

# Sustainability of Community Radio in Bangladesh

An Analysis from Operational Perspective



Press Institute of Bangladesh



**Sustainability of  
Community Radio in Bangladesh**  
An Analysis from Operational Perspective

**Syed Kamrul Hasan  
S M Morshed**



**Press Institute of Bangladesh**  
Department of Research and Reference  
3 Circuit House Road, Dhaka-1000.

**Publisher**

Director General  
Press Institute of Bangladesh  
3 Circuit House Road, Dhaka-1000.  
Phone : 9333403, 9330081-84, Fax : 880-02-8317458  
E-mail : dgpiib@yahoo.com, Website : <http://www.pib.gov.bd>

**First Edition**

June 2017

**Cover**

Momin Uddin Khaled

**Computer Layout**

Syed Mohammad Abu Shohel

**Printer**

Associates Printing Press  
164 Fakirapul, Dhaka.

**Price**

Tk. 60, \$01 Only

**ISBN : 978-984-732-027-4**

# **Sustainability of Community Radio in Bangladesh**

## **An Analysis from Operational Perspective**

### **Research Advisory Council**

**Dr. Sakhawat Ali Khan**

Honorary Professor, Department of Mass Communication & Journalism  
University of Dhaka

**Dr. Md. Golam Rahman**

Professor, Department of Mass Communication & Journalism  
University of Dhaka

**Dr. Shaikh Abdus Salam**

Professor, Department of Mass Communication & Journalism  
University of Dhaka

**Akhtar Sultana**

Professor, Department of Mass Communication & Journalism  
University of Dhaka

**Mofidul Hoque**

Trustee, Liberation War Museum

**Md. Shah Alamgir**

Director General, PIB

### **Research Supervisor**

**Faizul Haque**

Director (Research and Reference), PIB

### **Research Coordinator**

**Dr. Quamrul Haq**

Research Officer, PIB

## Preface

Different types of Mass Media are developing rapidly in Bangladesh. It's developing in every branches from Folk Media to Print Media, Print Media to Electronic Media and from Electronic to Digital media and others. This developing Mass media has both problems and opportunities as well as needs and hopes from viewers, listeners and users. Moreover there are many scopes of researches on this matter, as well as need for it.

Since its establishment, the Department of Research and Reference of the Press Institute of Bangladesh has been undertaking various research works on various matters of Mass Media and its impact and effectiveness on society. For greater benefit of Mass Media, PIB is willing to take their research works to a wider range. So, PIB took initiatives to add researchers from all over the country beside their own researchers. As a part of it, PIB took 'Research Program of Guest Researcher and Organizations' and formed an 'Research Advisory Council'.

PIB asked for research proposals from interested individuals and organizations by advertisement on 7 different newspapers in April, 2014. After publishing advertisement, PIB got research proposal from 117 people, from those the Research Advisory Council selected out 11 in two steps. In the first stage, research work was done on 5 of 11 research proposals. In the next stage, Memorandum of Understanding were signed with researchers of the 4 proposals. One of the research among these four proposals is 'Sustainability of Community Radio in Bangladesh: An Analysis from Operational Perspective'.

I am congratulating the researchers, Syed Kamrul Hasan and Dr. S M Morshed for successful completion of research work. I am also thankful to Syed Tamjidur Rahman for reviewing this research work. With this I am also thanking the members of Research Advisory Council as well as former Director of the Department of Research and Reference Kazi Moshtaque Zahir, present Director Faizul Haque and coordinator of this Research Program Dr. Quamrul Haq.

We believe that our work will be fruitful if this research work is useful for media researchers, media workers and concerned people.

**Md. Shah Alamgir**  
Director General

## Evaluation Report

This report, "Sustainability of Community Radio in Bangladesh: An Analysis from Operational Perspective" is produced by two researchers under the prime contract with Press Institute of Bangladesh (PIB). The views expressed in the report are of the researchers and not necessarily of supervisor or PIB.

Community Radio is generally a broadcasting system established by the efforts of a specific community, operated by the community for the purpose of the community's welfare. It is, therefore, a type of radio service that caters to the interests of a certain area, broadcasting content that is popular to a local audience and is often overlooked by commercial or mass-media broadcasters. Community radio stations serve the local community listeners by offering a variety of content that is not necessarily provided by the larger commercial radio stations. Community radio outlets often provide news and information programming geared toward the local area, particularly focusing on the marginalized groups such as cultural minority groups that are poorly served by other major media outlets.

The policy outlines the Community Radio as "a non-profit service will be in charge of 'Community Radio' broadcasting activities". It should be owned by a particular community, usually through a trust, foundation, or association. Its aim is to serve and benefit that community. It is, in effect, a form of public-service broadcasting, but it serves a community rather than the whole nation, as is the usual form of public broadcasting described above. Moreover, it relies and must rely mainly on the resources of the community.

A community is generally considered as a social group of any size whose members reside in a specific locality, share government and often have a common cultural and historical heritage. The term 'community' obscures many complexities. 'Community has been defined in many different ways. Geographical definitions emphasize that a community is a group of people living in proximity within defined borders such as a village or neighborhood. Social psychological definitions emphasize that a community is defined less by presence in a particular physical space than by real or imagined commonalities of identity, aspiration and/or values. Sociological and

anthropological definitions emphasize commonalities of culture, kinship, religious affinity, social structure and values, together with living in a particular place.

Within communities, there are important differences in status, wealth and power. In fact, the term 'community' often implies a level of homogeneity that does not exist. A community frequently consists of multiple sub-groups that differ according to religion, socio-economic status and ethnicity and some groups may wield much more power and influence than others do. In such contexts, communities may decide to establish community radio that reduces the inequities that already exist within the community. Even if the groups include members of different sub-groups, their participation may be symbolic and their influence may be limited.

Communities in Community Radio are often a contentious and tricky debate and will vary from country to country. Community may also often be replaced by a range of terms like "alternative", "radical", or "citizen" radio. Although traditionally in sociology, a "community" has been defined as a group of interacting people living in a common location, community radio is often built around concepts of access and participation and so the term community may be thought of as often referring to geographical communities based around the possible reach of the radio's signal, i.e. the people who can receive the message, and their potential to participate in the creation of such messages. This poses the challenge in defining the community appropriately for the fact that many community radio stations now broadcast over the internet as well, thereby reaching potentially global audiences and communities.

According to the government policy "A 'Community' is considered to be a group of people who share common characteristics and/or interests such as sharing a single geographical location i.e. a specific town, village, or neighborhood; sharing of economic and social life through trade, marketing, exchange of goods and services.

How to define sustainability in the field of Community Radio can be very daunting and challenging? Generally, a project or an initiative can be considered as sustainable if its outcomes continue after the end of the promoters' (donor, funders etc.) initial active engagement in funding and managing. However, since the

sustainability of Community Radio outcomes may be difficult to anticipate and to describe – most are not tangible and are difficult to see – this research focused on the sustainability of community radio activities and/or outputs. Sustainability may not concern all the aspects of a community radio activity. In each community radio initiative, some activities or outputs may be maintained, while others may not be so necessary to maintain. A project can therefore be considered as sustainable if relevant activities are pursued and outputs are maintained or developed where the promoters can retrieve from their active and often "hand-holding" frame of funding and management and operation.

A practical way to understand the potential or achieved sustainability of a community radio initiative is to use the following two criteria:

1. Diversity and intensity of activities/outputs maintained or developed after the promoters' active engagement:
  - Activities/outputs are maintained, i.e. new community engagement procedures (activities)/an ideology in program design and broadcasting is still used (outputs)
  - Activities/outputs are developed, i.e. community needs are assessed periodically (activities)/capacity building of the community people has reached new segment of people (socially excluded, minorities, vulnerable group (outputs)
  - Activities/outputs can be disseminated, i.e. development of a new program building community harmony and bonding and learning to know each other (activities)/Programs developed by the community is included in regular programs of community radio which was not in the initial program schedule/plan (outputs)
2. Intensity and enlargement of the cooperation:
  - The network is maintained, i.e. partners take care of the follow-up.
  - The local network is maintained, i.e. the local institutions and community people meet regularly with the radio management.
  - Finally, the initial network is enlarged to incorporate other domains or entities, i.e. new government, non-government, private sectors, academic or research institutions have joined the community radio initiative.

The research has looked into these as well as a few other interesting issues about community radio sustainability which, I believe, would be helpful for the promoters, policy makers, researchers and the practitioners.

I would like to specially thank Mr. Mohammad Shah Alamgir, Director General of Press Institute of Bangladesh to initiate the study. I would also like to acknowledge the support provided by the different community radio station initiators to carry out the study. I also thank all the respondents who gave their valuable time to the research team to get area specific information that helped shape the report.

Finally, I also thank the researchers Mr. Syed Kamrul Hasan and Mr. S M Morshed for undertaking the in-depth and extensive study on Community Radio Sustainability issue.

**Syed Tamjidur Rahman**

## **Acknowledgement**

This is our pleasure that the research work on **Sustainability of Community Radio in Bangladesh: An Analysis from Operational Perspective** has been completed and finally submitted within the assigned time-period. The work has been assigned by Press Institute of Bangladesh (PIB) in June 2016 for a period of 1 year. We would like to give our thanks to PIB Authority to pick up such a very important and interesting issue for commissioning a research. As community radio in Bangladesh is a new actor in our media landscape, which already runs quite a few years, now this is the right time to check the acceptance, sustainability and its challenges. We acknowledge the cooperation and direction of Md. Shah Alamgir, DG, PIB, Faizul Haque, Director (Research and Reference), PIB and Dr. Quamrul Haq, Research Officer, PIB for their whole hearted support and cooperation throughout the research period.

We acknowledge the support and suggestions as provided by Mr. AHM Bazlur Rahman, CEO of BNNRC, the pioneering organization in community radio movement and growth of the country. Different studies, paper, bulletin and policy briefs published by BNNRC were used as secondary documents and helpful to validate the facts and information of the research. We are also grateful to the Joint Secretary (Radio) and Deputy Secretary (Radio), the Ministry of Information who gave their valuable time and supportive suggestions regarding the sustainability and progress of community radio in Bangladesh which contribute a lot for the conclusions and recommendations drawn in the research paper.

We must acknowledge the support and cooperation extended by the staffs and the listeners, the station managers and the CEOs of all 04 community radio stations (under the study) while we visited their stations and met them in several occasions of Focus Group Discussions, interviews and consultations.

Finally we are grateful to Syed Tamjidur Rahman, the supervisor of our research work, who is a “think tank” for community radio sector of the country, has provided his time to review the draft

research paper. We have utilized his useful guidance and constructive suggestion to revise our paper and made possible this final version now ready to submit.

We believe that the findings of the research paper will be useful for both the researchers and the policy-makers of any future undertakings for the betterment of community radio sector. We hope PIB will take initiative for wider dissemination of those findings.

With regards-

**Syed Kamrul Hasan**

**S M Morshed**

## Executive Summary

Community radio is a local broadcasting system that broadcasts local issues and important occurrences. It gives opportunity to express opinions of the community people with easier access and thus minimizes information divide between rural and urban people. The Ministry of Information, Government of People's Republic of Bangladesh, has declared Community Radio Installation, Broadcast and Operation Policy 2008. Accordingly, in April 2010, Ministry of Information gave approval to 16 Community Radio Stations to operate for the first time in the country. Later in a second phase government has provided licenses for additional 16 initiators to install CR stations. In a country like Bangladesh, where the majority of the population lives in rural areas, community radios immediately became the ears and eyes of the poor, the marginalized and the excluded groups. Beginning the broadcast in the year 2011, the 17 community radio stations in 16 districts of the country are now broadcasting 135-hours programs in a day on education, entertainment, culture, development motivation and various other socio-economic issues covering 6.18 million listeners.<sup>1</sup> Around 1,000 youth women & youth are now working with those stations throughout the country as rural broadcasters. Community Radio Stations drew attention of all levels and recently they have received some prestigious awards from national and international organizations.

The quality programs and the contents produced by rural youth and youth women broadcasters have already earned recognition by the institutions at home and abroad such as UN-WSIS Award-2016, Asia Pacific Broadcasting Union Award (ABU Award), UNICEF Meena Award.

As for the stations (04) under this study, Radio Pollikontha bagged 14, Radio Jhenuk 11 and Radio Bikrampur received 03 awards at different levels.

Over the experience of 5 years operation and with the principles of "Community radio as being for by and of the community", it becomes essential to review and check with certain parameters for sustainability whether the stations could establish any model for community ownership and sustained engagement and participation of

the communities that they serve. As commissioned by Press Institute of Bangladesh (PIB) this research titled: **Sustainability of Community Radio in Bangladesh: An Analysis from Operational Perspective** is an attempt to review critically the sustainability factors experienced by the operational stations and recommended some concrete steps towards their long-term growth and sustainability.

The objectives of the study are to (i) take stock and analyze the present financing mechanism, (ii) identify different aspects of sustainability, (iii) identify challenges, scope and opportunity for sustainability and (iv) make recommendations for policy interventions towards sustainability of CR stations.

Four (4) CR stations-Radio Pollikontha, Radio Jhenuk, Radio Mukti and Radio Bikrampur- have been selected for the study work. For methodology, the research has combined literature review, FGD and Key Informant Interview (KII) as means for fact and opinion findings. Relevant documents like similar studies by other organizations, the published books and policy briefs, and GoB Policy and guidelines were reviewed to get some background information.

Tools were developed for data collection and guiding questions were designed for conducting FGD and interview. A total of 4 (Four) Focus Group Discussions-02 with listeners club members, 01 with non-listeners and 01 with CR staffs have been conducted. Interviews were conducted with key informants like Station Manager, Chief Executive of Initiating organization, CEO of BNNRC, Joint Secretary (Radio), the Ministry of Information and Deputy Secretary (Radio), the Ministry of Information. After describing a brief narrative on the evolution of community radio in Bangladesh and south Asia region, the study follows a comprehensive analysis of the findings of literature review, FGDs and KIIs. The findings generated some success and common best practices, some challenges and also recommendations to way forward.

The findings critically examined how far the community radio stations could achieve the indicators for sustainability i.e. social, institutional, political and financial sustainability. The analysis of the program contents of 04 CR stations under the study explored that the issues covered by CR programs are prioritizing the community needs, particularly the special needs of the marginalized community (*dalits*), and give emphasis on disaster response, gender equality, promoting appropriate technology and life and livelihood options of

---

1. Voices for Change, Why Community Radio Matters in Bangladesh, BNNRC, August 2016



the poor community people, local sports, culture, drama and dialect. Aiming to create a knowledge based society; most of the CR Programs are supportive to mainstreaming development agenda of the Government of Bangladesh in line with national and international commitment such as 7th Five Years Plan, 10 special initiatives of the Honorable Prime Minister, UN SDGs, and WSIS Action Plan.

As part of this study, the ownership of the community radios was keenly observed. The study team could capture some evidences in favor of community ownership. For example - the community people are represented in both Management and Advisory Committees established for community radios. Local youths render voluntary services for community radio in program or news presentation. Dalit young women are being awarded fellowship as a strategy for social inclusion in journalism. The key focus of news and programs presented by community radio is based on community need and community interest. Community Radio is facilitating public service to community through disseminating information on health, education, agriculture, women and child rights, disaster risk reduction, social protection. Fighting child marriage is a great success of community radio. In disaster-prone areas, particularly in the coastal belt, community radios have been acknowledged as one of the most effective media for disaster response. The community radio has created opportunity for the marginalized and socially excluded peoples to express their own issues which can be termed as “Voice of the Voiceless”. Phone-in-program, formation of listeners clubs, SMS, quiz competition and direct participation in programs are the tools used by the community radio stations for community engagement. The reflection of community needs in program contents and the engagement of community in program production are evidences of social sustainability. Formation of listeners club is a good indicator of community engagement. The active presence of more than 10,000 listeners clubs in the study area is a good indication of social sustainability. The listeners’ clubs act as formal platforms for citizen’s feedback on CR programs and make bridge between CR Stations and the Community. In a score sheet of the research analysis the community engagement and participation in the programs have been given the highest achieving scores.

Participation of Local Elite and GoB officials in governance structure is a clear indication of institutional accountability and sustainability that is being ensured by the stations. The institutional

sustainability is also reflected in station policies, democratic process and practices, maintenance of separate Bank Account & Annual Audit and partnership with external agencies.

At local level, CR stations are keeping close link and coordination with local administration and local elected representatives. The government officials and the local elected representatives are providing necessary guidance through their involvement and participation in regular meetings. The stations are also reportable to Central Monitoring Committee at national level.

Although CR stations are now maintaining highest ethical standard and transparency in financial management, however, finance is a major challenge for CR stations to sustain their work. A few stations have managed to raise a small amount of money from the INGOs/NGOs for dissemination of messages and information of their projects. These arrangements are for a very short period and do not have continuity. While the volunteers are engaged for such financially supported project, they used to receive conveyance or a small honorarium, but when the project is closed, all facilities are also stopped. During field level investigation, it was found that, one CR station out of four has no earning for last Six (6) months, total expenditure is managed by the initiator NGO; other three CR stations earn 20-30% of their total expenditure from income generating sources including advertisements, campaign and promotional activities. There is no “business plan” for gaining sustainability of the station.

While talking with the officials of parent organization, they expressed frustration regarding lack of GoB policy guideline for financing CR stations. They are expecting the establishment of a Trust Fund for Community Radio. During KII, the officials also referred the provision of Indian Government for providing financial assistance to the community radios located in different provinces.

This research identified some challenges and recommendations for sustainability. The recommendations include - Formation of a Trust Fund, mainstreaming of Community Radio in government development activities as implementing partners. Private–Public Partnership can be established in implementing GoB projects either with money from GoB or donor. GoB can take initiative to request the development partners to come forward to extend development assistance to community radio. Private sector investors particularly the mobile phone company can be requested, as part of CSR, for

providing 1% or 2 % of their profit to give the CR stations for attaining sustainability, provision for commercial advertisement covering 10% time of total on-air time may create an opportunity for earning from local sources, Bangladesh Betar or the Ministry of Information can provide equipment for live broadcasting. It has been suggested to allow 5,000 watt transmitter for the CRs instead of current 250 watt.

In spite of strong demand for establishing a Trust Fund, till now the CR stations could not develop a draft outline of this fund, which can be the base for discussion, while research team talked to senior officials of the Ministry of Information, they replied that, at this stage GoB is not thinking about such fund. On the other hand community radio stations do not have any business plan yet to increase/generate revenue/income from the local sources.

The study team noticed the gap of knowledge sharing, particularly absence of sharing the best practices among the CR stations.

Bangladesh NGOs Network for Radio and Communication (BNNRC) has been providing technical assistance to the CR stations and contributed for capacity building of the radio staffs through training and sharing knowledge products. BNNRC publications contributed towards better understanding on the CR station operation and programs.

Since the first time of broadcasting, there is no disruption on the activities of community radio, rather, community expectation and engagement is increasing day by day and this community media is getting popularity among the audiences due to easy access to CR programs through mobile phones.

The study shows that, Community Radio will have to continue high level of engagement with its community over a longer period of time, enabling the audiences and community members to play successively bigger roles in all aspects of its decision making-not just in terms of content design but also in institution building and internal policy decision, to be able to raise resources from the community. At the same time, Ministry of Information will have to strengthen its supportive role for addressing challenges on the way to sustainability.

## Acronyms

BNNRC	Bangladesh NGOs Network for Radio & Communication
CR	Community Radio
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
MMC	Mass-line Media Center
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
KII	Key Informant Interview
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
MoI	Ministry of Information
NGOs	Non-Government Organizations
PKSF	Palli Karma Shahayak Foundation
PIB	Press Institute of Bangladesh
SFYP	Seventh Five Years Plan
UNICEF	United Nations Children Fund
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
MRDI	Management and Resources Development Initiative
WSIS	World Summit on the Information Society
CEMCA	Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia
RTI	Right to Information
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction

## Table of Contents

<b>Chapter 1 : Background of the study</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>Chapter 6 : Sustainability Analysis for Community Radio</b>	<b>47</b>
1.1 Introduction	21	6.1 Social Sustainability	48
1.2 Research Objectives	23	6.2 Institutional Sustainability	48
1.3 Methodology	23	6.3 Financial Sustainability	49
1.3.1 Literature Review:	23	6.4 Political Sustainability	49
1.3.2 Focus Group Discussion:	24	6.5 Community Ownership	50
1.3.3 Key Informant Interview (KII)	24	6.6 Trend of Volunteerism in CR by Local Community	50
<b>Chapter 2 : History and Advancement of Community Radio in Bangladesh</b>	<b>25</b>	6.7 Partnership with GoB Projects and Non -government Initiatives	51
2.1 Global Advancement of Community Radio	25	6.8 Transparency in Financial Management	51
2.2 Community Radio in South Asia	26	6.9 Community Engagement	52
2.3 Community Radio in Bangladesh: An Overview	27	6.10 Participation of Local Elite and GoB Officials in Governance Structure	55
2.4 Policy Guideline for Community Radio	28	6.11 Current scenario of Financial Sustainability	55
2.5 Radio Stations in Operation: Present Scenario	29	6.12 Financing For CR– A Major Challenge	56
<b>Chapter 3 : What is on air?</b>	<b>33</b>	6.13 Political Sustainability	57
3.1 Prioritizing the community need in CR programs	33	6.14 Findings of KII (Key Information Interview) : Suggestions and Recommendations	58
3.2 Disaster Response by Community Radio	33	6.15 In Depth Analysis on Sustainability of 4 Radio Stations Based on Field Level Findings	60
3.3 Contribution towards Knowledge Based Society	34	6.16 Level of Engagement	61
3.4 Addressing Special Need of the Marginalized Community	34	<b>Chapter 7 : Challenges faced by CR Stations</b>	<b>63</b>
3.5 Programs at a Glance	34	<b>Chapter 8 : Way forward with some recommendations</b>	<b>65</b>
3.6 Supporting Development Agenda	36		
3.6.1 Contribution to achieving MDGs:	36		
3.6.2 Supporting 7th Five Years Plan (2016 -20)	36		
3.6.3 Supporting SDGs	37		
3.6.4 Supporting Top 10 Development Agenda of the Honorable Prime Minister	37		
3.7 Community Participation in Radio Programs	37		
<b>Chapter 4 : A Brief Introduction to Community Radio Stations under this study</b>	<b>38</b>		
<b>Chapter 5 : Community Ownership: Analysis from community engagement perspective .</b>	<b>40</b>		
5.1 Coming Back to Education: Sumi Created a New Chapter of Success	42		
5.2 Enhancing Rural Economy: Significant Contribution of Community Media	43		
5.3 Receiving Awards by Community Radio	44		

## Chapter 1 Background of the study

### 1.1 Introduction

Community radio is a local broadcasting system used for the betterment of community people and it is established, run, and managed by the community people. This community may be of some particular area or region such as some small outskirts, village, municipality or upazilla, or some small island. The difference between Community Radio and other mass media is - only a privileged class of people can participate in the mainstream mass media; only their participation remains in program operation or program broadcasting whereas greater participation of all classes and stages in all sphere is emphasized in Community Radio. Moreover, the members living in community and the organizations are the major mobilizing force for the establishment and operation of this sort of radio.

Community Radio gives the community people access to information as because this sort of radio creates an opportunity to participate directly in communication process. Exchange of information is the major mobilizing force of education as well as development activities. Community Radio broadcasts the local issues and important occurrences; side by side, it gives opportunity to express opinion of community people without obstacle in the arena of social, political, economic, ecological and cultural as well. It minimizes information divide between rural and urban people. In the same direction, it can reduce distance of center and margin. Above all, Community Radio works in establishing rights to control over self-interest and will of total community. The characteristic of Community radio is, it inspires participatory democratic process; it creates opportunity for the people of all stages in making program, planning, management and to participate in different stages of ownership. Community Radio encourages use of reasonable technology within the capacity of people, as a result, it helps to lessen reliance over external assistance.

Community Radio stations also support in many ways, in mitigating gender gaps existing in rural areas in Bangladesh. These are a) direct and active participation of deprived and disadvantaged people in the community, b) focus on area specific current and

burning issues/problems as identified by local people, c) emphasis on local norms, culture and values.<sup>2</sup>

The role of community radio in implementation of right to information, participation of the grassroots people in the development process and democratization of a country is globally acknowledged. Community radio is the mass media of the grassroots population.

The Ministry of Information, Government of People's Republic of Bangladesh, has declared Community Radio Installation, Broadcast and Operation Policy 2008, which was the citizens expectation since the year 1998. Accordingly, in April 2010, Ministry of Information gave approval to 16 Community Radio Stations to operate for the first time in the country. After granting of license the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission allocated frequency after which the Community Radio stations started broadcasting from 2011. Later in a second phase government has provided licenses for more 16 initiators to install the station.

In a country like Bangladesh, where the majority of the population lives in rural areas, community radios immediately became the ears and eyes of the poor, marginalized or excluded. They became the voices for participation, the sources of information and the instruments for mobilization. At present, 17 Community Radio Stations are on-air in different parts of the country aiming to ensure empowerment and right to information for the rural community. Beginning broadcast in the year 2011, 17 community radio stations in 16 districts of the country are now broadcasting 135-hours programs per day on education, entertainment, culture, development motivation and various other socio-economic issues covering 6.18 million listeners. Around 1,000 youth women & youth are now working with those stations throughout the country as rural broadcasters.<sup>3</sup>

Over the experience of 5 years operation and with the principles of "Community radio as being for by and of the community", it is now essential to review and check with certain parameters for sustainability whether the stations could establish any model for community ownership and sustained engagement and participation of the communities that they serve.

---

2. Role of CR in Promoting Gender Sensitivity in Bangladesh, Majeda Haq, UNDP, Bangladesh

3. Voices for Change, BNNRC, Dhaka

As commissioned by Press Institute of Bangladesh (PIB) this research titled: **Sustainability of Community Radio in Bangladesh: An Analysis from Operational Perspective** is an attempt to review critically the sustainability factors experienced by the operational stations and recommended some concrete steps towards their long-term growth and sustainability.

## **1.2 Research Objectives**

This study has been designed targeting the objectives mentioned below:

- a) Take stock and analyze the present financing - cost benefit analysis and operational mechanism adopted by CR Stations
- b) Identifying different aspects of sustainability for community radio
- c) Identify challenges, scope and opportunity for sustainability of CR
- d) To make recommendations for policy interventions towards sustainability

## **1.3 Methodology**

### **1.3.1 Literature Review:**

Relevant documents were reviewed to get some background information and develop tools for data collection and interview with Station Managers and CR Initiators of Community Radio Stations under this study. The relevant documents taken for study and review included: GoB Policy and guidelines related to establishment and operation of community radio, similar studies by other organizations such as Community Radio and Sustainability published by UNESCO and CEMCA, Sustainability Strategy for Community Radio in Bangladesh- a draft report of BNNRC, Situation Analysis and Sustainability of community Radio in Bangladesh, a study paper produced by MRDI.

The Literature review also included a concept note on Access to Information and Community Radio published by UNESCO in association with BNNRC & MMC and a good number of BNNRC publications such as- a Self-Assessment toolkit on Sustainable Community Radio Operation, Community Radio for Governance and Development, Handbook on Community Radio- Voices for the Voiceless People, Community Radio-a platform for public participation in mass media, proceedings of roundtable titled “Ensuring growth of community radio in Bangladesh-Removing

barriers, Increasing Effectiveness”, Community Radio for Rights to Information, Good Governance and Human Rights to the Rural Community, Community radio Handbook and Community Radio in Bangladesh –Achievement and Challenges.

### **1.3.2 Focus Group Discussion:**

A total of 4 (Four) Focus Group Discussions have been planned to be conducted.

Two FGDs have been conducted with listeners club of Radio Jhenuk at Jhenaidah and Radio Bikrampur at Dewbhog, Munshiganj sadar respectively. One FGD was specially designed with the community who are not organized within listeners club and the last FGD was held with CR Staffs of Radio Mukti in Bogra.

### **1.3.3 Key Informant Interview (KII)**

Interviews were conducted with key informants like

- Station Managers
- Chief Executive of Initiating organization
- Joint Secretary (Radio), the Ministry of Information
- Deputy Secretary (Radio), the Ministry of Information

## **Chapter 2**

### **History and Advancement of Community Radio in Bangladesh**

#### **2.1 Global Advancement of Community Radio**

The history of today's Community Radio is ancient of more than half a century; it was originated in Latin America. To protest against poverty, social oppression and anarchy, "Miners Radio" in Bolivia and in the same year, "Radio Sutatenja" in Columbia was set up in 1948. These two radios are the pioneer in the history of establishing Community Radio in the world. The endeavor of establishing Community Radio in Bolivia and Columbia is still working as a principal inspiration for establishing Community Radio in the different regions or countries of the world. Basically, Miners Radio was established by labor union and the labors themselves supplied money for its operation and broadcasting. As regards to "Radio Sutatenja" of Columbia, supply of capital and endeavor of establishment were offered by the local people who were closely involved with this. Around fifty thousand letters were deposited in this station and there the programs were made and broadcast as per listener's interest. The continuous endeavor of establishing and broadcasting of "Radio Sutatenja" had been successful next and which made a basis of forming "Radio Broadcasting Association on Education" in Latin America. The relationship between community education and radio is still working as a major catalyst of humanitarian broadcast of Latin America and the movement of Community Radio establishment.

Despite being the movement of Community Radio establishment introduced in Latin America, the inception of Community Radio establishment opposite to the traditional broadcasting and as an important alternative happened in Europe in the decade of 1960-1970. The traditional radio broadcasting faced challenges when broadcasting started without approval of government and due to its enormous popularity, it threw challenge to unitary form of stately broadcasting. These kinds of hidden broadcasting and popularity paved the way to legal validity of petty and local broadcasting media.

Having been changed of the political background of South Africa, Community Radio installation and evolution happened in Africa as a consequence of social movement. This movement was

accelerated in other regions of Africa by democratization, localization, decentralization, empowerment of voiceless people, and structural change particularly.

#### **2.2 Community Radio in South Asia**

The backdrop of Community Radio installation in South Asia is a little bit different. Like Latin America, Africa, or Europe, there was no concealed broadcasting system like Miner's Radio. Both the opportunity and the way of establishing Community Radio in Asia were more difficult than Africa. And, India is the place of pilgrimage of that difficulty. Having unfolded the way of legal obstruction of establishing Community Radio, 'Voices', a mass media agency in India, took an endeavor for the sake of drawing necessary law in September 1996, in coordination of sixty representatives including law experts, university teachers, development and communication experts. There in 'Bangalore declaration' Indian government was recommended to take quick necessary initiatives in establishing Community Radio. So to say, elaborate initiatives were taken on behalf of civil society leaders as regards to open up Community Radio in India. Consequently in 2006, Indian government declared a Policy relating to Community Radio and it was for the first time in South Asia. At present, Community Radio and Campus Radio are running their operations in India.

Before establishing 'Radio Sagormatha' in Nepal in 1997, state regulated radio was the only radio broadcasting center. It is Nepal which is only the pioneering country in South Asia in the realm of Community Radio establishment. Nepal provided an open media environment for several years and even today there is no community Radio policy in the country. Yet there are over 250 Community radio stations operational in this small Himalayan country, many in remote and far away hills working with tribal and indigenous communities.

There was pioneering work done in SriLanka in the early and mid-90s. The Kothmale FM Community Radio Station was set up in February 1989 by the SriLanka Broadcasting Corporation with the objective of providing information to more than 60,000 people who had been relocated as a result of SriLanka's second largest dam project- the Mahaweli Irrigation Project. The Kothmale Radio and ICT integration model supported by UNESCO provided much inspiration along with several other case studies. Kothmale Radio station was a regional center of the national broadcaster, but

developed locally relevant strategies for community participation especially in local program production, editorial design and broadcast. However, these were lost to years of war and conflict and Sri Lanka now, has to restart its engagement with the idea of community radio.

### **2.3 Community Radio in Bangladesh: An Overview**

Movement for establishing Community Radio in Bangladesh dates back to late '90s. Various non-government organizations, development practitioners, media-enthusiasts, aspirants and representatives of the civil society started movement for Community Radio operation.

In 1998, for the first time in Bangladesh history, Mass Line Media Centre (MMC), a media NGO, submitted a proposal to the Ministry of Information for setting up a community radio station- in the southern coastal Patuakhali district. The aim of the radio as stated in the application is “to bridge the gap between people and the policy makers, create an interactive environment of communication, serve as a platform for debate, exchange of ideas and reactions to plans and projects, preserve cultural identity, enhance emancipation and self-worth and use as the voice of the voiceless, the mouthpiece of the oppressed and as a tool of development” (Snigdha: 2002:5). DANIDA gave consent to provide the financial support for setting up the proposed 5 kW FM community radio station. MMC demonstrated its proposed plan for setting up a community radio in the conference on “Media, Communication and Technology” in 1999. Considering its merits, the idea got numerous supports from media people and experts during the conference. Later, Bangladesh NGOs Network for Radio and Communication (BNNRC) and some other organizations joined the movement. The demand for community radio in Bangladesh came into the forefront again in 2002 during the ‘South Asian Broadcasting and Development’ workshop organized by Institute of Development Studies of the University of Sussex in Dhaka. Participants strongly voiced for establishing community radio to ensure a well-balanced information flow in Bangladesh. In 2006, Community Radio related Dhaka Declaration-2006 was drawn up after three day long round table discussion relating to Community Radio in coordination of broadcast experts, jurists, university teachers, communication and development experts, NGO representatives, donor agencies, development

associates, and civil society leaders. The government was recommended in this declaration to take necessary initiatives for the establishment of Community Radio in the country.

As records show, the movement got somewhat official recognition through holding of a meeting on Community Radio at the behest of the Information Ministry on 23 July in 2007. After a comprehensive discussion, the meeting formed an eight-member strong ministerial committee, tasking it to draft concept paper and regulatory framework so that Community Radio could be introduced in Bangladesh on a pilot basis. A government circular was issued in that respect on 22nd May in 2007. After several meetings the committee submitted the concept paper, draft policy regarding Community Radio on 29th October in 2007. Following an inter-ministerial meeting on Community Radio, government adopted Community Radio Installation, Broadcast and Operation Policy on 8th March 2008. The main thrust of the policy is to open up the radio spectrum to community broadcasting, in order to explore the potential of this unique form of media.

### **2.4 Policy Guideline for Community Radio**

Community Radio Installation, Broadcasting, and Operation Policy, 2008<sup>4</sup> acknowledged internationally recognized and accepted fundamental principles of community radio. The policy identified following basic principles for establishment and operation of community radio;

- a) It should be explicitly constituted as a ‘non-profit’ organization.
- b) The institution/organization should have a proven record of providing service to local community for at least five years.
- c) The community to be served by the Community Radio Station should be well specified and defined.
- d) It should have an ownership and management structure that is reflective of the community that the CRS seeks to serve.
- e) The program contents should cover educational, social, gender, economic, environmental and cultural fields and be relevant to the needs of that particular community. It should not go beyond the community’s cultural and historical heritage. Any kind of political, sectarian or doctrinal program shall be prohibited.
- f) The institution/organization must have a Legal Entity.

---

4. Ministry of Information, GoB

g) Preference should be given to rural communities during the pilot phase. The focus must be for communities deprived of the reach of mainstream media outlets.

Then the Ministry of Information invited applications for Community Radio installation, broadcast and operation from the interested organizations. This government initiative got tremendous response and some 450 organizations took application forms from the Ministry and 178 of them finally submitted filled-up forms seeking to launch Community Radio. In the whole process the Government ensured the proper participation and representation from civil society organizations through incorporating representatives in Regulatory Committee, Technical Committee and National Monitoring Committee for the successful operation of the Community Radio.

Eventually, government allowed some of the applicants (32 through call for twice) to operate Community Radio. Now 17 Community Radio Stations are on-air in the country and 15 more are in the pipeline.

The Bangladesh Community Radio Policy of 2008 took much of its inspiration from the Indian CR policy. Other countries in the region, like Bhutan and Myanmar, are contemplating community radio albeit slowly and tentatively.

### 2.5 Radio Stations in Operation: Present Scenario

The stations, which are in operation now, are geographically well distributed so that these are reached out to people of different regions of the country, particularly to those who are living in relatively less advantaged locations and in districts considered to be the most backward in terms of their socio-economic development. The 17 community Radio stations, with their locations and their initiator organizations are mentioned as follows:

No.	Name of CR Station	Initiator	District & Upazila	Upazilas Covered	Unions Covered	Region
1.	Community Radio Padma 99.2 fm	Centre for Community and Development (CCD Bangladesh)	Rajshahi Sadar, Rajshahi	5	49	North
2.	Community Radio Nalta 99.2 fm	Nalta Hospital & Community Health Foundation	Nalta, Kaligonj, Satkhira	3	19	South-West
3.	Community Radio Lokobetar 99.2 fm	Mass-line Media Centre (MMC)	Barguna Sadar, Barguna	4	37	Coastal
4.	Community Radio Pollikontho 99.2 fm	BRAC	Moulvibazar Sadar, Moulvibazer	4	19	East
5.	Community Radio SagorGiri 99.2 fm	Young Power in Social Action (YPSA)	Sitakunda, Chittagong	4	21	Coastal
6.	Community Radio Mahananda 98.8 fm	Proyas Manobik Unnayan Society (PMUS)	Chapai Nawabgonj Sadar, Chapai Nawabgonj	6	34	North
7.	Community Radio Mukti 99.2 fm	(LDRO, now managed by ASBL International)	Bogra Sadar, Bogra	9	87	North
8.	Community Radio Chilmari 99.2 fm	RDRS Bangladesh	Chilmari, Kurigram	4	36	North
9.	Community Radio Jhenuk 99.2 fm	Srizony Bangladesh	Jhenidaha Sadar, Jhenidaha	7	67	South-West
10.	Krishi Radio-Community Rural Radio 98.8 fm	Agriculture Information Service (AIS), Ministry of Agriculture Khamarbari	Amtoli, Borguna	4	25	Coastal
11.	Community Radio Barendro 99.2 fm	Naogaon Human Rights Development Association(NHRDA)	Naogaon Sadar, Naogaon	8	60	North
12.	Community Radio Naf 99.2 fm	ACLAB	Teknaf, Cox Bazar	5	39	Coastal
13.	Community Radio Sundarban 98.8 fm	Broadcasting Asia of Bangladesh	---	---	---	Sundarban (South)
14.	Community Radio Bikrampur 99.2 fm	Environment Council Bangladesh renamed as Ambala Foundation	Munshiganj Sadar, Munshiganj	3	25	Middle
15.	Community Radio Sagardwip 99.2 fm	Dwip Unnayan Shongstha	Hatia, Noakhali	2	---	Coastal (Island)
16.	Community Radio Meghna 98.4 fm	COAST Trust	Charfasion, Bhola	2	Above 20	Coastal (Island)
17.	Community Radio Sarabela 98.8 fm	SKS Foundation	Gaibandha Sadar, Gaibandha	7	---	North





As far as working with the grassroots is concerned, one common feature of the CR initiators is- all of them (except Krishi Radio) are initiated by non-government development organizations. One of them has some media and communication programs while others have years of development experiences in diverse areas i.e. human rights, legal aids, health, micro-credit etc.

Geographically the stations cover, including the partial area – 29 districts and 115 sub-districts/upazila of the country.

The total population of broadcasting area is 23.876 million. The total listeners are: 6.18 million. Altogether the stations broadcast 135 hours daily and 945 hours per week.

This new-media has produced a new generation of community radio broadcasters at rural level where a total of 1000 youth and young women are contributing their time and effort creatively and thus taking part in nation-building process. Nearly half of them are women.

489 programs are broadcast per week. Broadcasting hours of these stations have got a wide range of variations. While some of the stations air programs as long as 18-hour a day, there are ones who put programs on air for 6/7 hours only.

It has been identified that the Community Radios have a wide range of programs to present for their listeners. The programs produced by the community radio stations met the information needs of the target audiences. Almost all of them broadcast not only local and regional news but also some national and international news, which they consider very important. The topics included disaster prevention and management, impact of climate change, women rights (including education, women health, child care and employment), local governance, land rights, food production and

security, farming and fishing, opportunities for starting small businesses etc. Some of these stations run English language learning programs that many find useful. Some of the stations also air programs by creating awareness about trafficking, early marriage, nutrition, food adulteration, legal supports and also highlight livelihood and rights of poor, marginalized and indigenous people. They also put on air different musical programs and other programs related to folk heritage, regional and local development challenges etc.

The general program formats are news and current affairs, informative programs, talk shows, magazine-type programs, local entertainment and music. Specific program formats are public service announcements, personal life stories, village debates, weekly forum (weekly phone with panel discussions). Each of the radio stations customize their programs to fit the interests of the general and specific audiences in each region, taking into account the area-specific context, experience and dialect. Most favored Radio Program Formats are- Magazine, Phone-in, Radio Drama, News, local song, Discussions, features, interview and dialogue.

The listeners include- Youth & Youth women, labor, Adolescent, Women, student, farmer, Child, Persons with Disability, Fisherman, Rickshaw Pullers, Tea shopper, Small shop keeper, Teachers Community and local administrative officials. People tune 8.58 hours in a week to listen to community radio. Usually the community listen radio program when they are free from other work.

There are some reasons for why the people listen the programs. A list of the reasons could be like this : the contents reflected on local issue, local news and weather forecast, information on life and livelihood issues, profession-specific content and information, programs in own language/dialect, own voice: accessibility and participation-scope of opinion sharing, local culture: songs, drama and entertainment through active engagement of local performers, information on local communication and market price, information on employment opportunities/job market, programs on indigenous people's life, culture and tradition through their involvement, sense of ownership, all broadcasters are locally recruited etc.

Furthermore, these programs are quite supportive to the activities reflected in 7th 5-year plan of Government of Bangladesh, UN World Summit on the Information Society (UN WSIS) Action Plan, and UN Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs).

## Chapter 3 What is on Air?

The CR programs can be categorized under three broader areas, such as – Information, Entertainment and Community Empowerment. Apart from programs, the CR also telecast development advertisement, Public Service Announcement (PSA) and special program on the theme of national and international days.



Figure 1: Community Radio in action

### 3.1 Prioritizing the Community Need in CR Programs

CR Stations have diversity in program planning by addressing the issues related to life and livelihood of the community. From content analysis this is observed that CR stations have prioritized access to information, entertainment program targeting the community development news, local government issues, women empowerment, DRR & Climate Risk Adaptation, agriculture information service, child rights and also the issues related to technology driven development.<sup>5</sup>

### 3.2 Disaster Response by Community Radio

Community Radio has established a model of significant contribution in communicating the people during emergencies, particularly in the area of early warning dissemination, evacuation and post disaster response. Special program was on air for keeping the community update and alert during Cyclone Roanu and Tropical Storm Mahasena in May 2015 which resulted in reducing the losses of lives and resources. The program on Disaster Risk Reduction and

5. Policy Brief, What is On Air? Published by BNNRC, February, 2017

Climate Change Adaptation has been designed to contribute towards building a resilient community in the disaster-prone areas particularly in coastal districts.<sup>6</sup>

### 3.3 Contribution Towards Knowledge Based Society

To contribute towards a knowledge based society, the community radios are also broadcasting some other programs such as - academic coaching, career show, health education, local history & culture, program on reproductive health, indigenous knowledge, music and drama, local talent hunting, street show, learning English language, tourism, history of liberation war and some other social and economic issues including access to justice.

### 3.4 Addressing Special Need of the Marginalized Community

Special need of the community is also addressed by the Community Radios, such as rights to physically challenged persons is considered with due importance in program planning, even the participation of the persons with disability. In Radio Jhenuk, a youth who is blind is now planning and anchoring three popular programs.

The issues of social inclusion and the rights of marginalized community are well addressed by the CR stations, particularly the rights of Dalits. Third Gender Persons, Street Children have taken in programs with due importance. Through the programs, the Community Radio plays advocacy role for promotion and enforcement of non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development.

### 3.5 Programs at a Glance

Based on a policy brief titled *What is on air?* published by BNNRC, a summary of programs being on air by the community radio is presented here;

6. Policy Brief- Role of Community Radio in DRR, published by BNNRC, February, 2017

Community Radio Stations	On airin a day (hours)	Issues covered by CR programs
Radio Padma	11 hrs	Life and Livelihood, Primary Health Care, Human Rights, Indigenous knowledge, Youth, Child and Women Issues, Career Show, Local Government, Rights to Information, CTSD, Memories on Liberation War, Beauty & Health, Music, NGO Services Delivery and Teaching English Language.
Radio Nalta	09 hrs	Primary Health Care, Agriculture, DRR & Climate Change Adaptation, Local Entertainment, Life & Livelihood, Religious Information, ICT, Local Government, Combating Trafficking, Youth, Child and Women Issues, Local Development News and Teaching English Language.
Lokobetar	07 hrs	Education, Agriculture, RTI, Market Price Information, Primary Health Care, Local Entertainment, Issue Based Development Information, Gender Equity and Women Empowerment, ICT, Local Government, Career Show.
Radio Pollikontha	12 hrs	Primary Health Care, Agriculture, Rights Based Programs, Local Entertainment, Talent search, Market Price Information, Education, Teaching English Language, Healthy cooking, Street Show, Reproductive Health & Family Planning, Literature.
Radio Sagar Giri	05 hrs	Primary Health Care, Agriculture Information, Rights to Persons with Disability, Climate Change & DRR, Life & Livelihood, Women & child Rights, Education, Combating Arsenic Contamination, Weather Update, Biodiversity, Reproductive Health Issues.
Radio Mahananda	10 hrs	Education, Entertainment, Prevention of Human Trafficking, Local entertainment, Promotion of Local Culture and Heritage, Rights Based Programs, Women & Children Issues, Celebrity Profile Show, Campaign on Social Issues – stop child marriage, child labor and stop dowry.
Radio Mukti	06 hrs	Child Rights, Local Development Information, RTI, ICT, Women Empowerment, Career Show, Local News, DRR and Climate Change, Women and Child Rights, Indigenous Culture.
Radio Chilhari	05 hrs	Primary Health Care, Life & Livelihood, DRR & Climate Risk Adaptation, ICT, Local Heritage and Culture, Weather Update, Market Price and Local Communication Information.
Radio Jhenuk	08 hrs	News, Local Development Information, Youth, child and women Issues, Local entertainment and promotion of local culture, History of Liberation War, DRR & Climate Change Issues, Awareness Raising Programs, Rights of Adolescent, Career Show, Rights to Persons with Disability, Rights to Marginal Community, Weather Update.
Krishi Radio	05 hrs	Agriculture Information, Life and Livelihood, Rights Based Programs, Youth, Child and Women Issues, Local Development Information, Local Entertainment, Local Culture & Heritage, Family Planning.
Radio Sundarban	05 hrs	Development Messages and Motivation, Local Entertainment, DRR & Climate Change, Life & livelihood, Primary Health Care, Education, Agriculture Information, Local News, child and Women Issues, Nutrition based cooking.
Radio Naf	05 hrs	Anti-Drug & Trafficking, DRR & Climate Change, Biodiversity, Rights to Fishermen, Local Government, Women Empowerment, RTI, Adolescent Rights, Nutrition, Reproductive Health and Family Planning, Rights to Persons with Disability, Teaching English.

Community Radio Stations	On airin a day (hours)	Issues covered by CR programs
Radio Bikrampur	06 hrs	Development Motivation, RTI, Local entertainment, Local Development News, Climate Change & DRR, PHC, Education, History, culture and heritage, Agriculture Information, Anti-Tobacco Campaign, Campaign on social issues such as stop child marriage, stop practice of dowry and teaching English literature.
Borendra Radio	12 hrs	RTI, DRR & CC, Anti-Tobacco and anti - Drug, Education, Family Planning, Local History and heritage, Liberation War, Youth, Child & Women Issues, Agriculture Information, Rights of marginalized citizens such as Dalits, Hizra (3 <sup>rd</sup> Gender), Teaching English Language.
Radio Meghna	06 hrs	Primary Health Care, River Erosion, Agriculture Information, Women Empowerment, DRR & Climate Risk Adaptation, Rights to Adolescent, Child Rights, Social Issues- stop child marriage, Anti dowry, teaching English Language.
Radio Sagar Dwip	04 hrs	RTI, DRR & CC, Teaching English, Local History and culture, Youth, Child & Women Issues, Agriculture Information, Awareness and Campaign on Social issues.
Radio Sarabella	16 hrs	Health Care, River Erosion, Agriculture Information, Women Empowerment, Climate Change & DRR, Reproductive Health, Education, Local entertainment, Indigenous Knowledge Sharing, ICT, Social Issues- anti dowry, stop child marriage, Teaching English Language.

### 3.6 Supporting Development Agenda

Most of CR Programs are supportive to mainstreaming development agenda of the Government of Bangladesh in line with international and national commitment such as 7th Five Years Plan, UN Sustainable Development Goals, and World Summit on the Information Society Action Plan.

#### 3.6.1 Contribution to achieving MDGs:

Community Radio programs made contribution in achieving Millennium Development Goals, particularly in achieving Universal Primary Education (Goal -2), Achieving Gender Equality (Goal#3), Reduction in Child Mortality (Goal#4) and achieving Environmental Sustainability ( Goal#7).

#### 3.6.2 Supporting 7th Five Years Plan (2016 -20)

Community Radio is contributing through its program in strengthening information at community level on key area of actions mentioned in 7th Five Years Plan such as Institutionalizing Citizen's participation in local government bodies, improving DRR & Climate Change adaptation capacities, protection of natural resources and good governance in environmental sustainability, reduction of child mortality and awareness raising on health care issues etc.

### 3.6.3 Supporting SDGs

Ongoing programs are also designed in line with Sustainable Development Goals – Good Health (SDG#3), Quality Education (SDG#4), Gender Equality (SDG#5), Clean Water & Sanitation (SDG#6), Climate Action (SDG#13), Reduce Inequality (SDG#10) and Peace and Justice (SDG#16).

### 3.6.4 Supporting Top 10 Development Agenda of the Honorable Prime Minister

The community radio programs are contributing for achievement of 8 special programs out of 10 development agenda chosen by the Honourable Prime Minister. These agenda includes-One House and One Firm, Community Clinics, *Asrayan* (housing to landless), Digital Bangladesh, Education Assistance, Women Empowerment, social safety-nets and Environmental Protection. Current CR programs are not covering investment expansion and electricity at every home.

### 3.7 Community Participation in Radio Programs

Some programs are planned and participated by the community. Even the music groups make contribution in payment to community radio station for their participation in radio programs. They consider this access to media as acknowledgement to their work and also an opportunity to establish mutual partnership with community radio. Similarly, the members of listeners club also take part in program twice in a month regularly, where the listeners are the artists, whole planning and performance is managed by them, and the CR station provide only the technical support.

## Chapter 4 A Brief Introduction to Community Radio Stations Under this Study

Out of 17 Radio Stations, the study covered 4 stations located in different districts. A brief introduction on these four stations are mentioned here –

**Radio Mukti:** Located in Bogra town and managed by ASBL International came on air on 07 December 2011. The station was initiated by LDRO. Currently the station has around 400,000 listeners both in town and rural areas. Through broadcasting 06 hours in a day the station reached to the marginalized people of Char areas,



where there is no coverage of mainstream print and electronic media. This station is headed by a female manager and a team of 4 staffs are running this station with the contribution of volunteers.

**Radio Jhenuk:** Located in Jhenaidah district town, came on air from 20 November 2011 and managed by Srizon Bangladesh, a leading NGO of the country. Socio-economic development of community people through information dissemination, bridging the information and knowledge gap between urban and rural people, women and child empowerment, orientation of marginalized with information technology etc are the major objectives of Radio Jhenuk. The radio is producing special programs on reducing suicide tendency (major local phenomena), women and child trafficking and violence against women. The station is headed by a female station manager. Assistant Station Manager is also a female. Broadcasting 08 hours in a day Radio Jhenuk has 500,000 listeners both at town and rural areas.

**Radio Bikrampur:** Located in Munshiganj district town this center started broadcasting on 1st May 2012. Managed by Ambala Foundation- an NGO, the slogan of the station is “Speak and Listen, Our Opinion in Our Language”, with which the station aims to contribute in socio-economic and cultural development and create a self-empowered community. With a 4- members staff team along

with a group of young volunteers Radio Bikrampur is broadcasting 06-hours programs in a day and cover 450,000 listeners at urban and neighboring rural areas.

**Radio Pollikontho:** "Radio Pollikontho" was initiated by BRAC and came on air on 25 October 2011 in the area of Chandnighat union of Moulovibazar district (located in the eastern region of the country). The slogan of PolliKontho is "The Tale of Progress". With this slogan, Radio PolliKontho aims to be established as sustainable community media to promote local people's access to information. The station produces program content on women and children's development, agriculture, education, health, entertainment, community participation in rural development and promotion etc. By the 12-hours broadcasting per day Radio Pollikontho serves a total of 400,000 listeners of the area. Among the listeners of the station Tea Garden workers are especially mentionable.

## Chapter 5 Community Ownership: Analysis From Community Engagement Perspective

There is a debate on community ownership, as some experts do not find real community ownership while the radio stations are run by the NGOs or Government agency, at the same time other experts strongly defend community ownership even the stations are managed by the NGOs. They urges on some points that includes – ownership does not always means the name of a person or organization who got the license rather it means who are engaged, who are benefited and who is utilizing the information for his/her improvement. As part of this study, it was keenly observed how the ownership is taking place. From field investigation it was found that, the GoB policy made provision to issuing license to a NGO or a Government agency but the spirit is that, community radio will serve for the community; it will be run by the community and from this realization the study team captured following evidence in favor of community ownership.

- Community Radio is facilitating the access to information and communication for the community.
- The CR is acting as an avenue for interaction and dialogue between community people and elected representatives.
- The community people are engaged in choosing the topic of program, community people are the participants and they are the audiences, even the local elites are accommodated in the management committees. At present 1000 youths are engaged across the country for information collection, program planning, editing and presentation.
- Key focus of news and programs presented by community radio is based on community need and community interest. Local culture and heritage, issues related to life and livelihood of the community is presented in radio programs.
- Community Radio is supporting the skill development of local community.
- Community Radio is facilitating public service to community through disseminating information on health, education, agriculture, women and child rights, disaster risk reduction, social protection etc.

- Stopping Child Marriage is a great success of community radio. Radio Bikrampur has taken the success in stopping 62 child marriages. Even while the social elites are engaged for child marriage, then the community sends SMS to radio station staffs to come forward for stopping the child marriage.
- In disaster-prone areas, particularly in the coastal region, the community radio has been acknowledged as the most effective for disaster response. During some recent past natural disasters such as Cyclone Roanu, Komen and Mohasen, the CR stations continued on air for 24 hours in spite of electricity failure and CR served as the only source of disaster information, particularly the messages of evacuation and taking place in shelter centers. Hundreds of fishermen saved lives as they got the early warning messages from community radio.
- Phone in program, formation of listeners clubs, SMS, quiz competition and direct participation in programs are the tools for community engagement, which are being used by all community radio stations.
- Local youths who rendered voluntary services for community radio in program or news presentation, some of them are already appointed in mainstreaming electronic media.
- The CR stations already received UNICEF MEENA MEDIA AWARD, Asian Broadcasting Union Award and UN-WSIS award.
- A study on “Giving Voice to the Voiceless: Community Radio in Bangladesh” conducted by the Department of Media and Journalism Studies under the University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh mentioned that, the community people are represented in both Management and Advisory Committee established for community radio. Even the landless people, fishermen and farmers are included in these committees.
- Dalit young ladies are being awarded fellowship as a strategy for social inclusion in journalism and facilitate their betterment. In last three years 60 Dalit youth females got fellowship and among them currently 38 fellows are working with CR stations as producer, news room editor, joint news editor, presenter, producer and reporter also. As a result, their social dignity is increasing and acceptability in the society is visible.

- For broadcasting regional program, two networks are going to be established. One network among the stations is located in northern areas and another network for CR stations is located in coastal region of the country. This initiative will enhance mutual communication among the community and it will also extend more participation of the community in radio programs.
- Finally, it is mentionable that, in a day total 135-hours programs are on air by 17 Community Radio stations which are being produced by the community, of the community and for the community. If this role is ownership, then community radio is really owned by the community

### 5.1 Coming Back to Education: Sumi Created a New Chapter of Success

Sumi Akhter of Dewbogh, Munshiganj is from a floating family, basically her community lives on boat and moves from one place to another for managing livelihood by fishing. Sumi had to adjust with this pattern of life and livelihood with her family members since her childhood. Interestingly, some floating families have some temporary housing on the river-bank and they are engaged with some temporary income generating activities. Usually they do not take care



of education for their children, for any favorable conditions, if the children of this community go to the school, but that do not sustain as the families move frequently.

Sumi Akhter who finished primary education up to class III, dropped out due to poverty. Her father earns small amount from fishing and mother is a hawker, she assists in cooking for family members and accommodated her childhood with family work. Radio Bikrampur program staffs came to know about Sumi's early

departure from primary education and motivated her to re-enrolment with assistance from radio station. Sumi got wonderful mental support and came back to school with new hope. This new journey added another turn to her life. She got training on child journalism and started work with Community Radio Bikrampur. By this time, she passed the primary education and now studying in class VII in local high school. Currently Sumi is the planner and presenter of women program JAGO HE BAGHINI (Oh my sisters---- come forward). Sumi won UNICEF Meena Media Award in 2015 for her outstanding contribution in community journalism. Sumi now dreams to be a teacher in future. Her parents are also happy with the success of their daughter. Her relatives and community people eagerly waits to hear the voice of Sumi on community radio.

### 5.2 Enhancing Rural Economy: Significant Contribution of Community Media

Community Radio is supporting economic empowerment of the community by providing agriculture information to the farmers, housewives and local agriculture firms. **Khetkhamar**, an agriculture based program of Radio Mukti is on air every Wednesday from 06.00 to 07.00 pm where local Agriculture Officer answers the questions raised by the audience. Already 5 listeners clubs have been formed by the listeners of this program, who reviews the quality of this program and make list of their expectation regarding contents and contemporary agriculture issues, such as vegetable cultivation in winter season or any other off season. The representatives from listeners clubs come to radio stations and discuss on their expectation and need with the producers and presenters and sometime local agriculture officer also joins in such kind of discussion. This program has created a bridge between the community and local agriculture office. The audience is used to send letters asking different questions and they also call over phone to know required information. The farmers living in river eroded areas and also the communities in flood prone areas are highly benefited from this program in minimizing their losses and also in sustaining agriculture products.



Radio Mukti facilitated access to information to the marginalized community particularly to the farmers, while the agriculture workers and other working groups are being facilitated for increasing farmers' earnings and managing better livelihood for them. Rural economy got new boost as a result of community radio services.

### 5.3 Receiving Awards by Community Radio

Community Radio Stations have been recognized for their outstanding contribution in different sectors of development by using radio. They received prestigious awards in open competitions with public Service broadcasting and Private FM Radio channels. They have proved the strength and power of broadcasting. As for the stations under this study, Radio Pollikontho bagged 14 awards (with highest number of Meena Media Award), Radio Jhenuk 11 and Radio Bikrampur received 03 awards until now. Radio Mukti does not have any award yet. Here is a description of awards received by the stations located under these study areas:

Sl.	Name of CR Stations	Name of Award and awarded by	Category	Position	Year	Issue/Content	Type of Program	Duration	Symbol of Award
A.	Radio Polikonho	Family Planning Media Award by Family Planning Department (Gov't), UNFPA	Age Above 18 years	1 <sup>st</sup>	2013	Family Planning and Good Health	Magazine	20 Minutes	Crest and Tk. 50,000
		Meena Media Award UNICEF	Above 18 years	2 <sup>nd</sup>	2013	Child Rights and Education News	Magazine	20 Minutes	Crest and Tk. 25,000
		Upazila (Sub-District level) Award (Local Government Award)	General	1st	2013	Presentation (Contest, Issues, Presentation, Neutrality, Realistic)	News Presentation		Crest
		Meena Media Award UNICEF	Above 18 years	2nd	2014	Child Education	Investigative Report	10 Minutes	Crest and Tk. 25,000
		Digital Exhibition Award (District level)	General	1st	2015	Stall and Radio Program Broadcasting	Live Program		Crest
		Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA), Delhi, India (CR Video Challenge Award)	General	Combined 3rd	2015	Impact of Voice for Voiceless people	Short Film	2.57 Minutes	Prize will be given later on by CEMCA
		Meena Media Award UNICEF	Innovation/creative category (above 18 years)	2nd	2015				
		Meena Media Award UNICEF	Innovation/creative category (above 18 years)	3rd	2015				
		Meena Media Award UNICEF	Innovation/creative category (below 18 years)	2nd	2015				
		Meena Media Award UNICEF	Innovation/creative category (below 18 years)	3rd	2015				
		Asian Broadcasting Union	Radio Category	Espeacial Jury Award	2015				
		Meena Media Award UNICEF	Innovation and creative category (below 18 years)	1st	2016				Crest and Tk. 50,000
		Meena Media Award UNICEF	Innovation and creative category (above 18 years)	3rd	2016	Sexual Harassment of Children	Magazine		Crest and Tk. 15,000
		A2i Digital Innovation Award Regional		1st	2017	Make Apps on Sylheti Nagri font			Crest and Certificate
B.	Radio Mukti	No Award received yet							
C.	Radio Jhenuk	GPP (Girl Power Project) Plan Bangladesh, through BNNRC	General	1st	2013	Against Child Drug Addiction	Magazine	20 Munites	Crest
		Health and Family Planning Department, UNFPA	General	Jointly 1 <sup>st</sup> with Bangladesh Betar	2014	Methods of Birth Control	News (2 episode)	20 Munites	Crest and Tk. 25,000
		Meena Media Award UNICEF	Child	1st	2014	Gov't Asrayon Project Child Rights	Investigative Radio Report on Child Rights/News	10 Munites	Crest and Tk. 50,000
		Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA), Delhi, India. (CR Video Challenge Award)	General	2 <sup>nd</sup> Jointly with Radio Chilmari	2015	Release (A story of employment of a Blind Disable Person as a producer at Radio Jhenuk	Short Film		Prize will be given later on by CEMCA

Sl.	Name of CR Stations	Name of Award and awarded by	Category	Position	Year	Issue/Content	Type of Program	Duration	Symbol of Award
		District Silpakala Academy	General	Memorandum of Honor	2014	Exhibition of Liberation Struggle 71	Radio Program, Content and Live Broadcasting of Exhibition		Crest
		Meena Media Award UNICEF	Investigative Reporting category (above 18 years)	2nd	2015				
		Meena Media Award UNICEF	Investigative Reporting category (below 18 years)	3rd	2015				
		Meena Media Award UNICEF	Investigative Reporting category (below 18 years)	2nd	2015				
		Family Planning Award 2016	Radio Category	1st	2016				
		Best Community Radio Award	Best Community Radio	2nd	2016				
		Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids (CTFK) & Bangladesh Community Radio Association (BCRA)	Best Producer (Al Mamun)	3rd	2016				
		Meena Media Award UNICEF	News Report/ Investigative Reporting category (below 18 years)	2nd	2016				Crest and Tk. 25,000
D.	Radio Bikrampur	Meena Media Award UNICEF	Below 14 years	2nd	2014	Social Impact of Slang song on children mind	News	12 Minutes	Crest and Tk. 25,000
		Meena Media Award UNICEF	Above 14 years	3rd	2014	Socio-Economic condition of Neglected Dalit Community	News	20 Minutes	Crest and Tk. 15,000
		Meena Media Award UNICEF	Innovation and creative category (below 18 years)	3rd	2016				Crest and Tk. 15,000



## Chapter 6 Sustainability Analysis for Community Radio

Lisa Canon in her book *Life Beyond Aid* defines Sustainability as “the ability of an organization to secure and manage sufficient resources to enable it to fulfill its mission effectively and consistently over time without excessive dependence on any single funding source. The sustainable organizations have, at minimum, a clear mission and strategic direction; the skills to attract resources from a variety of local, national and international sources and the know how to manage them efficiently.”<sup>7</sup>

Sustainability of community radio can be analyzed from a comprehensive framework, which includes – Social Sustainability, Institutional Sustainability, Financial Sustainability and Political Sustainability. The UNESCO study on Community Radio and Sustainability analyzed sustainability from three basic pillars such as Social Sustainability, Institutional Sustainability and Financial Sustainability. Quoting Gumucio Dargon (2001) the study mentioned, “Social and Institutional Sustainability are the foundations on which financial sustainability is built”.

In an impact assessment of community radio, AMARC found that, the sustainability of local Community Radio is related to its capacity to have relevant participatory contents and creating programming that attracts the audience and encourages access to the media in their own languages and its alternative and distinct characteristics from public and commercial broadcasting. It is linked to financial support and technological support otherwise it distracts community participation from dedicating themselves to radio production, increased community participation and pertinence of programming.

UNESCO as part of its Media Development Project identified four decisive factors to minimize vulnerability and to ensure sustainability of CR stations function. Factors are based on the challenges and obstacles identified while looking at the local community radio stations.

7. Community Radio and Sustainability, CEMCA, Canada, April 2015

A sustainability framework of community radio is presented here.



### Indicators of Social Sustainability

**Sustainability requires following indicators;**

#### 6.1 Social Sustainability

This refers to community ownership of the station and participation in productions and airing of programs at both decision making and operational levels. A communication process can make it socially sustainable. Following indicators reflect the level of social sustainability.

Social Sustainability	● The management structure reflects the community it serves
	● Community Radio is accountable to the community (for its content)
	● Community Radio Promotes Gender Equality
	● Community Radio provides rights of access to marginalized community and right of access to media
	● Status of Listeners Club (Listeners level of participation)
	● Issues related to Socially Excluded Groups addressed in CR Programs

#### 6.2 Institutional Sustainability

This refers to the ways in which broadcasters function; it includes station policies, democratic process, governance and management styles, internal relationships and practices, and partnership with external agencies. Following indicators can assess the institutional sustainability of a community radio.

Institutional Sustainability	● Nature of contents and on air time-whether these comply with the policies
	● Trend of volunteerism inculcated within the operation of Community Radio by local community
	● Democratic governance instead of centralized direction
	● Partnership with external agencies
	● Separate Bank Account & Annual Audit
	● Review and Suggestions of different committees involved in Radio Station Management

### 6.3 Financial Sustainability

This is about community radio station's finance, its income generating potentiality, and how money is used and accounted for. Certainly, this has a lot to do with the social and institutional environment. Communities that are involved in and identify with a broadcaster are more likely to make sure it has enough money to function. Meanwhile, laws and regulation should also facilitate community radio access to funding from local, national and international sources. Following indicators can identify financial sustainability of a community radio station:

Financial Sustainability	● Self-Income Sources of CR Station
	● Revenue from advertisement and sponsorship
	● Earning from partnership with Corporate Bodies for mutual interest
	● Earning from partnership with CSOs, NGOs, different projects
	● Partnership with Local Government or other GoB Offices
	● Community Contribution in cash
	● Back up support from host (initiating) organization

### 6.4 Political Sustainability

This refers to the political commitment by major political parties, such as whether election manifesto have addressed this issue and the CR is identified as effective tools for community empowerment in mainstreaming development agenda, so following indicators can be identified to assess the political sustainability of community radio:

Political Sustainability	● Inclusion of Community Radio as development media tool in election manifesto of major political parties
	● Required Policy Support from the Government
	● GoB Pro-active role for financial sustainability of CR stations
	● CR in policy level discussion at parliament, cabinet etc.
	● Whether CR programs are designed in line with key development agenda

## Sustainability analysis of CR stations under the study from different perspectives:

### 6.5 Community Ownership

Out of 17 Community Radio, only one (Krishi Radio) is managed by the GoB, the Agriculture Information Service under the Ministry of Agriculture. Other 15 stations are managed by the NGOs and one station (Radio Mukti) is managed by private sector investor. The initiator organizations are treated as mother (parent) organizations.

Community Radio stations are working independently and the station managers and program team has full freedom in designing the program. The study team did not find any single evidence of influence by the initiator organization for taking any specific program to satisfy any particular groups or persons. Even the CR stations did not face any political pressure for program or news.

### 6.6 Trend of Volunteerism in CR by Local Community

It has been already mentioned that around 1000 broadcasters are working with Community Radio Stations. Among them 53.78% are male and 46.22% are female. Most of them are students and not paid at all.

*While talking to the volunteers, they replied happily and they considered Community Radio was an opportunity to express their talent and commitment. They are very much honored by the community people. Even a volunteer of Radio Bikrampur informed that, while he moved on a rickshaw, the rickshaw puller did not want to take money from him, as the rickshaw puller was an audience of community radio program. The volunteers also treated their engagement with CR as scope for career planning. Boishakhi, a volunteer of Radio Jhenuk is now working with mainstreaming media - Bangladesh Betar as an anchor of the program.*

In the study locations, the status of volunteerism in CR stations is as follows:

Radio Station	Total of Volunteers	Male	Female
Radio Mukti, Bogra	16	12	04
Radio Jhenuk, Jhenaidah	42	18	24
Radio Bikrampur, Munshiganj	32	18	14
Radio Pollikantha, Moullovibazar	12	05	07

**Table 1: status of volunteerism in CR stations**

### 6.7 Partnership with GoB Projects and Non-government Initiatives

For institutional sustainability, the CR stations have developed strategic partnership with GoB projects and some other non-government initiatives for strengthening information services in respective working areas, where community gets benefit. Partnership with Comprehensive Disaster Management Program under the Ministry of Disaster Management contributed to make the community disaster resilient and similarly partnership with the Legal Support Project of the Ministry of Law established partnership with CR stations which contributed to make the marginalized community more conscious on laws and also to be benefitted of the legal aid supports to the victims of gender based violence and also in some other exclusions.

The community radio has the pleasant experience of working with UNICEF, FAO, USAID, European Union, Free Press Unlimited, Action Aid, Oxfam, Care-Bangladesh, Sight Savers, Plan International, American Center, CAMPE, Engender health, Rupantor, EC Bangladesh, BNNRC, Bangladesh Betar, a2i project under the office of prime minister, GiZ, ipas, ORBIS etc. These organizations provided small amount of fund for production and broadcasting of programs in line with respective working areas. The CR stations gave emphasis on mutual cooperation, collaboration and partnership rather than the financial benefits of the stations. The program personnel also got better understanding on different development issues.

### 6.8 Transparency in Financial Management

The CR stations are maintaining highest ethical standard and transparency in financial management. The Finance Persons are

recruited under the approval of management committees. All the CR stations are maintaining separate Bank account. Annual Audit is done by recognized firms and the audit report is sent to concerned GoB departments regularly.

### 6.9 Community Engagement

Community people have participation in program designing both in direct and indirect way. The audience proposes a new program or their idea through letters and in the formal meetings. Formation of Listeners Club is a good indicator of community engagement. This club is a formal platform for citizen's feedback on CR programs and this platform acts as bridge between CR Stations and Community.

See below the status of listeners clubs in radio stations:

Community Radio	Number of Listeners Club	Members of Listeners Club
Radio Mukti, Bogra	15	300
Radio Jhenuk, Jhenaidah	110	1,500
Radio Bikrampur, Munshiganj	25	400
Radio Pollikantha, Moullovibazar	760	8,600

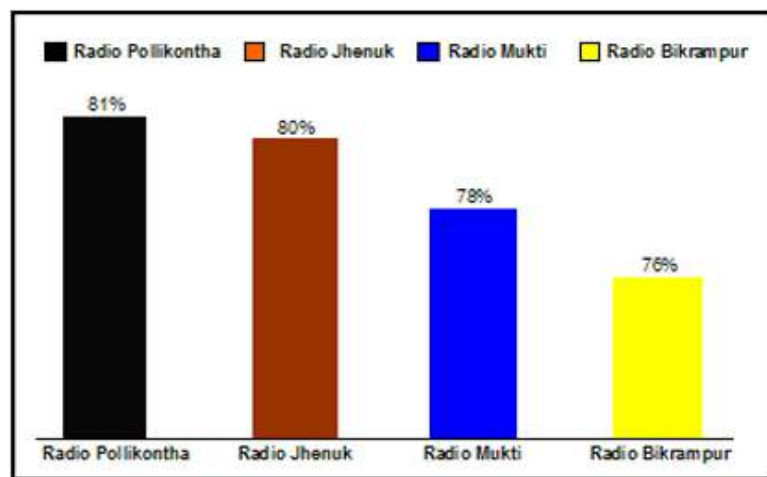
**Table 2: number of listeners club and number of members in listeners club**

The members of listeners club provide feedback to the radio stations and they also design program and come to radio stations to participate in various programs, where the listeners are the artists, and the whole planning and performance is managed by them, the CR stations provide only the technical support. This is a regular practice in Radio Jhenuk. The listener's club members include youths, the housewives and the old aged persons also. Even more than one or two members of a family have attachment with listeners club. In educational institutes, particularly in the colleges the listeners clubs are more active.

Listeners Feedback integrated in Community Radio Program

Radio Pollikontha	81%
Radio Jhenuk	80%
Radio Mukti	78%
Radio Bikrampur	76%

### Listeners Feedback integrated in Community Radio Program



Some programs are planned and participated by the community people themselves. Even the music groups make contribution in payment to community radio station for their participation in radio programs. They consider this access to media as acknowledgement to their work and also an opportunity to establish mutual partnership with community radio.

CR Stations have diversity in program planning addressing the issues related to life and livelihood of the community. From content analysis this is found that, CR stations have prioritized access to information, entertainment program targeting the community development, news, local government issues, women empowerment, DRR & Climate Risk Adaptation, agriculture information service, child rights and also the issues related to technology driven development.

Community Radio is contributing towards knowledge generation among the community, which helps the local people in behavioral change and also changes in practice, production and livelihood management. The listeners of agriculture program used to come to the station with their agriculture products to share their success and joy. A listener of health program informed over phone that, he has left bad habit of smoking as a result of information getting on impact of smoking in human health. From a GIZ supported human rights

program, the community learns legal tips for releasing their relatives from prison.

In Radio Mukti (Bogra), the local cultural groups come to CR station twice a month and perform the show. They also pay BDT 1000 as their contribution for income generation of the radio station.

The rights of marginalized community are also well addressed by the CR stations, particularly the rights of Dalits. Third Gender Persons, Street Children have taken in programs with due importance. Through the programs, the Community Radio plays advocacy role for promotion and enforcement of non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development. Community Radio broadcasts a total of 14-15 hours program per day targeting the marginalized community, particularly for their rights to social protection and human dignity.

Increasing trend among the youth groups for their engagement as volunteer is interesting which reflects the commitment for sustaining the local CR station. During the visit of Research team in Radio Mukti, it was found that 52 candidates appeared in written test for serving as volunteers on free of cost basis. Among the candidates, the radio station has selected best five candidates.

Gender equity is promoted within the structure of Community Radio and in the community radio programs. The proportion of men and women participation in community radio staff and volunteers is almost 60: 40. In addition, all the CR stations give emphasis on broadcasting programs on women empowerment to accelerate women's participation in formal and informal job sector and also the participation of women in local decision making process. "Fellowship for Young Women in Media and Journalism" has added a new dimension in increasing number of rural young women in media landscape. It has been playing a vital role in highlighting the women and child issues in media and draws the attention of policy makers. The program has won the UN Innovation Award in 2016.

Special need of the community is also addressed by the Community Radios, such as rights to physically challenged persons is considered with due importance in program planning, even the participation is ensured of the persons with disability. In Radio Jhenuk, a youth who is blind is planning and anchoring three popular programs now.

### 6.10 Participation of Local Elite and GoB Officials in Governance Structure

The Management Committee for each community radio is comprised of 7 members by taking representatives from different active groups in the society, such as teacher, local cultural personality, businessman, housewives, retired officers, lawyers etc. The Committee meets four times in a year to review the activities of the stations and also takes decision in line with the guidelines mentioned in respective policy.

The Advisory Committee is headed by the UNO or ADC (for CR station located in district town) and comprised with officials from other relevant departments such as Additional Police Super, Upazila Education Officer, Upazila Agriculture Officer, Upazila Fisheries Officer and other designated officials and local government representatives. This committee encourages the participation of local government officials in CR programs. In Radio Mukti located in Bogra, local Assistant Agriculture Office anchors a program on agriculture regularly. He advises the farmers for crop diversification, environment friendly agriculture production and other related issues. The producer and the Government officer work jointly to make the program KHET KHAMAR more informative and farmers - friendly.

### 6.11 Current scenario of Financial Sustainability

Financial Sustainability refers to broadcaster's finance, its income generating potential, and how money is used and accounted for. This has a lot to do with the social and institutional environment. Communities that are involved in are more likely to make sure it has enough money to function. Meanwhile, laws and regulation should also facilitate broadcasters access to funding from local, national and international sources. The indicators of financial sustainability of a community radio stations are: self-Income Sources of CR Station, revenue from advertisement and sponsorship, earning from partnership with Corporate Bodies for mutual interest, earning from partnership with CSOs, NGOs, different projects, partnership with Local Government or other GoB Offices, community contribution in cash and back up support from host (initiating) organization.

Regarding financial sustainability, the GoB Policy for community radio mentioned that the advertisements related to development services will be permitted while community radio program broadcasting is based on the following conditions:

- a) The commercials should be related to development services relevant and limited to the specified area.
- b) The stations will ensure that the sponsors of programs do not influence the content or the style of individual programs or the overall programming of the Community Radio Station and its code of conduct.
- c) Existing government regulations shall be followed for commercials.

Following Income and Expenditure status of 4 CR Stations has been prepared during this study; while the research team visited concerned CR stations:

Radio Station	Monthly Income (BDT)	Monthly Expenditure (BDT)	Sources of adjustment
Radio Bikrampur	No Income	110,000	Parent organization
Radio Jhenuk	30,000	140,000	Parent Organization
Radio Mukti	20,000	80,000	Parent organization
Radio Pollikantha	60,000	380,000	Parent organization

**Table 3: Income and Expenditure status of selected CR Stations**

Monthly expenditure includes– House rent, staff salary, conveyance/honorarium for volunteers, electricity bill, generator charge, telephone bill, office maintenance, stationary cost etc.

### 6.12 Financing For CR– A Major Challenge

Station Mangers and their program team expressed deep concern over uncertainty of required finance. As the policy does not favor the commercial advertisement for community radio, so there is hesitation for earning money from that practice. On the other hand, the concept of development advertisement is not very much clear to station management. Mostly the development messages provided by the concerned GoB department are disseminated by the CR stations, but they are not paid for. As an example, Fisheries Department requested Radio Bikrampur for announcing ban on fishing Hilsha at their reproduction time, the CR station did accordingly but while requested for simple financial assistance for this announcement, the Fisheries Department expressed inability to make any financial contribution.

Some stations managed small amount of money for dissemination of messages and information related to particular projects run by the INGOs/NGOs funded by the development agencies. This kind of arrangement was for a very short period.

While the volunteers are engaged for such financially supported project, then they receive some conveyance or a minimum honorarium, but when the project is closed, all facilities are also stopped.

The Radio Mukti staffs do not get monthly salary, if they cannot manage income in that month. The parent organization pays the office rent regularly.

Among the 4 CR stations, community contribution in cash was happened in Radio Mukti only, as local cultural group pay BDT 1000 for one episode performance.

Palli Karma Shahayak Foundation (PKSF) provided loan to 4 Community Radio stations, which are owned by the NGOs having partnership with PKSF for microfinance program. The loan recipient NGOs have to pay 2% service charge on the loan.

While talking with the officials of parent organization, they expressed frustration regarding lack of GoB policy guideline for financing to CR stations. They are expecting the establishment of a Trust Fund and its contribution to be managed by the Government of Bangladesh as it has been indicated in the policy. During Key Informant Interview, the officials also referred the provision of Indian Government for financial assistance to the community radios located in different provinces.

During discussion, the CR station management officials gave emphasis on financing from local government offices having mutual partnership; particularly CR stations wishes to get the campaign budget from Upazila Parishad, District Parishad and also from the Pourashava or City Corporation. They also suggested for different options and sought policy amendment for making CR financing affordable.

### **6.13 Political Sustainability**

Until this time, CR stations are operating their activities in line with CR Policy guidelines. At local level, they are keeping close link and coordination with local administration and local elected representatives. The government officials and the local elected representatives are providing necessary guidance through their involvement and participation in regular meetings. The stations are also reportable to Central Monitoring committee.

They are to submit their reports to UNO on monthly basis. CR Programs are designed in line with key development agenda of the

government. They are also broadcasting important public service announcement issued by the government. So far, both government and local elected representatives are supportive to smooth operation of community radio stations in their target audience area.

Community Radio is playing complementary role to the implementation of RTI (Rights to Information Act -2009), as in the introductory part RTI mentioned that, "Rights to information is an inalienable part of freedom of thoughts, conscience and speech" and RTI is an act to make provisions for ensuring free flow of information and people's right to information. For sustaining the spirit of RTI, role of community radio need to be strengthened and much facilitated.

### **6.14 Findings of KII (Key Information Interview) : Suggestions and Recommendations**

The findings on Key Informant Interviews are important to consider. During Key Informant Interviews the research team met 02 CEO of parent organizations of 02 Radio stations (Radio Bikrampur and Radio Naf), Asst Director (from Radio Jhenuk) and 01 senior Station Manager of Radio Pollikontha. They are:

1. Mr. Arif Shikder, Chairman, Radio Bikrampur and Executive Director, Ambala Foundation
2. Mr. Tarikul Islam, CEO, Radio Naf, Cox's bazar
3. Mr. Shahnur Raza, Assistant Director, Srizony Bangladesh, the Initiator Organization of Radio Jhenuk
4. Mr. Mehedi Hassan, Station Manager, Radio Pollikantho, Moulvibazar

There were elaborate discussions regarding different aspects of Radio station –its challenges and scopes. Particularly there were important recommendations regarding sustainability aspects of radio station.

*During interview Mehedi Hasan, the Station Manager of Radio Pollikontho has described his experience and identified some positive indicators towards achieving sustainability of their station. Please find below a summarized account of the discussion:*

*Institutional Sustainability: Radio Pollikontho is fully supported by initiator organization BRAC. The*

organization allocates money for 5 years at a time, so the station can run smoothly. The station has 12 fulltime paid staff and also 12 volunteers who contribute regularly in program planning and presentation. The volunteers are provided small amount of honorarium based on their category.

Though this station is running in a rental building now but getting land from local administration is under process, which will help to have own building of a CR station in the country for the first time.

Engaging more people from the community in Managing Committee has extended ownership. A total of 25 local elites and representatives from different groups are accommodated in the Managing Committee, who sits twice in a year.

**Social Sustainability:** Radio Pollikontho is facilitating economic and social empowerment of local women by informing them on different schemes and facilities for income generating activities and also facilitate their learning process targeting a knowledge based society. A total of 8430 community members have been organized under the banner of 760 listeners clubs, most of them are women. Regularly they provide feedback on CR programs, participate in radio program, send message on social issues such as attempt for child marriage, collect donation from the community and donate their membership fees to CR station.

Community contribution for assisting CR initiatives is also encouraging. Last year, the community contributed BDT 128,000 for celebration of Radio Pollikontho's Birth Anniversary.

The programs give emphasis on information need of tea workers, ethnic people, dalits and other marginalized groups. The community interacts through call in program, mobile SMS, interview, expert participation in special occasion also the community participate as musician, artists,

producers even as technicians. Approximately this station regularly reaches to 400,000 listeners. The community received 400 radio sets free of cost and a culture of cooperation among the community has been promoted from the practice of listening radio in a group. This also facilitates information sharing among the community.

**Financial Sustainability:** Currently the monthly expense of this station is around 380,000 BDT and the CR station earns 20% of its total expenditure which is deposited to BRAC account. As the initiator organization has commitment to support this station, so there is no concern on financial issues and in absence of BRAC support, the CR station management is in a position to arrange alternative arrangement. They are optimistic to take the opportunity for commercial advertisement as proposed in amendment in policy.

#### **6.15 In Depth Analysis on Sustainability of 4 Radio Stations Based on Field Level Findings**

To summarize the key drivers of sustainability we can mention some points, which may help us to see at what stage 04 radio stations currently exist.

**Content** is one of the most important components of sustainability. How far contents reflect the people's demand, do they visualize the priority issues of the local community, and do they go in-depth? This is one of the important points to earn core support of the local people by the station.

**Engagement** of the local people in radio program production can be other important criteria for sustainability. The local people can participate as performer in a program, or they can give their opinion through interview by joining in a talk show. They can be the members of listeners clubs and act as support groups for the station. In cases they can be the pressure group to influence the station to take on their side and right-based issues.

**Participation** of the local institutions can be another driver for sustainability. Local institutions may include local elected constituency, government administration, educational institutions, religious institutions, clubs, drama and cultural organizations/

groups. The representatives of these institutions can participate in radio programs and express their opinion and help in the local development process.

**How far community radio can be the platform** for all social forces to express and exchange views and ideas which help people to take informed decision. Community radio can be an open platform to discuss and debate, for all community based social organizations those are active in movements for people’s rights in many areas.

The following scoring can give an idea on the present status of the sustainability drivers of four community radio stations, selected for this study.

**6.16 Level of Engagement**

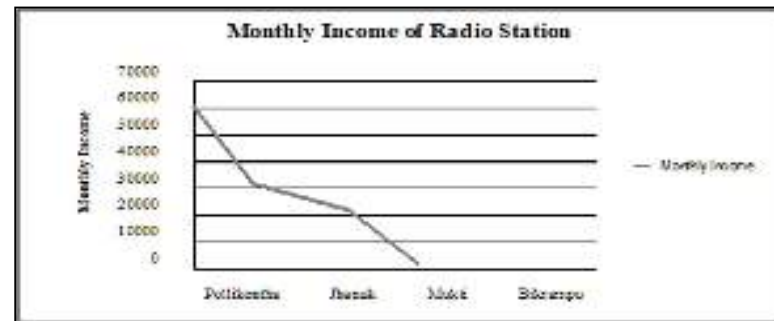
The rating was done based on consideration of community need in program design, level and frequency of community participation in content selection, number of audience club members and their engagement with CR station, feedback mechanism and community contribution for CR.

**High level A+, Mid-level A, Low Level A-**

Drivers of Sustainability	Four Stations Selected for this Study			
	Radio Jhenuk	Radio Pollikontha	Radio Bikrampur	Radio Mukti
Content	A+	A+	A	A
Engagement	A+	A+	A	A+
Participation	A+	A+	A+	A+
Platform for dialogue	A+	A+	A	A

**Table 4: Level of community engagement in Selected Community Radio Stations**

**Financial Analysis (Flow of income)**



**Figure 4 : Financial Analysis (Flow of income)**

Each radio station usually spends for rent, electricity bill, core staff salary, volunteers honorarium/conveyance, transport of performers, refreshment etc. Each radio station earns through the subsidy/loan/contribution from the parent organization, partnership with NGOs and INGOs for issue based program production and broadcasting, partnership with government departments, local advertisement, and people’s contribution.

**GoB Position on Sustainability:** As part of KII, Mr. Abul Kalam Azad, Joint Secretary (Radio) in the Ministry of Information was interviewed and the concerns raised by the Chief Executive of initiator organizations of community radio and station managers were shared with him for knowing the GoB position to respond. He informed that, GoB is revising the policy and 10% of total on air time will be allowed to broadcast commercial advertisements under the condition that, this earning would be spent for managing radio station’s expenditure. Regarding formation of Trust Fund, he said that, at this stage, the Ministry is not thinking for such kind of funding.

Regarding sustainability, he replied that before issuing license, the Ministry strictly assessed the capacity of the initiator organization and did not find any risk factors in running the station.

Mr. Ismail Hussain, Deputy Secretary (Radio) appreciated the role of community radio in supporting the development initiatives of the Government of Bangladesh. He also acknowledged the community radio role in women empowerment in rural areas. He informed that GoB has positive observation on community radio operation and its expansion will be facilitated.



## Chapter 7 Challenges Faced by CR Stations

Following challenges have been identified during discussion with key stakeholders

- i. Community Radio is not a commercial institution but the stations have to pay electricity bill as applicable for commercial offices and establishments. Shortage of electricity is a big challenge for CR. In Radio Naf area, (while discussing with Mr. Tarikul he informed) electricity is available hardly for two hours. Under this context, managing generator cost is difficult for a station. Non-availability of electricity results high cost generation service.
- ii. Two transmitters out of 3 are not working in Radio Bikrampur. Telecasting is now dependent on one transmitter only. Purchasing of new broadcasting equipment requires good amount of money. The CR stations those have purchased broadcasting equipment from the local (in-country) market, will lose its capacity for operation within next few years. So, the financial involvement for purchasing new equipment will be difficult for initiating organization (informed Mr. Arif Shikdar, Chairman, Radio Bikrampur). This situation is rated as Risk Factor.
- iii. The development partners always put attention on training of staff and production of particular programs but they hardly provide assistance for transmission equipment. While the Development Partners intend to contribute to CR income but the existing rules and regulations do not permit to receive money directly for community radio. On the other hands, trained staffs move to a new station with a higher salary.
- iv. The policy allowed for development advertisement but there is no allocation for Community Radio in GoB advertisement guideline. Secretary, Ministry of Information issued a DO letter to 38 ministries for providing development advertisement to CR, but there is no implication of the letter till now. In addition the term “Development Advertisement” is not clearly defined.
- v. Prospects of commercial advertisement are not good until the on-air coverage area is extended (told Mr. Shahnur Raza of

Radio Jhenuk). Also, the proposed provision for renewal of license depositing BDT 10,000 is not encouraging. On the other hand, some FM Radio is also covering CR station broadcasting areas, so there is a competition in managing the advertisement.

- vi. Mainstreaming media particularly the TV Channels do not put required attention on the operational aspects of community radios and also the challenges faced by the stations. Partially the achievement of particular stations was covered by 2 or 3 TV channels.
- vii. The initiating organization (e.g., Srizony Bangladesh) has to make contribution on an average 60% of the expenditure for running the stations. Since it is highly dependent on development assistance from donor. For any reason, if current funding do not continue, then financing from the initiator organization may not be possible as it is now.
- viii. Currently community people is volunteering to support in program production and broadcasting process but still they are not in a position for financial contribution.
- ix. The Community Radio Monitoring at Central level is not found pro-active enough, as the community radio stations send monthly report to the committee on a routine-basis. But very few of the stations receive critical feedback and constructive guidance from the committee which is very much demanded for.

## Chapter 8

### Way Forward with Some Recommendations

- **Establishment of a Trust Fund** is urgently needed for financing to Community Radio. The National Budget of Government of Bangladesh in next Fiscal Year can address the issue and start the process by allocating an amount for the trust fund. Establish a trust fund for 500 crore Taka, so that the interest from the deposited money can be utilized for CR stations. [The Government of India is financing the CR stations across the country from national budget. In some cases, the government assistance covers more than 80% of the expenditure in a year.] This is appreciable that PKSf has provided loan with a very soft service charge, such assistance can be a good support for running the station.
- **Funding source could include** local advertising, development project funds, membership fees, Government advertising of welfare schemes and other such public service announcement
- **Mainstreaming of CR** in government development activities as implementing partners. Community Radio can be the integrate part of campaign and awareness raising activities by making partnership between Community Radio stations and GoB ministries. The Ministry of Health & Family Planning, Ministry of Disaster Management & Relief, Ministry of Youth & sports, Ministry of Education may take initiatives for signing MoU with community radio for taking the responsibility of campaign and information dissemination in remote areas. GoB direction to local government authority such as pourashava and upazila for partnership with CR in supporting campaign and information dissemination on different development issues can be useful for both of the parties.
- **SDG Implementation Plan** of the GoB should clearly identify the engagement of community radio in specific areas and budgetary allocation for this.
- **Private –Public Partnership** can be established in implementing GoB projects either with money from revenue or donor aided projects. GoB can take initiative to request the development partners to come forward to extend development assistance to

community radio. Finance Minister can urge the development partners on this during annual meeting with the development partners.

- **Contribution of Private sector investors** particularly the mobile phone company can be requested for providing 1% or 2% of their profit to give the CR stations for attaining sustainability. But this is important to have an outline of private –public partnership based on the success and practices in other sector.
- **Provision for broadcasting the commercial advertisement** covering 10% time of total on air time may create an opportunity for earning from local sources. The Ministry of Information can issue a circular on this.
- **Bangladesh Betar or the Ministry of Information** can provide equipment for live broadcasting. It has been suggested to allow 5000 watt transmitter instead of current 250 watt.
- **Increase quality engagement** with the community rather than the quantity of engagement. Ensure that, the community engagement is meaningful and leads to discussions and debates on crucial issues that a local media like CR could highlight.
- **Build local partnership with** stakeholders like civil society, association, cooperatives union, self-help groups, other news media like newspapers and cable television channels, local government departments etc.
- **Create internal policies** that are reflective of core CR principles like Gender Policy, Volunteer Policy, advertising policy etc.
- **Develop Business model:** Each of the Community Radio stations can develop a business model to increase and project its revenue generation for a period of at least 3 years, by considering the potential sources of earning at local level. It can collaborate with the local business associations and potential entrepreneur groups for the purpose.
- **Practice and use Self-Assessment Tool kit:** Along with external support and guidance Community Radio stations need to use and practice *Self-Assessment Tool kit* as BNNRC has developed one in Bengali version and distributed within the stations after an intensive training. The development of toolkit and later the training was organized through the support of European Union, Free Press Unlimited (a Netherlands based organization) and Ideosync combine (a Delhi-based media development organization) in the year 2015. The practice of toolkit will help the station operation team to measure regularly at what level of sustainability stage they stand on and where to improve.

**Note**

**Note**

**Note**

**Note**

**Note**

**Note**