

CR for disaster mitigation: Time to act now



CR has proven its credentials in disaster mitigation and relief

The cliché usually runs: From disaster to relief. But judging by a recent lead story of one of the country's most well known newspapers, the reverse might well be true. Headlined, "No disaster communication system despite spending crores," it points out that the Uttarakhand calamity has highlighted how advanced communication technology available with the government, was not deployed either for preparing for it or for quick response. "There were no early warning systems, and once disaster struck, no communication system for several days as mobile networks collapsed."

Those who remember the 2004 Tsunami assault or the flood havoc caused by the River Kosi changing its course, may not be too surprised. During the 2004 Tsunami, it was the low cost community communication mechanisms that often showed the way despite sophisticated surveillance systems deployed by the government.

The experience of the MSSRF Village Information Centre in Nallavadu

– a fishing village in coastal Tamil Nadu – is a case in point. The warning that the local community received on December 26, 2004 did not come from the internet, or a government weather surveillance system, but from a former project volunteer who was based in Singapore one and was "watching a news item about the earthquake that had just occurred off the coast of Indonesia. Worried about the potential impact on his family of giant waves that were reported to be spreading across the Indian Ocean, he telephoned his sister in Nallavadu." The information was disseminated through the MSSRF public loudspeaker. The result was that "not one of more than 3,500 villagers lost their lives." In fact the potential of community radio was underlined by Navin Chawla (then I & B Secretary) when he acknowledged that it "was an important component in disaster preparedness." Mr Chawla requested Dr Sridhar, then head of Anna FM, (which was the sole community radio station at that time) to set up a similar community radio station at the Nicobar islands. Unfortunately, there was little or no government follow up.

A similar scenario unraveled post the Kosi floods in Bihar in 2008. De-

spite efforts from community radio advocates to initiate emergency radio, their proposals fell on deaf ears within New Delhi's corridors of power. About three months post the floods, a field recce carried out by AMARC in North Bihar suggested that the relief mechanisms left much to be desired. While the promises were many, delays had aggravated a shortage of food provisions, health problems and infrastructure break downs. While village after village bemoaned the lack of timely information, the role of mobile telephony was applauded. Similar sentiments were evinced about radio. But there was a twist to the tale.

It was BBC Hindi service that was unanimously applauded to be the most comprehensive information player. AIR featured — but it appeared to come a distant second except for its farm radio programmes.

Now that NDMA have reiterated the critical importance of community radio and the relevance of a network of community based FM stations in Uttarakhand, we need to hit the ground running. All of us need to support and explore how we can strengthen the efforts made by community radio advocates and practitioners in CRF, CRAI, and like minded groups to make community radio stations a reality in the affected areas. From Nepal, to Haiti, to Japan community radio has proven credentials in terms of disaster mitigation and management. We can afford to ignore the writing on the wall – only at the peril of allowing relief to blindly hurtle into yet another disaster.

Ashish Sen
President, AMARC-Asia Pacific

*(Image courtesy:
Wikimedia Commons)*

Community Radio as a tool for disaster risk reduction



(Image courtesy: Wikimedia Commons)

In terms of the immediate impact of a disaster as well as the initial emergency response, disasters are ultimately local phenomena. It is no surprise then that international and national agencies involved in activities related to disaster mitigation and disaster risk reduction have often focused on building the capacities of local communities to deal effectively with natural disasters. Homes, workplaces, playgrounds, and places of worship become the spaces where one can conceptualise the beginning of this work.

It has been emphasised by several groups involved in disaster management that the measures we take must be grounded in local knowledge and communicated to and through local communities. Horizontal communication among members of a local community and sharing experiences is vital in not only addressing the risk of disasters, but also in providing efficient relief and rehabilitation action.

Steve Buckley, the then President of AMARC, speaking in light of the destructive earthquake in Haiti in 2010, pointed out that most of the community broadcasting outlets in that country responded by showing great flexibility in their programming, mobilising community responses, providing information on missing persons, explaining the causes of the disaster, advising on precautions, and providing psychological support (Buckley, Community Media and Disaster Response, WSIS Forum 2010 High Level Panel on ICTs and Disaster Response).

The Hyogo Framework for Action that came out of the World Conference for Disaster Reduction held in Kobe in 2005, among other things, emphasises community participation and calls for the empowerment of local communities and authorities through better access to information and resources to deal with disaster risk reduction. Similarly, it was asserted that early warning systems must be developed keeping in mind local cultural and demographic specificities.

It is in this context that participatory media such as community radio, produced and managed by local communities, are proving to be a vital tool in regions which are prone to chronic disasters. Community radio, with its basic philosophy of empowerment of marginalized people, is attuned to any approach to disaster management that focuses on sections of society that are most vulnerable to all kinds of disasters.

There is enough documented evidence about the critical significance of community radio in dealing with disaster risk reduction and disaster management from Asia, especially South and Southeast Asia. There are exciting stories as well from Africa, Australia, South and Latin America, and the Caribbean of how local communities have used their own communication competencies to share information about impending natural disasters, communicate with each other regarding post-disaster relief efforts, and to build resilient communities that adopt practices of sustainable development so that they become less vulnerable to future disasters.

Excerpts from the opening remarks by Prof. Vinod Pavarala, Unesco Chair on Community Media, University of Hyderabad at the Panel on Role of Local Media in Large-Scale Disasters at the International Symposium on "Catastrophes and Constructing Communities," National Museum of Ethnology, Osaka, November 16-17, 2012

A survey was carried out by AMARC Asia Pacific in 2008-2009 in eight countries. The countries chosen for the survey were Afghanistan, Australia, India, Indonesia, Japan, Laos, Nepal and Sri Lanka to determine the practices of community radio in disaster situations.

Key survey findings:

- a) Landslides, earthquake and floods are the most frequently occurring natural disasters
- b) Death toll highest amongst elderly, disabled and children
- c) Negligible programmes for women, children and elderly related to natural disaster preparation and management
- d) More than half of CR stations surveyed did not have a manual to deal with natural disaster though most of them face natural disasters quite frequently
- e) More than 60% of CR stations housed in buildings which are not specifically designed to withstand natural disaster
- f) 50% of community radio stations have staff trained in disaster management which is encouraging
- g) Not enough collaboration with relevant meteorological stations or organisations with information on potential disasters. Hence they are unable to provide updates and regular news on the situation
- h) Very few programmes on trauma healing

The survey also highlighted the role of women in Disaster Management and urged the need to include women in all aspects of disaster management.

Anecdotal data suggested that "often women are at home when disaster strikes. Preparing women would help her save herself and her family." There was also a strong need to take cultural norms into consideration when providing relief support. For example during the Pakistan earthquake an injured woman refused to be treated by a male doctor.

Ashish Sen
AMARC AP

SNIPPETS

Timely weather alerts could have saved thousands

(Neha Pant, Hindustan Times, Dehradun, June 21, 2013)

Presence of an effective communication dissemination system would have lessened the magnitude of the disaster caused in Uttarakhand.

The Meteorological Centre, Dehradun had alerted various departments of the state government about the possibility of heavy rains and landslides in the state, 48 hours prior to the intervening night of June 16 and 17 that brought widespread damage. However, it now emerges the alert failed to percolate down to the masses at large, worsening the magnitude of the damage, especially in the Char Dham Yatra route.

"The intensity of the devastation could have been much lesser had there been an effective communication system in place to disseminate our weather alert to the masses. A strong network of community FM radios would have played a radical role in alerting the locals as well as the tourists/pilgrims," Anand Sharma, head of meteorological center, Dehradun, told Hindustan Times on Thursday.

Uttarakhand faced the worst hit of rains from the night of June 16 and major damages were caused on June 17 in the hills. The Met Center had issued alerts to various governmental departments two days in advance. Sharma said that establishing an all-weather communication system was the need of the hour. Currently, only three community radios are reportedly functional in Uttarakhand.

"Setting up of a large number of community FM radios can avert such a disaster in future. Also, distribution of low-cost and low-maintenance technologies like tone alert hand-winding radios especially in the rural areas, will ensure that weather alerts reach to the public in time, averting such disasters," he concluded.

AMARC -Asia Pacific and SAARC-IC to work together for CR in South Asia

June 28, 2013, Kathmandu: The World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC Asia Pacific) and the SAARC Information Centre (SIC) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to work jointly for the development of community broadcasting in South Asia. The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) alliance includes Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The AMARC-SIC MOU is based on an earlier decision made by the SAARC Standing Committee to organise SAARC level consultations and capacity building workshops on an annual basis in partnership with AMARC Asia Pacific.

Third AMARC -Asia Pacific Assembly

June 27, 2013, Kathmandu: The Regional Board of World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters - AMARC Asia Pacific is pleased to announce that the 3rd AMARC Asia Pacific Regional Conference and Assembly will be held in Seoul, Republic of Korea from December 2-5, 2013. The Korean Community Radio Broadcasters' Association (KCRBA) will host the conference where community

broadcasters and advocates from over 30 countries of Asia-Pacific region will gather to take stock of the sector and to chart the way forward.

CRs in Bangladesh address cyclone 'Mahasen'

BNNRC, Dhaka May 22, 2013: As part of addressing the risk of Cyclone Mahasen, Six Community Radio Stations in coastal region of Bangladesh have broadcasted 514 hours program for 5 days continuously from May 11 to May 16. The stations included: Community Radio Nalta 99.2 (Satkhira), Community Radio Sundarban 99.2 (Koyra, Khulna), Community Radio Lokobetar 99.2 (Barguna Sadar), Community Rural Radio Krishi Radio 98.8 (Amtali, Barguna), Community Radio Naf 99.2 (Coxes-bazar, Tekhnaf) and Radio Sagargiri 99.2 (Sitakunda, Chittagong). A total of 391 staff and volunteers and more than 20,000 listeners' club members were involved constantly in disseminating disaster preparedness message and information to the local community. They updated and informed the cyclone situation at a regular frequency. They have provided information on cyclone shelter to the community according to the disaster situation continuously updated by Meteorological department and other GOB agencies. The Community Radio stations are continuously broadcasting the updates on "Mahsen" by increasing their previous air-time in line with Standing Orders on Disaster of Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

EMMC to monitor radio channels too

NEW DELHI: With Phase III of FM Radio auctions expected to begin in the next two to three months, the Electronic Media Monitoring Committee (EMMC) has been empowered to increase its capacity not only to monitor 800 television channels as against 300 at present, but also take on private radio services.

However, Information and Broadcasting (I&B) Ministry sources said this will not change the decision of the government about denying permission to the FM broadcasters from broadcasting news, as monitoring them would be a difficult process.

Established in 2008, the EMMC monitors about 191 channels on a 24x7 basis at present. The EMMC monitors the content of all TV channels based on the uplinking and downlinking policy in India to check the violation of program and advertisement codes according to the Cable TV Networks (Regulation) Act. Though the EMMC monitors private FM radio channels at present, it is dependent on the radio channel for recordings.

Sources said that a budget of Rs 90 crore has been cleared for the project. There are several regional channels that may be violating the program or advertising code and very often action against them is delayed because recordings of the objectionable telecasts are often not available. The sources also feel that listening posts may have to be set up in cities to monitor the FM radio channels.

Source:

<http://www.indiantelevision.com/headlines/y2k13/jun/jun73.php>

EDITORIAL

Wanted: Emergency CR licenses to aid relief operations



(Image courtesy: Wikimedia Commons)

The gravity of the disaster in Uttarakhand demands a multi-media approach to relief operations

The Uttarakhand floods are a wake up call to all of us that climate change is not just a reality but is also here to stay. As floods, earthquakes and drought increasingly confront the global landscape the writing on the wall reminds us of Gandhiji's wisdom: Man has enough for everyone's need, but not for everyone's greed.

While sophisticated weather surveillance and rapids strides in media technology are important requisites in disaster response and mitigation, they remain to effectively straddle two critical factors: cost and access. Disaster and Climate change does not distinguish between developed and developing. As we all know, during these times, the solitary communication technology that functions is the humble radio.

Across the world, community radio has demonstrated its crucial role in reining disaster. Apart from the issues of cost and access, it has enabled voices of the affected to take centre stage and provide the vital link between government and the community. A recent study by Steve Buckley,

earlier President of AMARC, affirms just how vital this link can be: "In Northern Quebec, Inuit communication networks are providing advice on safety as hunting routes across sea ice become increasingly precarious. In Mali, rural community radio stations are working to assist farmers adapt to changing seasonal patterns in order to maintain and increase their harvest. In Bangladesh, coastal NGOs are building community radio stations and other communication tools to provide systems for early warning and disaster management in the face of floods and inundations that result from rising sea levels."

The lessons of the 2004 Tsunami and more recently, the Kosi floods have repeatedly raised the need to develop and scale community radio stations in disaster prone areas. In the wake of the Uttarakhand tragedy, the value of setting up a network of community radio stations has emerged from various quarters including the NDMA. As a sector, we need to harness our resources, combine our strengths and make this a

reality. The Aceh Radio Reconstruction Network in Sumatra Indonesia, which was initiated in 2005, has demonstrated the critical importance of a mixed media model combining community radio, website, telephone lines and fax to effectively reach the last mile, last post. We need to build and adapt this to the Indian environment and landscape. Now is the time to act.

The Community Radio Forum, India had submitted proposals to NDMA in 2008 at the time of Kosi floods to set up Emergency Radio Stations, given that most of the AIR smaller stations are just relay stations and very few have production facilities. However, the government took six months to reject the proposal!

It is understood that 17 Letters of Intent have been issued to set up CR stations in Uttarakhand. It would do a lot of good if the government were to immediately issue licenses to at least those proposals for the CRs to aid in relief operations.

Ashish Sen

Voices for peace & change in South Asian region



RTI activist Aruna Roy addressing the seminar held in New Delhi

The UNESCO Chair on Community Media (University of Hyderabad) and AMARC Asia-Pacific, in collaboration with UNESCO, International Media Support, Community Radio Forum of India and the Indian Academy of Self Employed Women, organized a two-day seminar on “Voices for Change and Peace: Taking Stock of Community Radio in South Asia,” in New Delhi on January 17-18, 2013. About 60 activists, academics, advocates of community radio (CR) as well as eminent journalists from India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan, and Maldives participated in the seminar.

The Group included Ashish Sen, President, AMARC Asia Pacific, Bangalore, Vinod Pavarala, UNESCO Chair on Community Media, University of Hyderabad, Stalin K., President, Community Radio Forum, India, Goa, AHM Bazlur Rahman, Bangladesh Aruna Roy, MKSS, Rajasthan, Kalpana Sharma, columnist/author, Mumbai, Paranjay Guha Thakurta, Journalist and political commentator, Delhi, Patricia Mukhim – Shillong Times, Shillong, Sanjaya Mishra, Director,

CEMCA, Delhi among several other CR enthusiasts.

The group noted that the CR scene in South Asia is as diverse as the region. India, which is home to about 145 community radio stations today, the majority of which are run by educational institutions, is grappling with a community radio policy that is almost a decade old.

Despite having the oldest community radio policy in the South Asian region, the growth of the sector in India has been sluggish. Bureaucratic procedures, the formidable setting-up costs, and the demands of building people’s capacities for broadcasting, among other things, have been thwarting the growth of community radio in the country.

Nepal, on the other hand, has a thriving community radio sector, but remains to formalize a CR policy. Recent attempts in Sri Lanka to promote independent community radio broadcasting may finally take it beyond state-managed CR projects such as the Kothmale Radio.

Bangladesh, with a few stations on air, has been treading a cautious path,

seeing CR primarily as a medium to address issues of development and disaster management. There have been active conversations in other South Asian countries like Maldives, Bhutan, Pakistan and Afghanistan about the exciting possibilities that CR can bring into their respective national mediascapes.

The Group articulated several concerns that make the emergence and sustenance of a third-tier of community broadcasting in the South Asian region a challenging task.

Problems such as restrictive policy frameworks, inadequate allocation of spectrum for communities, and the lack of a sustainable support system are among the issues that need to be addressed urgently for genuine democratization of media spaces in South Asia.

Apprehensions over security arising out of the activities of a variety of non-state actors in South Asia have also contributed to a somewhat hesitant opening up of airwaves in certain areas.

Urging the need for an enabling and equitable environment for community radio in the region, the group worked on a ‘Recommendations for a more Democratic Environment for Community Radio in South Asia.’

The detailed recommendations that emerged from this consultation are available @ http://blog.uccommedia.in/uploads/2013/02/Voices-for-Change-Peace-Recommendations-for-CR-in-South-Asia_Final-Feb-6-2013.pdf

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Report compiled by Kanchan K. Malik and Preeti Raghunath

UNESCO Chair develops CR Continuous Improvement Toolkit with CEMCA support



Participants at the Delphi study workshop of the CRCIT

The UNESCO Chair on Community Media, University of Hyderabad has developed a Community Radio Continuous Improvement Toolkit (CRCIT) with support provided by The Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA).

The toolkit espouses the 'Continuous Improvement' framework that is looked upon not as "one particular system or a specific way of doing something," but "a mindset, based on the knowledge that there is always a better way of doing things and therefore a journey that never ends."

The toolkit may be seen as an effort at evolving frameworks and standards that the community radio stations themselves could use to review their performance. The quality of performance of a community radio station, for the purpose of this exercise, was seen as something embedded in the core principles of community radio.

The UNESCO Chair on Community Media undertook the following tasks for developing the toolkit:

- Review of existing practices and literature on quality issues of Community Radio (CR) stations;
- Identifying areas/parameters and indicators of improvement in CR operations – prepare a draft toolkit;
- A Delphi study amongst experts and practitioners to validate the parameters and indicators (two separate workshops);
- Developing, reviewing and finalizing the Community Radio Continuous Improvement Toolkit (CR-CIT) along with a detailed user guide.

The toolkit developed by the UNESCO Chair on Community Media is an outcome of a participatory and co-learning process. This process involved brainstorming within the team to come up with a preliminary set of parameters and indicators for self- assessment and continuous improvement of the performance of CR Stations.

This was followed by intense discussions over two different workshops with representatives of community radio stations from across the country as well as with community radio experts engaged in advocacy, research and capacity-building to thrash out and validate the parameters/indicators and evolve a toolkit.

The Community Radio Continuous Improvement Toolkit (CRCIT version 1.0) will be available in the public domain shortly.

VOICES FROM THE FIELD

CR programme revives traditional agriculture in rural Kanpur



Community producer Neetu interviewing a woman farmer

Waqt Ki Awaaz 91.2 FM, the community radio station operating from Metha block, Kanpur Rural which is supported by Shramik Bharati, has steadily grown to become a part of the community it serves ever since its inception. With its growing acceptance, the station found itself to be shouldering increasing responsibility towards the community.

To fully comprehend the needs of the community, the team from 'Waqt Ki Awaaz' travelled across villages to study and assess the situation of the farmers, who are the food producers for the entire country. Why do the farmers feel that agriculture is a non-profitable trade? Are the increasing investments and dwindling returns discouraging them? How are they losing ownership of their own farm lands? Why have the indigenous seeds become unavailable? How did the once fertile land turn barren? What are the reasons for decreasing health conditions of people and increasing illnesses?

While on the quest to find answers to these questions it became clear that there was only one solution for betterment – returning back to the traditional agricultural knowledge and practices. The effectiveness of this age old method was evident from the fact that then the soil was not lethal, the produce was not lost to insects or infections, and the environ-

ment was safe and unpolluted.

To bring back the traditional agricultural practices, a special 40 episode programme was produced titled 'Jiya Me Uthta Hilor' (A Surge of Feelings in the Heart). This pro-



Community producer Somnath interviewing a farmer on sustainable practices

gramme took a year for its production and saw active participation from the youth in the villages making it very unique. Following the completion of its first series in 2011, it was narrow cast across villages. Realising its potential in educating the farmers and increasing their knowledge base,

the Gyan Vani also started to broadcast them.

This gave rise to a new beacon of light for the farmers to adopt their traditional agricultural practices once again by which the hope of "healthy soil and healthy population" can become a reality. 'Jiya Me Uthta Hilor' programme was found to be helpful and effective for the farmers.

To date about 75 to 80 farmers from 15 villages in the Metha block are using fertilisers from cow dung, neem flower buds, neem oil, and techniques such as crop rotation, maintaining adequate distance between crops, ensuring non-wastage and preservation of seeds.

To ensure that the programme has a wider reach among farmers, it was broadcast weekly through 'Waqt Ki Awaaz' FM from June 13, 2013.

Women have participated in this programme actively from making compost pits to making 'Amrut Pani' an organic growth promoter, to ensure

they have an equal opportunity in contributing to the food production of the country.

Rakesh Kumar Pandey
Sr. Manager (Programmes)
Shramik Bharti
(Translated by Lauella Amy)

COMMUNITY MEDIA MANCH

Online sharing for Community Media



Participants at the stakeholders' workshop on Manch in late 2012

Experience in the Community radio sector has shown that the largest learning curves happen when CR practitioners from one station meet those from another. This idea fuelled the research behind the development and design of Community Media Manch, (www.manch.net.in) an online space where community based media practitioners can engage with each other, share content and learning and collaborate to produce 'open and free content' in various languages.

Community Media MANCH is supported by Ideosync Media Combine as part of the Grassroot Mediascapes grant from the FORD Foundation. It is a work in progress, contributing to ongoing efforts for greater freedom of expression and content plurality in media. Over 25 Community radio broadcasters and Community media activists participated in a two day stakeholders workshop in September 2012, to critique and provide inputs to an initial design and user interface that was developed for MANCH. Many articulated that the platform fulfilled a felt need, describing it as a 'common interest' platform that brings value by facilitating collaborative content creation practices and supporting process learning.

MANCH roughly translates to 'forum' or 'platform'. It contributes to the creation of an enabling environment for collective knowledge sharing and resource building. The platform is being designed specifically to cater to the needs of Community Radio and other community content producers who may be working at the margins with access to few resources. At the same time it enlarges the listening universe of these marginalized voices by finding ways to creatively engage with regional and international experiences as well as the mainstream media. Manch is entirely user based and user driven and supports multiple media and formats, enables text based and voice commenting and crowd sourcing of translations. Users can schedule and facilitate webinars where they share their experiences whether these are about establishing sustainable community engagement processes or about successfully establishing management committees, or adopting the CR gender policy etc. The webinars are also used for structured training and distance learning that is community driven and encourages peer trainers. There is an open forum on Manch that fosters discussion around key issues. The site facilitates and advocates that CR stations actively use Creative Commons licenses so that they are able to put their content out for others to use within a legal framework. Users are updated about various ongoing activities via email notifications, which are sent specifically for collaboration requests, webinar and other events.

Ideosync is working towards creating mobile versions and mobile applications that will enable faster and more effective audio content uploads by community producers. We also hope in future to make the site self-sustaining through user support and to put out all the development code in the open source space.

For more information contact: Venu Arora, Ideosync Media Combine, varora@ideosyncmedia.org

Bridging the digital divide: Technological innovations for CRs

Since the CR Policy was passed by the government in 2006, 144 CRs have been set up in the country giving voice to the communities.

Community Radios are still in a nascent stage in India and face several challenges.

There is a dearth of low-cost and appropriate technology options to help increase interaction and effectiveness of community radio. CRs also lack capacities for integrating technologies which are locally relevant and sustainable. The emergence of digital media has now opened many avenues for CRs to increase interconnectivity and enhance their potential social impact. Applications of innovations in technology and interconnectedness using digital technology are very essential for community radios to reach their potential.

Development Alternatives is trying to fill the technology gap in the community radio space to strengthen its impact through its new initiatives "Bridging the Digital Divide - "Technology Innovations for Community Radios". The project proposes to work closely with innovators to identify innovations in digital technology for CRs and pilot them with operational community radios. The initiative will assess the feasibility of these innovations and the potential to scale up the application of digital technology application for community radios. The application of new technological possibilities in CRs will require testing out models and learning from pilot projects.

Development Alternatives is inviting Technology Innovators in the Community Radio Space to share their innovations and get a chance to pilot their technology to other community radios of India.

Please contact Ms. Sutul Srivastav: ssrivastav1@devalt.org

Waking up to change: Threat to sustainability of Community Radio in India



CRs face a challenge from commercial radios that are now adapting social elements in their broadcasts

The National Community Radio Policy Guidelines 2006 are well into the eighth year of their initiation. The 12th Five Year Plan (2012-2017) envisions the process of inclusive growth to result in lower incidence of poverty, significant improvements in health care, universal access for children going to school and increased access to higher education including skilled development. To foster these objectives through participatory communication, the

Community Radio Guidelines have enabled civil society organizations to set up community radio stations in urban areas and rural hinterlands. But the number of such community radio stations is just 141. We must aim at setting up at least 4000 community radio stations during the 12th Plan Period that were in fact anticipated to be set up during the National Consultation on Community Radio held in 2007. This entails a dire need, in the current international context, to take an objective look at the threats to the sustainability of community radio in India.

First, the nature of broadcasting in developing countries is becoming quite fractured. Public service broad-

casters, private operators, state and community outlets all vie for positions in the increasingly crowded media markets. This is particularly true in the ever expanding megacities such as Mumbai and Bangalore where scores of FM stations pack the spectrum. This definitely means that the most economically weak will be pushed out of the market by commercial competitors. Without doubt, television, Internet and social media have widened media choices and reduced the radio audiences making it difficult to find backers particularly for community radio. Thus, unless and until, fair regulatory policies according a special place, as a third tier of broadcasting, are introduced and enforced, the unique voluntarism, energy and voice of community radio will be lost to market forces.

Second, we need to anticipate the trend towards hybridization. Many commercial radios have recently adopted a social element in their broadcasts to expand their reach to rural hinterlands and thus attracting development funding for carrying agricultural, health and other public interest programming that has been the traditional preserve of commu-

nity radios. They do this with a fresh, energetic and professional way using modern studios with strong and reliable transmitters. This is true for many primarily urban and private educational institution run community radio stations in India. As aid and donor agencies, both national and international, begin to see that they can reach larger audiences through such hybrids they may reduce their support for community radio in rural hinterlands especially in the programming for behaviour change messages.

The third major challenge for community radio is in areas experiencing terrorist and other types of threats to national unity and security. In fragile areas such as border states where local populations are constantly bombarded with cross border propaganda and areas afflicted with left wing extremism where accessibility is an issue it will be an uphill task to motivate civil society organizations to set up community radio stations. While there is more need for community radio stations in these areas, fears of 'take over' will perhaps suppress the latter's grassroots extent and coverage.

Finally, community radios have to converge with digital media and Internet. New technology, 'on demand content' and citizen media are all developing and becoming increasingly affordable such that broadcasting on the FM band may become old fashioned.

For instance, in India and other developing countries too, mobile phone operators can possibly circumvent government broadcast restrictions by creating and distributing news headlines as well as short bulletins as text messages to mobile phones for a small fee to users.

Abhilaksh Likhi

(The writer is an IAS officer and currently a Senior Research Fellow at South Asia Studies Program, SAIS, Johns Hopkins University, Washington DC. The views expressed are personal.)

Participatory research & CR: Ideosync - SWIT Radiophone India initiative

Participation and participatory content creation is at the heart of Community Radio. In keeping with this core philosophy, when Sesame Workshop India approached us to design an evaluation of their Radiophone India initiative for community radio, the team at Ideosync saw it as an opportunity to build a research culture and capacity within CR stations - and explore how such capacity building could result in other kinds of gains for the Community Radio stations.

The SCHWAB Radiophone Project by Sesame Workshop India Trust introduced an educational program series, Galli Galli Sim Sim, to 10 CR stations across north India. As part of evaluating the outcomes of this initiative, Ideosync trained ten Community Researchers, one from each station, in Ethnographic Action Research (EAR) methodologies. The researchers were asked to analyze and document their own work, as well as reflect upon the stories emerging from their communities while the Galli Galli Sim Sim programs were broadcast. Each researcher engaged with their local communities to understand how the programs were being received, creating exploratory maps of community experiences. The maps have facilitated engagement of the reporters with their communities, in a manner not extant earlier; and have been especially important in



cases where this kind of interaction was lacking due to varying reasons. Apart from this, the discussions also functioned as an immediate feedback mechanism for the CR station and provided inputs into other production processes.

The researchers' constant and continuous process of observation and reflection to understand the project's progress and simultaneous action to improve implementation, generated ownership by the researchers over the evaluation process as well as over the initiative as a whole. It is significant to note that the vast amounts of qualitative data emerging through the implementation of the project provides insights into learning

processes at the CR stations, self analysis and assessments of the CR reporters and complexities and contextual notions of change within communities.

The process is also informing thinking around self-evaluation within stations while lending credibility to research and evaluations methodologies that become part of program cycles - and, indeed, replacing traditional pre and post methodologies to become part of the functioning of a community radio.

We hope to share results more widely as the research data is fully analyzed.

Venu Arora, Ideosync

Mobile Vaani in Jharkhand: Networking for social change

Gram Vaani has been operating a mobile phone based network in Jharkhand, appropriately called Jharkhand Mobile Vaani. We like to think of it as managed Facebook/Twitter over the phone -- rural communities in Jharkhand call into our server to share messages and listen to messages left by other people, after the messages have been moderated by our editorial team. We now reach out to over 30,000 families who call more than 2,000 times per day. All content is contributed by the community. We are launching the Mobile Vaani partner program, to find local partners from among media and developmental organizations who want to try it out in their areas, either



in entirety or focused upon a specific topic such as on education or health or financial literacy. Mobile Vaani brings several benefits to partner or-

ganizations:

- a) You can upload your content that anybody can call to listen.
- b) You can have callers contribute their own content, ask questions and provide answers on various topics
- c) You can survey your callers using Gram Vaani's voice-based survey solution, to understand your community's interests.

Take a look at how various partners have used our vSurvey solution:

<http://www.gramvaani.org/?p=1135>

Please visit <http://mobilevaani.in> to review the partner program, and ask your friends to send us an Expression of Interest to contact@gramvaani.org.

Aaditeshwar Seth, Gramvaani

Revisiting Campus Community Radio: Looking back, looking ahead



Facilitators at the Campus Community Radio workshop

The UNESCO Chair on Community Media organised a two-day workshop on 'Revisiting Campus Community Radio', to understand and facilitate the functioning of Community Radios in the context of campuses across the country. Organised at the University of Hyderabad, the workshop had delegates from about ten institutions from across the country.

Day One of the workshop saw delegates sharing their diverse experiences in working with their respective campus community radio stations. Some key ideas like the need to engage with the community outside the institutional setup, challenges in working with a fluid student population, difficulties with procuring licenses for campus community radios in disturbed areas and more emerged from discussions.

In addition, delegates were involved in discussions around the philosophy behind community radios in general and campus community radios in particular. A detailed discussion about the application procedure as well as, the Community Radio Policy Guidelines ensued. The group also participated in a session that posed the idea of who the 'community was, in campus community radio. Day One came to a close with the participants

being divided into two groups and discussing the idea of 'community' in the context of their respective campus community radio stations, in terms of programming, management and participation.

On day two, delegates went on to share their experiences in engaging with the community that their campus community radio caters to. A session on technological options for campus community radios highlighted the idea that high-end technology could yield great broadcast quality, but might deter participation from the community.

The last session of the workshop dealt with content and station management, and the delegates recognized the need to ensure that most of the content needs to be emerge from the community. Concerns over station management, a tight-rope walk with the administration being involved in some institutions, were also reflected upon.

The following are some of the key recommendations that emerged out of the workshop:

- Campus community radios operate from institutional setups and hence, must be tuned to the needs and aspirations of the student community that they cater to. Campus

community radios must also acquaint themselves with communities in their listenership areas and gather an understanding of local issues pertinent to the community.

- Since campus community radios are youth-driven, they could engage students in not only producing educational and entertainment content, but to also act as links with the larger community.

- Campus community radio stations need to be sensitive to the needs of marginalised groups within the community, and programming content and community participation should provide space for such linkages.

- Innovative ways of attracting community interest and facilitating participation need to be devised. Orientation and training programmes for volunteers within the community need to be organised to enhance their capacities in using such equipment to produce content for broadcast.

- A network of campus community radio stations could be created for sharing programme ideas and content, technology and best practices with respect to community participation.

**Preeti Raghunath &
Mahaprajna Nayak**

CR News Team



SUPPORTED BY:
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PRODUCED BY:
Unesco Chair on Community Media
Department of Communication, Sarojini Naidu
School of Arts and Communication, University
of Hyderabad, Hyderabad

EDITORIAL TEAM:

Editor: Ashish Sen (President, AMARC
Asia-Pacific)

Associate Editor: Kanchan K. Malik (Univer-
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Call for contributions

The editorial team seeks contribu-
tions by way of news reports, fea-
tures, announcements and opinions
on recent community radio activities
in your organization/region/nation.

Voices/Stories from the field, in-
cluding interviews with community
members (listeners and producers)
are especially welcome.

Contributions should be in English,
restricted to 300 words for
news/event and 450-500 words for
opinion pieces and features, and
typed double spaced.

Contributions may preferably be
accompanied by photographs/illus-
trations. Contact address and details
of authors/organization should ac-
company the contributions.

The last date for submissions is
September 01, 2013.

Electronic submission of contribu-
tions is recommended. Please email
your articles/reports/features to:
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also post them to: **Dr. Kanchan K.
Malik, Department of Commu-
nication, S N School of Arts & Commu-
nication, University of Hyderabad,
Gachibowli, Hyderabad-46**
Phone: +91 40 2313 5506

'RTI & right to communication need be integrated'



Participants at the NCPRI workshop on RTI & Community Media

The UNESCO Chair on Community Media, University of Hyderabad coordi-
nated the session for "People's Right to Information and Community Media," at
the National Convention on People's Right to Information held in Hyderabad
on February 17, 2013.

The inability of mainstream media to adequately address the information
needs of the p-people, especially those of the marginalized in both rural and
urban areas, is well known. While a continuous engagement with the main-
stream media in order to render them more responsive is a necessity, the
larger goal has been to reverse the hierarchical flow of information from the
elite to the poor and to create opportunities for horizontal sharing of knowl-
edge and promote awareness of socio-economic conditions of peer communi-
ties. It is in this latter context that demands for transparency and greater
accountability in governance have gained a special salience.

The session, co-facilitated by Vipul Mudgal, Project Manager, Inclusive Media
for Change, Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) and Sukumar
Muralidharan, Independent Journalist and Programme Manager, International
Federation of Journalists (IFJ), discussed the performance and modes of func-
tioning of the mainstream media in contemporary times and the role commu-
nity media could play in enhancing local governance and transparency.

The workshop looked into the ownership patterns, financial sustainability
and its effect on content in the media. Sukumar Muralidharan expressed con-
cern about the non-transparency in media and sought public disclosure of the
finances of the media in the light of loss of faith of the public in the media
given the cases of Paid News and Cash for Coverage scams.

Prof. Vinod Pavarala, emphasised the immediate need for integrating the
right to information with the right to communicate in view of the shift from
the paradigm of development to the paradigm of rights in the case of the Com-
munity Radio movement in India. Ramnath Bhat, Vice President, Community
Radio Forum, India, argued for people's right to access the airwaves in context
of the Supreme Court judgement of 1995 which delineates 'public good' and
'public interest' as key criteria for spectrum allocation.

Three case studies – by video producers Chinna Narsamma and Algole
Narsamma of the Community Media Trust of Deccan Development Society,
Sultan Ahmed of Drishti and the case of CGNet Swara - were presented in the
workshop to drive home the point that participatory media practices could be
used effectively by not-so-empowered communities to address locally relevant
issues, share information locally as well as globally and thus participate in the
political processes of governance and espousing their opinion on a public plat-
form.

The workshop, in discussion and deliberation with the participants drew up
a host of recommendations which were presented at a plenary session of the
NCPRI convention.

Mahaprajna Nayak & Aditya Deshbandhu