

Effectiveness and Future of Community Radio Stations in India

Nuti Namita¹

Background

The foundation of Community Radio is built on the principles of access, participation and the ability to represent one's voice. We have numerous examples from all across India that underscore the transformative role that the Community Radio Stations (CRSs) play in the matters of inclusion, diversity and promoting the rights and participation of the marginalized community.

The Community Radio Policy Guidelines 2006 states that:

"The programmes should be of immediate relevance to the community. The emphasis should be on developmental, agricultural, health, educational, environmental, social welfare, community development and cultural programmes. The programming should reflect the special interests and needs of the local community. At least 50% of content shall be generated with the participation of the local community, for which the station has been set up. Programmes should preferably be in the local language and dialect(s)."

In December 2002, Government of India approved a policy for granting licenses for setting up of CRSs at well-established educational institutions, including Indian Institute of Technology (IITs) and Indian Institute of Management (IIMs). The guideline was expanded in 2006 to broad base the policy by bringing 'non-profit' organizations, like civil society and voluntary organizations, etc. under its ambit in order to allow greater participation by the civil society on issues relating to development and social change. In India, the CRS licenses are granted to only the not-for-profit organizations which are rooted in the local community. This gives the CRSs a distinct advantage to focus on local developmental issues of health, nutrition, education, etc. Further, as the broadcast is done in the local languages, people are able to relate to it instantly. As such the CRSs have the potential to strengthen people's participation in developmental programmes in the country.

¹ Assistant Professor, Sri Venkateswara College, South Campus, University of Delhi, India.
Email: namita.nuti@gmail.com