

Science for Women Baseline Study Report

for

NILA FM

Sri Manakula Vinayagar Engineering College, Puducherry

(BY VANDANA MAM)

Contents

1. Project Context	1-3
2. Profile of NILA FM	3-4
3. Baseline Study Objectives and Design	4-6
4. Data Analysis – Community Profile	6-9
5. Implications for the Institute & CR Station	10-11
6. Findings & Gap Areas	11-12
7. Recommendations by CEMCA	12
8. Appendix a– Tabulation Charts	
9. Appendix b– List of Participants from community	

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 NILA FM radio licensed to Sri Manakula Vinayagar Engineering College, Pondicherry. The baseline survey for project was conducted by girl students of the college drawn from various depts. (ECE, EEE, CSE, IT, ICE, MCA & MBA) along with 17 women belonging to the self help groups in the target areas Madagadipet, Kalitheerthalkuppam and Kumalam. The teaching faculties were involved in the survey and CEMCA appointed Mr. R.Naganathan as the expert for supervising the baseline study. The survey was conducted from 17th -19th September, 2007.

2. Profile of NILA FM Radio Station at Pondicherry

The **Nila FM**, the community radio is run by students of **Sri Manakula Vinayagar Engineering College, Puducherry**. Test run for the station started in August 2005 and with effect from 1st January, 2006, the station is regularly broadcasting on **90.4MHz** over a radius of 15km, covering 36 villages surrounding the college campus. The radio station has its own broadcast and recording studios, transmission tower and equipments for outdoor recordings.

Around 100 students from the college are involved in programme production, presentation and management of the radio station. As Nila FM is the only community radio station in the region, students from neighbouring colleges are encouraged to participate in the programmes. Students are responsible for the programme production and maintenance of the hardware in the station though

teachers and administrative staff of the college act as facilitators to successfully run the station.

Nila FM broadcasts programmes from morning to evening, extending a little beyond the regular college hours. "This is a community radio, which has to be used for the benefit of the people in the nearby areas. Since most of them are involved in agricultural activities, we have a tie up with the M S Swaminathan Research Foundation, which provides agri-based information to be broadcast for the benefit of the farmers," says Dhanasegaran, Managing Director of the college. The radio station gives information on the history of Pondicherry, local temples, education, health, traffic rules, environment, national events and personalities. Doctors are invited to talk about various diseases and their treatments. Music broadcasts form a popular section of the programmes. In between songs, information snippets such as safe driving suggestions, the dangers of smoking, health tips and news headlines that would interest the listeners is added on to make the programmes useful while being entertaining. The college has a tie up with Anna University, which makes programmes for its own community radio. The two stations regularly exchange programmes.

According to VSK Venkatachalapathy, Principal of the college, "The investment in the project is nearly Rs. 30 lakh but since it is beneficial for the students as well as the public, we are happy to be involved in it." The FM station is presently heard till the Thengaithittu petrol bunk and even in the neighbouring Villupuram district. But if the Ministry gives clearance, there are plans to extend the transmission to more areas.

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) **Madagadipet**, Kalitheerthalkuppam (1km from our college)
- b) **Kumalam** (10 km from our college)

The above two villages are basically involved in agriculture and related occupations. Some are skilled workers involved in construction activities. 1066 households were identified from the villages and from each household one woman was selected for baseline sample study. Care was taken to ensure that women (above 16years) 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 modifies to suit the local profile. The translated questionnaire was rechecked and finalized in consultation with CEMCA before the baseline study workshop commenced. 1200 copies of the questionnaire was 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.Naganathan** and on behalf of CEMCA Ms **Rukmini Venraju** 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. Hey 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 80% of the women interviewed were married and about 7% widowed. Only 3% of all the respondents were above 60 years of age. Majority of the women interviewed were in the age range of 21-40 years. The community is essentially Hindu (96%) with a small percentage of Christian 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 rural, with over 40% of the households having thatched roofs. More than 70% of the respondents belonged to households with monthly income below Rs. 5000. One-third of all the households selected were in the lowest economic strata, i.e. income less than Rs. 1500 per month. Almost 50% of the rest of the respondents belong to the economic bracket of Rs.1501-5000 per month and the rest were in the higher income group earning above Rs. 5000 per month. While majority of the women were homemakers (76.3%) while 12% were daily wage workers and another 8% self employed or petty traders. Around 44% of the women felt that women did not have enough employment opportunities but they also said that employment opportunities were equally limited for men. Electricity was available to almost all the houses and LPG gas for cooking in nearly 50% of the households though a fair majority used firewood for cooking. Toilet facilities was poor for over 40% of the households and water scarcity, especially getting clean drinking water is a problem faced by 40% of the women in the lowest income bracket and all the age groups and economic strata accepted that it is a problem faced by the community. Around 50% of women from all age groups and economic strata felt the region gets excessive rainfall which hampers their economic activities while the other 50% did to agree to this view.

Ref: Charts 69, 77, 78, 79, 80, 84, 76, 25, 22

4.3 Lifestyle Indicators

The life style indicator for the economic strata below Rs.15,000 per month was, as expected, bereft of most commonly known utility items or luxury goods except a TV set or an occasional transistor radio. In the other economic strata, more than 69% women from all age groups reported possessing electric mixer-grinder in the house, and an average of 16% houses also had a refrigerator. About 5% houses reported owning a washing machine and 15% also had music system including CD player. A very small percent (below 5%) reported owning car/tractor. Computer was also a very possession rare even among the affluent. 14% of the women owned mobile phone. Two-wheeler was found to be the most popular vehicle and despite being an agricultural community tractor was found in only 1% houses.

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

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

Overall condition of women in these two villages was comfortable enough for almost 50% of them to find time for Self Help Group activities. Nearly 70% in the age range of 21-40 were aware of the literacy programmes in the villages though the overall literacy figures are not too encouraging – only 4.5% of the women interviewed were graduate or above and a majority (40%) were educated only upto 6th standard. Nearly 27% were illiterate. 65% wanted to avail vocational training to become financially self-sufficient. More than 40% also reported lack of employment opportunities for women in the villages but most of the women also admitted inadequate education as a reason for unemployment. Most of the women, (cutting across educational and economic background) did not feel that women suffered from lower status in the household.

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

4.5 Primary issues of concern in community

The area is infested with snakes and over 70% of the women interviewed reported that snakes are a major hazard for them. The other health hazard is the presence of mosquitoes and flies. Adequate drainage is one major problem and pollution due to use of firewood was identified as an important problem in the community. Around 30% of women in the age range of 21-40 also reported water scarcity as a perennial problem. More than 60% said lack of doctors in the village was a very acute problem and wanted 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 not 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 and only 7% 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

The women reported that most households (over 80%) did not get any newspaper or magazines and their source of information was limited to word of mouth or information through television programmes or advertisements. Most houses had a television set (over 50% 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 70% of the households owning TV sets. Households with younger members in the age range of 21-30 years had greater number of TV sets with cable connection while households with predominantly older people were more attuned to radio programmes. 82% of the radio sets were found in households with women in the age range of 50-60 years. 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%).

There was a general awareness of the NILA FM station .As many as 40% of households owning radio sets with FM channels actually listened to the Nila FM programmes indicating the reach and relevance of the community radio channel in the region. 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 childhealth, 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. Their information outflow has been more through traditional systems like elders guiding with experience (about 40%) and doctors and local health workers (around50%).

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 NILA 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 1501-3000 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 NILA 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 NILA 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 Nila FM. Test transmission was carried out during the survey period of one week which gave the listeners a first hand experience. Thus, Nila 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 NILA 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 NILA FM. 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. Over 70% 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 villages also reported lack of doctors and medical facilities It is important for NILA 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 if recording is arranged in villages or at times suited to their daily household schedule. This will make NILA FM a truly participatory community radio.

5. The NILA FM radio team need to build linkages with the local SHGs (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 most women prefer to listen to radio in the early hours i.e. in the 6-8am. Nila FM needs to keep this in perspective and build programmes to extend interest in radio for longer duration.
7. Currently only about 28 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 essentially dependant on media for increasing the information base as newspaper and magazine availability is very limited (Ref Charts 2 & 3). Therefore use of the local FM channel is a wise decision.
- b. It is an agricultural community and information on agri-marketing, protection of crops from rain and damp weather will be useful.
- c. Information on personal hygiene and nutrition is very necessary

- d. They community also needs information on child health, pregnancy and vaccination
- e. The community is not overtly superstitious and it is not necessary to focus on such issues
- 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, tackling mosquito menace.
- 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 medical facilities, understanding of child and pregnant women health issues, handling of community hygiene and 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.** Snake and mosquito 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 summarised only the broad findings .Detailed tables in the appendix may be looked at for cross tabulations of habits and preferences with independent variables.