

# Community radio stations in rural or developing areas



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In recent times, media has prioritised the use of mass communications, where the rural areas receive information from their nearby capital cities. The minor community has always been overlooked. Community radio is the form of radio that emphasises on a community, allowing its members to plan, produce, perform and make the use of media to make their voices heard and existence sensed. The members of the community, often on a volunteer basis, for which the radio broadcasts for, are the ones who elect the board members, make the policy for the station, manage the station and produce the programmes that represents the community (Kim Mahling Clark, 2007). It is the means of expression of the community, rather than for the community (Lumko Mtimde, 1998). Community radio is an influential tool for empowerment of the unnoticed groups struggling to be heard in the society.

The word 'community' refers to a group of people living in the same place who share characteristics and/or interests. The term 'community' can be classified on the basis of the geographical location and a social group of individuals who share specific interests. Hence a community radio is the one that broadcasts solely for the entertainment, development and empowerment of a community. This goal is met by allowing the members of the community to voice their opinion about the issues and the policies that affect their personal lives (Lumko Mtimde, 1998). However, claiming that community radio broadcasts solely for the needs of a community will not suffice. The mainstream radio also take the responsibility of the communities. Also categorising the community radio as a small-scaled, alternative and socially beneficial form of radio is insufficient, as these can

be the defining features of commercial and public service radio (Chignell, 2009). Gordon, in his article, summarised the definition: Everybody who has any interest in radio knows what exactly community radio is all about. But these people, at times, contradict each other. However, it is unanimously agreed that a community radio is the one that is run principally by volunteers on a non-profit concept, this is where the agreement ends (Gordon, 2006). A community radio must either be registered as a non-profit making organisation or must be run by an entity that is registered as non-profit making organisation. Therefore it is understood that the objective of the organisation running a community radio should be to serve and educate their target community and not to make profit out of the business.

When Jose Ignacio Lopez came across the question “ Do we work primarily for our gain, or to help improve the social conditions and the cultural quality of life of the people in our communities?” he said that, “ Community radio stations are not looking for profit, but to provide a service to civil society. A service that attempts to influence public opinion, create consensus, strengthen democracy and above all create community – hence the name community radio.” (Lumko Mtimde, 1998). The community radio must take up the responsibility to educate their audience about the local political party and help them cast their vote; community radio can also help the listeners preserve their local environment. The networks of community radio stations can serve as an effective platform for the conception of national news and distribution of information (Kim Mahling Clark, 2007).

There can be as many community radio stations as the number of communities a country is comprised of. This is restricted by the frequencies <https://assignbuster.com/community-radio-stations-in-rural-or-developing-areas/>

available for the broadcast. However, some countries have legislations which renders some communities ineligible to community radio licenses. Source of income has always been a challenge for these radio stations. A well-harmonised pooled source of funding or a microcredit loan system for community radio improvement that is not a matter to donor priorities may help the struggling radio. The radio should seek for donors who would provide them with the required equipment and technological support. If the legal and political scenario does not encourage the development of community radio and if there is potential in a community, then the international development community should come forth and inspire the government to help the community establish their community radio (Kim Mahling Clark, 2007).

Nepal's topography did not allow the coverage by electronic media or the distribution of print media. The low literacy levels with poor electrification added to misery that media was in the early 1900s. The content covered by the radio, television and the two daily newspapers were essentially unrelated to the rural community, which comprised of an approximate of 80% of the country's population at the time. When the airwaves were made public, it gave birth to a few radio stations that mainly broadcasted pop music for the urban youth. After a long and hard battle with the conservative politicians and bureaucrats, the Nepal Forum of Environmental Journalists (NEFEJ), along with other organisations, who were determined to bring the Radio Sagarmatha (RS) into life, received their license. When the officer came over to hand in the license, he said, ' You have won the war'. To which the RS programme director replied, ' Lately, you have obeyed the law!' The RS is

run by a station manager/programme director, six full time producers, two technicians, a music librarian, an engineer, an accounts officers, a station helper and some 26 volunteers. These volunteers play an important part, as they would in any community radio, to help the RS to function. RS has actively taken interest in women empowerment. The station has two regular access spots: the first where the audience call the station and record their feedback onto an answering machine and the second is a vox-pop segment where the producers ask people in the streets to record their opinion on a particular topic. A pre-recorded daily segment called It's My Turn Now allow the people of the community to speak their mind on any topic. For the children, the radio broadcasts a serial, which is sponsored by UNICEF, in which a grandfather tree and a baby parrot interact with children who play around the tree. Monthly, or sometimes weekly, programmes are produced with collaboration with community groups and local NGOs. The radio has regularly covered the topics of meter tampering by taxi drivers, thieves and pickpockets, prostitution, AIDS, leprosy, TB, quality of air and water, child labour and abortion (Colin Fraser, 2001).

## References

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