



COMMUNITY RADIO STATION WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO DHARWAD – INDIA'S FIRST FARMERS RADIO STATION

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INTRODUCTION

India's agricultural system, the largest in the world caters to the technology needs of >100 million farm families. Its normal task of transferring and disseminating appropriate technologies and agronomic practices would not be sufficient for the empowerment of farming community.

In this regard, Community radio (CR) caters to location specific need of farming community. Defined as the radio owned by community and airs programs designed and produced by it for its own developmental needs.

CR is a significant departure from the primary centralized radio broadcasting paradigm that India has been following for decades.



- It is expected that the next leap of ICT will be in agriculture sector, together with traditional inputs & interventions farmers.
- Radio plays a vital role in passing on information to farming community as quickly as possible. Among various modes of radio broadcasting, Community Radio (CR) is a powerful medium for education and development. CR is 'characterized as a mouthpiece for socially, economically, politically and culturally marginalized people & as a tool for development of society improved input for agriculture, education and would encourage members of the community to associate together to design, produce and air programmes' (Srivastava, 2007).
- The experience of a number of developing countries in using community radio for such purposes has clearly demonstrated its tremendous potential for strengthening grass-roots democracy



- All India Radio (AIR) has been playing a very useful role for decades in providing relevant information to people in the remotest parts.
- Even today, radio is the primary source of agricultural information for the farming community of rural India. However, this has to be supplemented by a strong community radio movement to ensure greater involvement of local communities in the development process.
- In December 2002, the Government of India announced a policy for granting community radio licences to well established educational institutions.



Expectations of CR are:

- Enhancing participation of people in the development process
- Capacity- building, especially in rural areas, through education
- Providing opportunities to people to upgrade their skills and enhance their creative talents
- Preserving and promoting traditional wisdom, knowledge and skills, thereby helping to promote and project the local languages, arts, crafts, culture and traditions
- Bringing within easy reach of the rural population, topical information in areas of agriculture, social welfare, education, health and environment
- Creating rural networks for cottage and village industries
- Strengthening *Panchayat Raj Institutions*



ACTORS IN CR

- **Community members**
- **Providers of technology**
- **Government:**
- **Producers and staff**
- **Resource mobilisers**

PROFILES OF COMMUNITY RADIO

The profile of a community radio is determined by the community it serves & by the community that owns the radio station.

Divergent approaches and formats in urban and rural contexts are, however, ultimately adjusted by community radio's inclusive character.

A CRS in urban is difficult to determine since the meaning of 'community' in an urban context is diffused. Although a city or town have accessibility to media and with its heterogeneous character, community participation is often fragmented. In short, An urban CRS is similar to a public radio model. It can achieve the role of a personal friend, a role that the rural community radio can rarely perform.

Rural communities are culture-specific, respond to needs & demands. Here community listening of radio is more popular and community centers like *anganwadis* and issue-based clubs characterize community participation. Gradually members of these clubs become producers of specific programmes related to issues relevant to women, children, people with disabilities, etc. Programmes are also narrowcast using audiocassette technology to facilitate community listening.

How to Open CRS ?

General Pre-requisites:

CR is always projected as a low-cost, non-profit, easy to run venture, operated primarily by volunteers from the community and sustained by a minimal paid staff.

It does require an initial investment to create awareness, set up broadcast infrastructure and a regular flow of finance to cover operational costs.

To ensure community ownership, sustained involvement of a wide range of interest groups (NGOs, funding bodies, government departments, international agencies) in a wide spectrum of activities (training, procurement of equipments, licenses, etc.) is needed.



CR should have a broad-based ownership, accessible to any member of the community. The station should ensure that no particular group within the community becomes a dominating component in its operations and programming. Under the existing rules, the following can own a radio station:

- Educational institutions, including IGNOU can get license to run non-profit radio stations and involve the neighbouring communities in programming.
- Commercial houses, with majority share owned by Indian companies, can buy radio frequencies, as and when government auctions are held, and run a purely commercial radio channel.

All public, private or educational have their own methodology of assessing relevance of their radio channels and every channel understands that without direct participation by target listeners, channel tends to lose its audience sustainability. Therefore, emphasis on participatory programming is fast becoming the most accepted format for radio.



COMMUNITY RADIO: SPECIFIC INITIATIVES IN INDIA

CR, owing to its multifarious responsibilities to the farming community on agriculture production, information on rural development schemes, credit facility, education, health, sanitation, cooperatives etc., it is becoming very popular in the developing countries including India. The country's first community radio station has been operational since 1st February 2004 at Anna University, Chennai. Some of the important examples of community radio projects and audio initiatives working in India are:

1. The Deccan Development Society (DDS) Audio Initiative at Pastapur (AP)
2. Namma Dhwani, the *VOICES* initiatives in Budikote, Karnataka
3. Chala Ho Gaon Mein By AID – Bihar
4. Kunjal Panchchi KutchJi, Bhuj
5. Mana Radio
6. CRS in UAS, Dharwad

The Indian Agriculture while on the threshold of a second green revolution, Information and communication are the main planks of agricultural research, education and extension activities.

Among available sources of information, radio, being the cheapest mode of communication, is the most frequently accessed source for most of the farmers.

In this regard, CR has an important role to play. Due to its focus on local concerns and aspirations and the interactive nature of its programming, CR can be a powerful medium for education and development.

Experiences of a number of developing countries including India in using CR has demonstrated its tremendous potential for the development of the farming community in rural India.

CR needs continuous back up from institutions till it reaches to its sustainability. Therefore, role of stakeholders in running the service at initial stage is most essential.

CR can be an effective and pragmatic means to attain community development goals.

THANKS

