

COMMUNITY RADIO FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL WOMEN

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In India, women are the central figure of family life and constitute almost half of the country's total population. Women have a strong potential role in many aspects of economic development, in relation to their family responsibilities as well as their agricultural production. The world economic profile of women shows that they represent 50% of the total population, make up 30% of the official labor force and utilize 60% of all working hours but receive only 10% of world income and only 1% share in property income. India is the second most populous country having crossed the one billion mark. The number of women in India is 496,514,346. The most glaring evidence of gender bias is the low sex ratio. According to Census 2011, the sex ratio is 940 females per 1000 males while the ratio is 990 females per 1000 males worldwide. India's adverse sex ratio reflects relative neglect of women's health and their social subordination. Out of that number, 120 million women live in poverty. Over 70% of India's population currently derives its livelihood from land resources, which includes 84% of economically active women.

Status of Women in India: Women's status is the pure indicator of the progress of any nation. The status and development of women influence the development of a country as they not only constitute half of its population but also influence the remaining half. Women in rural areas are deprived of minimum facilities of enlightenment and education. The overwhelming majority of the labor that sustains life - growing food, cooking, raising children, caring for the elderly, maintaining a house, hauling water - is done by women and universally this work is accorded low status and no pay. Though women make substantial contributions to economic and

sustainable development, yet their condition is pitiable. They project a picture which depicts the gravity of the situation - illiteracy, ignorance, non-perception of role, shyness, poor health and nutrition, socio economic barriers, low level of development of skills and an indifferent socio-economic life style. Women contribute more to development but suffer a lot of problems regarding health, nutrition, hygiene and unemployment due to lack of knowledge. According to the World Bank (2003), in developing countries about one third of the total disease burden of women is linked to health problems related to pregnancy, child birth, abortion and reproductive tract infections due to lack of awareness about many aspects. In the hill state Uttarakhand, women are known for their courage, perseverance and hard work due to their involvement with agriculture, forest protection and dairying especially in difficult hilly terrain. Women are found extending their working hours inordinately at home and outside to earn enough to meet the subsistence requirements of their households yet they are deprived of exposure to knowledge.

Need for Women's Empowerment: Studies aptly indicate that women suffer from various problems due to lack of education and information. Women's empowerment is a key factor in determining the success of development. The right information given at the right time can empower rural women and protect them. Various Information Communication Technologies such as radio, television, mobile phones and the internet are available to be used to empower rural women. This is an ICT era but many women are suffering because of the gap between ICT and its use in rural areas.

Participatory Communication for Women's Empowerment:

Participatory Communication is necessary for the empowerment of rural people. The roots of participatory approaches in development communication can be found in the early years of the 1980s when people began to question the top-down approach of development in the 1950s and 1960s, which targeted the economic growth of countries as its main goal. Development was thought to be triggered by the wide scale diffusion and adoption of modern technologies. Such modernization was planned in national capitals under the guidance and direction of experts brought in from developed countries. Generally, four different ways of participation can be observed in most development projects claiming to be participatory in nature: (1) *Participation in Decision making:* People initiate, discuss, conceptualize and plan activities that they will do as a community. (2) *Participation in Implementation:* People are actively encouraged and mobilized to take part in the actualization of projects. They are given certain responsibilities to be fulfilled and certain tasks to be set or are required to contribute specified resources. (3) *Participation in Benefit:* People are asked to take part in enjoying the fruits of a project, such as water from a hand pump, medical care, a truck to transport produce to markets or village meetings in the new community hall. (4) *Participation in Evaluation:* Upon completion of a project, people are invited to critique its success or failure. Some people favor community participation as a means of reaching certain goals since it makes projects more humane, effective and sustainable. However, others see participation as an end in itself. For them, participation is a set of desired processes and relationships. Public participation is important for preventing the monopolization of communication. It fosters a fair balance between different parties involved in the communication process, enhances media autonomy and promotes a plurality of opinions. Thus, communication facilities may serve not just those in power but society as a whole.

Community Radio for People Participation:

Studies indicate that participatory communication is necessary for the development of rural people. Participatory communication is increasingly recognized by agencies as a development tool with the ever evolving world of information technologies used to mobilize social change. Whilst information technologies have now reached unprecedented levels, large disparities still exist between richer and poorer nations, regions and people groups. In Africa, Asia and India many of the poorest people still live in rural areas. In remote areas, community radio is often the only medium available that is pervasive, accessible and affordable and is the most appropriate medium of mass communication in developing countries with very low literacy rates, poor transportation systems and very low purchasing power. It is a new concept to ensure People Participation at grass root level for their local development. It provides a platform to rural people to take part in every step like programme designing, recording, broadcasting and evaluation. It is a medium of empowerment. The goal of development communication is to mobilize rural women at grass root level and sensitize them so that they become self-reliant. Among all communication tools community radio is at heart of the possibilities of an emerging "Information Society" that is people-centered, inclusive and development-oriented; where everyone can create, access, utilize and share information and knowledge, enabling individuals, communities and people to achieve their full potential in improving their quality of life. Community radio is a vibrant community broadcasting system to enhance diversity. It is a truly people's radio that perceives listeners not only as receivers and consumers, but also as active citizens and creative producers of media content. This form of radio is fully consistent with the letter and spirit of the Milan Declaration on Communication and Human Rights (1988) which asserted that communication media have a responsibility to help sustain the diversity of the world's cultures and languages and that they should be supported through legislative, administrative and financial measures.

Community-based independent media is now perceived by media activists and grassroots organizations as a means of enabling rural people and marginalized sections of society to manage their own development and acquire a sense of control over its course through self-management. Community radio is distinguished by three essential principles: non-profit making, community ownership and management and community participation. Community radio stations throughout the world have emerged in different political conditions initiated by individuals and groups with diverse backgrounds. These include priests, community and civic groups and government as well as non-governmental organizations. Developed in various forms depending upon its environment, community radio provides greater access and participation to its community members and reflects the educational, developmental and socio-cultural needs of the specific community it serves. As a tool for social change and participatory communication, community radio has several advantages over other media. First it is cost efficient in terms of investment both for those that run the station and for the audience. Secondly, it is pertinent in terms of language and content ideal for the huge illiterate population that still remains marginalized especially in rural area of the Third World. Thirdly, it is relevant to local practices, traditions and culture. Fourthly, once the initial investment in equipment is made, sustainability is feasible, though dependent on the level of community participation.

Community radio around the World:

Community radio has developed differently in different countries. In the UK, the idea of community-based services can be traced back as far as the original concept for BBC local radio in the early 1960s. Various land-based unlicensed pirate radio stations (such as London Radio and Radio AMY: (Alternate Media For You) developed the idea further. As pirate stations proliferated during the late 1970s and early 1980s, these stations were joined by those broadcasting specific musical genera and were

operated (theoretically at least) on a for-profit basis with community ownership and control built into their structures. Following an experiment started in 2001 by the former UK broadcast regulator The Radio Authority, since 2005 some 200 such stations have been licensed by the UK broadcasting regulator of communication. Most broadcast on FM, typically at a radiated power level of approximately 25 watts (per plane), although there are a few that operate on AM, particularly in more rural areas.

In the U.S. community radio stations are non profit, community- based operations licensed by the Federal Communications Commission for broadcasting in the non-commercial, public portion of the FM band. These stations differ from other public radio outlets in the U.S. by allowing community volunteers to actively participate as broadcasters. Pirate radio is virtually unknown in Australia because of the strictly controlled allocation of broadcasting frequencies and the likely application of severe legislation penalties, including jail for offenders.

Latin America has generally been the nest where the first experiences originated. Nonetheless, with the end of authoritarian regimes in Africa and Asia during the past two decades, new experiences of participatory communication for social change have also blossomed in these regions. In the view of community radio developers, community radio stations are the most trusted agent in villages bringing vibrant communities, mobilizing groups to action by informing and empowering citizens, giving voice to marginalized groups of society and bringing community needs to the attention of local and even national Government. The scope of the actual and potential impact of community radio is wide ranging, as are the challenges associated with community radio development. Various community radios around the world include: **[1] Radio Sutatenza:** The first to appear in October 16, 1947 was Radio Sutatenza, in Colombia, established by Jose Joaquin Salcedo Guarin, a Catholic priest. It had two main objectives - to broadcast the Christian doctrine to poor farmers and to teach skills that

would contribute to community development. The station has been a pioneer in the use of radio for educational purposes, especially in the education of rural adults. Sutatenza grew into a major force in the battle against illiteracy in Colombia. [2] **Radio Margaritas:** Radio Margaritas is an indigenous station established by the Institution National Indigenista (INI), an official institution. It produces and airs programmes in 31 local language and reaches an estimated six million Mexicans. The station is the fortunate result of political contradictions and because these contradictions are far from being resolved, the station has survived through various changes of Government. Radio Margaritas has had a tremendous impact on the local flow of information. The broadcasting of announcements in different vernaculars free of charge is probably the major contribution by the INI stations to indigenous populations. This announcements service enables villagers to expand and facilitate information flow in their social networks. The telecommunications infrastructure furnished by the stations can and has been used in relief efforts for natural disasters. [3] **Kotmala Radio:** Kotmala Radio is one of the first projects aimed at the convergence between radio and the Internet. Equipped with computer and Internet access, the station receives requests for information from the audience, searches the web for appropriate data and returns the results to the listeners in local languages. It is also building a database with information useful to the local constituency. Members of the community have been able to directly access information regarding health, human rights, agriculture and other issues affecting their daily lives. Students of the access centers are designing their own web sites using the Internet for research and school projects and obtaining information regarding educational grants and institutions.

Community radio in India: Presently there are 126 operational community radio stations out of which 78 are licensed to educational institutions, 38 to NGOs and 10 to KVVKs. Some are:

[1] **Anna FM:** On 1 February 2004 Anna FM: India First Campus community radio was

launched in Anna University which is run by Education and Multimedia Research Centre (EM²RC) and all programmes are produced by the students of Media Sciences at Anna University.

[2] **Sangham Radio:** The first community based radio station licensed to an NGO was launched on 15 October 2008, when "Sangham Radio" in Pastapur village, Medak district, Andhra Pradesh state was switched on. Sangham Radio, which broadcasts on 90.4 MHz, is licensed to Deccan Development Society (DDS), an NGO that works with women's groups in about 75 villages of Andhra Pradesh. This is a unique community radio experiment run by two Dalit women. When the villagers tune in, they hear their voices, concerns, songs and solutions to everyday problems. This new found thrill, however, is rooted in nothing less than a decade of passion, pursuit and perseverance. Medak district is not a picture of abundance. Most of its people are marginalized Dalits scratching along on low income. Many of them do not own land and work as daily wagers. Today, it is seen as a success story that shows how a community radio can educate villagers on biodiversity, crop patterns, nutrition, health, culture, sovereignty etc. and is the first all-women community radio in Asia.

Radio has a great role to play, villagers are informed how to make organic pesticides, natural pesticide management, good agriculture practices, health and hygiene, micro-credit methods, setting up of medicinal plantations and the need to repay loans in time.

[3] **Radio Ujaas:** Radio Ujaas is a community radio unit of largely illiterate women in Kutch who produce regular radio serials that are broadcast throughout their district, a desert region bordering Pakistan that is rich in traditional crafts and music. This radio unit which was a critical source of information during the 2002 earthquake and which has nearly 100% audience recognition, is often held up as one of the inspirational success stories of community media. Radio Ujaas has produced over 200 half-hour programmes, documented music in every village and caused a revival of traditional music of the region. Thus, community radio has proved

to be helpful in the time of natural disaster as a source of critical information and has made an impactful revival of traditional music.

In India, where the model of community radio for development is comparatively new, many cases, like the above, have proved that this mode of community media is successful in bringing about development. According to studies conducted in this field, the major areas which were touched are health, sanitation, folk music and culture, agricultural and allied activities and capacity building. In India, community radios were governed by strict regulations which were finally amended in 2006. The Cabinet has now started allowing non-profit organizations to apply for broadcasting licenses thus expanding the eligibility criteria to parties such as civil societies and voluntary organizations, state Agriculture Universities (SAUs) institutions, Krishi Vigyan Kendra and Registered Societies/Autonomous Bodies/Public Trusts registered under Societies Act.

The guidelines regarding the ownership and content of a community radio in India, however, are still very strict. Despite this, there have been various successful programmes run in India. According to Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, India is perhaps the only country in the South East Asian region to have a separate and distinct policy for community radio. The India policy places community radio within the framework of article 19 of the Indian Constitution which enshrines the freedom of speech and expression. This means that it recognizes the fundamental right of communities to express themselves and further recognizes community radio as a legitimate tool for expression. It allows for a maximum of 100 Watts ERP (Effective Radiated Power) and maximum 30 meters height for the tower. This FM band gives an average of about 10-12 kilometer radius of coverage. The policy also explicitly states that the community radio's management structure should be reflective of the community it seeks to serve. This is an excellent addition which aims to give political power to communities through ownership and management of media. Only participation is not enough to give rise to ownership. Formal community ownership is an

aim which has been formalized through this policy. For a highly populated and predominantly rural country like India, the education and entertainment of the masses is essential. This can be achieved by utilizing the concept of a community radio more effectively. The Government has in fact recognized this potential and plans to set up over 4000 community radio in various areas across the country over the next few years.

Status of Community radio in Uttarakhand:

There are four community radio stations in Uttarakhand. One is Kumaon Vani which is licensed to the well known environmental non-profit group called The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) based in Mukteshwar district. The other is Radio Khushi licensed to Guru Nanak Fifth Centenary School and based in Mussoorie; there is Hello Doon licensed to National Institute of Visually Handicapped (NIVH) and based in Dehradun and the fourth is Pantnagar Janvani licensed to Govind Ballabh Pant University of Agriculture and Technology (GBPUAT) and based in Pantnagar. Pantnagar Janvani was launched on 8th August 2011 and initiated its service from 15th August, the same year. It is running at 90.8 MHz and programmes are being transmitted thrice a day. Presently it is working on a voluntary basis, getting programmes from the local people of Pantnagar and nearby areas and students of the university. The need of the hour is to educate the mass, create awareness and cater to the needs of the people at the grass root level. Successful community radio can help to empower and give a voice to the people of India and in turn strengthen the tenets of democracy. Though there is long way to go, the realization is to step towards a brighter future.

It contributes to social change by initiating or accompanying communication processes and should carry responsibility for being effective in facilitating rural development through Women's Empowerment. The main distinguishing feature of community radio from other media is the high level of people's participation, both in management and program production. Individual

community members and local institutions are the principal sources of support for its operation.

[1] Several efforts have been made the by Government at times to equip rural women with information, education and knowledge on various aspects, but these efforts have mostly been fragmented, irregular, non-institutional and tapping a small proportion of rural women. Moreover, these efforts were based on the common needs of rural women without focusing on any specific issue and without going through any systematic empirical survey of research to assess the perceived needs of rural women in the context of women's empowerment. Hence, there is need of a participatory medium which could reach a larger number of women simultaneously. [2] Community radio can be used as a tool of development of rural people but just broadcasting various programmes is not

sufficient. Rather there is a need to develop audio modela based on audience researches for improving the effectiveness of community radio programmes. It is also necessary to know the needs of rural women. It requires formal research on need assessment and audience analysis. Moreover, message designing and programmes production should involve the rural population as has been explicitly recommended in multiple researches. [3] Community radio has the enormous potential of voicing the concerns within and between communities. Apart from catering to the needs of women, community radio modules could also be helpful in solving the challenges faced by rural women. Besides being an effective communication tool, it can promote rural women's interest in gaining knowledge and information which could eventually lead to their overall development.



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