Women Capacity Building and Empowerment

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Community Radio: A Key for Rural Development

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Introduction

Development is a holistic process; it encompasses not only economic progress but also the social, spiritual, and moral advancement of a community or nation as a whole. The shift from this nomadic way of life to agricultural agriculture in established groups, from which civilizations as we know them today developed, was one of the earliest important social and technological developments. As a result, this occurrence will be referred to as growth, albeit in a materialistic sense. In its true definition, development entails the advancement of all aspects of society, including social and economic growth. In order to avoid instability in the near future, it is critical to support social, ethical, and community-based growth in addition to economic development. Though our government is taking different efforts to aid the development process, we will not be able to achieve anything unless the situation of a large portion of the population who live in villages improves. As most of our people still live in villages, how can we hope to become a superpower without strengthening our rural communities?

In traditional civilizations, when access to education was just a dream, the media has played a critical role in spreading information. The media has played an important role in bringing diverse development to this country by routinely

broadcasting programs on agricultural issues as well as different social and moral evils. The role of the mass media in supporting this 'people's say' is crucial. However, due to their manner of operation, what is meant by "people's say" may not be realized through existing media institutions. They may or may not represent all sectors of the population of a country. As a result, it is critical to include all sectors of the public while expanding media infrastructure. In this perspective, community radio is important because it serves a purpose that cannot be fulfilled by a national, regional, or commercial broadcaster. Community radio is a grassroots effort that represents a community's goals, aspirations, and problems, which are often disregarded or missed by the mainstream media. People determine and define their own communication requirements and priorities. It is a democratic mode of communication.

Since the 1940s, community radio has played an important part in the lives of people all over the world as a democratic communication medium. The beginnings of community radio may be traced back to 1947, when two Latin American radio stations were established. The first was Bolivia's "Miners' Radios," and the second was Columbia's "Radio Sutatenza." Despite the fact that these two pioneering community radio stations were not owned by mine employees, their mission was to "unite the community of miners for improved working conditions" (Fraser & Estrada 2001). Since then, community radio stations have provided viable platforms for ordinary people to engage in the democratic process by expressing their thoughts and opinions. In this regard, community radio stations in South Africa are seen to have had a significant influence on the lives of women, who now feel emboldened to participate actively in the democratic process (Molefe & Molefe, 2007).

The word Community radio has a number of different connotations. In the United Kingdom, community radio sprang from illegal pirate radio stations, but in the United States and India, community radio is more frequently non-profit and non-commercial, using licensed Class-D FM transmitters. Community radio is a form of radio service that provides an alternative to commercial and public service radio programming. Geographic communities and community interests are served through community radio programming. The content of broadcasting is generally popular and relevant to a local/ particular audience, but commercial or mass-media broadcasters may miss it. Community radio stations are run, owned, and motivated by the people who live in the areas they serve. Community radio is a non-profit organization that enables individuals, groups, and communities to tell their own unique tales, share their experiences, and become active makers and providers of media in today's media-rich world.

Community radio is a type of public-service broadcasting that primarily serves a specific community. It represents a community's culture, philosophy, and views, as well as its norms and values. Community radio has become a popular and fresh option for both media practitioners and grassroots people as the medium of inhabitants of a particular community. Community radio aids in the provision of utilities and amenities for different elements of our society's development, such as education, health, water and sanitation, disaster relief, addressing social concerns at the community level, and connecting rural populations with the government. It can be beneficial to the growth of a certain target population, such as the elderly, women, or children. Community radio may help the country's underprivileged and vulnerable groups by elevating their voices, concentrating on their concerns, and expressing their contemporary, updated ideas and thinking for the country's overall growth. It may make a substantial contribution to the rural development of third-world nations like India by focusing on agriculture, education, health and sanitation, recreation, and social issues. In this chapter along with background of Community radio we will discuss how CR can boost rural development and also discuss some example of CR in India.

What is community Radio?

The expression Community Radio has been defined in different ways. It has been called a local radio, people's radio, democratic radio, and so on.

According to **UNESCO**, Community radio is "a media that provides voice to the voiceless, acts as a mouthpiece for the marginalized, and is at the core of communication and democratic processes inside societies,"

According to **Wikipedia** Community radio is only available in a limited geographic region. It is reliant on low-power transmission across a distance of no more than 20-30 kilometres radius. It serves a community that relies on similar resources for survival, has common development challenges and concerns, and is related to national and regional development goals despite being relatively localized.

According to **Lewis (1995):** "The community radio is a form of local radio which defines itself as an autonomous entity – and relies on the community for its survival without any commercial aims or objects."

Kumar (2004) identified radio as an avenue for participatory communication and as a tool relevant in both economic and social development.

In the case of community radio, the term "community" refers to the geographical region in which the station's signal may be heard. However, geography alone isn't enough

to constitute a radio station a community radio station. Community radio is properly realized when a radio station broadcasts for a diverse geographic community, taking into account that that geographic area is home to a variety of ethnic and social groups, that there may be power imbalances within that 'community,' and that the airwaves on a community radio station should be opened to those members of communities who are not heard on other media. Community radio stations are often established in order to form or develop a community out of an unconnected group of individuals. Community radio stations are frequently used as community centers, and since they promote community activities and serve as a venue for public discussion and self-expression, they contribute to the creation, maintenance, and definition of the community.

Evolution of Community Radio in India

Radio broadcasting was introduced in India by private organizations. The Madras Presidency Club's pioneering radio broadcast services, which began in 1924 and ended in 1927, were the first of their kind. The Indian Broadcasting Company (IBC) was founded in that year by a group of entrepreneurs with radio stations in Bombay and Calcutta. Radio transmission has been under the authority of the Indian government since then, till 1995. The Supreme Court of India took historic decision in 1995, which held that "airwaves constitute public property and must be used for the advancement of public welfare," liberated radio from government control. The court also said that, while airwaves are limited, they should be utilized with caution. The right to receive and transmit information is also protected by Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states the basic right to freedom of speech and expression. In India, this 1995 ruling laid the foundation for community radio. Immediately after the judgement, civil society organizations drafted and adopted the Bangalore Declaration, which highlighted the necessity for a third tier of broadcasting, namely community radio. The Pastapur Declaration, issued in 2000, reaffirmed the necessity for community radio while also stating that it should be non-profit, localized, and community-owned. These two declarations were crucial in the growth of India's Community Radio movement. In India, community radio was not legal until 2002. There had been a nationwide push by free speech activists, academics, and community people to legitimize community radio. Only well-established educational institutions were authorized to set up community radios, which were actually campus radios, under the first policy, which was enacted in 2002. Community radio activists protested the discriminatory approach, demanding a "more inclusive and coherent strategy" (Kaushal, 2015).

The government changed its policy in 2006 to enable NGOs, agricultural research institutions, and registered groups to apply for community radio licenses

as a result of community radio advocates' persistent efforts. When the CR policy guidelines for establishing CR stations in the country were released in 2006, the primary goal was to assist communities develop through community radio. So CR is thought of as a tool which can promote development of the country, and, indirectly, the welfare of women. Individuals, political parties and their affiliates, illegal and prohibited groups are exempt from the new community radio policy, which allows any not-for-profit 'legal company' to apply for a CR license. Such stations do not get central financing, and fundraising from other sources is restricted. Only groups having a minimum of three years of registration and a 'proven' track record of local community involvement are eligible to apply. License requirements implicitly favor well-funded stations (e.g. Mana Radio in Andhra Pradesh and Raghav FM in Bihar) over low-cost low-power enterprises, many of which operated successfully on shoestring budgets before any community radio policy was imposed.

They have been granted permission to operate a 100 watt (ERP) radio station with a coverage area of around 12 kilometers. An antenna with a maximum height of 30 meters is permitted. Community radio stations are supposed to generate at least half of their programming locally, in the local language or dialect as much as feasible. Though there is no clear restriction on entertainment, the emphasis is on developmental programs. In India, only 329 community radio stations are in operational as of August 10, 2021 (Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 2021), despite the government's target in 2007 to launch 400 community radio stations "in a few years" (Sharma, 2016).
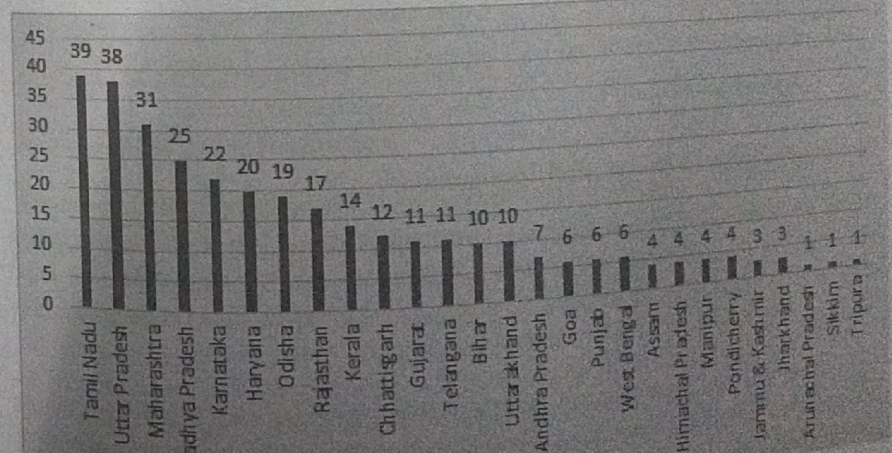

Fig 1: State wise distribution of Community radio station in India
(Source: https://mib.gov.in/all_broadcasting_documents as on 10.08.2021)

Community Radio vs. Public and Commercial Media

Community radio is distinct from public, national, and commercial media in the following ways: public media is frequently controlled by governments, and so is not independent, as community radio stations strive to be. The public media is viewed as the voice of a benign authority disseminating information to the general people. Public media is also viewed as a professional medium, with paid employees and professional reporters, but community media is typically operated by the people who live in the community it serves. Commercial media differs from both public and community media in that it is operated for profit. Public and community media may rely on advertisements or corporate sponsorship to remain competitive, but they aren't typically profit-driven businesses. Community radio practitioners, in contrast to public and commercial media, regard community radio as "grassroots" and "participatory," as opposed to the public service-commercial paradigm, which Louie Tabing has dubbed "Profit, Propaganda, Power, and Privilege" (Tabing, 2002).

Table 1: Difference between radio and community radio

Radio	Community Radio
Controlled and owned by Govt.	Controlled and owned by community
Focus on national priorities	Focus on local priorities and issues
Use national language	Use local idiom and dialects
Cover large geographic area	Cover small focused area
Mode of operation –Centralized	Mode of operation- Decentralized
One – way communication	Two – way communication

Community radio can boost rural development

"Rural development is defined as the process of sustainable growth of the rural economy and involvement of well-being of rural population." Prasad describes in detail rural development goals as people's economic well-being and larger social transformation (Parasad , 2009).

Empowerment is a process in which people become more conscious of how power dynamics affect their lives. People acquire self-confidence and strength as they become more conscious of different societal injustices, difficulties, and inequities. Newspapers, radio, and television supply them with information that shapes their perspectives. Local/community radios serve as an alternative for formal

education in rural areas. It leads to increased knowledge of issues such as women's empowerment, environmental conservation, scientific farming, entrepreneurship, and job opportunities, among others. According to a World Development Report, community media is critical to rural development (World Bank, 2001). They are especially successful in giving a voice to disadvantaged groups in society (Banjade, 2007; Singh *et. al.*, 2010; Kaur, 2012). According to Pradhan (2011), Listening to one's own voice, is an empowering experience for individuals because they "realize that this, genuinely, can be their voice and help them obtain a better deal from the government and others." Another distinction with community radio is that it promotes democratization of communication and emphasizes community involvement (Elliot, 2010). This is what sets community radio apart in democratic nations, where the mainstream media is more concerned with what sells than with what empowers people.

Local radio stations may engage rural communities, women, *Dalits*, indigenous peoples, and underprivileged people in an interactive social communication process by delivering timely and relevant information about injustice, opportunities, experiences, skills, development concerns, and public interests. It empowers communities on many topics by offering debate and discussion on numerous local concerns. People can acquire self-dignity through the empowerment process. It empowers individuals to speak up against injustice, exploitation, abuse, and violence perpetrated against them. It helps to long-term development by empowering individuals to take charge of their own fates, recognizing their needs and challenges, and giving access to knowledge and information that allows them to make educated decisions. Some important area of rural development where Community radio is working as driver of change and boosting pace of development are discussed below:

Agricultural Transformation

The terms "rural development" and "agricultural development" are frequently used interchangeably. The majority of agricultural communities in India live in rural areas, and the majority of people in rural areas rely on agriculture for a living. The revenue earned from agriculture provides for fundamental living requirements such as food, housing, and clothes. It is critical to strengthen the agricultural industry in order to develop rural regions. Change is inherent in development, and one of the most important indicators of rural development is a shift in farmer attitudes. For rural people, farming is a major economic activity, career, or source of income. However, due to a lack of knowledge or education among rural people, productivity is low. The main reason for this is a lack of scientific understanding about farming. Local

radios are the only and easiest way to reach consumers in rural regions with basic agricultural information today, and they may help boost the agriculture industry in rural areas (Khanal, 1989).

Community/local radios aid in the dissemination of critical information for agricultural development, such as better farming methods, improved seeds, timely planting, agro-forestry, better harvesting methods, soil conservation, marketing, post-harvest handling, and diversification, among other topics (Wabwire, 2013). It also educates rural residents about modern technologies that are suited for them, as well as improving and implementing indigenous technology. Furthermore, through programs such as live talk shows, phone-in shows, and on-location broadcasts, local radio allows farmers to engage with one other as well as other relevant authorities such as farm employees, crop and animal specialists (Banjade, 2007). Furthermore, local radio allows communities to express themselves and critically evaluate problems and policies that influence their lives. These policies may be debated and discussed, with timely feedback provided to relevant authorities so that they can take action (Banjade, 2007).

Voice of Voiceless

Small community-owned and operated radio stations are referred to as community radio stations. Community radio's premise is that it is the voice of the voiceless. It is seen as a medium that aids in the raising of the voices of those who are socially and economically disadvantaged, as well as a tool for development in general (AMARC, 1981). These radios benefit individuals by improving access to information and empowering communities by encouraging expression and involvement and valuing local culture. It serves as a vehicle for exposing disadvantaged populations' fundamental rights, and it has become the voice of the poor and silent, landless peasants, and destitute indigenous people (Wabwire, 2013). They assist to de-mystify scientific jargon and to convey research and scientific facts in a way that ordinary people can grasp. They help local communities grow by delivering important information in their own languages. One of the primary advantages of this type of radio is that it empowers local residents to speak up for themselves. Rural residents and local talents, as well as local champions who are supporting their communities in various ways, might be exposed through these local radios.

Information/ Discussion Forum on Local Issues

Since, local radio stations are established in the community and for the community's benefit, these stations become acutely aware of the community's needs and issues

as a result of their proximity to the listeners. Local radio stations speak about every unique problem in the communities they serve because they are familiar with the people in the community and are always sensitive to what their listeners want. As a result, local radio stations talk about every specific problem in the communities they serve (Banjade, 2007). They place a strong emphasis on content, such as political and economic news that promotes community debate and participation, communal and personal messages, information programmes, and culturally relevant entertainment. It serves as a forum for community discussions. These radios help to community empowerment by providing access to important information and discussion.

Promoting Participatory Democracy

Local/community radio offers community people with access to information by providing them with a method of communication. Local radio stations provide as a shared venue for individuals to express themselves socially, politically, and culturally. These radio stations place a premium on vital local topics. The majority of the material delivered is educational and developmental. Furthermore, it provides information on rural development initiatives and exposes rural concerns to government agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in order to enhance democratic processes in rural regions. Local/community radio encourages people to take charge of their own issues. Traditional modes of communication, such as storytelling and group debate, may be reinforced, allowing for grassroots engagement in policy-making and democracy.

Contribution on Good Governance

The major democratic duty of the media is to keep tabs on the government. The media has a critical role in fostering a healthy democracy and guaranteeing effective governance. Local radio also acts as a watchdog on society's power brokers, facilitating active connections between local leaders and society's citizens. Local radio serves as a watchdog for the local government, highlighting policy failures, maladministration, corruption, and scandals. Community media, according to Buckley (2006), may help to promote good governance by exposing corruption and holding politicians accountable.

In empowering women

Women's empowerment is not simple to attain. Family, culture, and the conditioning of disempowered women's mentality are all sources of resistance. Women's empowerment plan, on the other hand, requires special attention. Women's empowerment can be

achieved in a variety of ways. Education, entrepreneurial training programs, the development of self-help groups, social action (feminist movements), legislation, mass communication, and propaganda are some of the most prominent means of women empowerment. In today's society, the mass media are the primary agents of the development, preservation, and elimination of many sorts of images and stereotypes of women. The popularity of visual media such as television outnumbers that of newspapers and periodicals. People's perceptions of the world are shaped by the information they get via newspapers, radio, and television. The modern world's process of women empowerment should be led by the mass media. However, in most media, women are represented in their conventional roles, and their images are merely ornamental in advertising. The greater the number of decision-making positions held by women in the media, the greater their ability to influence production. They will be able to dispel outdated gender prejudices. Governments, non-governmental organizations, social activists, and others are all working to help women grow. The fundamental goal of AIR (All India Radio) has always been to inform, educate, and amuse the audience. The main goals of AIR were to meet the needs of women and to promote their well-being and growth. Women, both producers and listeners, have started to reflect on their abilities and aspirations and on other women's life; their capabilities to produce programs and interact with audiences have grown since they began. They have acquired confidence in speaking in public and in challenging discriminatory traditions. Improved access to a wide range of information, including women's rights, has improved their ability to make informed decisions; they've also learned or improved writing skills and become more familiar with information technology and media; and for some reporters, CR is a source of income and and listeners increase their possibility to access employment opportunities through livelihood-related information; their consideration within family and community is improved.

Karnataka's Namma Dhwani (Our Voices) is India's first cable CR station. It began in March 2003 as a collaborative initiative between the Budikote community and a few non-governmental organisations. Namma Dhwani is now a fully operational Community Multimedia Centre, complete with radio, video, and satellite services. It is also entirely self-sufficient in terms of revenue produced locally. The Namma Dhwani programmes not only raised awareness among listeners, but they also helped women develop leadership skills and behaviours. When it comes to raising knowledge about health and sanitation, education, savings, food habits, and family systems, it has a far greater influence on women (Singh, 2010), and it has resulted in major improvements in the lives of the people of Budikote. As a result, it acted as a catalyst in transforming the lives of rural people. On February 2, 2004, Anna University in

Tamil Nadu established Anna FM, India's first campus radio station, which is also the country's oldest CR station and the first to acquire a broadcast licence. Anna Radio's listeners are urban low- and middle-income people from urban clusters within a 5- to 10-kilometer radius of Anna University. The Deccan Development Society, an NGO that works with 100 groups of the economically disadvantaged Dalit women, established Sangham Radio in Telangana on World Rural Women's Day, October 15, 2008 - another pioneer in the field of CR. Village-level women's collectives are referred to as sangham. Sangham Radio aims to offer a voice to those who are marginalised in society, particularly women. This radio station is entirely owned, managed, and operated by women from rural, underserved regions. The radio station transmits to a 25-kilometer radius, which includes around 100 settlements and a population of over 50,000 people. Mann Vikas Samajik Sanstha, an NGO dedicated to the development of rural and underprivileged women, erected another CR station in Manndeshi Tarang, Maharashtra, on December 16, 2008. Manndeshi Tarang is a non-profit organisation that provides appropriate programmes to improve civic and cultural life. The CR is managed by the Mann Deshi Foundation, although the Mhaswad village community and the surrounding covered areas own it. Manndeshi Tarang has shown to be beneficial in their lives (Ray, 2009).

Young India, a civil society organization formed by some National Youth Awardees, Indira Gandhi NSS Awardees, and Ex-NSS volunteers who are committed to the cause of social transformation and development, launched another popular CR "Radio Namaskar" in Orissa on July 11, 2010, to make the common people informed and active participants in the community development process. The test transmission began on February 12, 2010, and was fully launched in July. Local governance, women's empowerment, food security, and youth development, among other social needs-based concerns, are presently the emphasis of Radio Namaskar (90.4). The goal of the CR programs is to improve its female audience's psychological, economic, cultural, political, and social status (Bandelli, 2011).

In 2012, Pondicherry University conducted a research to investigate women's rural development through CR in the Pillaichavady village region, with data collected from 100 women respondents. According to the research, approximately 87 percent of respondents believed the Puduvai Vaani CR initiatives had enhanced their education. They also reported to be more knowledgeable, particularly when it came to health concerns. The dietary information provided by the programs was judged to be beneficial by 64 percent of those surveyed, and more than half of those surveyed stated it helped them improve their mood (Balan & Norman, 2012).