Community Radio in India: A Study of Its Effectiveness and Community Participation

BALA LAKHENDRA
Supervisor: Dr. Abhijit Bora
Department of Mass Communication and Journalism
Tezpur University, Assam

Abstract

This study is about the effectiveness of Community Radio (CR) and community participation in the CR programme in India. This dissertation seeks to partly fulfill the information gap between the broadcaster and beneficiaries by reviewing the effectiveness of selected CR stations in meeting the needs and requirements of the community in the periphery of these stations with selected indicators, documenting the findings, and making recommendations for future CR initiatives in this field. The CR stations chosen for the study are Jnan Taranga Community Radio Station, Guwahati, CMS Community Radio, Lucknow, Radio Bundelkhand, Orchha, Tekamgarh, MP and Gurgaon Ki Awaaz, Haryana.

Jnan Taranga CRs is run by KK Handiqui State Open University, Guwahati, CMS Community Radio is run by City Montessori School, Gomatinagar, Lucknow, Radio Bundelkhand is run by Development Alternatives, Orchha, Tekamgarh, MP and Gurgaon Ki Awaaz, is run by The Restoring Force (TRF), Gurgaon, Haryana.

For this study rural as well as urban CR stations have been selected as they cater to heterogeneous and diverse groups, where people from different communities are encouraged to make use of the station for their development. With quantitative method i.e. an audience survey as a method, this study explores the nature and extent of community participation in the communication process and also explores the possibilities of its effectiveness. The CR stations operating with the participation from its community members are being effective in providing them with an access to important information.
and entertainment. And has also, in the process, proved to be a very important avenue for the community to express their opinions and views as well as exchange of feelings. An audience survey for this study revealed that 68% of the respondents got help up to some extent whereas 22% of the respondents said that CR has helped them up to the maximum extent. Community Radio is helpful in getting information needed by the community. CR is helpful for the community either up to some extent or up to maximum extent. Community members listen to their CR station because through this platform they get to hear the voices of their community, followed by the need for the information, entertainment and liking for the programmes broadcast by that CR station.

Communication is one of the fundamental rights / needs to human life. The evolution of modern technologies has made it more sophisticated and accessible than ever before, greatly increasing the potential for economic and social impact. Today, many groups are working to harness the power of communication technology to bring social change and meet people’s needs. For example, CR initiatives around the world are giving poor people a voice, enabling them to initiate their own change such as advocating for rights or promoting social learning and dialogue. For many remote communities, radio remains the most accessible technological medium available.

In a country like India, CR has grown and today there are 141 operational stations. Yet the needs of people remain pressing, with India ranking 134 from the bottom on the Human Development Index (UNDP, 2011). It is hard to measure the effectiveness of CR in meeting needs, with little documented primary evidence and few indicators to assess this change. To address this information gap this dissertation reviews the effectiveness of a community radio station in Orcha, Luchnow, Gudgaon and Guwahati.

The study investigates how the CR station as a whole is responding to the needs of community. The thesis concludes with key recommendations for the CR stations to: increase learning, increase broadcast timings, News broadcasting and, most importantly, increase community participation. It makes recommendations for Government of India to give autonomy to these CR stations for news broadcast as news is an important segment and the community should know the day to day activities.