

Science for Women Baseline Study Report

for
MOP FM

MOP Vaishnav College for Women, Chennai

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1. Project Context

1.1 The Background

The **Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia** (CEMCA) catalysed and supported by **Rashtriya Vigyan Evam Prodyogiki Sanchar Parishad** (RVPSP), Department of Science and Technology, Government of India, New Delhi, has embarked on a pan-Indian project to evaluate and encourage understanding and application of science in everyday life for women. Entitled ‘**Science for Women**’ (SFW) this project aims to reach out to the women in the poorly literate as well as literary challenged sections of society both in the urban and rural sectors across the country. Through participatory programmes specially designed with specific issues in focus and using the community participatory form of radio-programming this project will study how best women can be encouraged to the benefits of science in daily life. The project duration is at present two financial years and in the first phase, it is planned to operate through a selected number of Community Radio Stations (CRs) licensed to educational institutions and reach out to women living in communities covered within the primary and secondary catchment areas of these low power FM radio stations.

A pilot study for the project was conducted at Anna FM, Anna University, Chennai during the year 2004–2005. Eighteen educational institutions which had been granted the license to run community participatory radio stations were invited to a workshop held on March 8 and 9, 2007, under the aegis of RVPSP and at the end of the workshop each of the participating educational institutions were asked to submit proposals suited to develop the Science for Women Programme through the community radio stations run by the institutes.

CEMCA with its expertise in research, community participation and capacity building, was selected as the nodal organization and was asked to submit a comprehensive proposal to RVPSP for implementing and monitoring the project. CEMCA's role in the project is extensive - CEMCA is the focal organization for selection of educational institutions. It has been entrusted with the following responsibility:

- a) Help in identifying the communities and conduct a baseline study to profile the communities within the catchment areas of the community radio station
- b) Act as facilitator for capacity building within the students and the women from the communities so that the programmes developed can be truly community participatory,
- c) Ensure that the programmes are of interesting enough to motivate the women participating/listening to understand the importance of science in everyday life
- d) Ensure proper utilization of the funds generated by RVPSP.

CEMCA has designed the implementation programme in two phases:

- The first phase consists of a baseline study conducted under the supervision of a CEMCA appointed expert and using girl students from the educational institution as well as women from communities. Through this study a profile of the community will be mapped, the current practices and knowledge base vis-à-vis a range of issues/subjects in the community documented and assessment made of the needs and shortcomings among the women in the communities. The baseline study is also designed to motivate the students to understand and interact with the community and develop awareness within the community about the FM channel run by the educational institution.
- In the second phase, workshops will be conducted in the educational institutions for a capacity building exercise for the production teams which will be designing and producing the community participatory radio programmes with central theme of Science for Women. Community participatory programmes will be broadcast from the channel daily following the workshop.

Fourteen Educational Institutions granted by I&B Ministry license to set up Community Radio stations have been selected by CEMCA and RVPSP for awarding the SFW Project. The following report is the finding from the baseline study for NOP FM radio licensed to MOP Vaishnav College for Women, Chennai. This is an autonomous college affiliated to the University of Madras. The baseline survey for project was conducted by students of the college drawn from various depts. (nutrition and Dietetics, Electronic, Sociology and commerce) along with women belonging to target areas. This college is geographically

located about 76km away from Anna University campus and the MOP FM listeners are demographically different. The community around the college campus is essentially urban slum dwellers. The area also has many high-rise buildings and as a consequence the FM channel is heard only within a range of 5km. Therefore communities living in close vicinity of the campus were selected for the baseline study. The survey was conducted from 12th -16th August, 2007.

2. Profile of MOP FM Radio Station at Chennai

MOP Vaishnav FM station was inaugurated on March 12th, 2005 and at first was allocated 91.2MHz frequency. However the college campus, situated within a very busy business district in Chennai was not able to broadcast successfully with the allocated frequency. The frequency was therefore changed to 107.8MHz and even now listenership is limited to immediate areas around the campus.

The MOP FM broadcasts for three hours daily in three time slots of 6.30am – 7.30am in the morning, 1.00–2.00pm in the afternoon and 6.00–7.00pm in the evening. Each slot concentrates on one topic, which is exhaustively explored during the one hour slot using a variety of formats. Different departments are allocated dates and responsibility of slots to encourage widespread participation among the students. The FM has its own studios, editing consoles, transmission room and tower and is planning to extend the transmission hours gradually. There is a full-time station manager and technical staff appointed for running and maintenance of the equipment. The station's greatest competition comes from Rainbow FM and Hello Fm, both commercial channels offering entertainment programmes.

3. Baseline Study Objectives & Design

3.1 Objectives

The baseline study aims to achieve:

- A documentation of the socio-economic and demographic profile of the target listeners
- An in-depth understanding of the media habits of the women, particularly with reference to Radio,
- Identify the issues of concern for the community
- Assess the willingness/interest among women for participation in the community radio initiative
- Build awareness for the Community Radio and SFW programmes

3.2 Study Methodology

3.2a Sample

A thorough study of the catchment pattern of the radio signals of the community radio run the educational institution was made and thereafter two areas with two distinct communities was selected for sample survey. The villages selected were:

a) **Numgambakkam** - Two pockets within this large area, namely Badrikaraj and Pattrikarai were selected for the survey (1km from our college)

b) **Allayamamankoil Street** (1.5 km from our college)

The above two villages in two different directions and are both essentially slum areas. The communities are mainly Hindu with a small percentage of Christians and Muslims. A total of 1000 households were identified from these areas and from each household one woman was selected for baseline sample study. Care was taken to ensure that women (above 16 years) from all age groups and different marital status were included in the survey; households were selected to cover all socio-religious sections and economic strata in the community; effort were made to ensure that the sample is representative of the spread of literacy/education among women.

3.2b Instrument

CEMCA designed a detailed questionnaire comprising of more than 50 questions for the baseline study. The questionnaire was sent to the educational institution well in advance so that the questions can be translated in the local language and modified to suit the local profile. The translated questionnaire was rechecked and finalized in consultation with CEMCA before the baseline study workshop commenced. 1050 copies of the questionnaire were prepared by the institution along with an equal number of sticker advertising the FM channel through which the SFW programmes will be broadcast in the future months. The institute selected a requisite number of student volunteers among the girls for conducting the baseline study. The entire programme was guided and supervised by an expert and officers of CEMCA. In case of the present study the expert selected was **Mr.R.Mahadevan** and on behalf of CEMCA Ms **Dr.R.Sreedhar** was present to oversee the entire exercise. The questionnaire consisted of five distinct sections:

- a) Information on socio-economic and demographic profile of the listeners of the FM station
- b) Media habits of the listeners- ownership, frequency of listening, interest, utility
- c) Current information sources and nature of solution for problems on issues like health hazards, family planning, social hygiene, childcare
- d) Issues of local importance
- e) Issues that community women would like to hear as well as participate on radio

3.3 Data Collection

A field team was created for data collection. It comprised of:

- i) 20 Student volunteers who had some exposure to programme production at the Community Radio Station of the institute
- ii) Community representatives who were trained by CEMCA expert at the preliminary workshop on how to conduct a survey. They community volunteers also helped the students identify the households where women could be asked questions for the survey

iii) Staff coordinators from the educational institution associated with the FM Radio
In addition a team was selected to process the data immediately after collect so that at the end of the five day data-collection schedule, a detailed report can be prepared about the demographic nature of the target audience/participants. A one-day workshop was held prior to the data collection process to explain the entire project, methodology of data-collection, precautions to be observed during visiting the village households, and the procedure for tabulation. Training during the workshop included mock-interviews and tips on how to ask questions so that the exact information can be obtained. The students were encouraged to carry their cameras and photographs the interviewees. The pictures offer a visual presentation of the community, its economic status, the warmth and cooperation that the student volunteers received from the community and the reaction of men in the houses during the question-answer sessions.

To ensure that the student volunteers are able to collect a truly representative data of the women in the two selected communities, supervisors occasionally accompanied them. They also interacted with the community independently to understand the community from the perspective of the SFW project.

The complete data, duly tabulated was sent to Delhi for comprehensive report and analysis by the CEMCA expert in accordance with the pre-designed framework developed by CEMCA.

4. Data Analysis - Community Profile

4.1 The overall picture

Over 75% of the women interviewed were married and about 10% widowed. Only 5% of all the respondents were above 60 years of age. Majority of the women (over 60%) interviewed were in the age range of 21-40 years. The community is essentially Hindu (92%) with less than 4% percentage Christian and 3% Muslim families living in the villages. Over 80% of the houses showed presence of male members as the head of the household.

Ref: Charts No. 65, 66, 67, 68, 75, 86

4.2 Socio-economic profile of community

The community selected is predominantly urban poor, with over 32% of the households living in apartments and high-rise buildings. Nearly 50% of the respondents belonged to households with monthly income between Rs. 3000 - Rs. 5000. There was a sizable section (over 11%) with monthly income exceeding Rs. 20,000. Only 15% of all the households selected were in the lowest economic strata, i.e. income less than Rs. 1500 per month. While majority of the women were homemakers (62%) 11% were daily wage workers and another 7% self employed or petty traders. Around 78% of the women both young and old felt that women did not have enough employment opportunities but they also said that employment opportunities were equally limited for elderly men. Electricity was available to almost all the houses and LPG gas for cooking in nearly 80% of the households. Toilet

facilities were found to be adequate with nearly 80% of the households but the survey showed water scarcity, especially getting clean drinking water is a problem faced by 40% of the women in the lowest income bracket. Self Help Group activities, especially NGOs are active in the regions though 22% claimed direct involvement in NGO guided community activities

Ref: Charts 69, 77, 78, 79, 80, 84, 76, 25,

4.3 Lifestyle Indicators

As this was an urban slum most of the houses were pucca constructions and nearly all had electricity connection and LPG cooking facilities. But toilet facilities was poor, with restricted water supply and using open areas by children was found to be a regular practice. Luxury goods like TV set was available with over 90% of the households but only 47% had transistor radio with FM. Even in the lower economic strata, more than 71% women from all age groups reported possessing electric mixer-grinder, and an average of 40% houses also had a refrigerator. About 20% houses reported owning a washing machine and 20% also had music system including CD player. A very small percent (below 6%) reported owning car/jeep. Computer was also a very possession rare even among the affluent. only 24% of the women owned mobile phone. Two-wheeler was found to be the most popular vehicle.

Ref: Charts 4, 7, 85, 78, 63

4.4 Condition of Women - literacy, education, status within family

Overall condition of women in these two slums show school education upto 6-9years for 34% and only 18% are in the acceptable literate category. The household size is average 4.6% showing family planning norms are known to the communities. Nearly 70% in all the age range were aware of the literacy programmes in the area. Drunkenness and addiction of different kinds is a cause of concern for the women. In some sections as many as 73% complained that it creates problems. (cutting across educational and economic background) did not feel that women suffered from lower status in the household. Both over 70% wanted tips on better management of family finances.

Ref: Charts 47, 10, 27, 39, 40, 68, 50, 48, 28, 29

4.5 Primary issues of concern in community

The area is in urgent need of community hygiene information, cleanliness guidance and optimization of water resources. The other important issue is knowledge about epidemic control, child health and gender discrimination. More than 60% reported the lack of doctors and wanted primary health tips in radio programmes regularly. Drunkenness among men was also identified as a community problem. It was also found that the women were not properly educated about the importance of vaccination as a preventive measure for diseases like chicken-pox, measles. In some of the economic strata the ignorance level reached over 60%. The community is overtly superstitious.

Ref: Charts 18, 19, 38, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 44, 83

4.6 Primary issues of concern in household

Awareness regarding nutrition and child healthcare seemed very poor among the women interviewed. More than 50% did not possess much knowledge on either nutrition or proper healthcare. Personal health care among women was particularly appalling. Nearly 35% of all information was hearsay or elders advice but 20% picked up health related advice from radio/TV. Care during pregnancy also suffered from inadequate information. Adolescence care and hygiene during menstruation and pregnancy are two important areas where information flow needs to be stepped up.

Ref: Charts 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37

4.7 Media Profile -ownership, consumption, needs

Media awareness seemed very encouraging with 38% getting at least one newspaper daily and 20% at least one magazine in the local language. Most houses had a television set (over 90% colour sets) but only 28% of homes owned a radio set and out of them only around 50% owned radio sets with FM bands. Most of the women were familiar with the concept of DTH/cable connection as cable connection was available with nearly 85% of the households owning TV sets. On TV sets women preferred to watch entertainment programmes originating from Chennai. The thrust of viewing was on good music (30%) and useful information programmes (22%).

MOP FM station needs to be more active in the region as only 2% women said they tuned in to the MOP FM. But the encouraging fact is that all the time slots selected by MOP FM are equally popular with the women (around 23% listening in each slot was reported) indicating the possibilities of community participatory programmes. The bulk of the listenership however was for the programmes that were broadcast during the early hours of the day (6-8am) and majority listened to radio at home while engaged in household chores.

More than 50% of the women interviewed were eager to participate in organized group listening and felt that radio programmes can be useful in finding solution to the community needs. They wanted information on farming techniques/agriculture and health related problems which they felt were central to their daily life. So far information from radio on issues like child health, epidemics, and pre and post-natal care has not been adequate and less than 10% women reported to have been benefited with information via radio/TV. Their information outflow has been more through traditional systems like elders guiding with experience (about 40%) and doctors and local health workers (around 50%).

Ref: Charts 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 49, 51, 52

4.8 Community participation in CR programmes

The present status of community participation in MOP FM programmes is negligible but nearly 50% of the women interviewed showed readiness to participate in community radio programmes. While more than 25% of the elderly women, both literate and illiterate, opted to be community representative in the radio participatory programmes, the trend among the

younger women was towards radio jockey roles. Women in the age range of 31–40 preferred to be participants in useful programmes. This trend was most clearly visible in the income group of 3000–5000 rupees per household, irrespective of the literacy levels. Around 40% of women in this age range cutting across all income groups also wanted to be the community representative for radio programmes on MOP FM.

The overall impression the sample is that the women in these two selected villages were aware of radio programmes, were enthusiastic about radio/TV programmes and could afford the basic necessities of everyday living. They seemed responsive to new ideas and information. There was an overall progressive attitude among the women which the surveyors felt will be useful for the science for woman project.

Ref: Charts 54, 55, 56,

5. Implications for MOP FM

In the door-to-door survey, the students and staff got an opportunity to meet over 1000 women face-to-face to build an audience for the CR station in general and also explain SFW and its objectives. Thus a valuable asset was created for the CR station that can be tapped both for SFW and beyond as the database contains unique identification for the respondents, identifying those who are willing and ready to participate. During the course of the year, on different issues, where direct community participation is possible, these women can be invited to participate. Their presence in the programme will make the radio more relevant to its listeners.

Further, each of the surveyed household carries a sticker, proclaiming the name of the programme SFW in Tamil that will serve as a constant reminder to the community to tune in to MOP FM. The use of stickers announcing the SFW Programme entitled “Penne Nee Arivva” and the FM frequency will help develop awareness about the channel in general. Test transmission was carried out during the survey period of one week which gave the listeners a first hand experience. Thus, MOP FM has become a household name among 1000 households and acquired listenership among the 282 radio listening households. The data shows the following information for the programme planners of MOP FM:

1. Television at present scores over radio in engaging the community but as a source of information there is a general awareness and interest about MOPFM. If programmes are made in the local dialect listenership will immediately increase. But some devices will have to be put in place so that there is more number of radios available for listening, more community listening habits need to be developed and Self Help Groups harnessed for improving FM–community interaction.
2. A large section of the respondents are illiterate. This is the target audience who should be encouraged in participatory programmes, Such efforts generate breaking the literacy barrier and non–formal mode of information dissemination at the grass–root levels.

3. The slums also reported lack of sanitation facilities and information on personal as well as community hygiene. It is important for MOP FM to devise programmes that can provide information through radio on mid-wife training, nursing school facilities and simple medical know-how.
4. Most of the women are home makers. They can be encouraged to participate in interactive programme at times suited to their daily household schedule. The close proximity of MOP FM radio station to the slums is a convenient opportunity for creating a truly participatory community radio.
5. The MOP FM radio team need to build linkages with the local NGOs (many of the women interviewed were members or attached to local self-help-groups) so that the requirements of the community are regularly monitored
6. The survey showed women prefer to listen to radio in the forenoon i.e. in the 6-12am. MOP FM needs to keep this in perspective and build programmes to extend interest in radio for longer duration.
7. Currently only a small percent (282 households) are listening to Radio. The CR station needs to motivate the community to acquire radios and listen. As an incentive, radio sets can be given as gifts for participation in radio programmes. Efforts will have to be made to continuously involve the community members in the radio programmes to expand the listenership.
8. Music interspaced with useful is one of the most convenient ways of information dissemination in radio. As indicated earlier, there are not many offerings by way of FM radio. Myths and beliefs abound in the community-this creates a good entry point for SFW to understand the myths, local beliefs and taboos practiced in the community. A listening culture has to be built through SFW, by making programmes using these local forms which can help make a programme relevant, participatory and interactive while imparting correct, factual and useful information, especially in the present context of science for women.

6. Findings & Gap Areas

For CEMCA and RVPSP, this survey threw up interesting contrasts in information.

- a. This community is not totally dependant on media for increasing the information base as newspaper and magazine are available to household but education and literacy is limited(Ref Charts 2 & 3). Therefore use of the local FM channel is a wise decision.

- b. It is an urban slum community and information on sanitation, use of limited water resources and child health are the primary concerns of the communities.
- c. Information on clearing superstitions is very necessary
- d. The community also needs information on infant care, pregnancy and vaccination
- e. The community needs to be sensitized regarding the non-formal education options available to urban dwellers and importance of correct and timely information.
- f. Non-formal education using distance learning methods are likely to interest the listeners
- g. The women will benefit if they can be given simple household tips on electricity consumption, judicious management of limited water availability.
- h. Across the economic strata and education levels the women showed low level of awareness on health issue –importance of vaccination, child-nutrition, care for elders, in every sphere there appeared dependence on hearsay or local experience. This is both a cause for concern as well as an area where attention is urgently required.

7. Recommendations of CEMCA

- A.** A major gap area in information as can be deduced in this survey is lack of community sanitation awareness, understanding of child and pregnant women health issues, handling of cleanliness. In the absence of proper medical facilities in the area these concerns should be kept in focus while planning the programmes for the CEMA- RSVSP Project.
- B.** Mosquito and water borne diseases seemed to be two hazards that are causing concern among the women. Correct and sustained information on these two environmental issues is required.

This report has summarized only the broad findings .Detailed tables in the appendix may be looked at for cross tabulations of habits and preferences with independent variables.

