

You can establish your Community Radio Station!
(Special on World Radio Day, 13th February by UN)

-Suresh Verma

Imagine yourself as an RJ who runs live show on radio that people of your community are listen attentively! Or picture yourself as a radio programme producer or a script writer for a Radio Drama or a singer in your local dialect. This can be possible very economically in a Community radio. Community radio is spreading throughout Indian subcontinent like other parts of the world. They can bring inspiration and innovative ideas to their listeners through educational and information rich programmes in an entertaining way. It is well understood throughout developing countries that radio broadcasting plays a vital role in socio economic and cultural development of these nations. In spite of radical changes in digital technology in the twenty first century, radio still caters the need of all the segments of our society whether it be rural or urban, rich or poor, literate or illiterate even in the very remote parts of India. Effective communication with the masses is possible when radio broadcasting is skilfully used as a catalyst of change and development.

WHAT is Community radio?

It is popularly known by various names in different parts of the world like Rural Radio, Grass root Radio, Participatory Radio, Free Radio, Alternative Radio, Popular Radio, Cooperative Radio, Educational and Campus Radio. These names themselves reflect the varied characteristics of community radio. According to AMARC, "Community radio is not about doing something for the community but about the community doing something for itself." Community Radio means radio broadcasting by a very small transmitter (50/100 Watts). It engages members of the community in the broadcast of its programmes with the objective of serving the community. It fulfils the needs of a geographical area, that may be located in a rural village or in the heart of a large city. Community radio has three main features: Not-for-profit philosophy, democratic community possession and programmes through community participation. As such it is a dedication to use the medium of broadcasting for community building. Besides it is a vital platform from where listeners get an opportunity to participate. This can become valuable channel of communication for highlighting their voice to the state and diverse bodies meant for development.

WHY Community radio?

Community radio highlights local issues & problems by local producers using local voices in local dialect. Secondly, community gets an opportunity to actively participate in the management of radio station and decide content of the programmes. Thirdly, objective is to serve the community and not profit maximization and lastly, it improves social and economic conditions of its audience by making them subject and not simply object. Besides it is a vital platform from where listeners get an opportunity to participate. This can become valuable channel of communication for highlighting their voice to the state and diverse bodies meant for development.

WHO can start Community Radio?

Community Radio encourages the right to communicate, provides access to training, production & distribution facilities, promotes local creative talent and expression, fosters local traditions and contributes to the democratic process by offering a right of access to marginalised groups and protecting cultural and linguistic diversity.

The Government of India permitted for the grant of licenses for setting up of Community Radio Stations to well established educational institutions including IITs/IIMs in December 2002. Later the Government decided to broad base the policy by bringing 'Non-profit' organisations like civil society and voluntary organisations etc under its range for more participation by the civil society on issues relating to development & social change. In 2006, it was decided that following category of institutions/organizations are eligible to apply:-

a. 'Non-profit' organizations like civil Society and voluntary organizations registered under the societies act and having a proven record of at least three years of service to the local community at the time of application.

b. State Agricultural Universities (SAUs), ICAR institutions and Krishi Vigyan Kendras.

c. Well established educational institutions (including schools, colleges & State, Central & Deemed Universities).

WHERE to apply?

If you are interested in establishing your community radio, you need to ask yourself how you can serve your community by this radio station. You have to follow all policy guidelines and fill the application form along with a

processing fee to the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting. For any free assistance, you can mail me your enquiries.

WHEN you are going to broadcast it?

Universities/Deemed University or Government run educational institution will have a single window clearance by putting up cases before an Inter Ministerial Committee chaired by Secretary, I&B for approval. Thereafter, a letter of Intent (LOI) will be issued granting permission to run a community radio. In the case of all other applicants, including private educational institutions, Letters of Intent (LOI) will be issued only on receipt of clearance from Ministries of Home Affairs, Defence & HRD (in case of private educational institutions) and allocation of frequency by WPC Wing of Ministry of Communication & IT.

HOW vibrant is your Community Radio Station, If you are running a station? Please rate your station A+, A & A-

- Do you provide any development forum/ platform for your community?
- Do you encourage participation of community in programmes?
- Do you promote active involvement of underprivileged groups?
- Do you encourage innovation in community development?
- Do you increase the free flow of accurate and balanced information to the community?
- In the case of error do you rectify the said error and issue corrective statements immediately?

Basic Principles of Empowerment for Broadcasters in Community radio

Broadcasting means to inform, to educate, to entertain, to motivate, to bring change in your audience. Radio fulfil these objective not in a harsh manner but with a PLEASE attitude.

- 1) **P** → Plan your programme content
- 2) **L** → Learn to keep patience when others loose
- 3) **E** → Enjoy the company of community members
- 4) **A** → Assent positive attitude
- 5) **S** → Set development goals
- 6) **E** → Experiment new ideas

Radio is really an extraordinary mass medium. It became evident that radio's biggest strength is its elasticity, immediacy, its friendly appeal and its capability to expand the imagination of the listeners. With its unique power to touch your heart and mind quite unexpectedly, it has largest network in the world among the mass media. In India AIR only has 406 stations reaching 92% area & 99.19% population broadcasting in 23 languages and 146 dialects. Besides number of commercial radio, community radio and internet radio are also increasing day by day.

In 2011 UNESCO in its 36th General Conference took one important decision to celebrate 13th February as WORLD RADIO DAY. This day has its own historical importance. In 1946 on this day UN Radio was established. In 2012, the United Nations General Assembly voted to approve World Radio Day as a UN International Day, cementing its position as a major global celebration for years to come. By celebrating this day people realize that radio has touched their life in moments of happiness, festivals, joy and sorrow. This will also bring fraternity and feeling of sharing with your community and countrymen. Can you guess which Radio Stations of AIR were Broadcasting prior to Independence.

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