

Abstract No: communityradioIndia07/ABS/108

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Abstract:

ABSTRACT:

An estimated one-quarter to one-third of United Nations member-states are conflict-stressed states or emerging democracies. All of these are multi-ethnic states with racial and/or ethnic divisions, says H. Cholmondely (2004). These same countries are, at some point if not currently, will be going through the process of nation building. One tool that can be used in this process is the media and radio has proven to be particularly adept. Media workers trained in conflict resolution skills can help develop the basis for post-conflict civil society. An independent, lively and widely accessible media is a key part of long-term peacebuilding and post conflict reconstruction efforts. Independent media can place pressure on governments by broadcasting news items and features that question the 'official line' or existing government practices. Civil society should be provided with information on such aspects of governance to allow poor people and civil society organizations (CSOs) to advocate on their own behalf in pursuit of better services, such as health and education. Pressuring governments into 'good governance' is an essential long-term function of an independent media sector. Weak judicial systems, underdeveloped regulatory frameworks for the media, and poor standards of journalism often combine to weaken the effectiveness of the media in emerging democracies. Radio has long been seen as an important tool in the social, economic and political mobilization in developing countries. Volumes have been written about social development and the utility of radio in addition to how radio might be used in post-conflict and nation building scenarios. But there has been little, if any, examination of a more holistic approach of how both these bodies of work might be melded together providing some insight into how the media, and more specifically radio, might be used as a peacebuilder.

Among the radio, the new generation of community radios can be pivotal in social development approaches based on peacebuilding in the transition or emerging economies. The 'community radio' nomenclature derives the radio for the community, by the community and in the community. Therefore, it cannot just confine itself to development aspects without taking issues brought to the fore by the conflict. Community radio initiatives and their programming necessarily have to take conflict-based issues as well.

Normally, community radio stations put up a facet of promoting development and that is their main agenda. Peacebuilding does not come under their purview or rather peacebuilding is not their thrust area. This notion is also largely understood by the other actors/players in the development field such as NGOs and community-based organizations (CBOs). The fact is that in a conflict situation even the development infrastructure gets destroyed. People

who did normal life with economic standards get impoverished. The conflict is surely an impediment to development. Any development intervention has to take into its purview the peacebuilding aspects. It could be that the conflict is because of structural faults that impede development for certain sections or favour one group to the other or it could be deeply rooted in the functioning of regular activities of state and culturally taken for granted until some section of the society takes action against it.

This paper seeks to draw elements from both social development and conflict resolution theories, bringing them together to examine how radio could be used in post-conflict and conflict resolution situations. It analyses whether the community radio strikingly makes itself responsible in conflict resolution (based on its experience as working along the society) or it takes up such issues subtly. An examination of community radios in Nepal will serve as a case study on the role of radio in peacebuilding.

Bio-Data:

Sudhamshu Dahal is a PhD research scholar in the Department of Media Sciences, Anna University, Chennai. Prior to joining PhD at Anna University, Mr. Dahal has experience of working with media and research in Nepal for 15 years. Of late he was associated as news/media analyst with UNICEF Nepal and as Monitoring and Evaluations Coordinator with Equal Access Nepal (I/NGO) for its different media related projects. Mr. Dahal has experiences working as media practitioner (print, radio and television), researcher, trainer and manager with Government, I/NGO and UN system in Nepal.

Recently he has presented a paper on Community Media as Constitutional Safeguards in Nepal at UGS sponsored national seminar on "Humanrights and Factionalism" organised by S.V. University, Tirupati.