

'If you greet someone he or she can easily ask why you do that because she doesn't know you. It is very, very strange to us.'

KALK BAY

Freelance journalist Michelle Saffer holds out little hope for much change resulting from an election. 'I am not optimistic or pessimistic, it could go either way. I have no faith in politicians.'

She has never voted before – on principle. Having refused to take part in whites-only elections, she is nevertheless not convinced she will vote this time around. 'Voting will not be an automatic thing for me. It depends on the person, not the party.'

She adds that she cannot see herself voting for the National Party or the Democratic Party. 'Possibly I would vote for a candidate from the South African Communist Party, partly because I am attracted to what it stands for and partly because communism is collapsing all over the world and I would like to vote for it if I could.'

What she will be looking for in a candidate is a sincere commitment to economic development – and that means 'both growth and redistribution, not just one or the other'.

Her only real fear for South Africa's future is the possibility of continuing and escalating violence. 'I don't expect a civil war but I do worry that the anger and the expectations of people won't be able to be controlled. I worry that people won't be prepared to go through the democratic process, that people won't be prepared to wait, that it's too late to appeal to reason. Then what we will get will be outbreaks of violent anarchy and continuing and intensifying violence.'

those held by people in positions of power and prominence.

When Bush Radio ventures out onto the airwaves on April 25, its best defence will be a groundswell of public support, not so much for itself, but for the concept and principle of community radio.

The project is appealing for a simple letter or fax of support which will be greatly appreciated. It will serve both as a word of encouragement for those who will be broadcasting, and as an indication to those in power of the extent of public support for the right of small-scale, not-for-gain community stations to go on air.

Letters may be addressed to:

The Bush Radio Co-ordinating Committee, Bush Radio, PO Box 13290, Mowbray, 7705 (Fax 021-4485451 or telephone 021-4485450).

A healthy approach to radio

By SUE VALENTINE

IT'S 9.25am inside the converted trucking container which houses Zibonele Clinic in Khayelitsha and there's an atmosphere of anxious activity, excitement and anticipation.

Underneath the hospital bed at the end of the narrow corridor someone is fiddling with what appears to be nothing more than a compact hi-fi set.

There are five minutes to go before Radio Zibonele, a primary health care radio station, takes to the airwaves of Town 2 in Khayelitsha. The community health workers, with no knowledge of transmitters, signal frequencies or radio journalism interviewing techniques, fill the roles of reporters, presenters and role-play actors in the morning broadcast. In an environment where many people are illiterate and information by word of mouth is the norm, radio is the perfect medium for mass communication.

A sheet of newsprint stuck on the wall gives a breakdown of the broadcast sequence. The health workers who will be doing today's programme shuffle their notes nervously and wait in the corridor for their turn to squeeze into the tiny obstetrics examination room that serves as the studio. The air is indeed pregnant with anticipation!

Until just a few minutes ago the studio guest was nowhere to be found, but to everyone's relief he saunters in just before the signature tune starts up. A former TB sufferer, he will be the central focus of today's programme which will discuss the symptoms and effects of TB and how to treat and avoid the disease.

Just three broadcasts old, Radio Zibonele is the result of the efforts of Gabriel Urgoiti, an Argentinian doctor with experience of

community radio in the deep south of his own country. Urgoiti has been working in the South African health sector for 12 years.

The aim of the tiny radio station is to enhance and reinforce the services provided by the community health workers who offer primary health care treatment and advice during daily home visits in the area.

Through its tiny transmitter and antennae fastened to the roof of the container, Radio Zibonele can be heard up to 50km away. And in the crowded conditions of Khayelitsha, this means that potentially 20 000 people can tune in to the weekly, hour-long programme on health care.

The broadcast is entirely in Xhosa. Urgoiti

serves as the producer and sound engineer, monitoring the 30cm square mixing desk, popping in cassettes and the odd compact disc, while health workers take the seat next to the hospital



bed and pick up the microphone.

It's all very rough and ready, but the health care advice transmitted by Radio Zibonele every Tuesday morning comes through loud and clear to anyone in the 5-km radius with an FM radio.

'The only complaint is that the broadcasts are too short'

The response so far has been enthusiastic. The only complaint is that the broadcasts are too short. The only danger is that because it is illegal to broadcast without a licence, Radio Zibonele may not survive.

Zibonele means 'we did it together'. Here's hoping these words hold true for many more broadcasts!

Sue Valentine is Media Director with Idasa.