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Abstract:

India now boasts of a liberal Community Radio Policy, which was originally announced in 2002 and further liberalized last year. The procedure for applying and obtaining the permission to establish CRS has been made quite simple; however, the fear of technology and lack of sufficient inputs remains one of the major concerns.

CRS is no new technology. It is the same FM Transmitter (even less power), same production & editing tools, the same broadcast chain, which existed for the past few decades. What really makes CRS different is choice of right, optimum, friendly, rugged & cost effective technology and correct & well thought-out infrastructural decisions. It is important to plan the setup comprehensively considering the geography of the site, power situation, target audience, type of intended programming, the hardware needs and expansion plans.

No dedicated broadcast engineering institute exists in our country and many interested to establish CRS may not have much knowledge about the technicalities of the equipment and propagation. However, understanding the basic terms like ERP against Power of Transmitter, Antenna height above ground against Effective antenna height etc. and applying the correct criterion for decision-making may result in significant gains i.e. much enhanced coverage and less financial implications.

The first and the most important decision involves in choosing a good location. There are various factors, which need to be considered while arriving at the decision and the best trade off is to be achieved while keeping the resources and the specific goal of the CRS in mind. Some of the factors are Establishment Cost (New/ Existing building), accessibility, safety (to ensure participation of women, children & old folks) Availability and reliability of power supply, Ventilation and freedom from dust, Likelihood of lightening and water damage and of course height of the location, which has unprecedented bearing on coverage area

Choice of equipment & type of acoustic treatment is equally ticklish. The typical broadcast chain consists of Audio production/playback equipments – Microphone(s), Cassette recorders, DAT, CD player, Turn table, Minidisk player, Reel machines, Hard disk based systems, Phone in Units etc, the console for mixing and managing these inputs, the audio processor, STL, transmitter, RF cable & antenna. All these equipments or some of the essential ones have to be procured depending upon requirement. Each of these equipments have a very wide spectrum of features and cost and while

deciding on the technical system, it is important to have a clear perception of – what you want to achieve, how you want to do it and what are your expansion plans.

The community radio stations can be broadly categorized as- the educational broadcast stations/campus radio, a mid-segment community radio station, and a very basic set-up involving minimal financial implications. Alternatively, they can be categorized, based on their locations such as hilly, plain, desert, urban, remote, rural etc. And though there can't be exact universal solutions, broad standard solutions can be suggested for various set of installations, which may help in demystifying the broadcast technology and breaking the barrier.