



Monthly newsletter on issues of sustainable development

DEVELOPMENT ALTERNATIVES

A woman farmer and Radio Bundelkhand listener posing with her radio set



**Community
Media for Climate
and Development**

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Editorial



From Information to Ownership: How Community Media Drives Change

Community media is shifting rural views on climate change and development by enhancing communication. In this editorial, Maj. Gen. Rahul Bhardwaj emphasises how platforms like Radio Bundelkhand empower local voices, encouraging community participation and resilience. By simplifying information and connecting topics, he says these platforms foster shared understanding and strengthen governance, enabling villagers to engage confidently with local institutions and devise their own solutions.

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Lead



On India's Community Airwaves, Climate Action Sounds Like Home

In rural India, community radio stations have been empowering local voices to discuss climate change and its impacts on daily life. One such initiative is Radio Bundelkhand, India's second-oldest community radio station. Zainab Ahmed says that through relatable narratives and interactive formats, these platforms are fostering awareness and driving action, underscoring the importance of grassroots communication in addressing urgent climate issues and strengthening community resilience.

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Policy



Community Radio as Local Climate Infrastructure: A Policy Perspective from India

In this article, Shaila Sam explores the transformative role of community radio in addressing climate change challenges in India. She highlights how over 500 community stations engage local populations by providing tailored information on sustainable practices, thereby fostering resilience and adaptation in vulnerable regions. Through examples like Radio Bundelkhand, Sam emphasises the medium's potential as a vital platform for bridging policy and community action.

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Ground story



When Community Radio Became Farmers' Ally in a Changing Climate

Kisan Vani, a community radio initiative by the ISEP India Foundation, is serving as a vital resource for farmers. In this article, Ankit Rajput highlights the community radio's success in connecting over 200 villages across Vidisha and nearby areas. Through stories like that of Anil Jain, he illustrates how trusted community media can transform information into sustainable livelihoods and renewed confidence.

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Ground story



Shubhkal Sparks Change

In this article, Manish Samadhiya details how women farmers like Ramdhakeli Kushwaha are transforming agriculture through community radio. He says programmes like Radio Bundelkhand's Shubh Kal empower women with knowledge about organic farming, leading to better yields and greater decision-making roles. This grassroots movement highlights the vital role of local voices in fostering agricultural and economic change.

The views expressed in the articles in this newsletter are those of the authors and not necessarily those of Development Alternatives.

Editorial Team: Shaila Sam, Bharti Kapoor, Payal Choudhary, and Garima Garg

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B-32, Tara Crescent, Qutub Institutional Area, New Delhi-110016

Tel: +91(11) 2654 4100-200

Fax: +91(11) 2685 1158

Email: library@devalt.org

Website: www.devalt.org

From Information to Ownership: How Community Media Drives Change



Letters received from Radio Bundelkhand listeners

Community media is quietly reshaping how villages perceive climate and development. In regions where climate change is no longer just an abstract concept and where technical reports, policy language, and urban narratives often fail to resonate, locally rooted media have emerged as a vital bridge between complex interventions and everyday life. This is where community media platforms, such as Radio Bundelkhand, play an essential role, serving as last-mile delivery bridges that help connect communities to access public information, services, and technical solutions.

When Climate Change Becomes Local News

At the core of this role is climate resilience. For communities facing erratic rainfall, groundwater depletion, rising heat stress, and changing agricultural patterns, resilience is more than just a policy term; it is a daily concern. Community media addresses these issues and helps them create practical understanding and solutions. It disseminates information on development interventions

such as climate-friendly agricultural practices, water conservation, waste management, sanitation, health, and governance in a way that is accessible, avoiding complex terminology and institutional jargon. By using familiar voices, local dialects, and shared references, these messages resonate more deeply with the community. For instance, when a farmer hears another farmer discussing changing cropping practices, or when a Jal Sakhi explains safe water habits in her own words, the message feels credible and achievable.

Voices That Villages Trust

What makes community media powerful, is not just dissemination but also participation. Issues are presented not as isolated topics but as interconnected elements of everyday life. For example, conversations about safe drinking water are naturally linked to sanitation practices and women's health. Discussions on agriculture include climate-resilient crops, soil health, and water-efficient practices. Health programming creates opportunities to address topics like heat stress, nutrition, menstrual hygiene, and preventive care—subjects of-

ten shrouded in silence or stigma. Community media fosters a familiar, non-threatening environment where women can talk to other women, farmers can learn from one another, and front-line workers can engage with their neighbours as equals. In this context, information transforms from external advice to shared understanding.

Crucially, community media is fundamentally about two-way communication, not just one-way broadcasting. Radio Bundelkhand employs a participatory programming model that includes call-ins, local voices, community reporters, field-based recordings, and listener feedback. This approach has helped the station establish a strong, two-way relationship with the people of Bundelkhand. Listeners are not mere passive recipients; they actively shape content, raise questions, share their experiences, and challenge narratives. This ongoing dialogue allows the radio station to remain connected to real concerns while reflecting the community's realities. Over time, this participation fosters trust, relevance, and a sense of ownership that no top-down messaging can achieve.

This approach spans various programmes and sectors. Efforts to restore natural ecosystems are more effective when communities understand the importance of water conservation beyond just irrigation. Initiatives focused on resource access and equity are more successful when women are engaged in open, stigma-free discussions about water, sanitation, and health. Community resource management becomes sustainable when local groups share and learn from each other's experiences.

Linking Villages to Systems of Power

This participatory approach also strengthens governance and improves access to institutions. Community media plays a critical role in linking people with government schemes, announcements, state functionaries, and public systems

that often seem distant or hard to navigate. Information about entitlements, application processes, grievance mechanisms, and local governance structures becomes clearer when presented in simple, honest terms on familiar platforms. Dialogues with panchayat representatives, district officials, health workers, legal experts, and even police help demystify these systems and reduce fear or misinformation. As a result, people grasp processes better, ask informed questions, and engage more confidently with institutions. The media, in this sense, does not replace governance; instead, it facilitates connections between people and their governing bodies.

What this really demonstrates is that development outcomes are shaped not only by infrastructure or funding, but also by communication that fosters understanding, participation, and trust. It shows that community media fosters ownership by centring local voices, respecting lived experiences, and making knowledge accessible without compromising its seriousness. When villages see their own stories reflected in narratives of change, they engage more deeply, adapt more quickly, and sustain progress longer. They do not simply wait for solutions; they start to shape them, building resilience that is social, institutional, economic, and ecological all at once. ■

Maj. Gen. Rahul Bhardwaj (VSM)
rbhardwaj@devalt.org

On India's Community Airwaves, Climate Action Sounds Like Home



A listener sharing her thoughts on her favorite program, Stree: Ek Kahani Meri Bhi

On a winter evening in rural India, radios crackle to life in kitchens, shops, and courtyards. The voices filling the air are not those of experts from Delhi preaching jargon or officials reading out mechanical circulars, or radio jockeys (RJs) playing pranks on people stuck in metro traffic. Instead, these voices are rooted in India. Farmers, women's collectives, sanitation workers, and village representatives share their experiences, describing the slow but noticeable changes in their everyday lives. With the help of local RJs broadcasting from a small building equipped with a powerful microphone, they explain what these changes mean to them. This is what community media looks like in practice across rural India: climate action narrated from within.

When Climate Change Hits Home

In areas where downloaded PDFs and policy memorandums rarely translate into real-world understanding, climate change is not just an abstract scientific concept. It manifests as overflowing fields after erratic monsoons that destroy crops. It is evident in the borewells running dry

weeks earlier than expected, the illnesses that disrupt a week's worth of work, and the onset of menstruation that derails a girl's dream of pursuing a degree. The harsh realities of climate change result in child marriages, gender-based violence, farmer suicide, and bonded labour.

Locally trusted channels play a crucial role in communication. India has a growing community radio ecosystem, with 495 operational community radio stations as of May 2024, according to the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting's community radio support scheme. These stations integrate into people's daily lives, using local dialects, familiar voices, and interactive formats that encourage participation rather than just one-way messaging. The local stories shared through these channels reflect a broader national trend. Their impact often emerges in subtle ways; these stories travel faster than posters and resonate more deeply than technical advisories. By framing climate and development narratives in relatable voices and everyday language, community media is quietly transforming awareness into adoption, and adoption into sustained change.

Radio Bundelkhand: On the Air for Change

Radio Bundelkhand, India's second-oldest community radio station, has become one such conduit. Broadcasting to roughly 150 villages and reaching more than 250,000 listeners each month, the station airs programmes in both Bundeli and Hindi. These programmes cover various topics, including climate-smart agriculture, safe health practices, climate-related gender issues, women's health, and national schemes. Its long-running flagship show, *Shubh Kal*, is widely recognised as one of the country's most sustained community radio programmes focusing on climate change and adaptation. The show tracks changes in weather, water usage, farming choices, and everyday resilience over the years. Cultural formats play an equally powerful role: initiatives such as *Bundeli Idol* and *Zaika Bundelkhand Ka* celebrate local music, storytelling, and food traditions while incorporating conversations on health, nutrition, and climate awareness. Similarly, programmes like *Stree: Ek Kahani Meri Bhi*, centred on women's voices and climate-linked vulnerabilities, have drawn strong listener response, creating space for open dialogue on gender, livelihoods, and resilience. The format is conversational, featuring phone-ins, narrowcastings, focus group discussions, debates, and conversations held under neem trees.

What makes community media especially powerful is its participatory approach. Community reporters travel through villages to gather local voices. Listeners call in or visit community media stations to express their opinions, whether they agree, disagree, or pose difficult questions. Narrowcastings and focus group discussions help residents understand government schemes, while they engage in real-time conversations with the Panchayat and government officials. The result is a feedback loop that is often absent in top-down development programmes: local institutions are strengthened by understanding the challenges faced on the ground, and communities learn how decisions are made.

Taking Policy to the People

A policy signal embedded in everyday radio chatter is helping our policymakers keep pace with reality. As India accelerates investments in climate adaptation, strengthens institutions, engages youth, and promotes transparent governance

to achieve the vision of *Viksit Bharat 2047*, it becomes increasingly clear that strengthening the National Community Radio Policy and implementing licensing reforms can greatly amplify these efforts far beyond the pages of red books or the reach of leaflets or training workshops. However, policy reform is just one piece of the puzzle. What makes the difference on the ground is when information feels familiar and trusted.

Through community media, a vast amount of this information is delivered in a single broadcast. At the end of these airwaves is not just awareness, but also a momentum. Climate resilience is discussed in relatable terms, such as the crops that are saved, illnesses that are prevented, lives that are saved, forced displacement that are avoided, and a girl child's opportunity to choose education over marriage. Additionally, it highlights women stepping forward to speak on important topics that matter. Villages stop waiting for change to come from outside and start shaping it themselves. This is the true contribution of community media to climate resilience in India: not merely broadcasting development, but empowering communities to own it.

Radio Bundelkhand: A Living Example of Climate Communication

Key highlights:

- » Reaches 150 villages and over 250,000 listeners monthly in Bundeli and Hindi.
- » Programmes address climate-smart agriculture, water use, health, gender, and government schemes.
- » *Shubh Kal* offers long-term tracking of climate adaptation at the community level.
- » Cultural formats (*Bundeli Idol*, *Zaika Bundelkhand Ka*) integrate climate awareness into everyday culture.
- » Women-focused programmes open space for dialogue on gendered climate vulnerabilities. □

Zainab Ahmed
zahmed@devalt.org

Community Radio as Local Climate Infrastructure: A Policy Perspective from India

India currently has 500 recognised community radio stations that reach approximately 90 million people. This impressive reach makes it an ideal platform for delivering targeted messaging to specific communities. India's emphasis on community radio demonstrates a deep understanding of this medium and its usefulness. The gradual rise of community radio marks a significant acknowledgement of how localised communication systems can enhance public and commercial broadcasting, particularly in areas such as education, development outreach, and community engagement.

A Quiet Media Network with National Reach

The early 2000s marked a significant milestone in the evolution of radio in India. On **1 February 2004, Anna FM** (90.4 MHz), the first community radio station in India, was launched. It was inaugurated at Anna University in Chennai by the then Union Minister, L.K. Advani. The station was created to offer a platform for educational and community-focused programming. Consultations surrounding Gyan Vani, led by IGNOU, opened up policy opportunities for non-state participation in radio broadcasting through an educational and developmental lens. This model demonstrated how decentralised broadcasting could operate responsibly within existing regulatory frameworks while contributing to knowledge dissemination at the grassroots level. Although debates continued regarding ownership, content, and scale, this phase laid a strong foundation for the subsequent community radio policy introduced in 2006, which expanded eligibility to include non-profit and community-based organisations.

Importantly, India's community radio policy has been shaped through sustained dialogue among government agencies, academic institutions, civil society organisations, and development practitioners. Formal policy-making has been enhanced by consultations, research, and practice-based learning across different regions. This collaborative



Community Radio: Bridging information gaps and empowering the last mile.

approach has positioned community radio not as a competing or disruptive medium, but as a complementary platform that aligns with national development priorities. This orientation is especially relevant in the context of climate change and sustainable development.

As India faces increasing climate risks such as erratic rainfall, groundwater depletion, heat stress, and mounting pressure on agrarian livelihoods, the limitations of one-way communication systems are becoming more apparent. National advisories, digital tools, and mass media campaigns often struggle to reach the most remote areas and to present complex climate information in a way that is meaningful for local communities. Community radio operates at this intersection of policy and everyday experience. By broadcasting in local languages and dialects, it enables two-way communication, allowing communities to actively engage with information, share adaptation practices, and participate in local decision-making.

Radio Bundelkhand: Climate Communication on the Ground

The potential of Radio Bundelkhand is especially evident in climate-vulnerable regions like Bundelkhand. Supported by Development Alternatives, **Radio Bundelkhand** has emerged

as a critical local communication platform. As part of a long-term development engagement, Radio Bundelkhand promotes awareness of water conservation, climate-resilient agriculture, and local governance processes. Its programming creates spaces for dialogue among farmers, women, and panchayat representatives, connecting policy schemes to everyday realities and strengthening local accountability.

Experiences from Radio Bundelkhand demonstrate that community radio can be more than just a means of sharing information; it can also serve as vital local climate infrastructure. When community radio is integrated into programmes focused on water security, waste management, agriculture, and SDG implementation, it helps translate policy intent into collective action. This approach strengthens the capacity of local institutions to communicate, deliberate, and respond effectively, which is essential for effective climate adaptation and resilience building.

Lessons from the Himalayas, Drylands, and the Western Ghats

Similar examples from across India further demonstrate the relevance of community radio in advancing climate and environmental action. In Uttarakhand, the station **Mandakini Ki Awaaz** has played an important role in disseminating information on disaster preparedness, water conservation, and climate-resilient livelihoods in a fragile Himalayan ecology. Broadcasting in local dialects, the station has supported community awareness about landslide risks, changing rainfall patterns, and post-disaster recovery—areas where timely, trusted communication is critical.

In the dryland regions of Karnataka, **Namma Dhvani**, one of India's earliest community radio initiatives, has successfully integrated environmental concerns into its long-standing work on agriculture and livelihoods. Programmes focused on sustainable farming practices, water management, and climate-resilient cropping systems have enabled farmers to exchange knowledge based on local experience, reinforcing adaptation strategies that go beyond standard advisories.

Similarly, **Radio Mattoli**, located in Wayanad, Kerala, has tackled climate-linked challenges such as biodiversity loss, human–wildlife conflict, and sustainable agriculture in a biodiversity-rich but ecologically sensitive region. By engaging

with farmers, indigenous communities, and local institutions, the station has fostered dialogue on the need to balance conservation efforts with livelihoods, an increasingly urgent policy concern in climate-vulnerable landscapes.

Together, these experiences underscore a common insight: the value of community goes beyond merely information dissemination. It plays a crucial role in contextualising climate knowledge within local social, cultural, and ecological realities. Whether addressing water scarcity in Bundelkhand, disaster risk in the Himalayas, or sustainable agriculture in the Western Ghats, community radio empowers communities to interpret climate challenges collectively and respond through locally appropriate action.

For this potential to be realised at scale, policy support must shift from simply granting permission to creating an enabling system that is deeply embedded at the local government level. This system should make community radio an attractive employment option for the rural populace. Key components include formally embedding community radio within state- and district-level development and climate missions, establishing sustainable financing models that align with public-interest communication, and recognising community radio as a legitimate partner in local governance. Development Alternatives' experience underscores that when community radio is integrated with long-term development practices, rather than treated as a standalone media intervention, it significantly improves programme outcomes and community ownership.

Community Radio as Climate Strategy

In an era in which effective climate action increasingly depends on decentralised solutions and informed local leadership, strengthening community radio is not simply a media policy choice; it is a strategic investment in inclusive development, participatory governance, and climate-responsive futures. By integrating community radio into India's development and climate architecture, we can help ensure that national goals are not only communicated but also understood, owned, and acted upon at the grassroots levels.

Community Radio: India's Local Climate Connector

THE SCALE

Community Radio in India

- **500+** recognised community radio stations
- Reaching **90 million people**
- Broadcasting in **local languages and dialects**

Community radio reaches communities often missed by mainstream media.

THE CHALLENGE

Why Climate Communication Falls Short

- National advisories do not reach remote areas
- Technical language is hard to understand
- One-way messaging limits local action

THE SOLUTION

Community Radio at the Last Mile

Community radio translates climate and development information into:

- Familiar language
- Local examples
- Everyday relevance

It also enables two-way communication, allowing people to ask questions, share experiences, and shape responses.

EVIDENCE FROM THE FIELD

Community Radio in Action

- **Bundelkhand** – water security, agriculture, local governance

- **Uttarakhand** – disaster preparedness and risk awareness
- **Karnataka** – dryland farming and livelihoods
- **Wayanad, Kerala** – biodiversity and conservation

One model, many geographies.

THE INSIGHT

More Than Media

Community radio functions as:

- Local climate infrastructure
- A trust-building platform
- A bridge between people and institutions

WHAT'S NEEDED TO SCALE

- Embed community radio in state and district climate missions
- Create sustainable public-interest funding models
- Recognise community radio as a partner in local governance

BOTTOM LINE

Strengthening community radio is not a media choice—it is a climate and development investment.

Shaila Sam
ssam@devalt.org

When Community Radio Became Farmers' Ally in a Changing Climate



Kisaan Vaani RJs at the radio station, Sironj

Kisan Vani Sironj is a community radio initiative of the ISEP India Foundation (formerly known as the Indian Society of Agribusiness Professionals), launched in 2008. Over the past 17 years, the station has steadily expanded its reach across the Sironj tehsil in the Vidisha district, as well as neighbouring blocks such as Kurwai, Lateri, Ganj Basoda, and Shamshabad, along with border villages of nearby districts. Today, Kisan Vani connects with more than 200 villages through programmes that combine agricultural knowledge, livelihood guidance, and cultural expression.

The station's primary aim is to provide farmers with practical, climate-responsive information. Broadcasts cover topics such as crop management, livestock rearing, fisheries, agribusiness opportunities, and emerging farming technologies, often featuring conversations with subject-matter experts. The station also provides daily mandi prices, weather updates, and information about government schemes to help farmers make timely decisions. To ensure it stays connected to local culture, programming includes folk music and opportunities for listener call-ins, fostering a two-way dialogue rather than simply delivering one-way messages.

The station's primary aim is to provide information on:

- Crop management
- Livestock rearing
- Fisheries
- Agribusiness opportunities
- Emerging farming technologies

For many farmers in and around Sironj, this radio has become a reliable companion during times of climatic uncertainty. One of these farmers is Anil Kumar Jain, who also owns a grocery shop located on Custom Path in Sironj. A few years ago, his farming faced significant challenges due to erratic weather, poor-quality seed, delayed sowing, and limited irrigation facilities. Continuous cultivation of soybeans had led to reduced productivity, and there was a general lack of awareness regarding government schemes.

Regular listening to Kisan Vani's climate-focused programmes started to change his approach to farming. Following the advice shared on the radio, he implemented crop rotation, engaged in deep summer ploughing, switched to improved seed varieties, and adjusted his sowing schedules. This year,

instead of planting soybean, he chose to cultivate maize, which yielded better results. He also tried intercropping and mixed farming, reduced risks by conducting soil tests, and aligned his crop choices with the local climatic conditions.

The information shared on air helped him register for a solar pump scheme. Once the pump was installed, it eased his irrigation challenges and reduced production costs. Experiences like Anil Jain's illustrate how locally delivered information, communicated in familiar language and through trusted voices, can lead to real change in the community.

Beyond agriculture, Kisan Vani Sironj focuses on important social issues such as women's education, health, domestic violence, child marriage, sanitation, and environmental protection. The station is associated with over 50 folk artists and a repertoire of more than 900 songs. Daily call-ins from listeners ensure the programming is responsive and connected to the realities of village life. Broadcasting 7 hours a day over a radius of 15 to 20 km, the station has become a hub of knowledge, dialogue, and cultural pride.

Kisan Vani Sironj focuses on important social issues such as women's education, health, domestic violence, child marriage, sanitation, and environmental protection.

In a future impacted by climate change, initiatives like Kisan Vani demonstrate that community media does far more than simply transmit messages. It builds confidence, empowers informed decision-making, and helps farmers envision resilient livelihoods. Anil Jain's renewed fields and increased returns serve as a testimony to the subtle yet lasting impact of radio waves reaching rural areas. □

Ankit Rajput
Station Manager, Kisan Vaani Sironj
sironjcrs@isapindia.org

किसान वाणी : बदलते मौसम में खेती की नई राह

सामुदायिक रेडियो केंद्र किसान वाणी सिरोंज आईसेप इंडिया फाउंडेशन (पूर्व नाम इंडियन सोसाइटी ऑफ एग्रीबिजनेस प्रोफेशनल की पहल है जिसकी शुरुआत 2008 में हुई थी। बीते 17 वर्षों से यह स्टेशन विदिशा जिले की सिरोंज तहसील कुरवाई, नटेरन, लटेरी, गंजबासोदा और शमशाबाद क्षेत्रों के साथ-साथ पड़ोसी जिलों के सीमावर्ती गांवों तक अपनी पहुंच बना चुका है। आज किसान वाणी लगभग 200 से अधिक गांवों में कृषि आजीविका और सामाजिक बदलाव से जुड़े कार्यक्रमों के ज़रिए ग्रामीण समुदायों के रोज़मर्रा के जीवन का हिस्सा बन चुका है।

किसान वाणी का उद्देश्य केवल सूचनाएं प्रसारित करना नहीं, बल्कि किसानों को बदलते मौसम और कृषि संकटों से निपटने के लिए तैयार करना है। इसके कार्यक्रमों में फसल प्रबंधन, पशुपालन, मत्स्य पालन, कृषि उद्यमिता और नई तकनीकों पर विशेषज्ञों की सलाह दी जाती है। मंडी भाव, मौसम पूर्वानुमान, सरकारी योजनाओं और आजीविका से जुड़े अवसरों की नियमित जानकारी किसानों को समय पर फैसले लेने में मदद करती है। स्टेशन से जुड़े लोक कलाकारों के गीत और संवाद कार्यक्रमों को स्थानीय रंग देते हैं, वहीं श्रोताओं के फोन कॉल इसे दोतरफ़ा संवाद का मंच बनाते हैं।

सिरोंज और आसपास के इलाकों में रहने वाले कई किसानों के लिए यह रेडियो बदलते जलवायु हालात में एक भरोसेमंद साथी बन चुका है। इन्हीं में से एक हैं कस्टम पथ, सिरोंज के किसान और किराना व्यापारी अनिल कुमार जैन। कुछ वर्ष पहले तक उनकी खेती मौसम की अनिश्चितताओं से जूझ रही थी। समय पर बुवाई न हो पाना, अच्छे बीजों की कमी, सिंचाई की सीमित व्यवस्था और लगातार सोयाबीन की खेती से घटता उत्पादन उनकी आम समस्याएं थीं। सरकारी योजनाओं की जानकारी भी उन तक पूरी तरह नहीं पहुंच पा रही थी।

किसान वाणी पर जलवायु परिवर्तन से जुड़े कार्यक्रमों ने उनकी सोच में धीरे-धीरे बदलाव शुरू किया। रेडियो से मिली सलाह के आधार पर उन्होंने फसल चक्र अपनाया, ग्रीष्मकालीन गहरी जुताई शुरू की, उन्नत बीजों का प्रयोग किया और बीज उपचार तथा बुवाई के समय में बदलाव जैसे उपाय किए। इस वर्ष उन्होंने सोयाबीन की जगह मक्का की खेती करने का फैसला लिया, जिससे उत्पादन बेहतर हुआ। अंतर-फसली और मिश्रित खेती के प्रयोगों ने जोखिम घटाया और मिट्टी की जांच कराकर उन्होंने फसल चयन को अधिक वैज्ञानिक बनाया।

इसी दौरान किसान वाणी के कार्यक्रमों से मिली जानकारी ने उन्हें सोलर पंप योजना तक भी पहुंचाया। ऑनलाइन पंजीकरण कराने के बाद सिंचाई की समस्या काफी हद तक हल हुई और खेती की लागत में भी कमी आई। अनिल जैन जैसे कई किसानों के अनुभव इस बात की गवाही देते हैं कि जब सूचना स्थानीय भाषा में, परिचित आवाज़ों के ज़रिए और रोज़मर्रा की ज़रूरतों से जुड़कर आती है, तो वह ज़मीन पर बदलाव ला सकती है।



किसान वाणी सिरोंज के RJ स्टूडियो में कार्यक्रम प्रस्तुत करते हुए

किसान वाणी सिरोंज की भूमिका यहीं तक सीमित नहीं है। स्टेशन कृषि के साथ-साथ महिला शिक्षा, स्वास्थ्य, घरेलू हिंसा, बाल विवाह, बाल मजदूरी, स्वच्छता और पर्यावरण संरक्षण जैसे विषयों पर भी चर्चा को आगे बढ़ाता है। लगभग पचास लोक कलाकारों से जुड़ा यह मंच 900 से अधिक लोकगीतों का संग्रह समेटे हुए है और रोज़ाना आने वाले श्रोताओं के फोन कॉल इसे गांवों की नब्ज़ से जोड़े रखते हैं। वर्तमान में 15 से 20 किलोमीटर के दायरे में सात घंटे प्रतिदिन प्रसारण करते हुए यह रेडियो किसानों और ग्रामीण परिवारों के लिए जानकारी, संवाद और सांस्कृतिक अभिव्यक्ति का केंद्र बन चुका है।

जलवायु परिवर्तन के इस दौर में किसान वाणी सिरोंज जैसी पहले दिखाती हैं कि सामुदायिक मीडिया केवल संदेश पहुंचाने का माध्यम नहीं होता, बल्कि वह किसानों को जोखिम समझने, विकल्प खोजने और अपने भविष्य को नए सिरे से गढ़ने की ताकत देता है। अनिल जैन की बदली हुई खेती और बेहतर होती आय उसी भरोसे का प्रतिबिंब है, जो वर्षों से यह रेडियो अपने श्रोताओं के साथ बना रहा है। □

Ankit Rajput
Station Manager, Kisan Vaani Sironj
sironjcrs@isapindia.org

Shubhkal Sparks Change



Ramdhakeli working in her field

Across India, conversations on women's empowerment are becoming increasingly visible. Yet in regions such as Bundelkhand in central India, women continue to shoulder much of the agricultural labour while remaining excluded from key decision-making processes. When drought, debt, and crop losses dominate public narratives, the struggles of women farmers often go unnoticed.

In an effort to address this imbalance, Radio Bundelkhand 90.4 FM, the first community radio station in Madhya Pradesh, launched programmes like *Mahila Kisan* to elevate women's knowledge and experiences in farming within public conversations. During on-air discussions, women shared insights on seasonal crop choices, sowing practices, and fertiliser use. What emerged was striking: although women contributed to nearly 60% of farm labour, they were rarely involved when in discussions about selling the harvests or managing profits.

"Women's labour remains invisible despite their central role in agriculture."

As these discussions aired, many women started to reassess their farming practices. Among them was 55-year-old Ramdhakeli Kushwaha from Dhamna village in the Niwari district.

Ramdhakeli lives with her husband, two sons, and two daughters, making a total of six in the family. Agriculture is their only source of income. For years, she relied on chemical fertilisers, but everything changed when she began listening to Radio Bundelkhand's Shubh Kal programme, which introduced her to organic farming methods.

Persuading her family was not easy. Traditionally, decisions about farming were made by men. With patience, she encouraged her husband and sons to tune in to the programme regularly. After several days of discussion, the family agreed to experiment by converting one of their 5 acres to organic farming.

"Community radio like Radio Bundelkhand can be a powerful catalyst for women's empowerment and behavioural change."

The first harvest brought mixed feelings. The yields were slightly lower than expected, which raised doubts back home. However, when the produce was sold as organically grown, it fetched a higher price in the market. This change shifted perceptions significantly. The following season, 2 acres of land were converted to organic methods, and gradually, the entire farm made the transition. Within three years, the economic gains became clear: input costs fell, and income stabilised.

Ramdhakeli soon expanded these ideas to her home courtyard, transforming the unused space into a flourishing kitchen garden. She planted a variety of vegetables, including potatoes, tomatoes, chillies, coriander, brinjal, radish, ginger, mint, bottle gourd, pumpkin, bitter gourd, and okra. Whenever she encountered technical questions, she would call the radio station for advice.

The surplus produce from her garden was sold locally, providing additional income for her family while also supplying chemical-free vegetables to her neighbours.



Ramdhakeli working in her field

When Radio Bundelkhand's team visited her village, Ramdhakeli spoke with evident pride. She does not own a smartphone and relies entirely on the radio for information and entertainment. Listening while working in the fields fits neatly into her daily routine. In villages where newspapers and televisions are scarce or seen as distractions, radio remains a trusted companion that farmers can take with them into the fields.

Ramdhakeli's journey highlights the continuing relevance of community radio in the digital age of rural India. Through programmes like Shubh Kal, women are not only adopting new farming techniques but also gradually stepping into decision-making roles within their households and communities.

This is how change begins quietly, through familiar voices on the airwaves, instilling confidence in the fields, homes, and lives of women farmers across Bundelkhand.

"Shubh Kal demonstrates how locally rooted, vernacular radio programming can translate information into action." □

Varsha Raikwar
vraikwar@devalt.org

शुभकल ने बदली खेती की दिशा

देश भर में महिला सशक्तिकरण पर चर्चा आम हो चुकी है, लेकिन मध्य भारत के बुंदेलखंड जैसे क्षेत्रों में आज भी बड़ी संख्या में महिलाएं खेती का अधिकांश काम करने के बावजूद निर्णय-प्रक्रिया से बाहर रहती हैं। सूखा, कर्ज और फसल नुकसान की बात करते समय अक्सर किसान की तस्वीर सामने आती है, लेकिन खेतों में बराबरी से मेहनत करने वाली महिला किसानों की चुनौतियां कम ही दिखाई देती हैं।

इसी खामोशी को तोड़ने के लिए मध्य प्रदेश के पहले सामुदायिक रेडियो स्टेशन, रेडियो बुंदेलखंड 90.4 FM, ने “महिला किसान” जैसे कार्यक्रमों के जरिये खेती में महिलाओं की भूमिका को सामने लाने की पहल की। इन कार्यक्रमों में महिलाओं से बातचीत कर यह समझने की कोशिश की गई कि वे किस मौसम में कौन-सी फसल लगाती हैं, बीज बोने के उनके तरीके क्या हैं और खाद का इस्तेमाल कैसे करती हैं। बातचीत से एक अहम सच सामने आया—खेतों के काम का लगभग साठ प्रतिशत हिस्सा महिलाएं संभालती हैं, लेकिन जब उपज बेचने और मुनाफे की बात आती है, तो उनकी आवाज़ अक्सर पीछे छूट जाती है।

जब ये चर्चाएं रेडियो पर प्रसारित हुईं, तो कई महिलाओं ने पहली बार खुलकर अपने अनुभव साझा किए और अपनी खेती के तरीकों पर दोबारा सोचने लगीं। इन्हीं में से एक हैं मध्य प्रदेश के निवाड़ी ज़िले के धमना गांव में रहने वाली 55 वर्षीय रामधकेली कुशवाहा।

रामधकेली अपने पति, दो बेटों और दो बेटियों के साथ रहती हैं। छह सदस्यों वाले इस परिवार की आजीविका का एकमात्र साधन खेती है। पहले वे अपने खेतों में रासायनिक खाद का इस्तेमाल करती थीं। लेकिन जब उन्होंने रेडियो बुंदेलखंड 90.4 FM का “शुभकल” कार्यक्रम सुनना शुरू किया, तो जैविक खेती की बातों ने उन्हें सोचने पर मजबूर किया।

फैसला लेना आसान नहीं था। गांवों में खेती से जुड़े बड़े निर्णय अक्सर पुरुषों द्वारा लिए जाते हैं। रामधकेली ने धैर्य के साथ अपने पति और बेटों को समझाया और उन्हें नियमित रूप से शुभकल सुनने को कहा। कुछ दिनों की बातचीत के बाद परिवार इस बात पर राज़ी हुआ कि पांच एकड़ ज़मीन में से एक एकड़ में प्रयोग के तौर पर जैविक खेती की जाए।

रामधकेली के लिए यह एक छोटी-सी जीत थी। उन्होंने उस एक एकड़ में जैविक तरीके से फसल उगाई। पैदावार शुरू में अपेक्षाकृत कम रही, जिससे परिवार थोड़ा निराश भी हुआ। लेकिन जब वही फसल “जैविक” बताकर बाज़ार में बेची गई, तो उसे बेहतर दाम मिले। यही वह मोड़ था जिसने पूरे परिवार की सोच बदल दी।

इसके बाद अगले मौसम में दो एकड़ ज़मीन में जैविक खेती शुरू की गई और धीरे-धीरे पूरा खेत इस पद्धति पर आ गया। तीन वर्षों के भीतर इसका आर्थिक लाभ साफ दिखाई देने लगा—लागत घटी और आमदनी स्थिर हुई। खेतों के साथ-साथ रामधकेली ने अपने घर के आंगन को भी अवसर में बदल दिया। खाली पड़ी जगह में उन्होंने किचन गार्डन तैयार किया और आलू, टमाटर, मिर्च, धनिया, बैंगन, मूली, अदरक, पुदीना, लौकी, कद्दू, करेला और भिंडी जैसी कई



रामधकेली अपने खेतों में काम करते हुए

सब्जियां उगाने लगीं। जब भी किसी तकनीकी जानकारी की ज़रूरत पड़ती, वे रेडियो बुंदेलखंड पर फोन कर सलाह लेतीं।

सब्जियों की पैदावार इतनी अच्छी हुई कि धरलू ज़रूरतों के बाद भी काफी उपज बचने लगी। उन्होंने उसे स्थानीय बाज़ार में बेचना शुरू किया। इससे परिवार की आमदनी में एक और स्रोत जुड़ गया और गांव के लोगों को बिना रसायन वाली सब्जियां मिलने लगीं।

जब रेडियो बुंदेलखंड की टीम धमना गांव पहुंची, तो रामधकेली की खुशी देखते ही बनती थी। उन्होंने बताया कि उनके पास स्मार्टफोन नहीं है और जानकारी व मनोरंजन के लिए वे पूरी तरह रेडियो पर निर्भर हैं। खेत में काम करते हुए रेडियो सुनना उन्हें आसान लगता है, काम भी चलता रहता है और नई बातें भी सीखने को मिलती हैं।

रामधकेली की कहानी यह दिखाती है कि डिजिटल दौर के बावजूद ग्रामीण भारत में रेडियो आज भी कितना असरदार माध्यम है। जहां अखबार या टेलीविजन नियमित रूप से उपलब्ध नहीं होते, वहां सामुदायिक रेडियो खेतों तक पहुंचकर जानकारी, भरोसा और बदलाव की उम्मीद बोता है।

रेडियो बुंदेलखंड के कार्यक्रमों के जरिये रामधकेली जैसी महिलाएं न सिर्फ खेती के नए तरीके अपना रही हैं, बल्कि धीरे-धीरे अपने परिवारों और समुदायों में फैसलों का हिस्सा भी बन रही हैं। यही वह बदलाव है, जिसकी शुरुआत शुभकल जैसे कार्यक्रमों से हो रही है—खेतों में, घरों में और महिलाओं के आत्मविश्वास में। □

Varsha Raikwar
vraikwar@devalt.org

सुर बुंदेलखंड कौं



अपना रेडियो अपनी बातें



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