
Role of Community Radio in Promoting Agriculture in India

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Abstract: *Communication channels play an important role in disseminating information to its public. For promoting agriculture in the country various communication tools have been used that includes traditional media, print, radio and television. Some communication channels are inaccessible to rural farm community. But community radio can play a significant role in disseminating information to rural illiterate and semi-literate farmers as it is affordable and accessible. It is a powerful communication tool which reaches the farmers in the absence of regular and stable electric supply can run with a battery. As it is also a portable medium which a farmer be carried with him/her to the place where they work and listen to the station while doing their work. Community radio with its flexibility, immediacy, immense potentiality and capacity caters the needs of national, local, and rural masses in every corner in the country. From the beginning 1927 the All India Radio, the public broadcaster till now serving different needs of the public and now with its 96 stations broadcasting Kisanvaniprogramme has become one of the essential communication medium serving the*

farm community. But the recent trend is that there are community radio stations doing a remarkable job in providing agricultural information to its community members. The present paper examines the significant contribution of community radio stations in promoting agriculture in the country.

Key words: Agricultural promotion, community radio and development

Introduction

India is agricultural country. Since ages agriculture has been the backbone of Indian people, meeting the important basic needs of food, clothing and shelter. Today it ranks second worldwide in farm production. Agriculture and allied sectors includes forestry and fisheries accounted for about for 17.9 per cent of the total Gross Domestic Product) in 2014 and about 50 per cent of the total workforce. “India is the world’s largest producer of many fresh fruits, vegetables, milk, major spices, fibrous crops like jute, staples like millets and castor oil seeds. It is second largest



producer of many dry fruits, roots and tuber crops, pulses, eggs, fish, coconut, sugarcane and different varieties of vegetables (Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations www.fao.org)". Agriculture an important sector of Indian economy and more than 60 per cent of the population still depending on agriculture as its principal source of income and it is also a source of raw material for a large number of industries.

Introduction of Community Radio in India

Many non-governmental organizations and media-activist groups struggled and campaigned for setting up local radio broadcasting services to help and address the issues of their community and serve their needs, interests and aspirations. In 2007 the government announced the Community Radio Policy and all these voluntary groups joined together to constitute Community Radio Forum (CRF) of the country to support and promote the setting up of community radio stations in India. The Bangalore-based communication campaign group, 'VOICES' convened a gathering of radio broadcasters, policy planners, media professionals and not-for-profit associations in September 1996 to study how community radio could be relevant to India, and to deliberate on policies appropriate for such an action. A

Declaration calling for the establishment of community broadcasting was signed. A suggestion that AIR's local stations should allocate regular airtime for community broadcasting was put forward. Requests were also made for grant of licences to NGOs and other non-profit making groups for running community radio stations. Subsequently, UNESCO made available a portable production and transmission "briefcase radio station" kit to VOICES to do experimental broadcasts of programmes for a hands-on learning experience towards the objective of setting up an independently-run community radio station (Kanchan Malik, VinodPavarala, 2007). By early 2003, the government of India released the first set of community radio guidelines, but restricted eligibility to educational institutions only. Marginalized and voiceless communities continued to remain outside the ambit of the then released community radio policy guidelines. Deccan Development Society (DDS), an NGO organized a workshop in Hyderabad sponsored by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) in 2000 urged the government to allocate space for community radio. Representations were made by voluntary organisations, academicians and individuals to the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting

(MIB) which led the MIB to organize a workshop supported by UNDP and UNESCO in 2004 to work out a framework for community radio in India. In October 2005 the draft community radio policy was referred to a group of ministers, and finally it was approved by the Union Cabinet on November 16, 2006 which permits NGOs, educational institutions and agricultural institutions to own and operate community radio stations. In 2007, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting Government of India announced that in the next few years, 4000 community radio stations will have sprung up under the new enabling community radio policy. According to Compendium 2012 of the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting (MIB, 2016) "Community Radio Stations in India" there are 126 functional community radio stations transmitting their programmes in India.

Role of Community Radio in promoting agriculture

There are many community radio stations serving the needs of Indian farmers. Among them the **Sangham Radio**, a community radio was launched in Telangana (earlier in Andhra Pradesh), India, on World Rural Women's Day that is on October 15, 2008 by the Deccan Development Society, a non-governmental organisation (NGO) that works with 100 groups

of the economically poorest Dalit women. This CR radio is owned, managed, and operated exclusively by women from rural marginalised communities (the "Dalit" caste). The radio broadcasts covers 25 kms that includes 100 villages. The programme content of broadcast includes news and views of local people, tips on herbal medicines, news and reports on farming tools of agriculture, folk songs, stories etc. The themes include seed sovereignty and women; food sovereignty and women; women and biodiversity; women and land, ownership; women and ecological agriculture; ecological enterprises for women, healthcare and plant medicines; creating awareness about child education and its importance, legal education for women etc. DDS helps the farming communities and women specially in many ways including "getting credit and linking women to banks, conducting participatory natural resource documentation and planning exercises, overcoming resistance from men and upper castes, trying to get women ownership over or rights to lands they are cultivating (Ashish Kothari, 2015)". The community radio provides a lot of information on the dangers of chemicals, fertilisers, hybrid and genetically modified seeds. It also helps the women and other farmers in marketing of their organic

produce through a cooperative called Sangham Organics.

Krishi Community Radio is established on May 17th, 2007 by the University of Agricultural Sciences, Dharwad in Karnataka. It covers in 15-20 km area in and around the University. The CR is completely dedicated to the service of agriculture and the rural community, keeping in mind the largest economic growth sector and broad in the rural community. The community radio station is engaged in active involvement of farmers in production of programmes. It creates a platform for the farmers and also looks at preserving local culture of the farmers. A study was conducted by MadhuPattanashetti and D.A Nithya Shree in 2009-10 to analyse the impact of the Krishi Community radio on its listeners. According to them the CR “gives useful information on agriculture as the major reason” followed by “information on pesticides, helps to adopt new agricultural technologies, information about new varieties and increases knowledge” (Madhu, Pattanashetti, D.A. Nithya, 2012). The community radio also helping the listeners in gaining knowledge about “improved varieties of seeds, seed treatment, seed selection, storage, better methods of agricultural practices, control of pesticides and

diseases and harvesting techniques” (Madhu, Pattanashetti, D.A. Nithya, 2012).

Another community radio **SharadaKrishiVahini** launched on January 18, 2011. It was launched by KrishiVigyan Kendra, in Pune, This CR is funded by the Agriculture Technology Management Agency (ATMA) scheme of the Government of India and the station also receives funding by broadcasting local advertisements. It provides latest information in the field of agriculture to the farming community in and around 25 km from KrishiVigyan Kendra, Baramati. It provides a platform for the farmers, farm women to share their experiences, skills, art, problems and needs to their other farmers and farm communities. Farmers, Self Help Groups (SHG), students, doctors, local artists, agriculture businesspersons, teachers, experts in agriculture participate in programme production. The programme producers of the stations goes around the farmers in villages in collecting information about their problems of livelihood, their farming techniques and experiences and record them and broadcasted on the CRS. The CRS also records local folk songs from the members of the community and they were played in the CRS. The CRS airs information by agriculture scientists and experts to help the

farmers to improve their farming. The CR also broadcast programmes on human health, market prices and weather forecasts. A study of SharadaKrishiVahini revealed that “a majority of the farmers (67%) preferred agricultural success story programme followed by live interactive program (62%) and phone in programme (57.50%). A majority of the farmers were interested in programme like rainfall prediction, agricultural news, disease and pest predictions and inputs availability (Indian Agricultural Research Institute -airi.res.in).”

VasundharaKrishiVahini community radio station was launched on April 2004 by VidyaPratishthan Institute of Information Technology (VIIT), Baramati, Maharashtra. It focuses on the socio, economic development of the farming community in its region. It was launched to bridge the gap existing in terms of information needs of the farmers. A study was conducted by AnujaMahekhka (2007-08) for her dissertation to Mudra Institute of Communication, Ahmedabad to analyse the communication gap if any that exists between the providers of the initiative and the beneficiaries and the role of VasudharaKrishiVahini CR in it. It caters the farmers by providing a lot of information relating to agriculture like new varieties of

seeds, updated commodity rates, weather forecasts, various pesticides and medicines, animal diseases and information on research done by the scientists from various agricultural universities. It airs Bhumiputra a programme on success stories of farmers, Shashandarbar-programme on governmental schemes, Pashudhan-Dairy and animal husbandry, KrushiSandesh –weather report and agricultural advices for the benefit of farmers. According the study the CR “can leverage and empower the community with a platform to address their issues. It can not only be used for addressing the issues and information needs of the farming community but also for providing social development to the entire community (Anuja Mahekhka,2007-08). It is providing “social, economic and cultural development (AnujaMahekhka, 2007-08).”

There area few more community radio stations established for the purpose of promoting agriculture in the country. They are Allahabad Agricultural Institute Deemed University, Uttar Pradesh launched a community radio station called *Radio Adanto* to promote agriculture. It engages villagers and farmers in programme production to increase their knowledge in various fields of agricultural crops/ produces. The themes of the programming include

agriculture, health care, hygiene and social issues as they are relevant to for the community members. The programmes are produced with the help of agriculture experts with an aim to inform and educate the farmers. The primary aim of the Radio Adan is to empower its listeners with skills and capacities to enhance their agricultural incomes and strengthen their livelihoods and other security opportunities.

Another community radio station ***PantnagarJanvani*** was launched on August 15, 2011 by GovindBallabh (G.B.) Pant University of Agriculture & Technology in Uttarakhand. It reaches more than 80 villages in the radius. The community radio station was launched to create a platform for the rural people and to use the radio as a tool of participatory development at grassroots level. Along with that the community radio disseminates agricultural information to promote sustainable development. The radio as part of extension and communication efforts by the university disseminates the relevant need based research and technological information to the farmers and allied beneficiaries. The programming of the radio station includes agriculture, animal husbandry, fishery, health and other issues.

One more community radio ChaudharyCharan Singh (CCS) Haryana Agricultural University in Haryana called ***CCS Radio***. The CR was launched to disseminate technology related to agriculture and its allied sciences among the farmers, farm women and rural youth. The programmes of the station not only interest them but also benefit them with the information which they acquire from the station broadcast. The station was launched with the infrastructure and other support provided by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. The station broadcasts success stories of farmers to motivate them. These stories help the listeners (farmers) in knowing the problems faced and helps them in finding out the ways for solving them. Alongwith that, the radio broadcasts agricultural information on day-to-day, monthly basis and seasonal basis. The broadcasting programmes includes ‘do’ and ‘don’t’ of agriculture, knowledge of new seeds, fertilisers and pesticides, rabi and kharif crops, remedies for various plant diseases. It also includes veterinary and animal husbandry information, dairying and animal products. The “farmers, farm women, scientists of university and people residing in the coverage area” participate in programme production.



TANU e-Community radio (Tamil Nadu Agricultural University) launched in October 2009. It covers 15 to 20 kms radius. It was established with the help of World Development Foundation (WDF) (a NGO based in Delhi) and Media Lab Asia (MLA) (it has been promoted by The Department of Electronics and Information technology, MCIT, Government of India as a non-profit company). Both WDF and MLA joined together through a Memorandum of Association and started community radio stations for enhancing the life of poor and marginalized sections. The e-community radio was launched to provide information for farmers which benefit them. It uploads information on TNA Agri Portal for wider coverage and to effectively reach its audience. The TNAU e-radio is integrated into the University e-extension network and it aims to compile, record, edit and fine tune the content of the technologies for the benefit of farmers, farm women, youth and other stakeholders in the broad domain of agriculture and rural development.

KisanVani, a community radio station established as an extension tool by the Indian Society of Agribusiness Professionals (ISAP) a Delhi based NGO established for community development. The CR reaches surrounding 350

villages. The ISAP also runs a Kisan Call Centre which is located in Bhopal. The CR was launched on September 30, 2009 in Madhya Pradesh. The CR station covers entirely farm-specific useful information, social issues of the community, important announcement from the government departments along with information on various schemes of government departments and banks. It covers agricultural information, market information (market prices), weather, health programmes, government schemes and subsidies etc. The programme formats include Drama, Folk Songs, Farmers choice (includes phone-in, farmer talk, farmer goshtietc), interview with personality (include persons from agriculture, medical, administration, public figure, health, food etc), live play, special features on various occasion like festivals, world literacy day, women's day, children's day, tuberculosis day, independence day, republic day and so on. The community radio also broadcasts farmers and community benefit schemes and programmes in the state and central supported by the government in the state (i.e Madhya Pradesh) and around the country. The local community is benefiting with the CR services as it covers a wide range of topics that are required by farmers. It acts as advisory instrument on plat protection, irrigation, market prices of commodities, credit and finance for

farmers, bank schemes along with some programmes mend for promoting health and education.

Conclusion

Community radio which are established specifically for the promotion of agriculture in the country pays special attention to rural development and agriculture. As a radio set is an affordable and accessible medium for many in rural India and it also can run with the battery as many of the farmers can carry the radio set with them to their fields and listen to the station. It is proved as an effective medium in conveying farm/ agricultural messages to its listeners. CR stations have started with a motive to promote agriculture have become very popular among the agricultural community as it provides them information about weather, new technologies, pesticides, agricultural inputs, information on seed varieties, market rates and new farming techniques etc. OnkargoudaKakade (2013) concludes that a large percentage of farmers opined that the information which broadcast through agricultural radio programmes as practically applicable and reliable. Grace Kujur, M.N. Jha, B.N. Chaudhary, D.C. Kabdal, V.S. Deepkumar, R.C. Singh, P.A. Deshmukh, (2009)” concludes that most of the farmers felt that the information

provided in Kisanvani (community radio) could be actually practices/ adopted but the degree of adoption varied from year to year. Ashish Kothari, (2015) says that Sangham Radio (community radio) provides a lot of information on the dangers of chemicals, fertilisers, hybrid and genetically modified seeds. It also helps the women and other farmer members in marketing of their organic produce. MadhuPattanashetti and D.A Nithya Shree (2012) concludes that Krishi Community Radio provides useful information on agriculture and pesticides, helps in adopting new agricultural technologies by farmers and create awareness about new varieties and increases knowledge. It also helps the listeners in gaining knowledge about “improved varieties of seeds, seed treatment, seed selection, storage, better methods of agricultural practices, control of pesticides and diseases and harvesting techniques” (Madhu, Pattanashetti, D.A. Nithya, 2012). The study of SharadaKrishiVahini revealed that “a majority of the farmers (67%) preferred agricultural success story programme followed by live interactive program (62%) and phone in programme (57.50%). A majority of the farmers were interested in programme like rainfall prediction, agricultural news, disease and pest predictions and inputs availability (Indian Agricultural Research Institute - airi.res.in).” The study on

VasundharaKrishiVahini community radio concludes that the CR is providing “social, economic and cultural development (AnujaMahekhka, 2007-08).”Community radio (agricultural) impact studies proved that the CR is an essential medium in conveying the farm related information to farm community.

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