



Message on the 11th World Radio Day

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Delivered on 13 February 2024 at the Radio Festival 2024, organised by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Prasar Bharati, UNESCO and SMART NGO at the India International Centre, New Delhi.

Dear Shri Sanjay Jaju, Secretary, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India (MIB-Gol); Smt Neerja Sekhar, Additional Secretary, MIB-Gol; Ms Vasudha Gupta, Principal Director, All India Radio, Gol; Dr Tim Curtis, Director, UNESCO New Delhi Regional Office; Mrs Archana Kapoor, Founder of the Radio Festival, my colleagues at UNESCO, MIB, Prasar Bharati, CEMCA and Seeking Modern Applications for Real Transformation (SMART NGO) and, most importantly, the radio activists assembled here at the Radio Festival.

Best wishes to one and all on the 11th World Radio Day, celebrated worldwide, thanks to the recognition accorded by UNESCO. This year, celebrated with the theme: A century informing, entertaining and educating is a significant one. The theme denotes century-old practice of radio as a tool placed in the hands of many actors, especially the common people. In India, with the advent of community radio, the medium is not a passive one for listening to what others broadcast, but one that is used for 'learning', more so, 'lifelong learning' at the grassroots' level.

The Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA), for one, has been a major proponent of radio as an effective tool for learning. Although there was a surge of radio for educational purposes, with Gyan Vani, Krishi Vani, and the likes a few decades ago, it has been time and again proven that radio is the most resilient tool and the most affordable and accessible tool by the common people. The question is: amidst the latest technological

advancements, will the poor person's tool, the radio, survive? Well, the answer is in the previous statement that I had made. Radio has been the most resilient technology, tuned in by over four billion people around the world. But, less celebrated though. And, of course, UNESCO and the UN have made it possible for us to remember the power of radio on the 13th of February. Actually, it is indeed an everyday tool.

How do we use radio as a tool for learning and interacting with others for gathering knowledge and undertaking appropriate actions because of the knowledge gained. Professor M S Swaminathan, the recent recipient of the Bharat Ratna, posthumously, had proven it during the green revolution days. He used the television and the radio as the medium of communicating to the farmers, and ever since, it has been so.

At CEMCA, we have been attempting at learning if and how radio can be a learning tool, turning a passive listener into a lifelong learner. We have worked with some of the organisations present here, S M Sehgal Foundation, ISAP India Foundation (Formerly known as the Indian Society of Agribusiness Professionals) and Search for Truth and Return to Science (START) in the northern belt of India to see if radio can be used as a systematic tool for structured learning, and our findings are very positive.

We have also used radio to provide learning material on nutrition, wellness and wellbeing, in collaboration with the Ministry of Science and Technology and the Ministry of Ayush, (GoI). And, we have seen stunning results.

In the same vein, we are experimenting with the idea of stimulating grassroots' action through radio and audio communication to mitigate climate change and to undertake climate action.

As we all know mitigating climate change necessitates global cooperation, yet global data on individuals' willingness to act remains scarce. A recent study published four days ago by *Nature Magazine*, interviewing nearly 130,000 individuals in 125 nations, reveals widespread support for climate action. Notably, 69 per cent of the global population expresses a willingness to contribute one per cent of their personal income, 86 per cent endorse pro-climate social norms and 89 per cent demand intensified political action. Countries facing heightened vulnerability to climate change show a particularly high willingness to contribute. Despite these encouraging statistics, the study also documents that the world is in a state of pluralistic ignorance, wherein individuals around the globe systematically underestimate the willingness of their fellow citizens to act. This perception gap, combined with individuals showing conditionally cooperative behaviours, poses challenges to further climate action. Therefore, raising awareness about the broad global support for climate action becomes critically important in promoting a unified response to climate change.

As a response, SMART and CEMCA prepared a systematic learning curriculum: Climate Literacy for Community Media late last year covering certain topics of importance. The curriculum deals with SDG13, and the call for action at the level of the citizenry; it focuses on the effects of Climate Change in the Indian context where intersections of climate changes are explained. Mapping the vulnerability zones of India, the curriculum points to the concerted actions the communities can take for mitigating and adapting to the changes. The curriculum concentrates on a lot of the solutions at the community level and as community media activists how one can use storytelling as a method of developing a series of programmes, what we call the structured learning programme for climate action by the citizens at the grassroots level.

We are now looking at turning the curriculum into a series of audio-based learning programmes that the community broadcasters can use for furthering climate action by the people.

The curriculum released today is one 'for' the people, 'by' the people and 'of' the people at the grassroots.

Thank you!