

CRnews

tracking community radio in India

Supreme Court of India allows PIL against ban on news over radio

New Delhi, Oct 17 (PTI) Why not allow private radio stations, including community radios, to broadcast news when the same is allowed for television channels?, the Supreme Court today asked the Centre.

Agreeing to hear the PIL filed by NGO Common Cause, a bench headed by Chief Justice P Sathasivam raised questions on why the government has a problem in allowing news broadcast by private radio stations which is more accessible for the masses particularly the poor.

It issued notice to the Centre on a PIL seeking its direction to the government to allow private radio stations, including community radio, to broadcast news.

Advocate Prashant Bhushan, appearing for the NGO, pleaded

that unlike television channels, none of the 245 private FM channels and 145 community radio stations in the country is allowed to broadcast their own news and current affairs programmes, which is the monopoly of government-run broadcaster Prasar Bharati.

"You rightly mentioned that radio is accessible to everybody. There is no problem (for govt) in case of TV channels," the bench said, asking the government to respond on why private radio stations be not allowed to broadcast news.

The NGO contended that like television channels, radio stations be allowed to broadcast news as this medium is far more accessible to people and radio stations can be set up without much investment.

Communities are entitled to news

Eighteen years after the Supreme Court of India (SC) delivered a historic judgement (1995) declaring that "airwaves are public property" and that they must be "used for public good," the Court is once again on the threshold of a momentous opportunity to rectify a gross inequity in the broadcasting sector in the country. This opportunity arose as a result of a public interest petition filed before the Court by the NGO, Common Cause, seeking to annul the prohibition on broadcasting of news over private commercial and community radio (CR).

It took nearly eight years after the 1995 judgement and a sustained campaign led by activists, civil society organisations, and media advocates for the Government to hesitantly open the airwaves to established educational institutions in 2003, and to community-based organisations or NGOs in 2006. There are today about 150 community radio stations located in different parts of India, with the exception of so-called conflict-ridden states of the northeast, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, and J&K. The idea of community radio globally has been a medium

that functions on a non-profit basis, and has, as an integral component, community participation in not only programme production, but also in the management of the station. The CR movement in India has always articulated the need for community radio in the country as an antidote to



the systematic silencing by the commercial media of millions of people in rural areas and living in marginal conditions. Community radio, it has been argued, allows ordinary people to tell their own stories through their own voices, articulating distinct identities, promoting unique linguistic expressions, and exploring solutions to the many everyday problems of development and social change. While the development mandate

helped soften the intransigent broadcast bureaucracy in the country and made it open the door for community radio, it has also become a trap for civil society and the community radio sector in the country. After about a decade of implementation of the policy, we have many successful community radio stations across the country doing excellent work to project grassroots development issues and local culture. However, with news not permitted and politics proscribed (clause 5 (vi) of the Policy Guidelines for Community Radio clearly blocks news and programmes that are 'political in nature'), many CR stations have had to confine themselves to the developmental agendas of the NGO concerned or the donor agency. The irony is that while several CR stations have a model of "community radio reporters," they are not expected to produce and broadcast any news. At a recent interaction with listeners of Alfaz-e-Mewat, a community radio station in Ghagas village, in the foothills of the Aravallis, in Mewat district of Haryana, I heard a clear clamour for news and more information.

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SAARC supports CR sector in South Asia



The conference urged governments to identify CR as a distinct tier

The South Asian Community Radio conference on 'Enhancing the Role of Community Radio and Promoting Positive Social Change' has called upon governments of South Asia to recognize the need to strengthen regulation in countries where community radio already exists, and explicitly recognize community radio as a distinct tier of broadcasting in countries where it remains outside the law of the land.

More than 40 policy makers, community broadcasters and advocates, activists and academics urged the need to enable CR legislation through equal access to spectrum and transparent, liberal license procedures that protect and promote Freedom of Expression, especially to marginalized groups like women, rural and urban poor, sexual minorities, differently-abled, dalits, indigenous and migrant communities.

While emphasizing the need to secure a safe and secure environment for community media practitioners, the conference recommended establishing of a Regional Community Radio Development Fund within the SAARC Development Fund and appropriate participation from the sector for its distribution and dissemination.

The conference outlined specific areas of collaboration between existing development machinery within SAARC such as the SAARC Agriculture Centre, the SAARC Disaster Manage-

ment Centre, and other regional centres and mechanisms to strengthen the role and potential of community radio in the specific thematic areas. It has recommended knowledge sharing within the sector through development of guidelines, exposure visits across member states, developing an online community radio information bank, and working towards incorporating research and documentation of the process and practices of community radios, including promotion of more systematic research on the regulation, technology and functioning of operational community radio stations in the region.

Specific sessions in the conference discussed thematic issues that included the role of community radio in support of family farming and

small farming communities, enhancing role of women in community radios, right to information, safety of media workers in the context of community radios and evaluation of impact of community broadcasting. Representative of SAARC secretariat expressed solidarity and support to the outcomes of the conference.

The conference on 'Enhancing the Role of Community Radio and Promoting Positive Social Change' was organised jointly by the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC Asia Pacific) and SAARC Information Centre (SIC) from 6-8 September 2013 in Kathmandu. (Approximately 40 policy makers, community broadcasters and advocates from the eight SAARC countries participated.) The South Asia Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC) alliance includes Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Representatives of national associations, donor representatives and strategic partners of community radio sector in South Asia participated. The seminar was supported by UNESCO, Food and Agricultural Association of the United Nations (FAO), and the International Media Support (IMS).

Suman Basnet
Regional Coordinator
AMARC Asia Pacific
Pics: AMARC-Asia Pacific



Participants at the SAARC conference

SNIPPETS

Radio Bikrampur starts operations



Radio Bikrampur, a community radio station located in Bangladesh has started its operation in Munshiganj Sadar with the assistance of the Japanese government. Masayuki Taga, the chief guest and counsellor of the Embassy of Japan in Bangladesh, inaugurated the radio station along with Deputy Commissioner of Munshiganj, Md Saiful Hasan Badol.

Radio Bikrampur FM 99.2 will be broadcasting 69 hours of on-air content a week ranging over variety of issues such as health and nutrition, agriculture, education, climate change and adaptation, weather, local development news, events, and public service announcements. It is designed to cover a population of 1,293,000 people and is estimated that 452,000 people in the locality are regular listeners.

The Community Radio is becoming an active ground for dialogues in rural Bangladesh. The Community Radio initiatives give the rural masses a voice of their own and ensure free speech. It is calculated that there are 14 Community Radios currently broadcasting in Bangladesh. Source – The Financial Express 07 October 2013

Aid scheme guidelines for CRS almost ready says I&B



Ministry of
Information &
Broadcasting

The Information and Broadcasting Ministry is coming up with a scheme to assist Community Radio stations in India. It is on the verge of processing the guidelines for extending financial assistance to the CRS's infrastructure requirement. Once in effect, the scheme

promises 50 per cent of the equipment cost to the CRS provided the guidelines set by the I&B are met.

As per the 11th Five Year Plan, Rs 100 crores has been allotted for community radio stations. Out of which Rs 90 crores is for building operational community radio stations and remainder Rs 10 crores for the workshops the Ministry organises every year.

Preference will be given to backward areas, North-east and other specific regions. The grant will only be passed if the station is operational with all the needed licenses and approvals. As per the guidelines, the applicant should not be enjoying incentives or grants from the Central or State Government.

Source: Radioandmusic.com

Qradio for the LGBT community

The lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community has reasons to celebrate. They have got a voice as a new Community Radio named Qradio has been launched exclusively for them.



Qradio is the brainchild of Bangalore-based entrepreneur Anil Srivatsa and was launched in Bangalore on the 10th of September, 2013. The community radio caters to the LGBT community with call-in talk shows, audio documentaries, and regular music shows. The radio channel is part of a bouquet of 30-online channels he offers over the web and mobile devices.

“The LGBT population in India stands at two million. Yet they hardly find any mainstream acknowledgment. So, our programmes are mainly documentary features. We’ll have more talk, less music,” says Sunny Ahuja, general manager in charge of programming and operations.

At present, programmes would be in English and Hindi. However, there are plans to air programmes also in regional languages.

Source: Daily News Analysis and Times of India

UNESCO Chair speaks at The Great Debate, United Kingdom



Professor Vinod Pavarala and Tony Durcan took part in The Great Debate: “Media, Culture, Voice: Tackling Inequality and Marginalization”, held at Northumbria University, Newcastle, UK on 15th July 2013. The speakers touched upon the low uptake of internet usage in India and North England. Professor Vinod Pavarala is UNESCO Chair on Community Media at the University of Hyderabad and founder-President of the Community Radio Forum of India. Tony Durcan, O.B.E., is Director of Culture, Libraries and Lifelong Learning at Newcastle City Council.

Professor Pavarala spoke on “The Poetics and Politics of Community Media” and Tony Durcan on “Arts, Culture and Lightning Austerity”. Both speakers expressed similar concerns and wanted to address the problem that the poorest people weren’t gaining full access to the technological tools that would reduce their inequality. Prof Vinod Pavarala talked about localized communities in India making use of community media to achieve a voice they never had.

Source: <http://www.thegreatdebate.org.uk/MedCVReview.html>

EDITORIAL

Time to join hands and strengthen CR sector in South Asia

Community Radio has been making waves in South Asia during the past couple of months. Both the NGO, Common Cause's recent public interest litigation (PIL) and the SAARC-AMARC South Asia consultations in September have significant implications for the development of community radio in the region. How significant, will depend on how the crucial issues of follow up and momentum building by the sector are addressed.

The NGO, Common Cause's, recent public interest litigation (PIL) in New Delhi to revoke the prohibition on broadcasting news over private commercial and community radio is a watershed moment in the country's community radio movement. Despite the Supreme Court of India's landmark judgment of 1995 declaring that airwaves are public property to be used for public good, the government of India has preferred to look the other way. Its ostrich like stance is in glaring contrast with international stan-

The NGO, Common Cause's, recent public interest litigation (PIL) in New Delhi to revoke the prohibition on broadcasting news over private commercial and community radio is a watershed moment in the country's CR movement

dards of community broadcasting. The AMARC-LAC principles on democratic legislation underline its criticality especially in the context of guaranteeing media diversity, content, and perspectives. "Diversity and objectivity are the main objectives of any regulatory framework for democratic broadcasting. These require effective measures to prevent the concentration of media ownership, to guarantee the dissemination of diverse contents and perspectives in the media, and to recognize a diversity of forms of media ownership, goals and logic ..." The Common Cause PIL encapsulates this principle – both in letter and spirit.

This issue's lead article by Prof. Pavarala (also published in The Hoot) provides a comprehensive and holistic rationale why the ban on news in community broadcasting must go. It is complemented by Press Trust of India account on the PIL which provides a useful summary and background. As Prof. Pavarala has noted, the PIL provides the Supreme Court with a "momentous opportunity to rectify a gross inequity in the broadcasting sector in the country." All of us in the CR sector need to join hands now to strengthen the struggle to broadcast news and to ensure that it reaches its logical conclusion.

The SAARC-AMARC conference in September 2013 on enhancing the role of Community Radio and promoting social change reflected both the diversity and the growth of the movement in the region. While the consultation was the

first of its kind in the region, the good news is that the interactions are not a one off. They will be ongoing and continue on an annual basis. This will provide regular opportunities for stock taking, review and reform. At the same time, it will enable opportunities for community radio stations

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across the region to learn and share from each others experiences as well as facilitate potential platforms for collaborations and joint endeavors. The conference details and recommendations, as summarized by Suman Basnet, are featured in this issue.

Impact, management, ownership are key issues confronting the development of community radio today. Kanchan K. Malik's and Peter Mhagama's articles provide useful insights. Our other features include a first person account of the Dalit movement and community radio in Nepal, and updates within the country and outside. As always, we welcome your feedback.

Ashish Sen

Ban on news in community broadcasting must go

(continued from Page 1)

During formal and informal discussions with the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting (MIB), well-meaning bureaucrats have often told CR stations that they were free to broadcast locally relevant information, especially about government schemes, as long as they didn't call it "news". It is incomprehensible why local communities running radio stations on a non-commercial basis must adopt subterfuge to broadcast news, while a couple of hundred private television news channels, some even owned by foreign companies, can blare round-the-clock and umpteen number of portals and websites and offer instant news on the Internet. What, then, is so sacrosanct about radio? The only answer one can think of, as pointed out by lawyer Prashant Bhushan in his current petition before the SC, is that radio, historically, has been a people's medium, reaching people at the far-end of the development road, cutting across barriers of caste, class, and literacy. This indeed can constitute a threat to governments wary of the possibility of a well-informed citizenry aware of its rights.

Among mature democracies with a durable tradition of community media constituting a third-tier of broadcasting (public, private, and community), including the United States, Canada, Australia, Ireland, and the Scandinavian countries, there is no prohibition on broadcasting of news. In fact, local news is one of the prime attractions of a dynamic community media sector everywhere. In neighbouring Nepal, where there are close to 250 community radio stations, all of whom got licenses under the privatisation regime, can broadcast news. These stations managed to broadcast news, with little repercussions, even during the prolonged Maoist conflict and at the height of monarchical authority. International agencies such as UNESCO and the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC) have unambiguously recognised that community radio can be a very effective platform for alternative, citizen-driven journalism, unfettered by the commercial interests of the private sector and unencumbered by the propagandist zeal of state-controlled media. In fact, the post-apartheid constitution written in South Africa explicitly provides space for a three-tier system of broadcasting with equal rights.

At the National CR Sammelan held early this year, both the minister and the secretary, I&B, expressed their apprehensions about allowing news on radio because "we don't know what they will broadcast and we have no way of monitoring them". They then went on to gratuitously offer AIR news for relay on community radio stations. If all that we needed was the right to parrot AIR news, why bother about an independent, third-space in the media landscape of the country? Media diversity and pluralism are the hallmarks of a democratic society and any unreasonable curbs on the media cast serious doubts on one's

commitment to those key principles. AMARC states clearly that a democratic legislation on community broadcasting must ensure the dissemination of diverse contents and perspectives. It is quite evident that relaying or re-broadcasting news produced by the state broadcaster by all radio stations in the country flies in the face of such an imperative.

Finally, one must take head on the prickly issue of security, the basis on which hawks in the home ministry have been consistently reluctant to let community radio take root in some of the troubled regions of the country. It is the same fear that forms, at least, the overt basis on which CR stations are denied the right to broadcast news. If you examine carefully the work of about 145 CR stations that

have been in existence for at least a couple of years, and some for as long as five years, there has not been a single instance of any reported violation of AIR's Programming Code, an omnibus set of content regulations that binds all broadcasters. While not all community radio stations may be run by paragons of virtue, by and large, most stations have a mechanism of accountability that makes them responsible for and responsive to the community (or communities) they serve. The immediate listening

community could serve as the first arbiter of content going over the airwaves; and, beyond this first check, there are the laws of the land enforced by the local (district) administration and the police. These local authorities and any other regulatory agencies could also have access to the archives, which, as the policy mandates, must be maintained by the station for at least three months. Neither technological constraints nor logistic difficulties in monitoring radio content could be rational grounds on which the public could be denied its right to communication, which ought to include the transmission and reception of news. The state, with enormous resources at its command, must find a way that's not overly intrusive to monitor news.

Let us hope, as we enter the second decade of the community radio policy in India, the Supreme Court would exercise its enlightened judgment and usher in genuine democratisation of the media landscape in the country by lifting this odorous ban on news.

Vinod Pavarala

Prof. Vinod Pavarala is UNESCO Chair on Community Media, University of Hyderabad and former president of the Community Radio Forum (CRF) of India. He is also the author, with Kanchan K. Malik, of Other Voices: the struggle for Community Radio in India (Sage: 2007).

Source:

This is a reproduction of the article published in The Hoot on October 19, 2013. Here is the link to it: <http://thehoot.org/web/home/story.php?storyid=7097>



Study points to need for public funding of CR



The biggest challenge the community radio stations in India are facing is that of financial sustainability, concluded a recent research study of three operational radio stations in Bundelkhand. The study makes a strong case for making available independent, public funding for sustaining existing stations for such things as equipment upgradation, replacement of defective or obsolete technology, and salaries of minimal station personnel.

This UNICEF-supported study carried out by the UNESCO Chair on Community Media team critically examines the functioning of three community radio stations in northern and central India, two of which were started with the assistance of UNICEF.

Over the last five years, several grassroots organisations working especially in rural areas, have come to see in community radio a significant tool to articulate people's concerns in their own voices about their environments and ecologies, livelihoods and local cultures, and, more generally, their hopes and aspirations.

Multi-lateral agencies, donors, and independent facilitators and capac-

ity-builders have emerged on the scene today, are keen to enable access to audio production technologies and skills to marginalized sections of Indian society.

While there are several constraints and challenges in running such radio stations, many of the operational ones have been racked by issues of sustainability (both social and financial), people's participation in programme production, community ownership and management, and building a committed listener base.

This research was undertaken by UNESCO Chair to carry out a two-pronged study that involved a) Institutional assessment of the functioning of operational community radio (CR) sta-

tions and b) A review of the reach of the CR station and engagement among the listeners and other stakeholders.

The study examined the context and process of the setting up of the community radio station; the role and contribution of technical agencies involved in setting up the community radio projects; the governance of the radio station and how they facilitate community ownership; the dynamics of radio programming and broadcast; the role of networking in sustaining the station; the participation of and community ownership among the various stakeholders in the community; and the reach of the CR station and its engagement with the listeners.

The three stations included in the research, all located within the Bundelkhand region straddling the states of Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh, were Lalit Lokvani in Lalit-

pur (UP); Radio Dhadkan in Shivpuri (MP); and Chanderi Ki Awaaz in Chanderi (MP).

The research team was convinced that UNICEF and One World South Asia (OWSA, which to some extent facilitated the setting up of the CR station in Chanderi) selected NGOs that had an established community presence, and had been working with people at the grassroots level for several years on issues of development and empowerment for setting up the three stations.

The mandates of the two UNICEF-funded stations significantly showcase the social and developmental agendas of the funding agency as well as that of the NGOs. This does not mean that they are necessarily divorced from the 'needs' of the people. The overarching approach is to 'cater' to information needs of the community and borders on being instructive and prescriptive.

In Chanderi, although the larger mandate of BVS is to strengthen the weavers' community, the objectives



Focus group discussion in progress at Chanderi Ki Awaaz

seem to aim at larger development of the community. But again, the approach is to bring about social change through information dissemination and creating awareness. Community participation component was limited to highlighting the local culture and promoting local talent.

The detailed report with the key conclusions and recommendations will be in the public domain soon.

Kanchan K. Malik

Madurai Symposium favours networking among regional CR stations



A view of the Madurai symposium

DHAN Foundation organised a symposium on 'Governance for advancing development' between September 11 and 15, 2013 at the Tamukkam grounds, Madurai, which was attended by members from operational 48 Community Radio stations (CRSs) and representatives of two community-based organizations (CBOs). Various dignitaries from the Government and NGOs also participated in the symposium.

In the discussions, the participants raised concerns regarding the production of content, financial aspects of running the stations, and the Government's role in capacity building of the functional CR stations. They also voiced the idea of networking among regional language stations for content sharing on a regular basis.

The participants were in favour of setting up common portals for community radios and suggested that a re-

gional Google circle could be used for sharing the contents. Among other things, there was consent that networking could help in enhancing the airtime of every station without heavily increasing the cost of running the station. It could also provide as a platform for co-learning and sharing of best practices among the communities on all aspects including technological challenges and cost effective adaptations.

The sharing of folksongs recorded by CR stations was also extensively deliberated as this would not only generate bigger volume of shared music, but also enhance popularity of talent across the CR stations.

The Symposium touched upon many key issues and aspects regarding CR stations on a pan-Indian level. The various stakeholders present at the five-day long symposium put together a declaration for policy advocacy, and for further action by government as well as the practitioners:

1. The government when reframing policy guidelines need to have clearly defined terms for having local sponsorship for business / entrepreneurs in CRS
2. Government order for access to all CRS in producing programs on government schemes.
3. The government has to come out with defined time frame for the processes involved in obtaining licenses. This will enthuse aspiring new entrants to take up CRS
4. If the spectrum fee is not waived totally, at least the government could bring the fee to the earlier structure thus rendering more clarity to the spectrum fee.
5. The government could offer discounted spectrum fees for CRS having CBOs in their management.
6. Program produced using public funds and have government ownership can be shared among the CRS.

Naguveer Prakash
DHAN Foundation

WOL for Shramik Bharti and Nalamdana

Waqt Ki Awaaz, a community radio promoted by Shramik Bharti got its WOL approval and began its test transmission on August 26. It is a culmination of four years old dream, says Rakesh Pandey, the moving spirit behind Shramik Bharti.

Dr. R. Sreedher informed the CR fraternity that the NGO 'Nalamdana' also received the WOL at the same time as Waqt Ki Awaaz. It is already running a cable radio station for the past ten years in the TB hospital that replaced the Thambaram Sanatorium in Chennai. The name of the radio station is Thenral. It is in test transmission mode, and is broadcasting eight

hours a day.

Sajan Venniyoor adds: Nalamdana -- Are You Well? -- is one of those dedicated NGOs that deserve our admiration and praise. It's "a leader in its field, using theater, music, and radio as tools for HIV education, stigma reduction, and to promote an atmosphere of healing."

Nalamdana's cable radio in the TB Hospital (or Govt. Hospital of Thoracic Medicine, Thambaram, to use its correct name) is, by all accounts, an extraordinary effort. Thenral (or 'breeze', as the cable radio is called) "broadcasts for seven and half hours daily, six days a week, in the hospi-

tal's 17 Tuberculosis and HIV wards as well as the out-patient area. It features hospital staff as on-air personalities".

Technically, Thenral would be a hospital radio, a concept that has a valued and acclaimed place in the annals of cable radio and low power FM. I've often wondered why AIIMS and Safdarjung Hospital, side-by-side and so important to Delhi, don't have their own radio station. I hope someone will take this up as a challenge; I'm delighted that Nalamdana has shown the way.

CRs must work to end caste discrimination in South Asia

Community radio has a significant role in giving voice to the voiceless, poor and deprived people, and also as a means to raise their concerns in the public sphere. The role of community radio is to serve deprived and excluded communities and strengthen the process of social democratization.

Community radio stations contribute to progressive transformation of the society which is necessary to establish and strengthen democracy. Therefore AMARC has defined community radio (CR) as a mouthpiece of the marginalized people.

In South Asian Region, there is a huge population of Dalits. They have historically been facing challenges to be a human being in the Hindu as well as Muslim societies. Dalits are politically excluded, economically deprived and exploited. They are victims of the feudal labour system, culturally discriminated and treated as untouchables. They are fighting for justice and equity for long time in the South Asian continent.

The population of Dalits in India is around 17% which comprises more than 20 billion. Similarly 13% (as per



agenda. Later, India also recognized Dalits as Schedule Caste (SC). However, this is not the case in other countries. Dalit community is the most excluded vulnerable, deprived and in many ways among the voiceless in the South Asian region.

In South Asia, community radio has been mushrooming, but it has not paid serious attention towards the Dalit community. As CR is considered



government census) population of Nepal are Dalits; Bangladesh, Pakistan, Bhutan also have a big population of Dalits who are fighting for a dignified life and their socio-political, cultural and educational rights.

Constitutionally, only Nepal had recognized the Dalit community and it became a political and social

as a voice of the voiceless, Dalit, indigenous and other excluded and minority community must be their primary target groups.

However, CRs of the region have failed to identify the real voiceless people and serve their interest. Objectively, CR is responsible to mainstream the voice of people, and

enable participatory or inclusive democracy where justice and freedom exist, empower people.

To act as per its principle and objectives, CR must be responsible to end caste-based discrimination and untouchability along with other social issues. In the context of Nepal, the agenda of Dalits has become an important political and social agenda.

Only nine per cent on the ACORAB board are dalits. However, very few are in decision-making positions as chairperson, secretary and treasurer. Eleven Dalits, so far, have held the positions of station managers and eight out of them are still working in the same position.

However, the dalit community itself has started to establish CR in Nepal. Radio Jagaran established by Jagaran Media Center is the first CR established and operated in South Asia initiated by Dalit community.

A research conducted by JB Biswokarma has established that only 0.6% time has been allocated for the specific programme on Dalit per day on CR stations in Nepal. Very few CRs have taken the initiative to produce programmes for the Dalit community in Nepal. According to his book titled, 'Dalit in Nepali Media: Participation and Contents', 48 dalit-centred programmes had been broadcast so far out of which 15 had been discontinued.

There is a need that CRs of South Asian Region accept the serious agenda of Dalits and establish a clear roadmap to end the caste-based discrimination and untouchability for strengthening democracy in real sense.

**Rem Bahadur B. K.
JB Biswokarma**

Rem Bahadur B.K. is the Chairperson of Jagaran Media Centre and JB Biswokarma is a writer on Media and Dalit issues CR and the Dalit Community in South Asia

Pantnagar Janvani – Not just a farmers’ radio



A staff-community interviews a farmer

There are 54 agricultural universities in India and among them six have community radio stations out of 152 community radios in the country. Pantnagar Janvani at Pantnagar, Uttarakhand is one of them. It was launched on 15 August 2011 by GB Pant University of Agriculture and Technology.

I reached there on a rainy Sunday evening in September 2013 to know how it has completed its two years of successful journey. Now, it broadcasts fresh programmes for two hours and repeat the same for the next two times a day.

There are six staff- community reporter, anchor-cum-radio reporter, senior script writer, programme producer, programme editor, lab technician are working at the station. In fact, the staff of different departments of the university, has formed a community to manage the station and which is led by Associate Director Communication (Community Radio) of the University.

The station is reaching more than 80 villages in its vicinity. Dr. S. K. Kashyap, Associate Director said, “The station was started to be the interface between the farmers in the community under the vicinity of the community radio station and the scientists at the university through by-way communication.”

Rajendra, the community reporter of the station said that farmers have fewer problems here as these farmers are progressive enough due to the university. There are many programmes of the station which are very much attractive and appealing to different audiences such as women and children beyond farmers.

Women Self Help Groups come forward to share their success stories through community radio. Women and girls’ participation in the programmes are overwhelming. Sanjay, a senior script writer of the station informed, “On an average, 25 girls and women participated every week in a slogan contest which was started on 5 February 2012 and continued for three months”. This was to empower

women in the community and create awareness among the masses about various gender issues and concerns. Women have participated as guests as well as hosts in one of its programmes – ‘Meri Rosai’.

Vikas, who is a programme producer at the station said, “The latest research conducted by the station revealed that not many youth were participating in our radio.” Now, we have started campaigning to include youth in our programmes.” In the last semester, 56 students participated in the programme production. This time, 36 have registered within two days to anchor the youth programme.

Public participation has increased and erased the tag of farmers’ radio through various campaigns from time to time. Now, the station has become more inclusive. Before August 15, 2011, there were no radio listeners in the community. After one and half years, it was found that almost 20-25 per cent of the villagers have started listening radio.

Farmers, their wives and children come to the studio without any reluctance and record their voices freely. In these last two years, Pantnagar Janvani has faced many challenges including fund. However, the major challenge in front of the station is its diverse communities.

People in its neighbourhood speak Punjabi, Bengali, Gadwali, Kumaoni, Bhojpuri and Urdu. The station produces programmes in Hindi, which can be understood by most of these communities, though it records folk songs of different languages. One of the successes of this radio station is that local stations of All India Radio depend up on the station for its agriculture programme.

Bidu Bhusan Dash
Academic Associate in Communication Area
IIM Kashipur, Uttarakhand, India



Pantnagar-Janvani reports beyond just agriculture

INTERNATIONAL

European meet discusses role of community television



Prof. Vinod Pavarala, UNESCO Chair on Community Media; Sally Galliana, President, AMARC Europe; Bissera Zankova, Member of the Bureau of the Council of Europe Steering Committee on Media and Information Society (CDMSI); and Ciaran Murray, President, Community Media Forum of Europe

Community media activists, academics and policy makers from 26 European countries met in Brno at the CMFE Annual Conference to discuss the role of community radio and community television as agents for change in democracies. The state of community media in CEE countries was a central focus, together with recent developments in the community TV sector and special panels on participation in the media, gender equality policies and Community TV youth initiatives. Legislation and technological developments (including open source initiatives) formed another core of content.

Keynote speaker Prof. Vinod Pavarala, UNESCO Chair for Community Media remarked in the opening plenary that “Community Media are not only about content delivery, but also about local participation and citizen interaction.

Governments need to recognize community media as a distinct media sector and provide funding and equal access to the different distribution platforms.” Guest speaker Bissera Zankova, Member of the Bureau of the Council of Europe Steering Committee on Media and Information Society (CDMSI), supported the idea of Community Media as a vital element of democratic societies: “Community Media fill the gap left by public service and private media, and work for cohesion, tolerance and trust. Policy for gender rights is policy for human rights and community media have a central role to play in the implementation of the recently adopted Council of Europe Recommendation on gender equality and media.”

During the conference the results of the worldwide Community Media Mapping and Rating Project were presented. According to the CMFE 2012 mapping a total of 2237 community radio stations and 521 community television stations are active across Europe and 29 European countries were rated according to their development of community media. Correlations between democratic

structures and the status of Community Media can be seen in this first attempt to count community radio and TV stations not only in Europe but also in the world.

Despite the recognition of the role and value of community media in the expression of pluralism and social diversity in the media sphere, many European states still have not met the recommendations and resolutions of European and international institutions on community broadcasting. In particular, access for community media still has to be guaranteed on all available broadcasting platforms, ensuring that the shift from analogue to digital technologies becomes an opportunity for more media pluralism rather than for further media concentration.

In conjunction with CMFE’s Conference, AMARC Europe held its Second Forum “Changing the communication environment: Networking for Community Radio in Central and Eastern Europe”. Community radio broadcasters and academics from across Europe met to develop strategies to strengthen community radio across the region, as well as alliances and long term strategies for the enhancement of the sector in Central and Eastern European countries.

The joint conference and close exchange with AMARC Europe at the Faculty of Social Sciences of Masaryk University is an important step towards reinforced cooperation for a common European perspective on Community Media in a global media sphere.

CMFE also held its Annual General Assembly on Oct. 4th. The new members elected to the CMFE board are Urszula Doliwa from Poland, Judith Purkarthofer from Austria and Gergely Gosztonyi from Hungary.

The CMFE Conference was funded by the EU under the Europe for Citizens Programme 2013 and has been kindly hosted by the Faculty of Social Sciences of Masaryk University and by the INGO RadioExpert.

(Source: Press Release issued by CMFE)

RESEARCH

Why is community participation elusive in Malawi CR?



Nkhotakota Community Radio station

This article, which discusses reasons why participation is an elusive term in relation to Nkhota Kota and Mzimba Community Radio stations in Malawi, is a part of Peter Mhagama's research work for his PhD titled, "Community radio as a catalyst of development and social change: A case study of community radio in Malawi."

When establishing Nkhota Kota Community Radio, there was lack of proper community consultation and involvement. Many people around Nkhota Kota area reported to have just woken up one day only to hear a community radio broadcasting to them. The reason for this is that the Member of Parliament for the area initiated the establishment of the station with funding from UNESCO.

Consequently, at the beginning some people failed to relate to it because they thought it was a propaganda tool. It took a lot of community sensitization for people to embrace it as theirs. In addition, due to reliance on donor funding, it sometimes it takes too long for donors to hand over radio stations to the communities. For example, OSISA signed a 3 year contract with Mzimba Radio to

provide funding from 2009 to December 2012. At the time of writing this article OSISA was still providing funding. This has implications on participation because there is little community input at station policy level.

When it comes to management of Nkhota Kota Community radio there is selective participation because only people who are more knowledgeable in the community are invited to find solutions to the problems at hand. Of course, not everyone can be consulted. However, providing opportunities for participation in this way privileges some social actors while excluding the majority.

Each of the two community radio stations did not involve ordinary people in formulating programme schedules because they thought consultation takes long. Instead, staff members formulated the programmes as a starting point. This also begs the question of who is appointed to work in the radio station. The situation leads to self-appointment or selection which may 'other' marginalized people from the very community media which is supposed to serve them.

people from the very community media which is supposed to serve them.

The centralization of community radio stations at a particular location covering 100 square kilometer radius, as is the case in Malawi, also affects the way people participate. Due to transport problems, radio reporters only visit areas within the proximity of the station to record programmes thereby affecting community participation negatively. Local people especially those at the furthest end of the signal also experience transport problems to travel to the radio station due to poverty.

Finally, community radios are established in communities already served by other stations. To influence people to switch to a



Mzimba Community Radio station

community radio demands a lot of time, money and effort. To borrow from a famous phrase, it is like 'preaching to the already converted'.



Phillip Chinkhokwe, Producer of Farmers Voice Radio programmes recording songs sung by women of Mpamantha Listening Club

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Call for contributions

The editorial team seeks contributions by way of news reports, features, announcements and opinions on recent community radio activities in your organization/region/nation.

Voices/Stories from the field, including 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/illustrations. Contact address and details of authors/ organization should accompany the contributions.

The last date for submissions is **November 14, 2013**. Electronic submission of contributions is recommended. Please email your articles/reports/features to: crnews2010@gmail.com.

You can also post them to:

Dr. Kanchan K. Malik, Department of Communication, University of Hyderabad, Gachibowli, Hyderabad-46
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CR-CIT to be field tested in India and Bangladesh

The Phase II of the 'Development of Community Radio Continuous Improvement Toolkit (CR-CIT)' will see the toolkit being field tested in five Community Radio stations across India and Bangladesh between December 2013 and April 2014.

This field-testing project, supported by the Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA)/Commonwealth of Learning (COL) would be undertaken by the UNESCO Chair on Community Media team, University of Hyderabad. This phase seeks to subject the toolkit to actual field conditions, and get feedback on both the process as well as the content of the toolkit. Inputs from the field testing will go into revising the toolkit.

Before the field testing of CR-CIT in Bangladesh, there will also be a 3-day Validation Workshop in Dhaka, with operating community radio stations in Bangladesh, to adapt the toolkit to the Bangladesh context. This workshop is being organised by the BNNRC (Bangladesh NGOs Network for Radio and Communications).

In the Phase I of the project, the Community Radio Continuous Improvement Toolkit (CR-CIT) was developed, published and released in New Delhi. It is now available in the public domain

(http://blog.uccommedia.in/uploads/2013/08/CR_Toolkit-lowres.pdf).

The CR Continuous Improvement Toolkit provides an easy-to-use framework that allows CR stations to periodically assess themselves on their performance. The toolkit has been drafted keeping in view: (a) the national community radio policy guidelines (in India) which have several mandatory provisions; and (b) certain non-negotiable principles of community media globally, such as community participation and ownership, access and inclusion to marginalised groups, gender equity, community-generated content, emphasis on local cultures and identities, and transparency and accountability in practice.

The toolkit provides for indicators of performance along nine broad parameters and the themes such as participation, inclusion, gender, capacity building, etc. have been treated as core principles that cut across all the nine parameters.

(Compiled by Himabindu Chintakunta)

ANNOUNCEMENT

Maraa develops online C4D programme

Over the past year, Maraa has been involved in conducting face to face trainings on the community learning programme (CLP) approach and have worked with Gurgaon Ki Awaaz to develop Chahat Chowk, a CLP series that addresses reproductive health issues faced by women in Mullaheda (a village in Gurgaon).

Maraa has also been exploring other non-traditional modes of capacity building, for instance it has run a distance mentoring course for six community radio stations in the North belt that trained women broadcasters in conducting formative research for programme planning.

Maraa plans to run, starting this October, a series of online training and mentoring courses. One such training and mentoring online programme that has been developed by an international course development team brought together by the Commonwealth of Learning is called the CLP Developers Certificate.

This distance training and mentoring certificate programme will allow learners to develop the skills and know-how to plan, design and deliver effective, low-cost participatory communication programmes that focus on local community health and development priorities. It will also help them to differentiate between top-down and bottom-up approaches of communication and identify the benefits of participatory communication for development programmes.

Here is a link with more information about the programme of study:

<http://www.col.org/progServ/programmes/livelihoods/healthyComm/CLP/Pages/default.aspx>

