



Evaluation of  
 Fondation Hironnelle/Star Radio  
 Project  
 Monrovia, Liberia  
 for  
 International Foundation for Election Systems  
 and  
 Fondation Hironnelle

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The following report would not have been possible without the input and assistance of many organizations and individuals.

IFES would like to thank the United States Agency for International Development for its financial support of Star Radio. It should be noted that Star Radio could not have been established without the excellent technical and administrative assistance of Foundation Hirondelle. There would be little hope for Star's future if not for the dedication and professionalism of its Liberian staff and board of directors.

Finally, IFES would like to thank Star's listeners and supporters across Liberia and around the world for making Star Radio part of their lives.

## **I. Executive Summary**

The International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES) engaged media specialist Gregory A. Kintz to evaluate its Star Radio project. The late 1998 evaluation of Monrovia-based Star Radio was intended to determine the progress that has been made toward Star's establishment as an independent and economically viable Liberia radio station, and to offer recommendations to Foundation Hironnelle, IFES, and Star Radio as to how best assist in achieving that goal.

Mr. Kintz found that significant progress has been made toward Star's establishment as a Liberian-managed and operated radio station since it was started in the months prior to Liberia's July 19, 1997 national elections. Even so, significant work remains to be done. Over the course of 1999, the Hironnelle Foundation's (FH) staff should seek to more fully engage Star's board of directors in the transition process and in the identification and hiring of a Liberian station manager.

Progress on Star's transition has been hampered by factors outside of the control of FH, IFES, and Star. These factors include: a series of delays in USAID provision of add-on funds to its grant agreement with IFES dating to January 1998; restrictions on travel to and within Liberia; legal attacks on Star orchestrated by three Liberian ministries; building political and social tension since the 1997 elections; and, security concerns related to internal tensions as well as to the ongoing civil war in neighboring Sierra Leone. The negative impact of these factors on Star's transition increased exponentially with the September 18-19 Camp Johnson Road incident and its continued aftermath. Nonetheless, the commitment remains on the part of IFES and FH to facilitate Star's transition as quickly and smoothly as possible.

Based on Mr. Kintz's visit, an initial plan for Star's future has been developed. Section VIII of this report carefully outlines a strategy for Star Radio's future, focusing on its institutional development and alternative approaches to the station's funding.

The Star project must be viewed in three phases. Star's "rapid-response phase," May 1997-December 1998, featured Star's speedy installation with limited operational training and "on the fly" planning for sustainability. The desire for Star to begin broadcasting before the June elections eclipsed those for institutional development until some time after the elections. Star's rapid-response phase, or phase one, is characterized by several key highlights:

- Hiring and training of station administrative and production staff.
- Acquisition of production and broadcast equipment, office space, vehicles, etc.
- Establishment of broadcast agreement with Radio Monrovia.
- Acquisition of broadcast frequencies.
- Broadcasting on FM, July 1997.
- Broadcasting on short wave, September 1997.
- Temporary station shutdown by the Liberian government, January 1998.
- Short wave transmitter destroyed by lightning, March 1998.

- Development of a transition plan.
- Establishment of a board of directors.
- Transition of the board from advisory body to a governing body.
- Legal attacks by the Liberian Ministry of Labor, Posts and Telecommunications, and Ministry of Information and Culture.

January 1999 marks the beginning of Star's second phase. Efforts should center on the building of a sustainable Liberian media institution. The evolution of the Star project from phase one to phase two is significant. It allows for a clear demarcation between the mode of operation to this point, with an expatriate manager and administrator, to a fully Liberian management structure under the supervision of an expanded board of directors. An expatriate technical advisor would remain to assist Star and its board in their development.

Phase two is projected to extend from January 1999 through December 2001. Phase two of the Star project is envisioned as including:

- Restructured and more active board of directors.
- Liberian station manager, administrator, and technical manager/chief engineer.
- Expatriate technical advisor serving as counterpart to the station manager for two years.
- Continued growth in staff skill and professionalism.
- Fondation Hirondelle shifts from IFES contractor to IFES sub-grantee.
- Significant diversification of donor funding, led by the board of directors.
- Phase out of relationship with Radio Monrovia.
- Increase in Star Radio programming.
- Expanded production and broadcast of social and economic development programming.
- Expansion of vernacular and Liberian-English language programming.
- Training opportunities for Liberian and regional journalists and technicians.
- Strengthened relationships with the Liberian mass media community.
- Uninterrupted short wave programming and national coverage.
- Improved relations with the Government of Liberia.

The Star project's third and final phase begins with Star Radio's establishment as a self-sustaining Liberian media outlet. IFES estimated that phase three could begin in January 2002. Among other things, phase three will offer:

- Star Radio, a Liberian media institution.
- Complete phase out of expatriate involvement.
- Engagement of technical assistance on an "as needed" contractual basis.
- Direct funding of Star by national and international sources.
- Gradual expansion in Liberian/local financial support.
- Continued monitoring and support by the international community.
- Training opportunities for Liberian and regional journalists and technicians.
- Positive relationship with the Government of Liberia.

Mr. Kintz initially approached the Star project evaluation with the belief that changes could be made in three areas: 1) staff size, 2) IFES involvement, and 3) budget size and application. After testing his hypotheses, Mr. Kintz determined that changes could indeed be recommended in those three areas, but to a different degree than he had first considered being necessary.

While he initially assumed that Star's staff could be reduced, upon studying the station's operations first hand, it was evident that any reduction in staff at this point would adversely effect Star's program quantity and quality. Nonetheless, he felt that in the medium term, staff numbers could be reduced through cross training and streamlining station operations.

It was clear to Mr. Kintz prior to arriving in Monrovia, that an immediate reduction in project cost could be achieved through the removal of IFES from the mix. After talking this through with Fondation Hironnelle it became obvious that IFES wears a number of useful Star project hats. FH lacks the institutional capacity to comply with the USAID procurement and accounting procedures. Fondation Hironnelle is a skilled and competent provider of technical expertise to Star. FH has done an excellent job in setting up Star Radio as a leading provider of news and information, inside and outside of Liberia. However, FH lacks the contacts in Washington, access to and experience in fundraising, and experience and expertise in administering USAID funding. IFES plays a supporting role with the Liberian government through its support of the 1997 elections and its ongoing technical assistance program with the Liberian Elections Commission. Finally, the information and material resources that the Foundation has at its Monrovia office have proven useful to Star in its day-to-day work.

This report suggests that IFES assist FH in establishing the capacity to mandate USAID project funds. IFES and FH will discuss this possibility in the coming months. This evaluation recommends that IFES phase out its involvement with Star Radio over the next one to two years. It goes on to recommend that Hironnelle phase out its direct involvement over the next three years.

This evaluation included a detailed review of Star Radio's budget and expenditures over the eighteen months of phase one. Star has managed its limited funding with great care. Given the high cost of doing business in Liberia, Star's operating and production costs are quite low. This evaluation recommends the reduction or the cutting of recurrent costs totaling approximately \$86,000. It goes on to present a case for additional phase two expenditures to cover necessary equipment replacement and upgrades. In the long term, incurring these expenses in phase two will decrease recurring station costs in phase three.

Star Radio should require between \$900,000 and \$1,000,000 for 1999. In the immediate term there is urgent need for USAID support from January to June 1999 to enable Star Radio to address organizational and administrative issues as it transitions to Liberian management. January 31, 1999, when the current USAID funding runs out, will be too soon for interested international donors to come on line. By July 1999 it is hoped that donors other than USAID will be able to share in the support of Star Radio. IFES estimates required funding for January-July in the neighborhood of \$550,000. Providing that other funders come through, Star will look to

USAID to top-off the international contribution for post July 1999 operations with approximately \$200,000.

This IFES evaluation is based on interviews conducted by Mr. Kintz with the Star board of directors, management and staff; with select Liberian government, business, media, political, and development leaders; and with Liberian citizens. The general feeling expressed by the Liberians, and the non-Liberians, interviewed was that Star Radio plays an essential role as a crucial contributor to development of Liberian democracy. The opinion was widely held that Star stands as an example to other Liberian media of factual, unbiased, balanced, and fair reporting of the news. It was further stressed that without Star's commitment to covering the news in such a manner, the Liberian public's access to credible information would be severely limited.

This report first offers some background on the Star Radio project, as well as general information on the Liberian political and economic climate in which Star operates. Next, the report offers a systematic comparison of Star Radio to other Liberian media, with insights into the general media economy. This is followed by an evaluation of the station itself, with an analysis of its structure and organization, programming, resources, financing, and budget. That section also reviews the roles of IFES and FH, the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) managing the project. Recommendations for improvement in each of these areas are included.

The final section of the report outlines a mid- to long-range business plan, building on Star's rapid-response phase. Phase two, the next step for Star, projected to last three years, will focus on institutional development. Star's staff and board, with appropriate international assistance, will work to establish Star as a sustainable Liberian media institution. The Star project will culminate with phase three. This final project phase will be marked by Star's development of the internal technical and managerial capacity to exist free of dependence on outside technical assistance and a corresponding reduction in the need for international financial support.

This evaluation reaches the conclusion that with creativity and commitment, Star Radio can develop into a sustainable Liberian media institution. Post-conflict Liberia can only benefit from the presence of Star, and other dependable information sources, that stand to play a pivotal role in Liberia's democratic transition; and in its social, economic, and cultural reconstruction.

## **II. RECOMMENDATIONS SUMMARY**

### **A. SHORT TERM RECOMMENDATIONS (JANUARY – JUNE 1999)**

#### **Structure and Management**

- 1) Star's board of directors should be expanded to minimum of nine members. The chief of radio/station manager should serve as the secretary of the board. One seat should be made available to Fondation Hironnelle, as principal manager of funding and provider of technical assistance.
- 2) Star's board must develop the capacity to systematically address outstanding and future legal challenges by the Liberian government to Star's existence.
- 3) The board of directors should hire a Liberian station manager.
- 4) A Liberian should be hired as station administrator.
- 5) The organizational structure of the station should be adjusted.
- 6) A separate technical department should be created, supervised by a Liberian technical manager.
- 7) Cooperation must increase between Star Radio's department heads. Star management should commit to expanded communications with the station staff and to the facilitation of fuller staff participation in Star's operations.

#### **Programming**

- 1) The Star board should address the phase-out of the shared programming relationship with Radio Monrovia as soon as possible.
- 2) Star Radio should significantly increase its vernacular language programming to more effectively reach all Liberians with quality news and information programming.

#### **Technical**

- 1) The short wave transmitter needs to be replaced.
- 2) A broadcast-engineering consultant should be hired to evaluate Star Radio's coverage capacity and to recommend technical enhancements to insure Star's national coverage.
- 3) The station secretary should be outfitted with a reliable desktop computer and access to a high-volume laser printer.
- 4) The station photocopier should be replaced with a commercial-quality office unit.
- 5) The station should have on-site Internet access.
- 6) Internet news posting should originate from Star's main office.

### **Budget/Expenses**

- 1) USAID financial assistance must be secured for January-June 1999 in the range of \$550,000, to enable Star Radio to continue to operate and to pro-actively address the transition to Liberian management and funding diversification.
- 2) Main office square-footage can be reduced by approximately 1/4.
- 3) Reliance on expatriate staff should be minimized.
- 4) Star management must play an expanded role in budget development and tracking.
- 5) Star should develop a rolling schedule for station equipment replacement/upgrading.

### **Project Partners**

- 1) Fondation Hirondelle should determine what measures would have to be taken in order to meet the USAID and IFES accounting and procurement standards.
- 2) IFES should study the potential for FH to be considered as a sub-grantee, and eventually a direct recipient of USAID funding.
- 3) IFES should continue its involvement in the Star project for I-2 years.
- 4) FH should continue its involvement in the Star project through December 2001, maintaining a permanent presence in Monrovia through 2000.

### **Donors**

- 1) USAID support will continue to be required at varying levels through the transition phase.
- 2) Diversify the funding sources for Star Radio.
- 3) By July 1999 USAID should be joined by other donors in supporting Star Radio.

## **B. LONG TERM RECOMMENDATIONS (JULY 1999 – DECEMBER 2001)**

### **Structure and Management**

- 1) Performance evaluations for producers and journalists and general staff should be implemented.
- 2) Star's security and that of its staff should be addressed.
- 3) A system should be put in place for the airing and resolution of staff grievances before the board.
- 4) Development of a proactive external relations strategy, targeting national and international audiences, including a marketing plan to publicize the station.

### **Programming**

- 1) Star should expand into development-oriented program production.

- 2) Star should consider expanding its broadcast of Talking Drum Studios programming.

**Technical**

- 1) Gradual replacement of consumer-quality studio and editing equipment with professional-quality equipment.
- 2) Installation of a multi-station computer center for use by the news and program staff.
- 3) Installation of a server and the establishment of a local area network for Star staff and management.
- 4) Consideration of alternative energy sources for support of some station operations.
- 5) Technician cross-training in RF/audio and electrical work.
- 6) Shift from on-site, to periodic expatriate technical support in final year of phase two.
- 7) Development of permanent training program for journalists, technicians, and management.

### III. INTRODUCTION

The International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES) contracted media specialist, Gregory A. Kintz, to perform an evaluation of Star Radio, based in Monrovia, Liberia. Star Radio was established prior to Liberia's July 1997 national elections, the first multiparty elections to take place in that coastal West African nation since 1985. The 1997 elections stand as a watershed event in Liberian history, marking the end of over seven years of violent civil war. Liberia's war reduced its social fabric to tatters, and had negative economic, social, and political impacts reaching far beyond Liberia's borders.

Distrust resides at the root of complex conflict, impeding its peaceful and sustainable resolution. Liberia's fitful peace process stands as proof. Six years of failed accords, agreements, and manifestos preceded the 1997 elections. A wide range of international and Liberian non-governmental organizations and regional governments exerted considerable effort in shaping an acceptable transition program. IFES' role in Liberia from 1992-97 was to assist in that shaping exercise, and to then guide the Liberian election authorities in the organization and implementation of the national elections. IFES program activities in Liberia were, and continue to be, funded through a grant agreement with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

All of the peace agreements--many failed and one finally successful--were structured around national multiparty elections. Throughout the peace process, IFES and other organizations warned against the implementation of the peace process, and particularly the organization of post-conflict elections, in a vacuum. In order to succeed, the entire process required broad-based Liberian participation--from the political and social elite in Monrovia, to the hundreds of thousands of internally and externally displaced refugees across the nation, the region, and around the world. IFES placed particular emphasis on the national election event, not as the glorious capstone of the peace initiative, but as the real beginning of Liberia's resettlement, reconstruction, and gradual return to constitutional, representative government. In other words, the organization and the conduct of the 1997 election promised to be less of a challenge than situation to be faced by the newly-elected national officials and their constituents.

Accurate and accessible information diminishes distrust and encourages popular participation in change. Liberians and their international friends realized that there was a need for a vehicle to collect, prepare, and provide information on the peace process and the election event. It was agreed that to be effective, that vehicle would have to be apolitical-- above the fray and beyond reproach. Many options were considered. The combined challenges posed by the radically compressed 1997 election timeline and Liberia's estimated 15% literacy rate, pointed to radio as the sole medium capable of transmitting information to eligible Liberian voters nationally and regionally.

Racing against time, IFES contracted the Swiss-based Hironnelle Foundation (FH) to facilitate the establishment of a radio station in Monrovia. IFES, FH, and their Liberian colleagues dedicated themselves to the performance of what proved to be a logistical miracle of

considerable proportions to establish Star Radio. Star's initial objective was to broadcast programming to inform the Liberian electorate prior to the July 1997 election.

## **A. OVERVIEW OF STAR RADIO**

Star Radio is an independent news and information radio station based in Monrovia, Liberia. The Star program was initiated in June 1997 by the Hironnelle Foundation, operating under contract to IFES. FH continues to provide technical and managerial support to Star. IFES' assistance program in Liberia is funded by USAID. Financing for the Star Radio project was provided through IFES' existing USAID grant.

The initial concept of establishing a radio station prior to Liberia's July 1997 national elections was advanced by US officials as an attempt to "level the playing field," through the provision of clear information on the election process. In the months preceding the elections, there was a growing realization nationally and internationally that one of the leading candidates, rebel leader Charles Taylor, enjoyed essentially exclusive access to the FM and short wave airwaves through his own radio stations. Other electronic media outlets in Liberia had suffered substantial physical damage, or completely disappeared, during the civil war. There was a dearth of information available to the public concerning the mechanics of the upcoming election. In addition, the Liberian public had minimal exposure to the terms of the peace agreement and a limited recollection of the content of Liberia's constitution, promulgated in 1985, but never fully observed. FH realized, and IFES agreed, that an independent radio station could address many of the communications challenges faced by Liberia's election organizers, and by the Liberian government and its partner national and international organizations active in the areas of refugee repatriation, resettlement, and reconstruction.

From the outset of the discussions about the establishment of a radio station, IFES and FH were clear in outlining the administrative and technical challenges posed by the task. The key steps in the process included: securing funding, locating qualified specialists and working equipment, and facilitating international and national transportation and set-up logistics. Given those steps and the time remaining prior to the election, IFES and FH warned USAID, the US Embassy, and other interested parties not to expect the radio station to have a significant impact on the elections. At the same time, both organizations emphasized that the station's post-election role would prove more influential in the Liberian transition as a source of national and regional news and information. In that role, the radio could enhance the transparency of the newly elected government through coverage of its day-to-day activities. It could also enhance the effectiveness of the government and other groups and individuals active in Liberia's transition to stability through the collection and dissemination of news and information from the capital and Liberia's thirteen counties. The accountability of elected and appointed officials, and national and international assistance organizations, could be enhanced before their constituents—the Liberian public.

The fears expressed by IFES and FH proved true. Star Radio's introduction to Liberia was accelerated in an attempt to get the station on the air before the national elections. This acceleration was accomplished through a series of technical compromises determined by IFES

and FH to be necessary at the time. As a result, inadequate attention was focused on issues of grass roots capacity development and long-term station sustainability. Star Radio went on the air July 14, 1997, five days before the elections. Its transmissions were limited to FM, reaching the city of Monrovia and surrounding Montserrado and Margibi Counties and beyond. Star's short wave equipment did not come on the air until September 1997.

Star Radio's first 18 months (July 1997-December 1998) stand as the rapid-response phase of the station's development. Over those 18 months, the energy of Star's staff, its board, and its international partners was dedicated to Star's emergency set-up and staff technical training. The evolution from a conceptual station to concrete one was rapid. Equipment was expedited to Liberia and installed, staff recruited, training was conducted, and Star was on the air.

Star's rapid-response phase was not without its low moments. The first short wave transmitter was damaged in transit, and a replacement could not be deployed until September 1997. A March 1998 lightning strike destroyed that transmitter, forcing Star to turn to a lower-power replacement transmitter for short wave broadcasts. On two occasions, the Liberian government commanded the station to cease broadcasting. The first shut down was in January 1998. The situation was resolved in a matter of weeks. In October 1998, Star's short wave and the Internet services were suspended and Hirondelle Foundation's two expatriates threatened with deportation. FM broadcasting was allowed to continue. The Internet service was restored in November 1998. As of this writing, the Liberian government has yet to return Star's short wave frequency or to provide work permits to FH's two expatriates.

Another prominent feature of Star's rapid-response phase was the uncertain and erratic provision of USAID financial support. Initially conceived of as a pre-election initiative, USAID required some time to acknowledge Star's utility in post-election Liberia. In late 1998, USAID agreed to continue supporting Star through IFES and FH. In the meantime, funding for Star was provided on a month-to-month basis, rendering medium- and long-range planning impossible. Funding uncertainties and delays forced Star adopt a survival mode, versus a more productive future-focused planning and development mode.

Star Radio has established itself as Liberia's only news and information radio station that enjoys relative freedom from direct and indirect pressures to modify its news based on what the government or other interest groups would like the station to broadcast. As an independent broadcaster, Star is a model for Liberia and the region.

Star Radio broadcasts for 16 hours daily from 0500 to 2100 on FM. The FM signal, broadcast from Star's Mamba Point office in Monrovia, covers Monrovia and surrounding Montserrado and Margibi Counties and beyond. Six of those daily hours are dedicated to original in-house produced programming, from 0500-0800 and 1800-2100. The remaining 10 hours per day are simulcast on FM with Radio Monrovia, during which Star Radio provides some news updates. Short wave broadcasting totals six hours per day, 0500-0800 and 1800-2100. The original short wave transmitter destroyed by lightning earlier in 1998 broadcast a stronger signal that reached well beyond Liberia's borders. With its replacement short wave broadcast equipment, Star's short wave emissions are limited to the Liberian territory.

## **B. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY**

The methodology used in the evaluation of Star Radio included a thorough review of project documents and previous reports; a site visit to Star Radio in Liberia; a visit to the Hirondelle Foundation's offices in Lausanne, Switzerland; and a visit to the IFES headquarters in Washington, DC. (The Scope of Work for this evaluation is included in Appendix G.)

The Liberia site visit took place from October 22 through November 12, 1998. Mr. Kintz spent those three weeks in country interviewing Liberian citizens and representatives from various Liberian and international institutions and organizations. The interview schedule was developed by the consultant based on his Liberian contact base, with guidance provided by IFES' Liberia project manager and the Washington project team. Interviews were conducted with key people from eleven media institutions; six leaders of a variety of Liberian and international businesses; staff from four Liberian NGOs; directors of five International NGOs; representatives of four UN organizations; ministers and deputy ministers representing three Liberian ministries; staff from three political parties; and representatives of four donor nations and organizations. Interviews were conducted with the management and staff of Star Radio, members of its board of directors, its lawyer, and with the IFES project manager in Liberia. (Refer to Appendix A for a complete listing of organizations and individuals interviewed and documents reviewed.)

The balance of the consultant's time in Liberia was dedicated to other evaluation activities, including a day trip to Gbarnga, observations of the day-to-day operations of Star Radio and monitoring of its program content and quality, visiting and listening to other Liberian radio stations, and reading local newspapers.

One day was spent in Abidjan meeting with representatives of the Dutch government and the Swedish International Development Agency. November 14-16 were spent at FH's Swiss headquarters. The media consultant interviewed FH staff, collected relevant information from FH, and interviewed the president of the FH board of directors. November 18-20, the media consultant visited Washington, DC. While in Washington, the consultant met extensively with IFES staff. The remainder of his time in Washington was spent meeting with US based NGOs active in Liberia, Congressional staff, USAID West Africa staff, Department of State staff, and the Clinton administration's Special Envoy to Liberia.

## **IV. COMMENTS ON LIBERIA'S POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC CLIMATES**

Liberia's transition continues—from a failed state beset by civil war to a peaceful nation grappling with the establishment of rule of law and the challenges of physical and social reconstruction. The assessment of Star Radio's performance and its future should take into consideration the economic and political environment within which the station operates. That surrounding environment significantly influenced the early decisions determining Star's technical organization and programmatic operations.

As was mentioned earlier, Star's first eighteen months represent the station's rapid-response phase. Expectations for Star's future should be shaped with this in mind. For instance, many of those involved in the discussion of the original concept for the establishment of a news and information radio station in Liberia saw such a station as capable of generating sufficient income to become self-sustaining in a relatively short amount of time. In addition, USAID and others involved in the acquisition of funding for the radio initiative assumed that beyond the initial investment in equipment and supplies, the annual costs for operation of a radio station would be minimal. These well-meaning expectations, however, do not stand up to the test of the complex reality of operating an effective news-gathering institution in post-war Liberia.

### **A. ECONOMIC CLIMATE**

Liberia is in a state of economic collapse. The civil war destroyed most of the country's infrastructure. Railroads, mining operations, electrical power distribution, water, sewer, telecommunications, roads and bridges were destroyed by war or the atrophy of neglect. The few businesses that are back in operation function at 10% of their pre-war levels. The return of some industries, such as mining, is questionable, due to a total loss of capital investment in equipment and facilities. Unemployment, estimated at 75%, is endemic. Liberia possesses no tax base to speak of. The unstable political climate deters international investment and impedes the establishment of reasonable domestic income generation strategies. There is no indication of an economic turn-around on the horizon.

A majority of Liberians rely on the informal sector for the provision of basic goods and services. Government employees, in the rare event that they receive their salaries on time, if at all, take home less than US\$10 per month.

One of the business leaders interviewed maintained that jump-starting economic growth requires coordinated government action on multiple fronts. First, the government should commit to initiating the proposed banking reforms under debate. Liberia's dual currencies, the Liberty and J.J. Roberts, require reconciliation, leading to the introduction of a new currency and the resurrection of the central bank. At the same time, Liberia's security climate must be improved. It is possible, and some in the business community are optimistic, that this will happen within the

next three to five years. Even if it does, it will still take many years for the economy to recover to its pre-war levels.

In the short term, over the coming five years, 1999-2004, Star Radio cannot be expected to become self-sustaining. Depending on the success of Liberia's reconstruction and on the time required for the stabilization and initial growth in its economy, it is not practical to assume that Star Radio will be able to support itself from Liberian sources within the next 5 years. Beyond that it may still be difficult, but it is not possible to predict.

## **B. POLITICAL CLIMATE**

There is a high level of political insecurity in Liberia, and this plays a prominent role in determining the future of Star Radio. Liberia's government has been in office for 18 months. It was elected in a process that took place following over seven years of civil conflict. While the new government maintains that it is creating an atmosphere in which basic human rights are protected and rule of law and freedom of the press respected, there have been repeated allegations over the past 18 months that suggest this is not the case.

To date, Liberia's various human rights organizations have condemned many actions of the security forces since the elections, including several extra-judicial murders that are widely assumed to have been committed by government security. For instance, Samuel Dokie and his family were detained in late November 1998 by the Special Security Service (SSS) in Gbarnga, Bong County as they traveled to Nimba county to attend a wedding; the Dokies' mutilated bodies were found three days later. In another prominent case, Madam Nowai Flomo disappeared in July 1998 after she was verbally threatened by the SSS. In the GOL's recent September 18-19 "surgical strike" against Roosevelt Johnson and his supporters on Camp Johnson Road, the official death toll is reported to have been 50 persons. Human rights organizations and other independent sources allege that the toll was significantly higher. An international NGO reported cases of widows who were afraid to claim the bodies of their husbands. Eyewitness accounts suggest that during the chaos of the fighting, citizens from a specific ethnic group and other Liberians perceived as threats to the government were targeted. Liberia is not the only nation in the region facing looming security problems. The conflict in Sierra Leone, which traces many of its roots to Liberia, continues. The Sierra Leonean government alleges that the GOL provides substantial support to the rebels, in return for the support that the rebels provided to then warlord Charles Taylor during Liberia's civil war. Other diplomatic sources tend to support those allegations.

During the first eighteen months of Star radio's operations, the station has been closed completely once and partially a second time. On each occasion, the Liberian government has closed Star for technical reasons; nonetheless, one can not help but project some political motivations behind these actions.

The Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications first closed Star in January 1998 over the question of short wave and FM frequency registrations. In October 1998 three government Ministries sanctioned the station. The Ministry of Labor said the expatriate staff was working illegally and threatened them with deportation. The Ministry of Information ordered Star to stop

the Internet news bulletins. The Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications suspended the license for the short wave broadcasts. The timing of these events—the first occurring after the highly publicized death of Samuel Dokie, the second after the September 18-19 Camp Johnson Road incident—raises the question as to whether there was knowledge of these actions at the highest levels of the Liberian government prior to their occurrence.

Through its actions and statements since the election, the GOL has made it clear that it does not want news of these events to reach the rural parts of the country, nor the international community. Citizens', including journalists', seeming acceptance of this unspoken mandate could be attributed to their significant fear that the conflict may resume and their fear that they could be targeted for retribution. The tension is heightened due to multiple rumors of the potential for a violent overthrow of the elected government.

On one hand, one would suppose that if the Liberian government was totally opposed to Star radio that they would have closed the station completely by now. On the other, current efforts by Star Radio to resolve the short wave frequency and the labor permit issues that first arose in October 1998 have met with no success. Whether these current problems and/or future ones will succeed in closing the station depends in part on the strategies and resolve of the board of directors, the Star staff, and the international community, as well as Liberia's political climate.

This is the backdrop against one must evaluate transition options for Star Radio. In such politically insecure times, it is difficult for private, independent media to stand up to the pressures brought to bear on them. Nonetheless, as long as Star is able to broadcast accurate and timely news and information, it can create space for all of Liberia's media, limiting efforts to impose a culture of silence. This situation illustrates a remarkable paradox: compared with many African nations pursuing democratization, Liberia enjoys a relatively high level of press freedom as exhibited by the existence of private radio and print media.

In addition, it is critical to Star Radio and other Liberian media outlets that the international community continues to monitor the actions of the GOL. In January, 1998 when the GOL shut down Star Radio, pressure brought to bear by international government officials, combined with comments by former US President Jimmy Carter and Dutch Foreign Minister Pronk helped bring Star Radio back on the air.

## **V. LIBERIAN MEDIA AND ITS RELATIONS TO STAR RADIO**

There are a significant number of privately owned media in Liberia: 7 radio stations, 2 TV stations, and 6 newspapers. Among Liberia's privately owned media institutions, Star Radio is the only one that interviewees identified as independent. By independent, the interviewees specified that Star is sheltered against direct and indirect pressures from the government or other entities wishing to modify its news content. The station is held up by Liberia's media professionals as the only media outlet that can follow, prepare, and broadcast key stories in an unbiased, balanced way.

Liberia's news and information media face direct and indirect government intimidation. The print media was recently censored through threats issued to the single printing press in Monrovia that prints the daily papers. The printer was told not to print a picture of bodies from the September 18-19 Camp Johnson Road incident. To do so would be to risk losing some or all of his more lucrative printing contracts. The printer in turn informed the newspapers that he would not print photos of bodies with the news stories. Indirect censorship, sometimes facilitated through economic pressure, frustrates the ability of Monrovia's print media to hold the government accountable. Given its economic status, the printing company is more immediately vulnerable to government pressures than individual newspapers.

Every radio station seems to have stories of government intimidation, admitting to the practice of a degree of self-censorship. They maintain that Star Radio is, generally, able to tell the truth more often than they are, given its implicit protection by the international community.

Liberia's radio stations face similar economic pressures as those exerted on newspapers. Commercial stations depend on advertising for their survival. The government directly and indirectly exerts control on the media, pressuring advertisers to stop doing business with certain media outlets.

The government station, ELBC, for example is careful not to broadcast news programming that could be perceived as being negative or critical of the government. To avoid potential government confrontation, their programming focuses on rural development issues. ELBC strongly suggested to Mr. Kintz that Star Radio also shift its programming from a news to a development orientation.

### **A. MEDIA ECONOMY**

#### ***1. Operational Costs***

It is remarkable that Liberia's existing media institutions are still in operation. Their costs exceed their revenue in every instance. The poor state of the economy means that there is little money to be spent on advertising. What is available is being shared by 15 commercial media outlets. Salaries for management staff at these businesses are about US\$100 per month, with journalists

earning about US\$25 per month – an amount that is by most estimations impossible to live on in Monrovia.

Operational costs at any radio station or newspaper in Liberia are dominated by the cost of running and maintaining a generator. In many instances it exceeds the cost of salaries. For example, Star's generators cost at minimum \$50,000 per year to operate.

The unit cost of printing newspapers is high. Limited circulation, costly raw materials, limited competition among printers, and other factors result in a per copy cost of US50¢. At that cost, newspapers are not affordable to the average Liberian.

## **2. Sources of Revenue**

There are formal and informal sources of revenue for radio stations and newspapers. Formally, radio stations sell time and charge public announcements. Newspapers depend on sales volume and advertisements.

Informally, radio stations and newspapers have grown to depend on financial incentives to cover or run certain stories. These payments may be made to individual reporters or directly to the media outlet. It is impossible to account for such transactions. Anecdotal evidence abounds as to their existence. For example, if someone wants a story covered on radio or printed in the newspaper, one only needs to compensate the journalists and/or the media outlet to ensure that the story is covered and presented in a favorable light. Even when one does not seek out media coverage, journalists will cover a story, retroactively seeking payment for the story. Several NGOs tell of having an activity covered and printed in a newspaper, only to have the reporter return the next day to collect payment. At press conferences it is common for the reporters to line up to receive their payment as they leave the event. If the reporters are not paid, chances are that they will not cover the story.

Even taking into account formal and informal revenue streams, the media's operational costs outstrip observed revenue. Mr. Kintz was interested to note one instance where a private radio station ran out of generator fuel, only to have its supply replenished by the government. This raises the question as to how Liberia's media survives. Two possible explanations emerge. Perhaps Liberian media outlets operate at a loss, supported by wealthy individuals or groups who regard their short-term losses as a contribution to Liberia's reconstruction and/or to best position themselves for an anticipated economic turnaround. An alternative analysis suggests that some media outlets are subsidized by unseen sources whose primary intent is to exert control over news and information content. It is impossible to prove either explanation. The survival of Liberia's electronic and print media may be due to one, both, or neither strategy.

## **B. COMPARISON TO OTHER MEDIA OUTLETS**

In evaluating Star Radio, it is helpful to compare Star to other Liberian media. Comparisons can be drawn from information regarding ownership, coverage, physical plant, programming, staff, training, budget, and sources of income. Mr. Kintz collected as much data on as many media

outlets as possible in the course of the evaluation. It would be interesting to continue collecting and updating this information on a regular basis.

## **1. Star Radio**

*Ownership:* Star Radio is owned by Fondation Hirondelle/Star Radio, an accredited Liberian non-governmental organization.

*Coverage:* The FM signal reaches greater Monrovia and Montserrado and Margibi Counties, extending into some neighboring counties. The short wave full-power transmitter reaches all of Liberia and most of the neighboring countries. The low-power short wave reaches most of Liberia.

*Physical Plant:* Star Radio's offices and studios occupy about 9,000 ft<sup>2</sup>. Their equipment is a mixture of used last generation broadcast-quality items, new consumer-quality machines, and a few pieces of new broadcast-quality equipment. They have a studio site and a transmitter site with generators at each location.

*Programming:* The programming originated by Star Radio is a mix of news and information including news briefs in English, Liberian English, French, and 14 Liberian languages; and news summaries, in depth stories, interviews, and features in English. The station simulcasts Radio Monrovia programming from 0900-1700 daily.

*Staff:* Approximately 84 people work at Star Radio, including 30 on a part-time basis. The staff is well trained. Staff salaries are comparable to those paid by international NGOs in Liberia for full-time employees, ranging from about \$150/month to \$640/month.

*Funding and Income:* Star's support comes from donor governments and agencies: USAID, the Dutch government, and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation are Star's current supporters.

## **2. Radio Monrovia**

*Ownership:* Radio Monrovia is a private, Liberian-owned FM radio station.

*Coverage:* The station covers greater Monrovia.

*Physical Plant:* Radio Monrovia's physical plant is small, about 500 ft<sup>2</sup>. Desks, records, tapes, people, and equipment are packed in very tightly. The station's equipment is low-end professional broadcast, in good condition; all of it is new since 1996 when everything except the transmitter was looted. The transmitter was shot-up during the April 6, 1996 fighting in Monrovia, reducing its output to less than 1000 watts.

*Programming:* Radio Monrovia is primarily a music station. It does some of its own news, reads from the local newspapers, and relays VOA programming. It rebroadcasts Star Radio's hourly news from 0900-1700 daily.

*Staff:* The highest paid staff member receives US\$100 per month.

*Funding and Income:* The station relies on private funds and advertising income. Ad income is less than expenses. Radio Monrovia's owner operates the station at a deficit.

Radio Monrovia and Star Radio entered into a partnership when Star Radio was first being established. That partnership was instrumental in getting Star Radio on the air quickly. The future of the partnership is under review by both partners.

Radio Monrovia was closed down in January 1998 during the time the Liberian government closed Star Radio. It was reopened after the owner paid a fine and wrote a letter of apology to the government.

### **3. LCN**

*Ownership:* Three radio stations and one TV station make up the Liberian Communications Network (LCN). LCN is a private network, owned by Liberia's president.

*Coverage:* The three radio stations include: a short wave station broadcasting nationwide from Totota; an FM station in Gbarnga reaching the Gbarnga area; and an FM station broadcasting to greater Monrovia.

*Physical Plant:* The LCN TV and Monrovia FM stations are outfitted with moderate-quality professional broadcast equipment. These LCN stations are well equipped. In Monrovia, the TV and FM stations are in one building, co-located with their transmitters. The FM station in Gbarnga was visited, but the studio was not available for observation. The short wave station is in Totota and was not visited for this evaluation. LCN stations are equipped with good generators.

*Programming:* LCN stations broadcast music, development programming, and news. The news content has a distinct pro-government and pro-president flavor. One staff member interviewed said that their purpose was to provide good news about the president and the government.

*Staff:* Approximately 240 people work for LCN.

*Funding and Income:* LCN relies on private funds and advertising revenues.

A number of persons interviewed explained that the Liberian government introduced the possibility of transferring support to the Liberian Broadcast System (LBS) to LCN. Both stations generate similar programming. Public outcry convinced the government not to do so.

#### 4. *Radio Veritas*

*Ownership:* Originally known as ELCM, Radio Veritas is owned by the Catholic Church.

*Coverage:* Radio Veritas has both an FM and a short wave transmitter. At full power, the FM has the same coverage area as Star Radio. Radio Veritas' short wave has national coverage and reaches into neighboring countries.

*Physical Plant:* The station's equipment is good professional broadcast quality, almost on a par with LCN, and significantly better than Star Radio. Veritas' FM transmitter is a very good design, however, it has had serious technical problems in the past. Radio Veritas' studios and transmitter are co-located. There is a large generator on site.

*Programming:* Radio Veritas broadcasts a mix of music, news, development programs, talk shows, religious programs, and general information. Its news department does an adequate job

*Staff:* The staff is paid very little in comparison to Star Radio, and they have 18 volunteers. A few staff members are trained professionals, but most receive on-the-job training.

*Funding and Income:* Radio Veritas has a low budget. It receives support from the Catholic Church and Catholic Relief Services (CRS). IFES provided Radio Veritas with a generator and generator house to enable it to resume broadcasting in 1997. In addition, IFES has supported the monthly cost of generator fuel.

The Liberian government challenged the station's licensing arrangement in early 1998, but the situation was resolved within a few weeks.

#### 5. *DC 101*

*Ownership:* DC101 is a privately-owned radio station. The DC-101 owner is an entrepreneur who considers broadcasting as a good investment, with the hope of good returns in the future. The owner also has a TV station.

*Coverage:* DC-101 broadcasts to greater Monrovia on FM.

*Physical Plant:* DC-101 lost all of its equipment in the looting of April 6, 1996, with the exception of a standby 1000 watt FM transmitter. It has received some equipment grants from the BBC in exchange for re-broadcasting BBC news. The remainder of DC-101's equipment is consumer-quality, apart from one professional minidisk player. Overall, DC-101's equipment is limited, and what they have is generally not as good as Star Radio's.

*Programming:* DC-101's programming is primarily music, with in-house produced news reports and a daily call-in talk show.

*Staff:* DC-101 has 47 employees, including the small TV station. The radio station manager is paid US\$100 per month. Reporters are paid US\$22 per month.

*Funding and Income:* The radio station exists on private funding. According to the owner, the station usually operates at a monthly loss.

## **6. ELBC**

*Ownership:* ELBC is part of the Liberian Broadcasting System (LBS), and is owned by the Liberian government. It is something of a stepchild, as the bulk of the government's support tends to go to the LCN stations versus LBS and ELBC.

*Coverage:* ELBC broadcasts to greater Monrovia on FM.

*Physical Plant:* LBS is literally rebuilding itself from the ashes. The LBS main building can not be occupied due to heavy damage during the war. LBS has taken up residence in the Liberian Rural Communications Network (LRCN) building, which did not suffer as much damage from the war. Much of the building has been made useable. Two control rooms are in operation for ELBC. The equipment is good-quality professional broadcast. They own a good quality FM transmitter, a Harris 5 kW. However, spare parts are lacking, limiting ELBC to operate off of its exciter.

*Programming:* ELBC programming focuses on news, information, music, development information, and religious material. The news, intentionally, is very pro-government and pro-president. ELBC is seeking to significantly expand its development-oriented programming along the lines of what was once available from the former LRCN.

*Staff:* The staff is paid very little and erratically, as they are government employees.

*Funding and Income:* Most funding for ELBC operations comes at irregular intervals from the Liberian government.

## **7. ELWA**

ELWA was not visited for this report. ELWA is owned by the Sudan Interior Mission, an American Christian missionary organization. It features primarily evangelical programming.

## **8. Radio Liberty and Radio Hope**

Radio Liberty and Radio Hope are two stations that came on the air before the 1997 elections. They have since folded. Their funding was primarily from political parties. Following the elections, the parties did not have the resources to continue funding the stations.

## **9. Print Media: The Inquirer and The News**

The Inquirer and The News are privately owned newspapers that enjoy a good reputation in Liberia. The staffs receive limited salaries similar to those paid to most of the private radio station staffs and reporters. The newspapers are not operating at a profit.

**10. Talking Drum Studio, Common Ground Productions**

*Ownership:* Talking Drum Studio is a radio program production company owned by Common Ground Productions in Washington, DC, a division of Search for Common Ground.

*Coverage:* As a production studio, Talking Drum does not have its own radio transmitter. It establishes agreements with Liberian radio stations to broadcast its programs. All of the stations in the country, with the exception of Radio Monrovia, broadcast some or all of Talking Drum's programs, giving it national coverage.

*Physical Plant:* Talking Drum is equipped with quality production equipment, computers, and sound reinforcement equipment for live outdoor theatre. Its professional broadcast equipment is good - to excellent quality. Talking Drum's equipment and studio facility are the best in Liberia.

*Programming:* Talking Drum produces 10 hours of programming per week

*Staff:* Talking Drum has a full-time staff of 32. Like Star, Talking Drum salaries are comparable to international NGO standards, three-to-five times higher than those paid to other private media staff in Liberia.

*Funding and Income:* Talking Drum is donor financed. It receives a good deal of its financing from the Dutch government. In the past, Talking Drum has received support from USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives and IFES.

## **VI. PERCEPTIONS OF STAR RADIO AND ITS FUTURE CHALLENGES**

A significant portion of the evaluation conducted by Mr. Kintz consisted of interviews with Liberian citizens and representatives from various Liberian and international institutions and organizations. This section of the report lists and summarizes the perceptions of the interviewees regarding Star Radio. Topics included personal views of Star Radio programming and its impact, or lack thereof, on Liberia's democratic process; perspectives on the Liberian government's actions toward the station; suggestions for Star's transition from project status to a self-sustaining, Liberian-run radio station; and programming ideas.

In relating the salient elements of these discussions, Mr. Kintz and IFES strove not to alter the intent of the views presented. Mr. Kintz preferred to present these comments and suggestions coming from those people most familiar with Star Radio and the Liberian cultural, political, economic, and social realities as the backdrop for his recommendations. The perceptions presented in this section are the interviewees'.

Overall, Star Radio is greatly appreciated by the Liberians interviewed. Star was often portrayed as an essential element of Liberia's democratic development. Almost everyone interviewed for this report felt that Star provides factual, balanced, and fair reporting of national news. Special mention was made of Star's commitment to news gathering from each of Liberia's thirteen counties. No other Liberian news organization has stringers or vehicles to follow up on news events nationwide.

Through its presence on the Liberian media scene, Star challenges the practice of self-censorship employed by most Liberian media outlets. More than one media watcher or media professional offered comments to the effect that once Star Radio covers a story, particularly one of a controversial nature, other radio stations and newspapers can follow Star's lead with a reduced fear of retribution from those seeking to control media content. It was suggested that without Star Radio, neither Liberia's radio stations nor its print media would be able to report on important events during this critical phase of Liberia's transition from war to peace.

### **A. STAR RADIO STAFF**

Most of Star's staff was interviewed over the course of this evaluation. Mr. Kintz tried to arrange the interviews on a department-by-department basis: programming, news, audio technicians, electricians, administration, and language producers. Individual and small group interviews were conducted with people who preferred a more private forum. Separate interviews were done with department managers.

Star's Liberian staff members clearly feel that they are meeting their mandate to provide balanced news for the people of Liberia. They feel they are professionals with a duty to perform, maintaining a sense of pride and conviction in their work. The exchanges generated many suggestions, thoughts, and ideas. This information is arranged by topic in the following

paragraphs. These are not consensus opinions, but a representation of the range of thoughts expressed during the interviews with the Star staff.

**Board of directors.** There is a general feeling among the staff that they are cut off from the board of directors. Many members of staff did not know who the members of the board of directors are, nor what role the board was to play in the station's organization. They expressed concern with the board's composition. They felt that the membership should be expanded to include a staff representative elected by the staff, and that the board needed to include donors, media professionals, government officials, accountants, and technical people.

**Relations with Hironnelle Foundation.** The general view of the staff was that FH has done a very good job of managing the Star Radio project. The staff feels that the time has come to transition to Liberian management. It was expressed that FH set professional standards and values first, and that now was the time to start building a sustainable institution.

A fairly common suggestion was that FH should move into the background in phase two with Liberians taking leadership roles. It was often expressed that a counterpart process should be instituted, where a Liberian manager is hired and an expatriate works with that person and then phases out. After that, expatriate involvement could be limited to the periodic consultant on an as-needed basis.

It was generally felt that the expatriate staff acts as a buffer between the Liberian staff and the Liberian government. They felt that the government is reticent to pressure expatriate staff, but could easily pressure Liberian staff.

**Transition timing.** Suggestions for timing for the transition process ranged from six months to six years. Six months was suggested as a minimum length. The preferred length for the transition was two to five years, although several preferred that it not be time-dependent, but based on conditions being right for the change. These conditions included the board and management feeling prepared for the transition; assurances of funding; and, a political climate conducive to Liberian management and operations. The consensus was that the transition should be a gradual one, with a careful phasing out of the expatriate resident staff and the funding process.

Some staff offered an analogy comparing the transition of the station to child development. In this analogy, it was felt that Star, as the child, was too young to be on its own, but that it needed to begin to feel a sense of independence. Star, the child, requires supervision and nurturing, while being permitted to make its own mistakes and learn from them.

**Relationship with the Liberian government.** Many concerns were expressed about Star's relations with the government. The staff feels that the Liberian government is trying to pressure Star Radio to conform to its agenda. They feel that a Liberian managed and operated station would receive more intense pressure, and forced to yield to that pressure. The presence of an expatriate was considered critical. A need for improved relations and proactive interaction with the government was stressed. The staff also noted the need to clear the "American station" moniker applied to Star Radio. Some said that the government prefers a rapid and disorderly

transition for Star, anticipating that the new management will yield more readily to economic, social, and other pressure.

Several staff felt the need for Star to challenge issues in the courts.

**Funding.** Star's staff noted its appreciation for USAID's vision in funding a radio project. The staff feels that Star is a key to Liberia's democratization process. The staff stressed that Star is Liberia's sole media organ capable of providing balanced news. That capacity is attributed to the support of Star from the US government, and the staff's related freedom from corruption due to their receipt of wages allowing staff members to support themselves and their families.

The continuity of funding was a major concern to the staff. It was felt that the funding problems of the last year has a negative impact on staff morale. Staff members expressed concern that since their initial three month contract at the beginning of the year, they have been living with a great deal of uncertainty and ambiguity on a string of month-to-month contracts. Star staff members have a letter dated September 1998 informing them that their jobs end on January 31, 1999, the next date for the expiration of Star's funding.

Staff suggestions for funding diversification included establishing a sister station relationship with an American or European radio station; becoming a semi-commercial station; establishing a Star Radio membership program; and, seeking funding from other international donors.

**Administration.** There was a general sense that the staff lacks a clear understanding of Star's organization. They expressed the need for the development of a manual covering organizational structure, administrative procedures, and personnel policy. The issue of insurance and employee benefits was raised several times.

Staff members in several departments called for a review of the salary scale. The technical staff particularly felt that the salaries are not equitable. The part-time language announcers felt that they are treated as second-class staff, considered freelancers who are not paid like the others. As part-time employees, they receive no benefits or job security. The language announcers have to divide their compensation with their proxies—the basic equivalent to an understudy.

Security was a common theme raised by the staff. This ranged from job security, to personal security while on the job, to concerns about family security during a crisis. Staff members reminded Mr. Kintz that they are in a risky business, and that special measures should be taken to prevent their being abandoned when a crisis occurs.

**Programming.** In general, the staff is proud of their work at Star. The staff feels that it has an important role to play in Liberia's development through the production and broadcast of quality programming.

A common issue raised was the need to increase airtime for Star-produced programming and to decrease, and eventually terminate the use of Radio Monrovia programming. The programming department felt that it has the capacity to produce sufficient programming to fill the time allotted to Radio Monrovia material.

The language announcers noted that it is evident that the people in the rural areas are keenly interested in Star Radio programs, and are disappointed when they cannot receive the station's signal. Several staff, in particular the language producers, felt that vernacular language programming should be significantly increased. Staff members estimated that 25% of Liberians understand English. However, vernacular language programming is limited to 20 minutes per week. The language announcers suggested that they should be sent upcountry to develop stories in their respective languages.

It was underscored that the information and news from the rural counties is essential to the purpose of Star Radio. The stringers in each county and the staff news gathering trips upcountry are crucial to Star's ability to provide news from around Liberia.

Staff members suggested that Star's programming helped to create an atmosphere of honesty in Liberia. Cases of Star programs encouraging community initiative were recounted. A Star program about a neighborhood in Monrovia that took charge and began cleaning up the garbage and junk in its area inspired other listeners to take charge of their respective neighborhoods and follow suit.

**Technical.** Star staff shared a number of technical concerns. It was recommended that an engineering consultant be involved in the purchasing of new equipment for the station; that the generator capacity and load at the offices and studios be addressed; that alternate energy issues such as solar and UPS be considered; that outside broadcast equipment be acquired, negating the need to rely on Radio Monrovia for remote broadcasting; that the short wave system be reviewed; and that the concerns regarding limitations on the reception of Star's short wave frequency on some radios be addressed.

A question about the ownership of Star's equipment was raised with an eye toward the eventual transition of Star to full-Liberian ownership. Star's equipment is presently owned by USAID.

**Training.** Star's staff admits a basic knowledge of its work responsibilities. Full-time and part-time staff members requested that an ongoing professional development program be instituted as soon as possible. Suggested training topics include power supply systems, management, fundraising, grant writing, interviewing, production techniques, and script writing.

## **B. BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Star's board of directors has seven members. Four members are Liberian. Two of the four were in Liberia at the time of the evaluation. They were available on multiple occasions to assist in the evaluation process. Mr. Kintz interviewed them individually. During the evaluation period, the board had no scheduled meetings.

In their interviews, the two board members made it clear that Star should eventually be Liberian owned and operated. At present, they felt that expatriate, FH, and IFES involvement in the station's operations is necessary and beneficial. They noted that the transition must be well-planned—a premature transition would cause serious problems. According to their estimates,

Star's transition requires a period of years, rather than a few months. That transition should incorporate an ongoing staff-training component.

The board members' opinion was that the Liberian economy cannot support Star's operation now or in the foreseeable future. It would not be good for Star to compete with the existing radio stations for the few available advertising dollars. The board members agree that Star's funding could ideally come from a range of international donors. At the same time, they supported Star's development of a plan for the solicitation of limited symbolic contributions from businesses and individuals within Liberia.

The board members stressed their commitment to Star. They agree with the Star staff, that Star Radio is essential to the development of democracy in Liberia. They feel that the station should continue to pursue its mandate to provide reliable news and information to Liberia's population in Liberia and abroad. They feel that Star encourages a sense of civic responsibility and an expanded understanding of basic rights nationwide. They felt that Star Radio plays a role in keeping information safe, both domestically and internationally. The board members said they are willing to stand up for the station, even if that means going to jail. One of the board members clarified that, "This [Star] is our contribution to the image of the country."

The members felt that the board of directors can and should play a major role in educating government ministers and other officials about Star Radio, and in keeping them informed of Star's activities on a regular basis. They felt that the attitudes of government ministers are uneven, ranging from those who are uninformed and unwilling to listen to Star, to those who do not see a problem with Star Radio's programming.

### **C. BUSINESS COMMUNITY**

A total of six business people were interviewed. Two of those interviewed are members of Star's board of directors. One of the interviewees is an expatriate banker.

The business people interviewed for the evaluation see Star Radio as an essential source of independent, accurate and balanced information. They particularly see the Internet news as an important source of information for possible investors and Liberian business people who are contemplating returning to Liberia. It was felt by some that the continued existence of Star Radio and its balanced and independent news contributes to the image of a Liberia committed to the process of democratization. The business community representatives see this as favorable to the development of Liberia's business environment.

Some business people expressed concern about the image of Liberia presented overseas. They suggested that Star's ability to promote a positive image and inform people is the greatest of Liberia's other media outlets. One person commented that Liberians living abroad have told him that, "Star gives the most balanced picture."

One person said that Star Radio does report on negative things, following his statement with a rhetorical question and a response, "Are they untrue? No." It was felt that the station seeks

balance in its stories by verifying stories and sources carefully, and seeking opinions and information from all sides prior to airing a story.

Several of the business people interviewed noted that in spite of Star's role in Liberia's development, they are not prepared to associate their company with Star via the provision of financial support or the purchase of advertising time. There is a concern in the business community that such support could attract negative attention from the Liberian government. Overcoming this dynamic requires not only an improvement in Liberia's economy, but perhaps more importantly in its political situation. Political stability would provide a considerable encouragement for companies to publicly support Star without risking negative consequences.

#### **D. MEDIA**

Interviews were conducted with eleven different media organizations. These included private and government supported radio stations, newspapers, and media associations. At many of these interviews several representatives of the respective organizations and associations were present.

Among all the media managers and owners interviewed, the universal feeling was that Star is an essential part of the Liberia's media mix. Star Radio's news is respected and admired by all journalists. They unanimously laud Star Radio for being objective, fair, balanced, and courageous. They feel that losing Star Radio would be a major loss for the people of Liberia, and that the Internet news is very important. They appreciate Star's willingness to share their news with them.

Some of the media people felt that Star is not critical of government, just factual. They said that they have noticed a degree of self-censorship in Star Radio, but felt that this was prudent. There is general agreement that the government will not shut down Star Radio once it has a Liberian manager and is clearly under the Liberian board of directors. At the same time, it was felt that the government will continue to harass the station and pressure the staff. They felt that the presence of expatriates and the NGOs would help reduce government-generated pressure.

It was suggested that the Star board be expanded to include communications professionals who might better understand Star's function and purpose. Views on the transition period varied, but it was generally agreed that it should be an absolute minimum of six months, and preferably three years, depending on the political and economic situation.

Several people suggested that Star should expand its programming to include a talk show, and development-oriented programming focusing on health, agriculture, education, etc. It was also suggested that Star develop a regular program rotation to address different aspects of development on a daily basis.

The fact that Star Radio gets news and information from the rural areas was praised, and its necessity was underscored. Each person said that Star Radio is the only news-gathering source that has the resources to get news from outside of Monrovia.

Several news editors told the same story: When Star Radio reported on flooding in Grand Cape Mount county, news came out on Star before the government was aware that the floods had happened. The government, they felt, listens to Star Radio to see what is going on in the rural areas.

The view was expressed that Star Radio needs foreign funding in order to continue its balanced reporting; that donors should be concerned about the common people of Liberia—if they are being helped, then Star Radio is effective and should continue to be funded

Discussion usually focused on the feeling that news and information is essential to democracy formation, and that civil society benefits from free circulation of ideas. Star's nationwide short wave broadcast capability is essential. For the past seven years LCN was the only voice available to the rural population. The point was made that Star Radio is doing a job for humanity.

It was said that Star programs have upgraded the standard of Liberian journalism, and they hope that it continues. Newspaper people would like Star Radio training to extend to them; and various media people were interested in participating in media training through Star.

One private radio station owner holds a different view of Star Radio. His feeling is that Star Radio is US-government owned given that its funding ultimately comes from the US government. Therefore he feels that Star is not independent. His view is that USAID should be facilitating private ownership versus "socialist" media. He feels that Liberia's only independent radio stations are DC-101 and Radio Monrovia, because they are privately owned by people not in the government. He feels that his station could be unbiased and balanced with its news if it had the financial support that Star Radio has, plus the backing of the US government when there were problems. He was generally resentful that USAID was funding a station that he views as competition.

## **E. NGOs**

Both international and Liberian NGO managers and staff were interviewed representing four Liberian and five international NGOs.

Each of the International NGOs that utilize Star Radio felt that the station was invaluable to their information dissemination needs. The inconsistency and uncertainty of the short wave, however, was of great concern because a primary need of many NGO's is to get information out to the rural areas of the country. There are several radio stations that can reach Monrovia, but for the rest of the country Star Radio is their best option. The fact that the station does not charge for airtime is very significant for them. Broadcasting in vernacular languages was also considered to be very important, and increasing the time for languages was desirable.

They all felt that Star Radio is effective at getting information out. Save the Children Fund (SCF) gave examples of the reunification of children and families that are directly attributable to Star Radio. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) headquarters finds the Star Radio daily news bulletins very useful. The Integrated Regional Information Network (IRIN), which

collects news and reports from the West African nations that are experiencing conflict and reports this to UN organizations, is heavily dependent on Star Radio news.

The International NGOs all felt that Star Radio's news and information were of great benefit to the people of Liberia, and that it contributes enormously to the democratization process going on in the country. Some said that it contributes significantly to the reunification and reconciliation process. People familiar with broadcasting in Africa stated that it is not possible to find this level of free press anywhere else in Africa, and that it is the only independent news in East, Central and West Africa.

Comments included that Star has won the hearts of the people, that it is the most credible source, and that it curbs the misinformation that gets into other media. It was said that Star Radio is very thorough, and on the whole it manages to be impartial. It was felt that Star is crucial to Liberia's future, that its news is unbiased, and it sets a standard for other stations. Some felt that Star breaks a story, and with that, Liberia's other media outlets follow.

Commenting about the September 18-19 incidents, some said that Star's reporting was very responsible, and that it reduced the spread of rumors. A few were critical of Star's reporting of the activities of the international NGO's during that period. They felt that Star should not have reported on the international organizations' evacuation as a result of the fighting. In the view of the international NGO's, Star's report made the situation worse.

One person commented that Star Radio must carve out a personality for itself, a distinct voice from BBC, VOA, or other western news programs. In doing so, Star should employ maximum creativity in order to make a meaningful departure from the VOA and BBC.

There was a good deal of concern about the transition process for the station. It was felt that Star Radio is very important and that it sets a standard of quality and that if its quality goes down then there will be real problems. It was felt that the station needs a Liberian manager immediately, but also needs the continued presence of an expatriate for at least a year. It was felt that a Liberian manager would be subject to government manipulation. Consequently, it was recommended that the transition be gradual.

It was noted that Star has a high-caliber staff. The staff, combined with Star's quality programming, made it impossible for the government to attack the station based on content.

Comments about the relationship between Star Radio and the government included the feeling that many problems could have been avoided if Star had invested more energy in establishing its visibility and developing contacts with key people. It was suggested that a Liberian manager could best fill this role. It was suggested that the approach with the government should be one of constructive engagement, to work with relationships rather than confrontation. In this light, it was felt that Star should avoid news regarding Star's relationship with the government, as this exacerbates the feeling of animosity. The general feeling was that the Liberian government would endeavor to wear Star down through intimidation and harassment.

## **F. LISTENERS/BENEFICIARIES**

A formal audience survey was not conducted as part of the evaluation, so the general view of Star's listening audience cannot be judged. Based on anecdotes solicited during personal contact with Liberians from various walks of life, Star Radio is Liberia's most trusted news source. Interviewees spoke of listening to news broadcasts from a number of stations each morning, and employing Star as a barometer in determining the broadcasts' relative veracity.

Each person interviewed observed that Star Radio contributes to the reconstruction of a democratic Liberia. Lacking Star's news and information programming, it would be difficult to find out what was really going on in the country.

Mr. Kintz's visit to Gbarnga underscored how detrimental it is to have the short wave off of the air. Several people had not heard of the station, others thought it was just gone and would not come back. Some complained that it was off because of the government but they relied on it when it was on the air, and others with good radio sets capture the FM signal from Monrovia.

## **G. POLITICAL PARTIES**

Officials from three Liberian political parties were interviewed, representing the National Democratic Party of Liberia (NDPL), the National Patriotic Party (NPP), and the Unity Party (UP).

The majority NPP representative felt that while Star Radio is doing extremely well with its news, the station puts too much emphasis on the negative, especially via its Internet service. He felt that sometimes stories are not balanced, and that Star Radio takes its news from other Liberian radio stations and newspapers for the Internet versus transmitting its own stories. He admitted that Star Radio is able to cover most of what happens in Liberia, and that it is accessible to the people. He stated that they have quality news delivery. He said that shortcomings aside, it is important that the station continue.

Representatives of two opposition political parties interviewed felt that Star Radio provides unbiased media access to Liberians. Thoughts shared included that Star Radio came in at the right time; that it has been effective; gives balanced reports; and that its reports are non-biased, non-partisan, neutral, and effective. One noted that other stations sometimes seem afraid, avoiding certain stories, but Star Radio covers them. It was felt that Star Radio can have a positive impact on the democratic process in Liberia, especially with its short wave service. The opposition representatives observed that for the news to be balanced and unbiased the station cannot be dependent on the government, individuals, or businesses within Liberia. It was suggested that Star produce a talk show and more feature programs.

One of the people felt that the broadcast day is too short, at 9:00 PM when the station goes off of the air people in the rural areas are just ready to listen to the radio. There needs to be more programming in vernacular languages and Liberian English because literacy is very low and most people do not understand Standard English. Other comments offered: Star Radio

contributes to the building of democracy in Liberia, Star Radio dilutes the whole propaganda machine of the current leadership, and Star Radio is important for the long term to support the democratic process for the next elections.

## **H. GOVERNMENT OF LIBERIA**

It proved very difficult to meet with government ministers for the Star Radio evaluation. Numerous appointments and visits to the offices were made only to have the meetings canceled at the last minute. Mr. Kintz met with the Minister of Education, two deputy ministers from the Ministry of Information, Culture, and Tourism, and a deputy minister from the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications. The Ministry of Planning did not respond to repeated meeting requests.

A two-part official view was presented: there is no government position on Star Radio, but Star is too critical of the Liberian government and is biased by the US government. On a personal level, some interviewees suggested that the station is doing a good job, its journalists are professionals, and its news balanced and fair.

From the government's perspective, since USAID is Star's primary donor, its editorial decisions are controlled, directly or indirectly, by the US. The US government is not considered supportive or friendly to the current leadership in Liberia. Therefore, it is assumed that the station's unwritten objective is misinformation about the present government, directed particularly to the international community, locally via the radio, and abroad via the Internet service.

Star's official difficulties have transpired following events that the government did not want publicized. The closing of the station in January followed the Dokie murders in December 1997. The October 1998 problems with the Ministries of Labor, Information, and Post and Telecommunications followed on the heels of the September 18-19 Camp Johnson Road incident.

The Internet service's ups and downs relate to a lack of understanding about the nature of the Internet and the sources of information on the Internet about Liberia. There is a certain degree of "guilt by association." That is, Star Radio distributes news on the Internet, and the government receives feedback from Liberians abroad of negative news on the Internet about Liberia. The government assumes that Star is the source of all Liberia information on the Internet. This is simply not the case. There are several sources for Liberia news on the Internet, originating from Liberia and abroad.

The Minister of Education listens to Star Radio, and uses the station in the Ministry's education promotion program. She expressed appreciation that Star Radio staff was in each of the communities that she visited on her recent tour of schools around the country.

## **I. DONORS**

Representatives of four donor governments and organizations were interviewed: the Embassy of the Netherlands, the Swedish International Development Agency, UNDP, and USAID.

The donors interviewed noted that Star Radio plays a valuable role in Liberia, contribution to Liberia's reconstruction and democratization. Most of the individuals interviewed either listened to Star Radio daily, or read the Internet news summary. They find Star's news to be balanced and relatively accurate.

The Dutch government and the Swedish International Development Agency representatives expressed interest in exploring the possibility of providing funding for Star Radio.

## **VII. EVALUATION OF STAR AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE**

### **A. STAR RADIO MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE**

Star's management structure was appropriate to the needs of the rapid-response phase. In phase two, that structure must evolve into a sustainable system. (See Appendix B for an organizational chart based on observation of the station's structure.)

The staff has a great commitment to the principles and purpose of Star Radio. Staff members possess the skills necessary to perform their job duties. Continued training would be beneficial.

There are a number of gaps in Star's structure linked to the requirements and challenges of managing the rapid-response phase in a post-conflict environment. These gaps include: no staff contracts, no personnel rules and policies or manual, and no staff goal setting and evaluation.

Star's departments work well individually, however, there is a need for increased integration and cooperation among departments.

#### **1. Management**

The management staff of Star Radio is composed of two expatriates, the chief of radio/project manager and the administrator, and two Liberians, the news editor and the program editor. This management structure and its management style was adequate for Star's rapid response phase.

**Management Recommendations.** The station's organizational structure requires careful review. There are a number of changes that can be made. (Appendix C)

A Liberian station manager should be hired as soon as possible. This person should have good human and financial management skills, and have experience in journalism, communications and radio station operations. Experience in fundraising and development project management would be an asset.

A Liberian should be hired as station administrator as soon as possible.

Security must be addressed. This includes job security through the establishment of staff contracts and the development of a personnel manual clearly outlining rules and policies, including procedures for handling personnel grievances. Security also entails legal and personal security through the development of a station crisis management plan.

A general staff evaluation process should be implemented. The evaluation should include the setting of goals and objectives by both the staff member and his/her manager, and a periodic review of those goals.

There needs to be greater cooperation among department heads, and a greater level of communication and participation by all the staff.

## **2. News and Program Departments**

The news department is made up of the news editor, deputy news editor, fourteen journalists (twelve full-time and two part-time), and twelve stringers. This department appears to be well-organized and managed.

The program department is made up of the program editor, deputy program editor, three producers, eight journalists, and the fourteen language announcers.

The staffs of the news and program departments are well-trained and are good journalists.

**News and Program Departments Recommendations.** An evaluation process for producers and journalist should be implemented. This would involve a goal setting process outlining the output and quality improvements required, including the total minutes of interviews, news stories, or completed segments/programs for each individual. Department and individual performance should be reviewed monthly.

## **3. Administration/Technical**

The administration/technical department includes accounting, purchasing, expediting, logistics, housekeeping, clerical, and reception. It also includes the electricians and the audio/RF technicians. There are 27 people in this department. This department functions efficiently.

**Administration/Technical Recommendations.** The administration/technical department needs to be reorganized for phase two of the project. There is too much control under one person. The department should be divided.

Administration should focus on the accounting, procurement, office management and logistics issues for the station. A separate technical department should be created under a newly hired technical manager. The manager should have an engineering degree and experience in technical department management. Expertise in broadcast engineering would be of great benefit, but not a requirement, as long as there is a commitment to training. The new technical department would oversee Star's technical operations.

## **4. Board of Directors**

The board of directors has seven members. The board's four Liberian members—two businessmen, a lawyer, and a doctor—are joined by the Fondation Hirondelle project director, FH administrator, and a Star Radio staff appointee. The board members are committed to the principles of Star Radio and seem willing to accept the responsibility of overseeing a media institution that is not favored by the government.

**Board of Directors Recommendations.** It is recommended that the board of directors be expanded to include at least nine members. The station manager would serve as the secretary of the board. Another member should be the representative for Fondation Hirondelle, as it is providing the funding and project oversight.

Other members should be professionals, drawn from the Liberian community with expertise and personal networks that can benefit Star Radio. Possible members might include lawyers, accountants, businesspeople, media experts, journalists, political scientists, mass communications professors, etc.

A discussion should be held between the board and FH to determine if the station manager and the expatriate technical advisor should be voting members or simply ex-officio members. Ex-officio members are able to consult with the board on all issues, but they do not vote. The question here is whether it is appropriate to have two voting board members who work at Star.

Presently, the Star board functions as an advisory board versus a governing board. The board should be the governing authority of the station, overseeing all operations. The staff could have recourse to take issues to the board as part of a grievance process, but not representation on the board. Having a member of the staff as a representative on the governing board is not recommended.

The board should be Star's primary and regular interface with the Liberian government. To date, it has played a major role in the appeals to the government regarding the attacks on Star Radio.

## **B. STAR RADIO PROGRAMMING**

Star produces quality news and information programming. The staff is well trained and exercises diligence ascertaining facts and providing balance to their reports. There is a level of self-censorship that is practiced, but this cannot be faulted in Star's operating environment. The Liberian government representatives interviewed feel that Star's reporting is sometimes too critical, while private citizens suggested that some news reports were too soft on the government.

Star's programming consists of news stories presented in hourly news summary and headline programs, longer news bulletins broadcast four times daily, and interviews and longer stories packaged in magazine-style programs. Star airs pre-produced programs from Talking Drum Studios. A Save the Children program seeking to reunite children with their families who have been separated as a result of the war is aired twice daily. Weather and sports are broadcast throughout the day.

Two-minute news headlines in 14 vernacular languages are broadcast daily, morning and evening. A weekly 15-minute program is produced in each language. Daily 5-minute Liberian English and French news programs are broadcast morning and evening.

The programming is of a news style. It describes daily events and activities in Liberia. The news department provides short descriptions of these daily events. The programming department selects some events for in-depth coverage, featuring interviews and analysis.

Star Radio is on the air with its FM transmitter 16 hours per day, six days per week from 0500 to 2100. The Sunday broadcast day is 15 hours long. The short wave transmitter is scheduled to be on the air for six hours daily, from 0500 to 0800, and 0600 to 2100.

Star Radio originates approximately 55 hours of programming per week. Radio Monrovia provides 42.5 hours per week. Approximately 14.5 hours of weekly programming comes from other sources, such as Talking Drum.

Through an agreement with its owner, Radio Monrovia programming is simulcast on Star Radio for nine hours every day, from 0800 to 1800. As a result, Star Radio FM is on the air all day, only providing seven hours of programming.

Star's 0630 news bulletin is published on the Internet on Fondation Hirondelle's web site.

***Programming Recommendations.*** The shared programming relationship with Radio Monrovia should end. In the course of the interviews it was evident that there is a great deal of confusion about the relationship between Star and Radio Monrovia. This confusion is detrimental to both stations. Star's board of directors is prepared to end the relationship. They are waiting for the owner of Radio Monrovia to return to Liberia. It is suggested that they contact the owner and convey their decision in writing as soon as possible.

The nine hours of Radio Monrovia programming could be replaced by: music programming, live current events call-in programs, or nothing. Adding music programming will impact the budget. Staff will either need to be increased slightly, or staff assignments rearranged to accommodate the needs of the music programming. Music will need to be procured. Overall, music programming does not have to have a major impact on the budget.

Star Radio should expand their production of development-oriented programs. Some suggested topics are oral rehydration, breastfeeding, nutrition, and agricultural methods. This can be accomplished with the existing staff, and will enhance Star's impact without any increase in cost, by providing timely and useful information to the people of Liberia.

Star Radio should re-examine its decision to not carry more of the Talking Drum Studios programming. According to Talking Drum's research conducted in February 1998 and the anecdotal reports from the interviews conducted for this evaluation, TDS programs are very popular. Liberians find the programs to be effective.

Star Radio should commit to provide news and information to contribute to Liberians and to their democratic process. The vast majority of Star programming is in Standard English, yet approximately 40% of Liberia's population does not understand English. The two-minute daily headlines and 15-minute weekly program in the vernacular languages are insufficient. Star Radio should radically expand its vernacular language programming in an effort to reach all Liberians with quality news and information. It is possible to provide an expanded vernacular language program on short wave, without significantly interfering with the FM schedule.

## C. STAR RADIO RESOURCES

### 1. *FM and SW equipment*

Star's FM transmission system is adequate for its intended purpose. It is made up of a 2 kW Italian custom-made transmitter and exciter with an eight bay directional gain antenna. Its primary purpose is to cover greater Monrovia. (The City of Monrovia and its environs.) While determining signal coverage is beyond the scope of this evaluation, the anecdotal evidence suggests that the FM system is accomplishing its task. The FM system has been functioning reliably since it went on the air in July 1997.

The short wave transmission system has had many problems over the 18 months that Star Radio has been on the air. The short wave transmitter has been operational for only about seven months, just over 40% of the time since installation.

The short wave went on the air in September of 1997 with a used Collins 208 10kW transmitter. This transmitter worked moderately well, putting out about 3 kW of power. In March 1998 it was hit by lightning and damaged beyond repair.

In September 1998 a smaller homebuilt 3 kW transmitter was put on the air, operating at about 1.5 kW. After one and a half months the generator broke down. Shortly thereafter, the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications withdrew Star's short wave frequencies. The generator has been repaired. The frequencies have yet to be restored.

Star's assigned frequencies, 3.4 and 5.88 kHz, are tropical band frequencies (60-meter band) and are ideal for national coverage for the area of Liberia. However, there is a dilemma. While these are excellent frequencies to use to provide physical coverage of Liberia, some of the commonly available short wave radios in Liberia only begin receiving at 6.0 kHz (49-meter band) or above. These radio sets cannot receive Star's frequencies.

The previous transmitter provided good national coverage of Liberia. No formal signal studies were done to determine precise coverage, but the anecdotal, and staff travel reports indicated that this was an adequate system. Signal reception was reported from Sierra Leone and Cote d'Ivoire.

***FM and SW equipment Recommendations.*** The 3kW short wave transmitter is not adequate for Star Radio. It does not have the frequency agility to provide day and night coverage, and it does not have enough power for reliable national coverage. It is a temporary replacement for the 10kW short wave transmitter that was hit by lightning. The unit was insured. IFES and Fondation Hironnelle are seeking an insurance settlement for the destroyed transmitter. It is possible that the settlement will facilitate the replacement of the 3kW transmitter with a 10kW model.

It is recommended that a broadcast-engineering consultant be hired to thoroughly evaluate and recommend solutions to the issue of national coverage of Star Radio. Issues to be examined include the optimal short wave transmitter and antenna system for national coverage; the

possibility of changing from short wave to medium wave to expand broadcast range. Medium wave can achieve national coverage after sundown.

More power for the FM transmitter and a taller broadcast antenna tower are options that may be considered to fill in the near areas that may not be adequately covered with short wave. Another option is to drop the stereo component of the signal and only broadcast in mono.

Any replacement transmitter should be robust, tropicalized, day and night broadcast adaptable, easy to service, and resistant to lightning.

## **2. *Studio and Editing Equipment***

Star Radio's studio equipment consists of used professional broadcast gear, new consumer quality equipment, and some new professional equipment. Star's studio equipment is adequate for now, but it will not last long.

The potential for looting or confiscation drove the initial selection of station equipment in Star's rapid-response phase. Investing tens of thousands of dollars in new equipment would not have been the wise choice. The decision to purchase used professional- and new consumer-quality equipment, and filling in with new professional-quality equipment where unavoidable, was prudent. (See Appendix D for a list of studio and editing equipment.)

For long-term sustainability, new decisions must be made. Star's current equipment does not have a long life expectancy, and is expensive to maintain and operate.

***Studio and Editing Equipment Recommendations.*** With donor support, Star must make a capital investment to bring its equipment up to professional quality. Minimizing equipment and studio downtime will reduce Star's annual operating. Some consumer quality equipment that will not have heavy use, or is too costly in the professional version is acceptable. Equipment that will be used heavily must be of a professional broadcast standard. (See Appendix E for a suggested list of new and replacement studio and editing equipment, and explanation for the items.)

## **3. *Vehicles and Generators***

Star maintains four vehicles: two Land Rover Defenders, one Toyota Land Cruiser, and one Hyundai sedan. Four vehicles meets the minimum needs of the station and its very mobile staff. The vehicles are used for transporting staff to and from work in the early morning and late at night, taking staff to the various ministries and offices, taking staff up country for recording trips, and for purchasing, banking, and other administrative tasks.

The vehicles are currently in fair condition and should be expected to last for a minimum of three years. With the condition of the roads it may be difficult to get more than three more years out of the vehicles. The Land Rovers have frequently been in the shop for repairs.

There are three generators at the station. One is in service at the short wave site, one at the Mamba Point studios and office, and the third is a standby for use when one of the other two breaks down and will not be back up quickly.

The three generators are adequate for the needs of the station. There is hope that the Liberian Electric Corporation (LEC) will be back on line and supplying power to at least Star's Mamba Point location. The return of LEC power will allow a significant cost savings on generator fuel, repair, and personnel. It is projected that for the third phase of the project, the sustainable institution phase, that LEC will be operational supplying power to the Monrovia area.

The Mamba Point generator is operating at its maximum load. The generator was originally sized and installed to supply power for the two apartments composing Star's offices and studios. Over time, Star has expanded into two more apartments. The generator is over-taxed and its various mechanical problems can be attributed to the excessive load. This problem can be addressed through the reduction of the office and studio space from four apartments to three.

***Vehicles and Generators Recommendations.*** A replacement plan for vehicles will have to be addressed. These are major capital items, but they also wear out quickly with the rough roads in Liberia. A plan should be addressed that will provide for reliable transportation, but without risking the self-sufficiency of the station.

The three generators that the station owns should be sufficient for the next three years. They are run continuously and will likely need replacement within that time. The major variable here is when LEC will come back on line. Replacement generators should be planned for in case LEC does not come back.

Various forms of alternate energy may be worth investigating to reduce the dependence on the generators. While alternative energy technologies tend to be expensive, the investment cost will need to be compared to recurring generator operating costs.

#### ***4. Office Equipment***

Star's office equipment is inadequate. (See Appendix F for an inventory.)

There are six desktop computers at the station for management and administration. There is email access via satellite phone at one computer, and via a local Internet Service Provider (ISP) at another. Only the management has access to e-mail. There is no Internet access.

The news and program staff is currently equipped with six manual typewriters and two electric typewriters for writing stories, cues and scripts.

The photo copy machine is a personal home office style copier, designed for limited use.

***Office Equipment Recommendations.*** Star requires a computer lab for the news and program staff. A minimum of three computers is required. Ideally, these machines should be linked via a local area network (LAN) with one another, as well as with the news and program editors'

computers. This arrangement would streamline copy writing, editing, review, and approval. The office computers should be Wintel machines (IBM compatible).

An office-wide LAN would facilitate file sharing, centralized backup, and printer sharing. Properly managed, it would also minimize down time due to file corruption and computer viruses. At this time, the LAN is not essential. In lieu of a network, the staff can share work by keeping their files on 3.5" diskettes. They will be working with relatively small word processing files that fit easily on diskette. A systematic plan for maintaining file backups is required, and a backup drive will need to be purchased.

The laptop computer being used in finance can be reassigned to the news editor or another staff person who needs a laptop. The new station manager, administrator and the finance clerk will each need new computers. The secretary needs a reliable desktop computer and access to a high-volume printer.

Star Radio should have Internet access. The journalists need to have access to research materials on the Internet, particularly as they begin development-oriented programming; to web based email accounts; and to news stories that may be relevant to the people of Liberia. With Internet access, Star will be able to post its early news broadcast in-house, versus relying on Fondation Hirondelle. Arranging to do this in-house will make it easier for Star to show people exactly what news the station is posting and to expose more Liberians to the Internet.

The photocopier needs to be replaced with a machine designed for small office use with a longer service life. The new copier should be selected based on the anticipated volume of use, and on the availability of toner, drums, spare parts, and servicing in Monrovia.

#### **D. STAR RADIO BUDGET**

The Star Radio annual project budget is approximately \$1.2 million. This figure includes the station operating costs, station payroll, expatriate staff salaries, expenses and overhead for Fondation Hirondelle and IFES, and the equipment procurement costs. Star's budgets are prepared by Fondation Hirondelle staff in Lausanne.

Upon detailed review of Star's operating expenses, it is evident that a significant reduction in operating funds could only be achieved at the cost of program and staff quality. Mr. Kintz found that Star had made a good effort to economize and trim its budget over the past year. Star Radio's staff totals 84 people. Of those, 54 are full-time employees. Part-time employees number 30, including 16 stringers who receive a \$25 monthly retainer, and \$5-\$15 for each of their stories that is aired by Star Radio.

The technical staff is integral to the station's operations, making certain that the generators and the broadcast equipment functions properly. When the station is broadcasting, an audio technician and an electrician must be on site, both for the short wave and for the FM. When both are broadcasting, two teams are at work. Each team works approximately an 8-hour shift. Therefore, the full FM broadcast day requires two shifts.

The news and program departments create the material to fill airtime. Combined, 24 people work for those departments. Due to the transportation and communication difficulties in Monrovia, reporters cannot get to the scene of newsworthy events in a timely manner. Instead, reporters are stationed at "news making" locations. For example, Star has correspondents positioned at the key government ministries and at the president's mansion.

In comparison with other radio development projects, Star Radio's expenses seem reasonable for its mandate and mission. Looking specifically at Liberia, the Liberian Rural Communications Network, a USAID-funded project in the 1980s, was much more expensive than Star. Talking Drum Studios has much better equipment than Star, and their cost of production is higher than Star Radio's.

Liberia is an expensive place to do business. The lack of an electrical grid requires the station to operate off of generator power. Star Radio has two sites with generators. The generators require fuel, repairs and maintenance, and electricians to maintain them. Generator operating costs totaled almost \$50,000 last year. The cost would have been much more if the short wave transmitter had operated for the whole year. Property rent in Monrovia is high, due to the security situation and to the limited availability of functional space. The station is paying about \$1,000 per month, per apartment. They currently have four apartments (one for the project manager and three for offices and studios). The provision of security for Star's properties is necessary in the present climate. It is also expensive, totaling almost \$20,000 per year. The other tenants in the building where Star has its offices compensate Star for part of the security costs as they benefit from the arrangement. Finally, banking has its additional cost as well. Bank charges claim 2% of the total money brought into the country (1% for transfers in, and 1% for checks written). One year's bank charges totaled about \$9,000.

***Budget Recommendations.*** Simply reducing Star's staff next year in an attempt to save money does not make sense. The negative impact of such a reduction on the programming, functioning, purpose and objectives of the station would outweigh the minimal financial savings.

With Star moving out of the rapid-response phase and into its second, and perhaps leaner, phase of existence, Mr. Kintz recommended that the station reduce its rent payments by consolidating its space from three apartments to two. The third apartment was required as a training area but can reasonably be eliminated without affecting the station's overall operations. With some creative space management, all of the office space and the three studios can be combined into two apartments. Eliminating one apartment will save \$12,000 per year in rent, plus an unspecified amount in generator fuel and maintenance.

A natural part of the evolution of the station to its second phase will be the reduction of the expatriate staff to one. This will save salary, benefits, and perquisites, cutting approximately \$60,000 from the budget.

Cross-training some of the technical staff might permit the technicians to master both RF/audio work and electrical work. Cross training would eventually permit the reduction of almost eleven staff positions. The initial training costs would reduce the stations recurring costs over time.

There will be a need for equipment replacement, additional computers to increase efficiency, and adding computer-based audio editing equipment. Strategic equipment replacement will reduce studio technical down-time and save in maintenance costs. Scheduling these expenses over the next few years will succeed in decreasing the station's longer-term recurring costs. Equipment replacement will not be cheap. However, the external assistance for equipment and supplies can be more forthcoming than assistance for salaries and recurring costs. It will be important for Star to realistically project its equipment needs for the next three to five years, and to develop a strategy for approaching the donor community for its support.

Star's station management should assume responsibility for preparing and managing the station's annual budget. Generating the budgets at FH's Swiss headquarters does not allow the development of Star's institutional capacity for this important function. Following an in-house approach, each department should propose a budget for its area of responsibility to the station manager. The station manager would revise the budget and submit it to the board of directors. Once approved by the board, the budget would be shared with Fondation Hirondelle. For the next one or two budget cycles, Fondation Hirondelle can offer its assistance and feedback with the budgeting process. Fondation Hirondelle will retain the right to final budget approval, but it will have brought Star into the process, in anticipation of the station taking full responsibility for its budgeting in the future.

## **VIII. EVALUATION OF STAR RADIO'S PARTNERS—PRESENT AND FUTURE**

In this section, the evaluator looks at the various institutions involved with Star radio and makes recommendations for next steps for each institution.

### **A. FONDATION HIRONDELLE**

Fondation Hironnelle is a Swiss-based NGO. Its staff has good development knowledge, and good knowledge of radio broadcasting and news. They have set up and managed a similar radio project in a post-conflict situation in the Great Lakes region of Central Africa, Radio Agatashya. FH has an ongoing project in East Africa, an Information, Documentation and Training Agency for the war crimes tribunal in Arusha, Tanzania. FH has two staff members resident in Liberia, the chief of radio and the administrator for Star Radio.

Fondation Hironnelle has done a remarkable job in establishing a news and information radio station with both FM and short wave transmitters in Liberia. The station is well organized, the staff is well trained, the programming is very good, and the station is meeting its mandate.

Currently, FH is under contract with IFES to manage Star Radio. IFES receives its funding for work in Liberia through a Grant Agreement with USAID/Liberia. A budgeted percentage of the grant goes directly to IFES to cover its administrative and operating costs. In its contract with IFES, FH also receives a budgeted percentage to cover its overhead costs. As a result, there is a high total overhead cost to the Star Radio project.

Fondation Hironnelle does not have the administrative capacity and experience to be a direct recipient of funds from USAID. At this time, they are unable to meet the accounting and procurement standards necessary for such funding.

FH is behind in their plans for the hand-over process to Liberian management. They have reconstituted the board of directors. The process of hiring a Liberian station manager was recently initiated. The hand-over process, has been slowed by factors outside of FH's control. Many of these are tied to the Camp Johnson Road incident on September 18-19. These include a delay in USAID funding because of the incident, travel restrictions delaying the scheduled visit of the evaluator, the legal problems created for the station by three ministries, and heightened security concerns. There is a commitment on the part of Fondation Hironnelle to make the transition to Liberian management as quickly and smoothly as possible. This is underscored by the visit from Hironnelle's president in October to personally review the situation.

***Fondation Hironnelle Next Steps.*** FH should increase its administrative capacity to meet the accounting and procurement standards of USAID. This may permit them to receive funds from IFES via a sub-grant, or directly from USAID. IFES' approved overhead for the management of a sub-grant is less than that assigned to contracts. It is not clear to the evaluator at this time

whether or not FH could be considered as an IFES sub-grantee following 18 months as an IFES contractor. The two relationships are different in a number of important ways.

If it is determined to be possible for IFES to shift its relationship with FH, IFES should seek to provide some assistance to FH in developing the capacity to become a sub-grantee, and eventually a grantee of USAID funding. This should start to happen within the first six months of phase two, between January and July 1999.

For the second phase of Star Radio there is a need for only one expatriate to be resident in Liberia. It is suggested that the current FH project manager continue through June 1999. During that time he would train the new Liberian station manager, work closely with the board of directors, provide on-going feedback to the station's programming staff, oversee the transition to more original programming on Star Radio (after ending the shared programming relationship with Radio Monrovia), and facilitate the on-going training of the staff.

Fondation Hironnelle should continue its involvement with Star Radio for another three years, through December 2001. There should be an in-country FH staff member for two of those years. During the third year FH should send in staff and consultants four to six times, contingent on Star's needs.

## **B. EVALUATION OF IFES**

The International Foundation for Elections Systems, IFES, is a well known and respected US-based NGO specializing in the provision of technical support to the development of participatory democratic political processes world wide.

The involvement of IFES in Star Radio can be understood looking at the sequence of events that led to the establishment of the station. Leading up to the 1997 special elections, US officials were concerned by the perceived lack of parity in access to the national media. It was considered that if an independent radio station could be established in Liberia, candidates could be guaranteed better media access. Fondation Hironnelle who had managed a similar radio project in the Great Lakes was contacted by USAID's OTI to conduct an assessment of Liberia. IFES as the leading USAID-supported assistance provider to the Liberian electoral process, was approached to contract Fondation Hironnelle to manage the development of a radio station in Liberia via its existing USAID grant. IFES and Fondation Hironnelle both agreed, and the relationship was established.

IFES has contacts in Washington, access to and experience in fundraising, and experience and expertise in administering USAID funding. The Foundation plays a supporting role with Liberia's national and local government through its program to decentralize the operations of Liberia's Electoral Commission and its oversight of the Liberian Democracy Resource Center. The resource center materials are available for use by Star's journalists in researching and developing programming.

**IFES Next Steps.** During Star's phase two, IFES should work with Fondation Hironnelle to develop its administrative capacity, and that of Star Radio, to comply with the accounting and procurement requirements of USAID grants. This should happen in the first six months, from January to June 1999.

IFES should determine if it is permissible to change the status of FH from contractor to sub-grantee. This change could reduce the overall overhead expenses on the Star project, while maintaining the positive benefits of continued IFES involvement in the project. If it is determined possible, this change should take place by July 1999.

### **C. USAID AND OTHER DONORS**

USAID showed considerable insight in proposing the establishment of an independent news and information radio station to facilitate Liberia's first major steps in its democratization. It has exhibited its continued support for the project by renewing Star's funding and doing what it could to defend Star Radio to the Liberian government during the various challenges mounted by the ministries.

The funding from USAID through January 1999 has totaled approximately US\$1.8 million. USAID's view, as communicated by its Liberia representative, is that the station is a project deserving of continued support, but at a significantly reduced level.

Funds for Star Radio have been made available on an erratic basis. Negotiations for funding between USAID and IFES/FH have been challenging, and the flow of funds has been interrupted several times. Star Radio's first funding for June through December 1997 was provided by IFES from its original grant agreement with USAID/Liberia. Although not originally budgeted, IFES made adjustments in its program to provide funds for Star's start-up and operations from surplus funds initially intended for the support of other pre-election activities.

Support for January through June 1998 was negotiated separately as an add-on to IFES' grant agreement. At first, OTI seemed prepared to fund Star for the first six months of 1998; however, it later appeared that OTI did not have a complete understanding of what Star Radio was and what the costs were. OTI questioned Star's budget, drawing a direct comparison between the national station and women's community village radio projects funded in other countries. During these negotiations IFES/FH generated close to 10 different budget options before agreement was finally reached in January 1998. Funding for the January-June period was received in June 1998, half coming from OTI and half from USAID/Liberia.

IFES covered Star Radio's expenses from January through June from funds remaining in its post-election project. It did this with no guarantee that the USAID money would be forthcoming. To try to limit IFES' financial exposure, FH was contracted month to month. This arrangement impeded long and even medium-range planning by Star, FH, and IFES.

The delay in funding was repeated from July to September 1998 when funding for that period was not received until late September 1998. The funding that was provided is only enough to last

through January 1999, despite USAID's spring 1998 promise to fund Star through June 1999. Star will not survive much past January 1999 without additional funds from USAID.

A number of other international assistance organizations and governments have expressed interest in supporting Star Radio in the near future. The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) has provided US\$60,000 to carry out an impact study on the audience of Star Radio in 1998. Star Radio management hope that that evaluation can take place in 1999.

The Dutch government provided US\$106,000 for July 1998 through January 1999 to cover some of the costs for equipment, furniture, vehicles, personnel, and some production and broadcast expenses.

***USAID and Donor Next Steps.*** It is both wise and necessary to diversify the funding sources for Star Radio. USAID's commitment to Star Radio will likely be substantially reduced over the course of FY99 and FY00. The Dutch, Swedes, and Norwegians are all interested in helping to fund Star Radio. Their involvement could attract support from the European Union.

In the immediate term, there is urgent need for USAID support from February to June 1999 to enable Star Radio to address organizational and administrative issues as it transitions to Liberian management. January 1999, when the current USAID money runs out, will be too soon for the other donors to come on line. By July 1999 the other donors should begin to share the costs for funding Star Radio. The required funding from USAID to support Star from February through June is approximately \$560,000. For the balance of the year, and with substantial contributions from other sources, Star will require approximately \$250,000. If Star is successful in diversifying its funding, USAID support should be reduced to about \$250,000 annually.

## **IX. STRATEGY FOR FUTURE/BUSINESS PLAN**

This section presents the evaluator's vision of a strategy for the future of Star Radio and an outline for a business plan.

In order to outline the necessary strategies for Star Radio it is practical to look at Star Radio as a project with three phases. The rapid-response phase covering the startup, training, and organizational development will end in December 1998. The second phase involving the development of a self-sustaining media institution will last for three years, through December 2001. The third phase covers the full operation of a self-sustaining institution, and is continuous.

The primary purpose of this section is to examine the strategies that will be necessary to take the project from its current state at the end of the rapid-response phase, to the ultimate goal of a self-sustaining institution in phase three.

### **A. PHASE TWO: JANUARY 1999 – DECEMBER 2001**

The second phase of Star Radio will be a period of concentrated institutional development. A Fondation Hirondelle expatriate will be resident for two years and come in as a consultant for the third year, during which time the Liberian manager will be trained in all aspects of the station's management and operation, as well as in the process of securing funding from donors, fees for services, and sponsorship of programming. The board of directors will be reorganized, strengthened and will take ownership of the station.

#### **1. *Areas for Development***

##### **a. *Liberian Station Manager***

It is essential that a Liberian station manager be hired as soon as possible. The board of directors of Star Radio should hire this person, not Fondation Hirondelle. As such, it will be necessary for the board to be reorganized according to the recommendations in this report. The board must hire the station manager so that the board feels ownership of the decision. It will be their responsibility to supervise the manager, to work very closely with him or her, and to evaluate his/her performance.

Fondation Hirondelle should propose the job description, qualifications, and salary range for the position to the board for its approval.

##### **b. *Board of Directors***

The board of directors of Star Radio is the key to the development of a self-sustaining independent media institution for Liberia. The recommendations made earlier regarding the board of directors should be implemented immediately. To summarize:

- The board should consist of a minimum of nine members, drawn from the Liberian community, and should include people who have expertise, professional experience.

personal networks, and political connections that can be of direct benefit to Star Radio.

- The station manager will be the chief executive officer of the organization and will be the secretary of the board.
- The expatriate resident in Liberia should represent Fondation Hirondelle on the board of directors.

The board of directors should meet at least quarterly, but not more than monthly, to set goals for the station; develop policies; evaluate and supervise the station manager; review and approve plans for external relations work; review, approve, and supervise the budget; and review the station's performance relative to its mission and mandate. The board should not get involved in editorial decisions, specific program content, personnel issues (unless part of a grievance process), or other aspects of the day to day operations of the station.

The process of hiring the station manager should include approving the job description, qualifications, and salary range for the position. A personnel committee of the board should be appointed to advertise the position, accept applications, review the applications, and conduct first round interviews. A short list of candidates should be presented to the board as a whole, who should then conduct interviews and make a final decision.

### *c. Expatriate Involvement*

The first six months of Phase 2, from January through June 1999, will be a transition period with the current Chief of Radio/Project Coordinator working closely with the Liberian manager. During this time there would be a gradual shift of responsibility of the day to day operations of the station to the Liberian manager.

In June 1999 a new expatriate should be brought in as a technical advisor who will be a counterpart to the station manager. The technical advisor would provide support, advice, guidance, and oversight to the station manager. The technical advisor would also serve as the Fondation Hirondelle representative to the board of directors.

Over the course of the 18 months that the technical advisor is in country, he or she will assist in the development of the station's budget, oversee the use of resources, develop and maintain contacts with donors, assist in the development of the social and economic development programming of the station, and coordinate training of the staff.

In the last year of the second phase the expatriate involvement should be in the form of visiting consultants and trainers and not with a resident technical advisor.

### *d. Fondation Hirondelle*

Fondation Hirondelle should develop its administrative capacity to meet the requirements of USAID for grant recipients. It should do this with the assistance of IFES.

Additionally, Fondation Hironnelle will continue to manage the Star Radio project through the end of phase two, December 2001. During the this time, FH should assist Star Radio to develop funding sources directly so that by the beginning of phase three Star Radio will become self-sufficient.

***e. Training***

Training should be an on-going process during phase two. Areas for training include management in its various forms, including team management, motivating employees, evaluation, finances, fundraising, leadership, working with a board, and personnel management. Technical areas for training should include power generation systems and alternate energy, RF plant design and maintenance, computer maintenance and networking, and digital equipment maintenance and repair. Production training areas should include interviewing, script writing, news and script reading, radio drama, editing, digital audio production, music continuity announcing, and talk show fundamentals. Staff should be trained in using computers for writing, research on the Internet, email, web-page design and maintenance, and desktop publishing.

***f. IFES***

As the station moves into phase two the role of IFES will evolve to being less direct. During the first six months IFES should arrange to train Fondation Hironnelle and Star Radio to be able to receive grants from USAID.

IFES should continue throughout phase two to supervise the flow of funds, to ensure that the station maintains its commitment to the development of democracy, and to act as the US advocate for the project with government agencies, other NGOs, and with private foundations.

***g. Donors***

The donors for Star Radio will have to be diversified because it is in the best interest of the station politically and for sustainability.

USAID will need to be the lead donor in the first year of Phase 2 simply because there is not enough time to secure adequate funding by January 1999, and because it has already invested a great deal of time, resources, and political capital in the project.

The Dutch government will likely continue to fund Star Radio. Other bilateral donors must be brought on board, and soon. SIDA and the Norwegian government have expressed an interest; they and others should be pursued.

***h. External Relations***

Star Radio must have a proactive external relations process, a policy of constructive engagement. This would involve regular contact with government officials, building relationships, and explaining the nature, function, and operation of Star Radio. The purpose of the external relations activity is to prevent misunderstanding and misinformation from causing problems, and to establish relationships that can assist in diffusing situations as they occur.

The plan for external relations should include a systematic education process of government, business and community leaders about Star Radio. It should also include a series of contingency plans to address crisis situations, from government shutdown, to renewed fighting in the country, to natural disasters.

This external relations process should be systematically planned by the station manager in conjunction with the board of directors, Fondation Hirondelle, and the staff. It would be wise to hire an external relations consultant to assist Star Radio to develop the external relations plan.

As an adjunct to the external relations plan, a marketing plan should be developed to market the station to its audience, to the government, and to donors.

## **2. *Funding for Phase Two***

For the first year of phase two, the Star Radio project should have a final budget of approximately \$900,000 to \$1,000,000.

In the immediate term there is urgent need for USAID support from January to June 1999 to enable Star Radio to address organizational and administrative issues as it transitions to Liberian management. By July 1999 the other donors will begin to share the costs for funding Star Radio. The required funding for the first six months should be approximately \$560,000. Funding for the rest of year from USAID should be in the area of \$250,000.

The second year of phase two should have costs that are similar to the first year. The difference in 2000 will be that the diversified funding should drop the USAID component to around \$250,000 for the year.

By the last year of phase two, December 2001, the costs should begin to drop a little, to about \$800,000 for the year.

The majority of the funding for phase two of Star Radio will have to come from international donors. Star should begin the process of developing direct revenue from local and international sources. Below is a discussion of various options:

### ***a. Commercial Sponsorship***

The current state of the Liberian economy makes commercial sponsorship unrealistic for the short term. Very few companies need to advertise, and those that do are unlikely to sponsor a radio station that is often the target of government harassment. As the economy develops and the political situation becomes less volatile it will be possible to consider commercial sponsorship.

One form of commercial sponsorship that may be considered by multi-national companies in a few years would be what is essentially public relations advertising. This would involve companies paying for advertising on Star Radio that will provide a positive image of those companies in the eyes of the Liberians.

***b. News Agency***

There is clearly a need outside of Liberia for specialized news from Liberia, but there is such a small market that it is not practical to consider this on an international level. Reuters, AP, and other commercial news services, as well as IRIN are very interested in the news coming from Liberia, but it is not of such value that they would be interested in paying for that news.

It may be feasible for Star Radio to consider setting itself up as a Liberian news agency. The station's news is often quoted, although seldom attributed, in other media. It may be possible for Star Radio to charge a nominal fee to the other media outlets for use of their news, but with attribution. In this way, the other media have official permission to make use of Star Radio's news and a standard is set for attribution. This may be a hard sell since the other media are already using the news without permission or attribution.

Another level of the news service could be suggesting to other radio stations that they use Star Radio's news on their station, in lieu of having their own news department. To accomplish this the stations would pay a fee, and then they would just have to have a tuner and rebroadcast Star's news programs. They could then focus their resources on community service programming and their music programming.

***c. Development Programming Production for Hire***

Several international NGOs and UN organizations utilize Star Radio to get their messages out. Star does not charge for this service. However, this means that the donors for Star Radio are subsidizing the mission of other NGOs. While this is not a problem in itself, it is an opportunity for a source of income.

Star Radio should request NGOs and UN organizations to add broadcast production and air time costs to their budgets for next year so that the real costs for these services can be paid for by the agencies. If an NGO or UN organization cannot get funding approved, Star should not cut off service to them. The station needs to provide a service, but whenever possible, that service should be paid for.

Star Radio should also seek out NGOs and educate them as to how Star Radio can assist them in advancing their mission. Star should offer proposals to these NGOs to produce and air programs for a fee.

***d. Email News Service***

It is possible that Star Radio could receive a modest income from the distribution of its news via email and the Internet. It may be an avenue through which people may be willing to make donations to Star Radio to support its operations. If a nominal contribution of \$50 per year were requested, then 100 subscribers would provide \$5,000 in income. It is conceivable that that 100 people and organizations would want to support Star Radio's Internet news service.

***e. Studio Rental***

A source of revenue that has been suggested by some is the rental of Star's studio to outside people, but this is not practical. First of all, in order for Star Radio to rent studio time, it would

have to have free time available. After the programming changes proposed here are adopted, and any other programming changes are made the station will not have time available for rent.

***f. Lease of SW Transmitter***

The suggestion has been made that Star Radio sell time on its short wave transmitter. It is more practical for Star Radio to make full use of its channel space and broadcast a full day of programming on the short wave transmitter. If Star Radio's short wave signal can be received during the day, then it should continue simulcasting its own FM programming throughout the day.

***g. CD-ROM collections of News Bulletins***

It was suggested that Star Radio could create a collection of its news bulletins that have been posted on the Internet and distribute this on CD-ROM. A market analysis could be done to determine the feasibility of this. A survey sent out to the subscribers to the email distribution of the news bulletins, and posted on the Hironnelle website may be able to determine interest and the amount people would be willing to pay.

**B. PHASE THREE: SELF-SUSTAINING INSTITUTION**

The last phase of Star Radio, beginning in 2002, is the complete establishment of a self-sustaining Liberian media institution. In phase three, the board of directors of the station will be fully informed of the nature of a media institution like Star, and meeting at least quarterly to develop long term goals, set policies, review past performance, and ensure the regular flow of funding for the station. The station will be managed entirely by Liberians with no expatriates involved. The staff will be fully trained in all aspects of the station's operations. The funding for the station will be secured through a combination of donors, fees for services, and sponsorship of programming.

If the board and the management feel it is beneficial to Star Radio, a long term consulting relationship may be entered into with Fondation Hironnelle and other related organizations to provide on-going training and technical support.

***1. Funding for Phase Three***

Once the station reaches phase three, the self-sustaining mode, the station's expenses should be about \$500,000 per year.

The source for funding for the station will still have to come mostly from donors. The funding should be diversified enough by this point so that donors are giving no more than \$100,000 apiece. Major equipment replacement will have to be requested from donors as part of a special funding package.

Over the long term it will be necessary for the station to explore local funding options which could include advertising, fees for services, and donations from Liberian and multi-national corporations doing business in Liberia.

## **X. CONCLUSION**

Star Radio faces a number of risks. These risks include: unavailability of sufficient funding; shut-down of the short wave station; shut-down of the FM station; confiscation of equipment; physical harm to journalists, staff, and board; threats and possible harm to the families of staff and board members; shut-down of the Internet news postings; a resurgence in fighting accompanied by looting; and continued harassment by the Liberian government.

The events that make these risks real are ultimately beyond Star's control. At the same time, steps should be taken to reduce the potential for a number of these risks through a proactive external relations plan for Star. Along with actions from the Star Radio board and staff, the international community should make it clear to the Liberian government that a free press is a critical component of a democracy and that continued harassment of Star will only result in negative consequences.

The contribution that Star Radio can make to the building of democracy in Liberia and the balancing of news information received by the people of the country will be greatly curtailed if the station cannot broadcast to the entire nation. The short wave broadcasts must be reinstated. As useful as Star Radio is, one question looms: is it worth its high cost if the short wave is not allowed back on line and the station continues to broadcast only on FM?

The other major area of risk to the sustainability of Star Radio is the cost of operations and the funding sources. Star must continue to be diligent about keeping its costs down, and its equipment investment appropriate to the task and resources. The management of Star has to energetically pursue creative fund raising options, and establish excellent relations with donors and potential donors.

It will be necessary for Star Radio to be fully self-sufficient, that is, funded from within Liberia, within the next 10 years or so. It is unlikely that donors will be interested in an endless funding relationship with the station.

Star Radio has tremendous potential as a positive contributor to Liberia's reconstruction and democratization. In its short 18-month life, it has already made a substantial contribution. Star Radio can develop its news and program gathering resources into a news service, providing news, information and development programs to other radio stations and media outlets. Its quality of programming and its effectiveness of delivery can be enhanced over time. The station can also play a significant role in the social and economic development of Liberia, not only through delivery of its news and information programming, but also through the addition of programming designed to educate and ultimately improve the quality of life of Star's listeners.

The overall value of any development initiative has to be measured by the positive change it creates and the number of people it serves. Star Radio has contributed substantially to the democratic process in Liberia, and is a model for the region. It has reached, directly or indirectly, the entire population of Liberia, and thousands of Liberians living abroad. It is a valuable source

of information for decision-makers in the international community. Looking at the overall impact of the Star Radio project on the people of Liberia, it is easy to conclude that it is a cost effective and valuable project. Further, this project has the capacity to become a self-sustaining Liberian media institution that will have a positive part to play over the long-term reconstruction of the Liberian nation.

## **APPENDIX A**

### **EVALUATION RESOURCES**

#### **Interviews**

##### **Media Institutions**

- Ducor Broadcasting: DC 101
- Inquirer
- The News
- Liberian Broadcasting System (LBS)
- Liberian Communications Network (LCN)
- Media Against Conflict (MAC)
- Press Union of Liberia (PUL)
- Radio Gbarnga (part of LCN)
- Radio Monrovia
- Radio Veritas
- Talking Drum Studios

##### **Business Leaders**

- Fred Bass (Ducor Broadcasting Corporation)
- Joseph Boakai (Lusu Resource Corporation and Lofa Holding Company)
- Eugene Cooper (Denco Shipping Lines)
- Francis Leigh (ITC Bank)
- Mai Bright Urey (Datatech)
- Medina Wesseh (Communication Matrix)

##### **Liberian NGOs**

- Association of Female Lawyers of Liberia (AFELL)
- Center for Democratic Empowerment (CEDE)
- Justice and Peace Commission (JPC)
- New African Research and Development Agency (NARDA)

##### **International NGOs**

- Common Ground Productions
- Save the Children Fund (SCF)
- Integrated Regional Information Network (IRIN)
- International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)
- OXFAM

##### **UN organizations**

- UNDP
- UNESCO

- UNHCR
- UNOL

#### Government – Ministries

- Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism
- Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications
- Ministry of Education

#### Political Parties

- National Democratic Party of Liberia (NDPL)
- National Patriotic Party (NPP)
- Unity Party (UP)

#### Potential Donors

- Embassy of the Netherlands
- Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA)
- UNDP
- USAID

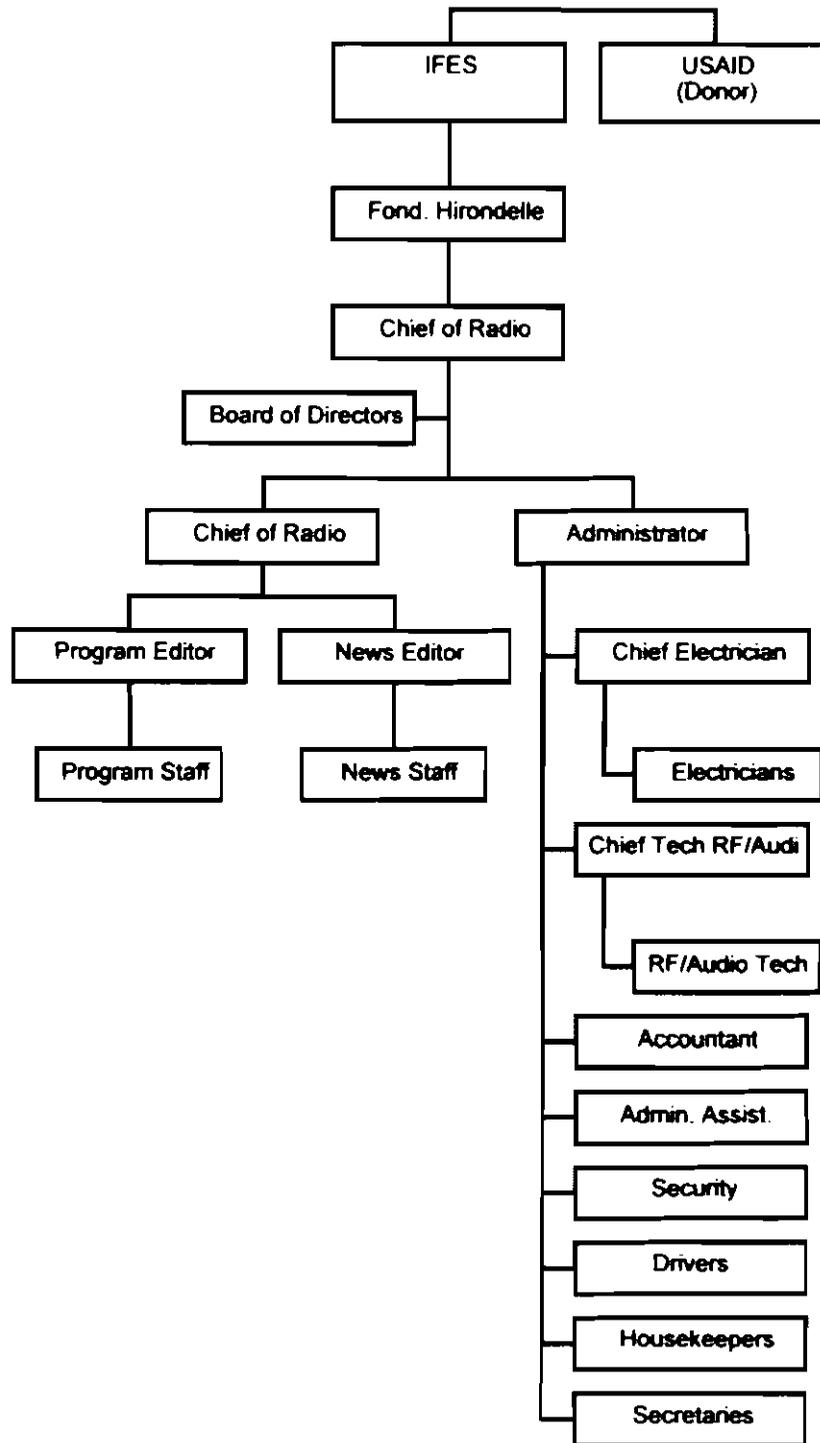
#### Documents Reviewed

- Project Proposal for the Implementation of an Independent Radio Station for Liberia (May to December 1997)
- Star Radio Charter, June 1997
- Application for Authority to do Business in the Republic of Liberia by the Foundation Hironde/Star Radio for Information In Case of Emergency, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, June 17, 1997
- Project Proposal for 1998 Star Radio, October 27, 1997
- Star 1997 Report, May 1 to December 31, 1997
- Memo Re: Government Orders Star to Shut Down, January 6, 1998
- Memo Re: The Star Radio Crisis, January 11, 1998
- Memo Re: Star Update, January 13, 1998
- Memo Re: Star Radio: Meeting with Ambassador Milam, January 13, 1998
- Memo Re: Q&A Guidance for Star Radio, January 14, 1998
- Memo Re: Notes on the Q&A, January 22, 19\_\_
- Working Paper on Scenario Regarding Star Radio's Closure, January 23, 1998
- Star Radio Monthly Report, January, 1998
- Articles of Incorporation of Foundation Hironde/Star Radio, Republic of Liberia Ministry of Foreign Affairs, February 3, 1998
- Monthly Report, February 7 till February 28, 1998
- Letter from Minister of Planning and Economic Development
- Star Radio Monthly Report, March 5, 1998
- Deliverables, March – June 1998

- Proposal for Complementary Funding for the Period July 1, 1998 – January 31, 1999: Presented to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Hague, the Netherlands, June 30, 1998
- Alternatives to Cover Liberia with Star Radio Programmes, Draft
- Star Radio Monthly Report, July 1 – August 24, 1998
- By-laws of Fondation Hirondelle/Star Radio, September 8, 1998
- Report by Roger Ketskemety for Fondation Hirondelle on Completion of Three Weeks Radio Training at Star Radio, September 9, 1998
- Star Radio Final Phase 1 Technical Report August 25 – September 15, 1998
- Memo Re: Fondation Hirondelle Terms of contract Extension – Star Radio Project, October 6, 1998
- Concept Paper: Handing-Over Management and Running of Star Radio Project to a Liberian Based Entity
- Star Radio Cash USD & Bank USD Analysis (September 1, 1997 to August 31, 1998)
- Star Radio Employees Listing
- Star Radio Salary Schedule
- Memorandum of Understanding between Star Radio and Stringers
- Star Radio Budget Lines
- Star Radio Staff Salaries, October 1998
- Star Radio Language Announcers Salaries, October 1998
- Star Radio Drivers Shifts
- Star Radio Technical Department shifts
- Star Radio Estimated Draft Budget for 11 Months – 1.2.1999 – 31.12.1999

## APPENDIX B

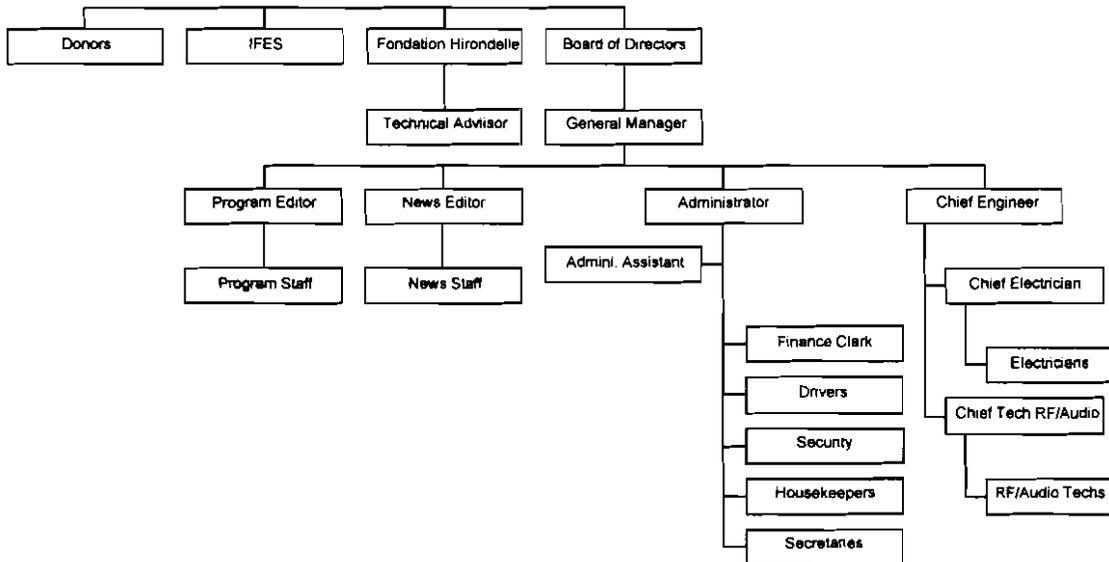
### ORGANIZATIONAL CHART – OBSERVED STRUCTURE



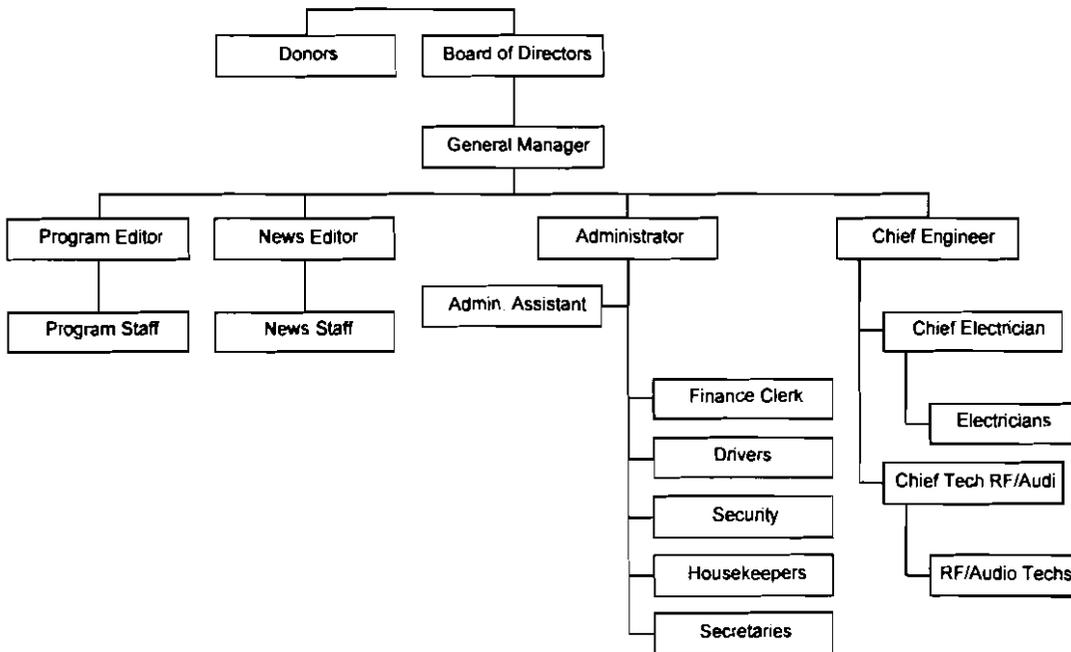
## APPENDIX C

### RECOMMENDED ORGANIZATIONAL CHART – PHASE TWO AND PHASE THREE

Star Radio Phase Two



Star Radio Phase Three



## APPENDIX D

### STUDIO AND EDITING EQUIPMENT INVENTORY

#### On Air

Mixer 18x2	Soundcraft K1	new, professional
Reel-to-reel	Revox B77	used, professional
Reel-to-reel	Revox 77A	used, professional
CD player	Technics SL-PG 380A	new, consumer
CD changer	Technics SL-MC 400	new, consumer
Tuner	Technics ST-GT 350	new, consumer
Cassette deck	JVC KD-A7	new, consumer
Cassette dual deck	Technics RS-TR373	new, consumer
Mini-disk	Tascam MD-801R	new, professional
VHS logging deck	Matsuhita AG-6124	new, professional
Microphone	AKG D3700	semi-professional
Telephone hybrid	EA 803	used, professional

#### Production

Mixer 10x2	Studer 169	used, professional
Reel-to-reel	Revox A77	used, professional
CD player	Technics SL-PG380A	new, consumer
Tuner	Technics ST-GT 350	new, consumer
Cassette deck	JVC KD-A7	new, consumer
Cassette deck	Revox B710	used, professional
Microphone	AKG D3700	semi-professional

#### Mini-Disk Production

Mixer 5x2	Pro-2 M-115	consumer
Reel-to-reel	Revox B77	used, professional
Cassette dual deck	Teac W518R	new, consumer
Mini-disk	Demon DN-M1050R	new, professional
Microphone (2)	AKG D3700	semi-professional

#### Editing Area

Reel-to-reel	Revox PR99	used, professional
Reel-to-reel	Revox PR99	used, professional

#### Field Recording

Mini-Disk (5)		new, consumer
Cassette recorders (23)		new, consumer
Microphones (19)		new, consumer

## APPENDIX E

### SUGGESTED NEW STUDIO AND EDITING EQUIPMENT

#### On Air

DAW	Macintosh/Deck 2.0	\$3,000
Telephone Hybrid	Telos One	\$680
Mixer 12x2x2	Audioarts R-60	\$7,500
Distribution Amplifier	Excaliber DA2-6	\$395
Summing amp	Excaliber APA-1	\$165
Processor	Optimod FM 2200/U	\$4,000
Processor	Optimod AM 9200U	\$4,000

#### Production

DAW	Macintosh/Deck 2.0	\$3,000
Telephone Hybrid	Telos One	\$680
Distribution Amplifier	Excaliber DA2-6	\$395

#### Mini-Disk Production

DAW	Macintosh/Deck 2.0	\$3,000
Telephone Hybrid	Telos One	\$680
Distribution Amplifier	Excaliber DA2-6	\$395
Mixer	Mackie 1402	\$485

#### Editing Area

DAW (3)	Macintosh/Deck 2.0	\$3,000
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#### Field Recording

Microphones (30)	Audio-Technica AT804	\$2,670
Microphone Cables (30)	XLR F to 1/8" mini 6'	\$360

\$34,405

The reel-to-reel decks should be replaced, or augmented, with digital audio workstations (DAW) for editing interviews and programs. These systems cost about the same as a new reel-to-reel, but are much less expensive in consumables. An hour of reel tape costs about US\$12 versus one 74 minute recordable CD that costs US\$1. The cost for 120 hours of tape would be US\$1,440 versus US\$100 for CDs. The storage space for 120 hours of reel tape is 7.5 feet of shelf space, versus about .25 feet for 120 hours of CDs. (The CDs would be stored in an album style CD case.) Macintosh computers and Deck 2.0 software are strongly recommended because of the ease of use for audio production. Windows editing software is nearly as not user-friendly.

The existing telephone hybrid, the device that allows the station to record a telephone interview or put a caller on the air for a talk show, is of such poor quality as to not be usable. It is highly

recommended that two of these units be purchased: one for the production room for recording interviews and the other for the on air room for talk show call-in.

The microphones that are being used for the field recorders are not sufficiently durable for the field use. While they are inexpensive and replaceable, a more economic alternative for the long term is to buy very durable professional field recording microphones. They will last for many years.

Field recorders should be considered as basic equipment for each journalist. Each journalist should be assigned a unit. This will mean purchasing enough for each. The portable cassette recorders are the least expensive, but they will only last about a year. Professional models are simply too expensive, so it is best to look at these recorders as consumables and plan to replace them yearly.

The mixer in use in the second production room, the mini-disk studio, is not adequate for the task. It is suggested that a durable, professional but inexpensive, production mixer be installed in this room.

The current on-air mixer is really a production mixer, not designed for on air professional broadcast use. The current mixer will not last long in that environment. It is also not very user friendly. It is highly recommended that the station install a low-end professional broadcast mixer designed for on air use. The advantages are much simpler user controls, more durable switches and faders, integrated telephone hybrid controls, and modular channels for ease of repair. This may be considered a redundant expense, but it will prove itself to be of great value over the long term.

Separating the equipment from the recording area is a desirable goal for the two production rooms. This will make the recordings quieter, and therefore clearer and easier to understand when they are broadcast. A partition inside the room with a window and door would greatly improve the quality of the voice recording done in those rooms.

The broadcast chain is missing a key piece of equipment. A limiter to control the peaks is required in almost every country. This is critical to control the splatter that can happen when a signal that is too hot makes it into the exciter. A processor that includes a limiter would also increase the clarity of both the FM and the short wave signal, which would increase the effective coverage area of both. A processor is needed for both the FM and the short wave in order for the signal to be optimized for each transmitter. These units should be considered essential.

One other piece of equipment that is needed is a distribution amplifier. The purpose of the distribution amplifier is to take the signal coming out of the mixer and distribute it to the FM air chain, the short wave air chain, the logging recorder, and to the DAW. The current setup has the mixer feeding all of these devices directly. This is not good practice. The signal can be degraded, or may fail entirely if there is a problem with any of the four devices. A distribution amp allows for the mixer output to be loaded correctly, making it perform better. Also, a summing amplifier needs to be installed in the short wave air chain to sum the right and left channels without

causing any frequency loss or other problems. A distribution amplifier should be put into both production rooms as well.

Additionally, an outside broadcast (OB) unit will need to be purchased. This will enable the station to carry live programming from locations away from the station. Currently the station simulcasts with Radio Monrovia when the government requires an OB. It is important that Star Radio have its own OB equipment.

## APPENDIX F

### OFFICE EQUIPMENT INVENTORY

#### Project Director

- 1 Computer, laptop
- 1 Printer, HP Deskjet 400

#### Administration

- 1 Computer, laptop
  - 1 Computer, laptop
  - 1 Computer, desktop
  - 1 Printer, HP Deskjet 672 C
  - 2 LaserJet 6L
  - 1 Copy Machine, Canon PC770
  - 1 Fax machines
  - 1 OfficeJet 500 fax/printer/copier/scanner
  - 1 Phone system, Panasonic hybrid
  - 5 Phone lines
    - 2 general use
    - 1 studio
    - 1 Chief of radio
    - 1 fax line
- Sat phone email  
Finance  
Secretary  
Secretary  
email/finance

#### Program Department

- 1 Computer, laptop
  - 1 Printer, HP 300
- Program Editor

#### News Department

- 1 Computer, desktop
  - 1 Printer, HP 300
- News Editor

#### News and Program

- 6 Typewriter, manual
- 2 Typewriter, electric

## **APPENDIX G**

**SCOPE OF WORK**  
ATTACHMENT A TO  
CONSULTANT CONTRACT  
BY AND BETWEEN  
THE INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION FOR ELECTION SYSTEMS  
AND  
Gregory A. Kintz

**SCOPE OF WORK**

1. Working with the STAR's Project Team, a representative of Fondation Hirondelle and the IFES Project Manager, assess progress and additional areas of work required to transform FH/Star Radio Project Team into an independent, economically viable station. This will entail gathering information via meetings and interviews with STAR's Project Team, representatives from Liberia's other media institutions, and a careful review of STAR's Charter and FH's "Handing Over Management" Concept Paper;

2. The areas that, at a minimum, must be covered in the assessment/evaluation are the following:

Board of Directors: composition, by-laws, rules and regulations.

Station Management: staffing, training, downsizing.

Programming: impact on programming and content by changing to sustainable operations.

STAR Radio's Legal Status: issues involving Liberian laws regarding communications and broadcasting by non-profits and for-profit organizations.

STAR Radio's Relationship with Radio Monrovia

Radio Programs and Content

The Independence of the Future Station: political and economic assumptions, conditions and risks that will affect both the quality of the programming and the sustainability of operations.

Estimated future costs: purchase of a short wave transmitter, studio rental and costs.

Funding: commercials, press agency, e-mail service, fee for services for NGOs, international internships with educational institutions, lease of short wave transmitter, special events, studio rental, CD-ROM retail, corporate sponsorship and private foundation funding.

3. Starting from the generally accepted assumptions regarding STAR' s future and the existing/projected climate for Liberia's radio business environment, the Specialist will develop and present strategic options to STAR' s management team, board of directors and to IFES. If possible, the Specialist will seek to identify consensus responses to these options from various partners and craft a business plan to support the consensus option. This plan will be presented to STAR's management, board of directors, IFES and to donors at the conclusion of the mission as part of the Specialist's preliminary final report.

4. Provide guidance to IFES' Project Manager in developing and using a basic questionnaire aimed at gathering information on audience share and listener preferences to better evaluate STAR's performance;

5. Write a detailed report summarizing activities, highlighting strategic issues and making recommendations to the STAR project team and IFES in the areas identified in 2 above, to be conveyed to the IFES/Washington office no later than November 8, 1998. [Date was revised to December 31, 1998.]