

Abstract No: communityradioIndia07/ABS/114

Author: Venu Arora

Email: varora@ideosyncmedia.org

Designation: Director of Projects

Organisaion: Ideosync Media Combine

Country: India

Abstract:

Henval Vaani and Mandakini ki Awaaz are two community groups from the districts of Tehri Garhwal and Rudraprayag (respectively) in Uttarakhand, who have been using community media to engage their communities in the ongoing development and governance process in their region. Over the last three years, Ideosync Media Combine has been working with the groups to build their capacity to setup and sustain a community radio station, with support from and in partnership with various organizations including UNESCO, Equal Access and Himalaya Trust.

However in order to sustain the projects beyond funding cycles - and to engage communities in the process of content creation in an ongoing and sustainable fashion - community radio initiatives need to create a business model that helps engage the community's interests. The primary concerns of the community revolve around livelihood - and information is not seen as a priority. Information access, participation in local content creation and engagement with governance and local decision making are long term goals that need to be perceived as integral quality of life inputs by communities in order for them to see the value of their own engagement in the process. In order to move away from NGO and funded models and into community managed processes that are driven by communities identified priorities, processes need to be designed over longer periods of time, with greater investment in community engagement and capacity building. Processes also need to be continually transparent, and management responsibilities need to be woven into efforts to enhance technical capacity and build technological infrastructures.

Over the past three years of intensive work with the communities in Chamba and the Manadakini valley, there have been certain key learnings that provide useful pointers for community based initiatives intending to initiate community radio processes. The models that have been evolved within the realities of each place present a study in contrasts: Henvalvaani Samudayik Radio is based in the town of Chamba, which is a small trading and business centre on the main Mussoorie-Chamba road. Mandakini ki Aawaaz Samudayik Radio has grown in the village of Bhanaj, a remote and mountainous village on the road to the pilgrimage center of Badrinath. Both community media centres are currently volunteer driven. However, it is difficult to sustain involvement levels and create regular programming within the same paradigm: As a result, there have been significant learnings at both sites that emphasize the importance of -

- Involving local governance structures
- Integration of other development activities into CR initiatives

- Broadening volunteer bases and ongoing training processes
- Creating a unique and tailor made business model that is derived from local contexts and priorities

The paper will draw from ongoing EAR (Ethnographic Action Research) being carried out at the sites with support from UNESCO, to explain the projects and sustainability processes suggested.

Bio-Data:

Venu Arora : Ms. Arora is Director of Projects with Ideosync Media Combine. A post-graduate in mass communications from the Mass Communications Research Center (Jamia Millia Islamia University, Delhi), and with an Advances in health Communications from John Hopkins University, Baltimore, Ms. Arora is currently pursuing a Phd with the Queensland University of technology. She has over 12 years' experience in the development sector. She has worked on consultancies and projects with DFID-India, UNDP, Equal Access and UNAIDS, among others. She has also worked with the UNDP REACH programme on HIV for South and South East Asia as a communication specialist. A recipient of the Macarthur Fellowship for Leadership Development (2002) for her work on ARSH and sexuality for young people, she is currently Ideosync's designated consultant for its long term consultancy on the Digital Broadcast Initiative being executed by Equal Access in Cambodia and Nepal.

N.Ramakrishnan : Mr.Ramakrishnan is one of the two Directors of Projects with Ideosync. A post-graduate in mass communications from the Mass Communications Research Center (Jamia Millia Islamia University, Delhi), and with over 12 years' experience in the development sector, he is a specialist in the development and execution of multi-sectoral communication for development initiatives. Mr.Ramakrishnan has worked on a series of technical and training consultancies for agencies as diverse as FHI, the EU supported Jandarshan youth training project, the British Council supported Beyond Borders project, and the Equal Access/JHAI youth training in radio project in Laos. He has been a part of the Ford Foundation/BBC-WST Sex & Reproductive Health education, (India) project; and is also the recipient of the EU-India Media Initiative award for cross cultural cooperation on filmmaking. Mr.Ramakrishnan was responsible for the ideation and development of Ideosync's path-breaking ARSH initiative for young people, Growing Up.