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CR AS A PARTICIPATORY GRASSROOT COMMUNICATION TOOL : A CASE STUDY OF ALFAZ-E-MEWAT COMMUNITY RADIO STATION



Rachna Saini

INTRODUCTION

"It's not just about getting a song on the radio or appearing on television. It really is about helping people change their lives one day at a time." (Yolanda Adams)

After Supreme Court's judgment in 1995 it was made clear that airwaves are not only government's property but also common man has rights on airwaves. As a response to the universalistic demand for democratization the community radio for the community, of the community and by the community appeared as an idealistic. And the community radio movement seemingly entered in intensive phase. The community radio as an alternative to mainstream radio system has surfaced with the support and under regulation of

ABSTRACT

Community radio has been identified as an important instrument for community development as evident from different empirical studies of the field. Due to empowering participation of community's people at community radio station in various forms like running infrastructure, developing message content; CR stations prove instrumental in community's development.

The success of CR as an effective development tool lies in its mechanism that involves its listeners in the production process of content. It also represents decentralized mode of community development through decentralized ownership and management of CR. It leads to highly localized content that directly connects to its receivers.

This paper explores how Alfaz-e-mewat CR is fulfilling its role of community development. The major discussion is about community involvement, participation, grassroot issues, indigenous ideas transformed into radio programs and sustainability strategy of community radio Alfaz-e-mewat.

KEYWORDS : Community radio, community development, Grassroot Communication Tool.

Short Profile

Rachna Saini is a Research Scholar, IMC&MT, Kurukshetra. She Has Completed M.A.M.C., M.Phil. and Ph.D.

the governments. Like any other socio-cultural movement the government realizes its limitation and private or autonomous agencies are allowed to take initiative. Presently, there are 180 community radio stations in India are on function and 226 are in pipeline to build a network of significance ensuring to reach to far off communities both in urban and rural setting. Alfaz-E-Mewat community radio are in that series.

CR Alfaz-E-Mewat has its distinct position with distinguished catchment area community composition where Muslim population has settled since centuries. The Muslim ethos and ethics, language a mix of Hindu-Urdu give it a character

and it has an influence on the programming of the CRS. The present study focuses on the functioning and programming in reference to the sustainability of e station.

OBJECTIVES

- 1) To find out the CR Station – beginning, Coverage area, broadcasting hour's language program-formats, issues themes community-participation, involvement feedback mechanism etc.
- 2) To Know how Alfaz-E-Mewat community radio station sustain itself on –Program, Human Resource management, Financial and Technical ground. Any get to know about constrain regarding this if any.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In the field of CR various researches have been done in India and world. There are four early initiatives in India in the area of CR progress. These have been discussed in the Book "OTHER VOICES". The struggle for community radio in India (2007) by Kanchan K. Malik, and Vinod Pavarala.. The DDS (Deccan Development Society), an NGO in Medah district in Andhra Pradesh (1998) and the other NGO - VOICES/MYRADA started an audio production centre, Namma Dhwani (2001) at Budhikots in the Kolar district of Karnataka. Third effort was made through KMVS (Kutch Mahila Vikas Sangathan in 1999). A 30 minute sponsored program in Kutchi language was broadcast through AJR's Radio Bhuj.

Another effort was made by "Alternative for India Development", a grassroots level NGO in Jharkhand. They broadcast from Daltongund, a backward region in Palam, a district of the state by using AIR Slot. These were the efforts made for grassroot level communication in various areas of India. The sustainability of CR has been discussed by various scholars in the field in the form of Research Papers and Reports. As by Arti Jaiman (2010), Tanja E, Bosch (2007), Reports by CIMA (2007), UNESCO Handbook (2002) and many

others. In these papers, reports and books; various success stories of CR are hinted but these is not story which can highlights the actual status of community radio. Although sustainability has been focused but the operating constraints of CR functioning has not been researched or not reported yet.

METHODOLOGY:

In this paper, researcher adopted both qualitative and quantitative method are used to get better information about the study. These method are covered under the light of interview with station director and station manager of Alfaz-E-Mewat (Community radio station), focus group discussion with the staff . The Main source of information in this concern is station manager and station director.

ABOUT MEWAT

Mewat is a small district near Arawali hills in Haryana. This area is much known for its backwardness in social , Educational , commercial. Along with Alfaz-E-Mewat, there is one another community radio station i.e. Radio Mewat. People earn their livelihood by farming or by working with small scale industries. Agriculture here is away from progressive techniques & Carries loads of problems with it. Non availability of water is the big backlog for farmers. Alongwith this people have less interest for Academics.

Data Analysis (In response to objective-1)

Alfaz-E-Mewat-Beginning

Alfaz-E-Mewat has been set up by an NGO named SM Sehgal foundation with the support from the Ministry of Agriculture. The radio staion starts its journey for applying license in august 2009 and got letter to intent in may 2010 and launched formally of 107.8 . The Community Radio staion is set up between Arawali hills on one side and open ground at other side, so its signal works just around 20-25

km area.

Broadcasting hours & language

Alfaz-E-Mewat CR broadcasts for all 7 days a week. And It broadcasts for 13 hours in a day, out of which 7hrs are fresh broadcast and rest is repeated broadcast. Everyday, the station broadcasts three hours interactive programme. The broadcast is done in local language/dialect. Broadcasting time of the station starts from 8:00 am in the morning to 2:00 pm in noon and resumes from 4:00 pm to 11:00 pm in late night. Program's language is Hindi, Mewati and Urdu.

Program-Formats, Themes Target group and Key program

Basically Alfaz-E-Mewat community radio station adopts all formats for programming like talk, discussion, Interview, Radio Magazine, Nazam, Folk Music, Folk songs and Vox pop. The programme's of CR station target each group of society i.e. Senior Citizens, women, Youth and Children. Programs are focused Knowledge. The programme's of Alfaz-E-Mewat are 'Maan Ki Baat', 'Agriculture News', 'Waqt Hamara hai', 'Saaf-Safai aur Sehat', 'Gali-Gali Sim Sim', 'Kisse-Kahaniya', 'Guftguoo', 'Masaki Mewat', 'Gaon Ki Chopal', 'Tofha-E-Kudrat-Jal, Jungle, Jameen', 'Hello Farmaish, Radio School, Sufi Mehfil, 'Hum se hai Shahan', 'kanoon ki baat'.

Feedback Mechanism

Mainly Alfaz-E-Mewat get the feedback through phone Calls and SMS. The CR station uses the software GRINS made by GRAMVANI especially for community radio broadcasting. Through this calls and messages from listeners are automatically saved in the computer. And CR station gets daily feedback from this. And, they reply on this feedback on program 'Maan Ki baat'. Community people also provide feedback through mails and to visit the CR station.

In response to objective II

The sustainability question has been

raised in the context of development of CR station in terms of capacity and existence of station to reach to the people continuously for a longer period. The sustainability areas have been outlined while assessing the performance of CRs as financial, technical, operational and of programme vitae.

Financial

Financial sustainability of any organization is judged by its management of expenditure and income generated potential. As CRS are non profit entity but there are so many ways suggested by Government of India (GOI) to generate income and run a CR station. The main expenditure of Alfaz-E-Mewat Community radio station is salary paid to the staff, electricity bill, spectrum charges, AMC, equipment maintenance, studio maintenance, monthly field expenditure, payment of the trainee etc. The station generates income to fulfill expenditure through following ways- Advertisements, sponsored programs, Govt. ads, projects. The community radio also takes help from its parental organization to fulfill its expenditure. So, we can say alfaz-e-mewat is financially sustaining by managing its expenditure and income. But its station director Ms Pooja Murada admits that there is always a financial constrain to manage the station. further she added that if a station is not financially strong it can be operated properly.

Program Sustainability

Program sustainability of any CR station is measured from the involvement of its community in the programs. The station manager of AEM (Alfaz-E-Mewat) community radio station Mr. Sorab told that the station gets very active response from the listeners for the program. Everyday 15-20 people from the community opine about the program through phone calls and also submit their response towards community radio station. About program making he added that community

people visit the CR station and record their program, And these programs are broadcast on AEM. Apart from that, the radio has made approx 20 listeners clubs in near by villages. These clubs are associated with the community radio station and through these clubs problems of the villages come into existence and solved in the possible way by through broadcasting of CRS

Technical Sustainability

The technical sustainability of any CRS depend upon adequate use of its equipments, their maintenance, broadcasting signal quality, studio space and immediate solution of technical problem. studio quality of Alfaz-E-Mewat station is very good. Its more than better that as a CR station is requires. As concerns the software AEM uses GRINS software which is considered to be best for community radio broadcasting. The station uses generator for power back up convenient broadcasting. Equipment maintenance is also checked on weekly basis. If there is any technical problem it solved soon. So, it shows that Alfaz-E-Mewat has good technical report i.e. technical sustainability.

CONCLUSION

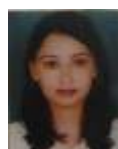
While going along with the objective of the study concentrating on Alfaz-E-Mewat community radio station located in narrow range of Delhi covering aspects – community participation, programs in languages, feedback system, human resource, and financial situation – condition of this CR station.

In a short period of its start Alfaz-e-Mewat CRS pulled up itself to a satisfactory scale in terms of sustainability parameters i.e. program, financial and Technical and human resource. The station could take sufficient local cooperation and support. The station was also become capable to raise a flag – The club of listeners which gave CR station feedback. The station is sound enough on financial and technical aspect. Overall, the station has succeeded in its grounding in the heart and minds of local

community. It is fascinating that this has a program title among many others, 'Maan ki baat' as PM Modi also titled its radio program on monthly basis.

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