



Community Radio (CR) – Participatory Communication Tool for Rural Women Development - A Study

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Available online at: www.isca.in

Received 17th July 2012, revised 27th July 2012, accepted 30th July 2012

Abstract

Radio was identified as the most accessible mass communication tool for grass root people. The radio as a medium, can easily reach the rural mass in short span of time. The technology is simple and easy to use. The advantage of radio is literacy is not needed for the users, while incurring lower investment cost. The concept of community radio (CR) is gaining momentum in recent period. Community radio is a process. It is not simply about producing radio programme, to put on air. CR is by the community and for the community. CR is giving opportunity for the people representation for different ethnic, social and religious backgrounds and gender. The community participation in all aspects of the radio station from establishment to management, from administration to financing. The modern concept of development gives emphasis to human and social development does not end with economic development only. For social development, empowering the Women at grassroots and their capacity building is the major concerns. Community radio (CR) can emerge as a future tool for rural women development. CR is a platform for bringing accountability of the development process, ultimately making the system more transparent and ensuring good governance. CR ensures the participation of the community, along with community ownership and control. Thus speedy transfer of technology is need of the hour for second green revolution. The research for finding future tools for rural women development is inevitable. CR will play a major role in identifying and addressing local infrastructure needs, grass root development by means of participatory communication.

Keywords: Community radio- participatory communication - women development.

Introduction

A woman has to play a vital role in life and society. In fact, she plays many a role in a single lifetime. She is the creator and protector of a family. She gives birth to a generation, develops it and thus forms the society. In fact, society is a product of women. But in spite of the importance attached to her personality, a woman is least respected – in the true sense of the word in society. Buxi¹ stated that over thousands of years, she has not been able to be free of shackles and chains, binding her and confining her to a limited space to move and act. Following a long spell of fights and struggles – internal and external – and under the immense pressure of women's liberation activists, at the international level, various governments began to act a number of laws, protecting women, including some for granting reservation in different elected bodies, in order to provide them with a share in power at various levels. Sahu Basanta² observed that Media has played an important role in developing rural women. The Media industry has now become a career, in which more and more girls are joining.

Mass Media and Radio: Mass media is any medium specifically designed to reach a very large audience such as the population of a nation state. The mass media – newspapers, magazines, television, film, radio and recording are a product of this mass society, and they in turn produce a standard product

for their audiences. Pruthi and co workers³ focussed that at macro level, the mass media is an important agent of transformation and social change. They are inextricably bound up with the capitalist project and they play a centre-stage role in the reproduction. At micro level, the mass media mingles with the population as one of their family members. Pertaining to Radio, it was the first electronic medium to serve a mass public.

Frequency Modulation (FM) Radio: In telecommunications, frequency modulation (FM) conveys information over a carrier wave by varying its frequency (contrast this with amplitude modulation, in which the amplitude of the carrier is varied while its frequency remains constant).

Community radio and Participatory Communication: It is now recognized that participatory communication approaches are powerful tools to bring in change and empower people at the grassroots to decide their own future. The community radio is owned and operated by a community or members of a community. The main purpose of this sort of station is to develop the community. Community radio is a process. It is not simply about producing radio programmes to put on air; it is about developing your community by using radio. Community radio is both for the community and by the community. The

community is understood to be the owner of the radio station. The community participates in all aspects of the station, from establishment to management, administration to financing. Community radio is characterised by the active participation of the community in creating news, information, entertainment and culturally-relevant material with an emphasis on local issues and concerns. Bora Abhijit⁴ stated that with training, local producers can create programmes using local voices. The best advantage in them is that immediate local problems and issues can be tackled in a minimum loss of time whenever the need is felt. The community can also actively participate in the management of the station and have a say in the scheduling and content of the programmes.

Puduvai vani –Community Radio: Pondicherry University in India is committed to carry out a lot of extension and outreach activities all throughout the year. With the ideological framework for carrying community voices, Community radio – Puduvai Vani was started in 2008. Puduvai Vaani is creating chances for participating and exhibiting their talents and views. By participating in CRS programmes they are getting exposure and increasing their confidence level. Puduvai Vaani also conducts competitions for school, college students and community people every year. These competitions are enhancing their knowledge, ideas other than their subject knowledge. Imparting training programmes for women and children from community for empowering their skills and economic status. Through its training programmes some of them are getting chances to start entrepreneurship. For an example, Mrs. Poorani, SHG member started a “A to Z shop” in Pondicherry University campus. Some of them are earning a reasonable amount by attending transmission duties, producing programmes and presenting live programmes. By attending the radio summer camps the students are usefully utilizing their holidays.

Research methodology

The influences or community radio programmes on rural women development is not covered in the previous research programmes. A study was conducted with the following specific objectives i. To study the socio-economic condition of the respondents, ii. To study radio listening pattern of the respondents, iii. To analyze the media profile of the respondents, iv. To find the willingness or interest among the target audience and their willingness to participate in community Radio Programmes, v. To analyze the rural development of women through community radio.

To fulfil the set objectives of this study, a detailed data collection in the coverage area of Puduvai Vaani CRS was made. Pillaichavady is the closer area of Puduvai Vaani CRS. Pillaichavady is selected area for this study. The sample size of the study was decided to 100 random samples from the village. This study is focus on women. So 100 women respondents were randomly selected for the study. Quantitative data were

collected and analyzed by using the statistical package for the social sciences software (SPSS Version 16.0). Frequencies were generated and the results were interpreted through percentage analysis. The data is also presented in relevant graphs and diagrams.

Results and discussion

Nearly half of the respondents (41%) belong to age group of 20 to 29 years and nearly one fourth of the respondents (23% and 22%) belong to the age group of 10 to 19 years and 30 to 39 years respectively. Nearly one-fourth of the respondents (24% to 26%) have completed high school and secondary level education. 12 percent of the respondents have completed elementary level education. Nearly one fourth of the respondents were Illiterate. This shows that the higher studies of their study area are very low. Regarding the occupational status of the respondents, nearly half (40%) of the respondents were home maker and Less than one fourth of the respondents (18%) were students. Nearly one – twentieth of the responders were wage labourers. Half of the (51%) of the respondents were usually listen to radio at their home. More than one-tenth (12%) of the respondents were listen to radio at their working place and at the time of travelling or commuting. One fourth of the respondents were listening to radio at other places like shops, beauty parlours etc. Half of the respondents (51%) not at all listening to radio. The development of television may be the cause and reduces the radio listening. The table no.2 shows that nearly one-two (45%) of the respondents listen to radio by mobile phones. Nearly one fourth of the respondents (25%) listen to radio by local radio receivers or branded radio receivers with antenna. Table no.3 reveals about the details of the most favourite programmes in radio channels. The informations on health issues are not all reaching the poor sector in India¹³. But through Community radio the community can access the informations at ease. One fifth of the respondents (20%) were eager to listen to programmes related to Education, Children and Health and Nutrition Programmes. The majority of the respondents are from the age group of 10 to 39 years and their education qualification is less than Higher Secondary Level. More than one tenth of the respondents (12%) interested in women and youth programme. Less than one tenth of the respondents (8%) were interested in listening information about local community and agriculture programme. About 67% of the respondents were ready to participate in radio programmes. One –third of the respondents (33%) were not shown interest in participation. Table no. 4 reveals about the interest of the respondents to participate in categories of programmes of Puduvai Vaani Community Radio Station. Nearly three fourth (74%) of the respondents were willing to participate in women programmes. Table no. 5 discloses the distribution of the respondents by their life style through the programmes of Puduvai Vaani CRS. Most of the respondents nearly 87% felt improvement in education. Near to education, they got improvement in knowledge and Health also. About 64% of the respondents developed in their nutrition aspects by the

programmes of Puduvai Vaani CRS. More than half of the respondents got improvement in their attitude.

Conclusion

Communication media is the most popular means of women development. Information technology (IT) is becoming a very popular social science. Akila Sivaraman⁵ found the impact of the media has been quite impressive on our social, economic, political, psychological, educational and commercial fields. Kaptan and Subramanian⁶ explained that the role of women in our society has changed dramatically in last 3-4 decades. It will be erroneous on our part to accept the traditional role of women in this modern world; women are now playing a diversified role in the socio economic context of our society. A historical analysis of the role of women in media and literature has been undertaken by several authors. Civil society is slowly gaining importance in Indian context Ganesamurthy⁷ depicted that it is still meaningless for the literate, poor, downtrodden, resource less and defenceless women who form the majority of Indian women.

The important conclusions drawn from the above point are to empower women is to increase their control over the decisions that affect their lives both within and outside the household. Arundhati Chattopadhyay⁸ explained that women should be encouraged to bring their vision and leadership, knowledge and skills, views and aspirations into the development agenda from the grassroots to international levels. Women should be assisted in conflict situations and their participation in peace processes supported. Thus radio media has a number of attributes that makes it an effective tool in promoting women's participation in decision-making processes and governance structures. It is not controlled corporate and government interests which allows it to speak to issues independently. Sharma Kalpa⁹ pointed out that Community radio uses local language that makes the information and the discussions on health issues accessible to local communities. It transcends literacy barriers, which allows and encourages a great number of women to use it as their primary source of information.

Acknowledgement: The authors express his sincere thanks to Mrs.Shaleema Shajahan, Pondicherry for rendering help in investigation and encouragement.

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Table-1
Distribution of the Respondents by places where they listen to the Radio

The place of listening to Radio by the Respondents (N = 49)	Frequency	Percentage
Home	25	51.0
Work place	6	12.0
Travelling / Commuting	6	12.0
Other places	12	25.0
Total	49	100

Table-2
Distribution of the respondents by the source of listening to Radio

The source of listening by the Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
Local Radio Receiver	12	24.5
Mobile phone	22	44.5
Branded Radio Receiver with antenna	12	24.5
Others	3	6.5
Total	49	100

Table-3
Distribution of the respondents by liking the programmes in radio channels

Most liking Programmes in Radio channels	Frequency	Percentage
Women Programme	12	12.0
Youth Programme	12	12.0
Health and Nutrition Programme	20	20.0
Information about local community	8	8.0
Children Programme	20	20.0
Agriculture Programme	8	8.0
Education Programme	20	20.0
Others	Nil	Nil
Total	100	100.0

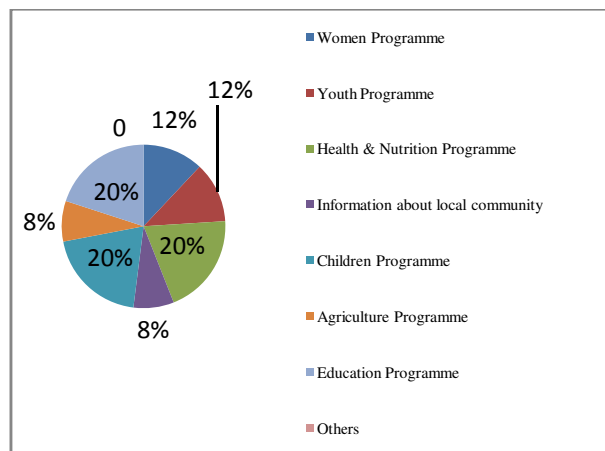


Figure-1
Likings in Radio channel

Table-4
Distribution of the Respondents by having interest to participate in specific type of programmes of Pudukkottai Vaani CRS

Type of programmes to participate	Frequency	Percentage
Women Programmes	74	74.00
Live Programmes	51	51.00
Music Programmes	36	36.00
Drama	7	7.00
Education Programmes	12	12.00
Agriculture Programmes	27	27.00
Health Programmes	49	49.00
Others	28	28.00

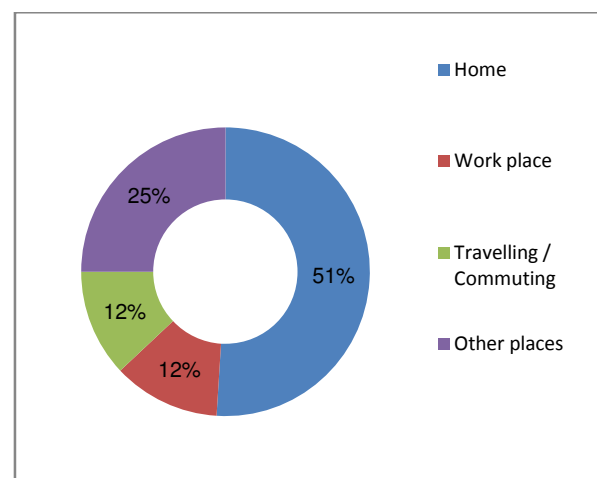


Figure-2
Place of Listening

Table-5
Distribution of the Respondents by improvement of their life style through the programmes of Pudukkottai Vaani CRS

Improvement in	Yes (%)	No (%)
Attitude	54	46
Knowledge	83	17
Education	87	13
Income	19	81
Motivation and Self Confidence	28	72
Agriculture / Fishing	16	84
Health	79	21
Nutrition	64	36
Sanitation	22	78
Family Management	16	84

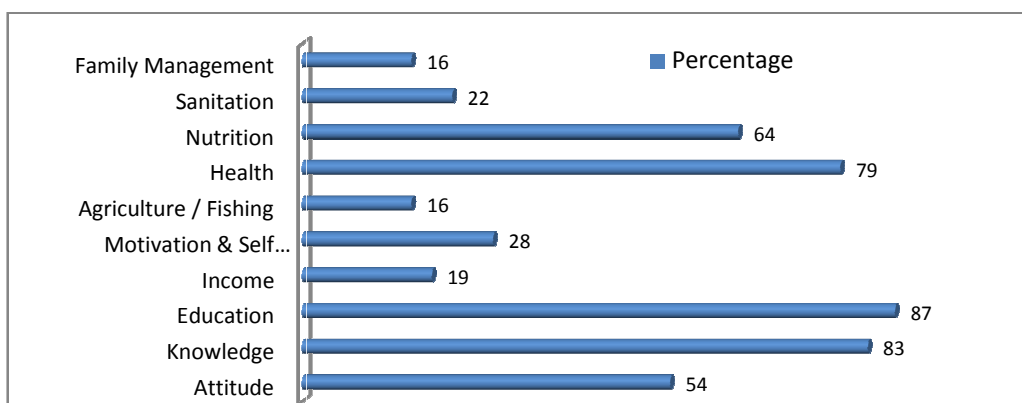


Figure-3
Distribution of the Respondents by improvement of their life style through the Community Radio programs