

❖ **Quest for a Sustainable Community Radio Broadcasting in Nepal: Practices, Prospects and Problems**

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Abstract

Since its inception in 1997, Community Radio (CR) in Nepal has earned wide range acceptability among the masses as an effective community-based medium. This paper critically looks into the issue of ensuring 'sustainability' in Nepalese CR broadcasting. Here, different types of CR management systems in Nepal have been analyzed with the goal of understanding the activities initiated to ensure the multidimensional sustainability of the stations. The five stations considered cover all the major types of CR management in Nepal. The field study focused on issues related to social, operational and financial sustainability. All the stations were found to be more or less successful in achieving social sustainability but struggling to some extent while achieving the rest. Finally, a set of recommendations have been proposed with the goal of developing a sustainable CR mechanism in Nepal that will be able to play a significant role in overall human development.

Introduction

For decades, radio has been contributing significantly to the greater social good by serving billions of people globally with relatively simple and cost effective solutions. Community Radio (CR) as a subset of radio broadcasting, specifically focuses on the active participation of its listeners and also tries to ensure access to information by all. Since 1997, Nepal has witnessed a steady rise in community-based societal broadcasting using radio. In this paper, a brief look has firstly been given into the basic concepts of CR and the background of CR activities in Nepal. Then, the multiple dimensions of sustainability in CR sphere have been defined. The practices and trends of five different Nepalese CR stations then followed to ensure sustainability were analyzed. The stations considered cover all the major types of CR management in Nepal. Finally, a set of recommendations have been proposed with the goal of developing a sustainable CR mechanism in Nepal that will be able to play a significant role in overall human development.

Community Radio: A Brief Overview

By community radio (CR) broadcasting, we understand a certain style of information and knowledge dissemination through radio, a style which caters to the needs of particular communities which can be defined in terms of geography, economic background, ethnicity,

political interests and so on. CR broadcasting tries to ensure the access to information for all its potential listeners and also wants to guarantee active participation by the community it serves (Fraser & Estrada, 2001).

Ideally in any CR-related activities, the ownership and management system of the network or of a single station, remains in the hands of the people of the community. This way, the representation of different groups and communities is also ensured. NGOs, local and international donor agencies, local and central governments, usually act as facilitators in areas like technical support, human resource development and initial fund raising activities. There is a global trend of using low powered FM transmitters for CR broadcasting with few exceptions of short and medium wave based applications. Irrespective of the transmission technology, the universal ideology behind any CR activity is to focus on effective information dissemination for sustainable community- dlevel development.

CR in Nepal: Past and Present

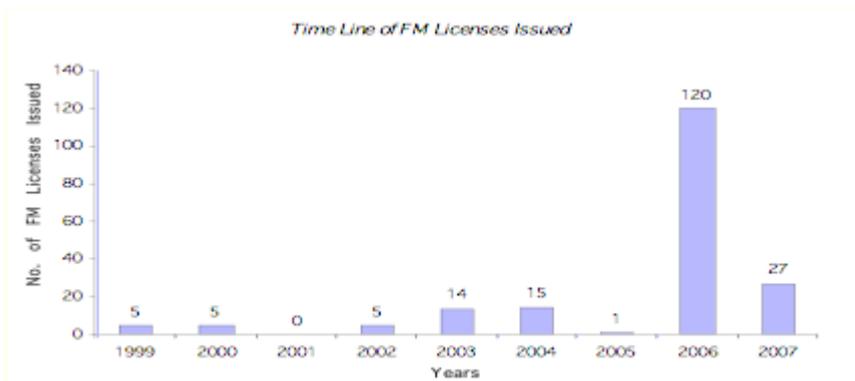
Radio has been one of the key mass communication media in Nepal for over half a century. Traditionally controlled by the ruling and urban elites, radio broadcasting first saw the initiative of liberalisation in Nepal's 1990 constitution. During this period, issues like right to information, freedom of expression, freedom of print and publication and so on, were mentioned for the first time.

The National Media Policy of 1992 and the National Broadcasting Regulations of 1995, under which the thought of independent Nepalese FM radio stations has been conceptualized, further strengthened this trend. (Pringle & Subba, 2007, p. 9)

The first Nepalese FM station was a commercial one (FM Kathmandu) and it started broadcasting in 1994. Even though the Nepal Forum of Environmental Journalists (NFEJ) applied for an FM station license in 1992, the government was reluctant to give away a license for community-based broadcasting. This decision delayed the emergence of CR stations. Then in 1997, NFEJ defied a government restriction and went ahead with CR broadcasting, and Radio Sagarmatha, the first CR station in the South Asian region, came into being. By 2000, two more CR stations were on the airwaves (Radio Lumbini and Radio Madanpokhara). NFEJ also pioneered in establishing Community Radio Support Center (CRSC) and the Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (ACORAB). Both these organizations worked as the support base for a nationwide CR network. In a society with a fledgling democracy in a post-civil war period, the roles of CR stations as local information providers, were constructive.

Over the last decade, FM broadcasters (both community and commercial) earned considerable credibility among the general population. This wider acceptance among the people ushered in a massive influx of new FM stations in 2006, right after the changes in national political scenario. Licenses were given 'en masse' to 150 FM stations during 2006–2007. Figure 1 shows the timeline of FM license issuance in Nepal.

Figure 1



By August 2007, ACORAB had 90 member broadcasters with 33 CR stations already transmitting. (Pringle & Subba, 2007, p. 10) Table 1 summarizes the present CR scenario.

Table 1
Present Status of CR in Nepal

<i>Number of on-air stations</i>	33
<i>New licenses issued in previous 6 month period</i>	93
<i>Districts under total CR coverage area*</i> <i>(of 75 districts nationwide)</i>	56
<i>Total % of population covered by CR broadcasting *</i>	62.5%

(Mainali, 2007; Pringle & Subba, 2007)

**These calculations included the future area and population coverage proposed by the CR stations with new licenses*

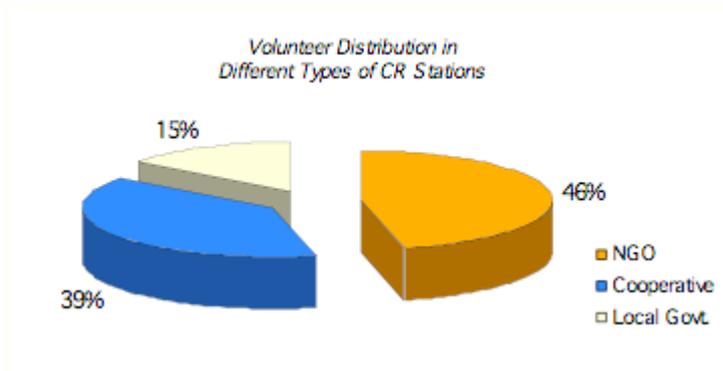
Practices and Challenges in Nepalese CR sector

Nepal has multiple ethnicities, languages and cultures within its national spectrum. In this diversified environment, CR stations have important roles to play in disseminating information and also roles as outlets for representing localized needs and major social issues. Field studies of CR stations in Nepal, interviews with related personnel, experts and impact analyses initiated by independent organizations, provide a mixed picture about the present Nepalese CR sector practices. Some of the major observations are stated in the following.

- CR stations in general are proactively involved in different social causes and community based initiatives (i.e. in issues related with education, health care, agriculture etc.)
- Focus on broadcasting local news using the community-based journalists in addition to the national and regional news is one of the most popular features of Nepal's CR stations.
- A significant number of CR workers are volunteers. In a recent study, it was found that 45% of the total CR personnel in Nepal come from the volunteer sector. Of this number, presently 46% are volunteers who work in NGO-managed CR stations, 39% work in the cooperative stations and the remaining 15% in local government controlled CR stations

(Mainali, 2007).

Figure 2



- CR support network in Nepal is coming of age with CRSC and ACORAB leading the way. CRSC provides training and advice in issues like station management, content development, revenue generation etc and ACORAB is the leading CR advocacy group in the country.
- Different types of digital technologies are being widely used by the CR stations, helping the community to spend less on capital and operational expenditures. The new technological options like PC (for audio production), satellite links and Internet (for networking and program sharing) have proved to be more efficient than the traditional ones.
- There is no explicit regulation in place to ensure equal distribution of CR licenses in the region. Because of this, the airwaves of some (mostly urban) communities, are congested with multiple CR stations, where some rural areas with acute need remain underserved.
- Management and daily functionalities of many CR stations are usually under the control of a few, generally the community elites. This type of practice undermines the basic notion of true participation-based CR broadcasting, where each group of people within any community has equal participation.
- Majority of the CR stations broadcast syndicated programs, developed by some well-reputed audio production houses. But one downside is that many CR stations are fast becoming overly dependent on centrally produced, shared programming. In one extreme case, a CR station has allotted 70% of the total airtime to the externally developed programs (Pringle & Subba, 2007, p. 21), while the rest is allotted for the locally produced programs.
- In a country being prepared for democratic elections after years of civil war, there is a concern about the use of CR stations by different entities to gain political mileage. In some of the populous districts, there are CR stations allegedly associated with various major political parties. (Pringle & Subba, 2007, p. 20)
- Until now, no CR station in Nepal has been closed down due to lack of funding or for other reasons. Yet most of the stations are struggling to remain sustainable in their day-to-day CR operations. The later sections of this paper will try to focus more in the issues related to present practices to ensure CR sustainability and how this is being done in Nepal.

Sustainability in CR: Contemporary Trends

'Sustainability' in the community media sphere generally signifies a concerted ongoing effort to make any media-based initiative or organization viable and functional. There are many dimensions of sustainability, including both static and dynamic components.

Ensuring any CR station's sustainability is one of the major prioritized objectives among interested groups globally. Sustainability in CR broadcasting can have different dimensions: financial, administrative, operational, social, technical, human resource development based etc.

But these different factors are also interrelated and interdependent.

In this paper, we categorized CR-related sustainability issues into three different, but to some extent-interconnected, dimensions based on global CR practices and trends.

Social Sustainability

Ideally, any CR station's primary goal is to empower the people in a community with information they need and to facilitate an interactive and effective two-way communication through which their voices can be heard. Majority participation at the micro level must be ensured to gain any kind of viable social acceptance. A successful CR station should assess the needs of the people and create mass level awareness about the importance of community media in their daily lives. The CR personnel's eventual goal should be to develop the 'sense of ownership' among the community regarding the CR facility (Jallov, 2001).

But popularity among the masses is not enough to make CR socially acceptable. The government and policy makers at different levels also have some important roles to play. The broadcasting or communication policy of a certain country needs to recognize the CR broadcasting initiative in the first place. Also, the people's representatives should be enlightened enough or be convinced to endorse CR as a mean to constructively empower their constituencies with information, a cornerstone in any democratic society. Once the target population and the regulators realise and act upon these facts, only then can a CR broadcasting initiative call itself socially sustainable.

Operational Sustainability

Viable social support may not always guarantee a properly functional CR mechanism. To some extent, operational sustainability of CR broadcasting acts as the applied version of the social one. In addition to a pro-CR communication policy or a wide range acceptance of CR, effective operational and management-related issues are also very important. Some effective initiatives practiced globally for ensuring the operational sustainability of any CR initiative can include the following (Jallov, 2001; Edmonds, 2005; Mushizi, 2005):

- *Proper application of CR-related regulations:* CR friendly broadcasting policies do not always translate into effectual actions. Irrespective of a community being in a developed or a developing country, it needs to exercise legal rights to ensure CR broadcasting.
- *Appropriate CR management mechanisms:* CR stations usually operate under the cliché of only representing the pilot projects of international development agencies. But there are different stakeholders (i.e. local government, local NGOs, cooperatives, educational institutions, religious groups etc) who are required to perform proactive roles in order to be a part of the local CR stations.
- *Trained work force:* Effective training and facilitation (in technical, management and program development sectors) are needed for the community members involved in the daily CR activities. Both pre-service and in-service, formal and informal training, is recommended to develop an active CR workforce.
- *Effective Program Development:* CR stations need to understand the needs of the community. The CR programming policy should reflect and ensure the interactivity and representation of the target audience. For example, in Mozambique, the participation of AIDS victims in the health awareness programs made those programs instant hits around the region (Community Radio).
- *Participatory-based organizational development:* Factors like volunteer management and listener group-based activities are very important for any successful CR broadcasting. All around the world, for example in Europe (Edmonds, 2005), Africa (Hickcox, 2006), Asia (BBC News, 2005) etc., volunteer workforces are considered as the key force for success of CR broadcasting.
- *Robust technical resource pool:* In addition to providing training to the local technicians

for station maintenance, it's also economically viable for the CR stations to create and use a common and centrally scheduled technical support. In that case, with few highly trained personnel, a certain number of adjacent CR stations can easily address the transmission and production-related technical issues.

- *Developing a Knowledge Network:* In this age of globalisation, a knowledge sharing option via a friendly, networked environment can provide significant opportunities for community development. The networking via CR stations of a certain region is a step towards achieving that goal, which can ensure the versatility, robustness and depth of CR broadcasting thus making it operationally sustainable.

Financial Sustainability

Ensuring viable sources of revenue generation to meet the capital and operational expenditure are generally the necessary and sufficient conditions in achieving any CR station's financial sustainability. Some of the major reasons that create financial crises in CR activities around the globe are the following (Mushizi, 2005):

- Over-budget allocation in CR station installation processes;
- High operational expenditures in sectors like monthly salaries, maintenance costs, utilities etc.
- Lack of understanding among community partners about the mode of investment and return;
- The temptation of unnecessary competition with the adjacent CR stations;
- Poor financial management systems;
- Scarcity of advertisements from business entities (IRIN, 2005);
- Absence of clear policy guidelines by the relevant government about airing commercials;
- Poor incentive-based structures for retaining volunteer workforce and listener club-related mechanisms;

Numerous efforts are undertaken by CR practitioners in different countries to ensure the financial sustainability (Community Radio Network):

- *Selling Airtime:* CR stations can sell airtime to NGOs or other development agencies for social marketing purposes. Also commercial sponsorship and traditional advertisement are two very important sources of income.
- *Contribution of the Community:* This can be in the terms of cooperative funds, membership fees, donations and institutional levies from affiliated or supporting organisations.
- *Event Participation:* Organising within different community events as media partners or promoting social events, can earn considerable revenue for any CR station.
- *Merchandise Sales:* Publications of local as well as national writers, promotional items like caps, t-shirts, bags or radios and transcripts of popular audio programs can be sold to raise CR funds.
- *Sharing In-House Infrastructure and Training:* A CR studio's physical infrastructure such as live studio, program editing room or conference room, can be rented or used for providing commercial training. CR stations with ICT training centres can also raise revenue by offering different types ICT training to the community.
- *Grants and Donations from Outside Sources:* Grants and endowments from different local as well as international sources are always a big source of financial support for CR stations. Especially in developed countries, this trend is very common (Edmonds, 2005). Donations in terms of station equipments, training subsidies and project funding, are some other notable sources to ease any CR station's financial burden.

Sustainability in Nepal's CR Broadcasting: A Report from the Field

A decade-long experience in CR broadcasting has given Nepal a unique position within South Asia. The proliferation of community-based media amid political repression, economic hardship and heterogeneous social background, is quite impressive. An extensive field study along with numerous interviews with CR experts, activists, volunteers, Nepalese policy makers and

common people, was conducted in summer 2006 (as a field research jointly supported by Carnegie Mellon University and the MacArthur Foundation of USA) in order to develop a better understanding about the applied nature of Nepalese CR broadcasting. Especially the focus was to identify the practices and problems in ensuring different dimensions of sustainability. Five CR stations in urban, semi-urban and rural areas of Nepal, representing three major station management systems, were chosen for further analysis. The findings have been summarised in the following tables. The station details are presented according to the order in which they were visited. In table 2, the stations' details (i.e. cost, coverage area, transmitter power etc.) have been summarised.

Table 2
CR Station Details

<i>Station Name (Year est)</i>	<i>Cost</i>	<i>Transmitter Power</i>	<i>Station Mgmt.</i>	<i>Time of Transmission</i>	<i>Coverage Area</i>	<i>Local Competition</i>
<i>Himchuli FM (2001)</i>	Cap-Ex: US\$ 22,500 (app.) Op-Ex: US\$ 1,400 (app.)	500 Watts (functional) 250 Watts (backup)	Cooperative	16.5 Hours	Pokhara valley and its surroundings	3 Commercial FM stations
<i>Radio Madanpokhara (1999)</i>	Cap-Ex: US\$ 25,000 (app.)* Op-Ex: US\$ 1,500 (app.)	100 Watts (functional)	Local Govt.	12.5 Hours	Palpa and 7 other adjacent districts	6 Commercial FM Stations
<i>Radio Lumbini (2000)</i>	Cap-Ex: US\$ 56,000 (app.) * Op-Ex: US\$ 2,800	500 Watts (functional)	Cooperative	18 Hours	Districts of Rupandehi, Nawalparasi, Kapilavastu and Palpa (partially)	2 Commercial and 1 CR FM Stations

	(app.)					
<i>Rupendehi FM</i> (2004)	Cap-Ex: US\$ 140,000 (app.) Op-Ex: US\$ 4,200 (app.)	1000 Watts (functional) 1000 Watts (backup)	NGO	18 Hours	35 districts of Nepal and some parts of northern India	2 Commercial FM Stations
<i>Radio Sagarmatha</i> (1997)	Cap-Ex: US\$ 66,000 (app.) * Op-Ex: US\$ 5,600 (app.)	500 Watts (functional) 100 Watts (backup)	NGO	18 Hours	Katmandu valley	12 Commercial and 1 CR FM Stations

* Station received financial assistance from international donor agencies

In table 3, the common practices for ensuring social sustainability by different stations have been presented.

Table 3

<i>Station Name</i>	<i>Practices to Ensure Social Sustainability</i>
<i>Himuchuli FM</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local people are member of the station management committee • Majority of the volunteers come from the local engineering college • Expatriate Nepalese use this station to broadcast personal messages • Local news is very popular
<i>Radio Madanpokhara</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due to effective program planning, it is very popular among the local communities • Local participation is ensured in news collection,

	<p>content development, interactive 'live phone-in' program</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk shows on education, health and agriculture are very popular
<i>Radio Lumbini</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organized volunteer structure regularly interacts with the audiences to gather feedback. • Education programs for class 8, 9 and 10 are quite popular. • Rebroadcasts news and popular programs from Radio Sagarmatha and other radio stations.
<i>Rupendehi FM</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It has the widest transmission coverage among all the CR stations, thus enjoying a vast number of listeners. • Popular phone-in entertainment and social programs.
<i>Radio Sagarmatha</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the participation of the community in program development • Environment, poverty, social welfare and education based programs are very popular

In table 4, the common practices for ensuring financial sustainability by different stations have been presented.

Table 4

<i>Station Name</i>	<i>Practices to Ensure Financial Sustainability</i>
<i>Himuchuli FM</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial investment came from the cooperative fund • Contribution from the local businesses and schools • Volunteers are given incentives like radio sets, audio recorders, free training
<i>Radio Madanpokhara</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yearly allocation by the Village Development Committee (VDC) • Traditional revenue generation sources: advertising, fund raising etc. • Unique community participation through daily donation of 'a handful of rice' by the community members*, earnings from community forests, religious programs and cultural shows. • The station prohibits airing any commercials

	related to any income degenerating and unhealthy products (i.e. cigarette, carbonated soda etc.)
<i>Radio Lumbini</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary revenue generations are through advertising, sponsorship donor funding. • The station strictly prohibits any advertising related to foreign products. • Newly opened community multimedia center is providing different computer trainings professionally.
<i>Rupendehi FM</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This station is financially quite solvent, principally due to its wider coverage, which attracts a lot of commercial sponsorships. • In addition to the local enterprises, Indian business houses are also buying air times for their commercials.
<i>Radio Sagarmatha</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trying to be self-reliant by seeking: donor funding for different social project based programs, sponsorship, fund raising, advertising etc. • 'Friends of Sagarmatha' initiative has been launched through which interested people will be able to donate in return of different incentives.

* In this method, people with ability donate a handful of rice each day within each community under the station's broadcasting area. At end of the month, all the donations are gathered, sold and the proceedings go to the station.

Finally table 6 represents some of the major problems identified while visiting the corresponding CR stations.

Table 5

<i>Station Name</i>	<i>Specific Problems Identified by the CR stations</i>
<i>Himuchuli FM</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Struggling to achieve financial sustainability with rising recurring costs and nominal contribution from different local SMEs. • High yearly renewal fee. • Intense competition from the commercial stations. • Dependency on outside sources for technical support.
<i>Radio Madanpokhara</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High yearly renewal fee. • Increasing recurring costs. • Signal interference from neighboring FM stations. • Not received any government advertisement till now.

<i>Radio Lumbini</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong local competition. • High yearly renewal fee. • Increasing recurring costs. • Struggling to achieve sustainability, even after utilizing the synergy of CR and CMC to certain extent.
<i>Rupendehi FM</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competition with local commercial FM stations in capturing the target audience.
<i>Radio Sagarmatha</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding shortage. • Signal interference from adjacent commercial FM stations. • Acute power shortage.

Recommendations for Sustainable Nepalese CR Sector

Based on our literature reviews, field studies, and personal discussions with practitioners and anecdotal evidence, we propose a set of recommendations for a sustainable Nepalese CR deployment

- Demystification of Radio Technology

In major parts of Nepal, people are now becoming more or less familiar with radio as a participatory broadcasting medium. Efforts should be there to sustain this general positive attitude towards radio, which will eventually ensure the sustainable acceptance of CR within the society.

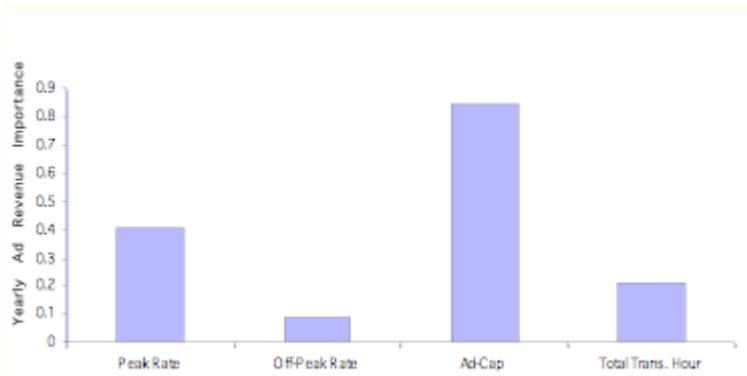
- Developing of Sense of Community Ownership

Demystifying a technology is not always enough in achieving social sustainability if the target audience fails to take an inclusive approach. If the general population views CR-based initiatives as the extensions of some big name donor agency funded project, the chances of community participation in CR management and program development will be significantly less. On the other hand, the acceptance of any local CR station as a one of the community assets will not only ensure people's spontaneous participation in CR related activities, but also will witness 'out of the box' efforts like 'handful of rice' more often (Kasajoo, 2004).

- Advertising and CR

Analysis of Nepalese CR stations' cost-revenue models pointed to the importance of ad revenues in attaining financial sustainability. The most effective way to generate maximum advertising revenue will be to set the ad rates based on social ability as well as the commercial interest of the target community. Empirical evidence suggests CR stations with relatively lower ad rates actually ended up earning more (Hussain & Tongia, 2007, p. 11).

Figure 3



In this figure Importance analysis of CR Ad revenue has been calculated. The Ad-Cap turns out to be relatively the most important factor followed by Peak Rate and Total Trans. (transmission) Hours in a South Asian CR setting. (Hussain & Tongia, 2007, p.11)

- Effective Business Model for CR

Worldwide, CR stations are predominantly non-profit. But non-commercialism should not be translated into non-viability. In a developing region like Nepal, many CR stations rely on unsustainable one-time grants or free labor. Focus should be on finding ways to maximize societal and economical benefits for both: the target audience and the CR service providers. So ad-free CR station mandated by any regulation can have a negative impact on the micro-level community broadcasting, unless there are be other financial means to ensure the stations' viability.

- Efficient Human Resources for CR

In Nepal, finding enough trained personnel for CR work is a struggle, even for the big name stations. The problem becomes more acute as the stations need to pay premium for the highly trained staff, thus increasing the monthly expenditure. On the other hand, the policy of depending solely on volunteers has the risk of producing low quality programs, which can result in fewer listeners and little advertising from the local enterprises. An effective approach can be to come up with some incentive mechanism in addition to the traditional training, which will help to ensure a steady supply of paraprofessionals for CR.

- Introduction and successful application of Community Radio Policy

Even though Nepal's government was the first in South Asia to recognize and facilitate CR broadcasting, this country is yet to have a specialised 'Community Radio Policy' or CRP, unlike India (Vincent, 2006) or Bangladesh (Bazlu/MoI). A comprehensive CRP will help in institutionalizing some of the common practices in Nepalese CR and also can facilitate the following:

- Lower yearly license renewal fee
- Establishing the regulatory mechanism required in to prevent politicisation of CR stations
- Paving the way for transparency in CR spectrum allocation and licensing.
- Tax exemption on imported radio equipment for CR facilities
- Special government loans to support CR station installations
- An advertisement policy for CR, where clear provisions will be mentioned about the kinds of commercials CR stations can air, the allowed economic contribution level from any certain commercial entity, the allowed percentage of broadcasting time for airing commercials etc.
- Declaring CR sector as a 'National Thrust Sector' and prioritising as well as ensuring the utility supply (i.e. electricity, water etc.) in all the CR facilities.

- Establishment of the Independent Regulatory Board (IRB) for broadcasting

An effective IRB can assume the responsibility of the whole broadcasting sector, thus being empowered to regulate and coordinate between different types of broadcasting activities. Like FCC in USA, it should be able facilitate and regulate the CR-based organisations with frequency allocation, management and administration. In order to act efficiently and objectively, IRB needs to be free from any political affiliation.

- Creation of a Community Media Fund

Like universal service fund in USA or other developed countries (FCC, 2007), Nepal can look into the prospect of creating a development fund for CR initiatives. Communication and broadcasting entities can contribute to this fund yearly on a mandatory basis according to any guidelines proposed CRP. In that way, a financial base will be established in order to ensure people's basic rights to have information via CR broadcasting.

- Ensuring the participation of the minorities in CR-related activities

Efforts need to be in place to ensure the participation of the ethnic and gender minorities in CR-related activities. New regulations and some incentive mechanisms can be considered. Government and ACORAB can encourage the minority participation by providing start up loans with low interest rates, special training facilities, lower renewal fee and taxation etc.

- Decentralized Support and Resource Centres

CRSC already has started working on this issue. The main idea here is to establish a group of networked CR support and resource centre from which people will get services like: training in technical fields, program development, operational and managerial consultancy etc. Thus, the CR stations in remote areas need not to be dependent on just Kathmandu Valley. As there is a persistent scarcity of efficient radio technicians, a 'mobile CR clinic' facility can be offered by these centres, where some groups of technicians will travel to different CR stations within a region on demand.

- Exploring the synergy between different Communication Technologies

Different Nepalese CR stations have already started the 'Radio Browsing' methodology in their daily program. In 'Radio Browsing', the listeners contact the CR stations with their queries and the station officials look up in the Internet to gather answers and eventually broadcast those via radio. In Nepal, the Internet is also used for other CR program development (i.e. news, interviews, educational programs etc). ACORAB and other related groups should also look into the possibilities to integrate cell phones with CR communication. With the increasing rate of mobile telecommunication use in Nepal, cellular phone sets with FM receivers can easily replace the traditional radio sets in the near future. Also via cell phone, the listeners can interact with the corresponding CR stations very easily.

- Efforts toward developing an effective Community Media Structure

One of the positive aspects of radio broadcasting is its adaptability in the face of technological innovation and socio-economic changes. For this very reason, CR broadcasting is equally popular in both developed and the developing regions of the world. The main objective should be to look for effective means to provide information to the community and these efforts need to be technology-neutral. Instead of focusing just on any particular technology, any alternative or hybrid solution (if more effective) can also be considered for community level information dissemination. So, technologies working at the same level have to some extent the same

target population, but having different roles (i.e. CR, local newspapers, local internet service provider, cell phone operator etc.) can be integrated ('horizontal integration') for better performance. Similarly, communication and broadcasting media at different levels (local, regional, national and international) also need to work in a coherent manner ('vertical integration'), so that people at the micro level can get a consistent and true view of the required information with proper participation.

Conclusion

Achieving sustainability is an ongoing need and needs to be pursued by CR activists without developing a sense of complacency or frustration resulting from the success or failure of the projects. Nepal is the pioneer of CR broadcasting in South Asian region with a decade-long experience. It's crucial for this country to be successful in this endeavour, as other neighboring nations or countries with similar socio-economic background are modeling their CR broadcasting on Nepal's actions. With proper policy reforms, nationally coherent strategies and locally adaptive methodologies, we believe Nepal's CR movement is on the right track towards ensuring comprehensive sustainability.

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