



Sustainable Radio

Summary

of financial sustainability debate

organized among Indian Community Radios

in Hindi, Bengali, and Tamil

By Ideosync and Community Media MANCH

Summary Contributions on International Debate from India

Ideosync Media Combine is a communication for Social Change organization in India and it has been working on Community radio in partnership with UNICEF and UNESCO for almost a decade now. Community Media MANCH (www.manch.net.in) is an online knowledge sharing and knowledge creation space for community media in India and South Asia.

Community Media MANCH collaborated as the India partner on the debate to enable Community Radio Stations across India to contribute their opinions and experiences about sustainability in the regional languages. The MANCH team was responsible for dissemination and translated regular summaries and lead questions that came forth from the international participants; on the Forum Page in three regional language streams (Hindi, Bengali and Tamil). Similarly, a summary of contributions (in the local languages) from the CR Stations in India were translated into English to be shared with international participants.

CR Stations from India that have contributed to the international debate forth their thoughts and experiences comprised stations across the length and breadth of India. These included:

- Kumaon Vani CR from Nainital district of Uttarakhand
- Henvallvani CR from Tehri Garhwal district of Uttarakhand
- Radio Dhadkan based in Shivpuri district of Madhya Pradesh
- Alfaz-e-Mewat based in Mewat district of Haryana
- Alwar Ki Awaaz based in Alwar district of Rajasthan
- Waqt Ki Awaaz based in Uttar Pradesh

Towards Financial Responsibility in Community Radio:

According to **Kumaon Vani CRS**, Financial Sustainability is by far the biggest challenge for Community Radio. Such kinds of webinar ideas, sharing of experiences will help pave the way for CR Stations to overcome the various issues around financial sustainability.

Henvallvani CRS hopes that the experiences shared by them around financial sustainability of Community Radio will help other CR Stations as well. Such sharing of thoughts and experiences with other community radio stations is a commendable initiative.

Radio Dhadkan agrees that in present times, financial sustainability is the biggest challenge faced by all CR Stations. Therefore in this context, the ongoing international debate and sharing of experience is a good initiative.

Alfaz-e-Mewat CR suggests that Sustainability is by far the biggest debate in community radio circles. Sustainability operates at four levels; human and social, programme, technical and financial but financial sustainability is the end of the road. All the other factors; human, technical and content contribute to financial sustainability. The online debate is a great

opportunity to reflect on this topic and discuss ways in which community participation can be enhanced so that sustainability does not stay as a distant reality.

According to **Alfaz-e-Mewat**, there are many ways of income generation for a CRS:

- Community can help in content development and even in preservation of the same.
- Active community members can contribute through writings (if they are a good writer)
- Local advertisements
- Community radio Station can hold trainings, workshops for community members
- Most importantly, implement budget planning

Prof. Ashok Singh Sunhal, Station Director from Radio Alwar ki Awaaz suggests that Income generation for a Community Radio Station is generally from advertisements from the Community and Business Houses. The Community Advertisers are very few. The Business Houses look for the so called 'TRP' of the Programmes i.e. the number of listeners tuning into the particular Programme. According to the CRS, for the popular programmes there are more number of listeners, they have been contemplating on making the other programmes more interesting so that the Advertisers also think of considering giving advertisements through their CRS.

For the radio station **Alfaz-e-Mewat**, it has been 2 years since the CR began its broadcasting. In these two years, the radio station has been able to develop a special bond with the community. The acceptance of **Alfaz-e-Mewat** CRS within Mewat was a big achievement in itself for the CRS. With the inception of **Alfaz-e-Mewat** in Mewat, the radio listening habits of the people that had once declined, was brought to life. People have now started listening to radio with their families. According to **Alfaz-e-Mewat**, in contrast to other CR Stations that use the volunteer model, this model did not work for them. The existing situation of poverty and unemployment makes it difficult to find volunteers from within the community. Before the inception of **Alfaz-e-Mewat**, a training was organized where 25 persons received training and they were reimbursed their travel bills. Since this experience onwards, there were many people that offered their services of recording in exchange for monetary benefits. Gradually, their perceptions have changed and they have begun to engage themselves with radio. As of now, local advertisements have been one of the income generating sources for **Alfaz-e-Mewat** from the community, apart from these, contributions from the community in the form of venue for meetings to be held, conveyance, food, making people listen to radio and engaging new persons with the CRS have been seen as opportunities by the CRS where it had little to spend in monetary terms and received much more from the community.

Henvalvani receives a lot of support from its community in terms of the fact that per day more than 12 listeners from the community engage with the CRS through SMS or phone. This provides a source of encouragement for the CRS team. As a result of this, two important aspects have come forth:

- On one end, the number of members in **Henvalvani** CRS has started to increase and the membership fee from the members helps in financially supporting the CRS activities. With the increasing number of members, the number of devoted listeners of the CRS

has increased and this has helped in acquiring local advertisements from the community.

- On the other end, the community in turn supports the CRS from time to time in terms of contributions in kind for instance at the time of field visit to the respective villages, provision of food and venue for holding meetings is made available by the community free of cost.

Waqt Ki Awaaz has been broadcasting for the past 14 months wherein some months included test broadcasting. According to Waqt Ki Awaaz Community Radio Station, they had introduced local advertisements at the beginning of broadcasting so that persons in the community become aware and understand the fact that the radio station belongs to them. Simultaneously, the station is receiving the support of volunteers from the community. These volunteers bear their own costs for travelling to the radio station and ensure their participation, be it in the form of local folk songs, stories, experiences, local issues. The station has been able to derive some of the expenses for instance, expenditure on stationary from the income gained from local advertisements.

"How does your community participate in income generation? How is this organized and managed?"

For Hervalvani Samudayik Radio a lot of support in terms of income generation has come forth from the community;

- The CR Station supports the community in terms of increasing employment opportunities for community persons. The community in turn contributes by providing the station with small contributions monetarily.
- By offering membership of the CR Station to the community persons, in turn membership fee is collected from them. Membership is offered to persons in the community as per their interest or by forming small listener clubs and these members contribute towards various activities of the station in the form of cash, kind, labour etc
- Encouraging young talents in the community to showcase their skills, knowledge which will benefit them as well as the community
- Recording folk songs of local artists that supports in income generation
- By developing movie proceedings for any organization, which also helps in income generation
- Persons in the community who contribute towards the station in monetary terms in their association with Hervalvani CRS.
