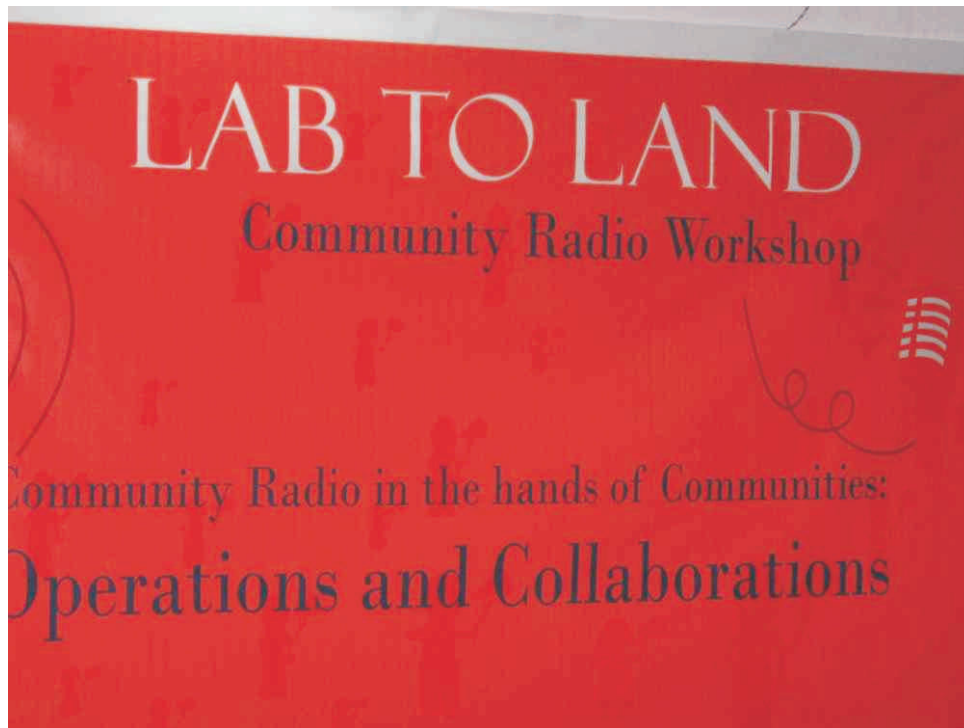


Community Radio

in the hands of Communities



Operations & Collaborations

2-4 February 2008
At Barefoot College,
Tilonia, Ajmer



Background

- » After liberalization of airwaves in November 2006, the organizations who have been advocating on CR Policy and the UN have been working together to advocate and sensitize Civil Society Organizations on Community Radio movement in India.

There is long way to go and there is a strong view that the communities are apprehensive about the technology options. Thanks to UNESCO for providing various options on setting up Digital Community Radio Stations in the module recently released and made available online.
- » While recognizing and promoting the concept of Lab to Land envisaged by Digital Empowerment Foundation (DEF) and Media Lab Asia (MLA), both the organizations are involved in aiding, assisting and awarding the ICT and e-Content initiatives. The mandate of MLA has been to enter into collaborative research in the task of developing relevant and sustainable technologies; providing culturally appropriate solutions and bringing them to the common man across five broad areas which include Healthcare, Education, Empowerment of the disabled, Village Livelihood Generation and Rural Connectivity. The objective is to fulfill the technology needs in local languages and to support local culture and tradition, by empowering people at grass root level forming collaborative efforts with Research and Development. Both the organizations decided to organize a series of workshops under the concept of Lab to Land integrating ICTs into specific issues related to Health, Education, and Livelihood etc. The Workshop on Community Radio is one of the first Workshops in the series.
- » The initiatives of both of the organizations would not only be organizing the Workshops but also assisting the Organizations in getting relevant technology support along with partial financial assistance. The efforts are towards evolving and documenting the viable models for empowerment of Community Based Organizations and Communities with low-cost technology options; strengthening practices of developing and sharing local e-content and how these could be g-localized through web-based technology not only dedicated to internet radio but also through other ICT options like Local Area Portals; Gyanpedia etc.

Community Radio in the hands of Community:
Its Operations and Collaborations three days
workshop focused on Community Participation;
Community Management and Community
Ownership



Participants in the Workshop were Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA), women members of the Self-Help Groups, doing multifarious activities focusing on socio-economic empowerment of women.

Sankalp is an organization working in the two blocks, namely, Shahbad and Kishanganj, covering 100 villages in the Baran district of Rajasthan. Women are working on various socio-economic projects; highlighting the women's issues and concerns, providing them the support for voicing their concerns at right platforms for getting their issues resolved whether they are related to land; women's violence and education. They are working among Sahariya, Kherua and Bheel tribal communities.



Sampark, an organization working in the Jhabua district, which is predominantly a tribal district located in the western part of Madhya Pradesh.

Representatives from Barefoot College, Tilonia, working in the nearby villages on education, health, livelihood and women's empowerment programmes.

M.S. Panwar Institute of Management and Communications, Solan, Himachal Pradesh, whose students first worked on Community Radio with the communities in remote villages of Solan, later applied for Community Radio license.

Other participants included S N Goswami, Media Lab Asia and H O Srivastava, World Development Foundation, New Delhi; Ina Shastri, Banasthali Vidyapeeth; Rajender Singh, Henvallvani, Uttarakhand; Raghav Mahto from Bihar. They shared their experiences with the participants on Community Radio: various technology options including low-cost studio; content from communities and community participation, management and ownership.

Three days deliberations of the Community Radio Workshop

Apart from the introductory and the inaugural session, the three days Workshop was divided into six Sessions

- I. Why Community Radio and its importance as an ICT tool
- II Lab to Land concept and how Community Radio fits into it
- III Community Radio Policy
- IV Good practices and implementation options
- V Community Radio Role of Communities and Content Development
- VI Practical exercise of setting up studio, content development and demonstration on how the transmitter functions for broadcasting the programme



Introductory/Inaugural session

The session started with a round of self-introductions by the participants. The session was an interactive session wherein the participants expressed their brief views on how they perceive radio as a tool to strengthen their on-going activities for development and how it could be a powerful tool for communications within the communities. They also expressed their expectations from the Workshop.

Release of a booklet on Community Radio: Programme Production and Packaging

DEF prepared a small bi-lingual booklet in English and Hindi on '*Community Radio: Programme Production and Packaging*' and a CD containing the online module of UNESCO; softcopy of the booklet and the presentations made during the Workshop. Ashish Garg, GeSci, had the honour to release the booklet and the CD during the inaugural session. Printed copy of the booklet was also circulated to the participants as a reference material during the training as well as for reference later.

The session on **Why Community Radio** and how it could be integrated with the other development initiatives in the community was discussed by Geeta Malhotra. The bottom-line was that how community participation, community management and community ownership could be evolved through constant efforts. When we talk of reaching to the masses, radio is the one of the best tool.

How Community Radio could be linked with Education?

Can Radio be an important tool for women's empowerment?

How the knowledge gaps in the field of Agriculture could be address through Community Radio?

How Community Radio could be given in the hands of Self-Help Groups?

How Community Radio could be used as a tool for good governance?

Can local concerns, local issues and local problems be highlighted through Community Radio?

How ICT tools could be integrated with Community Radio?

Whether Community Radio could be a part of the Village Resource Centers or Community Centers?

How one can start the internet radio before applying registering the application?

What is World Space Radio?



While discussing the life-cycle approach, the varied needs of the communities, keeping in view their age and sex, the sharing of local good stories, local concerns, providing a platform to local communities to voice their issues, to speak about their local culture and their heritage, Radio is one of the best platform to collect, share and disseminate various voices and to reach to the local communities with local participation.

How to communicate through radio was one of the important issues which were raised by the participants, the need for capacity building of the communities on production and programming and content for radio was also discussed. The importance of simple research, not necessarily through books, but through face to face consultations with the experts; through internet, if possible, through important stakeholders within the communities, but the crux of the matter is that the content through radio should be authentic and valid, and of

course, the programmes which community wants to listen and are benefited! How the information could be converted into knowledge and how knowledge could bring a behavioral change in their lives. The efforts should be to create a conducive environment around the communities so that they slowly own the process and feel their responsibility for taking this ownership.

While talking about the Lab to Land concept of the Media Lab Asia, Mr. S N Goswami, Director, Media Lab Asia expressed his views that there that about 1650 dialects spoken across the country and if around 5000 community radio stations would be established in India, how this tool can bring the richness in Indian languages.

Another important issue which was shared with the participants was that the technology could be handed over to the communities if we really want to empower them.

The overview of Community Radio policy in India was shared in detail by Dr H O Srivastava. Through his elaborative power-point presentation, Dr Srivastava showed the participants various models of audio studios and the transmitters. He also explained the policy in detail and encouraged the participants to prepare themselves for filing the applications. Many queries were raised which were duly answered by him. The three hours session was so interactive. In fact, his presence added value to the proceedings of the Workshop and participants were not hesitant to ask simple queries related to the production and complex issues of learning the steps to be followed for completing all formalities.

The interactive session provided the participants insights about All India Radio and the Government Policy on Community Radio. He also shared the details like when the All India Radio was established, when FM was introduced, what is Campus Radio and how it functions. How IGNOU is running Gyan Vani and how Banasthali Vidya Peeth is running their Campus Radio involving communities around them.

While explaining the technical issues, he explained the participants about the transmitters, studio equipments and their requirements, their maintenance and management etc. Regarding submission of the application why single window clearance for government bodies and for NGOs, clearance from various Ministries is mandatory. In case of the delay in clearance, what is the role of the inter-ministerial committee? How commercial FM is different from Community FM. The session was interactive and informative.

Dr Ina Shastri, Coordinator, Radio Banasthali, made an elaborate presentation on Campus Radio was initiated and now at what stage. She explained in detail the challenges faced by them in maintaining the technology, preparing the content, involvement of students and communities, transmission of the programmes etc. but it has been a good learning. Though there are various thoughts that the Campus radio is different from Community Radio, but Banasthali's efforts are to make this radio interesting, informative and knowledgeable for the communities in and around campus.





While demonstrating the low-cost technologies, Kamal Jeet from Sristi Gyan Kendra, Rohtak, Haryana, shared with the participants various low-cost technology options recorders, audio-studio equipments, mixers etc. He also demonstrated the technology behind making a transmitter and how it functions simultaneously explaining the legalities of GoI regarding the transmitters etc.

Raghav Mahto from Bihar also shared with the participants his experiences, which were though illegal, but the issue was that most of the technical solutions could be found within the villages itself.



The unique feature of the Workshop was sharing of the best practices. The presentation of Henvaivani case-study from Uttarakhand made them learn how a low cost studio could be built with a practical demonstration and how low cost technology could be used for recording and packaging of the programmes. Participants also wanted to know how low-cost studios could be established. While sharing the history of Henvaivani Radio, Rajender told the participants let the Community Radio be given in the hands of the communities, let them face the challenges, let them find their own solutions and let them decide how they would like to shape the Community Radio in their own areas. This is how they learnt and now they are at a stage that the success story needs to be replicated and the application for LoI have already been reviewed by the Government of India. Practice makes the man perfect, the statement he quoted and urged the participants to initiate the process, practice and learn, and then think of applying for license.

He also showed the participants the equipment he has been using, the software for editing and demonstrated the low-cost studio he made at the initial stages of practicing Community Radio.



Case study from Karol Ki Awaaz, a radio programme from a Mass Communications Institution in Solan was shared by Mr. Mukesh Sharma, Radio Coordinator. Being a Media Institute surrounded by rural areas, the selection of initiation of the programmes was a neglected hilly area, known as Karol ki Pahari. The selection was made with a conscience focus on the local communities and to facilitate the process of creating a dialogue between the beneficiaries and the local government through the use of radio. The community participants collectively arrived at the issue for each radio program and then they recorded people's voices and included them in the packaging of the radio programmes. They also conducted the interviews with the concerned local authorities to get their feedback to support the voices of the communities. That forced a certain level of accountability on the part of the officials as they could not ignore the issues raised by the communities.



It was not that the Radio Coordinators did not see the relevance or the need to talk about wider, social issues related to health, hygiene etc. But for them choosing people and community specific issues were a strategy to gain the popularity before they scaled up their programme. It is a well thought out process where they felt that only if there has been a degree of intimacy and ownership in what they would like to broadcast, their efforts would be sustainable and community-based. They did not want to impose anything on the communities.



He shared with the participants that they made a radio program asking the government to issue support prices for our tomato crops when the prices dipped in the market. The government officials had to respond to people's voices.

He added that the communities put forward their demand for an animal's hospital in their area through the radio program. The government official had to promise to think about it and took note of their request. That makes them feel like slowly they can change things in their areas.

They also started passing resolutions in favor of some of the community demands, on which the radio programs were made, in their panchayats. Radio has helped because they also record the responses from the concerned authorities and put it as a proof while submitting their resolution to the concerned departments. Since we have a legitimate demand and a government official's recorded acknowledgement and responded to it, helped them to fight for their resolution

SEWA women shared their experience on their Community Radio initiatives and they would like to strengthen through SEWA Women Federations. They made their radio programmes while experimenting on the technology and recorded their programmes in their own voices. The team worked at night for writing scripts, voice modulation and recording of the programmes.

Geeta Malhotra made a presentation of importance of Community participation and participatory content creation. Participants were explained about the importance of radio for strengthening communications for development. Community mobilization is an important component and how it could be strengthened was discussed among the participants. The importance of need for people-centered advocacy and how participation and communications could be integrated to make the process consistent, continuous, creative, compelling and convincing was shared with the participants.

While talking about radio programming and community-based outreach, the importance of the network of listeners' clubs was discussed, their formation, their duties and the importance of networking among communities was also stressed upon.

The issue of equal participation by men and women in the communities having their own responsibilities was also discussed. Women should come forward to have the ownership, as they have a very good platform to share, discuss and find solutions of their own problems. They should also come forward to learn the technical tools and feel confident in using them.

While talking about Principles and Values of Community Radio Capacity building and networking; NGOs contributions in making Community Radio a reality, the participatory mode of the Workshop encouraged the participants to clear their doubts on various issues. Hands on experience on Technology helped them to record one hour radio programme together the use of and was listened by the participants in the Barefoot College Campus.





Meena from Bhawargarh village of Baran District, working with the Jagrat Mahila Group mentioned that Community Radio can help them in many ways. Working in 100 villages and having face to face meetings for conveying the similar messages is very time consuming. Through Community Radio, we can address the women together. A group of women are experienced in recognizing and using various herbs in our area and making medicines, which are locally used and are effective. We would like to use radio to share our knowledge with the world outside.

Rajesh from Sampark mentioned that the tribal women do not have any platform to talk about their culture, their lifestyle, their issues and concerns. Radio in the hands of the tribal women can not only empower them but also provide them the recognition which they have not been getting adequately.



Rajender Singh from Henvallvani said that handover Community Radio in the communities as a tool for info-entertainment programme. Handover the radio in the hands of communities and let them decide what content they want to produce, what they would like to air and how they would like to manage. This is the only way for making Community Radio a reality.

Women participants from SEWA recorded their programme during the technology demonstration and felt confident about the whole process of community radio in the hands of women.



A few recommendations that emerged during the Workshop:

- ✍ For making Community Radio sustainable, 5 minutes advertisement in an hour's programme is allowed. Whether Radio could be used to promote the local products by the communities and share their expertise in making the local products with the outside world. Individual organizations were seeking support in organizing capacity enhancement workshops for them to start Community Radio and integration with internet radio.
- ✍ Low-cost technology options should be made available as Community-Based Organizations do not have funds to start Community Radio. If at all, funds are allocated, apart from setting up the studio and the transmitter, the funds are needed to meet the recurring cost for some time including capacity building till the time the programme is sustained.
- ✍ If women groups are managing the Community Radio, there is a need for their skill enhancement in the technology front, which normally does not happen. Men come forward to play this role. Special attention should be given on this aspect. Whether the towers already set up by the Mobile Phone companies could be used for CR transmitters/antenna. Whether individual organizations should negotiate with them or it could be taken as a policy initiative.
- ✍ Though as per the Policy, 50 per cent of the content should be generated through communities, whether content could be exchanged among the Community Radio practitioners, if yes, what about the copyright issue. Whether acknowledging the source would be enough or not.

A Future Plan of Action:

- ✍ DEF would be providing the requisite support to Barefoot College, Tilonia in setting up the studio as the participants have already started making the radio programmes involving communities from the villages. The process for setting up the transmitter would be done once the formalities with the Ministries are completed.
- ✍ Similarly, Sankalp and Sampark have also requested for more training workshops to prepare themselves for starting Community Radio initiatives and applying for the license. SEWA is in the process of applying through their Federations and will get in touch for technical as well as programme support.
- ✍ Digital Empowerment Foundation has scheduled five more workshops of this kind during this year in the States of Uttarakhand, West Bengal, North-East, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh.
- ✍ Media Lab Asia, World Development Foundation and DEF would be very happy to provide guidance and support to the organizations in relation to programmatic and technical support along with financial linkages.

DEF would be very happy to provide training and hand-holding for initiating the process of Community Radio with the Community Based Organizations. They may feel free to contact Digital Empowerment Foundation,
Geeta Malhotra at geeta@defindia.net

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