

Training Workshop on Community Radio: How to Get Started and Keep Going Community Radio Initiators Ready to Run the Stations Soon in Bangladesh

Dhaka, 27 August 2008

Bangladesh NGOs Network for Radio and Communication (BNNRC) along with other like-minded organizations has been conducting advocacy with the Government for community radio in Bangladesh since its inception. As a consequence, the Ministry of Information recently formulated Community Radio Installation, Broadcasting and Operation Policy 2008.

Primarily 116 organizations were identified as eligible of policy approval for community radio in a meeting of the National Regulatory Committee held in the Ministry of Information on Tuesday 15 July, 2008. On 23 July 2008 Ministry of Information sent an official letter to Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) and Home Ministry to issue security permit for the selected 116 community radio stations. As a consequence, investigation by three Government intelligence wings are working in the field level to find out required integrity, quality and legal status of the CR initiators.

From the community radio related experience, BNNRC feels deep urge that there should be an all out national initiative to train up manpower for the smooth operation of the community radio stations. With this view, BNNRC has set up a Community Radio Academy. From this academy training courses, technical support and research and development support will be given to the community radio stakeholders round the year.

In this backdrop, with main focus on the role of community radio in developing life and livelihood of the rural communities, Community Radio Installation, Broadcast and Operation Policy – 2008 and technical operation of Community Radio and strategy of work-plan for sustainable operation of community radio, Bangladesh NGOs Network for Radio and Communication (BNNRC) organized a daylong training workshop on **Community Radio: How to Get Started and Keep Going in Bangladesh** at IDB Auditorium in Dhaka on Wednesday, 27 August, 2008.

A total of 136 representatives from 98 community radio initiators including non-government development and research organizations took part in the workshop.

Session 1 and 2: Key Concept and Guideline of Community Radio and Community Radio Policy in Bangladesh and statutory Requirements to Operate the Community Radio

Chief Executive Officer of BNNRC AHM Bazlur Rahman presented welcome address and presented key concepts of community radio operation and CR policy 2008 in the workshop. In his presentation, he said, it is high time the community radio initiators could design a business plan and work plan for a full-fledged community radio studio and station in the respective community location. So, every initiator should have a clear concept of the policy level and technical level expertise regarding setting up a community radio.

In this regard, Mr Rahman presented a pictorial discussion on four types of broadcasting systems, special features, preparation works, frame-work and community involvement in a community radio station. During the question-answer session, CR initiators demanded reducing the importing tax from the community radio equipments and minimum charge for BTRC frequency allotment for community radio as it is the starting period of CR operation in Bangladesh.

Session 3: Community Radio Technology

Technical Expert of Community Radio Academy Mr. Sohel Awrangzeb presented a paper on technical aspect including studio set up, equipments, production and broadcasting techniques and budget for a community radio station. In his presentation, Mr Awrangzeb gave a pictorial description of pre and post readiness of the studio, transmission, indoor and outdoor broadcasting, recording, editing and program production system of a community radio station. Through question-answer session, participants came to know the technical aspects in details regarding commencement of community radio operation.

Session 4: Gender Relations and Development in Community Radio Operation

At the fourth working session, Consultant of BNNRC Mr. A H M Abdul Hai presented a paper on Gender Relations and Development in Community Radio Operation while Researcher of Institute of Hazrat Muhammad (SAW) Ms. Shaila Simi was in the chair. A proposed gender policy in community radio mentioning women's access to the airwaves, women's representation on air, special needs of minority women, women's representation at all levels of station management, use of appropriate technology and funding and capacity building for women's radio complying with the gender policy for CRS by AMARC-WIN AP was presented at the workshop.

The respondents called for greater access to leadership, management, finances and the whole cycle of CR set-up. They also recommended changes in the program contents and participation in the various stages of production. Among the recommendations of the policy include training for women; use of free and open source software, a quota of at least 30 per cent for women's leadership and representation; and special radio programs for women. The policy also suggested more practical measures such as space allotment for child-care; flexible working hours; women-friendly equipment set-up and broadcast schedules; adequate lighting and security at the station; and transportation arrangements for women who live in remote areas.

Session 5: Plenary Session

At the plenary session, participants expressed their valued suggestions regarding way forward to enhance their capacity and skills in program production, broadcasting, technical set-up and operation of community radio stations. In this respect, NGO leaders stressed on the regular training and capacity building workshops for the community radio human resources from Community Radio Academy.

They also gave much emphasis on the active role of National Institute of Mass Communication (NIMC) in arranging training courses on community radio operation. They hailed the BNNRC initiative of opening national help desk in its secretariat for all out information and technical support to the community radio initiators and establishment of Community Radio Academy.

From this academy training courses, technical support and research and development support round the year are highly expected by the community radio stakeholders. Moreover, conducting a national baseline survey on CR, producing a national geographical map marking the CR locations, developing training curriculum, handbook and arranging annual conference have been planned under the activities of CRA.

In the workshop, development organizations declared their commitment of distributing a large number of free radio sets among their stakeholders to ease the community radio listening for the poor community people.
