

Report on Second Capacity Building Workshop for Managers of Functional Community Radio Stations

The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB), Government of India (GOI), jointly with Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA) and Anna University, where first Community radio station (CRS) in the country was set up five years ago, held the second Capacity Building Workshop for managers of functional community radio stations in the country on February 10-11, 2009 at Anna University campus in Chennai.

The first such workshop, facilitated by CEMCA was held exactly a year ago at New Delhi in February 2008. The objectives of the Workshop were to help MIB focus attention on the CRS that have already been set up and are functioning to understand the extent to which CRS were catering to the needs of the community as well as to provide an opportunity to all the CRS to interact with each other and share the experiences. This year, in addition to the functioning CRS, applicants, who had received their SACFA clearances and were on the brink of setting up, were also invited to facilitate their understanding of CRS functioning.

Workshop Highlights

Over seventy five participants from 46 functioning and SACFA cleared CRS applicants attended the two day workshop([Participants List:Linked](#)). Participants came from literally all over the country, from North east-Dharamshala, East-Kolkata, Bihar, Jharkand, West-Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Central India-Madhya Pradesh, South-Kerala, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu.

Ms. Esther Kar, Additional director General, Press Information Bureau, attended the event as a special nominee of Secretary, I&B and also deputised for Additional Secretary, I&B, Shri Uday Kumar Varma, who was unable to attend the event due to work exigencies and delivered the Inaugural address.

Shri R.B. Prasad, Joint Wireless Advisor, Government of India and **Dr.Latha Pillai**, Pro Vice Chancellor, Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) were special invitees.

Professor Dr.Mannar Jawahar, Vice Chancellor, Anna University, presided over the Inaugural Function and delivered the presidential address.

Er. Anuj Sinha, Head RVPSP, Advisor, Department of Science and Technology (DST), GOI, delivered the valedictory address.

All the CRS provided a detailed report of the functioning of their CRS on a pre-designed format developed by CEMCA, who will provide a collated report to MIB.

In the open house sessions, participants had ample opportunity to discuss various issues relating to technical issues like transmission, reach, advertisements and other policy provisions with the concerned officials.

Session Report

Inaugural session:

Welcoming the delegates, Dr.R.Sreedher, Director, and CEMCA underscored the need for “community orientation” of CRS, lamenting that most CRS were not engaging with the communities adequately, even as he appreciated the improved awareness and understanding among the CRS about involving community in all aspects of running the CRS. Briefly tracing the history of the first community radio station in the country, set-up under his initiative and guidance at Anna University, he observed the relatively simplified five-step licensing procedure today. He urged the participants to take full advantage of the opportunity provided to them to discuss various issues about functioning of their CRS with senior government officials, who had taken a keen interest in guiding CRS by being responsive and pro-active.

Delivering the Inaugural Address, Ms. Esther Kar, explained the workshop objectives, the steps taken by MIB to create widespread awareness about community radio, true nature and spirit of community radio policy provisions and guidelines to ensure community orientation. Hailing community radio as a live, vibrant and democratic tool for development, she shared her thoughts on how to go about operationalising these key attributes. ([Full text :Linked](#)).

In his Presidential address, Professor Dr. P. Mannar Jawahar, observed that community radio belonged in the public service broadcasting domain, as opposed to the commercial FM and shared his experiences of Anna CR of reaching the unreached by broadcasting in local language Tamil. He spoke of how they ensure community participation through training, outreach programmes and various initiatives like local music talent competitions and other participatory and inclusive programmes. He highlighted the participation of community, including visually challenged, home makers and others as volunteers, content providers, announcers and Radio Jockeys. A special mention was made of the DST supported programme, Science for Women- titled **Shakti Arivayadi**-that was piloted at Anna CR and became a model for a successful community engagement in science awareness programme.

Briefly addressing the gathering, Mr. R.B.Prasad, Joint Wireless Advisor, Government of India explained the need and process of SACFA clearance and wireless operating licenses and reiterated his support and guidance in helping CRS tackle various issues pertaining to frequency allocation, transmission and other technical issues over the two days.

Presenting the Vote of Thanks, Dr.M. Alagar, Director, Educational Multimedia and Research Centre, Anna University thanked one and all, especially MIB for the opportunity to host the event, CEMCA for the collaboration, the Vice Chancellor, Registrar, Heads of Departments, Deans, faculty and students and his staff for their unstinted support and participation.

The inaugural began with symbolic lighting of the lamp and an invocation and presentation of bouquets and mementos to the dignitaries and concluded with singing of the national anthem. The event was attended and covered by media including Press, Doordarshan and All India Radio. ([The Hindu Clip: Linked](#))

Session 1- Showcase

Chair: Ms. Esther Kar, IAS, Additional Director General, PIB

Facilitator: Dr.R.Sreedher, Director, CEMCA.

Five CRS drawn from different regions of the country, who are setting a good example of how to be responsive and engage with communities made presentations in this session. These are:

- Anna CR-Chennai
- Pudhia vani- Pondicherry University CR –Puducherry
- Apno Radio, Banasthali Vidyapeth-Banathali;
- Vasundhara Vahini-Baramati
- JUCR-Jadavpur University-Kolkata.

The thrust of the presentation was community participation in planning, content generation, programming and execution.

Sessions 2: Presentation by CRS

Chair: Dr.Latha Pillai, Pro Vice chancellor, IGNOU (First part of the session)

Chair: Mr. Taneja, MIB (Second part of the session)

Facilitators: Ms.Rukmini Vemraju, Programme Officer, CEMCA (First part)

Dr.R.Sreedher (Second part of the session)

The session began with Dr. Pillai informing the participants IGNOU Capacity Building initiative by way of the recently launched Certificate Programme on community radio Management. She also acknowledged the support of CEMCA by way of offering 150 scholarships for the programmes and encouraged CRS to partner in the programme by offering their CRS as Practical Study centres. Rukmini Vemraju suggested that CRS could encourage and identify interested community members to enroll in the course and CRS to consider partnering with IGNOU as Practical study centres. The announcement lead to a great deal of inquires and interest in the programme and discussion.

The focus of the presentations was on community participation in terms of:

- programme management committees
- content creation
- programme production
- participation as talent, expert, interviewer etc
- outreach events and activities
- interactive programmes
- live broadcasts, phone-ins etc.

In the first part of the session, seven new CRS made their presentations i.e. those CRS who could not participate in the last capacity building workshop in February 2008, or have been set up since then.

The remaining CRS presented in the post lunch part of the session. Some of the CRS, who could not be accommodated on the first day, were given an opportunity on the Second Day to make their observations/presentations.

While the functioning CRS described how they were engaging the community, the ones yet to start broadcast described their outreach activities and preparations for community participation.

Some of the programmes and initiatives that were appreciated by all participants were:

- Tie-ups with state department of tourism for creating special awareness programmes for auto drivers –**MOP Vaishnav CR-Chennai**
- Tick-Tock- a quiz programme with 10 questions where Radio sets were given away as prizes. Training a community member Ms.Geetha Lakshmi and appointing her as assistant station manager- **Holy Cross CR- Trichy**
- Extending the programmes to several communities through non-broadcast mode , Setting up three committees with three different communities to draw up programme priorities through discussions –**Radio Active CR-Bengaluru**
- Offer to sharing copyright free original music of about 60 hours- **S.V Oriental college CR-Tirupati**

Session 3-Live Broadcast from Community

Anna CR organized a live broadcast from two communities located in the urban slums of Kannigapuram and Kotturpuram, linking each other and to the CRS with mobile telephones. The communities performed skits, written and enacted by them as well as some cultural programmes. Participants greatly enjoyed the community interactions and the simple technology was appreciated by all.

The first day's programme was successfully concluded with a dinner hosted by Anna University. Community members who participated in the live broadcast also joined in the dinner, extending the interaction.

Sessions 4 & 5 Face-to-face with Officials and Open House

Panel: Mr. R.B.Prasad , Mr. Taneja , Dr.Sreedher

The objective of this session was to provide an opportunity to participants to voice their concerns, difficulties; problems etc on any aspect of setting up or running CRS and seek clarification, answers and solutions. Participants' queries and concerns were broadly falling into three categories relating to: licensing procedures, transmission and reach, interference with other CRS/FM stations; and advertisements.

Licensing/ New GOPA

- Clarifications were sought regarding the validity period of the old and new licenses, procedures for migration to new GOPA-from the older CRS etc. Certain specific queries pertaining to delay in response, misplaced drafts etc were also brought up. (Kongu CR; SOLAN)

Mr. Taneja responded to all general inquiries satisfactorily and noted down details of specific case for follow-up and response.

Transmission/Reach

- A number of CRS, especially those located in urban centres complained of very poor coverage falling short of the desired 5-10 kms radius, interference with other CRS and FM stations. (MOPCR-Chennai; JUCR-Kolkata; FTII -Pune; MUST-Mumbai; Radio Active-Bengaluru; JIMS CR, RADIO Jamia, DUCR - Delhi). Complainants wanted to know whether the policy provision of a higher power transmitter could be invoked, or whether height of the antennae could be raised to over 30 meters etc.

Mr. Prasad explained the reasoning behind the transmitter and antennae height restrictions and without categorically ruling out either increasing transmitter power or raising antennae height, he proposed that:

- The affected CRS first have a systematic and scientific study carried out at their stations to rule out other problems like faulty transmitter, incorrect installation etc. by authorized agencies.
- He also provided details / addresses of the inspection offices closest to the CRS
- He assured that considered attention will be give to the reports received and the problems resolved

Advertisements on CR

The main concern of participants was rate fixation and getting DAVP advertisements. Mr. Taneja reminded CRS that it was essential to sign GOPA to start taking advertisements assured the participants of quick resolution of DAVP advertisements on CRS.

Dr.Sreedher appreciated Wireless Ministry and Mr. Prasad of proactively granting a temporary SACFA license recently for demonstration purposes for the Regional consultation of community radio awareness conducted at Guwahati. He also observed that such a provision of temporary SAFCA could play a vital role in disaster mitigation and management.

The session was lively and interactive and most CRS with queries got reassurance and an action point to tackle issues faced by them.

Session 6 Valedictory

The special address was delivered by Er.Anuj Sinha focusing on Science promotion and community. The session began with a short film commissioned by CEMCA on the RVPSP Project Science for Women, in which 11 CRS had participated. Referring to the film, he appreciated the positive feelings that communities expressed about the programme and also observed that more scientific and empirical data was needed to gauge the true benefits of participation. He appreciated the CRS who participated in the programme as well as CEMCA's role in implementing the project.

Er.Sinha outlined the various activities of RVPSP with regard to Science promotion and community participation like Science clubs, folk theatre, Science express etc and also highlighted the special role that CRS could play. Climate change, he observed was one of the current thrust areas where he saw good potential for partnerships with CRS.

In his valedictory address the Registrar, Dr.S.Shanmugavel observed that community radio was a service, shared his views on how community service could be rendered through community radio and highlighted the experiences of ANNA CR.

In his concluding remarks, Dr.Sreedher observed the appreciable change in the attitude as well as efforts of CRS in terms of community participation, compared to the last capacity building workshop. He also amplified participants' feeling that the workshop provided an excellent platform for interaction and exchange of views . Expressing his concern for those CRS who did not respond to the invitation to attend the meeting, he observed that the MIB considered attendance mandatory and would take serious note of defaulters. He expressed his appreciation and gratitude to all individuals and institutions who worked hard to make the workshop successful.

Dr.Alagar gave his vote of thanks by profusely thanking everyone and the workshop was successfully concluded. Participants were also given reference material comprising various model forms, policy guidelines, sample cue sheets etc to serve as a ready reckoner for all the steps to be followed in setting up and running a CRS.