



## Review Article

# COMMUNITY RADIO: AN EFFECTIVE TOOL FOR TECHNOLOGY DISSEMINATION

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**Abstract:** The Indian Agriculture Scenario is on the brink of a second green revolution. The country arose from an era of food scarcity to that of self-sufficiency. It is becoming increasingly clear that the next leap will come from the information and the knowledge intensity transfer to the agriculture sector, together with other traditional inputs and interventions involving farmers/ group of farmers.

**Keywords:** Green revolution, Community radio

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## Introduction

The Government expects a number of benefits to flow from the successful operation of community radio stations across the country. The question is how to keep agriculture moving and the answer are to pass on agricultural information to the farming community as quickly as possible. Radio can play vital role in this direction. Despite rapid technological changes in telecommunications in the last few decades, radio broadcasting remains the cheapest mode of information dissemination, equally catering to the needs of the rich and poor, rural urban masses and reaching the remotest parts of the country. Needless to say, it plays a vital role in the country's socio-economic and cultural development. Among the various modes of radio broadcasting, community radio especially has an important role to play. Due to its focus on local concerns and aspirations and the interactive nature of its programming, community radio can be a powerful medium for education and development. The experience of a number of developing nations in using community radio for social welfare purposes has clearly established its tremendous potential for reinforcing grass-roots democracy [1,2]. Some of these expectations are:

- Enhancing participation of people in the development process
- Capacity- building, especially in rural areas, through education
- Providing opportunities to people to upgrade their skills and enhance their creative talents
- Preserving and promoting traditional wisdom, knowledge and skills, thereby helping to promote and project the local languages, arts, crafts, culture and traditions
- Bringing within easy reach of the rural population, topical information in areas of agriculture, social welfare, education, health and environment
- Creating rural networks for cottage and village industries along with Strengthening Panchayat Raj Institutions

## Actors in Community Radio

Community radio is maintained and operated by members of a community. The Government, individuals or corporate or even international bodies can help in sustaining it. The essential purpose for community radio is to offer the people a voice and develop the community from within. A radio station is acknowledged as "community radio" when the station is owned by a non-profit group or by a co-

operative whose members are the listeners themselves [3]. The principal stakeholder in any community radio initiative is the community itself. The members of the community should be allowed to decide what kind of programs would interest them, whether a radio programme enthralls them, can help them articulate their problems and aspirations. The community alone can decide the format and scope of the programmes, the kind of entertainment that will enrich their own cultural heritage and yet keep them in tune with the mainstream, and the community alone will throw up the talents who can sustain the radio programme day after day. The idea of the community needs to be generated not only to create enthusiasm among the participants and the audience but also to help the community feel directly responsible [4]. The key players in a community radio project that involves broadcasting are:

Community members: the audience and the people who are central to the project  
Providers of technology: the people who provide the equipment and train the community to use and maintain

Government which grants permission for programmes either through AIR channels or through schemes

Producers and staff: These are the people who know the crafts of programme production and will help the community to generate ideas and create programmes. They will also help with inputs from outside sources that will add to the general information pool essential to sustain radio programmes.

Resource mobilisers - These are the people who provide the finance to support the initiative. These could be the State, corporate house or NGO but the ultimate sustainability must come from the community.

These groups are the stakeholders (actors). They are called stakeholders because each stakeholder has some interest in running the programme, and a 'stake' in the project. They are all partners in the project and share the responsibility of making it successful. Unless the participant, the listener and the broadcaster are all stakeholders in a community radio programme, it is difficult to sustain the programmes.

## Operational Community Radio Stations in India

As of date, licenses have been issued to 562 applicants. Out of 562 License Holders, 293 have signed Grant of Permission Agreement (GOPA).

About 340 applications are presently under consideration for permission to set up CRS. As of date, 214 Community Radio Stations have become operational in the country, of which 86 are operated by CSOs, 113 by the Educational Institutions and 15 by SAU/ KVKs. Grants will be provided to operational CR stations under the scheme "Supporting Community Radio Movement in India" for producing and broadcasting fresh programmes on various themes. Maximum grant to a station for content creation will be limited to ₹ 10 Lakhs, spread over a period of 3 years @ ₹ 2350/- per hour of programme [5].

### Challenges to Community Radio

To play this role they need to provide quality programmes to ensure continued audience, and support from the community. It has been a great success in developed nations but has lacked in developing countries because of illiteracy and lack of awareness among people. The major challenge of community radio includes:

- Long term sustainability, less possession of radio, less broadcast time on agriculture programme, less community involvement, low frequency, poor sound quality etc.
  - Community Radio derives its strength and popularity from community participation. In practice, participation is harder than it seems, because it is labour intensive, requires the right attitude, skills and mobile equipment.
  - Without proper management skills, as well as some knowledge of financial management and income generation, it is very hard for Community Radio to survive without donor funding, therefore, long term sustainability is the major issue in community radio.
  - Community Radio is by definition relatively small and often situated in locations where basic services, like a constant supply of electricity, are lacking. Due to these conditions' equipment suffers and needs to be vigorously maintained and/or regularly replaced.
  - Among the various challenges faced by the community radio, the participation from the people is the major one and no community radio can survive without participation of people as it demands 70% participation of the community people.
- All these problems can be alleviated through collective efforts by community and government. They can be in terms of planning the programme, consolidating the activities, staffing and controlling the activities. The adoption by progressive government policies, laws and regulations that enable this sector is an important step to be taken to improve the condition of community radio. To ensure people participation essentially the leaders of the community which include the elected and the religious authorities as well as the informal but also influential opinion leaders must be part of consultation process. But equally important is a consultation process that involves the community at large. Group discussions with various sectors in the community like farmers, farm women, fishermen, shop-owners, teachers, artisans, etc. are essential. It is also crucial to consult women and youth, who are traditionally marginalized in many rural societies. Nor should any minority, cultural and linguistic group be left out. The points to be ascertained are to know about the listener's need, listener's preference and their listening habit. The staff should provide people with technical support and facilities to produce the programme [6]. With the programmes of entertainment and local culture, they should also provide a platform to discuss relevant issues and village concerns in public, with local leaders called on to make respond and make their opinions and position clear. The programme recorded should be broadcasted next day if possible or as soon as possible this motivates the people to participate more and more. Also, when the programmes are evaluated opinion of the community should be taken regarding their likings and disliking of the programmes and programme format, further their suggestions regarding programme should be considered and implemented.

### Epilogue

Information and communication are the main planks of extension education. It is interesting to note that about 60 percent of the farmers have practically no source of information. Among the sources available, radio was found most frequently accessed source after other progressive farmers. Despite rapid technological changes in telecommunications in the last few decades, radio broadcasting

remains the cheapest mode of information dissemination reaching the remotest parts of the country. Needless to say, community radio plays a vital role in the country's socio-economic and cultural development. The old hegemony of state-structured and territorially-bound public life mediated by radio, television, newspapers and books is being rapidly eroded [7]. Due to its focus on local concerns and aspirations and the interactive nature of its programming, community radio can be a powerful medium for education and development. Community radio stations, rural, cooperative, participatory, alternative, or popular radios, can facilitate information, voice, and local capacities for public debate on key development concerns [8]. The experience of a number of developing countries including India in using community radio for such purposes has clearly demonstrated its tremendous potential for the development of the farming community in rural India. There is a growing acceptance of the community radio in the country. However, this service needs continuous back up from institutions till it reaches to its sustainability.

**Application of review:** The community radio especially has an important role to play. We are living in times in which spatial frameworks of communication are in a state of upheaval.

**Review Category:** Community radio

### Abbreviations:

CR-Community radio, NGO-Non-governmental organisation  
SAU-State Agricultural University, KVK-Krishi Vigyan Kendra  
GOPA- Grant of Permission Agreement, CSO- Community service organisation

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