy that interactive radio is like an unpredictable drama, complete with characters, controversy, and emotion. The main entertainer is the host, who keeps the show lively and highly engaging.



# INTERACTIVE RADIO IS... **LIVE**

MANAGING LIVE PARTICIPANTS HAS MANY CHALLENGES:

- Serial callers who can dominate the discussion
- Dead air space if no one calls in
- Participants, who might
  - Contribute nonsense, or boring talk
  - Be paid agents of a political party or politician
  - Act obnoxious, drunk, or hateful
  - Spout hate speech
- Picking a topic that interests the audience

Live radio also has technical challenges:

- Unclear mobile lines
- Callers suddenly dropping out
- Electricity outages
- Managing multiple SMS messages

**HOWEVER...**

**THESE RISKS CAN BE ACTIVELY MANAGED, WHILE THE UNPREDICTABILITY AND EXCITEMENT KEEP THE AUDIENCE ENGAGED**



INTERACTIVE RADIO...

# MUST MANAGE COMPETING INTERESTS

MANAGING THE DIFFERENT INTERESTS OF THE PUBLIC, DONORS, MEDIA, AND GOVERNMENT CAN BE A CHALLENGE.

Competing influences can make it hard for a host to create an entertaining show that lets audiences participate freely.

If any of these groups sponsor a show, they may be more interested in educating the public than listening to them.

However, when talk show hosts present balanced viewpoints, they gain the trust of their audience.

**RADIO SHOW SPONSORS WHO TRUST AND WORK CLOSELY WITH HOSTS CAN CREATE MORE ENTERTAINING AND SUCCESSFUL INTERACTIVE SHOWS.**



INTERACTIVE RADIO IS...

# A PRODUCT OF ITS CONTEXT

BUT CAN ALSO BE A FORCE FOR CHANGE

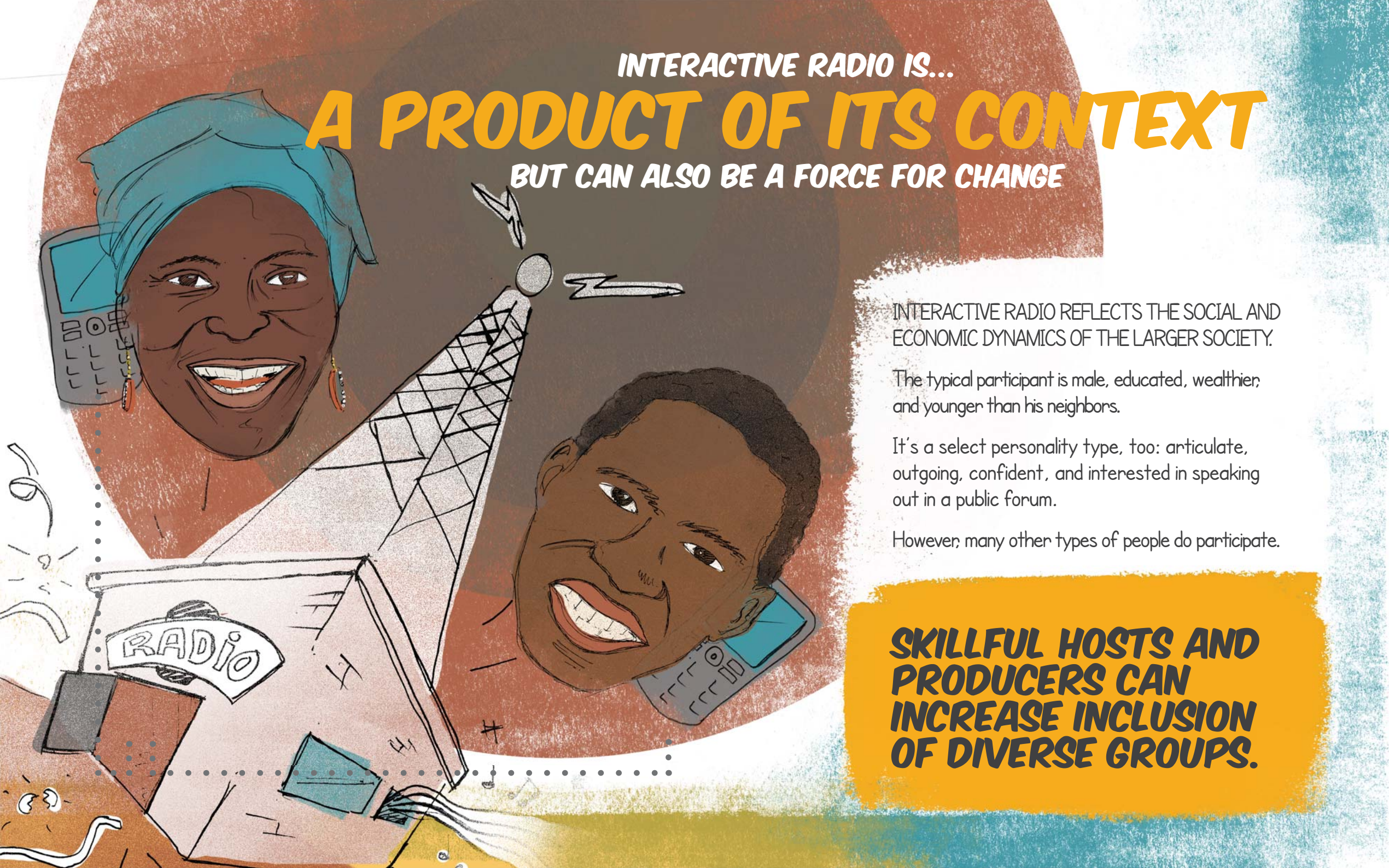
INTERACTIVE RADIO REFLECTS THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DYNAMICS OF THE LARGER SOCIETY.

The typical participant is male, educated, wealthier, and younger than his neighbors.

It's a select personality type, too: articulate, outgoing, confident, and interested in speaking out in a public forum.

However, many other types of people do participate.

**SKILLFUL HOSTS AND PRODUCERS CAN INCREASE INCLUSION OF DIVERSE GROUPS.**





INTERACTIVE RADIO CAN...

# LIMIT OR BROADEN PUBLIC OPINION

INTERACTIVE RADIO CONVERSATION SOUNDS LIKE A PLATFORM FOR THE VOICE OF THE PEOPLE.

However, callers and texters are a self-selected group. Participants' views are not a representative opinion poll.

Even though they aren't representative, interactive shows are a unique space for the public to have influence.

Hosts and producers play a vital role in shaping this space.



**INTERACTIVE RADIO CAN BE A PLACE FOR BROADER OPINIONS TO BE EXPRESSED PUBLICLY. AND THOSE OPINIONS WILL BE HEARD!**

**DESPITE CHALLENGES...**

# SEVERAL GROUPS CAN BENEFIT



## **PUBLIC**

Gets: their voices heard, education, access to experts and leaders.



## **GOVERNMENT**

Gets to: learn the public's needs; interact with the public; build public trust; become more accountable.



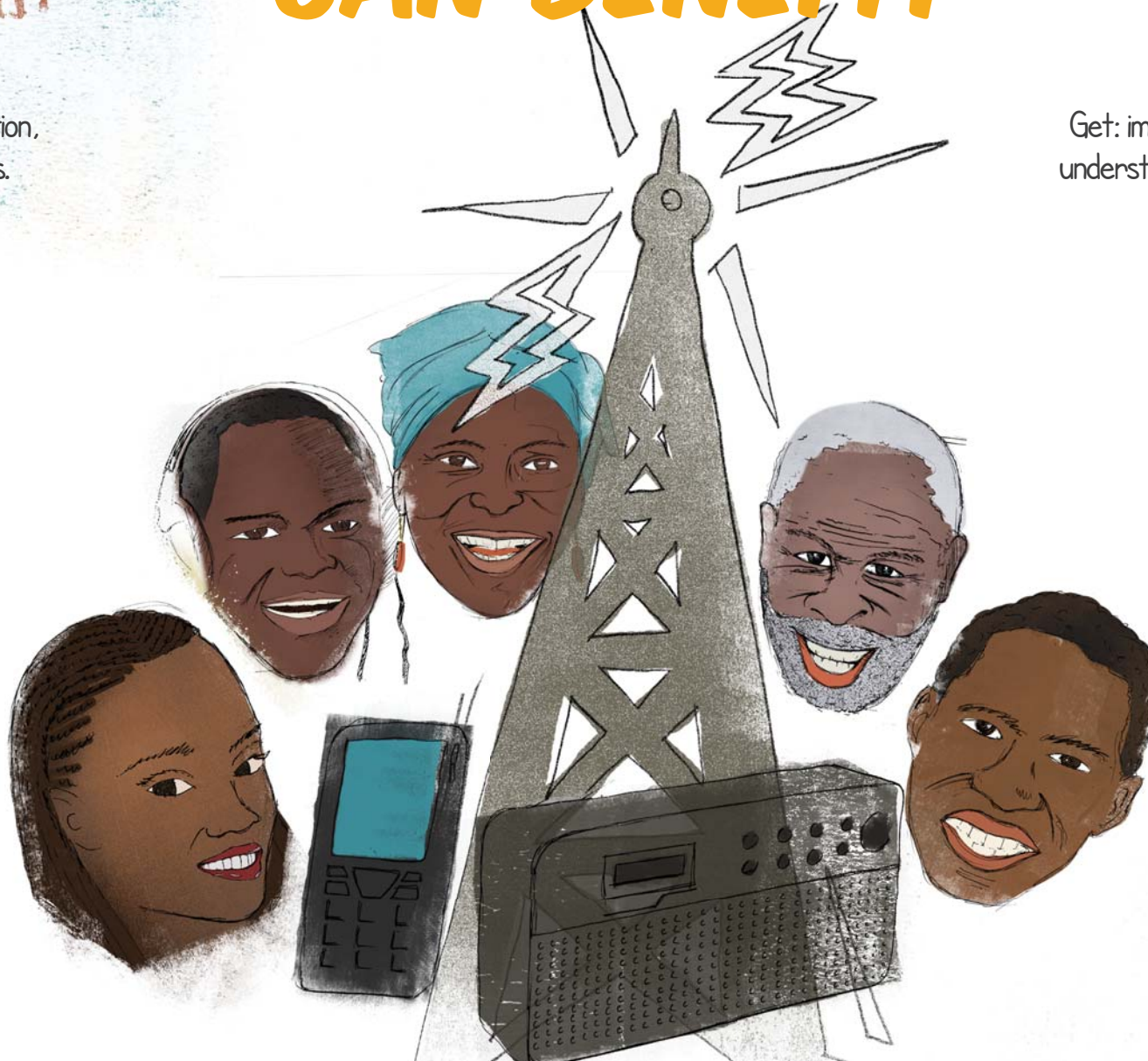
## **NGOS & DONORS**

Get: important issues out to the public; better understanding of citizen priorities and concerns; education for and by the public.



## **MEDIA**

Attracts: listeners and revenue.



# PiMA

Politics and interactive Media in Africa



## AFRICA IS... **RADIOACTIVE**

Want to learn more? Visit: <http://eepurl.com/-L6I5> to sign up to receive toolkits, multimedia resources and research briefings.

Radioactive: The Story of Interactive Radio in Africa is based on findings from "Politics and Interactive Media in Africa" (PiMA); a two-year DFID-ESRC funded research project (RG65326) in Kenya and Zambia led by the University of Cambridge's Centre of Governance and Human Rights, collaborating with researchers at the University of Nairobi and University of Zambia. See [cghr.polis.cam.ac.uk/research-themes/pdtm/pima](http://cghr.polis.cam.ac.uk/research-themes/pdtm/pima)

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