

CR Stations in Nepal struggle to restore broadcasting after quake



Radio Sindhu in Chautara resurrected under a temporary shelter

The recent devastating earthquake in Nepal, measuring 7.8 on the Richter scale, has affected millions in the country, leading to massive loss of lives and property. Official figures suggest that more than 5500 lives have been lost, with about 8 million affected on the whole. In the face of disaster, radio stations, of which many are community radio stations in Nepal's case, play a key role in catering to the information needs of the affected.

The state of community radios

"So far, many radio stations in the badly-affected districts of Gorkha, Sindhupalchowk, Ramechhap, etc. have been destroyed,

especially the ones with weak foundations. We have started looking at the post-effects in general and the exact status of the media, including community radios, can only be ascertained in the days ahead," said Laxman Pant of UNESCO Nepal.

AMARC Asia-Pacific, meanwhile, issued an update on the status of community radio stations in these affected districts. "Gorkha FM is one of the first local broadcasting services to be back on air in the quake affected areas. Similarly, Ratna Prasad Shrestha, Station Manager of Radio Sindhu, a community radio located in Sindhupalchowk district has informed that his station has also resumed broadcasting. Initial assessment indicates that around 108 community radio stations in approximately 30 districts have been affected. Most are off-air at the moment, owing mainly to equipment damage. While damage

to physical structures are quite huge, damage to equipment could be of lesser gravity", said Suman Basnet, Secretary, AMARC Asia-Pacific.

IRIN, an independent, not-for-profit media organisation, that focuses on humanitarian news and analysis, reports that BBC Media Action in Nepal, put out the first 'lifeline' programme, ten hours after the earthquake struck. (<http://www.irinnews.org/report/101421/can-you-hear-me-now-why-good-communication-is-critical-to-the-nepal-quake-response>).

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Sri Lanka Govt. revives dialogue on community radio

A National Consultation on Community Radio in Sri Lanka was organized by the Sri Lanka Development Journalist Forum (SDJF), with the support of Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA), New Delhi, and in partnership with the Ministry of Media and Information and Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation (SLBC) on February 7, 2015 at SLBC, Colombo.

The purpose of the consultation was to revive the dialogue with key stakeholders on Sri Lanka's community radio movement. It also strived to enable stakeholders identify key issues that affect the development of community radio in Sri Lanka and to identify ways and means for future engagements with policy makers.

The participants included civil society groups, academics and regional radio stations of the SLBC. The Secretary to the Ministry of Media and Information, Mr. Karunaratne Paranavithana; veteran Community Radio expert and the former Director of

UNESCO's International Programme for Development of Communication (IPDC), Mr. Wijayananda Jayaweera; and Programme Officer at CEMCA, Dr. Ankuran Dutta, New Delhi were among the participants.

Providing a background to the deliberations, Mr. Jayaweera said that the idea of community radio was introduced to Sri Lanka as far back as in 1979, when a community-based participatory radio programming service was established under a UNESCO/DANIDA project to facilitate the communication needs of those who had re-settled under the Mahaweli Development Scheme. Known as Mahaweli Community Radio, this venture was considered to be a unique community radio experience in Asia at the time, as, in almost every country, broadcasting was still a state monopoly.

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SOUTH ASIA

MBC conveys intent to initiate community broadcasting in the Maldives

The Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA), New Delhi in collaboration with the Maldives Broadcasting Commission (MBC) organized a National Consultation on Community Media on February 5, 2015 in Malé, Maldives.

Welcoming the gathering at the inaugural session, Commissioner of MBC, Mr. Mohamed Aslam, shared the country's vision to initiate community broadcasting in different atolls and islands in the Maldives.

Programme Officer, CEMCA, Dr. Ankuran Dutta, appreciated the initiative on community broadcasting in the country and enumerated the consultation's objectives and methodology. The Vice President of MBC, Mr. Abdullah Saju was the Chief Guest for the inaugural session.

During the consultation, Secretary General of MBC, Ms. Noora Ali, outlined the broadcasting scenario in the Maldives. Director, Planning and Projects of MBC, Ms. Aishath Shaaheen, analyzed the research findings from the preliminary research and consultancy for community broadcasting conducted by Dr. Murray Green on behalf of the MBC in 2012-13. This was followed by two interactive sessions on



'Why Community Media in Maldives' and 'Community Radio in South Asia- Status and Challenges'.

Several representatives from government and non-government organizations, including the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Home Affairs, the Ministry of Islamic Affairs, Human Rights Commission, Communication Authority of Maldives, Transparency Maldives, Dhivehi Raajjeyge Adu, National Bureau of Classi-

fications, United Nations Development Programme, Dhiraagu, Maldives Red Crescent, Island Broadcasting Company, MBC TVM, Maldives National University, Medlanet Pvt Ltd, Hope for Women, and Maldives Broadcasting Commission participated in the interactions.

Dr. Ankuran Dutta
Programme Officer, CEMCA

CR stations in Nepal ill-prepared for quakes

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Community radio, disaster preparedness and redressal

Even as the international community's aid response is directed to address the effects of the large-scale destruction, community-based efforts in providing key information for evacuation, relief and rehabilitation cannot be over-stated in such critical situations.

The Kobe earthquake of 1995 in Japan led to the setting up of Radio FMYJ, when the need for community-based disaster management information was felt. However, community radio stations are no exceptions to falling prey to the vagaries of nature. Community radio stations in Haiti were affected, with a handful of them severely damaged when Haiti was ravaged by an earthquake in 2010.

Key findings from a survey carried out by AMARC Asia-Pacific in 2008-09 among eight countries including Nepal, suggest earthquakes to be among the most fre-

quently occurring natural disasters. The report also highlights that more than half of CR stations surveyed did not have a manual to deal with natural disasters though most face them quite frequently. In addition, more than 60% of CR stations are housed in buildings which are not specifically designed to withstand natural disaster, it adds.

Suman Basnet's update also suggests that "despite the damage, many stations have informed them that they could restart broadcasting if minor spare parts or replacement for simple devices such as mixers, cables, etc. were made available."

Way forward

AMARC Asia Pacific also facilitated a coordination meeting in Kathmandu recently to take stock and initiate the next steps in relief operations. The group members, comprising community radio advocates, practitioners and station representatives identified the following dis-

tricts as the most critically hit: Dhading (two stations), Sindhupalchowk (two stations), Rasuwa, and Gorkha.

The group has agreed that at least one radio station in each district would have to be brought back on air urgently to ensure effective communication to support effective relief operations. A three-member team, including a technical and a production expert, would shortly visit the critical districts to assess the actual damage caused to community radios. The teams were expected to leave Kathmandu on May 1, 2015.

The group also noted that most of the stations in the critically hit districts would not be salvageable in a short time. Consequently, it was agreed that at least seven mobile/suitcase radios were required to support broadcasting in those districts.

Preeti Raghunath
University of Hyderabad
(with inputs from Suman Basnet,
AMARC Asia-Pacific)

CR UPDATES

Sammelan reflects on role of CR in good governance

The 5th National Community Radio Sammelan was organized in the national capital by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB) in association with One World Foundation India between March 16 and March 18, 2015. The theme of the Sammelan was 'Community Radio for Good Governance'.

Around 165 community radio representatives took part in the three-day proceedings. The interactions focused on exploring linkages between community radio and critical issues like access to justice, agriculture, financial inclusion, women's safety and education, and water and sanitation.

(See also "CR in India: Whose vision? Whose voice?" on p.5 in this issue.)

One of the Sammelan's stated objectives was to nurture, promote and empower the community radio (CR) movement in the country so as to substantially realize the potential of the medium. As in the past, it sought to bring together all operating community radio stations at one place for sharing their experiences and to facilitate dialogues with Ministry of Communications & Information Technology (MoCIT), DAVP and some of the social welfare ministries. Another aim was to engage with stakeholders like UN agen-

cies and other international organizations to promote community radio in the country.

Union Minister of Information and Broadcasting, Mr. Arun Jaitley inaugurated the Sammelan and underlined the fundamental importance of radio in the country. Affirming that "Radio is an instrument of future," he emphasized that "there cannot be a better idea to provide listeners the right to information and knowledge than this medium." Recalling the 1995 Supreme Court judgement, Mr Jaitley asserted that "the airwaves are not the monopoly of the state and it belongs to the people of this country."

Setting the tone for the deliberations, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, Ms R. Jaya said that the National Community Radio Sammelan provided a good platform for constructive discussions on good governance and also to bring about better co-ordination between the community radio stations and the ministry.

On the occasion, Community Radio Awards were presented in five categories. Radio Kissan from Orissa bagged the award for its programme on farmers, We are with you. Radio Anna from Tamil Nadu received the prize for its pro-



Arun Jaitley presents the Community Radio Awards

gramme Magalir Neram under the community engagement category. Pantnagar Janvani from Uttarakhand received the award for promoting local culture through its programme Anchal Ki Surbhi, while the award for the most creative content was bagged by Rathinavani CR from Tamil Nadu for its programme Pothumada Sami.

Saurav Mukherjee
OneWorld Foundation India

SOUTH ASIA

Workshop on web radio held in Sri Lanka



Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA), New Delhi in collaboration with Sri Lanka Development Journalists' Forum (SDJF), Colombo and Post Graduate Institute of Agriculture (PGIA) organized a national level workshop on Web Radio from February 9-11, 2015 at the University of Peradeniya, Kandy. Participants included representatives from University of Colombo, University of Kelaniya, Eastern University, University of Peradeniya, Department of Agriculture, Government of Sri Lanka, and Saru Community Radio.

The workshop was formally inaugurated by the Director of PGIA, Professor S. Samitha. Mr. Kapil Dadheech of Gram Vaani played the role of key resource person. Mr. Malinda Kumarasinha of Open University of Sri Lanka and Mr. Madhawa Perera of National Science Foundation, Colombo acted as the resource persons in the workshop. Dr. Ankuran Dutta made a presentation on the comparison between community radio and web radio and demonstrated the functioning of a web radio at the Krushi Radio, Kandy run by the Department of Agriculture, Government of Sri Lanka.

CEMCA

EDITORIAL

Fault lines in growth make CR sector vulnerable



The lifeline radio programme is broadcast from the BBC office in Kathmandu (Photo Credit BBC News)

Underlying the magnitude of destruction and tragedy wrought by the earthquake in Nepal are significant implications for media - especially community media. Often the solitary media lifeline that survives the savage onslaught of earthquakes and natural disasters, as these columns of CR News have previously asserted, is the humble radio. This Nepal tragedy has amplified a similar message. Radio played a role which overshadowed TV and other media as several reports in mainstream media have pointed out. Nepal Radio's proactive response enabled it to tie up with nearly 500 local FM channels to share resources. The impact was palpable and addressed a range of issues - from scotching rumors to persuading the government and officials to go on air and provide timely information and assuring the people of relief operations.

However, if Nepal's experience with disaster and the immediate aftermath of the earthquake has emphasized the potential of radio during times of disaster, it also highlighted its vulnerability. This is underscored by some of the first-hand accounts that highlight the impact of the earthquake on community radio stations in the country. According to AMARC's initial assessment, "around 108 community radio stations in approximately 30 districts have been affected. Most of them went off-air primarily because of equipment damage. The report also warned that the damage to "physical structures were quite huge." However, many stations had also pointed out that "they could restart broadcasting if minor spare parts or replacement for simple devices such

as mixers, cables, etc. were made available." This, at best, provides small cheer, given the larger issues that the vulnerabilities have thrown up.

The issue of infrastructure is not new for community radio both within and outside Nepal. As early as 2012, UNDP's comprehensive disaster risk management team had emphasized that several radio broadcasters in Nepal were vulnerable "given that they are stationed in earthquake-vulnerable buildings." Nepal's Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (ACORAB) had then echoed the warning by affirming that majority of the 350 radio stations in Nepal were housed in buildings that were not earthquake-resistant. However, the moral of the story points to a larger question which confronts the sector as a whole: How prepared are community radio stations to withstand disasters leave alone reckon with them effectively? While community radio stations may be potential lifelines, what good are lifelines, when the lines on which they are built are faulty?

The analogy of lifeline would appear to have double edged implications for community radio in other contexts as well. The first four months of 2015 have been fairly packed with consultations, workshops, and meetings across South Asia. While many of them are useful awareness-building and tracking initiatives in so far as they underline the increasing recognition and relevance of community radio in the region, they also raise fundamental questions pertinent to its essence. Are we witnessing the emergence and growth of a sector in South Asia that genuinely enables and embodies the spirit and practice of communities driving media? Or are we, dogged by exigencies of growth and consolidation, losing the wood for the trees?

As always, we welcome your feedback.

"While community radio stations may be potential lifelines, what good are lifelines, when the lines on which they are built are faulty?"

ARTICLE

CR in India: Whose vision? Whose voice?



The late Zane Ibrahim, community radio pioneer in South Africa, had famously said, "Community radio is 90% about community and 10% about radio." Something to that effect, anyway. After the recently concluded National Sammelan of Community Radios in India in New Delhi, one begins to wonder if, after a decade of community radio in India, Ibrahim's telling phrase should be reworded for India to say, "60% government, 30% community, and 10% radio." One can quibble over these randomly assigned percentages, but you get the idea.

The stately Vigyan Bhawan auditorium, the venue of the annual convention hosted by the Government of India, resounded to applause every time a government official from one of the ministries mentioned financial support to CR in exchange for transmission of content related to the mandates of the respective ministries. This, after the Union Minister of Information & Broadcasting, Mr. Arun Jaitley made a rather auspicious beginning by checking all the right boxes in his inaugural speech – the 1995 airwaves judgment of the Supreme Court, freedom of expression, voices of the people – and after the new Joint Secretary, Ms. R. Jaya had to clarify to the eager participants seeking state patronage that it was not government radio, but people's radio. Ironically, it took a state official to remind

us of our blurring vision!

The Sammelan as a whole, however, left one with a distinct impression that the present government sees community radio as an ideal low-cost, last-mile delivery platform for the many government schemes such as Swachh Bharat, Beti Bachao, and Jan Dhan Yojana, all of which had sessions allocated to them at the event. There was an interesting moment at the Sammelan when one of the participants brought up the issue of broadcasting the Prime Minister's radio show, Mann ki Baat over the community radio stations across the country. A doubt was expressed whether, in light of the ban on broadcasting political content on community radio, it is appropriate for stations to air the PM's show. The Ministry officials present as well as many station representatives objected to the characterization of the prime minister's broadcast as 'political'. A senior bureaucrat suggested that the Ministry had issued a 'strong advisory' to all community radio stations to carry the broadcast.

So the moot point for me would be: is community radio being seen as an extension of the government? During the years when activists and advocates had argued for a third sector of broadcasting in India, it was very clear that it was to be independent of the government and the market, and be an autonomous voice for local

"Combined with the increasing NGO-ization of community radio in India, negotiating an acceptable relationship with the state is a key challenge for the sector as a whole."

communities as an expression of their issues, problems, languages, cultures and identities. If community radio were to function merely as All India Radio, doling out information that would rally people around 'national' development goals and mould them into 'good' citizens through top-down, expert-driven communication, the years of struggle for an independent space would have been in vain. This is the reason why many of us responded with dismay when the Ministry 'generously' offered the right to re-broadcast AIR news on community radio stations instead of the right to produce and transmit independent news content.

The government, of course, has a role to play in community radio, that of providing an enabling environment and a progressive, regulatory framework. Some of us have also supported public funding of community radio, administered within an autonomous structure and not as is being done through a scheme of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB). The troubling aspect of state funding is that whether it is through preferential advertising or funding for content production by interested ministries, it has the effect of reducing community radio to a supplicant in a complex patron-client relationship. Combined with the increasing NGO-ization of community radio in India, negotiating an acceptable relationship with the state is a key challenge for the sector as a whole. No one denies that financial sustainability is a significant stumbling block globally for promoting a truly independent community radio. But, our efforts to find a way around it should always be illuminated by Zane Ibrahim's sage advice about the primacy of the community, and not to let it become an arm of the government.

Vinod Pavarala

TRACKING CR

A 13-hour broadcast marks 3rd anniversary of Alfaz-e-Mewat



Women farmers of Alwar are speaking live from their village on the radio station Alfaz-e-Mewat

February 28, 2015, was a red letter day for Alfaz-e-Mewat FM 107.8. The community radio (CR) station celebrated its third anniversary by increasing its broadcast time to 13 hours. Alfaz-e-Mewat FM 107.8, established with the support of Sehgal Foundation and the Union Agriculture Ministry, began with only two hours of daily broadcast. Its programmes highlight themes such as agriculture, gender equality, and women and child health, nutrition, free legal services, and other social and cultural issues.

With the support of other NGOs, corporate foundations, and the government, Alfaz-e-Mewat successfully completed its three-year relationship with the listeners. During this period, it has completed its first radio series based on Community Learning Programme (CLP), titled *Shauchalay Mere Angana* (Toilet in my house), and moved ahead to launch the next CLP series. The programme took the CR team closer to the community and helped it explore other underlying issues, thereby also deepening the relationship between the CR station and the community.

The Alfaz-e-Mewat team prepares programmes on different issues concerning the community, using different programming formats, peer learning and sharing, as well as interactions with experts. This has been a part of its programming

and organizational strategy. The CR team makes use of the learning opportunities through various trainings, workshops and conferences. These have included conferences of India Development Coalition of America; trainings on Community Learning Programme and on mainstreaming gender in community radio; FREE/DEM project training. Its growing popularity is evident in an increasingly interactive relationship it has built with listeners. Thus far, it has received over 29,000 listeners' calls from 183 villages.

The Alfaz-e-Mewat team has also helped villagers overcome challenging situations. It helped a lost child meet its family, motivated villagers to monitor the delivery of government schemes, and informed citizens on grievance redressal mechanisms so that they could demand their rights.

The CR station continues to strive to expand its programme reach through content exchange programmes, knowledge platforms, Integrated Voice Response System (IVRS), and interactive mobile apps.

**Charu Khanna and
Arti Manchanda Grover
S M Sehgal Foundation**

VOICES FROM THE FIELD

Radio Bundelkhand draws attention to role of women as farmers



Radio Bundelkhand reporter Gauri interviews community women

Radio Bundelkhand's 'Khetkhaliyan' is an agriculture based programme that recognizes the potential of women as farmers. The community radio reporters have approached women and made programmes where women share their experience as farmers. They talk about the crop patterns, as well as the techniques they use in the farming. The programme seeks to highlight that women are not only a part of the field, but also play a crucial role while deciding about the market and price.

Radio Bundelkhand was established by Development Alternatives at TARAGram, Orchha in Madhya Pradesh on July 23, 2008. Since then, it has been airing shows for its audiences which include women, youth, farmers and vulnerable groups. It reaches out to more than 120 villages within a radius of 15 kms.

Radio Bundelkhand is jointly managed by DA and the community. The programmes are produced with the participation of the local people. Its participatory programming and broadcast model provides a mix of awareness, information, and entertainment along with the objective of promoting local self governance. All the programmes are designed on the basis of feedback from communities.

Radio Bundelkhand has also produced other programmes related to women. For example, 'Sakhi Saheli' is a special programme for women, which provides them a space to share their experiences. The programme plays the important role of initiating discussions in the community. It fosters a dialogue

among people who listen to the radio programmes even on issues that have never been a part of their routine discussions. This, in turn, encourages acceptance and rejection of ideas, and facilitates change.

The women also sing folk songs for Radio Bundelkhand. Today, there are more than 2000 Bundeli songs recorded by Radio Bundelkhand. This is one of the largest collections of Bundeli songs available anywhere. During live programmes, women come and share their success stories.

Radio Bundelkhand has connected women from different fields of work. Meenadevi from Bagan, a neo-literate who just completed TARAakshar+ programme came for a live discussion, where she shared her experience with the community radio presenter. Her observations were revealing, "Initially I struggled a lot to convince my family for my education, but ultimately I was able to win their support. After attending TARA Akshar+ programme, I can read and write and even do simple calculations."

Radio Bundelkhand also broadcasts programmes where women from the police department provide information related to women and law. Another show provides a platform for women from academic departments to speak about women and education.

Naheda Yusuf
Development Alternatives

SNIPPETS

RANET helps battle climate change in Kenya



RANET, Kenya. PC - Reuters

Nganyi RANET - it stands for "Radio Internet" - is a community radio station set up by the Kenya Meteorological Service to target communities particularly vulnerable to climate extremes. Each station can broadcast in a range of 25-30 kilometers, and listeners within the zone are given free radio sets.

The other part of the station's name comes from the Nganyi clan, which for many years has predicted rains locally by monitoring the behaviour of plants, birds and insects. As climatic conditions become more erratic, however, some of those traditional indicators are failing.

"There was this demand for reliable climate information to enable farmers to be able to work. So we thought it was a good opportunity to bring together the meteorological people and the traditional people who have relied on indigenous knowledge to make forecasts," said Evans Kituyi, a senior program specialist for the Collaborative Adaptation Research Initiative in Africa and Asia (CARIAS).

There are now five RANET radio stations in Kenya where the climate change impacts are particularly strong. One, in Narok, is focused on worsening drought problems; in Kagema the problem is landslides; and in Kwale the station provides

information on both droughts and occasional flash floods. In Busia, a community radio station is helping reduce deaths and property damage caused by the floods along the Nzoia River.

Source: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/04/09/us-kenya-weather-forecasting-idUSKBN0N00W420150409>

Ofcom launches small scale DAB trials

Over fifty radio outlets have responded to the UK's invitation to apply for a digital experiment for smaller broadcasters. Ofcom, Britain's broadcast regulator, has announced trials to help smaller, local and community based radio stations access the UK's digital audio broadcasting (DAB) system.

The agency is working with an approach that it thinks will be more affordable to indie operations because it takes advantage of free software from opendigitalradio.org. The method is called "small scale DAB." It targets smaller scale geographic areas, "ideal for community and local radio stations," Ofcom says.

Ofcom has ten trials planned, each of which will run for nine months. "Each trial will allow new digital radio services to broadcast to a local area and will help explore how groups of radio stations can work together," an announcement for the project disclosed. "The trials will also inform Ofcom's work on identifying suitable frequencies for broadcasting smaller digital stations and help understand how these services could be licensed."

Source: <http://www.radiosurvivor.com/2015/04/21/dozens-of-uk-community-radio-stations-apply-for-digital-experiment/>



DAB, Ofcom. PC - Ofcom

Bolivia to host conference on CR and free software



The first international conference on community radio and free software will be held in Cochabamba, Bolivia from June 11-13, 2015. So far, the community radio stations from Spanish-speaking countries that have confirmed their assistance are: Argentina, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Uruguay, Venezuela, and of course, the host, Bolivia.

The preliminary agenda includes a forum discussing the advances taking place in Latin America regarding free software, telecommunication legislation, and a migration plan. There will also be workshops and simultaneous talks on free software tools such as Shamatari, Ardour, Audacity, and Creative Commons, amongst others.

Source: <http://globalvoicesonline.org/2015/04/02/bolivia-to-host-first-international-community-radio-and-free-software-conference/>

NBTC inspects CR stations in Thailand



Up to 200 community radio stations in Thailand have been found to be broadcasting 'anti-government content' in violation of the orders of the National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO), National Broadcasting and Telecommunication Commission (NBTC) secretary general Takorn Tantasith said recently.

Random inspections of the programme content of community radio stations nationwide showed that the main violation was broadcasting 'anti-government' content. Only a few stations had anti-monarchy content, the chief broadcasting regulator said.

Broadcasting of such content was a violation of the memorandum of understanding which the stations had with the NBTC. The regulator has approved the operations of a total of 4,300 community radio stations that signed the MoUs.

Source: <http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/politics/536031/some-local-radio-stations-violating-ncpo-orders>

Compiled by Arun John
University of Hyderabad

TRACKING CR

UP Govt. recognizes role of CR in health

The Department of Health and Family Welfare, Government of Uttar Pradesh, in partnership with UNICEF and the Community Radio Association (CRA) organised a two-day capacity building workshop on Routine Immunization for representatives of operating community radio stations in Lucknow on February 23-24, 2015 in Lucknow. Twenty operating stations from the districts of Agra, Azamgarh, Allahabad, Aligarh, Basti, Kanpur, Ghaziabad, Noida, Lucknow, Saharanpur, Lalitpur, and Ghazipur participated in the workshop.

Inaugurated by Principal Secretary, Medicine, Health and Family Welfare, Mr. Arvind Kumar, the workshop aimed at creating awareness about routine immunization, and also at changing attitudes of the communities with whom the Department of Health and Family Welfare works. Mr. Kumar assured participating stations that the department was keen to have a long-term relationship with the community radio (CR) stations. He committed to issuing instructions to all CMOs of the districts and the other health officials to work with the CR stations.

While he felt that CR stations could serve as a single window for access and information on all government schemes, Mr. Kumar reiterated that community radio stations had an important role in promoting sustained engagement and assuring delivery of health services in the respective districts.



Connecting the dots between CR and health

Discussing the UP Government's 'Indradhanush' scheme, the Principal Secretary reiterated his support to NGOs interested in setting up CR stations. He reassured the participants of a range of support that included the areas of content, expertise and finance. Mr. Kumar said that this was just the beginning, and the partnership would only grow in the coming days.

Dr. Ved Prakash of State Rural Health Mission made a detailed presentation on

challenges of immunization and the role of radio stations in dealing effectively with them. Mr. Amit Mehrotra, UNICEF, stressed that the experience gained in health sector would be replicated by using community radio stations for other development agendas like water, sanitation and gender equity. Mr. Bhai Shelly, UNICEF, outlined the priorities of UNICEF. He emphasized that the partnership with community radio stations in Uttar Pradesh would be sustained through networking support from Community Radio Association (CRA). The Secretary General of CRA, Ms. Archana Kapoor led this initiative and expressed full support to take it forward.

As part of the capacity building workshop, the community radio stations were asked to make programmes on related themes. The stations produced 13 programmes, of which five won the jury award. This also provided an opportunity to sensitize the development partners working in the health sector about the potential of community radio.



Can 'Indradhanush' show the way?

Archana Kapoor
SMART NGO & Radio Mewat

INTERNATIONAL

Community radio in Australia: Making the difference

Community Radio in Australia enjoys a unique and special position within the broadcasting system. The democratization of radio broadcasting began in Australia in the early 1960s. Different groups had initiated the reform process by campaigning for their "own" radio and a separate space on the dial.

The demand for increased access to the airwaves stemmed from the unhappiness with the mainstream media and the fact that the airwaves- a public resource -was being exploited only for profit. While early campaigns for a community (then called public) radio were led by Universities like University of New England (UNE), University of New South Wales (UNSW), and Adelaide University, and fine music enthusiasts. There were pirate radio attempts like 3DR and 3PR that came into existence to convey their disagreement and oppose Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War.

The pirate radio initiatives were shut down, but they showed the path for a new style of non-governmental and non-commercial broadcasting. Despite different reasons, these distinct groups were united by a common goal – access to the airwaves. The campaigns ultimately merited an inquiry in 1967 by the Australian Broadcasting Control Board. Its report in 1972 recommended the inclusion on FM radio and supported the idea of non-government, non-profit community broad-



Pinky Chandran with CR advocates in Australia

casting. Australia made history and became the first country to legislate community broadcasting.

Today the sector is vibrant and has more than 400 community radio stations, which service diverse community groups including indigenous Australian, ethnic communities, print disabled communities, religious communities, youth and senior citizens, and education, sports, music, art and culture and other special interest groups including LGBTIQ communities. Community broadcasting in Australia prides itself as being different from other media by promoting access and participation.

Although the reach of the community radio station is less than that of commercial or public radios because of lower ERP levels, the categorization of licenses proves a degree of flexibility. Specifically, categories of license awarded depend on the intended area, namely rural, regional, metropolitan, suburban or sub-metro. While in most cases, a single license is given to a station, in the event of poor

reception areas, repeaters have been allowed.

Granted on the basis of merit according to a criteria established by the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA), the licence eligibility and application process also deserves consideration. The criteria include: an identified community of interest, volunteer support, financial planning, community involvement, ability to sustain the licence over time and the ability to meet the technical requirements of their license area. It is worth pointing out that no new analogue radio broadcast licences have been granted since 2001.

With respect to funding, while advertisements are not permitted, stations are allowed to take up sponsorships of up to five minutes in one hour of programming. Stations also actively seek memberships, subscriptions, donations, gifts, and hold the annual Radiothon, a fund raising event. In addition, the Community Broadcasting Foundation (CBF), an independent, non-profit body acts as a funding agency that distributes funds that come in from the federal government.

(to be continued)

**Pinky Chandran, Director, Radio Active
(Recently in Australia)
With inputs from Shane Elson,
Alternative Radio, Australia**



SYN where young people run the show

SOUTH ASIA

Civil society groups pitch for independent CR sector in Sri Lanka

Continued from Page 1

Considerable research has underscored that the Mahaweli Community Radio station made an impact among the settlers by providing them with a platform to voice their concerns and inculcating a culture of responsive administration among the Mahaweli authority. While UNESCO support came to an end in 1986, SLBC was expected to sustain the project through its own resources. UNESCO had made a recommendation that the government develop a policy to enable establishment of community radio stations that were owned and operated by communities. Unfortunately, it did not become a reality.

Addressing the inaugural session of the National Consultation on Community Radio, Mr. Karunaratne Paranavithana acknowledged that community radio has enormous potential within a post-conflict setting to cater to civil society. He further noted, "The government is very keen to explore a model in which a community radio sector, with all the required principles, can be innovated within the scope of Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation or the Ministry of Media."

He assured that the existing government would take necessary steps to ensure that a scheme was launched to allocate frequencies for community broadcasting in Sri Lanka. The Ministry is keen to explore a model that can be installed under SLBC but developed for public participation through programmes by and for the people.

In answering a question raised by Ms. Samanmalee Swarnalatha, coordinator of the SARU community radio project, the Secretary to the Ministry of Media and Information assured that the SARU community radio association would receive a frequency in the near future.

Mr. Jayaweera noted that one of the reasons why UNESCO's recommendation to introduce an enabling community radio policy in Sri Lanka did not materialize was the absence of an active civil society movement advocating for a policy to establish independent community radio stations. The attempts to retain full control of the community radio stations within the SLBC administration were stronger,

notwithstanding SLBC's inclination to view community radio merely as a financial burden to its coffers.

Even when there was an opportunity to grant independence to the Uva community radio service, established under a UNDP project, SLBC insisted that it be kept within the administrative powers of the State broadcaster, though by this time many other private radio broadcasters were allowed to own and operate radio stations.

Mr. Jayaweera's recommendation to the Ministry of Media was to shift its focus. Instead of trying to revive the SLBC operated community radio stations, which are now defunct, SLBC should introduce an enabling community radio policy which would allow community owned and operated independent community radio stations to be set up. He was glad that the Secretary of the Ministry had promised to give a license to run the SARU radio programme service as an independent community radio station. He mentioned that similar pilot stations should be allowed in different parts of the country as an integral part of developing and testing a new community radio policy.

Dr Ankuran Dutta, Programme Officer of Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia, New Delhi delivered the keynote address on "Community Radio across South Asia: Understanding its Potential in Addressing Voice Poverty." He described the present status of community radio in the countries of the South Asian region and argued that the community radio movement should be revived in Sri Lanka. He also suggested that educational institutions should be included under the purview of community broadcasting. However, he clarified that educational institutions should have accountability not only to the students, but also to the community where they were located.

Mr. M. C. Rasmin, Director of SDJF, emphasized that they were able to host a



number of trainings on community radio. SDJF had also organized three national community radio conferences and an international conference in this regard. Although there were many challenges, SDJF was able to keep the dialogue around community radio alive.

The participants strongly noted that SLBC had in the past failed to ensure the independence of community radio and asserted that SLBC had not come up with any effective community radio programming models after the termination of the Mahaweli Community Radio Project. They argued that the best interests of the Sri Lankan people as well as SLBC would not be served if community radio operated under the State Broadcasting Corporation. They qualified their view by pointing out that community radio's key principle was ownership, control and management by the community. They also suggested that the Ministry of Media should hold a stakeholder consultation to develop an enabling community radio policy based on the experiences of the South Asian region.

Mr. Wijayananda Jayaweera reiterated that community radio could provide an effective platform for participatory democratic discourse devoid of vested interests and partisan influence at the local levels. Therefore, a number of community radio stations, based on a code of practice, should be allowed as pilots, as a part of the process of policy development.

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TRACKING CR

MIB kerfuffle over monitoring blows over?

The strange order from the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting (MIB) received by community radio stations across India on Friday, April 30 proposed a novel method of monitoring the content broadcast by the stations. The order read, in part, citing the GOPA signed by the stations, "You are requested to provide recordings of all programmes broadcast by CRS on [a] daily basis from the date of receipt of this letter along with Log book/Q-Sheet at the email radio-emmc@gov.in. Please provide the recordings in MP-3 format only."

The order caused much consternation among CR station representatives, who protested against the order saying that in the circumstances in which most stations are functioning, with shortage of human resources and meager funds, it would be impossible to comply. Stations that broadcast for over 15 hours pointed out politely that if they start packaging the content at the close of broadcast time, it could take all night with dedicated staff members working to upload the content. Some rural stations that contacted the UNESCO Chair on Community Media at University of Hyderabad lamented that there is no assured power supply in the villages where they are located and that their stations did not even have an Internet connection, leave alone one with the required bandwidth.

Press reports, raising the specter of control and censorship, combined with the responses from the ground may have led to quick rethinking on the order at the Ministry. At the time of going to press, there are unconfirmed reports that the Secretary of I&B, Mr. Bimal Julka announced that the order would not be implemented and reiterated his Ministry's continued support to the CR sector in the country.

While this kerfuffle over content monitoring seems to have blown over, the email address suggests that the Electronic Media Monitoring Centre may have widened its ambit to include radio. But, without transparent mechanisms being adopted by them to monitor content, it will not allay the fears of community radio stations that their work is under surveillance.

CR News

Call for contributions

The editorial team seeks contributions by way of news reports, features, opinions announcements on recent community radio activities in your organization/region/nation. Voices/Stories from the field, including interviews with community members (listeners and producers) are especially welcome. Contributions should be in English, restricted to 300 words for news/ event and 450-500 words for opinion pieces and features, and typed double spaced. Contributions may preferably be accompanied by photographs/ illustrations. Contact address and details of authors/organization should accompany the contributions.

The last date for submissions is **June 10, 2015.**

Electronic submission of contributions is recommended. Please email your articles/reports/features to: newsr2010@gmail.com

You can also post them to:

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