

Science for Women Baseline Study Report

for

KONGU ENGINEERING COLLEGE

Kongu Engineering College, Perundurai, Erode

Contents

| | |
|---|------|
| 1. <i>Project Context</i> | 1-2 |
| 2. <i>Profile of KONGU</i> | 3 |
| 3. <i>Baseline Study Objectives and Design</i> | 3-5 |
| 4. <i>Data Analysis - Community Profile</i> | 6-7 |
| 5. <i>Implications for the Institute & CR Station</i> | 8 |
| 6. <i>Findings & Gap Areas</i> | 9 |
| 7. <i>Recommendations by CEMCA</i> | 9-10 |
| 8. <i>Appendix a- Tabulation Charts</i> | |

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 (RVPS), 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 and literary challenged sections of

society both in the urban and rural sectors across the country. Through participatory programmes specially designed with specific issues of **Nutrition & Health** in focus and using the community participatory form of radio-programming, this project will study how best women can be introduced 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 RVFSP and at the end of the workshop each of the participating educational institutions was asked to submit proposals suited to develop the Science for Women Programme through the community radio stations run by the institute.

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 RVFSP 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 using students from the educational institution and women from communities. Through this study a profile of the community is 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. The baseline study is also designed to motivate the students to understand and interact with the community women and develop awareness within the community about the FM channel run by the educational institution.*
- *In the second phase, workshops are conducted in the educational institutions for a capacity building exercise for the production team which will design and produce community participatory radio programmes with the central theme of Nutrition & Health. Community participatory programmes similar to the pilots developed in the Capacity Building Workshop will be produced regularly and broadcast from the channel daily from a date mutually agreed between RVPSP and the institute..*
- *Once the broadcasts have started regularly from the selected Community Radio channel, CEMCA will develop a methodology for evaluation of the project.*

Fourteen Educational Institutions granted license to set up Community Radio Stations by I&B Ministry have been selected by CEM and RIPS for awarding the SFW Project. The following report is the finding from the baseline study for KONGU FM Radio licensed to Kongu Engineering College in Perendurai, Erode Distt., Tamil Nadu.

2. Profile of KONGU FM

KONGU FM, the community radio is run by Kongu Engineering College in Perandurai, Erode District, Tamil Nadu. The broadcasts started from 7th August, 2005, on 90.4 MHz over a radius of 15 km, covering a rural population, essentially agricultural communities where literacy is low and health issues are vital.

The station was formally inaugurated by the former Vice-Chancellor of Madurai Kamraj University, Prof. S.V. Chitti Babu. Activities of the community radio station include regular visit by the production team to the villages, and the station encourages villagers to come to the radio station, understand how it works, and promotes student-community interaction. As Dr. K. Thangaraj, Coordinator of KONGU FM says, the focus of the radio station is to encourage the community members to speak out their needs and ideas and learn to articulate their thought and grievances. This he feels is the first step towards development.

3. Baseline Study Objectives & Design

3.1 Objectives

The baseline study aims to achieve:

- *Documentation of the socio-economic and demographic profile of the target listeners*

- *Understanding of the media habits of the women, with particular 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

The base line study was initiated from 29th November – 1st December, 2007. There were 54 participants in all, most of them from the community. The institution sent 5 students and 8 faculty members of Kongu Engineering College. The community members at the workshop included women from Self-Help Groups, trainees from District Institute of Educational Training, housewives from village homes and women from community living near the college. The areas selected for the baseline study were as listed below:

- *Nathakattupalayam*
- *Kasu*
- *Essaimedu Chennimalai Road*
- *Perudurai*
- *V. Vellode*
- *Yallpalayam*

All these villages (except Prundurai) are located within a radius of 7km from the Kongu College Campus and the signal of KONGU FM was clearly audible in all the homes during the survey. Perudurai is the urban area around the campus where the signals are very strong.

This was the second survey undertaken in Kengu. The first workshop and the survey following the workshop held earlier with Jai Chandiram had to be discarded as the database was found to be unsatisfactory.

3. 2b Instrument

The questionnaire in Kengu Baseline Survey is marginally different from the questionnaire in other institutions as Ms. Jai Chandiram had decided to use the UNESCO developed Baseline Study format. As that questionnaire had been translated and printed in huge number, for the second baseline study under Mr. R. Mahadevan's guidance too the same questionnaire had been used. There is a difference in the thrust between the GEMCA developed questionnaire and the UNESCO questionnaire but most of the necessary information could be solicited.

The UNESCO questionnaire provides the following sets of information:

- a) Information on socio-economic profile of the community*
- b) Media habits of the listeners- ownership, frequency of listening, interest, utility*
- c) Information on issues like health hazards, family planning, social hygiene, childcare*
- d) Profile of community women - education, marital status, size of family*

3. 3 Data Collection

Mr. R. Mahadevan was appointed by GEMCA as the local expert for conducting the 3-day Baseline study Workshop. The workshop was formally inaugurated on 29th November by Dr. K. Thangaraj, Coordinator for KONGUAM, who explained to the participants the purpose of the workshop and how it would help in making the programmes from KONGUAM more listener-oriented. Mr. Mahadevan detailed out the procedure for data collection and the rationale behind the questionnaire.

A one-day introductory workshop was held prior to the data collection workshop to explain the need for a fresh data collection and where the volunteers need to be extra careful so that the data can be matched with the national tabulation system. During the workshop training was given through mock-interviews and tips were given on how to ask questions to obtain the exact information. All the students were told carry cameras and a field team was created for data collection, photography and cross-checking the data. This team included:

i) 5 student volunteers who had some exposure to community participatory radio production

ii) Staff coordinators from Kongu Engineering College

iii) 40 community volunteers including members of local Self-Help Groups and trainees from the District Institute of Educational Training

The participants were divided into 5 groups each consisting of one student, one staff member, two trainees for the district institute and three community women. The process of data collection was interactive. In addition, a team was formed under the guidance of Mr. R. Mahadevan, to process the data immediately so that at the end of the three-day workshop a detailed picture of the demographic character of the target audience/participant would emerge.

4. Data Analysis – Community Profile

4.1 The overall picture

The total data is based on 613 respondents. Among these 77% were married women and nearly 625 in the age range of 20-40 years. 4.1% of the

respondents were women above the age of 60 years. The community is essentially Hindu (95%) with only 3% Muslim and 1% Christian found among the respondents. Despite being an agricultural community the education level among the women is encouraging. 48% women were literate and educated upto SSLC level. But over 22% were also found illiterate, showing wide gap in the socio-economic status of the community. A large number of women were daily wage workers (40.6%) and another 20% engaged in agricultural activities. 66% women reported that husband was the head of the family and lived in the house.

Ref: Charts No. 6, 16, 18, 19, 22, 43

4.2 Socio-economic profile

The community is entirely rural with wide difference in the socio-economic conditions. The primary activity of the community is farming, with 40% working as agricultural hands. More than 47% women belong to households earning below Rs. 1500 per month and only 21% had water connection in the house for drinking water. Over 50% of the women had to depend upon common water source like roadside tap or public hand pump for drinking water. However nearly 10% of the women reported monthly income in the range of Rs. 3001- 6000 and an equal percentage of girls were students who did not have to participate in family earning. The community did not report any lack of employment opportunity for men or women in the area and were aware of the advantages of joining self help groups for improving their overall condition. The socio-economic diverges in the community was most starkly depicted in the kitchens - while 50% homes proudly displayed their LPG connection, over 32% admitted firewood as their only source of heat for cooking.

Ref: Charts 15, 44, 52, 111, 113

4.3 Lifestyle Indicators

76% of the homes had a radio with FM connection. Another 68% also watched television regularly. Beyond this no further information is available from the preset data available from the survey as the questionnaire did not solicit any information on life-style indicators. 34% of the women had private toilet facilities but 50% had to use open fields once again showing the extent of disparity in the region. Over 54% homes had an electrical grinder but only 6% had a refrigerator and 4% owned a washing machine.

Ref: Charts 45, 58, 59, 112

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

As already indicated, a very large percentage of the women were literate (45.8%) and a few girls were educated above HSC (11.7%) as well. Over 37% were members of SHGs but another 50% said they had not heard about SHG indicating the wide gap in information, education and intra-social communication.

Ref: Charts 23, 52, 53, 54,

4.5 Primary issues of concern in community

Mosquito is a major problem as reported by 53% of women and Chikan - Guniya the most troublesome disease for 36% of the families. Pediatric health problem is another serious concern.

Ref: Charts 46, 49

4.6 Primary issues of concern in household

The women are most concerned with improving the overall living standard of the family. They would like to learn more crafts through radio for overall improvement of living standards but need expert guidance. The family depends upon elders and neighbours as their source of information and support system.

Ref: Charts 85, 86, 101 – 128

4.7 Media Profile –ownership, consumption, needs

19% of the respondents reported reading newspapers daily while 22% never read any newspaper. Similarly 14% occasionally read magazines and 27% never saw any. The encouraging information was that over 76% owned radio with FM band and were regular listeners (64%). 70% also watched television daily. The usual listening hours are in the morning upto 10am and in the house. 15 said they were aware of KONGU FM. The community is able to pick up information through radio/Television news and informative programmes, There is no special preference for any local dialect and the data shows on issues like family health, information on diet, on how adolescent children can be guided, epidemics and seasonal health concerns in addition to agricultural news are issues where media is considered a dependable source of information. 12%- 28% respondents replied that they used radio as a source of information regularly.

Ref: Charts 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 63, 64, 65, 80-88, 90

4.8 Community participation in CR programmes

At present the community participation in KONGU FM programmes is very limited but 41% wanted to participate in radio programmes. The community felt more participatory programmes, especially interactive programme with experts will be useful. 30% also showed interest in radio presentation and another the highest interest was on programmes on agriculture (24%) and on traditional vocational training like tailoring, handicrafts food processing etc.

Ref: Charts 78, 79, 94, 96-110

5. Implications for KONGU FM

In the two sets of door-to-door survey, the volunteers met 1000 women face-to-face to build an audience for the KONGUM. Thus a valuable asset was created for the CR station that can be tapped both for DFW and beyond as the database contains detailed information on the expectations from radio programmes, and the kind of programmes in which community is willing to participate.. During the course of the year, programmes with direct community participation should be designed and all these women 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 bright coloured sticker, proclaiming the name of the channel KONGUM, the frequency written in Tamil which will serve as a constant reminder to the community of the existence of KONGUM. However the production team needs to keep in focus the following:

- 1. The socio-economic disparity in the community is very wide but needs and concerns are similar. Therefore it would be a challenge to make the programmes relevant to all sections.*
- 2. Radio listening habits of the community as reflected in the data is a very encouraging. KONGUM needs to involve community members on a regular basis to tap this asset and develop a sense of ownership with the radio station to become a constant source of information for everyone.*
- 3. Group listening is and DFG activities already exist within the community. Therefore group participation in radio programmes involving experts will be a suitable format for KONGUM.*

4. *KONGUM will also have to devise ways of recording the women in their homes frequently as women seem to be partners in earning and may not find time to come for recording to the studio.*
5. *A suitable time for broadcast of the SFW programmes has to be worked out as the listenership is highest in the morning but concentration is on entertainment programmes. It is best not to go into competition with powerful entertainment channels but develop listening habit for SFW programme in a time slot in collaboration with SHGs and community members.*

6. Findings & Gap Areas

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

- a. *This community though living in a close geographical area and dependant on similar economic activity shows with socio-economic disparity. This must be kept in mind while planning for programmes.*
- b. *The community is literate and capable of absorbing information through media including radio.*
- c. *Regular information on child health, pregnancy, local health issues and seasonal precautions will benefit the community.*

7. Recommendations of CEMCA

- A. *The women from the community will only get into the habit of radio listening if they are regular participants in the programmes.*

Participatory production techniques are essential for the Science for Women programmes in KONGUM.

- B. Community knows that radio is a dependable source of information. This is a very important asset for KONGUM and participatory programmes planned with local information needs will make the radio channel popular.*
- C. Community shows interest in interacting with experts. Programmes like phone-in, interactive question-answer sessions would interest the community women.*

KONGUM has some presence in the area but it is almost marginal. The programme planners need to keep in focus the community needs, involve a wide cross-section of the community members and devise programmes which are participatory.

There is already awareness within the community on the importance of radio as a source of information and KONGUM needs to build on this available asset.

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

