Community Radio and Gender
Towards an Inclusive Public Sphere

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Overview

- CR in the framework of Gender, Development and Voice
- Obstacle for a full participation of women
- Case studies: Radio Sangham and Radio Namaskar
- Recommendations for strengthening the empowerment potential of CR

Downloaded from: http://www.map-zone.net/map/india/
The status of women in India

- Elimination of discrimination is an “accepted social goal of the country” (Joseph & Sharma, 1994, p. 17);
- legislative achievements and political entitlements in Panchayat.

*However...*

- “Informal networks of males are the real sites of power” (Kotwal, 2008, p. 220);
- election of women representatives in Panchayat not translated in active participation;
- discrimination in access to healthcare and nutrition, sex-selective abortions and female infanticide are causes of death for 42 million of women per year (Kapur, 2010).
Voice:
injecting women’s experience into development

Through CR women relief from a condition of “voice poverty” where voice means “inclusion and participation in social, political, and economic processes, meaning making, autonomy, and expression” (Tacchi & Kiran, 2008, p. 31).

Effective voice is a “basic dimension of human life”. It includes the act of speaking and the act of paying attention (Couldry, 2010, p. 7).

“It is that act of speech of ‘talking back’, that is no mere gesture of empty words; that is the expression of our movement from object to subject - the liberated voice” (bell hooks, 1989, p. 9).
Women in Media

Globally, women are the most disadvantaged in terms of access to media, both as receivers and producers of information (WACC, 2010a).

**Causes:**

- poorer than men;
- discriminated against in the right to education;
- confined to domestic roles and childcare;
- limited mobility and prospects for establishing interpersonal communication.
Women in Media in India

The 2010 Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) country report:

• only 22% of news subjects are women (13% in radio);
• ordinary and disadvantaged women’s views are almost absent;
• women tend to represent popular opinion.

Lack of opportunity to:
access relevant information
produce communicative acts
Community Radio: “subaltern counterpublics” or “public sphericules”

“parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counter-discourses, which in turn permit them to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs”.

(Fraser, 1990, p. 67)

CR generates what Gitlin (1998) calls “public sphericules”. In these sites, non-elite groups set counter-hegemonic agenda and forms of solidarity.
Discriminatory gender norms: hindering factor for a full participation

- Radio devices are monopolised by men;
- submission to parents and in-laws;
- culturally non acceptable for women to stay out late at night and interact with male reporters;
- radio activity is to be subordinated to housework and relocation to husband’s village after marriage;
- in the long-term men replace women in field-based work with the ostensible intention of protecting them.

(Bandelli, 2012a; Pavarala & Malik, 2007 and 2009)
Case Study (1)*: Sangham Radio
Dalit women’s voice on 90.4 FM

First CR in rural India - Supported by DDS Machnoor village, Medak District (AP) narrowcasting since 1998, on air since 2008.
2 reporters + 16 sangham supervisors;
Community shareholders: Rs. 50 from 5000 members of the 75 sangham.

Content:
agricultural info for semi-arid regions;
traditional knowledge and community care of natural resources; education and literacy; violence against women and gender justice; local cultures, songs and dramas.

*based on field visits by Vinod Pavarala & Kanchan Malik 2001-2012
A reversal of the top-down, male dominated communication model

Women within the community as repositories of local knowledge; professional experts rarely featured;

95% participation by women listeners

Discussion of sangham activities; women participate in Panchayat meetings; husbands gradually recognize their work.
Case Study (2)*: Radio Namaskar
First CR in Orissa

Run by Young India NGO
on air since February 2010
250,000 potential listeners
72 listeners groups; 300 SHGs.

5 young women reporter out of 8 team members + 4 pgm advisors.

Contents: health and welfare schemes, interactive sessions with farmers, gender and women’s rights, local happenings, children, youth, sport and volunteerism, interviews with locally known figures, programmes recorded at villages, letters and phone-calls from listeners.

*qualitative research conducted by Daniela Bandelli in April 2011
Women communication needs fulfilled

Received messages (contents):
• Rights (Right To Information);
• employment;
• education;
• health;
• traditional knowledge, local culture and entertainment.

Communicative acts (functions):
• Speaking out on social problems and local governance;
• expressing skills and artistic inclinations;
• engaging in social activism;
• establishing relations and dialogue;
• practicing communication skills;
• familiarization with the media.
Women’s communication needs fulfilled
...enhanced possibility to enter the public sphere

• Jingles: right to receive proper services at *Anganwadi* centres
• listeners denounced irregularities in the quantity of *dal*
• debate with citizens and public officers
• women from Kunanga brought a sample of *dal* to the studio, sent it to the Prime Minister of India and to the Chief Minister of Orissa.
• sample found insect-infested
• issue covered heavily in the local press (cases of corruption)

Tangible results: more than 50 centres now supply the right quantity of *dal*; committee composed of local mothers is now in charge of purchasing the *dal* from local farmers.

(Bandelli, 2012b)
The empowerment process

• Awareness on rights and condition of women, informative choices, plans for the future;
• literacy, IT skills;
• public speaking, cultural discourse on silenced women voice reversed;
• position within the family enhanced;
• will to work as agents of change within the community.
Recommendations

Drawn from The Word Association of Community Radio Broadcasters AMARC Gender Policy*, adopted by CR Forum of India

Women as

Listeners ➔ “ensuring a supportive, secure environment in and around the station”.

- Equal partners in development initiatives; ad-hoc listening sessions and women-focused pgm.

Producers of media content ➔ “capacity-building is a key component for achieving gender parity” and must be “for both men and women”.

- Context-specific training; value voice; accommodate daily agenda and provide space for children.
Recommendations (2)

Decision-makers → “In order for women to be meaningfully represented at all levels of the community radio station, quotas for participation need to be set for ownership, management and production, including women’s participation in technical management”.
- Policy embracing respect for women and equality.

Portrayals → women must be represented “in their diversity, instead of emphasising stereotyped roles”.
- Gender sensitivity training; gender-specific programming; engender content and women as experts; no-tolerance policy for objectification.

References


*Pictures taken during field-work research by the authors Bandelli and Malik. The third picture on the first slide has been shared by Young India NGOs.*