

Krishi Community Radio: a case study

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Background

In India there are about 120 million farm holdings and the number is growing year after year. A majority of farmers lack access and exposure to relevant technology and scientific practices. Scientific knowledge and its proper application can give them a sense of awareness, strength and security as well as options. Therefore, there is need to keep the farming communities informed of what is happening around them to address numerous problems in agriculture.

Community Radio is one of the important communication channels that can be used effectively to bridge the information gap existing in the farming community. A community radio station is one that is operated in the community, for the community, about the community and by the community. What distinguishes community radio from other media is the high level of people's participation, both in management and program production aspects. Furthermore, individual community members and local institutions are the principal sources of support for its operation. The community radio owned and managed by the community can reflect their insight, native wisdom and heritage. It connects as a powerful tool to inform and educate them about new ideas and technical innovations for their social, economic and cultural development. The potential of Community Radio has been realized in the recent past and there are some initiatives within and outside the country.

Community Radio Madan Pokhara (CRM) is one of Nepal's first community radio stations (Kasajoo 2004). It is owned, controlled and managed by the community. The funds raised through villager's donation of rice now represent a significant percentage of CRM's budget. After mobilizing over 90 local listeners clubs as part of the campaign, the amount is expected to cross USD 4000 annually. The contribution of the people in cash and kind has befitted the station and the radio listeners clubs in various ways. It has improved the sustainability of the station in the long run. It has also contributed to increasing the listener's sense of ownership and responsibility over the radio station.

Ian Pringle (2005) in his article "Community Radio and Local Elections in India... Live! described the results of a local radio station's election coverage in a village of

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Karnataka, India. He mentioned that until now there has never been media coverage of local elections; which the community radio station Namma Dhwani (Our Voice) set out to change. Namma Dhwani is a cable community radio and multimedia centre which uses a wide range of information and communication technologies (ICTs) to support local development. He has also mentioned the Community Radio station's efforts in ensuring a free and fair election as well as "greater degrees of transparency, accountability and community participation in the voting process." The radio station identified local governance as a critically important factor in the area's development and thus set out to create a series of special programmes around the elections. Ashish Sen, Director of Voices, the advocacy group expressed that "the power of Community radio as a tool of social change is enormous in a country that is poor, illiterate and has a daunting diversity of languages and cultures".

Nepal launched South Asia's first community radio station in 1995 that addresses people's complaints and acts as a hub of information in times of strife.

Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC) is an international non-governmental organization serving the community radio movement in 110 countries and advocating for the right to communicate at the international, national, local and community levels.

During the National Seminar on Agricultural Extension organized by the Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India during February 2009, one of the recommendations was to harness Community Radio for dissemination of better management practices of agriculture.

Present Study

An attempt was made to understand the operational mechanism of Krishi Community Radio, extent of participation of farmers in programme production and in decision making, relevance of content and format, broadcast hours etc, by visiting KCRS and interacting with its stakeholders. A focused discussion was held with the programme officer and programme production team of KCRS. Similarly, an interaction was held with listeners in Mangalgatti, Kelgeri, Narendra and Chikkamalligawada villages in the catchment area of KCRS. Perceptions of both listeners and the management team of KCRS towards functioning of KCRS were also documented. The details are given below.

Community Radio initiative

Realizing the potential of Community Radio, the University of Agricultural Sciences (UAS), Dharwad launched the Krishi Community Radio Station (KCRS), FM 90.4 MHz on May 17, 2007 exclusively for farmers. This is the first Agricultural University in India

to launch this concept. The basic purpose of KCRS is to reach the farmers and address their local problems related to agriculture and allied areas. The channel with the catch line "*Raitarinda Raitarigagi*" (By the farmers for the farmer), deals with issues related to agriculture, health, nutrition, hygiene and income generating activities of farmers.

1. Technical Advisory Committee

The Krishi Community Radio Station functions under the overall direction of the Technical Advisory Committee. The committee consists of all the divisional heads of the University of Agricultural Sciences of Dharwad, District heads of development departments, input agencies, NGOs and Farmers. The Vice Chancellor is the Chairman of the Technical Advisory Committee and the Director of Extension is the Co-Chairman. The committee consists of 50 members including ten community members representing the community. The functions of the committee include, among other things, deliberating on the direction and policies related to the functioning of the station. The committee meets once in 5 to 6 months.

2. KCRS Team

KCRS is headed by the Programme Officer, who is drawn from the University of Agricultural Sciences, Dharwad in the cadre of Professor. He is assisted by a team of staff members hired on temporary basis viz., two Technicians, three Announcers/Anchors, one Graduate Assistant, one Field Technician and one Field Facilitator.

3. Strategies adopted for widening the Listeners Base

Community members were motivated to participate in programme production and listening in many ways. Initially, publicity about the Krishi Community Radio Station was initiated with school children. Children were involved in developing programmes through songs on health and hygiene. They were motivated when their programmes were broadcast. Similarly, the folk songs sung by women during the local functions were recorded and broadcast which has created interest among women to participate in the programmes of community radio. Gradually farmers also developed interest as the programmes were produced by involving innovative farmers as resource persons. Farmers heard voices of their fellow farmers, which reflected the local situation and issues. Stickers on KCRS were displayed in the catchment villages of KCRS. These strategies helped to increase the listenership of KCRS from 4 to 17 per cent in the service areas – recalls Dr.S. Devendrappa, Programme Officer of KCRS. Many cultural programmes and village activities are accommodated in radio programmes – confirms Mr.Chennabasappa Goud, a regular listener of KCR.

4. Broadcast Hours

Initially Krishi FM was broadcasting programmes in FM 90.4 MHz for two hours each in the morning and evening. Now it is broadcasting for three hours each in the morning (6.00 am - 9.00 am) and evening (5.00 pm - 8.00 pm). The programmes aired in the morning from 6 to 9 am are a repeat broadcast of the evening programme. The broadcast time is decided by the broadcasters and the technical advisory committee by considering the needs of the community, availability of resources necessary for operation, technical feasibility etc.

The listeners in the catchment area expressed that the programme aired in the evening hours from 5.00-8.00 pm was a little early as they are engaged with various activities such as ploughing in the field, etc. while farm women are engaged in washing or cooking etc at 5.00 pm. They felt that due to busy engagement, they were able to listen to only a portion of the messages and most of the messages were generally missed. Hence they suggested broadcast time of the evening programme from 6.00 pm-9.00 pm instead of 5.00 pm-8.00 pm.

5. Signal reach and Distance Coverage

Though the radius of Krishi FM Community Radio is said to be around 10 -15 km covering 50 villages, when this was checked with the listeners, it was learnt that the signal strength of KCRS covered a radius of 4 km towards Dharwad. Further, it was found that the signals were weak even in this area. They indicated that they could not hear the KCRS programme inside the house; many a times they have to come out of the house for more clarity. This reduced their interest in listening to the programmes of KCRS, they added. The signal strength of the commercial FM 103 radio station established at Dharwad city is more strong and it was felt that it suppressed the signal of KCRS.

6. Content Covered

The Krishi FM Community Radio station is broadcasting programmes covering the latest agricultural technology to educate the farmers on cropping pattern, improved agricultural practices, technology on animal husbandry, poultry farming, horticulture, fisheries, environment, income generating activities, health, hygiene, nutrition etc involving experienced and successful farmers and experts. Innovative farmers and other local people are used as resource persons in around 30 to 40 per cent of the programme development. Farmers were of the opinion that the information received from KCRS is very useful and relevant to their situation. They also indicated that KCRS may broadcast real time market information on input and farm produce which would help them realize better price for their produce.

Dr.S.Devendrappa indicated that, KCRS is located within the Agricultural University and having a good network of resource persons and hence there is no problem producing programmes for three hours duration on a daily basis.

7. Programme Format used by CRS

The programmes are produced based on the needs of community. It is delivered in Kannada language mainly in the local north Karnataka dialect. The format of KCRS is similar to that of mainstream radio including drama, talk shows, interviews, phone-in programmes etc. Table 1 below shows the formats used.

Table 1. Programme Formats used by KCRS

Formats	Percentage
Interview with Scientists	29
<i>Krishi Chintana</i> (Farmers experiences in colloquial language)	2
Farmers and Scientist Discussion	2
<i>Krishi Vachanagalu</i> (Proverbs on Agriculture)	26
Fortnightly hints (what to do for the next 15 days)	3
Chats (with women, farmers, students, youth in local dialect)	6
<i>Varada Basanna</i> Charche (Livestock information)	5
<i>Soundarya lahari</i> (hints on beauty)	1
<i>Serious Jivanakkondu nage chuchumaddu</i> (Jokes)	3
<i>Adugemaneyannagisi Arogya Kendra</i> (Healthy Recipes)	3
<i>Chinnar Loka</i> (Children's world)	1
Sharing of experiences and events by Farmers and Farm women	1
<i>Akka Kelavva</i> (Science for women)	4
Folksongs, <i>Hantipadagalu</i> , Season songs, <i>Bhajana</i>	14
	100

There is emphasis on local content in KCRS - says Smt. Geetha Dalur Anchor of KCRS. The major formats used by the KCRS are interview with the scientist, experts and innovative farmers; farmers experience sharing in colloquial language), Farmers and Scientist Discussion, Proverbs on Agriculture, fortnightly hints (what to do for the next 15 days); Chat(with women, farmers, students, youth in local dialect); livestock information, hints on beauty, Science for women, Jokes, Recipes, Children's world), experience sharing by Farmers and Farm women, Folksongs, *bhave geete*, *Hantipadagalu*, Season songs, *Bhajana* etc.

Of the various formats, interviews with scientists and farmers make up 60 per cent, Discussions make up 17 per cent, Phone in programmes are 10 per cent, followed by Drama (2 per cent) and other composite features such as *Roopaka*, Chats etc.

The Field technician carries the flash recorder, which can record 32 hrs of programmes, to document the programmes in the field. Smt. Vijayalakshmi U. Malimath, field facilitator informed that the flash recorder is user friendly and the trained community members are capable of recording field programmes using the flash recorder.

8. Phone-in Programmes and Live Coverage

Phone-in programmes on various topics relating to agriculture, health, nutrition were broadcast including coverage on organic farming, *Binn Makkalu Ake Huttutare* (Malnutrition), Cancer etc. A large number of people have interacted with experts in the programme. Similarly, live coverage of programmes such as a Seminar on Mango – 2008, *Poustik Aahar* (Nutritional food) of farm women of Kelageri village etc were broadcast in KCRS, - explains Programme Officer, Dr.Devendrappa. Further he explained that local institutions namely Schools, NGOs, Hospitals, Input agencies etc were also involved in developing special programmes. KCRS has also taken up specific local issues like Cleanliness, Health and Hygiene on a regular basis.

9. Preference of Programme

The most preferred programmes by the listeners are *Varada Basanna Charche* (Discussion on Livestock Management), *Krishi Chinthana* (Interview between Farmers and Scientists), and *Hatti Lakkavva* (Cleanliness and Hygiene). *Varada Basanna Charche* programme is more popular among the listeners. In this, the veterinary doctor plays the role of a villager and narrates the story to the village head regarding his livestock problems and solutions he got from the veterinary surgeon for overcoming the problem. The Discussion format is being used with typical local dialect.

Dr. Anilkumar Mugali, Associate Professor and Head, Department of Veterinary Science, who is a regular resource person for the “*Varada Basanna*” programme explains, “we give time-bound and location specific advice to farmers in a regular discussion format”. He attributed two reasons for the popularity of this programme, namely appropriate and real time information and its delivery in a dialect, which appeals to the listeners.

10. Role played by the Community Members

Community members play roles as content/information gatherers, producers of outdoor programmes and interact with studio experts. They have limited scope to play roles of announcers/anchors, technical personnel and as administrative personnel.

11. Capacity building for Community Members

Three villages of Dharwad taluk viz, Mangalagatti, Kelageri and Chikkamalligawad were adopted by KCRS under Science for Women Project. Listeners' groups were formed and 40 members of the groups were trained on radio anchoring, script writing, reporting, interviewing, studio recording, outdoor recording, mixing the programmes, phone-in, phone out, programme planning etc. The trained members of the group were trained in recording outdoor programmes using Flash recorder.

12. Science for Women (SFW)

SFW Project aims to reach out to the women in the poorly literate as well as literally challenged sections of society. It was implemented through the KCR to motivate the women to understand the importance of science in day to day life. Under this programme, health, nutrition, hygiene and drudgery reduction aspects of women such as *Binn makkalu* (Mal nourished children), *Samatolan aahar mattu pousik aahar tayarike* (Balanced and nutritious food preparation), *Hennu makkallalli rakta heenathe* (anaemia among women) etc were covered. Dr.S.Devendrappa informed that local institutions and NGOs such as Foundation Trust Dharwad, IDS, BAIF, DC, Matapathi foundation, Primary school of Chikkamalligawad, Mangalagatti Hospital etc were involved in programme production. Fifty programmes were organized and broadcast during 2008-09.

13. Other programmes broadcast on local issues

ATIC and KVK scientists collect queries/problems from the farmers and obtain suitable solution from the experts which are then sent to the community radio station. The same are broadcast through community radio for wider reach. Similarly, all the University events like training programmes, seminars and news are broadcast through KCR besides agriculture and allied department announcements.

14. Feedback Mechanism used by KCRS

The feedback about the programme from listeners is collected by the KCRS through personal visits of field technicians, phone calls during phone-in programmes and post cards.

15. Hardware and Software Components of CRS

There is a well setup studio with equipment to record and edit the programmes. The studio has two computers, two micro phones, console (for recording and transmission), phone-in programme console, transmitter with 50 watts capacity, antennae, control

and recording rooms. Recording in the studio is done using software Soundforge – 8. Flash Recorder, tape recorder, and video camera are used for recording the out-door programmes.

16. Cost of Community Radio Station

KCRS has been established with state-of-the-art equipment for field recording and transmission. The approximate cost of establishment and functioning of KCRS includes transmitter Rs.3,50,000/-; Cost of Civil works Rs. 3,32,000/-; Cost of other equipment Rs. 4,21,000/-, staff salary Rs 40,000/- per month (excluding the salary of the Programme Officer) and other operational costs of Rs 10,000/- per month. KCRS does not broadcast commercials. It neither generates nor does the community contribute any financial resources to run the station. The entire financial resources for establishing and operating KCRS are from outside the community mainly from the institutional sources.

Strengths of Krishi Community Radio Station

Strengths of KCRS as perceived by the staff members of Krishi Community Radio Station are listed as below

- Provides development forum to exhibit the talents of local people
- Promotes active involvement of underprivileged groups such as small and marginal farmers, women and youth
- Intensifies sharing of information within the community
- Encourages innovations in community development
- Acts as a forum for local cultural expression and voice of local people
- Improves people's access to information in local language and dialect

Perception and Suggestions of Community Members on KCR

Feedback about CRS was elicited from the community members in Mangalagatti, Chikkamalligawad Narendra and Kelageri villages. The following are the some of the perceptions and suggestions of the community members.

Most of the Listeners felt that this was a new programme of its kind wherein they could be directly involved in production and broadcast of programmes and they felt proud of it. They also opined that the programmes broadcast from KCRS would improve their living standards by way of information relating to agriculture, animal husbandry, weather, health, hygiene etc.

Mr.Chennabasappa Goud of Narendra village indicated that Krishi Community Radio

is very useful to him. He expressed that it is difficult to go regularly to the Agricultural University to get information. He rated interview as the best format, as the questions asked by the interviewer also clarify his doubts. He expressed that 3 to 4 days of advanced weather forecast information will help to take up precautionary farm operations.

Some of the frequent listeners of Krishi Radio programme expressed that the signature tune of Dharwad Krishi Vishva Vidyalaya is broadcast for a period of five minutes everyday both in the morning and evening, resulting in monotony. Listeners of KCR were also of the opinion that the voice of only two anchors was heard regularly. Songs are sung by them, programmes are announced by them, and sometimes programmes are also developed by them. They suggested that the KCR station may give publicity and ask the audience to participate in different programmes including folk songs based on their talent to avoid monotony in voice and content.

The listeners felt that, people are diverted to entertainment programmes after TV has become popular in villages. Even in the commercial FM radio programmes people are more inclined to songs and entertainment.

The production team felt that the capability of trained personnel available in the KCRS is sufficient to run the KCR station; however it requires additional manpower. The number of trained personnel working in the community radio station include two technicians for recording and editing the programmes, three field facilitators and technicians to facilitate field production and phone-in programmes and three announcers to facilitate the indoor production and announcing the programmes.

The movement of field technicians to record field programmes and encourage people to participate in the phone-in programmes is restricted as there is no fund provision for travel allowance to the field technicians as well as for bringing farmers to the studio as resource persons. As a result there is less representation of farmers in programme development and participation from villages.

It was expressed by the staff members of the KCR station that provision of nominal honorarium to the resource persons from outside would help in bringing experienced farmers as well as experts for programme production. They also expressed that there is no transport facility/vehicle in the KCRS to pickup and drop the resource persons. It may be difficult to sustain the interest of resource persons without honorarium and transport facility.

It was understood from the listeners that possession of FM radio sets in the catchments of KCRS is very less. People are inclined to go for TV sets rather than radio sets due to its comparative advantages of both audio and visuals. Persons who have FM radio sets are listening more to programmes of commercial FM radio, which airs more of entertainment

programmes.

In the opinion of the production team of KCRS, the production and transmission equipment are appropriate for the size and need of the targeted community. However the transmitter available with the KCRS has the capacity of 50 watts only. It was expressed that the signal of the commercial FM station established at Dharwad is more powerful and it suppresses the signal of KCRS, as confirmed by the farmers and other listeners.

Suggestions for improvement

- The staff members expressed that lack of funds is a major problem. However, there is fund provision under "Support to State Extension Programmes for Extension Reforms" by GoI for running the Community Radio Station. The programme management team needs to keep abreast of latest information about the fund available under various schemes.
- A simple loudspeaker or community audio tower system may be provided at gram panchayat, Kalamandap, Sabha Bhavan etc. Community members may be entrusted to switch on the loudspeaker both in the morning and in evening broadcast hours which will facilitate the reach of the programmes to a larger audience.
- Community members may be encouraged to purchase FM radio sets through various awareness and publicity camps. They may also be organized into listeners groups and FM radio sets may be given to groups at subsidized rates.
- KCRS may increase the capacity of transmitter to at least 1 KW to reach the maximum catchment area of KCRS.
- KCRS may collect the phone numbers and maintain the database of innovative farmers and details of Commodity Interest Groups, Self Help Groups and Farmers Organizations which will facilitate their participation in the programmes.
- Provision of Honorarium may attract good resource persons.
- Community members need to gain necessary experience and assimilate the required skills for managing and owning the radio station. Necessary capacity building and empowerment need to be undertaken to encourage them to take over the management of KCRS gradually.
- KCRS may also generate revenue for its economic sustainability.

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