



# Media development in Tunisia: Findings of IMS/AMARC Community Media Assessment

ASSESSMENT

July 2-12, 2011

A joint mission by International Media Support (IMS)  
and World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC)





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# 1 Introduction

In January 2011, the people of Tunisia were the first in a number of countries in the Arab region to push through a regime change where former president Ben Ali was forced to step down. In its wake followed a newfound freedom of expression and a widened space for media outlets to work independently.

Following this development an increase of media outlets is expected. To further this progress, International Media Support (IMS) and World Association of Community Broadcasters (AMARC) are working together to support and train new, independent and community media initiatives.

In addition to support towards decentralisation and professional enhancement of media, the AMARC-IMS collaboration entails support to ongoing media reform processes, currently in the form of concerted technical advisory to the regulatory reform body INRIC – L'Instance Nationale de Réforme de l'Information et de la Communication.

Shortly after the Tunisian revolution, IMS and AMARC initiated a process of obtaining an overview of the radio sector in the country; status of existing stations and a mapping of new initiatives.

A joint fact-finding mission undertaken in March 2011 focused on Tunis-based radio broadcasters, as well as on public broadcaster Radio Tunisienne's five regional stations. In conjunction with an IFEX-Tunisian Monitoring Group mission to Tunisia (8 – 19 April), an IMS/AMARC team furthermore travelled outside the capital Tunis to visit groups involved in or wishing to engage in community/local media.

Following the two missions, it can be concluded that:

Although Radio Tunisienne and its regional stations are important actors, they are not in the short-term obvious interlocutors for IMS/AMARC. Radio Tunisienne, alongside its national TV counterpart, is undergoing restructuring and transformation towards becoming a public service media provider. Public broadcasting counterparts in France and Britain are providing support in this regard. Although not at this time prepared to establish formal collaboration with IMS/AMARC, the management of Radio Tunisienne, both at central and regional levels, expresses openness towards collaboration with upcoming local/community broadcasters (incl. future IMS/AMARC partners).

The visit in April showed that groups that were located outside Tunis and who engaged in media activities, felt less informed about the widening media landscape and thus felt less able to make use of it. The visit also indicated that especially young people were exploring opportunities to continue and reshape the internet-based radio broadcasts they had launched during the revolution.

In June this year, 12 new radio stations, the majority located outside Tunis, were recommended for licensing by INRIC. IMS/AMARC yielded technical support to the regulatory advisory body in relation to the licensing procedure. The intended outcome of INRIC's recommendations made to Tunisia's interim government is an expansion of the broadcasting sector. As local radio



Photo: AMARC/IMS

stations, some with a community media profile, are amongst the recommended radios, IMS and AMARC conducted a series of workshops in Tunisia between 2 - 12 July to assess the possibilities for supporting the establishment of community radio/community media centres outside the main urban centres.

The mission was carried out by Lotte Grauballe and Kasper Ly Netterstrøm (consultant) of IMS, AMARC representative Bianca Miglioretto, and Aymen Rabai of Syndicat Tunesien des Radios Libres & Radio 6 (STRL).

Workshops were conducted in five main towns: Le Kef, Kasserine, Gafsa, Gabes, Bizerte. AMARC, IMS and STRL/Radio 6 presented the concept of community media and facilitated discussion amongst participants from civil society and journalists who were involved in existing media or future media projects.

The concept of community media is defined as a broad spectrum of different types of media (radio, theatre, TV, newsletters, websites, etc.) with form and content shaped by context, but with the one common denominator of being controlled by and implemented with the participation of a community (geographical or in terms of like-mindedness and sectors of society, or both).

The objective of conducting the workshops was to inform, inspire and uncover people's visions, as well as to create tangible plans for new media initiatives in different parts of Tunisia.

## 2 Context

### 2.1 National media context

Tunisia is in transition from dictatorship and one-party rule to a pluralistic democracy, with multi-party elections scheduled to take place in October 2011. The transition phase marking the country since the overthrow of Ben Ali applies to the political system, the government administration, civil society, and not least the media.

Limitations on freedom of expression still prevail in Tunisia, as does the absence of critical journalism. An on-going and time-consuming process related to a suggested media reform has been initiated in the transition phase, but is marked by the fact that many of the media managers in place under the Ben Ali regime remain in the same positions well after his departure. This suggests that a certain amount of censorship or 'guidance' of media practitioners is still taking place and is supported by anecdotal evidence offered by several media affiliates.

Secondly, self-censorship appears to be a common trait amongst journalists. Their way of working, thinking and reporting has been shaped by Ben Ali's dictatorship, and old habits die hard. An example of the lack of critical journalism is derived from the public television channel's coverage of politics. Contrary to what was the case under Ben Ali, politicians from different parties are currently invited to present their political programmes on the public broadcasting channel. However, critical questioning of the candidates remains absent. The journalists appear to be there merely to listen, alongside the viewing public, to the politicians talking into the camera.

Changing the media in Tunisia is therefore not just a question of supporting alternatives to the existing state and commercial media. It is also a question of combatting censorship through support to on-going media reform initiatives and to alleviate self-censorship by instilling professionalism and professional confidence in existing and emerging media.

#### 2.1.1 New developments: 12 new radio stations recommended for licensing

On 29 June 2011, L'Instance Nationale de Réforme de l'Information et de la Communication (INRIC) recommended 12 new local and regional radio stations for licensing to the Office of the Prime Minister. The recommendations were made after a thorough process of screening a sum total of 74 radio license applications. It is expected that calls for broadcast licences will henceforth take place annually in Tunisia. The 12 radio stations recommended for licensing are now in addition to the four already existing private, commercial radio stations that were licensed under the Ben Ali government. They are not formally licensed yet and it is uncertain whether licenses allowing for broadcasting will be issued before the October 2011 elections.

Among the up-coming radio stations, at least three are intended community radios. No specific legislation for community radio is currently in place in Tunisia. As part of the ongoing media reform process, INRIC recommends that legislation is put in place for community media.

As of July 2011 INRIC has not yet addressed the regulatory issues pertaining to which transmitter power the newly licenced radios will have; whether they will be given a permit to import transmitters or need to go via the Organisation Nationale de Télécommunication (ONT), which maintains the monopoly on managing frequencies, dispatching transmitters and determining broadcasting fees.

### **2.1.2 Decentralisation**

Aside from the five local stations of Radio Tunisienne, almost all Tunisian media were based in the capital Tunis under the former Tunisian regime. Many larger towns outside the greater Tunis area do not have a single local newspaper or any kind of local media. Decentralisation of the media appears an important objective at this time. As the director of Radio Gafsa Ben Hamad Zackair said during a workshop held in Gafsa:

*"Democratisation of media also means decentralisation of media. It means diversity and the ability to choose what newspaper people want to read or what radio stations they want to tune into."*

## **2.2 General observations**

The concept of community media generated excitement amongst participants during the five workshops held. The interest in attending the workshops was big. As soon as invitations for the five workshops had been circulated, calls and emails from towns not scheduled for visits requested inclusion in the programme (Jendouba, Sidi Bouzid and Tataouine). Time constraints did not allow additional workshops to be held, but to indicate the level of interest, several participants travelled well over 100 kilometres each way to attend the workshop held closest to their location.

In the discussion groups during the workshops some interesting projects were developed and existing media initiatives presented. Generally, community radio was identified as the most appropriate community media. Participants perceived radio to be the most accessible media for the majority of the population, including those populations without internet access.

It is important to note, however, that whereas sustainability considerations for community media formed part of the presentation by the IMS/AMARC/STRL (Syndicat Tunisien des Radios Libres) team, viability of specific radio ideas presented by participants as outcomes of group discussions, were not discussed in any detail. Feedback from participants underscored that the internet is quite accessible to educated people, even in smaller towns and there are a lot of websites and possibilities to upload to the internet. Community theatre, film and music are already widespread phenomenon, as many towns organise annual cultural festivals.

*"With smart phones or i-phones most young educated people in our town have access to internet and can use it at very low costs. That is why we want to run an internet radio."* Aydi Hachem, Association Citoyenneté, Regueb

## **2.3 IMS/AMARC Workshops around Tunisia**

(see Annex I page 13)

### **2.3.1 Le Kef, 5.7.2011**

The workshop was attended by 29 participants (11 women), among them nine people from Jendouba, a town 60 km North of Le Kef and nine journalists and interns from Radio Kef (Radio Tunisienne). Other participants included journalists and representatives of civil society organisations and one political party spokesperson.

Le Kef has a radio station (regional branch of Radio Tunisienne). Aside from this, there are no local TV, radio or newspaper outlets in Jendouba. The ideas developed in the workshop were two community radio projects and a media centre proposed by La Union des Diplomés/es Chaumeurs/euses with the



title 'From centralisation to decentralisation'. The idea is to run the centre through the network of associations in Jendouba. The central actors are: Association de Cinéma et Théâtre du Kef (ACT), The Association de Femme et Citoyenneté and a very young and active organisation, Horizons, run by women.

### 2.3.2 Kasserine 6.7.2011

This workshop was attended by 32 people from Kasserine, 14 of which were women and six men from Sidi Bouzid and two men from Sbetla. Among the participants were many civil society representatives, two internet radios from Kasserine (Radio Sada Chaanbi and Radio Houna al Gasrine), as well as Radio Chambi FM (recommended by INRIC for licensing).

There is no local media in Kasserine. The town is situated in the centre of the country and economically marginalised. The projects developed by groups in the workshops included a youth community radio and two community radios (one in Sidi Bouzid). A project worth highlighting was a planned local community TV station run by a network of 63 civil society organisations from Kasserine.

The workshop in Kasserine was characterised by a high-level of enthusiasm and provided an opportunity for Radio Chambi FM staff to meet and network with other actors interested in participating in the soon-to-be licensed radio project. Radio Hauna Al Gasrine broadcast live via the internet from the workshop.

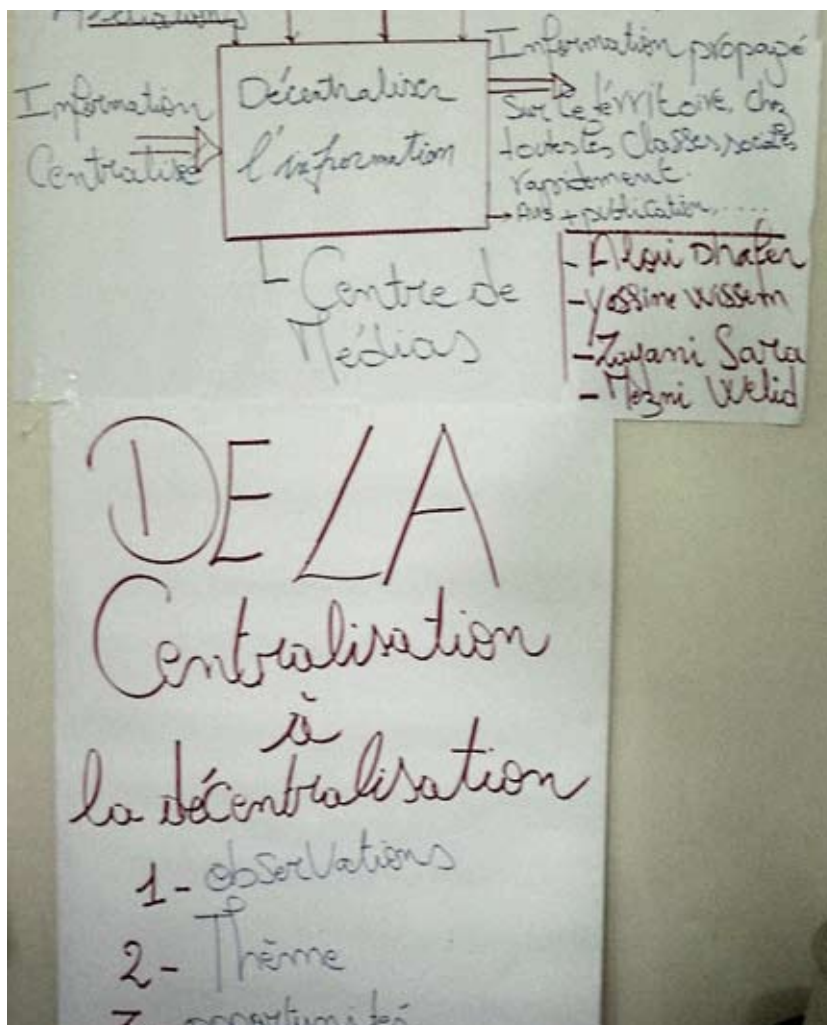


Photo: AMARC/IMS

### **2.3.3 Gafsa, 7.7.2011**

The Gafsa workshop was attended by 23 men and two women. A majority of them were senior intellectuals and journalists from Gafsa but also six young men from Regueb participated. The discussion in Gafsa centred on the environmental problems in the region, notably how the phosphate mining companies deplete most of the region's scarce water supply, which dries out the town's ancient oasis. Radio Sawt El Manajem, a community station for the miners in the Gafsa region and one of the radios recommended for licensing by INRIC expressed openness towards including other people in the radio station and covering relevant subjects that affect the local population. Radio Gafsa and Télévision Tunisiana were present and reported from the workshop.

### **2.3.4 Gabès, 8.7.2011**

The workshop in Gabès was attended by an enthusiastic young crowd of twelve men and eight women. The majority of them were students, but also young professionals, members of a cultural group, one party spokesperson and two persons from Radio Oasis (commercial station recommended by INRIC for license). Ideas presented included the possibility of launching a magazine targeted at blind and deaf people, and starting an international media corporation project via the internet by young people from around the world. No existing local organisations were interested in taking them on.

### **2.3.5 Bizerte, 10.7.2011**

The 16 men and eight women who attended the workshop in Bizerte were a very heterogeneous group comprising both young students from Radio Bizerte, two journalists from the hunting and fishing radio Oxygène FM (commercial station recommended by INRIC for license), senior members of the Jeunesse Scolaire in Jendouba (150 kilometres away), and representatives from various civil society organisations in Bizerte and Tunis. The director of Oxygène FM, Kamel Robbana expressed willingness to cooperate with all the young people present at the workshop.

*"I could imagine that within our commercial radio station we could open windows for community radio produced by civil society associations,"* Kamel Robbana said.

The statement – which was applauded by the entire workshop – gave testimony to the local networking, which this and the other four workshops have led to.

### 3 Other actors in community media



Photo: AMARC/IMS

INRIC supports community media in Tunisia and has issued a public statement to this effect. Although it is an interim structure, a regulatory body to replace INRIC will be established after the October 2011 elections. The space to lobby for legislation conducive to community media should be utilised by the aspiring actors in the sector.

SNJT (National Union of Tunisian Journalists) is pro-community media and equally constitutes a relevant liaison for upcoming local and community media actors.

Free Press Unlimited (Dutch) intends to engage in support of community media in Tunisia and is in the preparatory stages in this regard. Efforts should be made by both international and national actors engaged in the sector to ensure that initiatives are coordinated and complimentary and cover as much of the country as possible.

## 4 Recommendations

Recommendations for IMS/AMARC action in support of community media

- Partnerships with selected community media/new local radio initiatives should form part of IMS/AMARC's support to decentralisation and enhanced professionalisation of the media in Tunisia. The anticipated licensing of new radio and TV stations holds potential for greater diversification of the media landscape. It also holds a promise for greater participation in the public debate, especially in geographical areas where people are currently without access to media and feel overlooked.
- Careful attention should be paid from the onset to sustainability considerations, financial as well as structural/organisational. It is uncertain what the media situation will look like after the elections in October 2011, not least in regard to legislation and media reforms. IMS/AMARC should develop a concerted action plan with each supported radio station specifying a business plan; a fundraising strategy; intended advocacy vis-à-vis opinion makers on the desired media reform, etc.
- IMS/AMARC should give special attention to the active participation of women and youth in planning and implementation of community media projects.
- Networking amongst new local/community media actors should be actively encouraged by IMS/AMARC, specifically for the purpose of ensuring strong representation of the sub-sector as regards current and future debate on media and regulatory reform.

### 4.1 Proposed IMS/AMARC pilot projects Tunisia:

- Radio Sawt el Manajem in Gafsa
- Radio Chambi and planned Community TV in Kasserine
- Radio 6 in Tunis

Photo: AMARC/IMS



# 5 Annexes

## Annex I

### Map of Tunisia with different media projects



## Annex II

### **Invitation aux ateliers sur les centres de médias communautaires et les radios associatives en Tunisie**

Tunis, le 30 juin 2011

Mesdames,

Messieurs,

L'Association mondiale des radiodiffuseurs communautaires (AMARC), International Media Support (IMS) et le Syndicat tunisien des radios libres (STRL) ont le plaisir de vous inviter à un atelier pour le développement des médias en Tunisie, lors duquel nous présenterons le concept des radios associatives (RA) et des centres de médias communautaires (CMC) dans le cadre de la démocratisation en Tunisie, pour donner une voix et l'accès à la communication aux secteurs de la société marginalisés et exclus des médias.

L'objectif de cet atelier est d'explorer la question à savoir si une radio associative ou un centre de média communautaire serait un moyen pour améliorer la communication et l'accès à l'information pour les populations dans votre région/ville/communauté(s).

L'atelier s'adresse à des actrices/eurs et activistes de la société civile, comme des associations de femmes, de jeunes, des blogueurs/ses, journalistes professionnels/les et amateurs et toutes autres personnes intéressées dans la communication populaire.

Pendant la première partie de l'atelier, l'AMARC présentera l'idée d'une RA. STRL se présentera et partagera son expérience avec Radio 6 à Tunis, la première RA en Tunisie. IMS présentera l'idée d'un CMC et les possibilités que cela offre pour le progrès de la démocratisation.

Pendant la deuxième partie de l'atelier nous explorerons ensemble avec les participants/es le potentiel d'une RA et/ou CMC dans votre ville/région: La vision, la mission, les objectifs, les défis et difficultés. Les ateliers seront d'une durée d'un jour, en français et en arabe, dans les villes suivantes:

- Le Kef, 5 juillet 2011 de 8h00 - 13h00  
Centre Culturel de Kef
- Kasserine, 6 juillet 2011 de 8h00 - 13h00  
Centre Université ISET
- Gafsa, 7 juillet 2011 de 8h00 - 13h00  
Hotel Jugurtha Palace
- Gabes, 8 juillet 2011 de 8h00 - 13h00  
Hotel Oasis
- Bizerte, 10 juillet 2011 de 8h00 - 13h00  
Hotel Sidi Salem

Intéressé/e? Nous vous prions de vous inscrire par email à bianca@tinig.ch ou par sms au 026 781 058 avec votre nom, no. de mobile, organisation/profession et la ville dans laquelle vous aimeriez participer à l'atelier.

## Annex III

### Programme de l'atelier sur les centres de médias communautaires et radios associatives

**Le Kef, 5 juillet; Kasserine, 6 juillet; Gafsa, 7 juillet; Gabes, 8 juillet; Bizerte, 10 juillet 2011**

8h00 – 8h30	Arrivées et enregistrements
8h30 – 8h45	<b>Mot de bienvenue</b> par AMARC et IMS et d'introduction des participantes
8h45 – 9h15	<b>Session 1: Centre de Média Communautaire (CMC):</b> Son potentiel pour l'observation citoyenne des élections et le processus de démocratisation en Tunisie. Lotte Grauballe et Kasper Ly Netterstørm de IMS (International Media Support)
9h15 – 9h45	<b>Session 2: Les Radios associatives (RA) une voix pour les exclus/es</b> Potentiel pour la démocratisation, la participation des femmes, des jeunes et d'autres groupes sociaux marginalisés. Bianca Miglioretto du Réseau international des femmes de l'AMARC. (Association mondiale des radiodiffuseurs communautaires)
9h45 – 10h15	<b>Session 3: Expérience de Radio 6 – radio associative à Tunis</b> Présentation du Syndicat Tunisien des Radios Libres (STRL) et les expériences de Radio 6 à Tunis, la première radio associative diffusée en Tunisie Aymen Rabai de STRL et Radio 6.
10h15 – 10h45	<b>Discussion</b>
10h45 – 11h15	<b>Pause café/thé</b>
11h15 – 12h15	<b>Atelier – Visions et objectifs pour un CMC/RA</b> En petits groupes sous-régionaux, thématiques ou sectoriels Élaborer la vision, mission (audience cibles) et les objectifs d'un CMC ou d'une RA et les premiers pas à entreprendre.
12h15 – 13h00	<b>Présentations des résultats</b> et discussion
13h00	<b>Déjeuner ensemble</b>

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[www.amarc.org](http://www.amarc.org)

## Annex IV

### Press release: AMARC/IMS mission on Media Development in Tunisia from July 2-12, 2011

*"Democratization means decentralization of media, diversity and a choice what newspaper people want to read or what radio stations they want to tune in."* Ben Hamad Zackair, Radio Gafsa

IMS/AMARC in collaboration with STRL conducted five community media workshops in different regional cities of Tunisia (Le Kef, Kasserine, Gafsa, Gabes and Bizeirte). The objective of the workshops was to present the concept of community media, especially community radio and community media centers and listen to the voices of the local journalists and actors of civil society what are their perceptions of developing media diversity in their region.

The team of AMARC/IMS and STRL was warmly welcome in all the cities, the workshops were well attended by media people, amateur broadcasters who run internet radios, civil society such as women's associations, citizenship groups, organisations of graduated unemployed, aids prevention groups, revolution committees etc. The message about the workshop traveled fast by word of mouth and despite the hot temperatures in the interior of the country, people from surrounding cities came to attend the workshop. Participants from Jendouba, a city that does not have any local media, traveled 150 km attend the workshop in Bizeirte. The participants were very much interested in setting up community media in their place.

*"Central Tunisia is one of the forgotten regions of Tunisian development at the same time we are the center of the revolution."* Chedly Tlili, Radio Chambi FM, Kasserine

In Kasserine the people have been deprived of any regional media such as news papers, radio or TV by the Ben Ali dictatorship. They felt very inspired by the idea of community media in particular community radio and community TV. It would largely contribute to the development of the region which is based on agricultural production and has rich cultural inheritance.

Photo: AMARC/IMS





The mission was very timely as INRIC has just recommended 12 local radio projects to the Premier Minister to be granted a broadcast license. Among them are three community radio stations (Radio Chambi FM, Kasserine; Radio Saut El Mangem, Gafsa and Radio 6, Tunis). In the different cities all the radios that were recommended for licenses attended the workshops and said they got a lot of new ideas from the workshop on how to run their radio. The workshops also were an opportunity for networking among the participants and identify synergies of efforts and interests.

*"We really have to seek direct collaboration with the miners of Gafsa who are the target audience of our radio but we should also cater to the other people especially the women living in Gafsa"* Fahen Boukadous, Radio Saut El Mangem.

*"I could imagine that within our commercial radio station we open up windows for community radio produced by civil society associations."* Kamel Robana, Oxygene.FM, Birzeite

This mission will be followed up by ISM/AMARC with concrete support to a few pilot projects and collaboration with existing community media projects and initiatives with to objective to support the decentralization and diversification of the media landscape in Tunisia and strengthen the community media sector.

*"The energy and the enthusiasm of young people in Central Tunisia is amazing. As they have only experienced censured and centralized media coming from the capital they have little ideas how to go about building their own sustainable media project."* Lotte Grauballe, IMS

*"The development of community radio in the smaller cities has a great potential to reach out to the large sectors of society who do not have access to internet such as women agricultural workers. It is important to involve women from the very beginning of any community media project."* Bianca Miglioretto, AMARC

Through service to members, networking and project implementation, the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters AMARC, brings together a network of more than 4,000 community radios, federations, community media stakeholders in more than 115 countries. The main global impact of AMARC since its creation in 1983, has been to accompany and support the establishment of a world wide community radio sector that has democratized the media sector. AMARC advocates for the right to communicate at the international, national, local and neighborhood levels and defends and promotes the interests of the community radio movement through solidarity, networking and cooperation.

Tunis, 12. July, 2011





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