NGO-led Community Radio in Bangladesh: Democratizing Communication?

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Declaration

I hereby declare that the thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always indicated.

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Abstract

This study is an investigation into the operation on the ground of community radio (CR) in Bangladesh. The thesis argues, on the basis of fieldwork conducted at various CR sites, that the heavy involvement of nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) poses a number of problems. Their domination of the sector, and their formative influence in the campaign for the introduction of CR in the first place, has tended to reduce the potential of the medium to generate democratization of communication. Simultaneously, the initiator-NGOs' dominant role and protectionist approach to operations has generated a lack of active community participation and reduced community access to the medium. We have not, therefore, witnessed the emergence of an alternative public sphere in any meaningful way. Indeed, their efforts to institutionalize programing and broadcasting are indicative of a process moving towards the 'NGO-ization' of CR. This process is setting limits to the democratic potential of the medium.

The study is based on ethnographic fieldwork conducted in selected community radio station (CRS) areas, supplemented by qualitative research methods such as interview and focus group discussion (FGD). In practice, the NGO-guided CR only partially reflects the key values that constitute this participatory medium. The marginalised and excluded are yet to own and manage a CRS or have any decision-making authority. In the current status quo, local communities are unable to use the stations as a discursive arena in which to challenge dominant socio-political discourses. Nonetheless, initiator NGOs have trained local volunteers and the contributions of the CRSs during natural disasters is noteworthy. Furthermore, CR has demonstrated its utility as a means to support local development, i.e. as a form of local development radio. This, however, falls short of the true potential of CR. Thus, the thesis concludes with the overall observation that NGO involvement is failing to facilitate the proper democratic development of CR in Bangladesh.

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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

AKLAB   Alliance for Cooperation and Legal Aid Bangladesh

AIS   Agricultural Information Service

AL   (Bangladesh) Awami League

AMARC   World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters

AMARC-AP   World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters – Asia Pacific

AMIC   Asian Media Information and Communication Centre

BBC   British Broadcasting Corporation

BCRA   Bangladesh Community Radio Association

BCDJC   Bangladesh Centre for Development Journalism and Communication

BNP   Bangladesh Nationalist Party

BNNRC   Bangladesh NGOs Network for Radio and Communication

BRAC   Building Resources Across Communities (Formerly Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee)

BTRC   Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission

BTV   Bangladesh Television

C4D   Communication for Development

CDC   Centre for Development Communication

CEO   Chief Executive Officer

CIMA	Center for Media Assistance
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CM	Community Media
CNN	Cable News Network
CR	Community Radio
CRS	Community Radio Station
CRSC	Community Radio Support Center
CSC	Communication for Social Change
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
DevCom	Development Communication
DFID	Department for International Development
DSC	Development Support Communication
EC Bangladesh	Environmental Council of Bangladesh
ETV	Ekushey Television
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FM	Frequency Modulation (Technology)
GoB	Government of Bangladesh

GSS	Gono Shahajjo Sangstha
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
ICT4D	Information and Communication Technologies for Development
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
INGO	International Nongovernmental Organisation
JATRI	Journalism Training and Research Initiative
LDC	Least Developed Country
MDO	Media Development Organisation
MoI	Ministry of Information
MMC	Mass Line Media Centre
MTV	(Originally) Music Television
NED	National Endowment for Democracy
NGO	Nongovernmental Organisation
NHCHF	Nalta Hospital and Community Health Foundation
NWICO	New World Information and Communication Order
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PROGATI	Promoting Governance, Accountability, Transparency and Integrity
RTI	Right to Information
RTIA	Right to Information Act

SA	South Asia
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SEHD	Society for Environment and Human Development
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SLBC	Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
TIB	Transparency International Bangladesh
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USA	United States of America
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VOA	Voice of America
WB	World Bank

Thesis Summary

This study is an inquiry into the operation on the ground of the nongovernmental organisation (NGO)-run community radio (CR) in Bangladesh. Using the argument that access and participation are central to the values of the community medium, among other major issues, it investigates the level of community participation at different levels of operation. From the perspectives of democratization of communication, the thesis makes a critique of the strategy applied by the initiators to run the community radio stations (CRS) as a media development stimulus to democratize the medium itself as well as a process of community communication. The study is built around qualitative data derived from primary and secondary sources. The field level inquiries, conducted in the selected CRS sites, are based on the ethnographic model of participant observation, supplemented by qualitative research methods, namely interview and focus group discussion (FGD). The key CR themes are also taken into consideration in order to understand the discursive construction of the values and purposes of the radio.

In its existing condition, Bangladesh CR does not reflect some of the common principles of participatory community media. The modus operandi characterized by controlled participation is having bearings on community access, engagement and active participation, which are affecting the medium's democratic development. Despite fissures in the current operational practice, the CR initiators have been able to create the possibility for the local young volunteers to build their capacity in some aspects of radio production and broadcasting. They have also engaged selected sections of the community in CR broadcasting. However, the greater part of the community, and particularly the socially and politically excluded, whom the NGO advocates term 'marginalised', 'grassroots' and 'voiceless' are yet to initiate and own a community radio, and to secure

access to be able to participate in the production, management and decision-making.

Taking into account the situation on the ground, this thesis contests the NGO discourses on community participation in the CRS, and its use by the community as a discursive as well as deliberative site. In the status quo, the wider communities hardly find an opportunity to use the CR to negotiate community-driven socio-political, economic and cultural agendas. The management structure, process of programming, operational strategies and the environment, in which the community-based radio is being operated, is not conducive to transforming this into an alternative (community) public sphere. In addition, the apolitical aspect of CR has constrained the community participants from challenging the influence of the initiator NGOs and governmental authorities over community broadcasting.

The NGOs and CR advocacy alliances are keen on establishing a 'third-tier' of broadcasting and expanding their position in the country's changing mediascape. They are cautious enough not to lose their command over CR, and willing to retain the influence over community communications. Thus far, the initiators have not outlined any exit plan to handover the stations to the communities. This protectionist approach with a working model of guided and controlled participation to run the CRS is linked to the initiator NGOs' organisational culture. In this respect, I have argued that the attempt to institutionalize and professionalize the CR sector in accordance with the initiator's organisational practice could be indicative of a process which might be termed NGO-ization of community broadcasting.

As in other countries in the global south, over the decades, state-led modernization enabled the Bangladesh government to control its communications apparatus including the broadcasting institutions. After the liberalization of communications, it is now the NGOs, which generally apply

development support communication (DSC) paradigms for development and social uplift programmes, that are attempting to expand their position in the communication sector. At the current time, the initiators are using the CRS mainly as a development support tool and message multiplier in development, livelihood, and social change projects. These features bear a resemblance to the use of radio for development in the modernization paradigm. Instead of featuring active participation and community initiative, the NGO-managed CR is reflecting the characteristics of a local radio or radio for development with some degree of participation. I have termed this limited and manipulative approach to the operations as a rebranding of communication for development in the modernization framework, or the re-emergence of the old paradigm. As a result, in the current practice, the protectionist communication approach, which is also connected to the process of NGO-ization which I have described, is limiting the potential and development of CR as a tool for the democratization of communication and pertinent aspects of community-oriented broadcasting.

Chapter 1: Introduction

NGO-led community radio: facilitating access and participation?

> "We know of course there's really no such thing as the 'voiceless'.
> There are only the deliberately silenced, or the preferably unheard"
>
> - Arundhati Roy
>   The Sydney Peace Prize Lecture, 3 November 2004

Introduction

This chapter discusses the perspectives of my study that investigates the ground reality of the nongovernmental organisation (NGO)-led community radio (CR) in Bangladesh. Getting CR included in the Bangladesh mediascape was an outstanding success for the community media advocates and NGOs that ran a decade-long campaign to create an enabling environment for community broadcasting. The campaigners sometimes termed this 'third-sector broadcasting'. A Bangladesh Community Radio Policy was announced by the country's last military-backed caretaker government (2006-08) in 2008[1]. Under the policy, it is easier for an NGO to obtain a license to initiate and operate CR. In effect, the eligibility criteria are more favourable to NGOs than any other social or community organization which may want to apply for permission to establish CRS.

Lokobetar[2], initiated by a media development NGO, Mass Line Media Centre (MMC) was the first CRS that began test transmission in the country's southwestern town of Barguna in 2011. Currently, except for one community rural

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[1] The *Bangladesh Gazette* on community radio was published on 12 March 2008.

[2] See "First community radio on air: Lokobetar's test run starts in Barguna", *The Daily Star*, p.2, 31 May 2011. The story can be retrieved from http://www.thedailystar.net/news-detail-187959

radio station, managed by the Agricultural Information Service (AIS)[3] of the government, the remaining stations are initiated and managed by the NGOs. Among the sixteen CRSs[4] (Appendix A showing locations of the CRSs), which are presently on air, fifteen stations are run by different NGOs, the majority of which implement development and livelihood projects including micro-credit. The question is posed therefore, whether or not a decision to approve a policy for a community-based radio station (and qualifying NGOs to be initiators) by an unelected and nonpolitical entity is in fact a reflection of a bond of trust between NGOs seen as the 'third-sector' and the government; or if it represents, rather, a reflection of the government's realization of the need for broadcasting at community level as a mechanism to encourage independent media development?

Circulation of the key CR discourses

CR practice in Nepal and the Indian CR movement provided regional examples of community-based broadcasting for the NGO campaigners in Bangladesh. Primarily, the Indian campaign for CR might be considered as part of the 'right to communicate' movement. The advocates called for a freeing of the airwaves in order to establish community rights over those same airwaves. The latter issue gained traction after the Supreme Court of India's ruling that the "airwaves are public property". In Bangladesh, the key CR ideas emerged around the discourses of "community participation", "participation of the marginalised", "community ownership", peoples' "access to media" and "access to information", and CR as the "voice of the poor and marginalised". At times, the NGO

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[3] The Agricultural Information Service (AIS) is a governmental organisation under the Ministry of Agriculture. More information can be found at http://www.ais.gov.bd

[4] Radio SagarDwip is the 16th CRS. It officially started broadcasting on 12 November 2015. The CRS is located in Hatia, an island situation in the mouth of the river Meghna and the coast of the Bay of Bengal. Due to its geographical location, Hatia is prone to natural disasters like cyclonic storms and river erosion.

advocates also attempted to set an agenda for CR as a form of 'third-tier' broadcasting with the characteristics of public service media. The advocates and campaigners did not stick to any single perspective or framework in which the CR discourses were shaped. As the initiators progressed towards actual operations of CR, the focus of the messages shifted from the rhetoric and conceptual aspects to the issues that help the CRSs to be recognized as a development support medium, rather than identified as an independent community-run radio and a democratic discursive site.

Some popular slogans that the campaigners circulated through different communication channels, media, and publicity materials during the awareness campaign, policy advocacy and in the post-policy periods include "CR of the people, by the people, for the people", CR as "voice of the voiceless", "community ownership through participation" (see a campaign material in Appendix B), and "CR for good governance". Publicity material shown below (Figure 1) is an example of the communication approaches taken by the NGOs to advance their messages:

Figure 1: A CR promotional material (sticker) announcing the arrival of CR broadcasting for "good governance and practice of democracy"

In enunciating the key features or characteristics of CR, the campaigners also used the definitions articulated by World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters AMARC (1994 &1998)[5] and UNESCO (as mentioned in Tabing,

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[5] The Seventh World Congress of AMARC was held in Milan, Italy, during 23-29 August 1998.

2002)[6], for example. In addition, to highlight the contribution of the CRS, the publications and promotional materials brought out by the initiators and CR support organisations describe CR as a non-profit medium helping to achieve social change and development, enabling access and the right to information (See examples in Appendix C), and promoting gender and rights issues.

The lack of systematic collection of the Bangladesh CR campaign and promotional materials and absence of a process of documentation make it difficult for a researcher to do a comprehensive analysis of the key discourses and the process of the construction of the key ideas or values. Over the years I have created my own archive of the CR publicity materials – reports, special publication, booklet, leaflet, poster, sticker, audiovisual record, media pieces etc. They have been useful to me in identifying the key discourses, ideas, messages and popular slogans circulated over the different periods of the campaign and the implementation of the NGO-led CRS. The materials used in this section and in the appendices are from my personal collection. The results of my inquiries suggest that most of the key global principles of CR and the promises made by the NGOs and CR support organisations during the awareness and policy campaign are either partially applied or entirely missing in practice.

As broadcasting began, the focus of the messages shifted from the participatory aspects of community ownership to social change and voice-empowerment. The initiators are now strategically keen on communicating development and other indicators of the success of the NGO-led operations of the CRSs. The focus of the publicity of the Bangladesh Community Radio Conference in 2012[7] was on

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[6] Tabing, L. (2002) *How to Do Community Radio: A Primer for Community Radio Operators*. New Delhi: UNESCO.

[7] The Bangladesh CR conference 2012, the first of its kind, was organised by Bangladesh NGOs Network for Radio and Communication (BNNRC), and supported by, among others, the Ministry of Information (MoI), the National Institute of Mass Communication (NIMC), the Press Institute of Bangladesh (PIB), Free Press Unlimited, AMIC, UNESCO and UNICEF.

the contribution of CR to social change and as an enabling voice for the voiceless and maginalised rural groups. The following posters (Figure 2) publicize the discourse of achievement of the NGO-directed CRSs:

Figure 2: A poster (left) presenting the success of the fourteen CRSs informing readers that the stations broadcast 100 hours of programming everyday on education, information, local entertainment, development and motivation, and represent the voice of the rural people. Another poster (right) announces a call to take part in the first CR conference, and promotes the concept of "Community Radio for Social Change".

The *Handbook on Community Radio* (2009) introduces the essential aspects of policy guidelines, technology, operation and financial management of CR[8]. The handbook is prepared based on international publications, such as the UNESCO community radio handbook. Bangladesh NGOs Network for Radio and Communication (BNNRC) added local contexts to this. The cover page of the handbook (Figure 3) highlights a popular NGO slogan for CRS, "Voice of the voiceless". *Our Voice Our Power* (BNNRC, 2014), based on a women's CR fellowship programme, publicizes "the professional and personal achievements"

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[8] BNNRC (2009) *Handbook on Community Radio: Voices for the Voiceless of the Rural People* (2nd Edition), Dhaka: Bangladesh NGOs Network for Radio and Communication (BNNRC).

(2014:3) of the twelve young women who completed a CR fellowship at the CRSs. The report relies heavily on the discourse of "voice" often encountered in such publicity material (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Cover page of *Handbook on Community Radio* (left), supported by Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) promotes CR as the "Voice of the rural people". Cover page of *Our Voice Our Power* (right), a report on the achievement of female CR fellows, supported by Free Press Unlimited circulates the discourse of "Voice" as power.

Free Press Unlimited along with the EU has also supported *Voices for Change* (a pocketbook which provides basic information, some statistics, as well as programming and recent activities of the CRS) (BNNRC 2014). The issues, claims and focus of these publications have been influential in the process of the discursive construction of Bangladesh CR which in turn has had a bearing on the operation of the CRSs as well as donor support for CR-based projects.

The majority of the currently available publications on Bangladesh CR are brought out by the radio initiators or CR support organisations. Few of the reports recognize that there are potential challenges to be made to the current CR operation, but they do not seek to identify any gaps or operational deficits caused by the limitations in the operational procedures which constrain access and

participation. The studies are donor-sponsored, and they do not sufficiently reflect the fissure in the practice on the ground, particularly the issues of community participation. The academic studies conducted at the early stage of CR operation and conducted within a limited scope of inquiry identified the gap in participation and lack of reflection of the key CR principles in management and broadcasting. But these studies neither investigate the ground reality ethnographically to observe the day to day practice, nor do they shed light on the extent to which the NGO-run CR is complying with the common values of community radio or the degree to which it is capable of promoting democratic communication.

The CR surveys publicize the success of the CRS. A booklet *Why Community Radio Matters* (2015), published by CR support NGO, BNNRC provides statistics in support of the achievements of the NGO-run broadcasting. According to the booklet, the stations broadcast a total of 821 hours of programmes every week (2015:9). Among the total population (22,376,000 as the report suggests) in the broadcasting areas, there are 5.56 million listeners; and, on average, they listen to 8.38 hours of programme each week (2015:1-2). Although numerically the figures look impressive, they do not reflect the qualitative aspects of the ground realities. Therefore, as a participant observer, I wanted to analyse the situation on the ground beyond statistics to investigate whether the CR in practice corresponds with the reality represented through the figures of the survey.

Investigation into the situation on the ground

Taking into account access and active participation as central to the value of community media, primarily, the study investigates the level of community involvement and participation at different levels of operations. In this regard, I have observed the procedures and processes of programming, and also have critically analysed the operational strategies that are affecting the democratic development of the radio. Therefore, I have questioned the effectiveness of the

currently NGO-managed CR as a media development stimulus in democratizing the participatory radio. The inquiries into the practice on the ground have also led me to look into the challenges to forging alternative (community) public spheres using CRS as a discursive as well as deliberative space. In the following sub-sections, I will raise and briefly discuss the key issues that my analysis has led me to believe, are vitally associated with current CR practice and which have implications for its democratic development:

Community engagement, access and participation

The communities were scarcely involved in the preliminary activities for CRS when the NGOs were preparing to start up. Even before this, they did not have any direct participation in the CR campaign. Ullah (2012) finds that community was not at the core of the CR movement. Instead, the NGOs took a donor-driven initiative to advocate for community radio (2012:5). During the policy campaign questions were raised by some CR advocates whether community engagement is an organic process, or the NGO-initiators should adopt planned communication strategies for awareness building and engaging communities in CR operation. My study (Reza, 2012a) conducted in the five CRS areas when the stations were preparing to commence broadcasting highlights community engagement as a vital issue "in the management, operation and broadcasting of community radio". I observed then that most of the people in the surrounding localities were not aware of CR. In some areas there were members of the community who were aware of the radio, but some simply knew about the premises of the CRS[9]. I also found that there was no strategic intervention by the

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[9] One of the five stations, Krishi Radio is located at Amtoli, Barguna. Barguna is a coastal district in Bangladesh, which was decimated by cyclone Sidr in 2008. Hundreds of people were left dead. Except for the senior Upazila (sub-district) officials, local people in the area were not aware of the station. Another station is Radio Chilmari is located at Chilmari, Kurigram. Kurigram is located in the northern part of Bangladesh. Despite GO-NGO initiatives to eradicate poverty, this area is still underdeveloped and there are pockets of poverty-stricken areas. Communities here knew only about the physical location of the station.

NGOs for community mobilization in relation to the potential use of the radio and little awareness of the centrality of (community) public participation in a community-run broadcasting system.

According to Ellie Rennie (2006), "participation" and "access" apply to community media initiatives in general. By participation she means involvement of nonprofessionals in media production, while access refers to the community media as a platform, used by individuals and communities to express their views. It has been more than five years now that the CRSs are in operation, but overall, there is a lack of enthusiasm about the radio among the communities living in the areas adjacent to the CRSs. Except for the volunteers, who have access to the CRS and can conditionally participate in the production process, most of the people in the broadcasting areas have either just heard of the community-based radio or are unaware of the medium.

In the current operations, representation from the community in respect to the key post of station manager is practically zero. In all the four stations where I carried out my participant observation in connection with this study, the station managers are not from the community. With the exception of a few managers who had been with the CR campaign as their organisation's representatives, they were not associated in any capacity with any community media or any kind of media. In most cases, they were brought in as CRS manager from another development project of their respective NGOs[10]. I have never found them proactive in terms of proposing any new or innovative ideas to their respective NGO authorities.

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[10] The station manager of Radio Pollikontho used to work for BRAC's empowerment project at Moulvibazar where the CRS is located. This experience may be relevant to the activities of community engagement including facilitating work of the CR listeners' clubs. Among the managers in other stations, there are staffs who were assigned to the micro-credit recovery operation of the NGOs. However, after a few years of experience with the stations and CR related training it is possible for them to develop their production and management skills.

As participation is central to the operation of CR, it was imperative that the initiator NGOs would take appropriate measures to encourage active participation of communities. After more than five years of operation, the initiators have not taken up any planned initiative to create equal opportunities for the communities to access and participate in the production and broadcasting process of the stations. It was expected that the initiator organisations would prepare strategies to hand over the stations to the communities. But so far, none of the initiators has come up with any exit plan. After more than five years of broadcasting, freedom of access, active participation, community ownership and democratization of the operational process still remain as the vital issues for the future growth of the CRS in Bangladesh.

'Business model' or community ownership?

Arthur-Martins Aginam (2005) is critical about the media system influenced by the Modernization paradigm of the 1960s that failed to address the local issues of development and nation building. In the context of Africa, considering the multiethnic and fragile nature of its nation-states, Aginam thinks a "truly socialized public service system can facilitate genuine nation building and development" (2005:16). At the same time, he observes that the continent's NGOs prefer to capitalize on the governmental broadcasting model, as well advertisement-dependent market model that "works in favor of … business and against citizens" (Kean, 1991:80 as quoted in Aginam, 2005:134). In relation to community media, Fairbairn (2009) rejects the idea of a 'business model':

> "community media's origin in political struggle, its community ownership structures, its participatory production processes, and its whole purpose – to give voice to the voiceless, to provide an alternative to mainstream media, to place control of media in the hands of ordinary people – seem fundamentally to contradict the notions of both business and model" (2009:1).

Although the micro-credit programmes for the poor, implemented by the Bangladesh NGOs, is seen by some critics as a 'business', rather than an empowering model and despite "corporatization" (Schendel, 2009) of the NGOs, the African situation, observed by Aginam, is not fully applicable to the Bangladesh NGOs' engagement in community development and social change. However, at present, the CR initiators are silent about proposing any framework for handing over the CRS to the respective communities. The initiator-NGOs, one of which is the world-renowned development organisation, BRAC (Building Resources Across Communities), and CR support NGOs like BNNRC are focusing on developing 'business models'. The recently formed Bangladesh Community Radio Association (BCRA) too is inclined to ensure financial sustainability of CR as a sector (rather than considering each CRS as unique in terms of their location and community interest).

Raghu Mainali, a leading community radio activist from Nepal[11], who runs the Community Radio Support Centre in Kathmandu, thinks community radio's essential task is to prove itself as a "social entity". According to Raghu, "This entails drawing on social, human and physical capital and is not just a matter of financial resources" (Raghu cited in IDS, 2002 as quoted in Pavarala and Malik 2007:25). While social and human capital are as important as financial resources, in Bangladesh both BNNRC and BCRA are lobbying hard with the government for a community radio 'Trust Fund' which they believe would ensure financial security for all the CRSs. They also want amendments in the policy provisions that bar the CRS from earning revenue from commercial advertisement. BCRA leaders think enabling them to take commercial advertisements will be a way out of the financial hardships that the CR-managing NGOs are currently facing.

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[11] Raghu Mainali is one of the founders of Radio Sagarmatha in Nepal that works on an NGO model. Initially the CRS was funded by UNESCO and other NGOs. The license holder is NEFEJ. Raghu trained Bangladesh CR personnel on community radio production and management. I interviewed him more than once for the purpose of my thesis.

Controlled participation towards NGO-ization?

The CRS is being used by the NGOs mainly as a development support tool and message-multiplier for development, disaster preparedness, livelihood, and some social change and behavioral change projects. The government offices too are using this community-based radio to disseminate (government-initiated) development information including service-deliveries and social safety net programmes. Instead of enabling more access, promoting active participation in programming and encouraging community initiative and ownership, the NGO-managed CR has adopted and imitated the characteristics of local (development) radio or radio for development with some degree of community participation.

The thesis contests the popular NGO discourses that claim the NGO-led CR has managed to generate spontaneous community participation in the CRS. The ground reality suggests that the CRS does not provide the greater community with scope for active participation in the overall management and decision-making process, which is hindering the medium's democratic development. A working model implemented by the initiators permits controlled or what Peruzzo's typology of participation suggests (Peruzzo, 1996 as quoted in Sparks 2007:70) as "limited" or to some extent "manipulative" participation to run the CRS. The practice is also linked with the hierarchical practice and organisational culture of the initiator NGOs. A protectionist approach coupled with a trend towards the "institutionalization" and "professionalization" (Kamat 2013 and 2004)[12] of the operational procedures of the CRS in accordance with the initiators' organisational needs and priorities, as well as the NGO's tendency to emphasize the implementation of mostly 'development' agendas, could be indicative of a process towards NGO-ization of CR broadcasting.

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[12] Kamat, S. (2013) 'Preface'. In Choudry, A. & Kapoor, D. (Eds.) (2013) *NGOization: Complicity, contradiction and Prospects*. London: Zed Books. Also see Kamat, S. (2004) 'The NGO-ization of Grassroots Politics'. In P. Leistyna (Ed.) *Cultural Studies and Practical Politics*. Boston: Blackwell Publishers. pp. 112-156.

Alternative public spheres by the community?

In the current state of operation, opportunities for the broader community to capitalize on CR and to negotiate community-initiated agendas are very limited. Except for the volunteers and members of the CRS-oriented listeners' clubs, the remainder of the community serves as a mere recipient or simple reservoir of potential listeners for the radio shows. While the listener club members are not the agenda setters for the radio shows, they may give their feedback on the shows which have already been aired. Such feedback is also possible when listener groups hold meetings with station managers. Some stations have phone-in radio magazine programmes targeting local youth (whose normal listening choices favour mainly the commercial FM radios), in which the producers are at liberty to choose non-controversial (and politically correct) topics for discussion. Generally, these radio magazines include a variety of non-political items, such as music and live phone-in talk shows (about music or youth lifestyle), although not all the stations have competent volunteers or means to manage the funding for such shows.

As of now, no substantial contribution of the CRS could be observed which could enable the emergence of independent voluntary associations or civil society to support the democratic development of CR. In addition to the practice of controlled participation, the apolitical nature of the CRS bars the volunteers, producers and station managers from airing community-driven agendas challenging the dominant development or social change discourses. As a result, the stations are not yet ready to be used discursively or deliberatively by the 'grassroots' or 'marginalised' to forge something along the lines of Nancy Fraser's (1992) notion of "counter publics" or alternative public spheres for the "production and distribution of oppositional discourse" (Howley, 2010).

Re-emergence of the modernization paradigm?

As in other countries in the global south, Bangladesh experienced state-led modernization until the 1980s.This enabled the government to keep control over the country's economic policies, as well as the communication apparatus and institutions for the modernization of the state and its development processes. After the liberalization of communications, the NGOs are making strategic moves to anchor themselves in the communication and media sector. At the local level, the community radio is not only being used by the initiator NGOs as a development support communication (DSC), but also the CRS is providing the government departments with an opportunity to reproduce and redistribute the governmental discourses of development.

The guided use of the community radio with controlled access and participation, instead of being fully participatory, could be interpreted as a rebranding of the so-called old development communication (DevCom) paradigms[13]. The Bangladesh CR, which is largely being used as a development support with conditional access and participation of the community along with a control from the top in management and production and decision-making, represents the modernization paradigm (in which the framework of communication for change and development was implemented in the 1940s, 1950s and early 1960s, and again in the 1970s and 1980s is a slightly revised form).

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[13] The so-called old paradigm of communication for development in the modernization framework, by and large, applies to top-down approaches. However, in an attempt to revise the old paradigm, influential scholars like Rogers (1974) recommended the use of local and traditional media. Also see Servaes, J. (1991). 'Towards a new perspective for Communication and Development' In F.I. Casmir (Ed) *Communication and Development*, Norwood, NJ: Ablex, pp. 51-58.

Contributions to community development

Making young volunteers and producers

Despite fissures in the current operational practice, the CR initiators have managed to create opportunities for the local young volunteers and NGO personnel to build their capacity in radio production, management and broadcasting. Although providing the community conditional access, and almost no scope of participation in decision-making, the CRS is enabling the young people to be part of broadcasting, which otherwise was never available to them. But there is a challenge in retaining the volunteers as they become experienced. Expert volunteers and producers look for job opportunities with the mainstream media or in the commercial communications sector. Indeed, retaining experienced volunteers is a generalized challenge across all areas of CR practice.

Encouraging the socially excluded

While the greater sections of the community are yet to have access to the CRS, with the support of the donor, a few stations have provided the religiously and socially excluded, like the Dalit, Rakhain and *Bede,* with an opportunity to participate in the broadcasting of specially designed shows. Although the shows are not a result of participatory communication, the donor funding with a directed social change approach has at least enabled the marginalized like the Dalit community to be part of an institutional communication process. However, the sustainability of the programmes are uncertain for two reasons – it is not a community initiated process for which the community could easily take responsibility, and once the donor funding is exhausted, the stations are either discontinuing such work or producing the shows irregularly or less frequently.

Promoting local language

Although the CRS seems to be moving towards taking the form of a local development radio, one of the noteworthy practices is the use of local language. This is particularly evident in radio magazines for the younger audiences such as, musical shows, as well as development news bulletins (as the policy does not allow broadcasting of fully-fledged news itself). Local languages are also sometimes employed even in the donor-initiated shows on health and behavioral change, for example, and, lately, in the shows promoting the learning of English. As a medium of communication for a US Embassy-sponsored Basic English for Outreach Radio Audience programme, each of the stations that implemented the project in the first phase[14] translated the original English shows into the local language of the broadcasting area.

Contributing to disaster preparedness

The CRSs located in the coastal areas have played a vital role during natural disasters. The station's role has been appreciated by local people as a source of early warning information. They have also aired risk reduction messages during and after the emergency periods. This is an important role performed by the NGO-guided local radios and a precious contribution to community welfare. In a later chapter I will talk more about this topic.

Setting a conceptual and analytical framework

The theorization of community media is problematic. This is also true for community radio which is characterized by different models of operation and management. Instead of a grand theory, there is a tendency among media

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[14] The project was implemented by the five CRSs including Radio Naf and Radio Pollikontho, from which I collected my field data.

scholars to theorize CR by a combination of concepts. The identical problem exists in the conceptualizing of the democratization of media and communication. Against this backdrop, I decided not to design my study or structure my field level inquiries within the constraining framework of any particular theory. I took the decision to remain open to the nature of CR in the field and conduct my actual enquiries using ethnographic participant observation, supported by qualitative research techniques.

In a way, the inductive approach is more in-depth and exploratory, which enabled me to observe the patterns in the practice of the CRS, and subsequently led me to concretize my ideas on the issues of CR. The fieldwork data, generated through observation and interviews, were analysed in the light of a framework conceiving CR as a form participatory communication and, in particular, by regarding CR as a potential instance of a public sphere. As the influence of the NGOs became evident in the policy and practice, the analysis was then linked to the contested notions of NGO-ization. The analyses are shaped by the overall perspectives of democratization of communication, which is again an amalgamation of theories of democratic entities such as 'civil society' and the 'public sphere', alongside participatory and development communication theories and paradigms.

Approaches to investigation

The study has advanced around the qualitative data collected from primary and secondary sources. As a method of investigating the reality of the situation, principally, it is based on the ethnographic model of participant observation. It was then supplemented by qualitative research methods of interview and focus group discussion (FGD). Initially, I carried out my participant observation at four selected NGO-operated CRS - Radio Pollikontho, Radio Naf, Radio Bikrampur,

and Radio Nalta[15]. However, finally I have done comprehensive analysis of the data collected from the two CRS – Radio Naf and Radio Pollikontho and their adjacent broadcasting areas where I spent more time than at the other two stations. I also returned to Radio Pollikontho and Radio Naf more than once to follow up on developments. Yet in order to substantiate my analyses and arguments, I have also used the relevant data collected from Radio Bikrampur and Radio Nalta. I have discussed the details of the field investigation, including the methods, in chapter 4.

Radio Naf was initiated by an NGO named Alliance for Cooperation and Legal Aid Bangladesh (AKLAB). The CRS began broadcasting in February 2012. Radio Pollikontho was initiated by BRAC[16]. The CRS has been on air since October 2011. It is being operated as part of BRAC's community empowerment programme. Radio Bikrampur which started broadcasting in May 2012, is operated by an NGO, recently renamed Ambala Foundation. Formerly it was called Environmental Council of Bangladesh (EC Bangladesh). Radio Nalta was initiated by Nalta Hospital and Community Health Foundation (NHCHF). The CRS has been on air since July 2011. I have described the details of my participant observation at the CRS, and further details of the initiator in the fieldwork section of the methodology chapter.

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[15] See Appendix A for a Bangladesh CR map showing the locations of the thirty-two permitted community radio stations including the geographical and broadcasting areas of Radio Pollikontho, Radio Naf, Radio Bikrampur and Radio Nalta. Basic information about the stations can be found at the Community Radio Portal (http://www.communityradio.com.bd/)

[16] BRAC (formerly known as Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee), founded by Sir Fazle Hasan Abed is an international development organisation focusing on alleviating poverty by empowering people. This Bangladesh-based organization is the world's largest non-governmental organisation. See http://www.brac.net/ for activities of BRAC. For further details of the evolution of the organisation as an NGO, see Smillie, I. (2009) *Freedom from Want: The Remarkable Success Story of BRAC, the Global Grassroots Organization That's Winning the Fight Against Poverty*. Quicksilver Drive, VA: Kumarian Press.

Approaching research questions

The above discussion of community media and issues related to the current practice of the NGO-run CR in Bangladesh leads us to raise a number of questions in relation to the situation on the ground – namely, the extent to which the community is being engaged to support and benefit from the CRS; in addition we might ask how active participation is in the production and broadcasting process, as well as in decision-making and management?; and whether the modus operandi for the CRSs is creating an enabling environment for democratization of the medium, or if it is leading towards a risk of NGO-ization? Furthermore, we might ask what opportunities the CR is providing to the community for making alternative or community public spheres? Or, again, if the community-based media is being operated in a fashion targeted to promote community access for democratic communication; and if in the status quo, CR as participatory communication, is designed and being operated by the NGOs in a manner likely to democratize community broadcasting.

In addition, we might speculate as to whether CR in Bangladesh as 'third-tier' or a third-sector media (while the nongovernmental organisation itself is also considered as third sector), and thus regarded by the NGOs as a tier of public service media (rather than being an alternative media) are getting NGO-dominated in terms of the CRS's working approaches and organisational culture. Again, if the NGO control over the CR is the reality, then how and to what extent is the process determining the forms of community engagement, access and participation? Indeed, we are obliged to ask to what extent this could affect the very emergence of voluntary association? These questions take us to the next level of enquiry – whether or not the NGO-led CRS is serving the community as a discursive and deliberative space for setting their own agenda for socio-political and economic change?

As opposed to the old school of development communication, characterized by 'top-down', 'transmission' or 'effects' models, CR is valued for embodying participatory and interactive approaches, and "reflects community needs and interests" (Maslog,1997:3). Virtually, all the above issues are interlinked and directly impact the democratic development of participatory radio, as well as arguments pertaining to democratization of the media and communication. In summary, these issues boil down to the following key research questions:

a) What is the current state of community engagement and is there community autonomy in relation to access and participation in the CRS?

b) To what extent do the procedures and approaches applied by the initiator NGOs to operate the CRS reflect the key values of CR as a participatory, community-driven and interactive medium?

c) Are the current practices on the ground, and modus operandi in the CRS along with the CR policy provisions paving the way towards a possible NGO-ization of community radio broadcasting?

d) What scope has the CRS thus far created for the community to form alternative or community public spheres?

e) What are the bearings of the current practice on the democratic development of the CRS, and how is the process affecting the democratization of community communication?

Aims and objectives

It is useful at this point to restate in a concise fashion the aims and objectives of this research project. The initial rationale for the study was to attempt to see beyond the competing claims made by the various actors involved in the CR project in Bangladesh and come to some understanding of the actual situation on the ground. That is, to evaluate some of the claims being made for the medium and to test those claims in the crucible of the day-to-day functioning of individual stations at the local level. NGO-led CR in Bangladesh is widely understood to be a participatory medium. The struggle to introduce CR was waged against a backdrop of military-backed rule and tight governmental control of all forms of communication in the country. In this regard the triumph of the long fought campaign for CR represents a significant shift in the country's mediascape in the general direction of an overall democratization of communication. The research also seeks to comprehend the role of the agencies and authorities (the initiator NGOs and donors and the government, for example) in facilitating community access and participation, and their influence over the process of community-based broadcasting. At the same time, the study is also aimed at identifying the gaps between the CR discourses and the practice on the ground. Thus, the inquiries are set to look into whether the community, including the 'marginalized', who otherwise did not have participation and access to the dominant media, have managed through their purported 'ownership' of and access to the CRS to set their own agendas.

To restate the research questions then, the precise objectives of the study were to:

- observe analytically the nature and extent of community engagement, access and participation at different key stages of the CR operation;

- investigate methodically the situation on-the-ground – to ascertain whether the vital features of CR are implemented, and if that reflects the participatory and democratic values of the medium;

- investigate if in the status quo, the NGO-run CRS generates any possibility for the community to forge independent associations or alternative public spheres; and subsequently to

- look into whether a process of tactical attempts including the strategies to control community participation, operation and organization of the CRS, are leading Bangladesh CR towards NGO-ization.

Rationale of the study: further background

In Bangladesh, despite academic interest in participatory media and development communication, there is no significant academic literature on community radio. There is also an absence of substantial studies looking at the democratization of information and communication in relation to community communication and community-based, alternative, small or local media. With the exception of a few surveys, such as the ones on the prospects of CR conducted by MMC (2008), baseline surveys by BNNRC (2009), needs assessment by BNNRC (January 2012, Unpublished), needs assessment by GoB, BNNRC & Change Maker (March 2012, Unpublished); and sundry postgraduate dissertations (Suhrawardy, 2010, Nazma 2012, Rajshahi University thesis 2012 & 2013), much of our understanding of the challenges on the ground, for instance, access and participation, and community support and ownership remain limited or conceptual in nature.

Available academic studies, NGO reports and surveys do not tell us why the demand for community engagement is not being expressed by the community itself. Even the academic studies done so far do not provide us with convincing evidence as to how or if at all the grassroots and marginalized of the community are engaged or willing to use the CRS as a discursive and deliberative space to challenge the dominant development discourses. We do not know if they can or want to question the power structure, which for so long has prevented them from participating in policy debates. In addition, thus far, the available studies do not examine the provisions in Bangladesh CR Policy that could affect plurality, freedom of expression, greater level of participation, and the democratization of community media.

The initiator and CR support organisations claim that they have achieved overwhelming success and that CRS has had a positive impact at the level of the communities in which they are operating. It is necessary, however, to see beyond such generic claims. Detailed ethnographic observation is required in order to test them. After more than five years of broadcasting, the stations are also now facing serious financial challenges. If the communities were so overwhelmingly engaged with the CRS, they might have been expected to take responsibility for its sustainability as well. In this connection, besides addressing the current knowledge on participation gaps, a study of the situation on the ground will be useful in understanding the emerging notions of CR in the arena of community communication or new paradigms of development communication. The outcome of my study will also help to deepen our academic understanding of the prospects and challenges of NGO-led and guided community broadcasting.
In fact, it is fair to say that academia has not been responsive enough to the issues of CR in Bangladesh. With the exception of a few academics who have been with the CR campaign from the very beginning of the campaign in the late 1990s, there was no attempt from the NGOs or donors to involve the academia in the process of campaigning. Alienation of academics and insufficient academic inquiries are not new in the history of community media campaigns. For example,

in the context of Britain, there was a lack of academic engagement in the early stage of CR movement. Lewis (2012) in his account of the British campaign for community radio writes about the primary stages where "action and activism preceded theorisation and academic attention" (2012:9). The activists too found such attention irrelevant. He, however, argues that "the involvement of academia is a necessary addition to help create the discursive space essential for community radio to be recognized in policy" (2012:9). Thus, it is imperative that academic contributions are made thereby extending the discursive space, and advancing the theorization of CR broadcasting in the light of the reality of the situation.

Chapter conclusion and thesis overview

The CR situation and perspectives discussed in this introductory chapter shape the inquiries and analysis of the study. In my fieldwork, I found some key participatory values missing in the operations of the NGO-managed CR. In practice, the radio is yet to reflect some vital features that have universally been attached to the medium, including democratic access, active participation and community ownership. The CRS is largely being used as a support tool for different government as well as NGO-initiated local development, livelihood and donor-sponsored 'development' projects. The current tendency of the Bangladesh CR is more towards a local radio for development than a community-run or community-managed participatory radio. Overall, the limits in access and control of participation are affecting the democratic development of the radio. This then is the underlying contention of the thesis. To re-cap once more, this initial chapter sets out the rationale for the study as a whole.

Chapter 2 presents further background of the key events and development of the situation on the ground. That is the continuity and shifts, in which the themes and context of the research have emerged and evolved. The research project is situated in the global south where the questions of community-based

broadcasting have been conditioned by the political and historical development of communication. In that sense, the chapter is also an historical account of the context of the study. In relation to my inquiries, it is crucial to reflect on the subjects of liberalization and the role of NGOs as non-state actors in media development. Community media practices as a regional experience, for example, CR in Nepal, India or the state-led community-based radio broadcasting in Sri Lanka in the 1980s, are already internationally known. The Bangladesh CR literature has just begun to emerge and is not yet known to the international readership. Therefore, I have structured the different sections of the chapter with necessary contextual information that were influential and central to the CR issues. The chapter discusses key factors in the politics of broadcasting, policy issues in liberalizing the broadcasting sector, and the role of NGOs and civil societies in the campaigns for CR in Bangladesh as well as donor support in the development of local and community media. In order to understand how the liberalization of communication has helped Bangladeshi NGOs to secure access in community broadcasting, I have focused on the aspects that determine the position of the CR in a changing mediascape. In other words, through the analysis of the contexts, events and issues, I have raised the question whether or not the CR broadcasting is aimed at contributing to the democratization of communication, or if it is, in reality, serving to promote NGO-led (third-sector) broadcasting and thus functioning in a similar fashion to the state-led media under the modernization model.

In Chapter 3, I explain the theoretical and conceptual framework of the study. Community radio as community media practice can be approached from different standpoints. As there is no grand theory or concept of CR to serve best to guide an in-depth inquiry, for this study, I have applied multiple concepts to build an analytical framework in order to interpret the data. In addition to defining CR and referring to its diversities in terms of application and management, I have discussed and analysed the relevant ideas and arguments that are either attributed to the medium, or connected with greater areas of discussions, such as

development communication or media development. In this respect, I have also put down the thoughts on NGO and contested notions of NGO-ization. I have particularly focused on the views on CR as related to participatory communication, the alternative public sphere and the democratization of media and communication.

Researchers have not made sufficiently methodical inquiries into the facts on the ground of the NGO-managed CR to really answer the question to what extent the NGO approach to running the community medium has been successful in developing a community-owned and participatory radio. Chapter 4 provides the details of my research design, method and the process by which I hope to be able to answer such a question. It also outlines the rationale for choosing the qualitative research approaches I have adopted, and describes the procedures used to pursue my outlined research objectives. I have laid out the research design with a view to collecting qualitative data from primary and secondary sources. My participant observation took place first in the selected four CRS areas. Then I spent more time in two CRSs and made follow-up visits. In addition, applying thematic content analysis, I have also examined the key messages as expressed in the CR campaign and publicity materials.

Chapter 5 presents some of my key ethnographic findings in respect to CR practice on the ground. In it I will describe a fissure in the operational processes. The qualitative data derived from my participant observation at the CRS, alongside the interviews and group discussions, suggest that there are gaps between the perceived notions of CR and their implementation. The NGO-run CR is yet to reflect its cardinal features. The process of institutionalization of the operation in line with the initiator NGOs' organizational culture, is having a considerable bearing on access and community engagement and active participation. This practice is constraining the medium's potential contribution to community communication. I demonstrate that thus far, the initiators have allowed only selected sections of the community and volunteers certain degrees

of access to the CRS, and allowed only them to participate in the production and broadcasting. The socially and politically excluded are yet to be able to manage access and participation, let alone having any determining voice in the future of CRS. In interpreting the empirical findings, this chapter also mentions the issues that are essentializing NGO control over CR broadcasting, which in the current state, creates impediments to forming any counter narrative on media, politics or development.

Chapter 6 is an extension of the previous empirical chapter and interprets the data that supports or reinforces the arguments for a likely NGO-ization of CR. The findings that my observation, group discussions and stakeholder interviews suggest are that the protectionist approach to running the CRS are linked with the Bangladeshi NGOs' organisational culture and practice. I have argued that the policy support, practice and concepts applied to run the CRS are indicative of a process towards the NGO-ization of CR broadcasting. In this respect, I have also questioned the effectiveness of CR as media development as the continued NGO influence is affecting the prospects of creating civil society groups and alternative public spheres. Thus, the likely process of NGO-ization hinders the CR's role in promoting participation in deliberative democracy at the grassroots level, as well as the democratization of radio itself.

Chapter 7 is my concluding chapter and takes forward the discussion of my two major empirical chapters which precede it. The reality of the NGO-run CR and analysis based on my research is indicative of the re-emergence of a paradigm similar to the old school of development communication. The controlled mode of access and participation is targeted not only to promote the CR's development support function needed for the donors and NGOs to accelerate outputs in development projects, but also seems to have a function similar to the approach described as communication for development (C4D) in directed social change.

This final chapter, then, also summarizes the outcome of the study and includes final remarks on the contributions of the empirical findings to the objectives of the study. Referring to my participant observation and analyses done on the basis of the data from primary and secondary sources, I have concluded that in the existing situation, the NGO-led community radio most resembles a local development radio that communicates 'development', rather than challenges 'development' discourses. Although evident progress has been made in the capacity building of young volunteers, the guided or controlled access and "limited participation" (and somewhat "manipulative participation") alongside the process of NGO-influence are limiting and restricting the overall prospects for democratization of community broadcasting within the settings of community communication in Bangladesh.

Chapter 2: Emergence and development of the context

CR at the time of liberalization

Introduction

The objective of this chapter is to outline the issues and events and, especially, the politics that contributed to the process of evolution towards deregulation and liberalization of media and communication policy and practice in Bangladesh. This will help us to comprehend how the opportunities opened up by the measures of liberalization have created opportunities for civil society and NGOs to drive for independent, local and community media. In this chapter I will describe the socio-political, as well as the historical contexts, in which Bangladesh media and communication, and contemporary issues of community radio (CR), have emerged and developed. Instead of presenting the discussions in a chronological manner, I have attempted to link the issues to the broader events, such as the general politics of communication, key historical junctures of broadcasting agenda setting, the contemporary media environment, processes of liberalization, and the campaign for an enabling environment for community-based broadcasting that have shaped and influenced the agendas for community broadcasting.

Bangladesh came into being as an independent state in 1971. It is located in the north-eastern part of South Asia. The country has border with West Bengal of India in the west and the Indian states of Tripura, Mizoram and Myanmar in the east. The geographical area of Bangladesh is 147,570 square kilometers with a

population estimated at about 162 million[17]. Modern historians like Willem van Schendel regards Bangladesh as a "new name for an old land" (Schendel 2009). At the same time, David Lewis (2011) thinks that the outsiders know or understand relatively little about this country. According to him, except for Schendel's *A History of Bangladesh* (2009), there is a lack of ample literature on Bangladesh history, culture, politics and society available to an international readership[18]. On the historical issues of Bangladeshi politics, democracy and governance, he observes –

> Bangladesh has seen periods of authoritarian military rule as well as two decades of unstable electoral democracy, and is still widely seen today as suffering from severe problems of governance and high levels of corruption. It has long been a country central to the aid industry, and has become particularly known for the extensiveness of its non-governmental organisation (NGO) sector that some have identified with a wider "civil society". (Lewis, 2012:3)

However, Lewis thinks only recently "has the country begun to emerge as a fragile, but functioning, parliamentary democracy" (Lewis, 2012: i). He also notices that Bangladesh has started becoming self-sufficient in food-production with an economy that has maintained consistency in achieving growth. The country has made significant progress towards meeting some of the Millennium Development Goals (MGDs), such as poverty eradication, reduction of child mortality, improved maternal health and primary education (Lewis, 2012:5). According to the World Bank (WB) and International Monetary fund (IMF) report

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[17] For further details on Bangladeshi geography, demography and facts of the economy, environment and climate, see the Bangladesh National Portal (http://www.bangladesh.gov.bd). For further updates, also see 2015 Statistical Year Book of Bangladesh; and the data provided by Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) (http://www.bbs.gov.bd)

[18] According to Lewis, except for Schendel's *A History of Bangladesh* (2009), which he thinks "aims to complement" Rounaq Jahan's *Bangladesh Promise and Performance* (2001), there is a lack of introductory books for an international readership. See Lewis, D. (2011) *Bangladesh: Politics, Economy and Civil Society*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

published in April 2015, Bangladesh's economy advanced 14 steps from the previous 58th position to 44th in the world economy during 2013-14[19]. However, despite the recent impressive economic growth, there are serious challenges to institutionalizing democracy, establishing good governance and fighting corruption and inequality.

Notes on the modernization paradigm in Bangladesh

The overall development of Bangladesh, including the development of the media, cannot be understood without referring to the historical roots of modernization in this part of the world. Large-scale developments under the modernization model were initiated in the late1950s and throughout the 1960s (when today's Bangladesh was known as East Pakistan). Dams and hydroelectric projects, paper and newsprint mills, irrigation projects, radio and television, a national news agency, state-funded newspapers, academic and research institutions and new academic departments came into operation with support mainly coming from the United States. However, the modernization process and its associated projects failed to bring about the intended political and economic developmental outcomes in the then East Pakistan (as, indeed, was the shared fate of many countries in postcolonial Africa, Asia and Latin America).

State-owned or government-run national radio and TV were instrumental in supporting authoritarian or autocratic rule and publicizing state-sponsored values. For example, two military dictators - General Ayub Khan in the then Pakistan (ruled between1958-69) and Lt. General Ershad (ruled between1982-90) in Bangladesh relied on the broadcast media to disseminate information for state-led development. The media were also used to reinforce state-sponsored values on politics, nation building and governance. During the autocratic regimes,

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[19] For a news story on Bangladesh's recent economic upturn, see "Bangladesh economy moves up 14 places on World Bank IMF scale in two years" on bdnews24.com (http://bdnews24.com).

on the one hand, radio and TV were engaged in broadcasting programmes on social uplift and development, such as family planning and agriculture; and other hand, oppositional and alternative political views were completely ignored in the state broadcasting.

Broadcast media under modernization

State-led broadcasting in East Pakistan and, for at least two decades, in the independent Bangladesh, did not promote participatory and independent media practice. The bigger projects of mass communication – national radio, television, a news agency and, in some cases, newspapers (targeted to modernize the traditional society) by and large remained top-down in their approaches. They were structured to serve both political and state-led national development agendas. East Pakistan had a similar experience with the mass media in the 1950s and1960s, and during the 1970s-80s as the independent state of Bangladesh. The broadcast media were fully controlled by the government and used to propagate regime interests.

The use of state-controlled radio and TV in the celebration of Ayub regime's *Unnoyoner Doshok* (উন্নয়নের দশক), 'The Decade of Development' (1958-68), as well as Ershad's use of state radio and TV for justifying his rule and propagating the development activities of his government (including the Islamization of politics), share identical general characteristics. At the same time, the government-run broadcast media aired shows on education, agriculture, youth development and family planning, for example. Agricultural shows were produced particularly targeting listeners in the rural areas. But such programmes were not participatory, neither were they produced in consultation with the target audiences. Nonetheless, with a view to making impact on the ordinary people, the agricultural and family planning related shows used local themes, dialects and folk music in delivering their message. While the state was still implementing top-down communication approaches, from the early 1980s a few Bangladesh

NGOs began to try participatory and community-based approaches in their community empowerment, development and social change programmes.

Development of communication NGOs

Communication NGOs, which were also serving as media development organisations (MDO) came into existence in Bangladesh in the 1980s although their engagement in media development and communication issues became distinctly visible from the beginning of the 1990s. With the help of media development assistance, MDOs have been implementing a wide range of donor-supported projects on journalism and other aspects of media and communications. Prominent among such projects has been the training of local journalists and the empowering of women journalists, promoting media awards to journalists dealing with governance and anti-corruption issues, and holding events to promote the freedom of the press. Over the last decade in particular, they have been working extensively in organizing seminars and dialogues on media policy reform, the campaign for right to information (RTI), and ICT for development, as well as Internet governance.

In addition to the above media development and policy issues, communication NGOs or MDOs, like Mass Line Media Centre (MMC), Centre for Development Communication (CDC), Bangladesh Centre for Development Journalism and Communication (BCDJC), Society for Environment and Human Development (SEHD) and Bangladesh NGOs Network for Radio and Communication (BNNRC) have implemented or supported a great number of projects relating to development communication (DevCom) or communication for development (C4D). In the greater realm of communication and development, in recent years, UN organisations, like UNICEF and FAO and specialized agency like IFAD are promoting the C4D as a model for social change and supporting the NGOs in Bangladesh to implement relevant projects.

Internationally known development NGOs like BRAC, Proshika, and the now
defunct Gono Shahajjo Sangstha (GSS) adopted a number of DevCom
paradigms in their community empowerment, human development and
innovative education programmes. They also applied participatory and
ethnographic methods to engage community in development projects. One might
observe that in the last three decades, as the number of the state-led DevCom
projects were declining, NGOs took up lead role in DevCom and communication
for social change (CSC) projects. In recent years, community broadcasting as an
emerging sector has provided the NGOs – both traditional development NGOs
and communication NGOs with a near monopoly over using CR as a technology
and site for producing and distributing discourses of empowerment, social
change and development.

While it is important to understand the role of Bangladesh's NGOs in relation to
communication and development and their role in the liberalization of the media
generally (notably their endeavors to formulate a third-tier mediascape). It is also
important to focus on the emergence and development of broadcasting with
reference to the politics of broadcasting that has historically contributed to the
process of deregulation and liberalization of communication, and eventually the
construction of the country's current mediascape. It is to this topic that I shall
now turn.

Evolution and politics of Broadcasting

Radio broadcasting in what was then Eastern Bengal under the British-ruled
India, began in Dhaka in 1939. The first television was launched in Dhaka, then
provincial capital of East Pakistan in 1964. The broadcast media were perceived
by the Pakistani rulers (August 1947-December 1971) as important channels for
disseminating propaganda and public information, entertainment, improving
education and motivating people to take part in state-led development activities.
After 1971, in independent Bangladesh, all successive governments have

considered the broadcast media as a powerful instrument for national integration, development and social uplift. In 1972, the government of Bangladesh[20] nationalized Bangladesh Television (BTV) which had previously operated under a broadcasting corporation provision.

Broadcasting in Asia "was greatly influenced by the centralised, state-controlled traditions left behind by foreign colonizers" (Girard, 1992:5)[21]. Bruce Girard also finds that the Asian governments used broadcasting as propaganda machinery and never developed a feedback mechanism to uncover peoples' expectations. As the post-colonial states were aspiring to modernization and adopting the western model of economic development, almost all the Asian nations have similar experience with their state-run broadcasting media until the 1980s. Brian Shoesmith, Shameem Mahmud and Shameem Reza (2013) observe that by the early 1970s all forms of broadcasting in South Asia had become highly bureaucratized institutions, geared more towards articulating government views on issues rather than acting as independent broadcasters (2013:237)[22]. In Bangladesh too, since its inception the state-owned radio and TV have been used not only for dissemination of state-initiated development activities, but also for propagating the governments' political agendas.

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[20] The Awami League (AL)-led government ruled Bangladesh during 1972-75.

[21] Girard's observation on Asian broadcasting scenario was recorded in his book in the early 1990s. See Girard, B. (Ed.) (1992) *A Passion for Radio: Radio Waves and Community*, Montreal: Black Rose Books

[22] Shoesmith, B., Mahmud, S., and Reza, S. M. S., (2013) 'A Political History of Television in Bangladesh' In Shoesmith, B., and Gelino, J. (2013) *Bangladesh's Changing Mediascape: From State Control to Market Forces*, Bristol: Intellect, p 237.

Government radio and TV: *What's in a name*?

After independence, 'Radio Pakistan' and 'Pakistan Television' (PTV) Dhaka were renamed 'Bangladesh Betar' (**বাংলাদেশ বেতার**) and 'Bangladesh Television' (BTV). The name 'Bangladesh Betar' was again changed to 'Radio Bangladesh' by the country's first military and quasi-democratic regimes (1975-81), and the name was retained by the successive governments until 1995 including the country's last military autocratic government (1982-90). After the fall of that government in 1990, the newly elected Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)-led government (1991-95) too retained the same name. The state radio's name was further changed to the old name 'Bangladesh Betar' by the Bangladesh Awami League (AL)-led government in 1996.

Over the decades the government-run Bangladesh Betar and BTV served the various regime interests and worked as an extension of the state's bureaucratic governance (Reza 2012)[23]. The first government of the country (1972-1975) placed both the state broadcasting media under the control of the Ministry of Information (MoI). For the last four and half decades, the state radio and TV have continued serving as a mouthpiece and propaganda tool of the government. In commenting on the state of manipulation of the government broadcasting media, by the military regimes[24] Page and Crawley (2001) write,

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[23] Reza, S. M. S., (2012). 'Media Governance in Bangladesh: Rhetoric and Reality of Broadcasting Policy', *Forum/The Daily Star*, Vol. 6, Issue 5, May 2012.

[24] Major General Ziaur Rahman ruled Bangladesh during 1977-81, and Lt. General H. M. Earshad's autocratic regime continued during 1982-90.

During the military regimes of General Ziaur Rahman and General Ershad, the two leaders skillfully used the media, particularly television to project their own personalities and role of the army in national life, whether in digging canals or rescuing the victims of perennial floods. This reinforced the process of centralisation and politicisation of media which had begun earlier. (2001:57-58)[25]

Radio was used by the military rulers to propagate messages justifying the coups and establishing rationales of their regimes. The medium was heavily used in the undemocratic power takeovers in 1975 and 1982. The rulers manipulated the production and dissemination process of the radio shows, particularly the news bulletins. During the last military autocratic period of General Ershad (1982-90) there was an all-out use of the state radio and TV to propagate the government agendas and to portray a benevolent image of the military dictator.

Opposition political parties and cultural groups began to raise their voices against the politicization of the broadcasting sector from the mid1980s, and called for autonomy of the state radio and TV. The demand gained momentum in the late 1990s. There was high hope that with the fall of the autocratic government and return to parliamentary democracy[26], the media situation would improve. But instead of reforming the government-run radio and TV, all the consecutive governments in the last twenty six years mostly led by the two major political parties – the BNP and the AL continued with the old practice of controlling and politicizing the state broadcasting system.

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[25] For details, see Chapter 2 'Colonial Beginnings and National Imperatives' In Page, D. and Crawley, W. (2001) *Satellites over South Asia: Broadcasting Culture and the Public Interest*, New Delhi: Sage Publications.

[26] Popular uprising forced the military autocrat Lt. General H.M. Ershad to step down from power in 1990. For details, see "The roots of Bangladeshi dictatorship" In Schendel, W.V. (2009) *A History of Bangladesh*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp. 194-197. Also see Lewis, D. (2012) *Bangladesh: Politics, Economy and Civil Society*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p.3.

During the last autocratic regime (1982-90), it was, by and large, the supporters and people loyal to the government who had the opportunity to participate in the radio and TV shows. The administrative officers and staff of the state media were expected to or had to comply with government instructions in deciding the broadcasting agendas. In order to restore the democratic process, the opposition political parties rallied in a successful bid to compel the military ruler to step down. Simultaneously, with a view to democratizing the state radio and TV, political campaigners and cultural activists called for a change in the management and operation of Radio Bangladesh and BTV.

A joint declaration widely known as *Tin Joter Rooprekha* (তিন জোটের রূপরেখা), Declaration of the Three Party-Alliances[27] called for transforming Bangladesh Betar and BTV from government control to an autonomous public broadcaster was prominent here. Section 2(D) of the declaration states that "the mass media, including the radio and television, will have to be made into independent and autonomous bodies so that they become completely neutral". According to Shoesmith, Mahmud and Reza (2013), the demand for autonomy "was one of the few collective political initiatives and elite intellectual expressions of the period, signifying the degree of importance attached to an autonomous state broadcasting service by the intellectual elites and politicians" (2013:238). Primarily, the autonomy agenda was picked up by the news media and the journalist unions that supported anti-Ershad political campaigns. Soon the autonomy agenda attracted the attention of the ordinary people.

After the fall of the Ershad regime, Bangladesh returned to a parliamentary democracy in the early 1990s. The political parties that came to power since then, however, have not approved any policy to grant autonomy to the state radio and TV. The BNP won the first parliamentary election in 1991, but they did not

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[27] Three party-alliance, a broader political platform of three alliances was formed in the late 1980s. The grand alliance was led by AL, BNP, left-wing, as well as some right-wing political parties with a common objective to run political campaigns to oust the military dictator Lt. General Hussain Muhammad Ershad from power.

take any step to reform the management of the state radio and TV. AL came to power in 1996 and set up a commission, led by a retired government secretary Asafaddoula to report to the government on autonomy of the state radio and TV. The commission submitted its report in 1997 and recommended autonomy for the sector.

The report recommended that Bangladesh Betar and TV should be regulated by an independent broadcasting commission which would be answerable to the parliament, and the members including the chairman would be appointed by the President. It may noteworthy that the Commission's report was never circulated publicly, neither did the government implement the recommendations to grant autonomy to Bangladesh Betar and BTV. Instead, the parliament, in which the ruling party AL's MPs were the majority, endorsed two new acts - *Betar Ain* 2001(Betar Act 2001) and *Television Ain* 2001 (Television Act 2001). Neither of the acts was ever implemented.

Liberalizing media and communication

Liberalization of the Bangladesh economy began to take place in the early 1980s. There are varying opinions as to why the Bangladesh governments were reluctant or indecisive in deregulating and liberalizing the country's broadcasting system, while the print media was always in the private sector[28] and people had already been listening to international radio shows. Although it is difficult to stick to any particular argument, I would argue that primarily, security threat-perception of the part of the security and law enforcement agencies held the Bangladesh government back from granting broadcasting licenses to private or commercial operators. The same argument might have been applied to NGOs (which later campaigned for permission to broadcast at community level) which

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[28] Only the two newspapers – *Dainik Bangla* and *Bangladesh Times* used to be financed by the government and managed by a trust. It also financed a weekly magazine called *Bichitra*, which had a huge cultural influence on middle-class readers in the newly-born nation state, particularly in the 1970s and 80s. The AL government (1996-2000) dissolved the trust.

for many years was thought to be a parallel force to the government in development. Military rulers suspected that private broadcasting might challenge their authority to rule. Even the democratically elected governments held the perception that miscreants might use broadcasting to destabilize the country and threaten its security, and might even threaten their own sovereignty.

By the late 1990s, as the new communication agendas emerge, the political and cultural demand of the 1980s for the autonomy of the state broadcasters became outdated. The new media reform agendas were either market-driven or appeared to be connected with a neoliberal policy of deregulation, liberalization and privatization. With the financial support of western donors, media development NGOs and a few international nongovernmental organisations (INGOs) emerged as key patrons, holding events and setting agendas for liberalization of the broadcasting sector. While the business or commercial sector, representing the market, was lobbying for private broadcasting and telecommunications business, the communication NGOs and MDOs began to advocate for right to information (RTI) legislation, media policy reform, new broadcast policy making more room for private media, and, above all, an enabling environment for community radio in particular.

There was no private or commercial broadcast media in the country until the middle of the 1990s. However, although the process was slow, some practices of media liberalization were evident in the early part of the decade. In response to the wave of liberalization which had already dawned in the market-oriented private broadcast media in India, the BNP-led government (1991-95) enabled the BTV audience to watch some BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation) World Service and CNN (Cable News Network) International programmes. They were broadcast live for two hours for each of the channels. The government also allowed commercial and private use of dish antenna and receivers to get satellite TV programmes directly. This allowed commercial cable operators to develop satellite broadcasting services for private clients. In the early stages, the number

of channels was limited. People could mostly watch the Star Plus satellite TV channels, which included the Asian version of MTV. People could already listen to the shows of the international radio broadcasters, like BBC Radio, Voice of America (VOA) Radio, Radio Japan, Radio Peking (currently Radio Beijing under China Radio International) and Radio Tehran.

The AL-led government (1996-2000) took steps for the further liberalization of broadcasting. The first private or commercial FM radio station, Radio Foorti, began its operation in 2006 followed by Radio Today, Radio Amar and ABC Radio[29]. Bangladesh's first private satellite TV channel, ATN Bangla began broadcasting in 1997. In 2000, the AL-led government allowed the country's first terrestrial private TV channel, Ekushey Television (ETV). Later, as the BNP came to power, the issue of giving a terrestrial capability to only one TV channel became a political issue. ETV's terrestrial broadcasting was shut down in 2002 after a court ruling declaring that the channel obtained the license illegally. Since then both the AL and BNP-led governments have been quite liberal in allowing commercial TV channels and FM radio stations, but none of them allowed any further terrestrial TV channels in private hands.

There is no single answer as to what stimulated the relatively speedy liberalizing of the broadcasting media sector – whether it was the turn to neoliberal policy as well as pressure from the market, or whether it might have been a spillover effect of the Indian media revolution in satellite broadcasting[30]. In all probability it was a

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[29] Radio Foorti began its operation in September 2006, Radio Today in October 2006, Radio Amar in November 2007 and ABC Radio in January 2009.

[30] Daya Kishan Thussu provides a vivid picture of the entry of satellite TV into India that transformed the country's broadcasting sector in the 1990s, which according to him, "was evident in the exponential growth in the number of television channels from one state-controlled channel in 1991 to more than seventy in 1998" (1998:273). This necessitated new policies for the Indian broadcasting industries that had entered the liberalized media environment. With regards to spread of the Indian satellite broadcasting in the late 1990s, Zee TV network, for example was reaching approximately 5 million homes outside India including Bangladesh in South Asia (Thussu, 1998:280). For further details, see Thussu, D.K. (1998) 'Localising the Global: Zee TV in India' In Thussu, D.K. (1998) (Ed.) *Electronic Empire: Global Media and Local Resistance*. London: Arnold, pp. 273 – 294.

combination of market pressure and the changing regional media scenario that compelled the government to liberalize and deregulate the media sector. Whatever the reasons, the liberalization significantly changed the Bangladesh broadcasting landscape had an impact on patterns of media ownership, the nature of programming, the understanding of broadcast policy, and, most importantly, the notions of peoples' access to and participation in broadcasting. Despite the protective attitude of governments, irrespective of their political stripe, in relation to media governance since the early 1990s, all the successive regimes took some measures to liberalize broadcasting policies, albeit according to their own convenience and guided by their particular political or business principles. With hindsight we can see that the pace of change was not as fast as the general liberalization of the telecommunications sector which was primarily most beneficial to private media entrepreneurs and the business sector. Eventually, though, it also created prospects for the NGOs and other civil society advocates to campaign for an enabling environment necessary for independent and community-based media development.

During the decade-long campaign (1998-2008) for CR, Bangladesh had two elected political governments which did not approve any radio for nongovernmental entities. The movement for right to information legislation was active around the same time as the campaign for CR. The military-backed caretaker government (2006-08) came to power with the promise to reform political democracy and "put the politics back on track". Both the Right to Information (RTI) Ordinance 2008 (which was later endorsed by the parliament as an act in 2009) and Community Radio Policy 2008 were announced by the non-elected and non-political government. As NGOs have developed the capacity to "dictate an alternative political agenda" (Roy, 2004)[31], this might had been a conducive period for the NGOs to lobby for a new tier of broadcasting. This goes with the critical note that NGOs are vitally connected with

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[31] The English translation of the extract from Arundhati Roy's paper delivered at a conference in San Francisco, California, 16 August 2004 can be retrieved from https://mondediplo.com/2004/11/16roy

neoliberalism, and they play a crucial role in the transformation of state and economy caused by neo-liberalism (Kamat, 2004 and 2013). However, managing to have a CR policy approved was a big achievement for the NGO initiators to gain access to airwaves and broadcasting, which led them to establishing authority over the structure and process of community broadcasting.

Shoesmith, Mahmud and Reza (2013) think the influence of neo-liberal economic policies had already been reflected in the increasing number of private TV and radio licenses issued between 1995 and 2011. According to them, the situation suggests that there was a policy gap. Communication NGOs and MDOs and civil society groups were keen on addressing the fissure, and managing the benefit from the neoliberal governments that could help them to develop their own information, communication and media infrastructure. According to Reza (2012):

> The proactive role of civil society groups in persuading the South Asian governments to enact right to information laws is an example of how the neo-liberal reform agendas have been influential in local and regional policy attempts in the arena of media, communications and information. (2012:1)

Deregulation and liberalization in telecommunications over the last two decades demonstrate the process of establishing neoliberal economic and development polices. In order to conform to international protocol, the government implemented the necessary regulatory framework for telecommunications. It also gives security to foreign investors in the mobile phone, Information and communication technologies (ICT) and Internet industry. While the NGOs had been active in initiating discussions on good governance and transparency, democratic reforms, and updating media policies, they did not organize any discussion and nor did they call for public debates on policy changes in

telecommunications which could affect public interest and participation in new information and communication technologies[32].

The new broadcast mediascape

Today Bangladeshi audiences can watch both terrestrial (BTV and BTV Sangsad) and local (Bangladeshi) as well as foreign satellite TV programmes. Currently 25 Bangladeshi satellite TV channels, including BTV World (the state TV's satellite broadcasting arm), that operate almost round the clock. Different sources suggest that ten or twelve more channels are already in the pipeline to start broadcasting anytime soon. Cable operators (distributors of satellite TV channels) are capable of providing up to one hundred local and international TV channels. Indian satellite channels constitute the big part of the foreign TV channels, while the remainder are mostly the US company-owned and middle east-based channels. In addition to the international news channels, like BBC World, CNN and Al-Jazeera, cable subscribers can watch channels like RT (formerly Russia Today) news channel and CCTV (China Central TV). Although people can own private dish antenna and receivers, in recent years they prefer to get the service through the cable operators in their locality (a method which is less costly). The cable services are now available in the semi-urban, *mufassil* (মফস্বল) and even in the rural areas. It should be noted that in all the CR broadcasting areas where I conducted my fieldwork, people have access to satellite TV channels. In an area of Moulvibazar where such a cable service is not available, some households installed their own dish antenna to get the satellite channels (see chapter 4, where this is illustrated with a photograph).

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[32] Some specialized NGOs on ICT, communication NGOs, and even some development NGOs are working on Internet governance and promoting the global ICT and Internet agendas. It may be noteworthy that the NGOs had significant participation in the World Summits on Information Society (WSIS). Some NGOs were/are Internet Service Providers (ISP) and owners of mobile phone services which operate commercially. For example, Nobel Peace Prize winner, micro-credit organisation Grameen Bank in conjunction with Telenor marketed the mobile service called Grameen Phone (GP).

Government-run BTV offers four transmission services – BTV[33], Sangsad Bangladesh TV (Parliament Bangladesh TV), BTV World (satellite) and the Chittagong (regional) TV centre. BTV's terrestrial broadcasting system transmits seventeen hours of programmes with a potential coverage of about 97 percent of the country's population (BTV Website). BTV World is a separate channel of BTV that started satellite transmission in 2004. This channel transmits 24 hours of programmes daily. Besides BTV's Sangsad TV, which operates when the national parliament is in session, BTV's Chittagong (the second largest and major sea-port city of the country) Centre or sub-station airs one hour and forty-five minutes locally produced programmes everyday[34]. In spite of having an enormous infrastructure and organisational facilities, political influence in decision making, bureaucratic procedures in programming, lack of variation in programme content and politicization of the system have impacted the performance of the state TV. It often comes under criticism for being uncompetitive and inefficient and incapable of improving the quality of its programmes or meeting the audience's expectations.

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[33] BTV, Sangsad BTV and BTV Chittagong transmit programmes terrestrially.

[34] For further details, see Bangladesh Television (BTV) website (www.btv.gov.bd)

Figure 4: Parliamentary Committee observes – BTV is unable to progress, *Prothom Alo*, 1 December 2009.

A cartoon published in a leading Bengali daily the *Prothom Alo* (প্রথম আলো) depicts the stalemate situation of BTV's performance (Figure 4). In its observation, the parliamentary standing committee on the Ministry of Information (MoI) comments that BTV has been unable to progress satisfactorily. The cartoon shows the national TV as a garbage skip brimming over with personnel who are skilled at nothing but flattery. Under mounting pressure from the commercial TV channels, however, BTV has more recently shown signs of trying to improve the quality of its programmes, particularly in the area of entertainment and musical shows. The quality of news bulletins and the standard of journalism, however, is still questioned in terms of presentation, neutrality and balance.

Bangladesh's changing radioscape is now made up of three types of broadcasting - Bangladesh Betar[35] as the public broadcaster; private or

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[35] Bangladesh Betar has 12 regional stations. Its external service broadcasts in 6 languages. Betar also lends air-time to a number of international radio broadcasters. More information about Bangladesh Betar services can be found at http://betar.portal.gov.bd/

commercial FM radio;[36] and community radio (CR) as community-based nonprofit broadcasting. Commercial FM radio services are mostly urban-centric, although a few of the services have been extended beyond the big cities. Private radio shows are particularly popular with young listeners. Currently fourteen private or commercial FM stations are in operation. I have already mentioned in the first chapter that thirty-two initiators have obtained a license to run CRS in different geographical areas of the country, of which sixteen are now on air. There is no campus broadcasting in Bangladesh. Indeed, there is no provision in the CR Policy to enable an educational institution to run a campus radio. However, some CR advocates suggest that it is possible to issue a license for campus community radio under the current CR Policy.

Online radio has been the new addition to the Bangladesh mediascape. But it is difficult to find credible statistics or information about the exact number and services offered by online radio providers. Most of them do not operate consistently. Details of the type of ownership of the online radios are also unknown. A few universities attempted to run online campus radios, but they too do not operate regularly and neither do they have a sufficient number of shows to cater to the listeners. Information available on the website of the Bangladesh Ministry of Information (MoI) shows that it is now preparing a draft policy for online mass media. This would require any kind of online radio to register or obtain government approval before they can operate.

NGO attempts for community broadcasting

While the business or commercial sector representing the market was lobbying for private broadcasting media and flexibilities in telecommunications business, from the late 1990s, the NGOs began to advocate for right to information, media

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[36] Currently fourteen private FM radio stations are operating in Bangladesh. Private and commercial FM stations are the same entities. By the policy, they are established under private ownership and they operate commercially as business enterprise.

policy reform and community radio in particular. With the financial support of the western donors, media development NGOs and few INGOs started to emerge as the key patrons in holding discussions to set agendas for further liberalization of communication and media policies. However, in order to understand the situation, and appreciate how the NGOs came to ride the wave of liberalization to put the case for a new tier or broadcasting, we need to carefully reconstruct the different historical currents. In the next paragraph I have relied on historical notes alongside the archival evidence in order to sketch a brief history of the first emergence of NGO-managed (community) radio.

In 1998, the Ministry of Information (MoI), Government of Bangladesh (GoB), announced that it would accept applications for radio licenses under the auspices of a project set up to establish and operate private radio stations. MMC, one of the oldest communication NGOs, applied for one of these radio licences proposing that the station thus created be named 'MMC Community Radio' (see Appendix D for a copy of the covering letter for that application)[37]. The organisation had long years of experience working with communities in some of the coastal areas of Bangladesh. With the help of the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA), it provided training to local journalists and carried out advocacy for press freedom[38], safety of the journalist, promoting local journalism and reforming media policies to facilitate community broadcasting. Despite having such credentials in media development, MMC's application for a community-based radio was declined (see Appendix E for a copy of the refusal letter). MoI issued the letter in 2003, that is five years after the submission of the application. MMC was asked to take back the deposit. The authorities gave no

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[37] The application shows that MMC submitted eleven items or types of documents which include a project proposal (technical and financial), as well as Tk. 500,000.00 (approximately 4000.00 GBP) as a deposit, proof of registration with the NGO Affairs Bureau (NGOAB), a financial solvency certificate, evidence of the constitution of the organisation and a consent letter outlining financial support from a donor.

[38] With the support from UNESCO and DANIDA, MMC particularly attempted to promote the World Press Freedom Day.

reason as to why the application for a community-oriented radio licence was declined, nor did it explain the delay.

Executive Director of MMC, Kamrul Hasan, said, "Although the authority (particularly the Secretary of the Ministry) was convinced of the need for community-based radio, they could not issue a license to an NGO as there was no allowance in policy to allocate frequency to a nongovernmental entity for radio broadcasting"[39]. But Bazlur Rahman, CEO of BNNRC and a key CR advocate, thinks, "The government might not have considered the MMC application as it wanted a licence to broadcast in three districts and proposed a big budget. It was not practical for an NGO to ask for permission to operate a community radio targeting such a big population"[40]. Both of these CR advocates cite technical issues as the reasons for the refusal of a licence. None of them speaks of the politics of broadcasting or the fear factors that prevented the government from allowing broadcasting facilities at local or community level. The call for applications to establish radio under private ownership indicates a market pressure on the government. The two leading CR advocates do not make any suggestion that it was fear of a misuse of the airwaves or issues of trust in NGOs or even the public in relation to media and broadcasting that was at issue in the government's initial refusal of the licence.

Whatever the reasons were for the government not accepting this initial NGO application for community-based radio, the NGOs and CR advocates were convinced that they needed a more enabling environment for community broadcasting. They wanted legal protection or legislation that guaranteed that once a license was issued by the government, the permission could never be revoked.

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[39] My interview with Kamrul Hasan Monju, Executive Director, Mass Line Media Centre (MMC) in June 2015, Dhaka.

[40] My interview with AHM Bazlur Rahman, Chief Executive Officer, Bangladesh NGOs Network for Radio and Communication in October 2016, Dhaka.

In South Asia, Sri Lanka had an encouraging start with community broadcasting and was the first country in the region to experiment with government initiated community-based radio. Under the management of the Sri Lankan Broadcasting Corporation (SLBC), it facilitated radio broadcasting at the community level in the 1980s. Mahaweli Community Radio[41], which was operated as a branch of the national broadcasting system, according to Girard (1992), contributed to a "growing understanding of the possibility for local and national radio".

Nepal as a CR pioneering country in South Asia started community-level radio broadcasting in 1997 without any specific policy for CR. In recent years, Nepal is often cited as a successful example of CR in the region in terms of number, varieties and success stories. *Radio Sagarmatha* is the first community-based independent radio station in South Asia. After the political transition from monarchical to parliamentary democracy, Nepal got a new constitution which provided a better guarantee to freedom of expression and contributed to further growth of community broadcasting. Although Nepal has not adopted any written policy for CR, recently some leading CR advocates are suggesting that specific legislation for non-profit and independent CR would be appropriate. According to the statistics on radio licences in Nepal (August 2011), under the broader category of 'community' (which includes NGO-managed, cooperative, educational institutions, Village Development Committees and municipality), 242 radio stations[42] are operating in different areas of the country (CRSC, 2011). Although the CR Initiators in Nepal exercise community broadcasting without a

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[41] For a discussion of the origin and operation of the stations, see David, M. J. R. (1992) 'Mahaweli Community Radio' In Girard, B. (Ed.) (1992) *A Passion for Radio: Radio Waves and Community*, Montreal: Black Rose. For further detailed accounts of the origin and development, organisation and structure and evaluations of Mahaweli Community Radio, see the chapters in Valbuena, V.T. (1993) (Ed.) *Mahaweli Community Radio: A Sri Lankan Experiment in Broadcasting and Development*. Singapore: AMIC.

[42] The deadly earthquake in 2015 caused tremendous loss of life and damage to property in the country. Not surprisingly, it affected the CRSs too. We know that more than 20 of them were seriously damaged.

written policy, Raghu Mainali thinks "in the absence of a specific policy, CR broadcasting in Nepal is facing challenges in terms of recognition and the identity of the sector"[43].

India started CR broadcasting in the 2000s with written guidelines in place. It is worth noting that India first had campus radio or campus-based community radio back in 2004. The Indian government approved a Community Radio Guideline in 2006. In Nepal and India, NGOs played crucial roles in flying the banner for community-oriented and participatory broadcasting. They also created room for community organisations and civil society to become part of the CR movement. In spite of recent fears of a growing tendency of NGO-ization of the CR sector, there are instances of good practice in NGO-led CRS in India (Pavarala, 2015). Pakistan, the Maldives and Bhutan have not made any progress yet to introduce CR. However, Bhutan, which has a low power campus radio in Thimphu, has shown interest in CR for its geographically scattered communities. Bangladesh, then, is the last country in South Asia to initiate CR and develop relevant legislation.

The Campaign for CR broadcasting in Bangladesh

As a contribution to media development, donors supported the NGOs to arrange not only colloquiums on media policy issues, but also to implement media projects, which were historically performed by the journalism training institutions or professional media organisations. For example, DANIDA supported training projects for local journalists, CIDA supported projects related to media surveys and enhancing female participation in the media. DFID and SIDA too supported different media development projects. A number of western donors including USAID supported the Right to Information (RTI) campaign for a longer period of

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[43] On this issue, I interviewed Raghu Mainali in Dhaka in July 2015. Earlier, I interviewed him and had discussions during the AMARC-AP conference in Seoul, South Korea in November 2013; and again, in the South Asian consultation on CR, held at the University of Hyderabad in July 2014.

time. Such donor supports to the media, communication and information related activities were vital in creating synergy for the NGO advocates to carry out the campaign for CR.

In terms of peoples' access to communication and information, there is a divide between urban and rural Bangladesh, as well as between the centre and periphery. Development-deprived rural inhabitants, and even the disadvantaged communities living in the urban areas have hardly any chance to participate in the government-run or privately- owned media. After decades of broadcasting, the state radio could not address all the crucial information needs of all segments of the population. Private radio is already biased in favour of the interests of the urban listeners. The CR campaigners capitalized on this situation and advocated on behalf of the community for an enabling environment in which to operate CR. Specifically, they wanted to lobby for legislation to enable them to secure the permission they were hoping to receive. However, the NGOs did not enlist any specific communities, social organisations or groups to be part of the lobbying process. They argued that they were already working with the 'community' and thus were already representing their interests in the campaign. Suhrawardy's study (2010)[44] identifies the role of the key stakeholders in the campaigns for the Bangladesh CR legislation. According to his findings, the key actors from NGOs, civil societies, donors and development partners and only a few from academia were the most influential during the advocacy campaign. The campaign also received support from some individuals who were enthusiastic CR supporters, including journalists, former government officials and a few politicians. In addition, Suhrawardy thinks, in the South Asian context, media diversification and the campaign for the right to information accelerated the process for the formulation of a CR policy (2010: IV).

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[44] Suhrawardy, F. (2010) *Broadcasting Policy: A Case Analysis of Community Radio Installation, Broadcast and Operation Policy 2008*, Master Thesis submitted for the Degree of Master in Public Policy and Governance, North South University, Dhaka.

The 'National Declaration on Community Radio, Dhaka – 2005' (see Appendix F for a copy of the declaration), announced at a national consultation on community radio in Bangladesh, held in Dhaka in 2005, was a defining moment for the Bangladesh CR campaign. The consultation along with the declaration helped the advocates to build a solid foundation for a planned advocacy campaign. A publication brought out referring to the consultation[45] is a vital source that reflects the perceptions of the NGOs, civil societies and CR enthusiasts on the basic principles and prospects of CR in Bangladesh. After a decade-long campaign and lobbying at different levels, the government finally approved the 'Community Radio Installation, Broadcasting and Operations Policy 2008'.

It was expected that the Bangladesh CR policy would "guarantee access to information, free expression and increase participation, ensure democracy and governance, protect the rights and facilitate the poverty alleviation process" (Ullah, 2010:1). The policy states that CR is, "in effect, a form of public-service broadcasting institution that serves a community rather than the whole nation" (CR Policy Gazette 2008:1544), and that it would help to "accelerate the democratic process in the society". However, the policy does not articulate any provision as to how it would help to improve the democratic structure and process of community communication. On the contrary, provisions are there to legitimize government surveillance on the operational procedures that may affect the freedom of expression of the community. In my view, this is not a facilitative policy to creating an alternative site for deliberative action, and nor does it provide clear guidelines to democratize CR. Nonetheless, the comprehensively written CR legislation has enabled the NGOs for the first time in the country's media history to become broadcasters, as well as to establish control over a broadcasting sector. Active and direct involvement of the NGOs in community

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[45] *National Consultation on Community Radio in Bangladesh*, a report and compilation of articles was published by MMC on 5th December 2005. The consultation was organised by BNNRC, FOCUS, MMC, VOICE and IPSA, and supported by UNICEF, UNESCO and UNDP.

broadcasting along with NGO-friendly legislation represents a significant step forward in some respects but it also highlights a tendency towards donor-driven media development schemes and the potential drawbacks which such a situation might entail.

Donor support to media development in Bangladesh

Media developments in Bangladesh have been shaped by national and global political, economic and communications agendas. The restoration of parliamentary democracy in 1990 (which coincided with the fall of communist regimes in the former Soviet Union and Eastern European countries) led to a period of redefining the country's democratic governance, which also included media reform and improving the media environment. As the western donors strategized to support the liberalization of communications in the developing democracies and transitional states, communication NGOs and media support organisations complied with the donor-driven media development plans and received financial support for media and journalism projects. In recent decades international donors have invested quite heavily in media development in Bangladesh. However, it is almost impossible to find out the amount they have allocated or spent, as NGO or donor reports very rarely give any detail pertaining to the actual spend on the media development projects[46].

The Unites States Agency for International Development (USAID), a global promoter of media development projects financed the 'Promoting Governance, Accountability Transparency and Integrity' (PROGATI) programme in

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[46] According to BBC Media Action Report on Bangladesh (2012), one reason for the lack of accurate figures relating to donor spending in media development is that "funding is often spread across multiple budget lines and a number of years". However, on a rough 'guesstimate', as the report suggests, donors spent a total of just under $20 million for media development related projects between 2006 and 2011(BBC Media Action 2012:12). For further details, see BBC (2012) *Country Case Study: Bangladesh Support to Media Where Media Freedom and Rights are Constrained*. London: BBC Media Action.

Bangladesh during the period 2007-11[47]. Officially PROGATI aimed to focus on the root causes of corruption by strengthening selected democratic institutions including the media. It supported the media with the objective that they (the media) would serve as an effective public watchdog highlighting principles of transparency and accountability. The programme also supported a media centre for investigative reporting to help increase the media's capacity to report on corruption and transparency. One of the interventions made by PROGATI was the establishment of the 'Journalism Training and Research Initiative' (JATRI) which was aimed at focusing on the training of investigative journalism and the capacity building of journalists in this area.[48]

The Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA) has been a leading donor to journalism and media development programmes in Bangladesh. It started giving direct support to MMC from the middle of the1990s. The NGO implemented local journalist training programmes in two districts – Noakhali and the coastal district of Barguna. The project touched upon aspects of press freedom, media and good governance and grassroots journalism. MMC also received support from the UN organisations, chiefly UNESCO. To encourage local and community based journalism, it introduced awards for local journalists. One of the achievements of the DANIDA-supported 'grassroots journalism training' was to develop and train a significant number of female journalists at local level.

With the help of DANIDA, MMC published a monthly community newspaper called the *Methobarta* (মেঠোবার্তা), 'Field News'. After continuing for several years the initiative was closed down. No formal evaluation or study is available to comment on the reasons for the unsustainability of the initiative. However, after interviewing MMC staff, trainers and the local journalists (who received MMC

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[47] Through its five years period (2007-11) USAID spent $18.2 million funding PROGATI.

[48] The initiative has now been taken over by BRAC University's Institute of Governance Studies (IGS).

training), it appears to me that there was a lack of active community engagement with the newspaper. Indeed, no demand seems to have been created among the community for the monthly publication for information or entertainment. In such a donor-financed project, MMC did not seem to have tried to encourage the community to engage significantly with the initiative. Due to regular donor funding, the NGO did not have to struggle for the survival of such a purportedly community media project. Indeed, there was no planned initiative to engage with questions of future community ownership or to envisage the handover of the publication to some form of community management. When funding of the project was over, the publication of the *Methobarta* stopped. There is every indication that without additional strategic intervention, there exists the potential for CR initiatives to undergo the same fate. This is a subject on which I shall enlarge in forthcoming chapters.

Bi-lateral donors and multilateral agencies were supportive of the CR campaign. However, only a few of them provided direct financial assistance in setting up the CRS[49]. As Reza (2012a) observes:

> During the advocacy period donors and development partners
> showed a great deal of enthusiasm and support within public
> discourses on the need for a third tier of broadcasting. However, as
> the initiators obtained the first licences, there were few firm
> commitments of financial or other resources for the stations.
> (2012a:102)

A former programme officer in a CR support organisation told me that potential CR initiator NGOs[50] hoped to get financial support from donors for installing radio

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[49] UNICEF, UNESCO, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), and the Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) all provided partial support, mostly for buying equipment. For details, see Reza, S M S (2012), "From Elite Perceptions to Marginal Voices: Community Radio in Bangladesh" In Gordon, J. (Ed.) *Community Radio in the Twenty-First Century*. Oxford: Peter Lang, pp. 97-114.

[50] After the first call for applications, over 200 NGOs submitted applications for CR. The group was narrowed down to 14 possible licences.

stations, while others thought the radio would bring them a "handsome financial package as a new project"[51].In reality, the donor organisations that used to provide direct financial support to NGOs for implementing media development programmes had changed their funding strategy. For the first batch of CRSs, few donors provided more than partial support, mostly to buy and install equipment.

Over the last couple of years, financial and technical assistance from the European Union (EU) and the Dutch media support NGO, Free Press Unlimited, has been central in capacity building training of the CRS personnel. Very recently, US Embassy/State Department, which had already financed an English language show on the CR, has sponsored training of the selected station managers in the United States. Over the last several months, *Deutsche Welle* (DW) Training Academy is providing technical capacity building training to the CRS personnel across the country.

Donor support to public institutions and NGOs can be divided into two broad categories – direct financial support and assistance to advocacy and civil society initiatives. The key donors involved in substantial, direct media support to Bangladesh are the British Council, the UK Department for International Development (DFID), the European Union (EU), the Goethe Institute, the Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC), UNESCO, UNICEF, UNDP and USAID. Donors like DANIDA made significant direct contributions to media development in the past that included developing media facilities, training of journalists and projects aimed at promoting press freedom, journalism and good governance. The recipients of their funding also include public institutions including the media departments at the public universities. Recently, instead of any direct support, the donors have focused more on the work of the civil society initiatives and platforms.

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[51] My interview with Syed Tariqul Islam, Executive Director of ACLAB, initiator NGO of Radio Naf at Teknaf. His observation resonates with the views expressed by Zahidul Haque Khan, former programme officer at BNNRC. I have mentioned his comments in the relevant sections of the empirical chapters.

After supporting different media development projects in Bangladesh over more than two decades, the donors and media analysts have divided opinions over the issue of the role of the media in reforming democratic institutions and establishing good governance. Some donors think that the overall Bangladesh media system is constrained by the influence of political and power elites. Political division among the media personnel affects agenda setting, and most often they fail to give time and space to alternative voices or marginalized sections of the population. In some cases, the right to express and media freedom are not seen in a positive manner by the government. As a result, self-censorship is exercised within the media houses, which ultimately impacts on the independent or autonomous nature of the media. A programme officer working for a leading European donor indicated to me that he believes vested interests persisting in the media are also responsible for the poor outcome of some media development assistance.[52]

Donors providing media development assistance, have identified a number of challenges, which have caused changes in their strategies. Broadly, the allegations and challenges are issues related to corruption in big media support projects, lack of commitment of stakeholders and threats to local media and journalism from power elites. Donors also complain about the insensitivity of editors and owners, and failure in establishing effective partnership with the donors and multilateral agencies. NGOs representatives have a mixed reaction concerning donor responses to the effectiveness of media support strategies and outcome of the projects.

Shahidul Alam, a social activist and CEO of DRIK, a leading photo agency in South Asia, thinks donor support is necessary for media development. But, he emphasizes the need for more transparency in donor decision-making. He thinks

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[52] As vested interests in media may be a sensitive matter and subject to investigation, I have not mentioned the programme officer's name who otherwise played an important role in convincing the donor authority to support a radio project under NGO management.

that the top-down approach in donor strategy-making has impacts for the process of effective partnership making between the implementing organisation and donor[53]. Rahman, CEO of BNNRC, holds a different view on this matter and thinks that "as the recipient NGOs and media organisations are not creative enough to come up with new or follow up ideas, donors become reluctant to continue their funding. In other words, they (partner NGOs) do not know how to better utilize the existing project and develop further activities"[54].

After the withdrawal of direct financial support, the donors have now focused on strengthening national and regional journalism issues in respect of human rights and investigative reporting, for example. In addition to a new strategy to support advocacy, donors would support capacity building initiatives of "local, regional journalists and media outlets, including local newspapers and community radios" (BBC Media Action, 2012:19). They will also support media projects to enable public dialogue on issues of anti-corruption, democratic process and human rights[55].

The Role of the NGOs in the broadcast policy process

Commercial or private broadcasting began with ad hoc policies and until today has been regulated by old laws and partial policies. As rapid growth began to take place in the private TV sector along with an emerging commercial radio sector, associations of media owners, NGOs, journalists, civil societies and media experts expressed the need for necessary reform of the broadcast media

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[53] My discussion with Shahidul Alam, CEO of DRIK, took place in 2016. He also expressed a similar view in his statement given to the BBC Media Action in 2012 where he said that the donors consider their partners (NGOs) "as little more than contracted service deliverers".

[54] My interview with Bazlur Rahman, CEO of BNNRC in June 2015.

[55] With regard to supporting future media projects, Patricia A. Hill, Press and Information Office at the American Center, US Embassy in Dhaka hopes to "both strengthen them in conflicts with local and state actors, and to boost local voices in any national policy dialogue" (interview cited in BBC Media Action, 2012:19).

sector. In particular, they lobbied for a set of updated broadcasting policies. Later the demand was consolidated to focus on the need for a comprehensive broadcasting policy with the provision of an autonomous broadcasting commission. In short, the campaigns for reforming the broadcasting sector have been multi-layered, where, among other stakeholders, NGOs have played a vital role.

The government proposed a policy for private broadcasting in 2012 that faced huge criticism from journalists, media owners, civil societies and media experts. They considered it as an attempt to establish government control over private broadcasting rather than facilitating the sector's development (Haq and Reza, 2015)[56]. In response, the Council of Ministers, headed by the Prime Minister sent back the policy to the Ministry of Information (MoI) for revision. In 2014, the current government (2008-14 & 14 -) approved another policy - National Broadcast Policy 2014[57] for the whole broadcasting sector. Some clauses, which were perceived to be repressive and generated public debate and speculation concerning the government's possible designs on controlling the broadcast sector.

Except for a few pro-government organisations and political parties, most journalist organisations and civil society organisations were critical about this policy and called for its cancellation or major revisions. The communication NGOs did not issue any public statement on the controversial provisions which may have bearings on the freedom of expression and freedom of the electronic

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[56] Haq, F. and Reza, S.M.S. (2018) 'Nature of Coverage, Role of Stakeholders and Issues of the Debate on Bangladesh National Broadcast Policy' In Z, Hossain, and M. Asaduzzaman (Eds.) *Media and Cultural Identity: Texts and Context,* Dhaka: University Press Limited. (In press).

[57] Bangladesh Gazette, *National Broadcast Policy – 2014*, Ministry of Information, Government of Bangladesh, 6 August 2014.

media[58]. Despite the concerns over the policy and concern for the possibilities that it harboured for misuse, the government did not make any changes in the controversial policy provisions. As announced earlier, the government has already prepared a fully-fledged law with the provision of a broadcast commission. In June 2017, it said that it has drafted a policy for all online 'mass media', under which any type of online (mass media) will have to be registered. Discussions about the draft policy suggest that the responsibility to monitor the online mass media too may be bestowed upon the proposed broadcast commission.

A few NGOs, like Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) expressed concern over the grey areas in the proposed broadcasting policy 2014 that might allow government to retain or extend its control over the broadcasting. However, instead of being critical, the communication NGOs and CR support organisations were supportive of the proposed policy. In their view, it is important to have a policy in place so that the outstanding issues can be amended later. This could be seen as strategy to support the government policy initiative, which in turn, would help the NGOs to formally secure their position in the country's ongoing and future media policy initiatives. Such official engagement in the government actions for policy may also benefit them by helping to protect their interests in community broadcasting and national media policy matters, as well in the Internet, telecommunication, and information policies.

CR in the time of liberalization: "For whom the bell tolls"?

There was a vacuum in the Bangladesh media environment as the dominant and mainstream media were unable or unwilling to address community issues and

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[58] The national broadcasting policy drafting committee had two NGO representatives – one from the CR sector and another from Article-19. Except for the CR policy (2008) and Right to Information Act (2008), this is the first time in the country's media and communications legislation history that two members from NGOs including one from an international media support organisation were included in a drafting committee.

information needs of marginalized groups such as those in rural areas. The commercial radio is pro-urban and profit-oriented. Neither the state radio nor the commercial stations are participatory in nature or skewed particularly towards community. Thus, CR as an independent radio could be vital in facilitating community access and participation in broadcasting. In the Bangladesh context, the community-based radio was never projected to be an activist or alternative medium. Overall, the discourses suggested that it would provide communities with a platform to express their views (what the campaigners repeatedly a referred to as a 'voice') on change and development.

In practice, except for a few radio shows on local issues, the themes of the majority of the shows are either decided or dictated by the initiator NGOs or the donor who provides financial assistance. Running donor-initiated programmes, such as English language learning might be seen as the re-emergence of a top-down model with (a revision of) some limited scope for local participation and some degree of localizing of dialogues through the expedient of utilizing local languages. The programme donors did not provide any financial assistance to the CR campaign or to any CRS to start up, but recently there is evidence that they have been keen on using the potential of the medium. The following illustrations (Figure 5) depict publicity materials of a radio show that has benefited both the donor and the initiator-NGO[59]:

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[59] The project was implemented by the five CRS including Radio Naf and Radio Pollikontho from which I collected my field data.
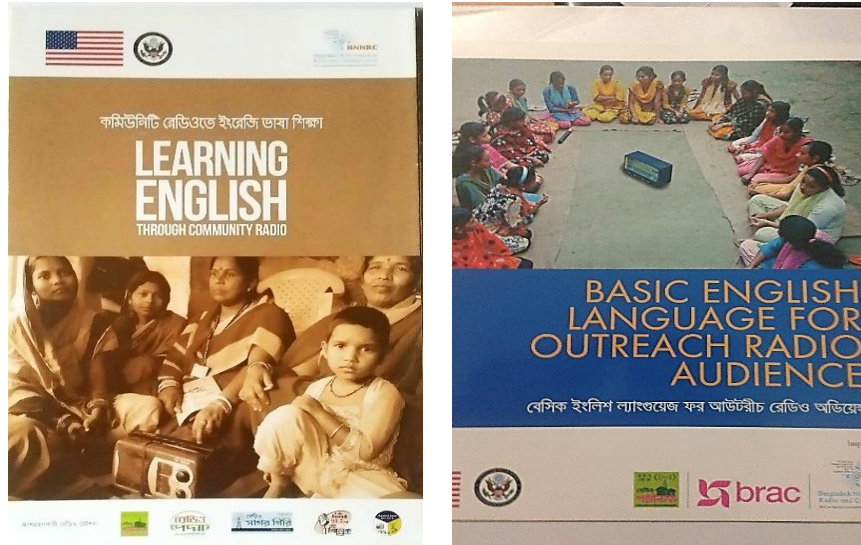
Figure 5: Publicity materials of US State Department-supported Basic English for Outreach Radio Audience, primarily implemented through five CRSs

Media development policies that pushed the agenda for media plurality, freedom of information and liberalizing communications have enabled the Bangladeshi NGOs, bi-lateral donors, as well as some international communication support organisations to determine their position and interest in both the policy process and at the implementation level. For a longtime donors and NGOs had to depend on government media and later on commercial media for disseminating their messages to target people. They can now produce or reproduce their development and social change discourses utilizing CR, and send their intended message out to the community in a fashion which previously could not have been done so easily or so cost-effectively.

Chapter Conclusion

In this chapter, I have outlined how the politics of broadcasting, in combination with elements of an emergent global neo-liberalism, have led to the liberalization of the broadcasting sector in Bangladesh. In this evolving environment, support from multilateral organisations, and financial assistance from donors enabled NGOs to utilize the new policy developments and to work towards establishing a so-called 'third-sector' in the local mediascape, in which Bangladesh CR would operate. In short, the liberalization of communication has helped the Bangladeshi NGOs not only to secure access in community broadcasting, but also to emerge as a key stakeholder in the media policy formulation process.

Chapter 3: Theoretical and conceptual considerations

Establishing a framework for analysing the reality on the ground

Introduction

Bearing in mind that community radio (CR) broadcasting as community media practice can be approached from different standpoints, in this chapter, I will discuss the theoretical and conceptual aspects relevant to the study. Thus, the objective of discussing the multiple notions of community-based and participatory media is to develop a working basis for interpreting the data. Therefore, this chapter discusses the different definitions, concepts and perspectives that reflect the full range of community media (CM) and CR in terms of practice and context. I shall also discuss the relevant arguments attached to participatory radio, such as in the area of community communication, media democratization, conceptions of an alternative public sphere and notions of NGO-ization.

The earliest discussions of community media (CM) centre upon notions of small-scale or group media. The milestone UNESCO report, *Many Voices One World* (1980)[60], widely known as the MacBride Commission Report, states that the objective of the community or individual initiative for small media is to create their own means of communications, which covers "a wide range of media from local

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[60] MacBride, S. et al. (Eds.) (1980) *Many Voices One World: Communication and Society Today and Tomorrow*. UNESCO.

and wall newspapers, mimeographed leaflets, photos, posters and dazibaos[61], local radios and itinerant, loudspeakers, to pamphlets, slides, tape recorders, exhibitions, experimentations, local fairs, film and music festivals, puppet shows, itinerant information vans, street theatre and endless list of similar devices and means" (MacBride, et al., 1980: 55). We should note that the list of small or group media experience documented by the MacBride Commission are based on the experience of the 1970s, but they are still relevant today in relation to the structure and process of community communication, which among other media include local and community-based radio practices.

The MacBride Commission reports with caution that small and group media are conceptually different from mass media. In its view, the report says:

> Group media sometimes called little media, have a place in the whole arsenal of communication means, vehicles and techniques. They cannot and should not be confused either with point-to-point or with mass communication. Group media have their proper place – and it is with that in mind that they should be planned, financed and used. (1980: 57)

The report suggests a focus on group or small media, and their connected local activities, for four main reasons; firstly, they may be overshadowed and pushed into the background by the big media; secondly, because mass media have been expected to accomplish tasks and goals for which they are not fitted; thirdly, because in many countries the neglect of a certain balance between big and small media led to unnecessary wastage of scarce resources, by using inappropriate means for diverse audiences; and fourthly, because by establishing links between them broader horizontal communication could be developed (MacBride, et al., 1980: 56).

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[61] Dazibaos or big character posters "are handwritten, wall-mounted posters using large-sized, used as a means of protest, propaganda, and popular communication. They have been used in China since imperial times, but became more common when literacy rates rose after the Xinhai Revolution". For details, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Big-character_poster

The absence of theoretical grounding

In Jankowski's (2003) observation, "the main deficiency in community media research is the paucity of theoretical grounding and model building" (2003:11)[62]. Other scholars too have raised similar issues. For example, Carpentier, Lie, and Servaes (2003) note that "the concept of 'community media' has proven to be, in its long theoretical and empirical tradition, highly elusive" (2003:51)[63]. Kevin Howley suggests that community media is a "notoriously vague construct" (2002:12).

On the issue of theoretical paucity in the community media tradition, referring to Carpentier (2007)[64] and Rodriguez (2001)[65], Howley (2010)[66] argues that two factors contribute to "the conceptual ambiguity and theoretical underdevelopment common to community media studies". First is a lack of definitional precision. The phrase "community media" is but one of a number of terms, including "participatory", "alternative", and "citizens' media", used to describe media produced by, for, and about local communities". Secondly, referring to Downing (2001)[67] and Rennie (2006)[68], he mentions the problems caused by the varieties

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[62] Jankowski, N. W. (2003) 'Community media research: A quest for theoretically grounded models'. *Javnost—The Public*, vol. 10. No. 1, pp. 5–14.

[63] Carpentier, N., Lie, R., and Servaes, J. (2003) 'Community media: Muting the democratic media discourse?' *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*, vol. 17, No. 1, pp. 51–68. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1030431022000049010

[64] Carpentier, N. (2007) 'The on-line community media database RadioSwap as a translocal tool to broaden the communicative rhizome'. *Observatorio Journal*, vol. 1, pp. 1–26.

[65] Rodriguez, C. (2001) *Fissures in the mediascape: An international study of citizens' media*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.

[66] Howley, K. (Ed) (2010). *Understanding Community Media*. Los Angeles: Sage.

[67] Downing, J. (2001). *Radical media: Rebellious communication and social movements*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

[68] Rennie, E. (2006). *Community media: A global introduction*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

of community media (CM) formats where "free radio, participatory video, street newspapers, computer networking—associated with alternative and community-based media further complicate theoretical development" (Howley, 2010:15). In addition to the lack of definitional precision and problems over the diversity of formats, I think theory building in CM studies is also made difficult by the "particular and distinctive" use of various technologies in dissimilar and contrasting geographical and cultural settings.

In this respect, while searching for theoretical grounding for this research, I found that studying CM in isolation could be problematic. References to CM can be found in a range of disciplines, from political economy to cultural studies. Historically, a great deal of work has appeared in connection with various paradigms associated with Development Communication. In recent decades CM has been discussed in connection with citizens and alternative media, as well the concepts and practice of radical alternative media. As access and participation have been central features of CM, regardless of other definitional refinements, they have also been linked with theories of media power and discussed in the light of the political theory of democracy and other radical traditions.

Over the last four decades, theoretical issues of CM have been shaped by movements like the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO), and communication right or right to communicate in the Global South debates. Recently, CM has been conceptualized in relation to global civil society, the public sphere, independent media development and the democratization of media and communications. For the purpose of the study, I have decided to embrace the diversity of theoretical perspectives available. This approach has enabled me to adopt a flexible framework to examine the contextual practice of CR on the ground as well as at the level of theory and discourse.

Understanding community media

According to Berrigan (1979), CM are commonly found in postcolonial societies across Latin America and Africa where "participatory communication strategies and techniques are used to help stimulate social, political, and economic development"[69]. Ibrahim (2000)[70] thinks that in societies in which state-run media were common norms, CM "emerged in direct opposition to repressive regimes and the propaganda" associated with "official" media. Downing (2001)[71] however thinks these motives are not mutually exclusive as, for example, even in societies with a constitutional guarantee to freedom of expression, oppositional and radical media emerges.

Howley (2010) argues that community media are a complex and dynamic object of study—"one that demands critical scrutiny to fully comprehend the range of structures and practices, experiences and meanings" (2010:2). CM operates in a variety of social, political, and geo-cultural situations. Therefore, the *context* in which community media operates plays a decisive role in shaping and informing the disparate initiatives (Tacchi, Slater and Lewis, 2003)[72]. Howley, however, notes that until recently, CM have been rather misunderstood and undervalued within academic circles. As "Community media" encompasses a wide range of community-based activities, according to him, they are:

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[69] Berrigan, F. J. (1979) *Community Communication: The Role of Community Media in Development*. Paris: UNESCO.

[70] Ibrahim, Z. (2000) 'Tarzan doesn't live here anymore: Musings on being donor-sponsored in Africa'. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 3(2), 199-205.

[71] Downing, J. (2001) *Radical Media: Rebellious communication and social movement*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

[72] Tacchi, J. Slater, G. and Lewis, P. (2003) *Evaluating community-based media initiatives: an ethnographic research approach*.

intended to supplement, challenge, or change the operating
principles, structures, financing, and cultural forms and practices
associated with dominant media. This rather generic definition is
purposeful insofar as it accommodates a diverse set of initiatives—
community radio, participatory video, independent publishing, and
online communication, to name but a few. (2010:2)

CM thus represents a fertile site in which to examine "what media do as well as what we do with media" (Silverstone, 1999:2)[73]. As a set of practices to examine, community media serve as a site to explore the way local populations "create media texts, practices, and institutions to serve their distinctive needs and interests".

If we shift our focus slightly and bring the concerns of a political economy of the media to bear upon CM, a central concern might be seen as the issue of media ownership and control. Golding and Murdock (1991)[74], and Herman and Chomsky (1994)[75] describe how methods of financing, the organizational structures, and the regulatory environment in which media institutions operate have important consequences on media performances. In relation to CM, Carpentier, Lie and Servaes (2003)[76] think the organizational structure is far less hierarchical than either corporate or public service media. Generally, community media operate with a relatively small paid staff as they rely on volunteers for functions of media production and distribution. CM encourages participatory decision-making structures and practices of the sort that are "antithetical to either

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[73] Silverstone, R. (1999) *Why study the media?*, London: Sage.

[74] Golding, P. and Murdock, G. (1991) 'Culture, communications and political economy' In J. Curran and M. Gurevitch (eds.) *Mass Media and Society*. New York: Oxford University Press. pp. 70-92

[75] Herman, E and Chomsky, N. (1994) *Manufacturing consent: the political economy of media*. London: Vintage Books.

[76] Carpentier, N., Lie, R., and Servaes, J. (2003) 'Community Media: Muting the democratic discourse?', *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies* 17(1), 51-68.

commercial or public service media outlets" (Howley, 2010:3-4). Thus, from a political economy perspective, according to Howley, community media represent:

> a significant intervention into the structural inequalities and power imbalances of contemporary media systems. By providing local populations with access to the means of communication, community media offer a modest, but vitally important corrective to the unprecedented concentration of media ownership that undermines local cultural expression, privatizes the channels of public communication, and otherwise threatens the prospects for democratic self-governance. (2010:4)

As far as any cultural studies approaches to CM are concerned, in his earlier work, Howley (2002) writes that CM provide ample opportunity to:

> Examine how media are embedded in the everyday lived experience of so-called ordinary people. Likewise, cultural studies' emphasis on "active audiences", negotiated readings of media texts, and the innovative and creative ways audiences resist ideological manipulation is especially suitable to academic analyses of community media. (2002:4)[77]

Conceptualizing community communication

According to Holander and Stapper (1992)[78], the emergence of community media in the 1970s demonstrated "the inability of the concepts 'mass' media and 'mass' communication to contain this new phenomenon" (1992:19). They also note that community media were "definitely not intended for a mass audience and had no intention of becoming mass media". Referring to earlier work such as Halloran

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[77] Howley, K. (2002) 'Communication, Culture and community: Towards a cultural analysis of community media' *Qualitative Report*, 7(3).

[78] Holander, E and Stappers, J. (1992) 'Community Media and Community Communication' In Nick Jankowski, Ole Prehn and James Stappers (Eds.) (1992) *The People's Voice: Local Radio and Television in Europe*, Academic Research Monograph 6. London: John Libbey.

(1975), they find that in studies describing small scale media or community media the expression 'community communication' was introduced, which puts an emphasis on the geographical locality and/or a community[79] interest as an essential context for community media.

Apart from community media and community communication's normative connotations (Berrigan, 1979)[80], Holander and Stapper (1992) refer to "the study of communication structures and communication processes within a distinct social setting – a geographical community or a community of interest – and therefore focus on both the structural and the process characteristics of mass communications" (1992:16). They emphasize, in particular, the point that participants in community communication (both senders and receivers) are "members of the same social systems".

When we attempt to study community communication as the structure and process of communication in a specific social and geocultural setting, it reflects the "structural and the process characteristics of mass communications". Holander and Stapper (1992) suggest that if we refer to mass communication as public communication the problem regarding the conceptualization of community communication can be solved. In other words, community communication can be conceptualized as a form of public communication - of making public and creating a public within the context of a specific community (1992:19). They also remind us of the fact that community media operate on a smaller scale than mass media although there are "efforts of some mass media to cater to specific, limited audiences through audience segmentation strategies". Therefore,

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[79]As another example, in the 1970s, community was conceptualized by MacBride, et al. (1980) as an "aggregation [*sic*] of groups which vary in social class, economic status, often in political or religious affiliation and also in outlook and opinion. Any community, large or small, is held together by a nexus of communications" (1980:115).

[80] Berrigan, F. J. (1979) *Community Communications: the Role of Community Media in Development*. Paris: UNESCO.

community communication, according Holander and Stapper, may be understood as:

> Small scale forms of public communication, i.e. public communication within a neighborhood, a village, town or suburb. The correspondence with audience segmentation, such as regionalization of national broadcasting and special interest magazines, is that in both cases – community communication and audience segmentation – communication is unrestricted and public, and is calculated to reach a relatively small audience. (1992:19)

In community communications, members of the community have common issues and they are interested in similar topics, as they share the same background. In this sense, community communication addresses their audience "on the assumption of a shared relevance and that community issues have for both senders and receivers because they all participate in the same community". Holander and Stapper (1992) state that:

> This community, further, serves as a frame of reference for a shared interpretation of the relevance of the topics communicated within the community. It is in the reproduction and representation of common (shared) interests that community media have gained their social and political significance. (1992:19-20)

Thus, the demarcation of small scale public communication from large scale mass media is only a first step towards a theoretical conceptualization of the phenomenon 'community communication' (Holander and Stapper, 1992:21). Consequently, community-oriented and alternative media in a community communication setting constitute the media forms and formats that could not be easily conceptualized by the conventional theories of mass communication[81].

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[81] We should add that "there is more to small scale public communication than just matters of scale or form. All forms of communication within a specific local social setting come into play, such as public gatherings, communication is neighbourhoods and pubs, meetings, posters and graffiti." (Holander and Stapper, 1992)

Community radio: definitions, concepts and theories

It is often the case that the Mahaweli Community Radio (MCR) project is referred to as the most successful example of community radio in Asia, but according to Vinod Pavarala and Kanchan Malik (2007), the first "genuinely community-based radio to be set up in Asia was in the Philippines, as part of the Tambuli Community Radio Project of UNESCO in the 90s" (2007:23). In fact, the Kothmale FM community radio began operation in 1989 as one of the four community radio stations airing under the Mahaweli Community Radio (MCR) Project of the Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation (SLBC). The MCR Project was launched by the SLBC with the assistance of UNESCO and DANIDA and is regarded as a "turning point in Sri Lankan rural broadcasting because of its participatory approach towards the socio-economic development of the settlers alongside the Mahaweli River (David, 1992)". In India, the famous Pastapur Declaration that represents a clarion call for freeing airwaves to community broadcasting, suggested that CR be based on principles of "universal access, diversity, equitable resource allocation, democratization of airwaves, and empowerment of historically disadvantaged sections of society'" (Pavarala and Malik, 2007:12). Overall, in the context of the Third World, Girard (1992)[82] and Dagron's (2001)[83] observation suggest that CR had a proven track record of being a catalyst for social change.

In defining CR, Pavarala and Malik suggest it should have three key aspects – it should be non-profit making, there should be community ownership and control, and there should be community participation (2007:16). Tabing (2002) has provided one of the most popular definitions of a CRS. His succinct formulation suggests that a true Community Radio Station is one that is operated *in the*

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[82] Girard, B. (Ed.) (1992) *A Passion for Radio: Radio Waves and Community*. Canada: Black Rose Books.

[83] Dagron, A. G. (2001) *Making Waves: Stories of Participatory Communications for Social Change*. New York: The Rockefeller Foundation.

community, for the community, about the community and by the community.
According to Louie Tabing, "the community can be territorial and geographical –
a township, village, district or island and can be a group of people with common
interests, who are not necessarily living in one defined territory". In short, Tabing
believes CR may be owned and managed by one group or by combined groups.
He also points out the fact that a high degree of people's participation both in
management and programme production distinguishes community radio from the
other media.[84]

For the survival and sustainability of CR, Tabing particularly mentions that the
principal sources of support for CR operations should be "community radio
members and local institutions." (Tabing quoted in Pavarala and Malik, 2007:17).
Pavarala and Malik (2007) too think that CR is thus characterized by access,
public participation in production and decision-making, management by listeners,
and the fact that its operations rely mainly on the community's own resources
(2007:17-18). According to Raghu Mainali, the most important thing for
community radio is to prove itself as a social entity, which "entails drawing on
social, human and physical capital and is not just a matter of financial resources"
(IDS, 2002).

The World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters, AMARC (1998)[85]
suggests that CR is not only about doing something for the community, but also
about the community doing something for itself including owning and controlling
its own means of communication[86]. This is similar to Fraser and Restrepo-

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[84] See Tabing, L. (2002) *How to do Community Radio: A Primer for Community Radio Operators.*
New Delhi: UNESCO.

[85] See AMARC (1998) *What is Community Radio.* AMARC is a non-governmental organisation for
the promotion, support and development of community radio worldwide.

[86] See declarations of AMARC Pan-European Conference of Community Radio Broadcasters,
Ljubljana, Slovenia, 1994; 6th World Conference on Community Radio Broadcasters, Dakar, Senegal,
1995; The Milan Declaration on Communication and Human Rights, 1998; and Communications
infrastructures for citizens' and community media – an AMARC-Europe response to the 1998
communications

Estrada's (2001) views that, as distinct from public and commercial broadcasting, community broadcasting is a non-profit service. They also view CR as a social process in which members of a community join to design and produce programmes, and air them.[87] Aginam (2005 citing Valle 1995, Hochheimer, 1993 & Opuku-Menash, 2000) says that normatively, community radios are self-managed (internally democratic), self-financed, pluralistic and participatory in nature, and they usually strive to afford every member of, or subgroup within, the community an equal opportunity in the communication process (2005:235).[88] Further to this, Tabing (2002) thinks CR helps to put the community members in charge of their own affairs where free ideas and opinions are created, and important local issues are aired making community radio an essential partner in community development.

CRS should thus produce context-specific content in local languages to address the communication needs of the community. The community's information needs otherwise remain unaddressed by mainstream and commercial media (Bonin and Opoku-Mensah 1998; Carpentier, Lie, and Servaes 2008). In their influential book on the Indian CR movement and its contribution to social development, Pavarala and Malik (2007) extend such ideas further and put the purpose and potential of CR into the broader socio-political and media agenda. They found that CR works as a cultural broadcast mechanism that:

> adapts perfectly to reflect the interests and needs of the community
> it serves and offers people of the marginalised sector an
> opportunity to express themselves socially, politically and culturally.
> (2007:18)

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[87] Fraser. C and Restrepo-Estrada, S. (2001) *Community Radio Handbook*, Paris: UNESCO.

[88] Aginam, Arthur-Martin (2005) 'Media in "Globalizing" Africa: What Prospect for Democratic Communication?' In Hackett, R.A. and Zhao, Y. (eds.) (2005) *Democratizing Global Media: One World Many Struggles*, Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

They make reference to AMARC and its recognition of CR as a unique contribution to media pluralism and an ideal means of fostering freedom of expression, development of culture and identity, and active participation in local life. Similarly, Pavarala and Malik (2007) refer to the principles outlined by FARCO in Argentina that describe CRSs as those that practice radio broadcasting as a community service and see communication as a universal right. According to FARCO (*Foro Argentino de Radios Comunitarias*) Argentina, the CRSs develop "pluralistic and participatory communication, and the right to information by challenging the traditional division between the broadcasters on one side and listeners/consumers on the other." In this respect, they conclude by saying that CR can be seen "as part of a broader struggle for access to communication media and as a mechanism for small groups to reproduce their cultural identity, to voice their social and economic demands and to create new social relations" (2007:18).

Drawing upon the observations of AMARC (1994) and UNESCO (Tabing, 2002), Pavarala and Malik (2007:18-19) summarize some key characteristics of CR:

1. It promotes access to media facilities and to training, production and distribution facilities as a primary step towards full democratization of the communication system

2. It offers the opportunity to any member of the community to initiate communication and participate in programme making and evaluation. In this respect, it encourages local creative talent and fosters local traditions

3. It facilitates full interaction between the producers and receivers of messages

4. It is managed and owned by the community members. The community or its representatives have a voice in the financing of radio programmes

5. It promotes the right to communicate, assist in the free flow of information and opinions, encourages creative expression and contributes to the democratic process and a pluralist society

6. It provides a right to access to minority and marginalised groups and protect cultural and linguistic diversity

Conceptualizing access and participation

Berrigan (1977, 1979)[89] identifies two concepts central to any understanding of CM - access and participation. To Berrigan, *access* refers to the availability of communication tools and resources for members of the local community, meaning that community members have a platform for individual and collective self-expression - from news and opinion to entertainment and education. By *participation,* he refers to community involvement in the production process, as well as the day-to-day operations of media organizations. Participation is closely aligned with the idea of self-management, as, according to Berrigan's later work (1979), CM is defined as "adaptations of media for use by the community, for whatever purposes the community decides".

According to Rennie (2006), the terms "participation" and "access" apply to most community media endeavors, meaning that:

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[89] For the details of Berrigan's work on community media, access and participation, see Berrigan, F. (1977). *Access: Some western models of community media*. Paris: UNESCO. Also see Berrigan, F. (1979). *Community communications: The role of community media in development*. Paris: UNESCO.

nonprofessional media makers are encouraged to become involved (participation), providing individuals and communities with a platform to express their views (access). Community media is often defined by the parameters within which groups have to work, including organizational structure, production techniques, and programming. (Rennie, 2006:3)[90]

According to Howley (2010), Berrigan's (1979) theoretical perspective is related to social-political thought concerned with questions of citizenship, governance, and deliberative democracy[91]. Thus, Howley thinks that the concepts of access and participation "have a wide implication, beyond reform of media organizations, and media production techniques" (2010:8). In other words, CM is not merely opening up the channels of communication to nonprofessional media makers. Rather, "community media's raison d'être is to facilitate two-way communication within the local community" (Howley, 2010:16). Drawing upon Berrigan's contention, Howley states that:

> Community media enable groups and individuals to enter into public discourse, thereby supporting popular participation in decision-making processes and promoting a greater sense of individual and collective agency in directing the community's growth and development. (Howley, 2010:16)

Berrigan's (1979) analysis of access and participation in CM suggests an intention to "reorient communication systems away from top-down models of message production and distribution in favor of a decentralized approach to communication that supports dialogue and exchange". Therefore, participatory media like CM is a "rejection of a one-way communications flow, of centralized

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[90] Rennie, E. (2006) *Community Media: A Global Introduction*, Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

[91] The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) sponsored a series of influential studies in the 1970s to deal with the issues of communication including the democratization of media and communication that put access and participation as central to understanding group, local and community media.

decision-making, of a view of the community as passive and non-contributory. (Howley, 2010:17)

Multiplicity in approaches to understanding CR

There are multiple theoretical entry points for understanding CR worldwide. Malik (2015)[92] has done a stocktaking of the academic discourses, around which the different theoretical arguments have been built up. They are: the discourses around participatory communication (White 1994; Servaes 1996), media democratization (Servaes 1999; Siochrú 2004; Rodríguez, Kidd, and Stein 2010), social movements (Downing 2001, 2008), alternative media practices (Atton 2001, 2002; Rodríguez 2001), communication rights (CRIS Campaign 2005; Gordon 2012; Thomas 2011, 113–143), the public sphere (Calhoun 1992; Fraser 1992), civil society (Béteille 1999; Pavarala and Malik 2007), and the concepts of "conscientization" (Freire1983) and, more recently, voice poverty (Tacchi 2012; Couldry 2010).

Such a multiplicity of approaches in academic terms has contributed enormously to the thematic diversity of academic discussion of CR. Community-based radio is already related to participatory CM, alternative as well as radical alternative media, and citizen's media. In relation to CR, studies have been conducted into a range of issues such as 'citizenship', 'publics', and 'civil society'. Thus, thematic discussions of CR could be related to voluntary association or civil society and the public sphere – in terms of both Habermasian and post-Habermasian concepts (Fraser and Calhoun, 1992) or the idea of a subaltern counterpublic (Fraser, 1990); community development; participatory communication; social movement; and local, alternative or citizen's media and resistance to globalization, for example. Against this backdrop and taking into consideration

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[92] Malik, K. K. (2015) "Our Media, Our Principles: Building codes of practice for community radio in India" In *Journalism Studies*, Published online, 11 August 2015.

the multiplicity of approaches to CR conceptually, and the diversity attributed to the different themes, I have connected my analyses and arguments primarily to the notions of participatory communication, alternative or community public sphere and democratization of media.

CR as a practice of participatory communication

The old paradigms of Modernization, and subsequently the so-called old school of development communication, characterized by 'transmission' model and 'top-down' approaches, either failed or were not useful to democratize media and process of communication. Neither could the paradigms ensure peoples' participation in communication and development planning. In the late 1960s and almost throughout the 1970s, development communication experts looked for a solution to the lack of participation in the development communication models. However, in the later stages of the modernization paradigms, Rogers (1974) suggested the incorporation of traditional media, such as local songs and drama, as well as interpersonal communication channel in development projects. Later Rogers (1976) also launched a critique of the "dominant paradigm" (that propagated transmission model) and recommended "alternative pathways", such as "integration of traditional and modern systems" (1976:131). In this connection, as Howley (2010) observes:

> … new perspectives held that participatory communication has distinct advantages over the "transmission" model long associated with development communication. Over time, this emphasis on participation would change the ways in which national governments, international aid agencies and nongovernmental organizations approached development communication. (2010:183)

MacBride, et al. (1980) observe this shift of emphasis (from big media to small media) as a phenomenon, which can be:

> related to the changes taking place in overall development strategies, which are turning away from the top-down models of recent decades and concentrating on greater participation of communities in expressing their very existence and their own particular needs and formulating plans and organizing action to meet them. This change has a broad impact on the use of media to support development action, not the least of which is establishing or expanding the use of local media. (MacBride, et al., 1980:56)

In fact, the UNESO report (MacBride, et al., 1980) mentions not only the need for and role of small media in community building, but sees the importance of such participatory media in a greater context of development planning and activities, which rejects the earlier 'transmission' and 'top-down' paradigms for modernization and development. Although MacBride, et al. did not specifically discuss the potentials of CR, small and community-based participatory medium's role had already become clearer in promoting participatory economic and social development. The practice of participatory community media like CR was explained conceptually in the theorizing of White (1994) and Servaes (1996), for instance.

CR as site of alternative public sphere

There is an interdependent relationship between CR as media institution, public discourse, and civil society. Community-oriented voluntary groups and associations, advocacy groups, NGOs and civil society organisations are in various ways connected to the activities of CR. As most of the CMs are linked with the democratic aspects of communication, CR activities are particularly attributed to the notion of the (community) public sphere. There are examples of practices where CR plays the role of a "mediating structure between individual's lives and the public sphere" (Carpentier, Lie, and Servaes, 2008; Howley, 2010

as cited in Malik, 2015). As a result, CR's role in creating discursive and deliberative spaces for community individuals and groups has become particularly relevant to the arguments for the potential of forging alternative public spheres and "counter publics".

Pavarala and Malik (2007) think that the growing marginalization of the rural poor in the market-oriented media, has created the potential for alternative media to serve as a "public sphere that is more egalitarian and equitable" (2007:11) According to Hackett and Carroll (2006),[93] alternative media's use of modest technology gives them the potential to challenge corporate media and give voice to counterpublics[94]. They also think that alternative media have substantial strength as a democratization strategy, and "their creation of a parallel and (debatably) prefigurative media field is absolutely central to media democratization" (2006: 59).

CR in democratizing media and communication

Wasko and Mosco (1992) consider CM to be crucial for the media democratization process, which takes place through ordinary peoples' participation in management, content production and organization. Hence, with regards to media democratization of CR, community groups produce information relevant to them, choose their own messages, and express their own voice in defining their identity. Media democratization campaigns have their origin in the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) movement of the

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[93] Hackett, R.A. and Carroll, W.K. (2006) *Remaking Media: The struggle to democratize public communication*, New York: Routledge.

[94] In Hackett and Carroll's observation, alternative media do not require the long nurturing of a political constituency. The simple skills required along with their autonomous characteristics, and do-it-yourself strategies attract a younger generation of activists.

1970s[95]. MacBride, et al. (UNESCO, 1980) conclude their report with recommendations for the democratization of communication (1980:254-268).[96] In recent years, Servaes (1999), Siochrú (2004, 2006), Rodríguez, Kidd, and Stein (2010), Hackett and Zhao (2006), Rennie (2006) and Thomas (2006) have all discussed the issues of media democratization and added their own perspectives.

Communication links are vital for the promotion and development of a national entity. But if communication power is "used to repress and silence minorities or to conceal divergence", according to UNESCO (1980), the effect must be to alienate a section of the citizens and thus to weaken the national community (1980:115). MacBride, et al. (1980) found communication to be a basic individual right. This is also a collective right needed by all communities and nations. The right to seek, receive and impart information too is a fundamental human right. In this respect, they call for an emphasizing of the importance of the democratization of communication, as well as the larger role of communication in democratizing society (MacBride, et al., 1980:256).

Aginam (2005) thinks democratic communication takes for granted a two-way, dialogical exchange between cultural groups - both as receivers and transmitters of information. Karol Jakubowicz (1993) calls this "send-ceivers" (1993:40)[97]. White (1995) argues that democratic public communication is an institutional mechanism that strives "to guarantee the right of all individuals and sub-cultures

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[95] Among others, Robert White (1995) and Michael Traber (1993) argue that the key issues in the 1970s NWICO campaign was the democratization of communication, and particularly its transformation from a social need to a basic right.

[96] Other recommendations of the UNESCO reports are strengthening independence and self-reliance; social consequences and new tasks; professional integrity and standards; and fostering international Cooperation.

[97] Jakubowicz, K. (1993) 'Stuck in the Grove: Why the 1960s Approach to Communication Democratization Will No Longer Do' In *Communication and Democracy*, (eds) S. Splichal and J. Wasco, Norwood, NJ: Ablex. pp. 3-18.

to participate in the construction of the public cultural truth" (1995:93)[98]. The import of this, according to Aginam (2005), is the vita need for such an institution to be open and accessible to all, to embody a plurality of viewpoints, and not to be beholden to powerful interests- be they those of the state, capital, or dominant social groups." (2005:133). UNESCO (1980) thinks communication becomes an indispensable component of development[99] efforts and of social life in every locality, in which:

> development media activities are not, in any way a "threat" to freer information flows, but on the contrary, one of the conditions of democracy, since a more active participation in development choices and activities is part of democratic way of life. At the same time, this does not mean that the role of large-audience media is going to decline or that countries and communities have to choose between them. (MacBride, et al., 1980:56)

With specific reference to CR, besides building the capacities of non-literate rural people, Pavarala and Malik (2007) emphasize the need for instituting more democratic governance structures, as well as establishing more ethical and responsible standards of media practice" (2007:11).[100] Media democratization is connected with the concepts of participatory communication and the public sphere as, in both cases, democratic access and active participation are prerequisites. CR is public, nonmarket and premised on an egalitarian philosophy which helps the community to contribute to the public good and to act in the greater social interest.

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[98] White, R. A. (1995) 'Democratization of Communication as a social movement process' In *Democratizing Communication* (ed) P. Lee, Cardiff: University of Wales Press. pp. 92-113

[99] At the same time these debates were ongoing, Wilbur Schramm (1979) presented his own arguments outlining the role of media and communication in national development in his seminal book *Mass Media and National Development*.

[100] Pavarala, V. & Malik, K. K. (2007) *Other Voices: the Struggle for Community Radio in India*. Sage: New Delhi

Although all such discussion accepts a set of common premises, there has been very little attention paid to how such values and principles are operationalized in actual practice. While much of the promise of CR at a conceptual level is all to the common good, actual implementation relies on a series of actors and entities which are not subject to any extensive commentary. Primarily here I am referring to the NGOs that, more often than not, are the bodies charged with the actual realization of CR projects on the ground. There is a need to understand and conceptualize how NGOs might be having an influence on the democratic outcomes of CR operations. We need to understand if the functioning of NGOs in specific times and contexts may itself actually impact on the intended and potentially liberatory affordances of such media as CR. Might some of the processes outlined above come under the influence of processes which I have chosen to call NGO-ization? I conceive this primarily as a process whereby the goals and operational logics of the instigator bodies themselves come to dominate the functioning of such initiatives in a fashion which ultimately plays to the detriment of the wider democratic and community ideals and finds them being shaped instead within the structure and process of a wider logic of global neoliberalism in which the NGOs themselves are imbricated.

NGO intervention and notion of NGO-ization

NGO-ization as a concept was discussed by Kamat (2004) in relation to the "NGOization of democracy" or the "NGOization of grassroots politics". It can be understood as a process of institutionalization, professionalization and depoliticization (Armstrong and Prasad, 2005; Burrows, Cousins, Rojas and Ude, 2007; Kamat 2004; A. Smith 2007a, as cited in Choudry & Kapoor 2013). The literature available on NGO-ization draws upon geopolitics (Kim and Campbell,

2013; Vukov, 2013)[101], socio-political contexts and historical specificity, as NGOs too carry (Choudry and Kapoor, 2013) "the trace of social struggle of the past" (Bourdieu 1998:2, as quoted in Choudry & Kapoor, 2013).[102]

These references to NGO-ization are built on a variety of case studies taken from: social movements, environmental change, resistance movements (Roy 2004), conservation and capitalist globalization (Choudry, 2013), social action and civil society (Kapoor, 2013), indigenous people and NGOs, and NGOs and democratic political movement (Sinwell, 2013). Drawing on these case studies and looking at the situations involved from the perspectives of both the activists and academics, Choudhry and Kapoor (2013) argue:

> NGOs – and the process of NGOization - frequently undermine local and international movements for social change and environmental justice and/or oppositional and anti-colonial and anti-capitalists politics, in complicity with state and private-sector interests. (2013:2)

Kamat (2004), Petras and Veltmeyer (2005) think professionalization and depoliticization of community-based NGO projects serve the interests of neoliberal regimes. Petras and Veltmeyer particularly think that the NGOs play a part in preserving "the existing power structure (vis-à-vis the distribution of society's resources) intact while promoting a degree (and local form) of change and 'development'" (2005:20).[103] Choudry and Kapoor (2013) call for more

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[101] Vukov, T. (2013) "Seven Thesis on Neobalkanism and NGOization in Transitional Serbia". In Choudry, A. & Kapoor, D. (Eds.) (2013) *NGOization: Complicity, contradiction and Prospects*. London: Zed Books. Also see Kim, E. & Campbell, M (2013) "Peace-building and Violence Against Women: Tracking the Ruling Relations of Aid in a Women's Development NGO in Kyrgyzstan" In Choudry, A. & Kapoor, D. (eds.) (2013) *NGOization: Complicity, contradiction and Prospects*. London: Zed Books.

[102] For the original reference see Bourdieu, P. (1998). "The Left Hand and the Right Hand of the State". In P. Bourdieu, P. (Ed.) *Acts of Resistance* (pp.1-10). Cambridge: Polity.

[103] Petras, J. & Velymeyer, H. (2005) *Social Movement and State Power: Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Ecuador*. London: Pluto Press.

analysis of the process of NGO funding to community projects. They think, "Analysis of NGOs and NGO-ization should examine ways in which funding and other material support can orient organizations to prioritize institutional survival and maintenance" (2013:5).

Arundhati Roy (2004) presents her observation of a correlation between NGOs and neoliberal agents and institutions, but does not go on to theorise what she also calls NGO-ization; nor does she define it as a concept in any detail. In her polemical essays, she makes no distinction between the work and contribution of the NGO in filling the gap that the state has not addressed, and what she terms NGO-ization. Her view of NGO-ization might be best interpreted as a set of issues that hinder popular resistance movements and establish limits and boundaries to, grassroots democracy and public participation. In Roy's very critical view, NGOs act to "defuse political anger" or "alter the public psyche"[104], referring to studies[105] of NGO involvement in diverse projects in different geographical contexts, she makes little effort to distinguish between the possible positive involvement of NGOs and the potential negative consequences of their presence. More cautious academic commentators such as Kamat (2013), caution against seeing a common equivalence between NGO presence and the process of NGO-ization itself.   However, Kamat (2013)[106] does suggest that NGOs are, indeed, a "compulsory feature of Neoliberalism". Referring to the interdisciplinary scholarship, he argues that NGOs play a vital role in the "dramatic transformation

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[104] Arundhati Roy considers NGOs as "the arbitrators, the interpreters, the facilitators that in the long run, are accountable to their funders, not to the people they work among". The NGOs, according to Roy, are "what botanists would call an indicator species". Further details of Roy's view on the NGO-zation of politics can be found at http://massalijn.nl/new/the-ngo-ization-of-resistance/

[105] The studies are on the NGO projects or NGO leadership in initiatives taking place in South Africa, Kyrgyzstan, India, Canada, Serbia and the Philippines. The projects involve indigenous people, fishing communities, farmers, feminists and urban poor. For details of the studies and case studies, See Choudhury, A. & Kapoor, D. (Eds.) (2013) *NGOization: Complicity, contradiction and Prospects*. London: Zed Books.

[106] Kamat, S. (2013) Preface. In Choudry, A. & Kapoor, D. (Eds.) (2013) *NGOization: Complicity, Contradiction and Prospects*. London: Zed Books.

of state and economy brought about by neoliberalism". The relationship between NGOs and neoliberalism may not be one of cause and effect, but they are certainly interconnected phenomenon. Kamat even goes as far as endorsing Roy's critical assessment that "the greater the devastation caused by neoliberalism, the greater the outbreak of NGOs" (Roy quoted in Kamat, 2013; Roy 2004)[107].

In relation to the role NGOs play as aides to neoliberalism through their influence on alternative politics and local resistance, Roy says that they dictate the alternative political agenda and promote attempts to depoliticize local resistance. Local people's movements which have traditionally been self-reliant are undermined by the activities of NGOs (Roy 2004)[108]. While Kamat (2013, 2004)[109] alludes to a 'synergy' in the spread of neoliberalism and the rise of NGO activity, Roy emphasizes the necessity to consider "the phenomenon in a broader political context" (2004) if we are to fully comprehend the close ties between NGOs and neoliberal institutions more broadly speaking[110]. Roy's critique of the NGOs' apolitical role and failure to properly support popular resistance movements, such as the *Narmada Bachao Andolon* (Movement to Save the Narmada) in India, leads her to characterize, "A hazard facing mass movements" as being "the NGO-ization of resistance"[111].

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[107] For the original text, see Roy, A. (2004) 'Help that Hinders' in *Le Monde Diplomatique* (English Edition).

[108] English translation of the extract from Arundhati Roy's paper in a conference in San Francisco, California, 16 August 2004 can be accessed from https://mondediplo.com/2004/11/16roy

[109] Kamat, S. (2004) 'The NGO-ization of Grassroots Politics'. In Leistyna, P. (Ed.) *Cultural Studies and Practical Politics* (pp. 142-156). Boston: Blackwell Publishers.

[110] According to Arundhati Roy, "In India the funded NGO boom began in the late 1980s and 1990s, coinciding with the opening of India's markets to neoliberalism. At the time the state, in keeping with the requirements of structural adjustment, was withdrawing funding from rural development, agriculture, energy, transport and public health" (2004).

[111] See Roy, A. 'The NGO-ization of Resistance' [posted on 04 September 2014]. Available from http://massalijn.nl/new/the-ngo-ization-of-resistance/

When we come to apply such concepts as NGO-ization to the realm of community broadcasting there are some studies to which it is useful to refer. Both the work of Gilberds (2009)[112] on NGOs and CR broadcasting and Yacobi's work on the NGO-ization of space, social change and the public sphere, (Yacobi, 2007)[113] offer useful hints even if they do not go as far as to apply any concrete concept or theory of NGO-ization. Although these studies analyse the nature of NGO and donor engagement and the process of influencing projects, neither of them attempts to define or conceptualize NGO-ization in their specific contexts. Due to absence of detailed definitions of NGO-ization, in an attempt to set a working definition in relation to CR, I will conceptualize NGO-ization as a process of NGO control of the mode of (CR) campaigns and advocacy initiatives, as well as influencing legislation, and the regulation of (CRS) operation in accordance with NGO's organisational practice. This also includes specific patterns of engaging (community) volunteers, as well as channels and procedures of financing and agenda setting for maintaining the social and political status quo.

NGO power and civil society

While some writers and activists may be critical of the NGOs' apolitical role in influencing development and alternative agendas, and pour scorn on the NGO-ization of grassroots and popular resistance movements, other commentators still remind us of the "impressive demonstration of the power of NGOs" and their networks. For example, Zhao and Hackett (2005)[114] highlight the success of NGO intervention in the negotiation process, within the framework of the

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[112] Gilberds, H. (2009) "Grassroots radio and the episteme of development", Master Thesis, Carleton University.

[113] See Yacobi, H. (2007) NGOization of space: dilemmas of social change, planning policy and the Israeli public sphere. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 2007. Volume 25, pp. 745-758.

[114] Zhao, Y. and Hackett, R.A. (2005) 'Media Globalization, Media Democratization: Challenges, Issues, and Paradoxes' In Hackett, R.A. and Zhao, Y. (eds.) (2005) *Democratizing Global Media: One World Many Struggles*, Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

Organization for Economic Development and Cooperation (OECD), for the Multilateral Agreement on Investment between 1995 and 1998[115]. As civil society organisations and NGOs have become increasingly important stakeholders in global communications in recent decades, Collin Sparks (2005)[116] notes that they now play an important role in developing effective strategy (including the use of mainstream media[117]). As I suggested in Chapter 2, most of the western donors support NGOs as a third-sector in promoting agendas for good governance. They also invested significantly in media development for investigative journalism and growth of independent, local and community-based media.

Broadly speaking, media development theorists have been critical of the hegemonic and undemocratic applications of state-run media, but they have also raised concerns in connection with the domination or powerful influence of commercial media. The end of the Cold War and spread of liberal democracy ushered new approaches to media development across the globe. The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the collapse of the Soviet Union and, overall, the fall of communism, activated US interest in promoting free and independent media in eastern European countries "as building blocks toward transparent and democratic societies". In describing the objectives of the US support in media development, The Center for Media Assistance (CIMA) at the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) report on 'US Private and Public Funding of Independent Media Development Abroad' states:

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[115] They state that "more than six hundred organizations in seventy countries were involved in the campaign, which successfully derailed a treaty that would have granted unprecedented freedom to capital. Such an invitation could be considered an example of democratization through the media" (Zhao and Hackett, 2005:17).

[116] Sparks, C. (2005) 'Civil Society as a Contested Concept: Media and Social Transformation' In Hackett, R.A. and Zhao, Y. (eds.) (2005) *Democratizing Global Media: One World Many Struggles*, Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

[117] It should be noted that use of mainstream media has always been an important component of influential NGOs like Amnesty International and Greenpeace. Also see Hackett, R. A. and Zhao, Y. (2005) (Eds)

Independent media sector development includes direct assistance to media outlets, journalism training, creating a legal enabling environment for independent media, media/business management training to ensure financial sustainability, and developing nongovernmental professional associations supportive of independent media. Another aspect of the development of the media is "communications for development". (CIMA, December 2000:4)

In 2000, a policy document prepared by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Office of Democracy and Governance, Bureau of Europe and Central Asia proposed a typology of countries[118]. The categories are: consolidating democracies, unstable states/divided states, weak states/weak societies, consolidating authoritarian states and failed states. As Price et al. (2003) suggest, the premise of the USAID document was that "a free and independent media, unrestrained by abusive government restrictions, is a key component to building vibrant democracies" (2003:7). The report also stated that its goal for independent media was to "develop self-sustaining, private (and, at times, public) broadcast and print media" (USAID, 2000 as quoted in Price, et al., 2003). In the last two decades, US support went beyond the former communist countries[119] and other major international donors too financed media development projects including the development of community broadcasting.[120]

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[118] The document points out that its typologies were not "rigid, nor do they exist on a continuum that leads one to another in a transition to democracy. In a number of instances, there are substantial areas of overlap, where one country may arguably fit into more than one typology" (Price, Rozumilowicz, and Verhulst, 2003).

[119] See for details, CIMA (2007) US Private and Public Finding of Media Development Abroad: A Report to the Center for International Media Assistance. Washington: CIMA/NED. December 10, 2007. (URL: http://www.ned.org/cima/cima.html). Also see, The Role of Media in Democracy: A Strategic Approach (Technical Publication Series). Washington: Center for Democracy and Governance Bureau for Global Programs, Field Support, and Research, USAID. June 1999.

[120] In a discussion on media development at Annenberg-Oxford Summer Institute 2012, Prof. Monre E. Price commented that the USAID document became an important reference in deciding media development policies of other key international donors. I was a participant in the programmes.

Chapter Conclusion

In this chapter, I have begun to develop a framework in which we can situate theoretical discussion of both Community Media (CM) generally speaking, and, more specifically, Community Radio (CR). In order to do this, I have rehearsed some of the historical developments that have led up to the current situation, from the general advocacy of a new world information order contained in the MacBride report to NGO implemented initiatives at the behest of powerful international donors. In discussing the latter developments, I have introduced a note of caution. While community media initiatives are seen as one way of escaping some of the dangers inherent in state-led or commercial media and investing properly in the arena of the local, the very presence of NGOs may in fact be a distorting influence that is having negative consequences on the local potential for developing truly democratic forms of communication. In this respect, I have borrowed the concept of NGO-ization and have, at a theoretical level, begun to apply it to CR. The next stage of this research is to investigate the operation of these processes on the ground through empirical fieldwork. The following chapter will set out the methods and research strategies which I have employed to such an end in the field in Bangladesh.

Chapter 4: Methodology

Approaches to ethnographic and qualitative inquiries

> "Thick description, inquiry in depth, direct quotations capturing peoples' personal perspectives and experiences formed the qualitative data to describe how people were experiencing the phenomenon."
>
> - Pavarala, V. and Malik, K.
>   *Other Voices: The Struggle for Community Radio in India, 2007*

Introduction

The objective of this chapter is to provide details of the research design and methods, and to describe the process of inquiry taken by this study. I will also address the rationale for choosing qualitative research methods and, in particular, the ethnographic approach of participant observation. I should state at the outset that there is no extant literature that describes or analyses the reality of Bangladesh CR on the ground, nor are there any attempts to analyse or describe the actual situation encountered in NGO-managed CRSs. For this reason, I felt it was imperative to make empirical enquiries in the field in order to enquire as to what extent the NGO-managed medium has been successful in ensuring both access and the participation of the community in such communication initiatives, as well as being able to judge accurately the extent to which Bangladeshi CRSs were evolving in the direction of community ownership and sustainable operation. With a view to operationalizing my research questions, as participant observer, I have inquired to what extent the CRS reflects the global and democratic principles of the medium, and whether the communities are able to use the CRS as a discursive arena, as well as a deliberative site for setting their own agendas. In this chapter, I have also provided some basic data for the CRS under investigation: type or nature of the radio shows, relevant information on the CRS and the broadcasting footprint,

including details of the local population. In addition, I have described the essential details of the organisational history, mandates and usual activities of the initiator NGOs.

The early studies discussing the potential of CR anticipate that it would bring about changes in existing power relations in Bangladesh. They also suggest that CR would be an effective tool to improve communication intervention for development in Bangladesh. But the recent NGO literature on CR does not give any indication that there might be limitations associated with current CRS practice. With the exception of a few limited studies, need assessments and baseline surveys, much of our understanding of the situation on the ground is, in fact, purely speculative in nature. Social researchers have not taken the opportunity to conduct methodical inquiries into the actual practice of the NGO-run CR. We have no real understanding, therefore, as to what extent CR has progressed and evolved into the independent and community-run broadcast medium that some of the more theoretical speculations treated in the last chapter would lead us to believe represented the ultimate goal of such projects.

Academia has not been responsive enough to Bangladesh CR issues, neither have the academicians studied the CR in practice to find out and analyse the gap between what is said about the radio and how they are actually implemented on the ground. This lack of academic investigation is not uncommon in other South Asian countries. Commenting on the state of academic research on CR in India, Pavarala and Malik (2007) state:

> …despite the range of issues discussed on community radio and development, it pointed towards a remarkable absence of sustained, context-specific research undertaken on the potential of community radio and its sociological and political ramifications with respect to the media scenario in India. (2007:36)

Pavarala and Malik's observation indicates that in the South Asian context, there is a need for "context-specific" studies of CR operations and the practices on the ground. In Bangladesh, there is a lack of academic knowledge in respect of the role of CR in democratizing communication. There is also a gap in the existing knowledge on the application of media development in relation to CR in order to enable community engagement, promoting voluntarism and participation in community broadcasting. In this study I have questioned the approaches to media development in Bangladesh with regard to the current NGO-guided operations of the selected CRSs, in which the initiator NGOs still hold the agency to determine the modus operandi.

A methodologically-sound study will help us to look into different aspects of the CR operation and help shed light on the issue of NGO influence over community broadcasting. Appropriate research methods will also be useful in order to uncover whether or not the NGO-guided CRSs have in practice included marginalised groups in the decision-making for both production and broadcasting. Thus, taking into consideration the limitations in the existing NGO literatures, and against the backdrop of a pressing need for academic research into CR, this chapter will outline details of the methodology and research techniques that were employed in the field studies themselves.

Research design

According to Maxwell's (1996) interactive model of research design, the necessary components are research purpose, conceptual context, research questions, research methods and a check on the validity and reliability of the study (Maxwell as quoted in Keyton, 2001)[121]. Maxwell's model demonstrates that the qualitative research processes are interdependent (mentioned in Keyton,

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[121] For further details, see Keyton, J. (2001) *Communication Research: Asking Questions, Finding Research*. Boston: McGraw-Hill. Also see Maxwell, J.A. (1996) *Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

2001: 67). In the first chapter of the thesis, I have outlined my research questions, and identified the aims and objectives of the research. To recap in broad outline, the research aims to develop a greater understanding of CR broadcasting in Bangladesh. In this chapter I will outline the practical research issues including descriptions of the research techniques employed and the methods of data collection.

As part of the ethnographic investigation of CR operations on the ground, I have used a compressed ethnographic approach, employing participant observation in multiple sites. My familiarity with Bangladeshi society and my prior acquaintance with the CR campaigners and the campaigning organisations, as well as experience of visiting the CRSs and the broadcasting areas were valuable in establishing contacts with relevant people for the purpose of general interaction, interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs). My primary knowledge of the research sites and their communities as well as an understanding of the local media situation, patterns of civil society, and local economic and social activities was also useful while investigating the various issues relating to the NGO-run CR. Although I do not speak the local languages spoken in the CRS areas, I can speak *Bangla* (Bengali) (which is understood and spoken in all the CRS areas) and have a sufficient working knowledge of local dialects to follow conversations.

Participant observation enabled me to collect the "thick description" alluded to by Pavarala and Malik (2007) and further assisted me in the task of gathering the "personal perspectives and experiences" of the people. As the "goal of research is less to test what is already known", the methods that I chose for my study gave me the optimum opportunity to "discover and explore the new and to develop empirically grounded theories" (Flick, 2014:16). In addition to the basic participant observation, I conducted in-depth interviews with a range of people representing the communities as well as volunteers and producers, station managers, members of the listeners' clubs, key figures from the initiator NGOs, government officials, members of the civil society organisations, CR advocates at

national and regional level, as well as experts and opinion makers. FGDs were conducted with the volunteers of the CRSs, listeners, and men, women and young people living within the CR broadcasting coverage areas.

Prior to immersing myself in fieldwork, however, there was a need to identify the major CR ideas circulating discursively so that I could observe to what extent the values inherent in them were reflected in practice on the ground. Therefore, I have also used the method of thematic content analysis to analyse the key themes presented in a selection of communication and publicity materials. Content analysis is an effective method for "analyzing overt communication behavior". Budd, Thorp and Donohew (1967) think, "Content analysis is a systematic technique for analyzing message content and message handing – it is a tool for observing and analyzing the overt communications behavior of selected communications (1967:2). Berelson considers content analysis as a research technique for "objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication" (as quoted in Budd, Thorp and Donohew, 1967:3). On the other hand, Kerlinger views content analysis as a method to analyse qualitative description of communication. In his opinion:

> ... content analysis, while certainly a method of analysis, is more than that. It is …a method of observation. Instead of observing people's behavior directly, or asking them to respond to scales, or interviewing them, the investigator takes the communications that people have produced and asks questions of the communications" (Kerlinger as quoted in Budd, Thorp and Donohew, 1967:2)

According to Lindlof and Taylor (2002), qualitative research is best employed when seeking to preserve and analyse "the situated form, content and experience of social action, rather than subject it to mathematical or other formal transformation" (2002:18). They also suggest that in qualitative research methodology, "actual talk, gesture, and so on are the raw materials of analysis". Referring to Kleinmann, Stenross and McMahon (1994) and Press (1999), they identify differences among the procedures in qualitative research approaches.

However, Lindlof and Taylor emphasise that despite certain differences, "qualitative research has a great deal in common with both interpretivism and naturalistic inquiry" and they propose qualitative research "to be an approach that subsumes most of what goes by the names of interpretative, ethnographic, and naturalistic inquiry" (2002:19)[122].

According to Priest (2010), qualitative methods are "designed to explore and assess things that cannot easily be summarized numerically". As an argument for qualitative research, Priest thinks qualitative researchers "may actively reject the positivist assumption that everything of interest can be measured" (2010:6). Priest also thinks that it is possible to find truth "in the development of insightful descriptions of how something in social life works, rather than statistics or equations". In qualitative methods, researchers "emphasize the communication environment interactants, allowing the researcher to explore everyday social phenomena in a way quantitative method do not allow" (Keyton 2001:63). Keyton further suggests that qualitative methods emphasize empirical, inductive and interpretative approaches and can be applied to "interactions within a specific context". In his view, one of the essential features of qualitative research is that it is "conducted in the field as opposed to simulated or lab environment" (2001:63). Like Lindlof and Taylor (2002), Keyton includes conversation analysis, participant observation, interviews, focus group interviews, narrative analysis and ethnography as part of the armory of qualitative methodology.

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[122] For example, Lindlof and Taylor describe development communication as an area "in which ethnography is seen as an approach that can study local realities and needs without imposing the value assumptions of traditional media effects research" (Bourgault, 1992 as cited in Lindlof and Taylor 2002:25).

In Table 1, I have very briefly discussed two studies on community radio, conducted in India that use qualitative methods and ethnographic techniques. They have similarities with Bangladesh. Although the governance patterns and political situations vary, in both countries peripheral sections of the populations have limited access and participation in the media.

Table 1: Use of qualitative methods and ethnography in two studies

Pavarala and Malik (2007) address critical issues regarding functional and efficacy aspects of community radio in India. They carried out case studies in four Indian states. The aim of the study was to have a deeper understanding of the social, economic, cultural and political dynamics and constraints that have bearings on community radio. With regard to very structured research design the researchers said that they "avoided getting locked into rigid designs that eliminate responsiveness". In investigating the ground realities, Pavarala and Malik use qualitative methods to accomplish the objectives of the study. The case study method was supplemented by in-depth and open-ended interview and focus groups. They also made extensive analyses of secondary materials that included official publications, factual records, reports and declarations. In addition, the researchers' personal experience, observation and insight contributed to the inquiry. Regarding data analysis, they do not treat it "as a distinct end process" They carried out a substantial amount of practical analysis as data collection proceeded.

[Pavarala, V. & Malik, K.K. (2007) *Other Voices: The Struggle for Community Radio in India*. Los Angeles: Sage.]

Shoesmith and Jayaprakash's study (2007) of community radio and development, conducted in a tribal area of India, explores how a low-power radio station located in the Nilgiri hill areas of South India worked as a development tool in a changing mediascape. Their study also looks into how tribal audiences negotiate time between radio and television as well as how the "latest changes in the indigenous mediascape necessitate basic changes in the programming and scheduling of development programmes" (2007:43). For data collection methods, Shoesmith and Jayaprakash used in-depth interviews, participant observation, field notes, focus group and analysis of secondary documents.

[Jayprakash, Y. T. and Shoesmith, B. (2007) 'Community Radio and Development: Tribal Audiences in South India'. In Fuller, L. K. (Ed.) *The Power of Global Community Media*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 43-53.]

Applying ethnography

According to Tacchi, Slater and Hearn, "Rich research consists of a range of grounded and relevant facts, observations, understandings, perceptions and interpretations" (Tacchi, Slater and Hearn 2003:9). Their own work serves as a model in some respects, although the ethnographic approach is always susceptible to factors that are out of the control of the researcher. In my own case, the actual immersion in the field was disrupted by political developments and local unrest. In order to overcome the difficulties involved in sustained fieldwork in just one region, I took the option of conducting slightly less intensive fieldwork in a range of different sites. Such a multi-sited approach has been advocated in anthropology by George Marcus. This option also had the advantage of enabling me to make an assessment of a variety of regional variables and develop a sense of how they too influence the day-to-day operation of CR on the ground. While longer and more sustained immersion may have generated more data in relation to individual research sites, multiple visits to a range of different CRSs afforded me a unique insight into their operation. Using extended concepts of ethnographic research, such as compressed ethnographic design (Scrimshaw and Gleason, 1992), I allocated my fieldwork time to four CRS areas.

Overall then, I have combined multiple techniques within an overarching qualitative methodology. Considering the ethnographic model of participant observation as subset of qualitative methodology, I have supplemented it with open ended and in-depth interviews and focus group discussion (FGD). Instead of structured or even semi-structured interviews, I adopted an open-ended interview technique using checklists of key questions. In addition to the communities' opinions, I have collected the views of community media experts, advocates or opinion makers on the issues of my inquiry through interviews. Although my project was not designed to be a comparative national study, I did conduct a brief period of participant observation at a station site near Kathmandu

in Nepal. I also managed to conduct a few FGDs with the staff and producers of another Nepali NGO-run CRS, Radio Karnali. This furnished me with useful comparative insight and helped me see the Bangladeshi materials through a different lens. My visits to a community-initiated and voluntarily-run CRS located in Seoul, South Korea and a commercially operated radio (Metro FM)[123] in Kathmandu Metropolitan City, Nepal gave me further comparative insights into CR which helped me think more clearly about the Bangladeshi material.

Planning for field visits and the selection of sites

In choosing the field sites, first I took into account the fact that in order for me to complete my research project, I had to abide by a specific timeframe. My plan for the fieldwork in Bangladesh was also shaped by the availability of limited personal resources, access to the CRS, and the political situation around the period. Visiting the field sites became restricted due to the volatile political situation and frequent actions like *Hartal* (হরতাল), strike[124] that severely disrupted the regular activities and movement of the people. My fieldwork plan originally scheduled for November 2013 was postponed due to a very volatile political situation in Bangladesh that left around a hundred people dead. The crisis deepened at the end of the year over a disputed issue of holding the national general election under a non-political caretaker government and continued until late 2014.

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[123] I conducted a couple of FGDs with the producers and listeners of Metro FM. Although the station is commercially operated, the producers introduce the station as a community FM station. In Nepal, besides NGO-run and cooperatives-run CRS, there are stations known as 'commercial'/'private' community radio.

[124] *Hartal* is a form of political protest originally developed as a means of noncooperation. In recent decades, they have become increasingly violent.

As a result, I had to reorganize my plans and rescheduled the field investigation[125]. I was able to begin my fully-fledged field level inquiries in April 2014 and stayed in the sites for an aggregate period of six months. I made further visits to two stations in 2016 and spent a further three months. Again, in order to see the recent development, I made follow up visits to the stations in 2017.

Although I was acquainted with most of the initiator NGOs, I had to secure permission from the CRS that would allow me to stay at the stations and to observe their activities for four to eight weeks at a time. It was also important for me to make sure that the NGO would not interfere with my interactions with the station personnel as well as people in the broadcasting areas. All the CRS initiator NGOs have their own prior networks as they have been implementing development projects in their respective areas for many years. So, gaining trust of the initiator NGOs was essential for conducting interviews or holding FGDs with the people, some of whom happened to be their beneficiaries (or target people of the development project that the NGOs were implementing), staff, volunteers and members of the listener clubs.

From the ethnographic point of view, I could have chosen one or two stations or research sites to spend quality time for participant observation, but in order to test broad propositions such as the possible NGO-ization of the media development project in relation to CR, it was imperative to select multiple research sites. Besides, in order for me to overcome the constraints caused by various factors as I have mentioned above, I decided to select multiple CRS and their broadcasting coverage areas as my field sites. The CRSs are located in different parts of the country and to some extent, the main features of the initiator

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[125] Although I could not implement the first fieldwork plan in early 2014, I did manage to visit the sites and conducted some sample interviews, FGDs and discussions to test out the practicalities of the study. In addition, before I could finally start my field visit in Bangladesh, I stayed for a shorter period at a community radio stations located in the Kathmandu valley, Nepal, and visited a CRS in Seoul, South Korea. The data collected in these stations were useful in validating my primary findings, and eventually were used as an important reference in my analysis.

NGOs vary in terms of the organisation's size, capacity and activities. Instead of following approaches to random sampling, I decided to take purposive sampling to identify the four CRS - Radio Pollikontho (রেডিও পল্লীকণ্ঠ) at Moulvibazar, Sylhet; Radio Naf (রেডিও নাফ) at Teknaf, Cox's Bazar; Radio Nalta (রেডিও নলতা) at Kaliganj, Satkhira; and Radio Bikrampur (রেডিও বিক্রমপুর) at Dewbhogh, Munshiganj for my investigation. The following map of Bangladesh (Figure 6) shows the administrative areas where the stations are located:

Figure 6: Map of Bangladesh showing the districts where the four CRSs are located. (Source: Google)

I split my total observation time among the four CRS sites. However, compared to Radio Nalta and Radio Bikrampur, I spent more time at the sites of Radio Pollikontho and Radio Naf. I decided to spend more time at these two sites in order to attain a better "analytical and observational position" as well as to have a "rich understanding" of the situation on the ground, i.e. organisational practice of the CRS, listener reception, volunteer activities and overall, state of community participation in the production and broadcasting process. Radio Pollikontho is run by BRAC, the largest NGO in the world and a leading international development organisation. The CR is run as part of its empowerment programme. I found it useful to spend more time at Radio Pollikontho to understand how an internationally known NGO-managed CRS is enabling community participation and contributing to democratizing community communication.

As opposed to BRAC, in terms of exposure, organisational size and number of projects, Alliance for Cooperation and Legal Aid Bangladesh (ACLAB) that is running Radio Naf, is a small NGO. But Teknaf, the broadcasting areas of Radio Naf deserves a special focus for a number of reasons. The area is prone to natural disasters. In addition, there are areas in Teknaf that are still out of coverage of the Bangladesh Betar or BTV's broadcasting. People living in such pockets cannot access commercial broadcasting either. A large number of people who are fishermen by profession do not get any broadcasting service when they go fishing in the deep sea. Besides drug trafficking and threat of HIV/AIDS in Teknaf, which has a river and land border with Myanmar (as recent tragic events have highlighted), it has also become an entry point for human trafficking through Southeast Asian water routes.

The particular focus on the above two CRSs also enables me to understand if the likelihood of NGO-ization is caused by the structure and organisational culture of an NGO or whether it is a process that, regardless of the strength, exposure and size of the CR initiator (NGO), is linked with the organisational practice of the Bangladeshi NGOs, the nature of the NGO-led campaign, the policy process as

well as the modus operandi set by the initiator NGOs for the functioning of the CRS.

Descriptions of the CRS and the coverage areas

Radio Bikrampur

Radio Bikrampur got permission to broadcast as a community radio in May 2012. The CRS began fully-fledged broadcasting on 1 September 2012. Today Radio Bikrampur broadcasts on average for six hours every day from 4pm to 10pm. One of the major challenges for this CRS, as identified by Reza (2012a) in the very early stage of broadcasting, was that the people of Munshiganj, the town in which the station is located, could watch or listen to programmes of almost all the broadcast media including the commercial FM radios. This is still a big challenge for Radio Bikrampur to make its programmes popular to local listeners, who are also exposed to commercial radio shows.

EC Bangladesh: the initiator NGO

Environment Council Bangladesh (EC Bangladesh) is the initiator and operator of Radio Bikrampur. This NGO implements different rights-based projects, namely human rights and good governance in Bangladesh. EC Bangladesh also deals with projects on economic development, health, education, livelihood, environmental protection and tobacco control. Since its inception in 1994, the organisation has been working to achieve the four main objectives of the organisation - to increase livelihood capabilities and opportunities, access to education, health awareness and service; and awareness on human rights[126]. The CRS area: political geography and demographics

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[126] As mentioned earlier, EC Bangladesh has now been renamed Ambala Foundation. More information on EC Bangladesh/Ambala Foundation and its activities can be found at http://ecbangladesh.org/vision-mission-objectives/

The station has been set up in Dewvog of Munshiganj Sadar (সদর) or district town (Munshiganj district is indicated in Map/Figure 6), which is nearly 45 kilometres away from Dhaka city. The total area of Munshiganj Sadar Upazila (sub-district) is 160.79 square kilometer[127]. More than three hundred thousand people live in this upazila. Four major rivers – the Padma, the Meghna, the Ichamati and the Dhaleshwari flow around Munshiganj. This radio coverage extends 17 kilometres from the station which includes Munshiganj Sadar, part of Gajaria, Tongibari, Lohojong, Sirajdikhan, Srinagar and Narayanganj Sadar and Fatulla[128]. In the broadcasting coverage areas, there are some religious/ethnic minority groups, such as the Dalit (দলিত)[129] and the communities who live in the *Char* (চর) (mid channel island) areas.

Key themes of the radio shows

The shows of Radio Bikrampur cover the issues of education, agriculture, weather, local development, health and nutrition, climate change adaptation, and local history and heritage. One of the special programmes of this CRS is *Chaichi Tomar Bondhuta* (চাইছি তোমার বন্ধুতা), 'Asking for your Friendship' which has become popular among the local young people.

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[127] Munshiganj has borders with Bhedarganj and Naria upazila on the south, Narayanganj Sadar, Narayanganj Bandar and Sonargaon Upazila on the north, Gazaria and Matlab Uttar upazila on east and Tongibari and Naria upazila on the west.

[128] Digital maps for specific locations and administrative status of these areas can be found at http://www.lged.gov.bd/ViewMap.aspx

[129] With donor-support and participation of Dalits, Radio Bikrampur started broadcasting a programme for the Dalit community which is now running infrequently as the funding has stopped.

Radio Nalta

Radio Nalta began test transmission on 13 July 2011[130]. Later on 4 October of the same year the CRS started fully-fledged broadcasting as a community radio[131]. Radio Nalta is one of the fourteen CRS that received the government's permission as the country's first batch of community broadcasters. The CRS is located in the south-east of Bangladesh. Administrative unit wise, the station is situated at a place named Nalta in Kaliganj Upazila (Sub-district) under Satkhira District (indicated in Map/Figure 6). Radio Nalta now broadcasts more than 12 hours of programmes everyday using FM 99.2. It covers a 17 kilometres area from the broadcasting centre[132].

NHCHF: the initiator NGO

Radio Nalta was set up with cooperation from the Climate Change and Health Promotion Unit (CCHPU) under Nalta Hospital and Community Foundation (NHCHF), an NGO which was established in 1999. In addition to providing health treatment services, Nalta Hospital works as a centre of some rural development projects along with other social organisations. The current projects of the hospital are awareness building on HIV/AIDS, water and sanitation, anti-tobacco campaigning and youth friendly health support.

The CRS areas: political geography and demographics

The total area of Kaliganj Upazila is nearly 334 square kilometres. Four rivers – the Ichamati, the Kakshiali, the Kalindi and the little Jamuna run around this

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[130] Radio Nalta received the government's clearance for transmission on 22 April 2010.

[131] For further details can be found at http://www.radionalta.com/

[132] Following the government's instructions Radio Nalta has kept its transmitter power within 100 watts and the size of antenna 32 metres from the ground.

Upazila[133]. It consists of 12 Union Parisads (Union Council) and 249 villages. Kaliganj Upazila is situated near the Bay of Bengal and the Sundarbans, one of the largest mangrove forests in the world and a UNESCO declared heritage site.

The current population of this Upazila is over two hundred thousand, of which 50.7% are male 49.3% female. Among others, the *Bagdi* (বাগদি), a Hindu caste or minority community live in this Upazila. The main occupations of the communities of Nalta and the people living in Kaliganj Upazila are agriculture and fishing. Many people also work as day labourers or wage labourers.

Key themes of the radio shows

Radio Nalta claims that it designs programmes targeting the "local information needs and development of the community". It produces shows on public health, climate change effects mitigation along with the other programmes. For empowerment and development of women, Radio Nalta produces the shows called *Gohre Baire* (ঘরে বাইরে), 'Home and Away', a health care-related programme called *Apner Dakter* (আপনার ডাক্তার), 'Your Doctor', and a programme known as *Fosholer Math* (ফসলের মাঠ), 'Crops Field' to address agricultural issues and problems. The CRS also produces shows on music, culture, community talents, local literary issues, and programmes addressing the listener's feedback. Radio Nalta's key target listeners are farmers, minority communities, day labourers, fishermen, rickshaw pullers, students, teachers, businessman and, particularly, women.

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[133] Kaliganj Upazila has a border with Debhata and Assasuni Upazila on the northern side, Shyamnagar Upazila on the southern side and Assasuni Shyamnagar Upazila on the east and West Bengal of India on the western side.

Radio Naf

Radio Naf is situated in Teknaf Upazila Sadar, which is in the southern side of Cox's Bazar district in Chittagong division. Radio Naf started broadcasting on 21 April 2012 and is named after *Naf Nodi* (নাফ নদী), the river Naf. Currently, Radio Naf broadcasts five hours of programmes daily from 8am to 11am and 5pm to 7pm. There are some areas in Teknaf that are not yet within the coverage of Banglaesh Betar's transmission. In those areas, people either cannot access the state broadcasting or the level of reception is of poor quality. Besides, when fishermen go fishing into the deep sea, they cannot access radio transmission.

ACLAB: the initiator NGO

The Alliance for Cooperation and Legal Aid Bangladesh (ACLAB) was established in 1987 and works within a remit to improve the socio-economic conditions of poor and disadvantaged people. The key focus areas of ACLAB programmes are disaster management, health and nutrition and population, and environment and climate change. The organisation also implements projects on family planning jointly with the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare of Bangladesh; and youth development related projects with the Ministry of Youth and Sport of Bangladesh. In addition, ACLAB works with BRAC on the Non-Formal Education Program (NFEP) for children in Cox's Bazar and Chokoria of Chittagong Division[134].

The CRS areas: political geography and demographics

Teknaf has a border with Ukhia Upazila on the north, the Bay of Bengal on the west and south, and Arakan state of Myanmar on the east. The Upazila consists of 6 unions and 133 villages. More than two millions people live in the 388.66

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[134] More information on Alliance for Cooperation and Legal Aid Bangladesh can be retrieved from http://aclab-bd.org/

square kilometres area of Teknaf[135]. The area is prone to natural disasters. However, Teknaf is known to people as a tourist area and is about 90 kilometres away from Cox's Bazar, the most popular beach town of Bangladesh. Besides a sea beach, Teknaf is rich in bio-diversity and has one of the oldest reserved forests in the country. The following Figures (Figure 7) present glimpses of the adjacent localities of Radio Naf:

Figure 7: Fishermen with their traditional boats are seen cleaning fishing nets as they are preparing to go fishing in the Bay of Bengal (left), and a local vegetable or perishable goods market (right). (Photograph taken while I was carrying out participant observation in the field site).

Key themes of the radio shows

Radio Naf mostly broadcasts pre-recorded programmes. The content of the programmes focuses on weather forecasts, anti-drug and anti-trafficking, primary health care, and fishing and agriculture. The CRS also airs shows on local government, issues of women's development and empowerment, and the right to information. Like other CRSs, Radio Naf broadcasts entertainment shows based on local and folk music and cultural tradition. The station also has a special focus

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[135] Further information on Teknaf Upzila can be retrieved from the online *Banglapedia* (the National Encyclopedia of Bangladesh) http://en.banglapedia.org/index.php?title=Teknaf_Upazila

on biodiversity, disaster risk reduction and climate change related issues. According to Haque (2012), daily weather forecasts aired by Radio Naf have become one of the most popular programmes as the area is prone to natural disasters such as sea storms and tornados (2012:24). The station manager of the CRS thinks that local fishermen have come to rely on Radio Naf's weather forecast.

Radio Pollikontho

As part of BRAC's (Building Resources Across Communities) community empowerment programme, Radio Pollikontho[136] started test transmission on the 25th October 2011 with an aim "to improve the socio-economic condition of the poor and disadvantaged and ensure people's right to information". BRAC received approval from the government to run the CRS on 22 April 2010. But it did not start test transmission until almost one and half years later[137]. The station is located in an area known as Matar Kapon in Moulvibazar district (indicated in Map 1) of Sylhet Division[138]. Moulvibazar Sadar (the main town) Upazila is situated in the west of the Moulvibazar district[139] and in south-eastern side of Sylhet division.

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[136] Radio Pollikontho was officially inaugurated on 12 January 2012

[137] Like other CRSs, Radio Pollikontho operates on 100 watts using 99.2 Mega Hertz frequency.

[138] For details, see "BRAC Inaugurates Radio PolliKontho 99.2 FM in Moulavibazar" [Retrieved from http://www.brac.net/latest-news/item/504-brac-inaugurates-radio-pollikontho-99-2-fm-in-moulavibazar].

[139] Moulvibazar Upazila is bordered with Rajnagar and Balaganj Upaliza in the north, Komolganj in the east, Srimongol in the south and Hobiganj Upazila in the west.

BRAC: the initiator NGO

BRAC (Building Resources Across Communities), formerly known as the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee, founded in 1972 by Sir Fazle Hasan Abed, is an international development organisation focusing on alleviating poverty by empowering people[140]. After the independence of Bangladesh in December 1971, BRAC first started its activities through limited relief operation in some remote areas of the country. In the course of time, this Bangladesh-based organization has developed into one of the largest development NGOs in the world[141]. More than a decade ago, Hudock (2001) found BRAC to be one of the largest southern NGOs, and "perhaps the best known"[142]. To comment on BRAC's transformation as a southern NGO, Hudock writes:

> The strategies it has employed vary, but the result has been an NGO which has made the transition from providing relief and community development assistance at the local level starting in 1972, to an NGO which currently has multi-sectoral activities, support programmes, and training and research capacity. (2001, p.12)

While many NGOs in Bangladesh have developed with the help of "external aid resources and advice", BRAC has been institutionalized by social entrepreneurs like Abed (Lewis 2011). According to Lovell (cited in Lewis 2011), by the 1990s, BRAC has evolved into a multifaceted development agency, "undertaking

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[140] More official information on BRAC can be found at http://www.brac.net/

[141] For a detailed description of BRAC's history, activities on poverty alleviation and empowerment of people at the grassroots level, and evolution of the NGO as an international development organisation, see Smillie, I. (2009) *Freedom From Want: The Remarkable Success Story of BRAC, the Global Grassroots Organization That's Winning the Fight Against Poverty*. Quicksilver Drive, VA: Kumarian Press.

[142] Back in 2001, Hudock also noticed that BRAC "successfully scaled up its grassroots activities so that it now employs over 4,500 people and has an annual operational budget of about US$23 million". For further details, see Hudock, A.C. (2001) *NGOs and Civil Society: Democracy by Proxy?* Cambridge: Polity Press.

everything from credit and empowerment to health and education work" (Lewis, 2011: 114 referring to Lovell, 1992). Like other authors, Smillie (2009) too describes the process by which BRAC has combined a "social business management approach to its development work" and focused on organized growth, innovation and professionalism". Schendel (2009) observes this growth in a different way as he writes:

> Over the years BRAC became a giant corporation that spawned activities as varied as national health programmes, upmarket crafts shops, a tea company, a bank, a university, internet services and an ombudsperson's office. (2009, p.222)

Today BRAC programmes involve education, community empowerment, human rights and legal aid services, gender justice and diversity, microfinance, advocacy for social change, and social enterprises. In 2014, the organisation has disbursed USD$1.9 billion as microcredit to 4.5 million borrowers[143]. BRAC has expanded its operations into different countries in Asia, Africa and the Caribbean including Afghanistan and sub-Saharan Africa. Although BRAC's programmes have transformed from an early approach of relief operation to multi-sectoral projects "for implementing all kinds of 'development policy'" (Feldman 2003), the 1970s empowerment approach has been inspirational to this development NGO's activities. As mentioned previously, Radio Pollikontho too is an initiative of BRAC's community empowerment programme.

The CRS areas: political geography and demographics

Nearly three hundred thousand people live in an area of 344.34 square kilometre of Moulvibazar Sadar Upazila, which stands by the Manu River. The Sadar Upazila has 12 Unions and 419 villages. The literacy rate of this area is 48.61%

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[143] BRAC (2014) *Reaching for the MDGs: Bangladesh Report 2014*. The report can be accessed at http://brac.net/sites/default/files/ar2014/BRAC-annual-report-14.pdf

and the main occupation of the communities in the region is agriculture[144]. Based on the government rules for CR, Radio Pollikontho broadcasts within a radius of 17 kilometres that covers parts of Moulvibazar Sadar and the adjacent areas. The following photographs (Figure 8) that I captured in the field site presents a glimpse of the area and a moment of activity of a volunteer-reporter/producer:

Figure 8: A tin-shed house with a satellite TV receiver (known as *Dish Antena*) in a village which is about 5 kilometres from the Radio Pollikontho station (left). Many inhabitants in this area have relatives or family living abroad, including in the UK. Well-to-do people in this area are able to watch satellite TV channels. The other photograph shows a Radio Pollikontho volunteer-reporter/producer interviewing a village woman (right).

Key themes of the radio show

Radio Pollikontho broadcasts around ten hours of programme regularly on issues of rural development, agriculture, health awareness, and local culture and heritage. The CRS broadcasts special shows for women and children, and also focuses on agendas for good governance, and social issues of violence against women. Besides the special programme, Radio Pollikontho produces entertainment-based programmes, particularly folk music in the local Sylheti

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[144] More information about Moulvibazar Sadar Upazila can be found
http://moulvibazarsadar.moulvibazar.gov.bd/node/59212

language. Examples of some of the shows are *Ain O Jeebon* (আইন ও জীবন), 'Law and Life', *Bazar Dor* (বাজার দর), 'Market Price', *Ishthanio Songbad* (স্থানীয় সংবাদ), 'Local News', and *Shonafola Mati* (সোনাফলা মাটি), 'The Fertile Land'[145]. There are children and women-focused programmes, such as the children's English learning programme *Cholo Khelte Khelte Shikhi* (চলো খেলতে খেলতে শিখি), 'Lets Learn while Playing'[146], and the women development programme *Narikantho* (নারীকণ্ঠ), 'Women Voice'. Mehedi Hasan, station manager of the CRS writes in an NGO publication on the achievement and challenges to CR that the "English language learning programme has created an overwhelming enthusiasm among children" (Hassan, 2012).

Environment Cycle Radio (in Nepal)

Environment Cycle Radio (FM104.2Mhz) is located in Lalitpur, one of the three districts of the Kathmandu Valley. The total area of this district is 385 square kilometres. Patan, well-known for its rich ancient heritage, is a sub-metropolitan city of Lalitpur. The radio is operated as a project of Environmental Television (ETV). I visited the CRS on the eve of Nepal's national election in December 2013.

Environment Cycle Radio is situated at Badegaon village which is more than an hours' drive from Patan city. During my one week's participant observation at the station and around the adjacent areas, I found that under the name of ETV, the community radio was able to broadcast live for one hour only every day. The station manager informed me that due to financial constraints ETV could not start TV broadcasting. In order to manage financial support to run the radio, they had

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[145] More information about the Radio Pollikontho programmes schedule can retrieved from http://pollikontho.communityradio.com.bd/bn/programme-schedule-all

[146] I have already discussed in chapter 2 of this thesis the US Embassy/State Department-sponsored Basic English Language learning programme implemented in five CRSs including Radio Pollikontho. See Chapter 2 for photographs of the brochure/campaign materials of the project.

to rely mostly on donor projects. The following figures (Figure 9) show the ETV Radio building and a moment inside the studio:

Figure 9: The ETV Radio station building at Badegaon village, Lalitpur (left) and two producers inside the studio. (Photo taken during my stay at the CRS)

A typology of Bangladesh CR?

With the exception of the radio shows that particularly focus on local issues, by and large, all the CRSs broadcast similar types of programme mainly targeting the 'development' of the community. With regard to ownership, except for one station, Krishi Radio, which is managed by Agricultural Information Service (AIS) of the government, all other CRSs are NGO-managed. The NGOs either give funding to the CRS from their own organisational sources, or they manage money from donor sponsors. Thus far, the communities do not make any financial contribution to the running of the stations. As a result, there is no imperative to make a typology of the CRS on the basis of any genre or specialization, ownership or nature of funding. However, referring to the earlier discussion of the key themes of the radio shows, in the following table (Table 2), I have presented a summary of the types of programmes, themes and special focus:

Table 2: The themes/types of programmes and special themes or focus of the CR shows

Name	Location	Initiator NGO	Themes/types of programmes	Special Focus of shows
Radio Nalta (FM 99.2 MHz)	Village: Nalta Upazilla: Kaliganj District: Satkhira Division: Khulna	Nalta Hospital and Community Foundation (NHCHF)	Agriculture, Climate change, Disaster risk reduction, Development motivation, Local entertainment and promotion of local culture, Primary health care, Right based issues, Anti-trafficking, Youth children and women issues, Local development information.	Public health, Climate change effects, Solution to climate change mitigation.
Radio Pollikantho (FM 99.2 MHz)	Village: Matar Kapon Union: Chadnigath Upazilla: Moulvibazar Sadar District: Moulvibazar Division: Sylhet	Building Resources Across Communities (BRAC)	Primary health care, Agriculture, Right based issues, Development knowledge and information, Women empowerment, Local government, Talent search, Market price, English language, Street show (issue based), (Personal) Success story	Women and children, Good governance, Agricultural development, Health awareness, Millennium development goal (MDG), Violence against women, Right to information
Radio Naf (FM 99.2 MHz)	Village: Puratan Pallanpara Upazilla: Teknaf District: Cox's Bazar Division: Chittagong	Alliance for Cooperation and Legal Aid Bangladesh (ACLAB)	Anti-drug and anti-trafficking; Disaster risk reduction and Climate change mitigation, Bio-diversity, Primary health care, Fishing and agriculture, Local government; Development motivation, Women development and empowerment, Local culture and entertainment	Weather forecast, Anti-trafficking, Anti- drug, Disaster risk reduction, Climate change, Bio-diversity

Radio Bikrampur (FM 99.2 MHz)	Village: Dewbhogh Upazilla: Munshiganj Sadar District: Munshiganj Division: Dhaka	Environment Council Bangladesh (EC Bangladesh)	Development motivation, Right to information, Local entertainment, Local development news, Climate change, Youth children and women issues, Local culture and heritage	Youth culture, Tobacco control Women health, Safe motherhood

Conducting the fieldwork

I pretested the qualitative research techniques at the selected research sites during November and December 2013. I conducted interviews and FGDs at my planned research sites and carried out participant observation for very short periods at the four Bangladesh CRS, and also at one Nepali CRS situated in the Kathmandu valley. The following photographs (Figure 10) that I took while testing out my ethnographic methods, show a local male artist performing at Radio Pollikontho, and an indigenous presenter of a Radio Naf show for the Rakhain (রাখাইন) community living in Teknaf:

Figure 10: A local artist at Radio Pollikontho (left) and a presenter for a show at Radio Naf (right)

Before I had my methods pretested, I reviewed the methods applied in other CR studies, such as the ones described briefly in Table 1. Although I knew about the activities of the CRS[147] and had already visited some of them before I designed the research project, visiting the research sites before the main ethnographic observation began helped me to collect information relating to the social, cultural and development realities of the communities in the broadcasting areas. The pretesting was also useful to revise some aspects of my research design. It was particularly useful in selecting specific areas for observation which have bearings on the processes of NGO-ization of CR broadcasting in Bangladesh.

Overall, I spent an aggregate of six months during November 2014 – May 2015 in the field sites, which include the four CRSs and their broadcasting coverage areas. I had been a participant observer for about a month at Radio Nalta and Radio Bikrampur. As mentioned earlier, I spent more time at the other two CRSs - Radio Pollikontho and Radio Naf where I spent two months in each of the stations. During my second and follow up stay at the two stations in 2016, I spent

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[147] Twelve CRSs were in operation when I pretested the methods.

around a month at Radio Pollikontho and around two months at Radio Naf. Except for Radio Nalta, I made further short follow up visits to the stations in 2017. As an extension to participant observation, I conducted in-depth interviews and FGDs. I also undertook a good number of one-to-one interviews with, among others, key opinion makers, CR advocates, and regionally and internationally known CR experts and activists. The following photographs (Figure 11) show a couple FGDs in progress in the field sites where I worked:

Figure 11: A focus group discussion (FGD) in progress at a village yard in the broadcasting coverage area of Radio Pollikontho, in which Dr. Gareth Stanton from Goldsmiths College was present (left); and I am conducting a similar discussion at Radio Naf office where, among others, the former station manager is seen participating (right).

The following table (Table 3) presents an overall picture of the research techniques and sources of information that I applied to pursue the research questions, and subsequently the objectives of the study:

Table 3: Research questions, methods and technique, and sources of information

Key research questions	Methods/techniques used	Participants/respondents/ source of information
What are the key ideas of the core values of CR; who produces them, and how are the discourses manifested and distributed?	Thematic content analysis of the issues/themes/ideas; as presented in publicity materials; and interviews.	CR campaign materials/publications and promotional communication materials; and CR campaigners, activists and experts
What is the current state of community engagement and autonomy for the communities to access and participate in the CRS?	Participant observation, FGD, In-depth Interview, field notes, discussion.	Wide range of community people including the radio listeners, volunteers, producers and listeners' club members; participants in the CRS, stations managers, initiator NGO personnel.
To what extent the procedure and approach applied by the initiator NGOs to operate the CRS reflect the key values of CR as participatory, community-driven and interactive medium?	Interview, Participant observation, FGDs; and review of relevant literatures	Station managers, Key decision makers at initiator NGOs, management community members, Community people, CR experts, CR Policy experts; and CR literatures and official documentation and archive
Are the current practice on the ground, and modus operandi in the CRS along with the CR policy provisions are paving ways towards NGO-ization of community radio broadcasting?	FGD, Interview, Participant Observation, field notes, analysis of organisational (CRS) practice	Station managers, CR initiators, CR experts, NGO and development experts, Key government executives, Civil society organisations, local government representatives, NGO project beneficiaries, community opinion makers, producers and relevant community people
What scope has the CRS thus far created for the community to	Interview, participant observation, field notes;	Key opinion makers, Civil Societies, Station managers, NGO and development experts,

forge alternative or community public spheres?	and relevant literature review	Key government executives, and local journalists' association, relevant community people
What bearing does the current practice has on the democratic development of the CRS, and how is the process affecting the democratization of community communication?	Participant observation, Interview, and review of relevant publications and communication materials	Donors, CR initiators, media and communication experts, Initiators and non-initiator NGO staff, communication and social experts, evaluation reports, CR publications, donor reports

Data Analysis

I have followed qualitative thematic analysis schedules to interpret the data derived from my ethnographic observation and supplementary qualitative inquiries. I have categorized the data manually and organised them under core themes and sub-themes in the light of the key research questions and sub-questions of the study. I should note that I have not analysed the full range of photos taken during my field observations. However, the selected photos used in the thesis to some extent, contribute to the overall process-documentation.

Ethical guidelines

In respect of ethical concerns that might have arisen at any stage of the study, I have followed the Goldsmiths' ethical guidelines. These rules have also been followed in presenting the findings of my fieldwork. I have been cautious in revealing the identity of persons whose views are included in the dissertation. When citing critical statements, I have retained the ethics of confidentiality and refrained from mentioning names, designation, affiliations, place or any other specific identification of the source. In a few cases, I have also avoided exposing the real names of the individuals if I have judged that their personal views have

the potential to cause any problems in respect to their work affiliation and future social engagements.

Chapter conclusion

In this chapter, I have described the approaches adopted in order to collect my data. I have laid out the research design, and discussed how the qualitative data were collected from relevant sources. Primarily, the inquiries were conducted applying the ethnographic method of participant observation, which was supplemented by in-depth interview and focus group discussion (FGD). I have also outlined the fieldwork sites chosen for the in-depth investigations of the reality of CR on the ground in Bangladesh and described some of the basic features of each of the CRSs. The experience of participant observation will be described in more detail in the next chapter.

Chapter 5: An in-depth look into the CR in practice

The situation on the ground: reflecting the fundamental principles?

> (We have) arrived in a new land –
> Had a shipwreck, floated along the coast
> Hopes, fascinating, will be produced from the language of unknown souls
> Fabricated, sensitive network of coloured twines …[148]
>
> "Elem Notun Deshe" (এলেম নতুন দেশে) from dance-drama
> *Tasher Desh* (The Land of Cards) by Rabindranath Tagore,
> Nobel Prize winner in Literature 1913

Introduction

This chapter brings together the primary findings of my ethnographic inquiry into the practice of the NGO-led CR in Bangladesh. It deals with the findings of my field inquiry which was aimed at studying to what extent the key CR principles are reflected in practice. I have written this chapter using the qualitative data derived from my ethnographic investigation[149] through participant observation, focused discussions and in-depth interviews largely with the people from the

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[148] Full English translation of the song by Anjan Ganguli can be found at
http://www.geetabitan.com/lyrics/rs-e/elem-natun-deshe-english-translation.html

[149] I have already mentioned in the methodology chapter (Chapter 4) that originally I carried out my ethnographic inquiries at four NGO-operated CRSs and the broadcasting areas. The majority of the data presented and analysed in this chapter are from the two CRSs – Radio Pollikontho and Radio Naf where I spent more time than the other two stations. However, in order to present a holistic view of my observation and subsequently to substantiate my arguments, in some cases, I have also used the data collected from the other two sites - Radio Bikrampur and Radio Nalta.

local communities and CR stakeholders at community level[150], as well as my informal conversations with them. This empirical chapter presents not only the findings of my critical examination of the level of community participation in the CR, but also documents the good practices which could lead to the development of radio as a genuinely community-owned participatory medium. As comprehensive community involvement determines the dynamism of community communication, my inquiries were guided by the notion that democratic access and active participation are the key components that, in effect, have bearings on the operational aspects, as well as the overall development of the CRSs. While this chapter presents a more descriptive account of my experiences during fieldwork, in the next chapter, I will analyse the operational realities linking the data to the views expressed by experts, advocates and lobbyists, initiators, and the stakeholders who one way or another shape the discourses and influence the characteristics of the practice of CR.

Observing CR in practice

Conceptually, the study combines a number of interrelated academic discourses contributing to the notions of democratization of media and communication in relation to CR. As regards to pursuing the research questions which were modified over the period of my field visits, I observed the processes and practices in the CRSs both in their overall and specific contexts. In addition to looking into the level of participation, my observations include, but are not limited to, the communication approaches and organisational culture of the initiator organisations. Naturally, these are again linked to the NGO approaches to development, and media and communication. In terms of presenting the findings

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[150] Among others, the participants in the discussions and interviews are members of the local community including both nonparticipants and participants in the CRS, general listeners, listener club members, local civil society members, special interest groups and people of marginalized sections, station managers, volunteers, producers and members of staff, NGO/INGO (other than the CR initiator organisations) staff working in the CRS areas, government officers at Upazila level, and elected representatives to the local government offices.

of the investigation, I have written them thematically rather than narrating my experience for each of the stations.

In my visits to some remote areas, I was accompanied either by the station managers or senior member of staff, while in most other cases, I took help from volunteers and my local aides. In the areas where the initiator NGOs have development-projects and beneficiaries, I relied on a member of staff to manage appointments for interviews and to assist in setting up discussion groups. Nevertheless, I was cautious of the fact that sometimes the beneficiaries might refrain from making any critical comments. I was always wary if it seemed to me that the respondents or participants showed any indications of having been briefed (to speak only of the success of the CR, for example) by the CRS staff prior to a discussion. Although they did not accompany me at all times, and neither did they interfere with my intention to visit a particular place or meet particular people of groups, Nonetheless, I was to some degree dependent on their advice on travel and other local issues (especially when local political tensions were high). I should note also that sometimes the help from the NGOs was useful in organizing meetings with women and young people, as well as members of marginalized communities.

Women in general in the CR areas are socially and religiously conservative. I needed to make prior contacts to hold meetings or FGDs with them. For example, NGOs like BRAC and EC Bangladesh (currently known as Ambala Foundation) have good networks of women's groups in their broadcasting areas. This results from the fact that much of their work is focused on women's empowerment and they help to run micro-credit programmes targeted at women's groups. Almost all the CR initiator organisations have been implementing different development projects, including micro-financing, in their respective station areas for many years. This has also helped them to develop strong relationships with the local civic organisations and the local chapters of the NGO-led campaigns on good governance and anti-corruption, for instance.

The programmes involve local journalists and opinion leaders in the campaign activities. Thus, the NGO networks were also useful to me in making contacts with the civil society groups. Above all, as mentioned in the methodology chapter, my prior acquaintance with the CRSs that grew over time though repeated visits to the CR areas, and my personal and professional network, worked as "social capital" during my fieldwork.

I spent a significant amount of the day dividing my time between participant observation at the stations and holding discussions or interviews with the members of the local community in adjacent localities. In most of the late afternoons and evening, I spent time interacting with the people in the CRS townships. Evenings were deemed to be good time for the station managers to give me a longer period of time for informal conversations. Late afternoon or evening were also convenient for the business people, community leaders, and cultural personalities who are usually busy during the day. NGO workers, and local journalists gather at the local press clubs in the later part of day. They preferred evening for having a chat with me. The government officials too were available for informal conversations after office hours. The following photos (Figure 12) show moments of discussions at two CRSs:

Figure 12: A discussion with Radio Pollikontho members of staff and volunteers/producers at the station in Moulvibazar (left); and a meeting in progress with NGO and INGO staff in a recent venture to engage them in the activities of Radio Naf (right)

Apart from the pre-agreed or scheduled and formal meetings, I interacted informally and had conversations with the community performers in the CR shows, volunteers, producers and station managers, and members of the local community of different professions (and people without a job or profession) – for example, shopkeepers and vendors of vegetable, fish or perishable goods, as well as buyers in the markets; local restaurant managers and service people, and customers who come to take away or eat their meals; rickshaw pullers, three wheeler drivers, and bus and lorry drivers; and farmers, small entrepreneurs, and day labourers. I also managed to have informal conversations with the elected representatives to Union Parishad or Upazila Parishad. In an informal setting, I found that the local government representatives and government officials were happy to comment on the issues which they would not have otherwise been willing to discuss in a more formal context. At the local level, NGOs maintain cordial relationships with both the local government and development departments of the government as the NGOs need the support of the government departments concerned with the implementation of development and livelihood projects.

The methods of documenting my discussions and interviews varied depending on the environment and context in which the meetings were held. I always asked permission to record the interviews. Few of the interviewees did not want their statements to be recorded, while some others wanted part of their interviews off the record. However, for those who did not want their interviews to be taped, I got their permission to take notes. In the FGDs, I first explained to the groups the objectives of my discussion and the research for which the data would be used. Except for a very few short video clips, I did not try to video record the meetings. In order to capture the scene, and, to some extent, to record the process, photos were taken either by myself or by my local helpers.

Besides documenting meetings and conversations, I organised field notes, in which contents and key issues of the discussions and conversations were

written. I particularly noted down my observation of the key issues in the actions related to the daily operation, and mode of participation of local people in the operational process. I jotted down my impressions of the organisational culture of the NGOs that might have had a bearing on the progress of the CRS as a participatory and community-run medium. The field notes constitute a personal record of the development of my inquiries from the formative stage to the final phase of the study.

Before I was able to find out to what extent and in what capacity members of the community are engaged as listener and participant or participant-listener in the CRS, I attempted to understand the community knowledge of the fundamental values and activities of the CR. This led me to observe further the communities' willingness to participate and contribute to the radio as a community asset. In this respect, as participant observer, I also became interested in inquiring into the relevance of the medium as a participatory institution within community life. Using part of the qualitative field-data, as well as depending on my field notes of the ethnographic observation, in this chapter, the phenomena of the CR practice have been presented with critical notes[151] under the interdependent notions of awareness, access and participation, along with my evaluation of the key outcomes of community-based broadcasting.

CR in town, but does the community care about it?

The initiator organisations did not carry out planned communication campaigns in order to raise community awareness, neither did they attempt to help them to build collective consciousness of the significance of CR. Radio Pollikontho, established by BRAC as part of the organisation's community empowerment

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[151] Following my general ethical precepts, I have made sure that mention of name, designation and place, and disclosure of identity do not lead to a situation of conflict of interest. In case of a critical or controversial statement by a respondent, I have not disclosed the names in order to protect them from any potentially adverse consequences.

programme, communicated the CR information with its beneficiary groups. Radio Pollikontho, Radio Nalta and Radio Bikrampur officials said that they had organised some awareness building programmes when stations were about to start up. As I visited the sites and spoke with the CRS managers, volunteers and community people, however, it became evident that the stations did not run any organised campaign to encourage active community involvement. Compared to the other three stations, Radio Naf is lagging behind and thus needed an aggressive communication initiative to inform people of the activities of the CRS. On special events or anniversaries, such as the founding day of the CRS or World Radio Day, the stations do organise rallies and carry banners emblazoned with station slogans.

A community listeners' club "is a group of men and women who wish to listen to radio programmes actively and systematically with a view to discussing the content and above all putting into practice the lessons learned" (FAO-Dimitra Project, 2008)[152]. Listeners' clubs were formed in all the CRS areas in Bangladesh with a view to find volunteers, programme participants and to increase listenership. The organisations expected that the clubs would enable the CRSs to gather communities' suggestions for programme contents and feedback on the shows. One senior member of staff of an initiator-NGO said, "Although there was a lack of planned initiative for awareness building, organising listeners' clubs and engaging volunteers with broadcasting might be considered to be a communication intervention to promote CR". Many members of the clubs themselves are beneficiaries of the NGO projects, including recipients of micro-credit. The following photos (Figure 13) show the Radio

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[152] The definition was agreed on by participants at a workshop organised by FAO-Dimitra Project in Lubumbashi, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in preparation of new listeners' clubs. For details, see FAO-Dimitra (2011) *Community Listeners' Clubs*: Stepping stones for actions in rural areas, FAO: Brussels.

Pollikontho manager[153] and a CR volunteer/reporter in conversation with a woman in a listeners' club in a village nearby Matar Kapon, Moulvibazar:

Figure 13: Senior Station Manager of Radio Pollikontho, Mehedi Hasan speaking with a woman (left) just before she and other listeners are interviewed by a reporter from the station (right)

Radio Naf has twenty-six listener clubs, of which six or seven clubs are comprised of women. Radio Pollikontho on the other hand, has formed more than six hundred listener clubs. According to Anna Minz, Director of BRAC's Community Empowerment, the communication between the CRS and listeners' groups is contributing to the promotion of community engagement and volunteerism, as she says –

> We follow up on how the radio shows were received by the listeners. The reporters/producers ask for their feedback to our radio programmes. The objective of this exercise is to transform the listeners' awareness into practice. This is, in other words, promoting volunteerism and encouraging community engagement with the station.

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[153] A senior Station Manager for Radio Pollikontho used to work for BRAC's development projects in Moulvibazar before the CRS was established. He has been in charge of the activities for the station since the preparatory phase, and was responsible for starting up broadcasting. In 2017, he, along with four other CR managers/producers received US State Department funding to undertake a radio training programme at the University of Oklahoma.

It is quite difficult for any small community-based radio station to keep contact with such a large number of listeners' clubs. In Radio Pollikontho, many members of the all women listeners' clubs have come from BRAC's community groups called *Polli Shomaj* (Village Society) and *Union Shomaj* (Union Society)[154]. The station also formed listeners' clubs consisting of children. These clubs are meant to give their feedback to the shows on child rights issues, which has been a special focus of the CRS. Yet, the manager and producers of the station cannot manage time to visit the hundreds of clubs with any frequency[155], let alone have regular consultations or follow-up meetings with the members. Radio Naf organised a few awareness raising events for the listeners' clubs in the early days of broadcasting. However, they did not seem to have followed up with the club members in the last couple of years or more. Except for a few target-specific shows, the station staff do not enter into discussions with the club members to learn the reach of their radio programmes or to understand the level of reception of the shows.

I visited one CR Fellow's[156] house near Teknaf, in a village where the majority of the inhabitants belong to a religious minority community. She had told me that "the CRS management did not carry out any promotional activity in my area". In reality, with the exception of her mother, the women whom I spoke with in the neighbourhood hardly had any knowledge of the CRS. Neither did they show any

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[154] *Polli Shomaj* is a ward level forum of people, especially women, facilitated by BRAC's Empowerment Programme. Each *Polli Shomaj* is comprised of 50-60 members on average. According to a BRAC programme officer, the forum is initially formed with the help from BRAC, but it is expected that eventually the group members will run it independently. *Union Shomaj* is a federation of *Polli Shomaj*. It operates at the Union level and serves as a platform for grassroots advocacy and networking among *Polli Shomaj* leaders. Usually *Union Shomaj* meetings are held at the *Union Parishad* premises.

[155] Although it is not practical to expect a CRS to be able to follow up over six hundred radio listener clubs, BRAC as a big development NGO and might have a view to use the radio as a message-multiplier for its empowerment, legal support and livelihood improvement projects.

[156] CR Fellowships are managed and coordinated by BNNRC which has been representing the CR sector to the government and donors since the CR policy was approved in 2008. The grant for women fellows are provided by Free Press Unlimited.

signs of being willing to contribute to the development of the community-based medium. I have already suggested in this thesis that the communities were not involved in the advocacy campaign or in the lobbying for CR legislation (Reza, 2012a:112).[157] This gap has had a fatal impact on the state of peoples' knowledge and perceptions of CR. In fact, what I observed around five years ago in relation to the situation of community awareness of the values and potential of CR for community communication has not changed much in the intervening years.

The local business communities are not enthusiastic about a CRS that is located only a few blocks or a few kilometres away. In many places the initiators did not consult or communicate with other NGOs and INGOs (which are not initiators of CR) to discuss the activities of the CRS or to seek their cooperation. Almost the same goes for the local opinion leaders who were never contacted by the initiator NGO to ascertain whether they could be involved and contribute to the CRS. For the first time since Radio Naf began its operation, the CRS held an opinion sharing meeting with the representatives of the NGOs and INGOs working in Teknaf in September 2016.

Perceptions of the values and potentials of CR

Lal Miah, himself a fisherman and community leader of the fishing community of Uttar Jalia Para in Teknaf is also a playwright and composer[158]. He expresses his understanding of the characteristics and practice of CR:

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[157] My observation on community involvement in CR campaigns and the policy process, originally published in 2012, has recently been cited in Rahman, A, Reza, S M S and Haq, F. (2017) "The Politico-commercial nexus and broadcast policy reform in Bangladesh" In Udupa, S. and McDowell, S. D. (2017) (Eds.) *Media as Politics in South Asia*, Routledge: London.

[158] Lal Miah is unusually well travelled. As part of local government delegations, he has visited many river and sea ports in Thailand and Sri Lanka. This has enabled him to observe the life and activities of the fisher folk outside the River Naf and the Bay of Bengal. Lal Miah wrote a couple of plays for Radio Naf, in which his fellow fishermen performed. I was also told that in its early days he also composed a few folk songs for the CRS.

> Community radio is for the people, run with help or donations from outside; operated in consultation with the local people; and has been set up to operate within the community purview. You can visit the station anytime you want. You can hold and use a recorder. I was able to bring home with me a recorder.

He never thought there would be a radio station in his locality. He also feels the community should preserve it. While Lal Miah demonstrates his knowledge of CR and expresses his enthusiasm for the medium he is, nonetheless, unusual. The young people and women in the neighbourhoods closest to the station are hardly aware of the CRS's activities. Some of the villagers might have listened to the CR shows a few times in the past, but they have never been regular listeners. Furthermore, they are not sure how they could contribute to the operation or sustainability of the station.

I had a meeting with the leaders of the Truck Owners Association of Teknaf. Their office is located within walking distance of Radio Naf. They had heard of the radio, but nobody from the station had ever approached them to request any help or to discuss with them the role the radio might play in the town. Nobody from the station has ever asked them for any contribution or canvassed any advertising. The business owners think it is an NGO radio, and like any donor-supported development project, the radio receives money from donors.[159] I spoke with a small tea stall come restaurant manager whose simple outlet is located just a block away from Radio Naf (Figure 14). Previously, as a community aide, he had worked with Save the Children and UNHCR. He said that the shop had

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[159] One of the business leaders explicitly said that he believes CRS receives donor money for running the station and that "NGOs do not do anything for free". This is the reason he thinks the CRS people never felt the need to ask them for financial support.

indeed received a radio set from the station, but that the set is now broken[160]. He knows about the CRS, but admitted that he does not listen to the programmes. He is also not adequately aware of the radio's activities.

Figure 14: A station manager is interviewing a woman to learn if she listens to the CR programmes (left); A street-side tea stall manager expresses his unhappiness that the station management have not done enough to inform him of the community-based broadcasting in Teknaf.

A former volunteer of Radio Pollikontho said:

> Despite being in operation for several years, many people in the broadcasting areas are still unaware that there is a community radio in Moulvibazar, even though it has been established to benefit them. At the same time, there are many people who have heard of the CRS, but are not keen to know more about it, and neither do they listen to our programmes regularly.

He thinks several factors are responsible for this situation. There is insufficient information concerning the radio available to local people; radio sets themselves

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[160] There was a tradition of keeping radio set for playing songs to entertain customers. Radio was played for news and information at shops including tea stalls, restaurants, hair-cutting saloons, *paan* and tobacco outlets, and grocery shops until the early 1980s, when they began to be replaced by cassette players/recorders imported from abroad or brought by migrant workers who had worked largely in the Gulf States. Keeping a television in the shops also became a trend but this enabled audiences to watch only the state TV programmes. Over the decades, this has gradually been replaced by a cable connection. However, one may still find people in small corner shops, especially in the rural areas, watching vintage Bengali movie on TV channels. But it is now rare to see people gathering around a radio set to listen to music, drama or radio talks.

are not widely available; the younger generations are getting more interested in the use of the social media; and some old-style mobile phone sets need earphones (as many people do not yet own smart phones).

In a focused discussion with NGO staff, one participant told me that they were not yet "sufficiently informed about the CRS as an NGO-led development project". There were further doubts expressed as to whether the "officers working at the government's development departments are adequately aware of the value and activities of CRS". In contrast, the Executive Director of ACLAB said, "Our station (Radio Naf) has a Facebook page. Information about the radio shows is uploaded after they are broadcast. This way we disseminate the information and work of the CRS to the people". The Access to Information (A2I) project under the Prime Minister's office made a web portal for all the CRSs currently in operation. Some of the stations have their Facebook pages though not all of them are updated regularly. Some stations are sufficiently au courant with social media to make their information available on Twitter. Despite such Internet-based information sharing though, and after five years of broadcasting from a CRS located in his own municipality, one Vice Chairman (male) of an Upazila Parishad said, "I have not heard of their activities; and I do not know much about the (community) radio".

Overall listenership for the CR, if the truth be told, is poor[161]. In the CRS areas, thousands of people are not yet quite sure what the radio (CR) does. Except for the listeners' club members or the individuals and group of people who had an opportunity to participate in the radio, the larger part of the population in the broadcasting areas either have not heard about the medium or are unclear as to what it does. In addition, there are people in the communities who might have infrequently listened to the radio shows, but ultimately did not continue listening.

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[161] The CRSs follow formulae suggested by CR support organisations like BNNRC to measure the reach and listenership mathematically. They calculate approximately how many people might have listened to a particular show. My own observation of the level of community awareness and the extent of the radio listening habit on the ground do not suggest that the mathematical calculations of the listenership employed represent the actual reality, rather, they result in an overestimate.

The state of ignorance and lack of familiarity with the community-based medium has led to a situation where the communities do not feel to any enthusiasm for or inclination to participate in the activities of the CRS. Regarding this issue, the CEO of ACLAB says:

> A big problem is the lack of realization of the essence of CR. I do not think there is an urge among our station manager or producers to learn the true use of community radio. They are happy with just producing a show. They do not care if anyone is listening. If the community does not care about what we are doing, then what is the point of running a CRS?

There are many instances where even the people working or living in the neigbourhoods closest to the stations do not listen to the CR programmes. Just like the perceptions held by the business organisations in Teknaf, professional bodies and business groups and the people around the CRS areas in Moulvibazar, Bikrampur and Nalta think it is a kind of 'NGO radio' and that it does similar work to NGOs, i.e. it is simply another way of implementing development projects. One CR advocate and initiator expresses his frustration:

> In reality, the whole practice has come to a point where people have the impression that this (CRS) is an NGO office. Here nobody seems concerned about how the radio programmes are received out in the community. We keep on producing and broadcasting shows, but it does not matter to our producers whether people are listening or not.

The station manager of Radio Naf makes a different observation in this regard. In addition to the limited awareness of the CR's activities, there are few technical issues that should also be taken into account. Referring to an incident which caused an interruption in the transmission of the CRS in June 2014, he said:

> This impacted on the interest of the listeners. They lost their enthusiasm to listen to our programmes. Although our broadcasting did not stop completely, for some days we could not keep to the programme schedule. As a consequence, we lost our credibility to the listeners. They were frustrated.

The manager thinks this credibility loss was also responsible for a reluctance in the community and among volunteers to participate in the CRS. He also blames the previous station manager for failing to liaise with the initiator NGO office in Dhaka. There was also a technical issue at the beginning of Radio Pollikontho's operation. The station's antenna was struck by a thunderbolt which caused some interruptions in broadcasting for a brief period. The listeners were confused as they did not hear anything from the station for some days. However, the initiator organisation responded to the problem promptly and the station was soon fully operational once more.

As part of their promotional endeavors, the initiators distributed free radio sets to the communities at the beginning of the CR broadcasting periods. In 2017, Radio Naf and Radio Pollikontho distributed more radio sets in their respective local communities. Generally, I found only a small number of people still have their sets though and it was not possible for me to verify in a meaningful way if those sets that were retained were still in working order. A variety of people, from farmers to fishermen, across my different fieldwork sites, showed me the radio sets that they had received from the CRSs. One example, however, sheds interesting anecdotal light on this topic. Ani Sharma, a volunteer and CR fellow, told me that there are over a hundred households in her village. Of those households, 20-25 families have some degree of familiarity with the CRS, even though many of them do not have radio sets. Her own family has a radio set that her sister received as a fellow. As I conducted FGDs in her village[162], I uncovered the fact that except for Ani's household, none of the other families

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[162] The majority of the population in Sharma's village belong to the Dalit community, but there are Muslim families too. My FGDs in the village were attended both by Dalit and Muslim women.

ever had a radio set. It also did not appear to me that the CR fellows discussed the CRS with their neighbours. Furthermore, the radio set that the fellow's family had in their possession could not be played as there were no batteries. Like many others, this family is not willing to spend the money required to buy batteries needed to listen to the CR shows.

I found instances where people with a radio set are very protective of it as a possession. They regard the set as prestige object rather than something for daily use. Again, the people who listen to the CR occasionally or infrequently do not invite their neighbours to join them in listening. This has led to a restricted flow of information, which poses a barrier to any effective communication process and might hinder the rise of CR as "community mass media" (Foxwell, 2012). Some years ago, in studying a project on the use of Right to Information (RTIA), I observed a similar tendency among NGO groups who kept important information to themselves rather circulate it more generally to the benefit of the community as a whole. The only people outside the group with whom they would share the information were their relatives.[163] In my opinion, as change agents, the CR fellows, volunteers, producers and station managers could have done more to promote the community-based radio. In other words, they could have helped to raise the level of community awareness in order to accelerate a growth in listenership, and encourage community participation[164]. The following photos (Figure 15) show moments of group listening, which is generally hard to find outside the guided environment of the listeners' clubs:

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[163] See "A Qualitative Assessment of BRAC's Creating Awareness of RTI Law for Community Empowerment (CARE) Project". The report can be found at https://www.brac.net/sites/default/files/portals/BRAC-WB%20RTI%20Project%20Evaluation%20Report.pdf

[164] Although I always explained my objectives to the participants in FGDs, I detected that some people felt that the aim of holding discussions with them was in order to develop some new (NGO) projects which would be of benefit to them.

Figure 15: A group of women listening to the Basic English Language programme as appeared in a BELFORA promotional brochure (left); and a feature photo (published in *The Guardian* in 2013) shows women listening to the CR programmes while at work in north-east Bangladesh (right).

On the other hand, I cannot ignore the fact that I was told by certain community members who had gained a familiarity with the CRSs, (in particular individuals living nearer to the sea), that Radio Naf played a crucial role during the cyclonic storms *Mahasen* 2013 and *Roanu* in May, 2016[165]. This was highlighted in the NGO publications as an exceptional community service offered by the CRS. Radio Naf ran continuous broadcasting, despite power outages, for a very long period during the extreme weather conditions. People in Teknaf used battery-powered radios as their only means of receiving emergency information broadcast by the CRS. To my surprise, I was unable to find a concrete answer from any respondent as to why people did not become more aware of the radio station and continue listening after this vital service had been provided to them during such a period of emergency and natural disaster.

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[165] Tropical storm *Mahasen* hit the coastal areas of Bangladesh in May 2013 "killing 12 people, destroying thousands of huts and forcing up to a million people to flee", according to BBC. The BBC report can be found at http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-22537615; and cyclonic storm Roanu caused severe flooding in Bangladesh in May 2016 killing at least 21 people and injuring many more. The Reuters report can be found at http://www.reuters.com/article/us-cyclone-bangladesh/cyclone-roanu-kills-21-in-bangladesh-softens-idUSKCN0YC08E

I did not find statistics as to the demographic distribution of listenership in the semi-urban and rural areas. The station manager of Radio Naf said:

> Our main listeners are the peripheral populations, particularly the fishing communities, Dalits and the *Adibashi* (indigenous) community. Our radio shows have greater acceptance among these communities. Yet, we think our most immediate or nearest communities are the people in the town where the CRS is located. We need to establish our credibility here.

My observations suggest that despite the apparently overall poor audience figures on the ground, the CR shows are better received in rural and, indeed, some remote areas. I have understood from my discussions in such regions that there are two factors which might have contributed to this fact. The first is the use of the local language in the CR shows. The second driving factor is the limited opportunity for rural communities to have access to other media (e.g. cable and satellite TV) and Internet services. The situation is different in the areas adjacent to the towns where nowadays cable operators have extended their services and young people are gradually becoming heavy users of mobile technology and Internet services.

There was high hope that people would use their mobile phone to access the CR programmes. On the ground, I observed a dim picture as the listeners in general barely use their mobile phone to access the CR programmes at all (Figure16 shows photos of listeners' choice of device for radio shows). In recent years, a rise in the use of mobile and smart phones has brought about changes in peoples' communication patterns, particularly with young people both in urban and rural Bangladesh[166]. However, one may still observe gender disparity in

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[166] Although the scope of my study does not include investigation of the bearings of ICT on the processes of social and political communication, in relation to the observation of radio consumption – habit and choice of technology and format, I think there is a need for multi-disciplinary approaches to study the consumption of the CR outputs. Although the CRS uses local language, plays folk songs, in the wake of a new communications world, the tastes of the media audiences are shifting from mere folk or local to cosmopolitan entertainment genres.

media use in relation to both social media and mobile technology, although the difference has started to decline. In my field sites, overall, people are leaving behind their radio listening habit. The generations of radio listeners have now turned into the watchers of satellite TV shows. The young listeners interested in the phone-in CR shows focusing on entertainment and youth issues, use their smart phones to check online postings and access live broadcasting.

Figure16: A child in a village where I conducted a couple of FGDs with listeners' club members is posing with a radio set (right); and an NGO executive is trying to fix a connection on a young man's mobile phone so that he can listen to the CR shows on his digital device (right).

It is an uncommon scene in a local bazar (market) to find someone listening to the CR on a mobile phone. But one may find young people are using their sets to tune to the commercial FM stations' musical shows or similar entertainment programmes. In my discussion with the high school boys and girls, I asked them if they listen to the CRS. Except for those who volunteer for the CRS, students in general are not interested in it. However, some of them use mobile or smart phone for listening to the entertainment-themed CR shows[167].

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[167] The entertainment and local taste-based programmes are similar to the formats used by the commercial FM radio for entertainment. The CRSs like Radio Bikrampur maintain a Facebook page to post information for the youth-targeted shows which provides opportunity for the young listeners to interact further through social media.

Who participates, in what capacity, at which level?

While observing the level of community awareness and community interest in the CR, simultaneously I inquired to what extent the community could manage access to the CRS and negotiate their participation in management and broadcasting. I was also interested in looking into the issues which could limit or control communities' active participation in the programming and operational procedures.

In relation to Berrigan (1977, 1979) and Rennie's (2006) concept of access[168], I would say that in the current state of affairs, the practice of CR ensures availability of a community-oriented broadcasting facility. However, it is not an unconditional fact that the local population is able to utilize the small media outlet to establish community agency. In the extended sense of the notion of access (Berrigan 1977 & 1979, Rennie, 2006), the current operational procedures (which I will discuss further in Chapter 6) limit the opportunity for individual or collective self-expression through deliberative actions in producing and broadcasting news and views, as well as discursive expressions in entertainment and educational programmes, for example.

On the ground we find in fact that only a limited number of local people have had partial involvement in the production processes. While it is understood that they cannot participate in every aspect of the operations of the CRS, and that "nonprofessional media makers" (Rennie, 2006) are not sufficiently technically skilled to run the stations, this does pose issues in relation to any discussion of access. Members of the local communities are yet to build their capacity, particularly in relation to the technical know-how of production, but there are few initiatives in place to alter this situation. If access and participation are to be

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[168] See Chapter 3 for a discussion of access and participation which relies on Berrigan, F. J. (1977 and 1979) and Rennie, E (2006).

associated with the idea of self-management, in practice, the NGOs are not letting CRS be used for "whatever purposes the community decides". Although a small number or people have learnt production techniques, they cannot decide the agendas for programming and are very poorly represented in the organisational structure. This fact is borne out by a salient fact already alluded to in this dissertation, no local community member in any of the CR catchment areas without any prior attachment to the initiator NGOs has ever become a station manager.

Although, as a channel of communication, the CRSs demonstrate numerous positive attributes, they are yet to "enable groups and individuals to enter into public discourse", which as Howley (2010) describes, would also support "popular participation in decision-making processes" and promote a "greater sense of individual and collective agency" (Howley, 2010:16). The management committee members[169] do not say anything in particular about the vitality of community engagement and active participation in addressing the challenges to establishing community agency over community broadcasting.

Some management committee members think that there is a lack of suitable transport available which has important ramifications for women participants' and the movement of volunteers. Local transports in most of the CRS areas is often unsuited to women. Sometimes they find it difficult to get a suitable vehicle to travel to and from the CRS. However, despite difficult journeys, I found that young female volunteers do indeed come from quite far away. They have been working with the stations for the last few years. Although the initiators and management committee members recognise that community participation should

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[169] According to the CR policy conditions, each CRS in Bangladesh should have a management committee and an advisory committee. The policy states, "There should be a management committee that is reflective of the ideas of the community that the CRS seeks to serve" (Article 2.d). The advisory committee is part of monitoring of CR broadcasting (Article 8).

be increased, they do not necessarily accept that the situation is impacting on the proper functioning of the medium[170].

The operational environments of the CRSs are informal and flexible. Unlike the state and commercial media outlets, they are not bureaucratic or restricted. If willing, people can come to the station at anytime and without prior appointments and can speak to a member of staff. Despite this relaxed environment, however, people in general do not come to the station to inquire if they can learn a skill which may be beneficial to them. Some people told me that they know they will not get a paid job at the station even though they have been trained. Some young volunteers too have a similar impression and argue that their chances of getting a paid job as a producer are slim. I have known a few producers from indigenous and disadvantaged communities, one of whom has recently left their station, but they are rare. As far as top positions are concerned, except for Radio Naf, which appointed a second station manager, the same persons have been station managers in all the CRSs since their inception.

Youth volunteer engagement is high in musical shows and radio magazines that include other entertainment genres. For example, currently Radio Bikrampur airs six programmes a week that include musical entertainment and a phone-in option. But on the whole, most of the youths and adults who participate in the shows come to perform by invitation only. It happened only on rare occasions that an individual or group approached the station staff intending to perform. At Radio Pollikontho, local musical groups perform most regularly, while at Radio Naf cultural groups that performed in the beginning of the station's existence

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[170] They are keen on mentioning that some stations have infrastructural problem, and at the same time, their operation is being affected technically by inadequacies in the power supply. This is causing them extra expense. Whenever there is a power outage, the stations have to arrange an alternative power supply through generators. The problems that the initiators identified to begin with include insufficient number of listeners' clubs, lack of publicity, staff shortage, lack of skilled people and volunteers, lack of acceptance, and equipment supply.

have not come to perform in recent months or even years. The station has either lost contact with them or failed to follow up with local cultural groups. The station has replaced some of its live musical shows with recorded music. BRAC maintains a good network with folk musical groups. The organisation also has popular theatre groups. It uses interactive approaches, like theatre for development (TfD) to communicate development and empowerment messages. The theatre groups perform in local areas as part of BRAC's community empowerment programme. Performers of the local musical and theatre groups are good assets for Radio Pollikontho and they also perform in the station's musical shows and dramas. Radio Bikrampur too has good network with local musical groups that sometimes come to the station to perform.

In the current state of affairs, however, the people who are connected with the stations as performers or volunteers do not take any policy and management decisions. They are not the primary decider or agenda setter for the programmes though Mehedi Hasan, Senior Station Manager of Radio Pollikontho, says, "We consult the community before we decide the topic for our shows". According to my observations, there are a few shows on local issues related to agriculture, music and local culture, for which the producers and reporters consult the target listeners or club members about their preferences or choice. But the agenda and core themes for the sponsored shows are decided by the donors or initiators. For example, Radio Pollikontho, along with four other CRSs[171] have been implementing a project called Basic English Language for Outreach Radio Audience (BELFORA)[172] funded by the US State Department. The participants in FGDs told me that they did not voluntarily ask for any radio show of this kind although it might benefit the young listeners. The programme was designed by

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[171] BELFORA was implemented by five stations – Radio Pollikontho, Radio Padma, Radio Sagorgiri, Radio Jhinuk and Radio Naf. Duration of the first phase of the project was during September 2013-September 2014.

[172] I have mentioned about the project in Chapter 1, and showed a couple of photos of the publicity materials for the BELFORA radio shows.

consultants, and implementation of the programme is monitored periodically. The CRS has designated a person who holds a master degree in ELT (English Language Teaching) to look after the implementation of the show. In response to my repeated questions as to whether programme agendas are decided in a top-down manner and if so does not this undermine the communities' stake in the whole process, a CR advocate told me, "The show is beneficial to both the CRS and the listeners although the community did not ask for it"[173].

Recently Radio Naf implemented a radio project on family planning, funded by Ipas, an INGO. The station made and broadcast twelve radio shows which were produced at the station by the local participants and producers. But, the main agenda for the show or the core themes were not decided by the community in the first place. The CRSs take similar targeted communication approaches to other programmes without direct participation of the community in the original decision making. They can only give their feedback at a later stage when they are asked to comment or suggest additional issue for the ongoing episodes. The station also implemented radio projects with a directed communication approach with the support from Marie Stopes and USAID, for instance.

The station managers say that they sometimes discuss issues with listeners' groups before finalizing topics of some shows or to make modifications in a given plan. But this approach is not maintained as a rule or regular practice. Themes of the sponsored shows on development issues related to heath, education, environment, rights or legal advice are pre-decided. At the CRS level, only a few local components are added, performed or delivered by the locals, and if needed,

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[173] Although not produced in a participatory manner, the station manager of Radio Pollikontho thought that the English language show would benefit children and young people in Moulvibazar. Many people from this area intend to migrate to the UK. In other CRS areas, potential migrant workers planning to go to Malaysia or the Middle Eastern countries, for example may be benefitted from such show. But I should note that the relevance and impact of the programme will depend on the needs (demand) of the listeners, level of reception and interactions, which in my observation, thus far, is at a low level.

the script is translated into local language. A producer at Radio Pollikontho says, "Although we cannot take all policy decisions at the station level, we try to modify programme plans or add new elements suiting community needs and taste. We also follow up with the listeners to look into how they have received the content of a show". BRAC is regularly connected to its beneficiary group members who are also part of the listeners' clubs. It may thus be easier for Radio Pollikontho to consult listeners regarding target-specific shows. With regards to most other stations, the shows which are dependent on donor funding, generally do not take the communities' view into account or even consult with the volunteers in deciding programme topics.

On the question of how a CRS identifies "marginalised" communities as their target participants, as well as listeners, we find a similar set of problems. Prior engagement with the target communities by initiator NGOs often means that they have 'predetermined' the media habits and communication needs of such groups. A member of staff at Radio Pollioktho says they have been working in Moulvibazar for many years. Indeed, BRAC, the initiator organization, has been implementing development projects, including empowerment and justice issues, across the country. This has helped them develop knowledge of the 'marginalised' who have been excluded due to their social, economic position and religious identity. In the opinions of the elected representatives to the local government, the marginalised people are, but not limited to farmers, communities living on fishing, workers in tea gardens, and the religious and indigenous minority groups. To them, religious minorities are among the most vulnerable and excluded segments of the community.

To encourage active participation of the "voiceless", "marginalised", "grassroots" and peripheral people, the NGOs needed an approach to "reorient communication systems away from top-down models of message production and distribution" (Howley, 2010). The CRSs attempted to establish communication with the marginalized communities, like Monipuris and tea garden workers in the

Radio Pollikontho areas; Rakhains and fishermen in Radio Naf areas; Dalits and *Bedes* in the Radio Bikrampur areas; and *Bagdis* and Tiger Widows (whose husbands were killed by tigers in the Sundarbans areas) in the Radio Nalta areas. But participation of the disadvantaged people has not been as active or spontaneous as one might have imagined from its expression in the CR discourses.

Although those who could participate were not passive or noncontributory, their participation became limited to a few specially designed programmes. They learned techniques of script writing and anchoring, and some broadcasting skills. But once the donor funding ceased, it becomes difficult for a CRS to continue with the shows. They are either discontinued or operate irregularly. The volunteers or participants too do not continue their engagement with the station. Therefore, the guided (if not typically top-down) approach to engage the marginalised and enable them to participate in community media eventually does not contribute to a process of dialogue and exchange of information between the minorities and dominant groups.

Moulvibazar district has the highest number of tea gardens in Bangladesh. With low wages and allegedly deprived of fundamental rights including education and labour union rights, the tea garden workers may be considered as among the most disadvantaged and marginalised communites[174]. Even in the recent past, NGOs were not allowed to work with the *Cha Shromik* (tea workers), who are also locally called *Kulis*. Recently NGOs have been allowed to work with them to address health and education issues. During my field visits, I never found a tea worker coming to the station to make an inquiry or participate in a show. Bangladesh NGOs are not radical and do not work to revolutionize the process of social change. Although organisations like BRAC aim to fight poverty and social

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[174] For an account of the vulnerability of the tea garden workers and their life and living, see Gain, P. (2009) "The Story of Tea Workers". The article can be found at http://archive.thedailystar.net/forum/2009/june/tea.htm

injustice with an ostensible aim of establishing human dignity, they do not seem to be inclined to upset the status quo in the realm of social and political relations through community communication. Unless the initiator NGO agrees, the CRS alone cannot take a policy decision to mobilize a community like the tea garden *Kulis* to participate in CR.

Many decades of social exclusion have made the fishing communities of Moulvibazar one of the most vulnerable and socially excluded communities in the country. Also called *Maimal* in the local language, the fishermen are to some degree outcastes who have been barred from participating in certain community affairs for generations. I also found that the local farmers constituted a vulnerable section of the population. There are programmes on Radio Pollikontho targeting the farmers and I observed the CR reporters collecting news from the farmers in the fields. A senior producer said, "The farmers are consulted before they finalized the themes of the agricultural programmes". In response to a question relating to how the farmers are being engaged with the CRS, a producer shared with me a story:

> We were broadcasting information about the National Immunization Day. Our presenter was providing information as to where people should take their children for vaccination. A farmer perhaps did not hear the information correctly. He took his child to a wrong venue. He thought we broadcast the information incorrectly. Straightway he came to our station and argued that we were disseminating wrong information. We showed him our schedule. Eventually he was convinced.

Such a story does constitute evidence of community engagement and trust between the CR and disadvantaged groups. Radio Pollikontho enabled participation of the members of the Monipuri community, an ethnic community in Moulvibazar in pre-designed programmes. A similar approach was followed by Radio Naf to involve Rakhain volunteers to participate in a programme specially designed for the community. It even had a producer from the community.

However, in the current situation, socially excluded people, like the tea garden workers, the poor farmers in Moulvibazar, and the fisherfolk in Teknaf who are marginalized due to social, political and economic exclusion. Such groups are yet to have access to use the CR as a site where they could negotiate alternative discourses. They are also yet to participate in the production process or able to set agendas for their own shows.

In addition to the structural problems and safety aspects that are connected to women's engagement with CR, there are issues of social acceptance that affect women's likely participation and contribution to the CRSs. Perceptions of the community as to how they realize the issue of women's participation and particularly young women's participation is important. In the words of a young female volunteer at Radio Nalta:

> There was a social issue of acceptance when we started to work at the station. In the beginning, people were hesitant to accept what we were doing. But as more young female volunteers are coming, the more we are being accepted by the community.

Religious prejudice about women's movement is an outstanding issue in the CRS areas. I understood from my discussions with young people and guardians that restrictions on the movement of women is affecting participation of young Muslim women and volunteers. However, in comparison with the other CR broadcasting areas, the situation is better in Moulvibazar and Munshigonj. In relation to a discussion on social or religious restrictions, management committee members of Radio Pollikontho said, some quarters of the community try to restrict women's movement referring to religious indications. But the situation is now changing. Accepting women engaging in broadcasting is a social issue in Teknaf and some areas of Kaligonj. Protima Rani, a producer of Radio Nalta said:

In the early days of the station, it was difficult for us to convince our families to come here. Even members of the community around us were not ready to accept that we work for a radio station. It took them quite some time to understand what we do here. Now I think their primary impressions about women's engagement with media have begun to change.

Social barriers to women's participation in CR is not discussed much as a problem at Radio Bikrampur which is located in an urban context and only 45 km away from Dhaka, the country's capital city. As the local communities were not mobilized for community-oriented broadcasting in the first place, there has always been a gap between what the NGOs want to accomplish through the CRS and peoples' perceptions of their aims. Although NGO-led interventions for women empowerment and social justice have a visible impact on women's participation in social life and the development process, the religious attitudes towards women cannot be faced up to unless they are addressed at the community level both as political and cultural issues. They must be seen as rooted in the local historical processes, as well as related to contemporary global political events. Again, the issue of women's participation in CR cannot be separated from the greater reality of citizens' participation in media and communications. In the context of community communication, the NGOs need to focus on social mobilization approaches in a way that makes people sensitive to the necessity and benefit of women's participation in CR broadcasting.

I want to now move on to the topic of the participation of government officials in the CR process. An initiator thinks that the objectives of establishing a CRS is to publicize NGO activity. This goes hand-in-hand with promoting the government's development issues including those projects related to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals. On the ground, while the non-initiator NGOs have little access to the CRS, the government officers stationed at Upazila level in different development departments participate in the CR programmes regularly. *Upazila Nirbahi Kormokorta (*Upazila Chief Administrative Officer),

Veterinary Officers, Agriculture Officers, and Fisheries Officers participate in CR programmes providing information on aspects of government development and welfare service delivery including social security, agriculture and fisheries, for example. Some of the programmes include phone-in services enabling listeners to call and speak with a guest from a government department. In reality, the government officers at the Upazila level get more opportunities to come to the CR shows than the civil society groups.

I was keen to observe how their participation had impacted the government officials' perceptions of the value as a participatory and community-grounded medium of the CRSs. Many of them think CRS is an effective means to disseminate governmental development messages to the local population. Like some NGO staff, the bureaucrats too perceive CR as a local development radio[175]. An Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) thinks the CRS "should be planning for more shows on the government's safety-net programme". He is also of the view that there is a "great need for campaign to popularize CRS, and the initiators are not doing enough". An Upazila Education Officer I interviewed perceives the situation in an identical fashion and thinks one of the objectives of CR is to "publicize the messages of the government safety-net, education and health". By and large, many government bureaucrats imagine CR as a local radio that is there simply to promote the government's development activities[176].

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[175] Recently the NGOs requested government permission allowing them to increase the transmission capacity of the CRSs, i.e. expanding the broadcasting area which is currently set at 17 km radius. I heard from an NGO source that some initiators are willing to manage more than one CRS. One of the members of the CR Policy 2008 review committee told me that the government might be willing to consider a maximum of three stations under one NGO.

[176] I should note that CR is not yet in the government's publicity media list and therefore entitled to receive financial assistance to publicize public information. Most of the government officials are willing to use the CRS, but the initiators are unhappy as CR has not yet been included in this list. This would help the CRS generate revenue in exchange for promoting government-led development programmes.

The majority of the volunteers and participants in the CRSs are young people from the local communities. Indeed, more than forty percent of the country's population are children and young people, which naturally has significant implications for social and economic policy planning. A large portion of this young population are in need of employment or need incentives to become entrepreneurs. Many of them are willing to go abroad as migrant workers, while others are desperate to engage in income generating activities within the country. Despite steady economic growth for at least the last decade, a lack of rule of law, and the politicization of the economy, business and administration, along with changes in traditional societal norms have affected the socialization process of Bangladeshi youth. For example, in Teknaf, the trade in illegal drugs and human trafficking have had a serious negative impact on young people's perceptions of employment and volunteerism.

Unlike the Nepalese and Indian CR sectors that were able draw a significant number of adult volunteers into the community broadcasting process, Bangladesh has not been able to involve a significant number of adult volunteers. The volunteer groups here consist mainly of young people. Conceptually, there is the scope for them to participate in the CRS in roles such as anchor or presenter, performers, reporters and script writers, and in a few cases as producers, but the incorporation of new adult volunteers into the CRS proceeds at a slow pace. Indeed, many volunteers from older cohorts of volunteers have left the CRSs for paid jobs elsewhere. As soon as volunteers become skilled and experienced, they want payment for their time and services. Most of the station managers realize this is logical and recognize that in reality the volunteers need concrete forms of incentive. One senior producer posed the question, "how long can the old volunteers continue with a station without any solid incentive? Unless new volunteers join and help in our activities, it is not possible for us to run the stations at the low levels of funding we are expected to operate with".

The majority of the producers currently working at the CRSs, like the station managers, have been with the radio almost since the stations' inception. The producers too were first involved with the CR as volunteers. They have learned production techniques. Now they look after production including editing and broadcasting. They also teach the novice volunteers, and help the station manager with administrative work. Sometimes they visit listeners' clubs and conduct outdoor interviews. Some producers are performers too as well as serving as anchors and presenters.

I took trouble to explore the question as to who comes to a station aiming to be a volunteer, and who has potential to become a volunteer. A producer for Radio NAF says, "Our door is open to all. We cannot pull volunteers over to the station. Young people come as they wish. After a few days when they find nothing concrete to be gained here they leave". Photos in Figure 17 show a contrasting scenario where some young people are seen participating in a discussion at a CRS, while the other photo features a few young people in a village who could potentially become volunteers but who I found were never contacted or mobilized by the NGO to participate in the CR. There are many disadvantaged people like them in all the CRS areas. Despite this potential reservoir of helpers, the stations face serious challenges in both retaining and recruiting volunteers. Despite this situation they are yet to plan any initiatives to promote CRS among such disadvantaged groups of young people. In relation to approaching young people in general, a senior producer says, "Young peoples' expectations are sky-high. They are obsessed with the social media, like Facebook. They are not interested in working for a non-profit radio for long periods."

Figure 17: A group of young CR volunteers participating in a group discussion (left); and some young people in a fishing village who have heard about the NGO-run radio and who claim they would be willing to participate, if they were given the opportunity (right)

Siddique, station manager of Radio Naf, blames the socio-economic environment of the area as one of the factors affecting young peoples' interest in participating in voluntary initiatives. He says, "Young people can earn money in many easy ways in Teknaf. At the same time, some people don't let their girls to come to the CRS". On the challenges to retaining volunteers he says:

> Volunteers do not stay with us for long. Those who gain skills in post-production leave the station early as we are unable to pay them. New volunteers are reluctant to work with us for a longer period, because they do not find any solid benefit here. Some volunteers come from far away. Sometimes we are unable to pay even their transport costs.

Abdullah, a volunteer says:

> Volunteers need minimum financial support, particularly conveyance money for traveling by rickshaw, bus or autorickshaw. If not, they cannot manage to come to the station regularly. We are interested in volunteering, but we need this support at the very least.

The stations pay honourariums to few a select few volunteers who have been working with them for a longer period as a programmer or producer. In Teknaf, some volunteers say in order for them to make a return journey to Radio Naf by autorickashaw or motorbike costs them around Tk100. Radio Pollikontho maintains similar practice of paying experienced volunteers. In the socially conservative areas, women face less restriction from their families if they get some honorarium in exchange of their (voluntary) services to the CRS.

In terms of capacity building when it comes to volunteers, the majority of the training initiatives for CR management, production and post-production are donor-funded. Nonetheless, the stations, in some cases now organise their own in-house training. Figure 18 shows a photo taken at just such a training session, conducted by senior producers or station managers. Advocacy and CR support organisation, BNNRC liaises with the donors and government, and coordinates most of the major training programmes for the CRSs. Usually the producers, station managers and a limited number of volunteers get opportunities to attend capacity or skill building training. Such training is aimed either at teaching the participants new knowledge and skills or designed to upgrade their existing knowledge of management and skills in production and broadcasting. The initiator NGOs decide who should receive the training. In many cases, the same producers and stations managers are repeating similar types of training. Station managers and senior executives of the NGOs enjoy donor-sponsored excursions abroad to visit CR stations. In the early stages of operation, a few programmer-producers also received foreign training.

The initiators and CR support organisations say capacity building training has helped nurture local talent, and been inspirational impacts for local young people involved. One female volunteer at Radio Pollikontho says, "I like my work with the community radio. It's really fun. I enjoy interviewing farmers when they are working in the field". A male volunteer at Radio Naf says, "I wanted to have a challenging job like working for a radio". One female volunteer at Radio

Bikrampur says, "I always wanted to work with a radio station or TV channel. But I never thought I would be working with a local radio. It is really amazing that we can make radio shows in our local language". A young female programmer-producer at Radio Nalta says, "At the beginning, I was quite shy of working in a team. Now, I am no longer hesitant about talking with people or even interviewing them".

Although younger people are most interested in receiving technical and skill development training, new volunteers and even some of the old volunteers told me they do not get a chance to receive production or post-production related training. They think one of the useful things which might advance their career is to develop their technical skills in radio production. Such training, however, is frequently not available. A volunteer who has been engaged with a CRS for more than a year recounts:

> We have learnt how to write a news story and prepare a script. We can record a programme, but cannot handle the technical side of things. They do not teach us how to edit. A producer does the editing on our behalf. We cannot do any technical work. They want us to take computer training. What's the point of learning computer skills at a radio station?

In every station, volunteers name technical skill development as their top priority. In a couple of stations, they complain that the CRSs are offering them nontechnical training or something like computer training, which they can do elsewhere[177]. This is making them less participative and eventually they become irregular or do not stay involved for a longer period. In my observation, generally volunteers learn pre-production skills, and basic skills needed to operate recording equipment. They are given field assignments of reporting and

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[177] The management committees and station managers think computer or IT-related skill development training programmes will attract new people to come to the CRS. This will also help the station to earn some revenues. In reality, similar or even advantaged IT trainings can be found in other places of the CRS towns. Young people are less interested to be involved with the CRSs for receiving the computer training.

interviewing. However, the volunteers who joined early on had more opportunity to gain hands-on experience. Current volunteers feel thwarted as they think technical expertise in aspects of radio production will enhance their employability, and will enable them to find jobs in the commercial media sector.

Figure 18: A senior producer of Radi Bikrampur is conducting in-house training (left); and publicity material at Radio Naf with information concerning a station-run computer course (right)

The station managers are critical of young people's lack of interest in voluntary activities. But the new volunteers and young people (particularly high school students) who participated in the focused discussions said, they are interested in getting involved actively and do not mind give voluntary services. But they want to learn a skill that will help them in their future careers.

Enhancing social activism?

While at the current time, volunteerism and active community engagement are still areas that could be developed, there is no doubt that these are areas where the CRSs can serve as a catalyst. There is no doubt that CR can enhance forms of social activism if only the community can be fully engaged and motivated. Under such circumstances voluntary service could be enhanced and the community may even play a role in generating financial contributions to

community welfare. One example helps to illustrate this point. An accident in Moulvibazar resulted in serious burn injuries to a local man. Radio Pollikontho broadcast the news and appealed to listeners for help. The Senior Station Manager said that the response to their plea was overwhelming:

> We were able to collect Tk. 15,000 from community contributions. A local small business owner donated Tk. 5000. The patient got admitted to hospital. We also posted an appeal on our Facebook wall. One Bengali-British man from London responded to our call and donated Tk. 25,000.

In a similar vein, as I interviewed the producers and Station Manager of Radio Bikrampur, they repeatedly drew attention to the station's particular contribution to addressing the issue of child marriage. Despite government interventions and NGO campaigns, early marriage is still an unsettled social problem in Bangladesh[178]. The CRS not only urged the community to prevent child marriage practices, but, with the help of the local administration, the volunteer-producers were directly also able to stop a number of child marriage attempts. They used a mixed media approach combining CR broadcasting and the station's Facebook site (for an example, see the screenshot in Figure 19) in conjunction with a media advocacy campaign in the mainstream media to raise awareness against *Ballo Bibaho* (বাল্য বিবাহ), early-age marriage[179]. Although such extended activities are not common in all other CRSs, this campaign is a good indication of the capabilities of CR to enhance volunteerism and social activism.

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[178] For a sample commentary on six girls' roles in combating early marriage in Bangladesh, find an Editorial at http://www.thedailystar.net/editorial/girls-combating-early-marriage-1475473

[179] Radio Bikrampur's campaign to stop early marriage has been part of an advocacy initiative along with a few other CRSs supported by BRAC-UNICEF. The campaign combines radio, TV and social media. The non-commercial TVCs (which is seen posted on Radio Bikrampur's facebook wall) can be found at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KNV0pkBjg3U
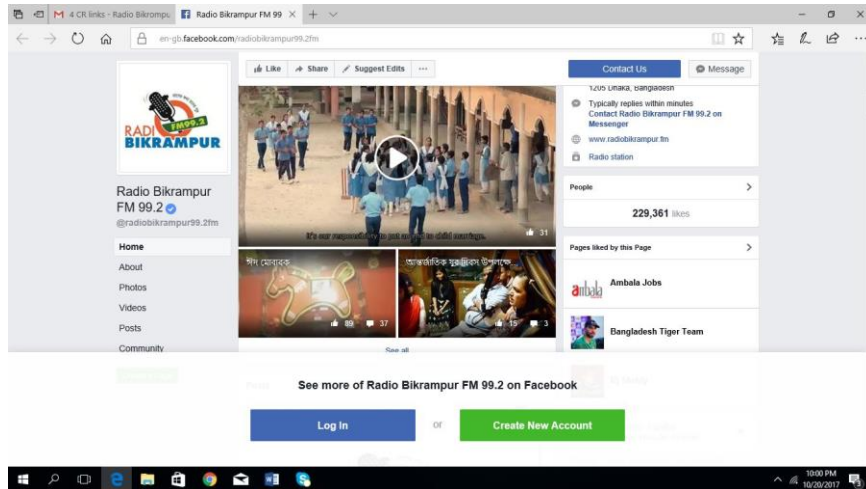
Figure 19: Screenshot of the Radio Bikrampur Facebook post of a TVC as part of its campaign to prevent early marriage

The above experiences not only suggest possible avenues for promoting activism for social change and development through CR, but also indicate prospects for new ways of combining community broadcasting with social action. Given the NGOs' relationship with the government, in current conditions, volunteers, producers and station managers very rarely get organizational endorsement for the promotion of and certainly never where such social activism may disturb the socio-political status quo.

Controlled participation: prospects and challenges

Of the three categories in Peruzzo's (1996) typology of participation – non-participation, controlled participation and power-participation- controlled participation breaks down into two sub-categories: limited participation and manipulative participation. As Colin Sparks has noted, limited participation is a "model of social organization in which the fundamental parameters are set by the elites who go on to determine the nature and scope of participation", while in the case of manipulative participation, "the elite permits discussion, and possibly decision making, but retains for itself power over the means of opinion formation

and decision making" (Sparks, 2007:60-70)[180]. I have called this guided participation and selective participation.

In the case of the NGO-managed CRS, guided participation takes place as the core programme theme is arranged or decided by the initiator or donor. The nature of participation and the type of participants too are directed by the initiator. On the ground this is determined and guided by the CRS staff. Like Peruzzo's model of manipulative participation, in the case of selective participation, the decision makers determine the themes or core issues, while the implementers select the suitable participants. They may allow them to negotiate the sub-topic, but the implementation is strictly monitored so that the planned output is achieved. The result benefit only the selected audience, not the whole population. In both the cases, the participant has no engagement or participation in decision-making and selection of key themes. In the protected operation, community participation is either limited or selective. Despite such controlled or conditional participation, the CRSs have still managed to achieve outputs which must count as a success and models of good practice but, by and large, they are the exception and not the rule.

The prospects of CR, however, should be understood in the context of place and time as well as the media environment and communication approaches to operation. In the case of the NGO-led CR in Bangladesh, after half a decade's operation, I notice some elements of change. At the same time, there are instances where the fundamental values of the CR are clearly not properly understood, and in some cases partially or even wrongly understood. The protectionist approach applied to run the CRSs does not allow the community in general to participate in programme planning, decision making and management on the ground. This controlled approach to CR broadcasting is linked to the structure of Bangladeshi NGOs and their organisational culture. Despite some good practice and much potential, the attempt by the NGOs to manipulate the

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[180] See Sparks, C. (2007) *Globalization, Development and the Mass Media*. pp. 69-70.

procedures at the level of access and participation and thus to "determine the outcomes that are suitable for their purpose" (Sparks, 2007:70), poses challenges to democratizing the process of community participation, or in other words, the process of community communication.

Chapter conclusion

The information presented and analysed in this empirical chapter investigates the gaps between the discursive constructs of the key CR ideas and the practice on the ground. Inadequate campaigns to popularize CR among host communities has affected levels of community awareness and understanding of the values of the medium. Some sections of the population still have misperceptions about the management and potential of CR. After half a decade of operation, even many CRS personnel lack a clear understanding of the core principles of CR. In practice, the NGO-run CRS does not reflect the vital features of community participation in decision-making and management. A controlled or guided process allows selected sections of the community conditional access to the CRS, and enables them to participate in certain stages of production and broadcasting. The socially and politically excluded and disadvantaged members of the community participate in the CRS only by invitation, and mostly in shows and programmes that have been organized for them.

Initiators have not, on the whole, been successful in generating community enthusiasm or interest in the community-oriented broadcasting medium. Even potentially crucial services for the community that can be afforded by the CRS, such as being a source of alerts and information during periods of natural disaster, for example, have not proved sufficient to cement its role in the community. One of the significant outcomes of current practice is the nurturing of local talent, namely producing a cohort of volunteers with media-capacity at local level. However, with the current practices in respect of engaging volunteers, it

has become a challenge to retain experienced volunteers and producers in a small community-based radio. In the next chapter I will look more closely at the implications of other aspects of the NGO-led operations of the CRS such as issues of ownership and sustainability, and, in particular, the potential for the community itself to transform the CRS into an alternative deliberative site.

Chapter 6: CR under NGO direction

Community-led radio or towards NGO-ization?

> **"**It is a wondrous thing. In it I see *Shakti*, the miraculous power of God"

> \- Mahatma Gandhi
> At All India Radio (AIR), November 12, 1947[181]

Introduction

As an extension of Chapter 5, this chapter analyses the implications of the NGO-managed operation for the democratic development of the CR. In this chapter, I will analyse the communication approaches and strategies, and look into the methods adopted to deal with sustainability. The protectionist approach applied to participation to operate the CRS is directly or indirectly linked with the initiator NGOs' organisational culture. The data on the ground suggests a likely NGO-ization of the CR as well as the process of community broadcasting itself. This hinders the community medium's potential to promote active community participation, which is eventually affecting the possibility to make community-led deliberative sites or alternative public spheres. The heavy presence of NGOs in the CR sector, as well as their influence over community broadcasting as a whole are also affecting the prospects of the CRS as a mediating structure in stimulating civil society and community associations.

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[181]M. K. Gandhi, fondly called Mahatma, said this about the power of radio as he entered the studio at All India Radio (AIR) for his first and only live broadcast on AIR.

Key communication approaches to operation

The communication approach that is applied by the NGOs in operating the CR does not promote community activism for community-oriented broadcasting, but neither is it fully top-down as the CRS does make some room for the community to participate. As mentioned in the previous chapter, in current practice, the community members and groups have been given conditional access to participate in production and broadcasting. The initiators and donors are using the community-based broadcasting facility effectively as a form of development support and a means to spread their project messages. In this sense CR is not considered an independent media in its own right, but as a new component in the NGO-led development projects. The modus operandi has been shaped by the NGOs' organisational practices and the influence of the CR support organisations and donors which directly or indirectly guide the capacity building agendas and mode of technical and financial support. As most of the initiators are concerned with securing funding for sustainability, they are not always in a position to negotiate community priorities over donor agendas in deciding the programme themes and training matters. Most of the programmes are designed as part of specific output-oriented projects.

Information Education and Communication (IEC) technique is used in the special shows targeting fishermen, *Adibashis* (indigenous people), farmers, women and children. IEC is also applied to the CR shows supported by the government, such as on ICT or 'Digital Bangladesh'. In fact, IEC has also been applied to many other programmes by the state radio, Bangladesh Betar, in the areas of health, education, agriculture and family planning, for example. IEC, along with some aspects of Behavioral Change Communication (BCC), have particularly been used in the health-related CR shows on family planning programmes[182],

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[182] Radio Naf implemented an I-pas sponsored programme, under which twelve shows were made over a period of one year. With the help of the CRS, I-pas formed six listener groups in six areas. The shows included drama, magazine, discussions and talk shows.

sponsored by Ipas. The English language programme supported by the US State Department combines an IEC approach with follow up discussions. Highlights of some of the CRS programmes are available on the station websites. Recently the A2I Programme at the Prime Minister's office provided a web portal to all CRS with the basic information about each individual station[183]. Radio Pollikontho and Radio Bikrampur are particularly active in giving updates and posts of their shows, especially the ones on music and youth entertainment. Some CRSs have Twitter and Weebly accounts, but only a few of them are active.

The organisational practices at the CRS are linked with the initiator NGOs' organisational structure and bureaucracy, in which decisions are first made centrally, and then beneficiaries are asked to participate at some stage of implementation. Except for a few programmes on local themes and youth entertainment, programme themes for most of the CR shows are decided or directed by the initiators. In this regard, a senior producer at Radio Bikrampur says:

> In programme planning, the community does not participate 100%. However, sometimes they (CRS) ask members of the community first what their expectations are, and what they want to say through a proposed show. Based on the community-driven information a programme is finally designed.

In reality, community consultation for proposing and finalizing a programme theme is not a common practice. Although the shows are produced locally, the programme planning approach is by and large top-down and not participatory at

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[183] See Radio Naf web portal: http://naf.communityradio.com.bd/en/about-us, Radio Pollikontho web portal: http://pollikontho.communityradio.com.bd/en and Radio Bikrampur web portal: http://bikrampur.communityradio.com.bd/en/about-us, and Radio Nalta web portal: http://nalta.communityradio.com.bd/en

all stages of production and dissemination. On planning a show, another producer shares a different experience:

> When we plan for a show, unless we are able to manage a donor fund, we contact BNNRC to help us manage financial assistance. Our programmes must get endorsed by the head office. The community does not contribute anything financially. Due to financial constraints and organisational practice, even if we want, we cannot always plan for shows according to the community agendas.

Even if a programme is planned at the CRS level, it requires final approval from the initiator NGO. Again, the initiators are dependent on one to two CR support organisations, particularly on Bangladesh NGOs Network for Radio and Communication (BNNRC) that over recent years, has been coordinating most of the western donor funds for training, capacity building and support for specially targeted programmes. Heavy donor dependency for programme support is inevitably affecting diversity in themes and means that certain topics which might be suited to the specific needs of local communities or listeners are ignored.

Despite a lack of funding, the CRSs still try to broadcast for longer hours. This is having an impact on the quality of programmes, as well as the producers' creativity in programme planning, and degree of community engagement in production. This is ultimately making the stations even more dependent on donor funding. In my assessment, it is quite tough for a CRS with limited resources to broadcast for six to ten hours on average. In order for any CRS to broadcast over longer hours regularly requires not only additional resource and funding, but also a sufficient number of experienced staff and volunteers. According to Kamal Ahmed, a Consultant Editor of the national Bengali daily *Prothom Alo*, and a former journalist at the BBC Bengali Service:

> Broadcasting for longer hours causes a huge challenge to any CRS. Big media houses or broadcasters may have good sources of funding, still they too find it difficult… […] I think a few hours of well-planned shows, designed and broadcast by the communities could be effective[184].

In relation to such issues as donor support to programming and its implications for independent programming, Professor Vinod Pavarala, UNESCO Chair on Community Media at the University of Hyderabad says:

> Well-endowed NGOs and well-meaning donor agencies have upped the ante for smaller groups struggling to put out a few hours of original programming a day. Content is often closely tied to the programmatic agendas of NGOs, and the imperative of putting together a "fixed-point-chart" of more and more hours of daily broadcast forces many stations to a stultifying adoption of standardized genre and format (2013:3-4)[185].

I have already given a list of the key programme themes in the Methodology chapter. For example, one of the central focuses of Radio Pollikontho is on child rights and women's empowerment[186]. Besides giving importance to the use of local language, the initiator has emphasized using infotainment techniques in delivering motivational messages. The CRS promotes folk songs as local tradition. The musical shows also include Islamic songs and songs from Bengali films. Juliara, a producer of Radio Pollikontho says they encourage the listeners to call in for live phone-in-shows. I observed a programme named *Jiboner Joigan*

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[184] My interview with Kamal Ahmed took place in November 2015, in Dhaka. I followed up this discussion with a further interview in London in March 2016. Ahmed is also a former broadcaster for a UN community radio project.

[185] Pavarala, V. (2013) "Ten Years of Community Radio in India: Towards New Solidarity" *Educom Asia*, 17(2) (April). The article can be retrieved from https://www.academia.edu/22864885/Ten_Years_of_Community_Radio_in_India_Towards_New_So lidarities

[186] The station also broadcasts shows on development, agriculture, general knowledge, music, music coaching, cookery and a wide variety of other topics.

(Triumph of Life), in which an expert guest answered listeners' queries on topics such as tax, Union Parishad budgets or the construction of roads.

Participants in a focused discussion said that they enjoyed *Dhamail* songs in the Radio Pollikontho musical shows. *Dhamail* is a genre of folk music from Sylhet Division of Bangladesh[187]. The songs are usually performed in wedding ceremonies and special occasions[188]. Female listeners say they do not always like typical educational programmes. Instead, they prefer a cookery show called *Undai*. The CRS has a show on local culture and heritage, *Shekorer Shondhane* (In Search of Roots). They also have a show, *Duranto Fotik* (Restless Fatik) for farmers, day labourers who work in the agricultural and *Rakhals* (cowboys or shepherds). The listeners in general, and young listeners in particular, say they are more interested in the musical shows than the development ones. However, in terms of time of broadcasting, participants in the FGDs conducted in all the CRS areas suggest that the broadcasting time of the shows needs to be scheduled in consultation with the listeners. Listener groups, like farmers and fishermen, want the programmes to start early in the morning as they go out farming or fishing in the early hours of the day. Some programme targeting the farmers and fishermen are not scheduled for the early morning.

There are other issues which are critical in relation to programme planning. An executive of an initiator NGO stated that the station managers do not take their job at the CRS creatively, and to them it is merely a job. In frustration he adds:

> Our station managers only do an office job (*Era Kebol Chakri Kore*).
> This is radio; a community radio. Either they do not have this
> feeling or they do not understand this.

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[187] The Radio Pollikontho broadcasting areas are part of Moulvibazar district which administratively is in Sylhet Division. Division is an administrative unit comprised of districts.

[188] *Dhamail* song (*Dhamail Gan*), according to the Banglapedia, is mainly ritualistic dance and song of women. They perform Dhamail or Dhamail dance and songs on the occasions of certain "religious rites, different religious festivals and birth and marriage ceremonies". Further information can be retrieved from http://en.banglapedia.org/index.php?title=Dhamail_Gan

But on the issue of creativity and the proactive role of station managers in programme planning, a station manager himself argues:

> We are now dependent on donor-sponsored programmes. This places a burden on us for additional reporting tasks. Frequent reporting to the donors (in the prescribed template) take away much of our time and energy. This affects our energy which otherwise could have been utilized to plan better and to run the station creatively.

The current station manager of Radio Naf is willing to spend more time thinking creatively about programme planning, and motivating the volunteers and encouraging club members to do likewise. But, he said, due to time constraints, he is unable to do this:

> I have always wanted to spend quality time at the operational level, but cannot do that due to my other responsibilities. Much of my time is being spent discharging administrative duties at the station.

I have mentioned in the previous chapter that many NGOs and a number of the CRS personnel do not have an adequate knowledge of "the core principles that define the CR sector" (Malik, 2015). They consider it a locally based broadcasting outlet for publicity and promotion of NGO development activities. The station managers either do not find a favourable environment or due to the organisational culture, do not question the effectiveness and relevance of the donor-sponsored programmes to members the local community. For example, an English language learning show may be relevant to the young adults who are willing to go abroad as migrant workers, but it is not relevant to the people in another locality where the radio could address other outstanding social issues, such as drug addiction or human trafficking. In addition, many CRS personnel seem increasingly to believe to that CR should be used as a conduit for government departments to communicate national development messages locally. Nonetheless, despite these issues, the active role played by CR during

periods of natural disaster marks a significant contribution to the community life and is worthy of consideration in some more detail.

As the cyclonic storm *Mahasen* hit some areas on Bangladesh in May 2013, the CRSs located in the coastal areas managed to run a few days of continuous broadcasting in order to keep the people updated with information concerning the impending storm, as well as provide instructions in preparation for the storm. *Community Media*, an NGO bulletin of CR activities reports:

> …. when cyclonic storm *Mahasen* was going over the Bay of Bengal in May 2013, six CRSs in the coastal areas became the prime source for the people to get information about the imminent storm. People also got information as to what preparation they should take to mitigate an emergency situation. CR broadcasting saved lives as well as reduced loss of assets. This once again proved the necessity of CR to the people living in the coastal areas. (August 2013:7)

The role of Radio Naf, one of CRSs in the coastal areas during the periods of the cyclonic storms has been lauded by non-initiator development NGOs. It broadcast early warning and risk reduction information during and after the disaster. Bangladesh Betar and Bangladesh Television (BTV) have poor reception in Teknaf and Cox's Bazar. Radio Naf became an important source of information during the disaster period. To me, this demonstrates not only the necessity of CR or local radio as a means to disseminate disaster mitigating information, but also underlines the role of such community-based media in establishing peoples' right to life.

NGO reports and bulletins describe the CRSs as the "only" or "the prime source" of information (*Community Media*, August 2013:7) during the crucial times or as the prime source of local news (*Community Media*, February-March 2014). Despite the CRSs' effective role during the emergency periods, such definitive claim though is an exaggeration of the facts on the ground. Besides Radio Naf,

Bangladesh Betar's regional station was a prime source of information during the crisis (although there are reports of poor reception). Mobile phones also became a vital means for the people in coastal areas to keep in touch with each other and to spread information. However, the contribution of Radio Naf to saving life and minimizing loss of assets during the emergency periods of *Mahasen* or *Roanu* is recognized not only by the development NGOs and government offices, but also by the fisher communities themselves. An NGO staff member recalled for me the CRS's vital contribution:

> Radio Naf ran an uninterrupted five-day long broadcast during the period of hurricane *Roanu*. There was no electricity supply in Teknaf before and after the storm. Still Radio Naf continued its operation using an alternative power supply. Due to power outages, many people could not charge their mobile phones. So, battery operated radio sets became a principle means to receive the disaster-warning and preparedness messages broadcast by Radio Naf before, during and in the post-disaster period.

The above statement supports my own observations. I should note, however, that only 1200-1300 hundred radio sets were distributed at the beginning of operation around five years ago, many of which were not in working order during the disasters. In addition to the media interventions, disaster mitigation efforts were engaged in collectively by the government, NGOs and organisations like the Red Crescent which also disseminated preparedness information. However, one unique aspect of Radio Naf's contribution was that it used local language and had on-the-spot reporting which was absent in the broadcasting by Bangladesh Betar and BTV. An NGO worker told me that its vital role around the period of the storms prompted a growth of interest in Radio Naf. Historically, people struggled to understand the government media's disaster warning messages that used jargon and unfamiliar vocabulary to express the gravity of weather situation. Therefore, use of the local language made a significant difference in disseminating disaster-related messages. People remember the service of Radio Naf in the crucial period, but surprisingly, after only a couple of

years, most of the people in Teknaf town and the adjacent areas do not listen to the station as their "prime source" of news, views and entertainment.

This fact may be linked to the generally poor campaigns to promote CR at the community level and the failure to engage the community actively in the operation. Whatever the exact nature of the explanation people did not continue listening to the radio in the post-disaster period. Despite the vital role in emergency period, Raghu, a leading South Asian CR campaigner who has provided capacity building training to most of the station managers and producers of the first batch of fourteen CRSs, thinks part of the reason lies in the characteristics of such CRSs, "In Bangladesh these radios (CR) have the characteristics of local radio, in which the community has a limited scope for participation".

In the past, the NGOs implemented development, livelihood and empowerment projects without any direct use of media outlets although they used alternative and local or folk media forms. Some NGOs like BRAC formed their own theatre groups to use theatre for development (TfD) as a development support tool. In the case of the NGO-led CR, the CRS may be used both by NGOs and the government as a local (development) radio or a community-based development radio for time-bound and output-specific projects. As the CRSs has started taking the shape of a local radio, it will work better for guided or directed social change programmes. In addition, the experience of communicating disaster risk reduction messages could be used to disseminate public announcements at a local level.

Sustainability and community ownership

The initiators and CR support organisations consider sustainability of the CRS to be primarily associated with financial security. The support organisations have trained the station managers in how to develop a 'business model'. CR

advocates along with the initiators have been lobbying the government for the last few years for a flexible policy provision so that the CRS can take commercial advertisements[189]. An initiator, who also holds an important position in the newly formed CR support organisation consisting of the CRS operators, Bangladesh Community Radio Association (BCRA), says:

> Most of the CRSs do not have secured funds for running the stations. Thus far, the initiator NGOs are subsidizing the shortfall every month. Krishi Radio (কৃষি রেডিও) may have government support. Radio Mohananda (রেডিও মহানন্দা), for example secured good funds from a donor. The other initiators are managing money from various development projects.

The initiator of Radio Pollikontho, BRAC bought a piece of land on the outskirts of Moulvibazar where in the future, the station will have its own building. The CRS also received funding for the first few years from the NGO so that it did not suffer from financial issues in the formative phase[190]. Compared to the other stations, this is an advantage for Radio Pollikontho. Nonetheless, recently the station personnel have been instructed by the initiator to look for alternative funding sources. Except for Radio Pollikontho, almost all other CRSs, are financially dependent on donor-assisted programmes or a subsidy from their initiators. A senior producer comments:

> At the beginning, the NGOs started the CRS with great enthusiasm. Their spirit is now on the decline. They thought this media project will bring them new funds from the donors. Except for some CRSs who could secure funding for the initial years, the CR has now become a burden on some initiators.

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[189] Under the current CR Policy 2008, as a nonprofit broadcasting service, the CRS cannot take any commercial advertising. They are, however, allowed to take development advertisements contributed by any community enterprise or individuals. Again, there is confusion over interpreting 'development advertisement' as the policy does not provide any specific guideline in this regard.

[190] Thus far, besides funding from BRAC, Radio Pollikontho has received funds from the World Bank, the American Center, European Union (EU), Centre for Development Programme (CDP), and Comprehensive Disaster Management Programme (CDMP).

Most of the initiators have not had any planned consultation with local civil society, social elites, business people or community organizations about the sustainability issue. Members of the community in general think the CR is an NGO matter and the organisations have already secured money to run the radio. In fact, the local communities or listeners have no idea of the sustainability or financial security aspects of the CRS. Moreover, volunteerism and community engagement are not perceived by the station managers to be effective means to address the financial challenge. On the topic of community contributions, an initiator NGO executive gives a pragmatic view:

> The nature of community contribution to a community project is not the same in every case. In some regions, local business enterprises are capable of contributing through advertisements, while some areas are blessed with volunteers. An area with an educational institution and higher levels of literacy is likely to produce more volunteers than other areas with low literacy levels.

A station manager cautions against any quick fix method of obtaining financial security:

> Financial security for the CRS is an issue, but there is no quick solution to the problem. In development project planning, NGOs include overhead or administrative costs. For the donor-driven CR projects, there is no such provision.

Overall, there has been no substantial support from the donors to building the infrastructure of the stations. After five years of operation, most of the infrastructure and broadcasting equipment needs overhauling. Zahidul Haque, a former manager of a CR support organisation believes, "It is high time that an evaluation is done of the financial resources, sustainability plan and an account given of preparations made to handover the station to the community". As the communities were never approached by the CRS for any financial contributions

to the radio, they too have never expressed their willingness to contribute in any financial sense. A senior volunteer quite confidently stated that the "community will not be willing to contribute money to CRSs".

Although the principal source of support should be CR members and local institutions (Tabing, 2002), Bangladeshi initiators identify financial constraints and policy restriction as the outstanding issues with regards to sustainability. The initiator NGOs along with the management committee members do not consider the "social, human and physical capital" (Mainali, 2002) as vital aspects that would make CR sustainable. While the CRS should relay mainly on the community's own resources (Pavarala and Malik, 2007) and active participation of members of the local community, the NGOs are more inclined to depend on revenue from commercial advertisements and financial support from the proposed CR Trust Fund, and donor sponsorships.

As opposed to the CR situation in Africa where most of the CRSs are operated by governments on behalf of the communities, in Bangladesh, the NGOs are operating the CRS on behalf of the communities. The African CR sector is substantially funded by international organizations. According to Aginam (2005), such external assistance usually has certain political and strategic implications. I have not investigated in particular whether the donors have any hidden political agenda behind supporting the CR programmes in Bangladesh. However, the programme themes and patterns of support are indicative of the donor interests being met in exchange for their support. The NGO-led CR sector in Bangladesh is gradually becoming dependent on external funding sources. Janey Gordon (2015) finds the Bangladesh CR funding model "complex". Referring to a case of foreign assistance to CR, she thinks that it may be a route by which foreign governments can provide forms of additional aid to other countries (Gordon

2015:255)[191]. While the CRSs are desperately looking for financial support, the donors seem to have found them to be a flexible and cost effective medium to try and test the effectiveness of controlled community broadcasting as a mechanism for achieving short-term results in social change projects. A station manager says:

> Sometimes the donor sponsorship to the CR shows is so minimal that it is difficult even for a local radio to meet the basic costs for making an episode, let alone producing a quality show or giving a good honorarium to the volunteers.

Although I could not find any direct evidence that donors have any covert objectives in exchange of their support to the CRSs it remains plausible., Considering the donor influence on development planning in the least developed countries (LDCs), it may not be unlikely that the donor support to the financially struggling CRS may have long-term objectives of influencing and determining programme agenda and operational strategies. At the same time, government offices are already using the CRSs to disseminate government-led national discourses. If the government announces a Trust Fund or decides to provide financial assistance to the NGO-led CR sector, I do not think the support will be unconditional.

In respect of support from non-initiator NGOs, they are commonly not consulted by the initiator NGOs regarding issues of sustainability, despite the fact that the organisations work in the same localities and largely on the similar types of

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[191] As an example, Janey Gordon refers to the foreign government assistance to Paywand Radio, a small community radio station in Afghanistan. The radio is broadcasting to and providing training for Afghan women who wish to pursue a career in broadcasting. The station is funded by the US Agency for International Development. For further details, see Gordon, J (2015) "The Economic Tension faced by the community media" In Atton, C. (Ed.) *The Routledge Companion to Alternative and Community Media*, London: Routledge. pp. 254-55.

projects. The CR initiators expected that the donors would assist them on a bigger scale. But, except for a few exceptions, where the donors helped financially in setting up of a few CRSs, their support has been confined to programme and training sponsorships. Now as the CRSs are facing financial problems, some of them, such as Radio Naf, is exploring the possibility of finding help and contributions from the non-initiator development NGOs. A number of development NGO and INGO staff told me they were unhappy that the fellow CR initiator NGOs wanted to do everything on their own. Many of them just heard of the NGO-led radio, but were never invited or asked to visit the station. One of them said to me:

> The CRS as a broadcasting outlet should have been able to publicize their activities. But those who were behind the operation did not disseminate the information properly.

Following my discussions with development NGO staff in Moulvibazar (site of Radio Pollikontho), Teknaf (site of Radio Naf), Munshigonj (site of Radio Bikrampur) and Kaliganj (site of Radio Nalta), it appears to me that the CR support organizations along with the initiators might want to create a domain of NGO-led communications or, more precisely, a third-sector broadcasting realm. This might also be an attempt to concentrate media power within the NGO sector, in which a group of NGOs already have managed control over CR broadcasting. A reliable source told me that BRAC applied to the government for more licenses to operate five CRSs, but the application was not approved. This suggests a heavy NGO presence, as well as domination of stronger and richer NGOs over the process of community communication. A member of the CR Policy review committee said to me that the government is actively considering limiting any one NGO's permit in regards to CR to a maximum of three stations.

In an opinion sharing meeting between a CRS staff member and non-initiator NGO representatives, an NGO representative said that the initiator never

informed them of the overall activities of the station or discussed the sustainability issues. In his words:

> We see a gap between the initiator NGOs and non-initiator NGOs (and INGOs) working in the broadcasting areas. It has been five years now, but they [keeping the CRS anonymous] never communicated with us, neither asked for any help. I think the initiator NGO does not consider us as a CR stakeholder.

Another NGO representative stated that help could be available to the CRSs, notably in relation to sustainability matters, but communication between different interest groups involved was poor. The CR initiator NGO representative underlined this point by saying, "NGOs are our closest friends. We should have established contacts with them much earlier".

In truth, thus far, there is no exit plan or strategy to handover the CRSs to the communities. In reality, none of the initiators or CR support organisations are discussing this issue; neither are they interested in developing any transfer plan. As the CR policy was approved, the issue was first raised by a few independent media advocates. The point was also raised by the UNICEF representatives in a few consultation meetings. In a CR knowledge sharing workshop in 2011, as a reaction to a comment on transferring the CRS ownership to the community, Marghub Moshed, a former Secretary of the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) who became a CR advocate after his retirement, stated bluntly that, "Community Radio is the NGOs' brain child. NGOs must remain at the operational helm of CR for as long as they are needed"[192]. While this part of the statement was omitted,

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[192] In the CR workshop, I raised the issue of making an exit plan or preparedness to handover the stations to community leadership. In response, the former Secretary who is also the former Chairman of the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) made this statement and justified the necessity of retaining an NGO presence in the sector for as long as they (NGOs) feel it is necessary.

other excerpts from his statement appear in the Association for Progressive Communications (APC) blog[193]:

> The CR movement is a journey, not a destination. We have to be prepared for future roadblocks and to grow in number…...Community will be our strength. Community ownership will only come about through a gradual process, gradually people from the community will step forward and the initiating organizations will slip to the rear, taking an increasingly background role.

The outcome of my discussions with staff members of both CR initiator and non-initiator NGOs, as well as CR support organisations, suggests that their perceptions of CR ownership have not changed from those that they held several years ago. Though they themselves may make no explicit claim that CR is their "brain child", nonetheless, they still believe that there is a need for the NGOs to maintain their presence in community broadcasting; and they are not thinking of any ownership transfer at the moment. However, except for BRAC and a few other NGOs, most of the initiators said to me that the enthusiasm that they had about CR at the beginning has now weakened. One initiator said:

> We have begun to realize how challenging it will be for us to sustain our operations, as we are now dependent on donor assistance. We are struggling even to support our own programmes that we broadcast without donor assistance. In this situation, it will not be practical for us to handover the stations to the community.

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[193] See Bangladesh NGOs Network for Radio and Communication (BNNRC) post in APC blog on 24 December 2011. The report can be retrieved from https://www.apc.org/en/blog/community-radio-now-existence-bangladesh

A senior producer from Radio Bikrampur claims:

> Nobody from the communities is aware whether they can take over the radio through forming a co-operative or community organisation. At this moment, there is no exit plan. However, if commercial advertising is permitted, the situation may change

Harun, a senior producer who has been involved with a CRS since the station's preparatory phase, says:

> The NGOs thought they would benefit immensely from the CR. There was an environment at the beginning when donors showed interest. But they are quite strategic now. At the moment, the CRSs are not receiving any encouraging level of support from the donors. We have reached a tough stage in terms of finances. In such a position, it would not be a wise move to transfer the managing responsibility to the community.

According to the views of the producers of Radio Pollikontho, if the ownership is transferred to community organisations, they will not be able to manage funding for longer hours of broadcasting. They think it will also be difficult for community groups to manage regular salaries for paid staff, as well as to bear the maintenance related expenses. Bazlur Rahman[194], a leading Bangladeshi CR advocate points out:

> Some CRSs does not have sufficient funds to pay an honorarium to their volunteers. This is making it difficult for them to retain the volunteers who have already been trained. At this stage, if the CRSs are handed over to the community, they will not be able to retain the volunteers.

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[194] AHM Bazlur Rahman is also the CEO of Bangladesh NGOs Network for Radio and Communication (BNNRC)

One initiator raised the issue of security and ethical responsibility. He thinks if the stations are handed over to the community, "it will not be possible for the initiator NGOs to determine who should be held responsible for any misdeed or violation of policy provision?" In fact, the communities were never asked whether they would be willing to take the management responsibility of the CRSs, let alone speculating about their ethical responsibility in running the CRS. There was no programme for the community organisations in order to build their capacity for CRS management. At the moment, the community organisations, such as voluntary or charity institutions, cooperatives, community clubs and educational institutions, have no collective preparedness to run a radio station.

Taking into account my early experience, and recent interviews taken during my study period with different stakeholders, I would summarize the NGO arguments for not making an exit plan at the current stage as consisting of a) suggestions that the community is not prepared yet to take up ownership of the stations, b) a feeling that the community will not be able to manage the financial burden of operating the station and c) a sense that the community may not be able to operate the stations according to the policy directives[195]. Raghu Mainali, who worked with Bangladesh CR on several occasions as a trainer thinks:

> Community radios in Bangladesh are not guided, but they are fully controlled by the initiators. …That is why there is no exit plan. Due to the NGOs' power interests, ownership handover of the CRS to the community is still far away.

Although Mainali considers the NGOs as power elites which create a parallel system of governance, he still suggests:

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[195] I should note that the issues of security and ethical responsibility were mentioned to me only by a couple of CR initiators. I did not conduct any formal fieldwork in their CRSs sites. Nonetheless, I spoke with them during my observation period. One of them received Japanese government funding that enabled them to meet the station's installation costs, and the assistance has continued. The donor also sent Japanese volunteers to work with the CRS.

> The NGOs should have an exit policy to ensure active community participation in the community radio. … We have to convince the NGOs to hand over the stations to the community. … The CR experts need to make them [initiator NGOs] understand the importance of ownership transfer from the NGOs to the community organisations.

The issue of community ownership has been contested since the time of policy approval. Most of the initiators were not interested in bringing up an agenda for ownership transfer when they were preparing to start up. A few NGO advocates including representatives of Mass Line Media Centre (MMC) argued that the NGOs should start a process of dialogue with the community from the very beginning of CR broadcasting so that the community would be prepared for taking on the management responsibility for the stations[196]. A few early donors to the CR campaign including UNICEF and a few other CR experts[197] also argued that the initiator NGOs should have an exit plan in order to maintain the integrity of the core values of CR. In the current situation, the NGOs and CR support organisations are keen on maintaining their own space in the country's expanding mediascape. They are cautious not to lose their command over CR broadcasting, and gradually over the structure and process of community communication. The protectionist and controlling approaches are affecting the democratic development of the CRS, which, to put the matter bluntly, is hindering the process of fashioning a community deliberative site.

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[196] This matter was further confirmed in my interview with Kamrul Hasan Monju, Executive Director of Mass Line Media Centre (MMC), a communications NGO that first attempted to establish community radio with the financial help from DANIDA. However, due to organisational weakness, MMC could not retain its leadership role in the CR campaign. Currently it is running a CRS named Lokobetar in the coastal district of Borguna.

[197] In this regard, among others, I interviewed Arifa Sharmin, Communication Officer, UNICEF, Dhaka; and Faruq Faisal, international CR expert and consultant.

NGO-guided CR: Implications for the community public sphere

"Controlled participation" (Peruzzo, 1996) enables the initiators to determine the objectives of the CRS programmes. As they guide the nature and scope of participation, community performance and engagement in production can be systematically controlled by the initiator NGOs. In the light of the concept of "Manipulative participation" (as part of Peruzzo's typology of participation), I would note that the NGOs permit the volunteers and programmers some levels of participation in the production process, but "retains for itself control over the means of opinion formation and decision making" (Sparks, 2007). This has significant implications for making alternative public spheres, or using the CRS as a discursive site for deliberative practices of discussion and opinion formation. In relation to such conditional participation in the production process, I would refer to what Willems (2013) called a "second form of participation" in the context of CR in Zambia. This is "a managed form of participation in which radio producers have the final say on how to involve audiences, when to involve them, who exactly to involve and why to involve them" (Willems, 2013:3)[198]. The "controlled participation" and "second form of participation", or what I have called guided or conditional participation applied by the NGOs to run the CRSs and to manage the extent of participation, are either limiting the possibility or hindering the options towards making alternative public spheres.

While the key principles that constitute CR as a participatory radio are conditionally reflected in practice, the local community are either unaware or not yet ready to use the CRS as a tangible as well as a discursive space. The NGO advocates have argued that they have been able to facilitate potential opportunities which could be utilized by the local communities to exercise

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[198] Willems, W. (2013) "Participation – in what? Radio, convergence and the corporate logic of audience input through new media in Zambia" [LSE Research online]. Retrieved from: http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/49244/1/__Libfile_repository_Content_Willems%2C%20W_Willems__Partici pation%20_what_radio_2013_Willems_Participation_what_Radio_2013.pdf

discursive practices. But as "participation in public discourse is an ongoing process, and …should be continuous" (Ferree, Gamson, Gerhards and Rucht, 2002: 211-212)[199], some guided participatory actions do not meet this target. For example, the guided participation of the marginalised communities like Rakhains and Dalits in shows conceived specifically for them was not continuous or regular. The shows have either been irregular or discontinued.

According to Gaynor and O'Brien (2017), "Issues of access and participation lie at the heart of community media ethos and practice"[200]. They emphasize the need for community management as well as ownership by the community, which will determine content and production of the medium. Therefore, with regard to the public sphere:

> Community radio offers the potential for more broad-based participation in deliberation and debate within the public sphere engaging multiple voices and perspectives and contributing towards progressive social change". (Gaynor and O'Brien, 2017:29)

Raghu Mainali thinks, "In Bangladesh CR sector, active community participation in programme direction and planning are missing". With the current level of participation, he doubts whether it is possible for local people to form a democratic public sphere. Butsche believes, "Issues of the media and the public sphere revolve around the central axis of whether media enable or undermine a healthy public sphere with widespread participation" (2007:3)[201]. Although active community participation and leadership in management, production and

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[199] Ferree, M. M., Gamson, W. A., Gerhards, J., and Rucht, D. (2002) *Shaping abortion discourse: Democracy and the public sphere in Germany and the United States*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

[200] Gaynor, N. and O'Brien, A. (2017). Community radio, democratic participation and the public sphere. *Irish Journal of Sociology*, 25(1), 29-47. Retrieved from http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.7227/IJS.0002

[201] Butsche, R. (Ed.) (2007) *Media and public sphere*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

broadcasting are central to forging alternative public sphere, the initiators and NGO advocates set their own perspectives to explain the discursive practices. They prioritize community's technical capacity over participation and deliberative practices for opinion making.

From the initiators' perspective, the communities are now capable of producing radio programmes locally. The listeners can question the service providers or duty bearers from the government departments who appear in the CR shows. Initiators believe this is contributing to building local democracy. A senior producer at Radio Pollikontho thinks the "CRS has become a channel of communication between the people and the government". Another producer from Radio Naf says:

> It is a snowball process. The CR has expanded the horizon of community knowledge. It works as a disseminator of information through which people can now question the government officials and local government representatives.

In reality, the listeners cannot ask any critical question to the guests on the shows. In the phone-in-shows, most of the questions are restricted to the issues, such as service delivery and social benefits, and youth training programmes. Most of the club members or listeners who call in belong to the NGO projects including micro-credit groups. I did not find any listener asking a question or raising an issue about any anomaly or irregularity in the construction projects or corruption in the distribution of social benefits or other services, for example.

With regards to media's role in the public sphere, Curran (1991) says they "facilitate the formation of public opinion by providing an independent forum of debate; and they enable the people to shape the conduct of government by

articulating their views" (1991:29)[202]. Thus far, the CRSs do not provide any such independent forum of debate to argue and discuss any development alternative or new agenda for social change. The current CR shows and the infrequent follow up meetings with the listeners' groups do not enable the communities to express their views or debate contested issues, like participation, empowerment and development.

Although as a tangible space, CRS is informal and people can visit the station to speak with a member of staff, an international CR expert observes:

> There are very few occasions where the community radio stations in Bangladesh are used as a venue for community programmes. In terms of participation in production and broadcasting, only select people are allowed to use the equipment of the station.

The selective access and participation are also affecting the people from the local community's potential to become CR producers, as the above expert says:

> Every citizen can be a reporter for CR. Volunteers are not participating as producers (although some of them do generate content). There is no community participation at management level. Besides, I observed that generally, people from the community are hesitant to visit the CRS.

"The Public sphere is a deliberative space in which a self-organizing public debates matters of common interest in a rational and civil fashion" (Howley, 2010:74). Howley's observation leads me to raise the question as to whether a controlled discursive arena facilitates or endorses deliberative practices of opinion forming or decision-making through news, radio talks or critical discussion shows. Discussing the public sphere, as the concept was developed

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[202] Curran, J. (1991) "Rethinking the media as public sphere". In Dahlgen, P. and Sparks, C. (Eds.) *Communication and citizenship: Journalism and the public sphere in the new media age*, pp. 27-57. London: Routledge.

in Habermas's earlier work *The Structural Trans formation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into the Category of Bourgeois Society* (1962)[203], Fraser (1992) says that the:

> …. bourgeois conception of the public sphere supposes the desirability of a sharp separation of (associational) civil society and the state. As a result, it promotes what I shall call weak publics, publics whose deliberative practice consists exclusively in opinion-formation and does not also encompass decision-making (1992:132)[204].

In Fraser's interpretation, the bourgeois conception also does not endorse an expansion of the publics' discursive authority to incorporate decision-making, as they believe such inclusion would threaten the autonomy of public opinion. There is no "self-organizing public" in the NGO-led CR arena, neither are the participants (including the marginalised groups) organised to discuss independent agendas for "common interest" or "common good". The associational life of the NGO project beneficiaries and the civil society they have formed is in essence apolitical. The "weak publics" which are controlled by the initiator organisations are not included in the decision-making for deliberative practice. Related to controlled deliberative practice, is the idea of mediated public deliberation, which according to Wessler and Schultz (2009)[205] is:

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[203] See Jurgen Habermas, *The Structural Trans formation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into the Category of Bourgeois Society*, translated by Thomas Burger with Fredrick Lawrence, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989.

[204] Fraser, N. (1990) Rethinking the public sphere: A contribution to the critique of actually existing democracy. In Calhoun, C. (Ed.) *Habermas and the Public Sphere* 25(26), Baskerville: MIT Press. pp. 109-142.

[205] Wessler, H. and Schultz, T. (2009) 'Can the mass media deliberate?: Insights from print media and political talk shows'. In Butsch R. *Media and Public Sphere* (pp. 15-27). New York: Palgrave Macmillan. pp. 15-27.

> … a standard of 'openness or equal opportunity for topics, perspectives, interpretations, ideas and arguments' that is more appropriate (Peters, 2002:14) because it would ensure that new ideas and ideas held by minorities get a chance of being heard (2009:16).

The initiators think that the appearance of government officials on the CR shows has been vital in establishing a "channel of communication" between the community and government development departments. The NGOs produce a similar discourse which in some senses mimics sections of the population in a project area by, for example, using the Right to Information Act (RTIA) to lodge applications seeking government information. Such actions are also projected by them as a "channel of communication" contributing to good governance. To be able to question the government representatives in the CR phone-in-shows may be considered as limited deliberative practice, but the question has to be asked to what extent do such forms of access really enable the listeners or participants the opportunity for genuine debate leading towards critical opinion making?

Under limited or manipulative participation in the overall operation process or in a secondary form of participation in production, few deliberative exercises take place, for example, in the programmes designed for minorities. While they may be present, the participants are not self-organizing and their opinion-making capacity is minimal. For example, at Radio Bikrampur, *Dalits* themselves did not come up with an idea for a radio show. It was a top-down project where the participants did not make any decisions in relation to the shows although they do participate as either anchors or performers. Almost the same patterns of programming are applied to the shows for Rakhains on Radio Naf, for farmers and fishermen groups like *Maimals* on Radio Pollikontho, and the shows for *Bagdi* and tiger widows on Radio Nalta. These specially designed programmes do not allow any debate for the marginalised. They include discussions within the

permissible social and political norms. They are not meant for setting alternative agendas by the marginalised or minorities which might seem to be challenging.

Such an analysis of the role and possibility of the CRS as a community discursive space for deliberative actions are also connected to the issue of counterpublics, which "emerge in response to exclusions within dominant publics" (Fraser, 1992)[206]. In her contribution to the critique of public sphere, Fraser notes:

> In principle, assumptions that were previously exempt from contestation will now have to be publicly argued out. In general, the proliferation of subaltern counter publics means a widening of discursive contestation, and that is a good thing in stratified societies (1992: 124).

There are contrasting views on identifying the activities of the counterpublics in relation to the NGO-led CR. Raghu Mainali says, "The NGOs are talking about the voiceless, marginalized, grassroots, excluded groups, but in practice, we do not find them". In contrast to the Bangladeshi situation, he says that in Nepal Dalits run two CRSs and four stations are operated by women. However, from an NGO perspective, a senior producer says:

> The socially excluded people, like *Harijans* or Dalits and *Bede* (who live in boats) have no land, and in many cases, they are excluded from the voter lists. The CRS wants to help these people. We discuss issues of *Khash* land (government owned unused land) for these people, and schools for their children.

The question though is how CRS is creating an enabling environment for the counterpublics' agenda to be "publicly argued out"; and whether, in practice, the

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[206] Fraser, N. (1992) Rethinking the public sphere: A contribution to the critique of actually existing democracy. In Calhoun, C. (Ed.) *Habermas and the Public Sphere* 25(26), Baskerville: MIT Press. pp. 109-142.

marginalised are capable of widening the "discursive contestation". In reality contributions originating in potential counterpublics are constrained by the forms of controlled participation which operate, excluded groups such as Dalits, to take just one example, are not empowered in the decision-making process and are therefore unable to set agendas for discussions, let alone contest controversial issues. In a "second form of participation" they are not independent or autonomous to 'widening of discursive contestation". In my opinion, the NGOs have been able to identify the farmers, fishermen, Dalits, Rakhains, *Bagdis*, Tiger Widows, *Maimal*, and *Bedes* as groups belonging to the marginalised sections of the community. But they are as yet to emerge as counterpublics both in relation to their engagement in the CRS or their contribution to alternative development discourses.

In Chapter 5, I wrote about Lal Mia, a leader of the fishing community in Teknaf, who participates in the Radio Naf shows occasionally (see him speak and a few of the community fellows in Figure 20). In the past he wrote a play and composed songs destined for the programmes designed particularly for the fishing communities. He welcomes a radio established locally as he thinks, "Community radio is for the people, run with the help or donation from outside; and operated in communication with the local people". While Lal Miah and his companions discuss the flexible nature of the CRS and its usefulness, there remain plenty of young people and women in the neighbourhood who remain unsure how they could contribute to the programming of the station and feel excluded from its activities. On the possibility of constituting alternative or subaltern counterpublics, Vinod Pavarala said to me:

> The hope for a CRS independent of the state and the corporate
> world was right. But the NGOs seemed to have wanted to occupy
> the third space. To some extent, at the surface level, they seem to
> have achieved that. But, the extent to which they (the CRSs)
> constitute alternative and subaltern public spheres remains a big
> question.

In the current situation, neither the leaders of the marginalized communities nor the young people could form counterpublics as they primarily lack autonomy and agency for decision-making. With their token participation in the CRS, the minorities or the marginalised whom the NGOs call "voiceless" are unable to widen the scope of the NGO-led discursive arena.

Figure 20: Lal Miah and his fellow community leaders engaged in discussion with me about the local CRS.

In the public sphere discursive opinions are formed, but they are also "arenas for the formation and enactment of social identities" (Fraser 1992: 125). The NGO-guided radio shows on music and culture, education and rights, health, and government development services provide very limited scope for deliberative practices. The discussion-based shows do not allow debate or opinion formation that might challenge the existing development discourses and strategies, neither do they attempt to create an enabling environment for the participants or listeners to discuss issues of identity, exclusion and marginalization.

NGO-ization of CR broadcasting

Limited and manipulative participation alongside a protectionist approach to operation, and the initiators' control over programming, have deterred the making of a community-led CR broadcasting. Instead of attempting a radio *of* the people, *by* the people, the NGO-led CRS is an illustration of a process of NGO-ization. I

should note that referring to a number of studies on NGO involvement in diverse projects, Kamat (2013), as I have previously noted, cautions against common equivalence being made between NGOs and NGO-ization. NGO-ization of CR, I would like to suggest, may be understood primarily as a process of professionalization and institutionalization of CR practices. I would argue that the nature of access and participation in the CRS, the mode of operation, along with the policy support are indicative of NGO-ization. Moreover, the heavy presence of NGOs in the sector and their attempt to manipulate the CRS as a discursive arena have deepened the process of NGO-ization of Bangladeshi community broadcasting.

I have already indicated that central decision making, donor dependency, and reliance on external funding have bearings on the themes and topics of the shows, and the nature of productions. Broadcasting of content "closely tied to the programmatic agendas of NGOs and increasing pressure" for greater daily broadcasting output is putting pressure on the CRSs and resulting in the "adoption of standardized genre and formats". In addition, the CR initiators are professionalizing the station management and operational procedures in accordance with the NGOs' organisational culture and practice including hierarchy in decision-making. Globally some powerful NGOs have developed the ability to "undermine local and international movements for social change" (Choudhary and Kapoor, 2013:2). In Bangladesh, the NGOs controlled the discourse and direction of the CR campaign. In practice, the initiators are inclined towards institutionalizing the operation, which is not always suitable for a community medium which requires flexibility and social contribution rather than adopting standardized institutionalized practices imported from elsewhere.

Most of the CR experts whom I interviewed think that the NGO-led CR in Bangladesh is, by and large, controlled by the initiators. In addition to the influence of the programme sponsors, they identified at least two major types of control – at the level of the planning process, and the control of organisational

activities of the CRSs by the initiator NGOs. The hierarchical pressure to institutionalize and professionalize is linked to the initiator's organisational practice. CR, which could be a vital tool for communities in the formation of alternative public sphere, or the promotion of counterpublics to negotiate their cultural identities, is being used mostly to communicate 'development' agendas. 'Development' agendas as the key priorities are linked to both the NGO-donor relations and the process of NGO-ization. Choudry and Kapoor (2013) calls for more analysis of the process of NGO funding for community projects as they think, "Analysis of NGOs and NGOization should examine ways in which funding and other material support can orient organizations to prioritize institutional survival and maintenance" (2013:5). This statement is relevant to the analysis of the influence of the NGOs' on the CR operation in terms of receiving external funding and planning sponsored projects.

With the exception of one CRS, Krishi Radio that is funded by the government, the CR sector in Bangladesh is an all-NGO affair. This heavy NGO involvement in CR operations has resulted in a domination and NGO influence over the key features of the CR practice. On the issue of NGO efforts in CR broadcasting in India, Pavarala (2015)[207] notes:

> The funding imperative, the policy specifying NGOs as the eligible applicants, and the overall developmental framework led to the growth of community radio in India largely through the efforts of NGOs (2015:16)

The situation has led him to express his concern "over what he considers such a heavy involvement of NGOs in community radio broadcasting in Asia, which he calls "NGO-ization" (Pavarala, 2013:2-4 as quoted in Gordon, 2015: 254). He has enlarged on this theme elsewhere:

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[207] Pavarala, V. (2015) "Community Radio 'Under Progress' Resuming a Paused Revolution" In *Economic & Political Weekly*, December 19, 2015 Vol. l, No 51. Retrieved from http://www.sancomonline.net/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Community-Radio-Under-Progress-Vinod-Pavarala.pdf

> … the heavy involvement of non-governmental organisations
> (NGOs), among key civil society actors, in the setting up and
> promotion of community radios in countries where there is an active
> community radio sector has led to all kinds of anomalies (Pavarala,
> 2005:16).

In Bangladesh, NGOs ran the awareness and policy campaigns for CR and outlined strategies for CR legislation. NGO representatives were members of the CR policy drafting committee, and managed to get a policy approved "specifying NGOs" as eligible applicants. With the NGO-friendly policy provisions, in practice, the initiators are in full control of the operation. Besides guiding and manipulating community participation, with donor support, the NGOs are deciding the agendas for training and capacity building. The process of support to the CRSs has been facilitated, and needs are being assessed and lobbied for on behalf of the sector by only one or two CR support organizations. Such domination by a few powerful and well-connected NGOs has a significant bearing on the NGO-ization of Bangladeshi CR broadcasting.

Only a few NGOs has been influential in producing and circulating CR discourse. Since the policy approval, it is one support organisation, Bangladesh NGOs Network for Radio Communication (BNNRC) that has been most influential in the CR sector. In fact, they have been the dominant organisation to represent the Bangladesh CR sector at different levels. As Gordon (2015) observes:

> In Bangladesh, the NGOs network for Radio and Communication
> (BNNRC) represents the community media sector to the
> government, industry and regulatory bodies, media and
> development partners (2015:253).

Recently another CR support organisation, Bangladesh Community Radio Association (BCRA)[208] has emerged. BCRA is an association consisting mainly

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[208] For BCRA Facebook page, see https://www.facebook.com/bdcra/

of the CR broadcasters and initiators. BCRA have some similarities with the Nepali community radio organisation, Association of Community Radio Broadcasters Nepal (ACORAB)[209]. However, BCRA does not want to distribute any centrally produced content to the CRSs. Primarily its objective seems to be focusing more on capacity building, and exploring new funding sources including finding new donors, lobbying for the proposed CR Trust Fund and amendments in the advertisement provisions.

As I interviewed some CR support organisers[210], it seemed to me that there was a power struggle taking place between BNNRC and some initiator NGOs over guardianship of the CR sector. In my view, the domination of one support and advocacy NGO is not only strengthening the process of NGO-ization, but also obstructing variations in CR practice. Having just one such organization has affected policy revision, diversity in programming, aspects of capacity building, evaluation of donor support, and the making of an independent community public sphere. If the newly formed BCRA also wants to establish its NGO authority over CR broadcasting, the medium is unlikely to become a radio *of* the people or *by* the people.

Modes of financing and donor sponsorship have significant impact on the CR programme themes. So far, the general tendency of the CRSs is to communicate 'development' in the various shows. As the NGOs focus on 'impact' for the sponsored programmes, in many cases the programmes allow for only limited participation of the community. In India some of the best practices of grassroots CR are managed by the NGOs, but in order to further their organisational objectives, they "take less than participatory methods under pressure from donors to "scale up" operations and to demonstrate "impact" (Pavarala, 2015:16).

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[209] For details, see ACORAB website: https://www.acorab.org.np/

[210] The initiators who played a vital role in the establishment of BCRA include initiators of Radio Pollikontho (by BRAC), Radio Naf (by ACLAB), Radio Mahananda (by Proyash), and Radio Chilmari (RDRS).

It is not unlikely that the donors have "political" intent (Gordon, 2015) behind supporting 'development'-themed programmes. In my interviews, the CR experts and development specialists from Nepal and India drew attention to donor influence on the Bangladesh development sector, although over the last couple of decades the country has been moving away from its previously heavy external dependency. The NGO-donor approach in implementing development has been reflected in the CR programming. In this respect, Pavarala (2015) observes:

> The situation may not be much different in Bangladesh where NGOs, supported by international donors, form a crucial part of the social sector, and community radio is seen primarily as a tool for development and disaster management. In the context of NGOs being used increasingly by the government for service delivery (2015:16)

Pavarala also thinks that the perception of CR as a means to communicate "development" only is "very much a legacy of the postcolonial nation building project in which media were mobilised for "national development" (Schramm 1964). Tareq, Executive Director of ACLAB, justifies the development role of the CRS:

> NGOs now work with the government at the grassroots level to improve the life of the deprived people. The CR as local media plays an important role as a development tool. First NGOs worked with the local newspaper. Now they have the CRS to inform the community of the development issues.

I would argue that using the CR as a tool to communicate NGO-led and government initiated 'development' programmes are connected to the Bangladeshi NGOs historical role in the development sector, which have also been shaped by the international donors' agendas. Except for a few NGOs, like BRAC that has developed a sustainable business model and turned into a "corporate NGO model" (Schendel 2009), most of the initiators are heavily dependent either on donor assistance or micro-credit programmes. The CR in

practice reflects the NGOs' conventional priority on 'development'. This is also contributing to the process of NGO-ization. If we want the CRS to contribute in the making of a community public sphere, the NGOs will need to "go beyond the developmentalist agenda" (Pavarala, 2015).

The AL-led government (2009-2014) endorsed the CR Policy which was originally promulgated by the previous army-backed non-political government. In recent years, the government has been quite critical of NGO activities and their spending of foreign funds. The government has had serious disputes with the globally known micro-credit organisation, Grameen Bank. The matter ended in a court battle and the Managing Director of the bank, Nobel Peace Prize winner Professor Mohammad Yunus, was forced to quit. However, the NGOs working in Bangladesh have been keen on developing a mutual working relationship with the government. The NGO leaders have now called for a greater share of foreign donations for NGOs in order to achieve UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).

Decades of control over broadcasting by national governments targeting nation building and development were largely non-participatory and top-down. Neoliberalism has accelerated the development of commercial media globally. South Asia is no exception here but such media are also non-participatory and urban biased, and present the same hybrid type of programming template as global media culture. As opposed to both the government and commercial media, CR could promote direct and active participation of target listeners and community organisations. However, instead of demonstrating signs of becoming an independent community media, CR has been a means for the NGOs to securing their command over community broadcasting. Discussion of Bangladesh CR in relation to third-sector broadcasting has not surfaced frequently in the recent NGO literatures. However, early NGO-led discussions express their intent to establish 'third-sector' broadcasting. Although in addition to NGOs, the third sector should include community organisations and

cooperatives, for instance, in Bangladesh, the CR campaigners imagined a sector that would be single-handedly led by the NGOs. Thus far, no effort has been made by the government or by donor agencies or capacity-building organisations and advocacy groups, to include community organisations and groups as initiators or operators of CR.

An NGO radio in the making?

I have already pointed out that the NGOs are using development support communication (DSC) paradigms, under which CRSs are being used as a means to support development projects. It is also helping the NGOs to publicize their 'development' project activities and success stories. On the use of community-based media for advancing NGO objectives, Gordon (2015) says:

> In some parts of the world, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are the initiators and managers of community stations, using broadcasting to further their aims. In Asia and Africa, NGOs support and use community radio widely to promote their work" (2015:253)

In Bangladesh, the government departments too are utilizing the CRSs as a tool to reproduce and redistribute the dominant governmental development discourses. In some cases, the NGOs are working as implementing partners to the government in donor-sponsored projects. As I have already described how both NGOs and government are using the CRSs as a local (development) radio that is capable of re-generating dominant development messages locally.

The NGOs have enabled young people to become volunteers and producers for a locally situated radio, which in turn, made them capable of producing the media content locally. One of the NGO advocate says, "Despite financial hardship, none of the NGO-managed stations have been closed down". However, running the CRSs will place different burdens on different charities, depending on financial

strengths, donor connections, and organisational capacity. NGOs like BRAC and Radio Bikrampur have a better chance of develop an NGO (community) radio model. If an NGO-led CR model is developed, BRAC, for example, as an international development organization, may replicate the model in other regions.

An NGO development radio model could also be effective in conflict regions where organisations like BRAC are already working. The model could be of use in local and rural development initiatives. While few national and local NGOs could use an NGO model as message multiplier and channel of communication between the NGOs and beneficiaries, donors may internationalize the model in various projects. The NGO-led CRS are already being used as a cost-effective medium for promoting programmes, like English language teaching in rural areas. Referring to the USAID funding to small-scale radio stations around the world, Gordon (2015) says, "Although the local communities gain from the stations, the background to the generosity is political."

Chapter conclusion

Controlled access and participation in the operational process, and no community participation in the decision-making, have significant bearings on the future of community ownership and sustainability of the CRS. Instead of relying on community contributions, the initiators now focus on securing donor and government funding, earning revenue through advertisements and developing a business model for the future security and sustainability of the stations. *CR of the people and by the people* remains a rhetorical gambit but the reality is that the NGOs are unwilling to handover CR management and operational authority to local community organisations. Furthermore, the use of CRSs as an old-fashioned message multiplier reflects the characteristics of a local development radio.

The absence of democratic development of the CRSs is affecting the possibility for the community to turn CR into a deliberative site. The nonproliferation of the discursive arenas is limiting the potential of NGO-led CRS to act as the alternative public sphere. The apolitical nature of the CRSs and the controlled approach to operations do not promote empowerment of counterpublics. As the status quo is maintained, the excluded or marginalised sections of the communities are unable to use CR to communicate their cultural identities and to negotiate alternative development, communication and political agendas. Also, the radio is not working as a "mediating structure" between the community and civil society organisations or between the common people and the government.

Heavy NGO presence and NGO influence over the campaign process and policy advocacy, as well as over the nature of the programming, combine with managed control over community access and participation in the CRSs and are leading the way towards the NGO-ization of community broadcasting in Bangladesh. Although not always overt, attempts to establish a third-tier broadcasting may be understood as the process of an NGO radio in the making. The failure or reluctance of the NGOs to facilitate the making of an alternative community public sphere along with the process of likely NGO-ization are either limiting or hindering the potential of independent media development at the grassroots level. This could also affect the democratic development of CR and the democratization of community broadcasting. In the final chapter, I will summarize my arguments in relation to the key findings of the study and analyse them in the broader perspective of arguments for the democratization of communication.

Chapter 7: **Conclusion**

NGO-led CR: democratizing communication?

> "Development consists of the removal of various types of
> unfreedoms that leave people with little choice and little
> opportunity of exercising their reasoned agency".
>
> - Amartya Sen (winner of the 1998 Nobel Prize),
> *Development as Freedom*, 1999

Introduction

This concluding chapter summarizes the outcome of the research project. It interprets the findings and key arguments from the broader perspective of a focus on the democratization of communication. While the analytical and empirical chapters are linked to the discursive manifestation and the practices of the NGO-run CR in Bangladesh on the ground, this chapter puts the discussions into their specific contexts. It also brings together the arguments with a view to answering the research question to what extent CR as a media development project has enabled the democratization of the process of community communication. The study findings suggest that the use of CR in NGO interventions for development and livelihood improvement projects has now enabled those NGOs to establish a greater control over the community broadcasting process. The controlled participation along with other NGO-oriented approaches are responsible for the likely NGO-ization of CR. Consequently, as a logical extension of my arguments, a pertinent issue emerges – whether or not the current CR operations bear a resemblance to forms of practice more closely reminiscent of the modernization paradigms of an earlier era than the participatory frameworks that have been developed for independent and community-owned public media?

Limits to democratizing communication

"The media reform movement frequently has been characterized as highly fragmented, lacking substantial inter-group coordination, and lacking a sufficiently large constituency" (Napoli, 2007:3). I have already noted in the thesis that the Bangladesh CR movement was not part of greater social or political movement. At the same time, it was not entirely a standalone movement either, as its growth mirrored that of the RTI movement in Bangladesh. The latter campaign was actively supported and financed by the INGOs and donors. It involved a wide range of civil society organizations and journalists in particular. The key RTI related arguments were produced around the discourses of access to public information, good governance, and strengthening democracy. The CR movement too generated discourses related to good governance. The democratization of communication was not the prime focus of the movement. Collectively, it championed one ideal principle – CR *of* the people, *by* the people and *for* the people. The findings of this study of the situation on the ground at the level of actual daily operation of the CRSs, however, suggest that this worthy principle is not reflected in practice.

NGO involvement has been vital throughout the CR campaign. Although some non-NGO advocates were involved in the advocacy and policy campaign in an individual capacity, it was the NGO campaigners who lobbied the nonpartisan caretaker government (2006-08) for new legislation. A few communication NGO executives also worked as committee members in the CR policy drafting committee. I should note that throughout this process most CRS aspirants were more inclined to make sure that the policy provisions enabled the NGOs to have the flexibility to establish community-based radio. There was little concern expressed about the policy gap that was inherent in such a strategy. The gap, that is, between the high-minded principles of the campaign, the desire for autonomous media which would facilitate democratic communication, and the reality of NGO domination of the end results. Although the CRSs have extended

the mediascape of the country, the NGOs are not encouraging "novel perspectives to be articulated and heard" (Malik, 2015) in the CR sector. Ultimately, in relation to the democratization of community broadcasting, members of local communities have not been transformed into "active partners" as Sean MacBride and others had hoped, rather, they have remained "mere object(s) of communication" (MacBride, et al., 1980:166).

Ordinary peoples' participation in management, content production and organisation are crucial for the development of community media (Wasco and Mosco, 1992). In order for the community to use the CRSs in democratizing the structure and process of community broadcasting, ordinary people should be able to choose their own messages, produce the shows relevant to them and express their own views. Conceptually the CRSs are open to all community people to participate. But in reality, the volunteers are carefully selected, and the agendas for the programmes are decided by the initiators. Only a select few participate in a limited capacity in production and broadcasting. As the communities do not manage the stations, the selection of participants undermines the participatory value of the CR.

The medium's specific use by the government and NGOs to communicate mostly 'development' issues leaves local communities with scant opportunity to set their own agenda. For example, members of local communities and listeners to CR in the areas where I conducted fieldwork frequently told me that they did not want a typical 'development' focus as it had become a cliché to them. Local audiences are already familiar with this variety of developmental programmes (on agriculture, family planning, health and education, for example) broadcast by state radio and TV. The lack of participation in programme planning is also impacting the "diversity and sensitivity in programming content" (Malik, 2015). The controlled mode of operation of the CRSs is restricting the effective participation of wide sections of the communities including even the listeners'

groups. All these factors are limiting the potential for creating a community-owned media.

If we consider the functions of CR to be associated with democratic public communication, this establishes links to communication rights. MacBride, et al. (1980) consider communication to be a basic individual right, as well as a collective right. I have noted already that the Bangladesh CR campaign was not based on the ideas of communication rights or right to communicate (although the two do not always amount to the same thing). A leading CR advocate suggests that:

> Most of the CR enthusiasts in Bangladesh did not have clear ideas about the 'freeing airwaves' campaign in India or the 'Right to Communicate' movement. […] We wanted a broadcasting medium for the people where they will all participate; and they will be able to express their views on globalization. They should also be able to maintain their uniqueness and autonomy.

Many CR advocates were either unaware or did not have any specific communication philosophy for establishing a community-based radio. Nonetheless, the prior intention of the NGOs to possess a broadcasting medium at local level is now quite evident. Despite the shifting focus in the post-policy period, the NGO discourse of CR, with its catchy maxims, such as "voice of the voiceless", and talk of "social change" and "good governance" generally include the basic ideal of a community's need to seek, receive and impart information. Such discourses, however, do not articulate a notion of CR as a communication right. Where there is discussion of rights, it is limited to women's and children's rights and empowerment. While implementing CR, the NGOs do not enable the communities to exercise their right to decision-making and participation in the management of the radio.

Democratic public communication is two-way, dialogical and participating groups are both receivers and transmitters of information (Aginam, 2005). The NGO-led

CR has made some limited concessions in this regard where two-way communication between the listeners and speakers (communicators) takes place. But contexts where community members could act as both "receivers and transmitters of information" are systematically controlled. As a media institution, apparently the CRSs are open to all, but technically the community has restricted access to the station. They are yet to use it as a tangible space for associational life; or a medium in which to express their critical or alternative viewpoints on culture, development and identity. The CRSs are "beholden to [the] powerful interests" of the initiators which is obstructing the building of an "institutional mechanism" (White, 1995) needed for democratic public communication.

This lack of active community participation in CR operations, and complete absence of community ownership have also impacted claims to inclusive communication which includes the participation of subcultural groups, the marginalised and other sections of the local population. Due to the control over the decision-making process, the community cannot set the programme agendas which are most relevant to them. The volunteers have limited access to the CRS. Although some minorities of the community do participate in selected shows occasionally, greater sections of the socially and politically excluded, and even the listeners' club members have not been able to use the CRS as a site for deliberative practices.

Despite the potential to build community public spheres, the NGO-guided CRS has not been effective in facilitating a discursive space in which active deliberative practices could take place. Protectionist and top-down approaches, and control over management and programme planning affect the potential for creating an "egalitarian and equitable" (Pavarala and Malik, 2007) public sphere. Some leading CR advocates claim that there are activities taking place at the CRSs which mark the beginning of the making of a public sphere. I have already noted in chapter 6 however, that there are fundamental loopholes in the practices of CR operation on the ground that obstruct the making of an alternative or

community-led public sphere. The CRS is not yet an independent channel of communication between the marginalised and the representatives of various government departments. In this sense, the CRS is not an independent site for deliberative exercises aiming at community agenda setting. Hackett and Carroll (2006) have suggested that a 'modest' use of technology might give potential voice to forms of counterpublic. In practice, however, such potential counterpublics have no access to the broadcasting hardware, neither is there any scope for them to find and install more appropriate technology, which are cheaper and more affordable.

Under current practice, the NGOs are supporting a form of radio which is apolitical in nature. This approach undermines the community's potential to perform communicative and deliberative actions which might contribute to the creation of a democratic public sphere. At the same time, the communities have no incentive to use the stations as a tangible space to promote their associational life. I am suggesting here that, for strategic reasons, the NGOs do not want the independent participation of the community and nor are they interested in allowing communicative actions which might set new agendas which challenge the status quo. In sum, coupled with the absence of fully-fledged news bulletins, this heavy NGO influence and the NGOs' almost quasi-monopoly over actual CR practice negate the potential for CR to act as an effective discursive arena.

The liberalization of media policies that began in the 1990s helped the NGOs to achieve one of their communication goals, local and community broadcasting. As I have already stated, the campaigns for community radio operations were largely NGO-led. It was an opportunity for the international donors that invested in media development to support the campaign for a CR enabling environment. Both the communication NGOs and development NGOs were successful in capitalizing on the benefits of media liberalization, and ultimately managed to influence the lobbying process for a CR policy in a period of political transition.

The NGOs that led the CR campaign influenced the policy agendas. At the implementation level too, the CRSs are fully NGO-managed and local communities only have controlled and guided access. The initiators are not willing to transfer the ownership to the local or community organisations; neither are they preparing the communities to run the stations in the future. In addition, a limited number of CR support organisations are deciding capacity building agendas, outlining financial models, and mediating between the donors and initiators. The existence of only a limited number of support organisations has further complicated NGO involvement in CR operations.

NGO influence over the policy process and advocacy, control of operations for institutionalization and professionalization of the programming and management, the initiatives to develop a business model as opposed to community contribution and ownership, the use of the CRS for accelerating the dissemination of 'development' messages at the local level, and the overall protectionist approach to control participation, have all had serious implications for the democratization of the communication process. In the thesis, I have called this a process of NGO-ization. My experience of participant observation at the CRS sites and information gathered during interviews and focused discussions suggest that the protectionist approach to maintaining the social and political status quo is linked to the NGOs' organisational culture. Due to the hierarchical and vertical nature of management, the CRSs are unable to provide an environment that enables local communities to engage in critical debate. As a result, the CRSs have not been able to make any significant inroads in terms of being accepted as the primary source of local information and sites for ideological negotiations.

If we look at the picture overall in South Asia, NGOs and civil society groups have called for media reform which they believe will assist in the creation of enabling environments for community media. Bangladesh is no exception and over the last decade, as we have seen, NGOs have been actively involved in the campaigns for broadcast media reform. In the current situation, CR is ostensibly

operating free from direct state influence and market pressure. However, the policy enables the government to retain bureaucratic surveillance over operational procedures. The real development of CR as an independent media is under threat due to heavy donor dependence for programming and not being able to challenge the dominant discourses on development, citizenship, identity and participation. NGOs fear losing the government's favour and, indeed, are even lobbying for the creation of a secured fund guaranteed by government.

The international donors who invested in the media development projects in Bangladesh are not challenging the increasing NGO domination of the CR sector. Indeed, major donors, such as Free Press Unlimited, are continuing to provide financial assistance for capacity building and the promotion of women's engagement in the CRSs. In reality, none of the donors are focusing on the issues of active community ownership or the problems involved in creating an independent deliberative site. In fact, aspects of the NGO-ization which I have described (and which is hindering the democratic development of CR in my opinion) seem to pass them by entirely. Some donors are now even investing in radio programmes to promote their own development agendas and are therefore, in effect, using CR largely as a local development radio. Thus far, the international media development donors seem to have been comfortable with the current functioning of the CRSs, which is top-down in terms of decision-making, and only partially participatory in its programming.

On the ground, CR is being used as a development support communication (DSC) tool rather than an independent participatory medium. It is tempting to suggest that what we see is little more than the re-emergence or the contemporary rebranding of the old modernization paradigm. The NGOs, government and donors are using the community-based broadcasting facility for the promotion of their own 'development' agendas. Although some of the themes are beneficial to the community, they are not initiated or discussed by the

community itself and donors have increasingly begun to capitalize on the stations to accelerate the reach of their project messages.

This is not to be entirely negative in my assessment of the CR project in Bangladesh to date. CR had enabled certain local issues to be addressed in a local context and expressed through the local language. Local folk traditions in music and theatre are finding a new locally-based avenue of expression. There has been some progress in addressing the training needs of local youth and bringing them into the fold of the CRSs. In periods of natural disaster, CR has more than proved its worth as a source of life-saving information and assistance. All these gains, however, are fragile. In its current form, CR in Bangladesh is operating more as a local development radio and its true potential is yet to be realized.

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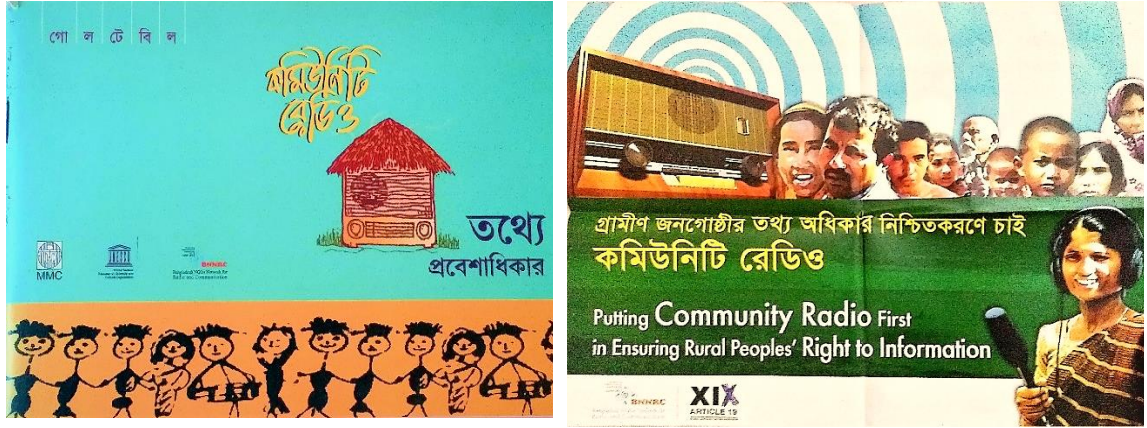
Appendix A
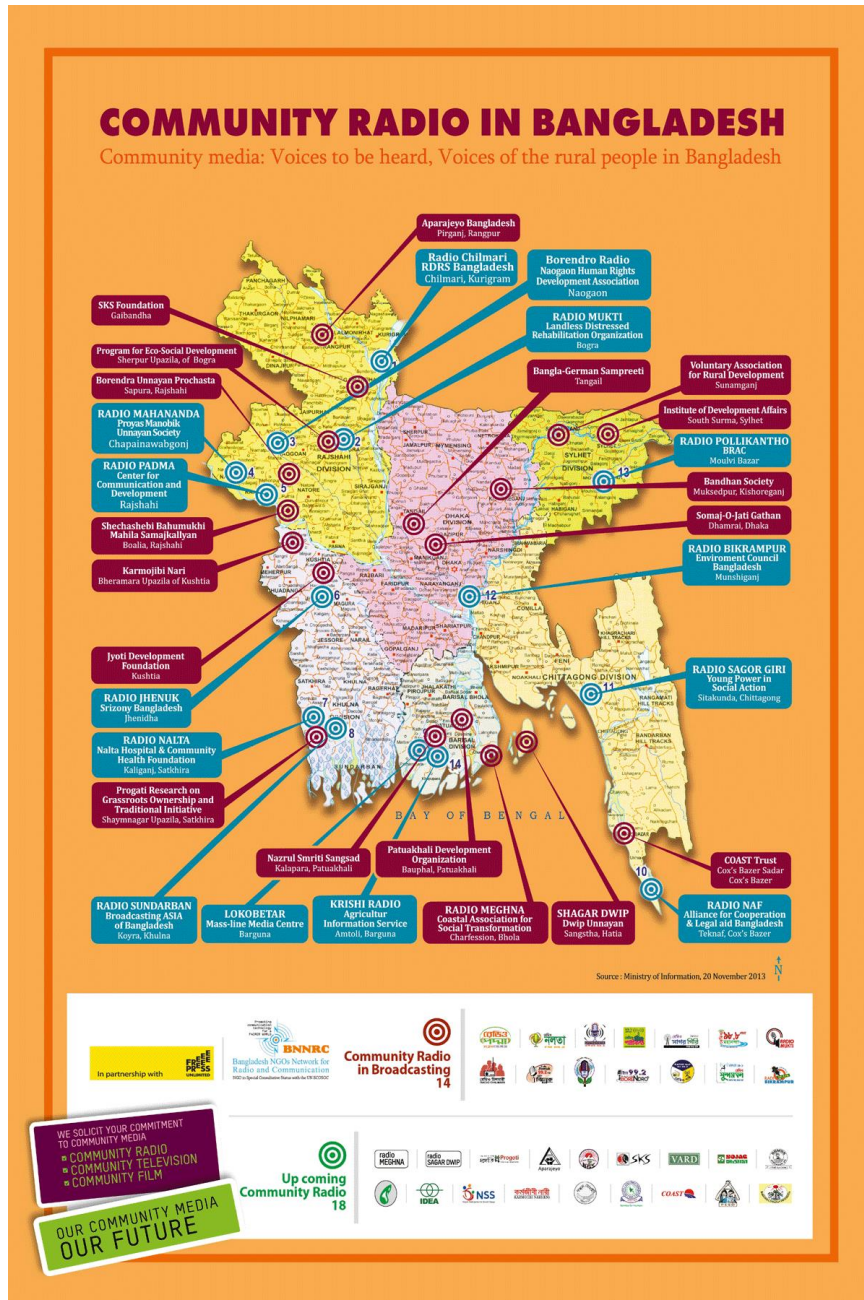
Appendix A: Map showing locations of the thirty-two community radio stations (CRS) that received government permission including the stations that are currently in operation. The publicity messages that appear at the top and bottom of the map are printed for promotion by the CR support NGO who published this. Source: Bangladesh NGOs Network for Radio and Communication (BNNRC), Dhaka, Bangladesh.

Appendix B
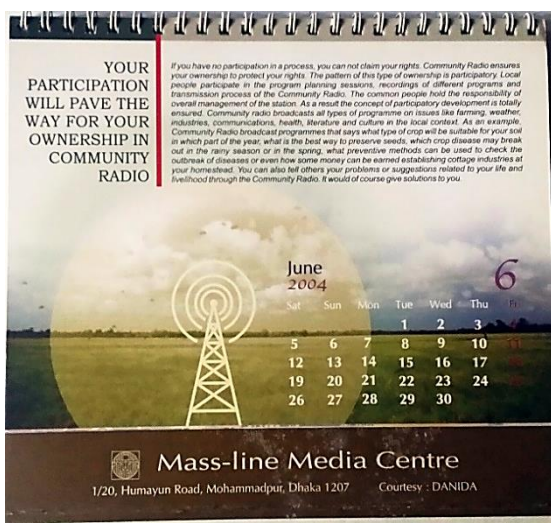
Appendix B: A campaign material (a desk calendar of 2004 printed both in Benali and English) produced and distributed by Mass Line Media Centre (MMC), one of the leading CR campiagning NGOs, dissmeinates one of the basic tenets of CR – participation and onwrship. It states, "Your participation will pave the way for your ownership in community radio". (Source: personal archive)

Appendix C

Appendix C: A campaign material showing the theme of a roundtable meeting – CR's role attributing to access to information (left); and promoting a slogan published on a publicity booklet – Putting community radio first in ensuring rural peoples' Right to Information (right)

Appendix D

MASS-LINE MEDIA CENTRE (MMC)
ম্যাস-লাইন মিডিয়া সেন্টার (এমএমসি)

সূত্র: এমএমসি/ডিএইচ/১৪০৬৯৭/৬০১
তারিখ: ১৪ জুন '৯৮

বরাবর
সচিব
তথ্য মন্ত্রণালয়
বাংলাদেশ সচিবালয়, ঢাকা।

দৃষ্টি আকর্ষণ: মোঃ মোকছেদ আলী পিকে
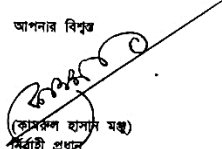সহকারী সচিব, তথ্য মন্ত্রণালয়, বাংলাদেশ সচিবালয়, ঢাকা।

বিষয়: বেসরকারি মালিকানায় বেতার কেন্দ্র স্থাপন ও পরিচালনা সংক্রান্ত প্রকল্পের দরপত্র উপস্থাপন প্রসঙ্গে।

মহাত্ম্য,

যথাবিহিত সম্মানসহ এবং গত ২৩-৪-৯৮ তারিখে দৈনিক 'ইত্তেফাক'-এ আপনাদের প্রকাশিত দরপত্র আহবানের প্রেক্ষিতে আমরা একটি কারিগরি প্রকল্প প্রস্তাবনা আপনাদের সদয় বিবেচনার জন্য উপস্থাপন করছি।

অতএব, প্রস্তাব বিবেচনা করে 'এমএমসি কমিউনিটি রেডিও' স্থাপনের জন্য অনুমতি/লাইসেন্স প্রদান করে বাধিত করবেন।

ধন্যবাদান্তে

আপনার বিশ্বস্ত

(কামরুল হাসান মঞ্জু)
নির্বাহী প্রধান
এমএমসি।

সংযুক্তি:
১. প্রকল্প প্রস্তাবনা ১ কপি (কারিগরি ও আর্থিক প্রস্তাবসহ)
২. ৫ (পাঁচ) লক্ষ টাকা পে-অর্ডার, সোনালী ব্যাংক, ডিআরএমসি শাখা
   চেক নম্বর PO $\frac{GA}{100}$ ০৯৩৩৮১২,তারিখ: ১০/৬/৯৮
৩. স্বাক্ষরিত শর্তাবলীসহ দরপত্র দলিল।
৪. সম্প্রচার মানচিত্র– (৫ কপি)।
৫. পটুয়াখালী মৌজা মানচিত্র
৬. ট্রেড লাইসেন্স।
৭. এনজিও বিষয়ক ব্যুরোর নিবন্ধন।
৮. সমাজসেবার নিবন্ধন
৯. আর্থিক সচ্ছলতার সনদপত্র
১০. সংস্থার গঠনতন্ত্র
১১. দাতা সংস্থের আর্থিক সহযোগিতার সম্মতিপত্র।

ce : 1/20, Humayun Road, Block–B, Mohammadpur, Dhaka-1207, GPO Box No. 2157; Tel. 9125077, 823446; Fax : 880-2-9121627
ffice : College Road, Banani, Patuakhali-8600 ; Phone/Fax : 0441-2533
: Azad Monzil (2nd Floor), Hospital Road, Maijdee Court , Noakhali-3800; Phone/Fax : 0321-5666

Appendix D: Mass Line Media Centre (MMC) application to Ministry of Information (MoI) for license to establish CR in private ownership. (Source: personal archive)

Appendix E

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার
তথ্য মন্ত্রণালয়
বেতার শাখা-২
বাংলাদেশ সচিবালয়, ঢাকা।

নং তম/১/১/৯৭-উন্নয়ন(অংশ-২)/ ২৮৫/১(১৪)   তারিখ ঃ ০৫/০৭/২০০৩ইং

বিষয় ঃ আর্নেষ্ট মানি ফেরৎ প্রদান হইবে।

বেসরকারী উদ্যোগে বেতার কেন্দ্র স্থাপনের জন্য প্রায় ৫(পাঁচ) বছর পূর্বে দাখিলকৃত দরপত্রের সাথে আপনি আর্নেষ্ট মানি হিসেবে যে পে অর্ডার তথ্য মন্ত্রণালয়ে জমা দিয়েছিলেন, তা ফেরৎ নেয়ার জন্য আপনাকে অনুরোধ করা হলো।

(কে,এস,এম,প্রেসমীন আখতার)
সিনিয়র সহকারী সচিব,(বেতার-২)

বিতরণ ঃ

১। ব্যবস্থাপনা পরিচালক, সুবচন লিঃ (বিজি ইউ,এস,এ প্রাইভেট রেডিও), ৫৬-৫৭ শরীফ ম্যানসন, মতিঝিল, ঢাকা।

২। ব্যবস্থাপনা পরিচালক, রেডিও ব্রডকাষ্টিং এফ এম (বাংলাদেশ) কোং লিঃ,স্যুট-৯০৪(১১শ তলা), সেনাকল্যাণ ভবন,১৯৫ মতিঝিল,বা/এ,ঢাকা ঃ ফোন-৯৫৬৮৪৭৫।

৩। জেনারেল ম্যানেজার, মাল্টিমোড ট্রান্সপোর্ট কনসালটেন্ট লিঃ, এনকব টাওয়ার, ১/১(বি), সোনারগাঁও রোড, ঢাকা।

৪। পরিচালক, সাউন্ড স্কেপ এন্টারটেইনমেন্ট লিঃ, ১০২,গুলশান এভিনিউ, ঢাকা।

৫। চেয়ারম্যান, নর্দান ব্রডকাষ্টিং সেন্টার,বাড়ী নং-৩৯, সড়ক নং১৩,বনানী, ঢাকা।

৬। চেয়ারম্যান, মেট্রোওয়েভ লিমিটেড,ইরেকটোরস হাউস (১০তলা) ১৮,কামাল আতাতুর্ক এভিনিউ, বনানী, ঢাকা।

৭। ব্যবস্থাপনা পরিচালক, ঢাকা এফ এম, নাতানা টাওয়ার (৮মতলা),৪৫,গুলশান, দক্ষিন বা/এ, সার্কেল-১, ঢাকা, ফোন-৮৮১৯২২০।

৮। প্রোপাইটর, আমার দেশ,বাড়ী নং -৩৮, সড়ক নং-১, বনানী, ঢাকা।

৯। ব্যবস্থাপনা পরিচালক, ইনফরমেশন সার্ভিসেস নেটওয়ার্ক লিঃ, ৫২,নিউ ইস্কাটন রোড,টিএমসি বিল্ডিং, (২য় এবং ৫ম তলা), ঢাকা-১০০০।

১০। ব্যবস্থাপনা পরিচালক, পার্টেক্স এয়ার লিঃ সেনাকল্যাণ ভবন,১৯৫ মতিঝিল বা/এ, ঢাকা।

১১। সম্পাদক ও প্রকাশক, আজকের বেতার,বাড়ী নং-৫, সড়ক নং-২/এ, ধানমন্ডী বা/এ, ঢাকা।

১২। নির্বাহী প্রধান, মাস লাইন মিডিয়া সেন্টার,১/২০ হুমায়ুন রোড,মোহাম্মদপুর,ঢাকা।

১৩। প্রধান সমন্বয়, গণযাত্রা কেন্দ্র সাভার, ঢাকা।

১৪। পরিচালক, রেডিও মাররিয়া (ক্রিশ্চিয়ান কমিউনিকেশন সেন্টার), ৬১/১, সুবাশ বোস এভিনিউ, লক্ষীবাজার, ঢাকা।

নং তম/১/১/৯৭-উন্নয়ন(অংশ-২)/   তারিখ ঃ ০৫/০৭/২০০৩ইং

আর্নেষ্ট মানি ফেরৎ প্রদানের ব্যবস্থা গ্রহণের জন্য অনুরোধসহ অনুলিপি প্রেরণ করা হলো ঃ-

হিসাব রক্ষণ কর্মকর্তা, তথ্য মন্ত্রণালয়, বাংলাদেশ সচিবালয়, ঢাকা।

(কে,এস,এম,প্রেসমীন আখতার)
সিনিয়র সহকারী সচিব,(বেতার-২)

Appendix E: Ministry of Information's (MoI) letter to Mass Line Media Centre (MMC) asking for taking back the pay order that they provided as deposit with the application. (Source: personal archive).

Appendix F

NATIONAL DECLARATION ON COMMUNITY RADIO, DHAKA-2005
compiled at NATIONAL CONSULTATION ON COMMUNITY RADIO

We, the participants of the National Consultation on Community Radio held on 6-7 December 2005 are agreed that Community Radio can play a pivotal role to promote rights of people and facilitates their access to information. Thus, we all agreed that favorable legislation and effective strategic plan for Community Radio in Bangladesh is an important step that might be taken immediately. We unanimously agreed as follows :

01. We reaffirm the Article 39.2 of the Constitution of the Peoples Republic of Bangladesh that facilitates freedom of expression and communication right.

02. We recognize the Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights where access to information and freedom of expression is declared as human rights.

03. We believe that People's participation, right to information and freedom of expression are neglected in existing two-tier broadcasting media policy and practice. The inception of community media can help democratization and ensure people's participation.

04. We recognize that Community Radio is friendly and will play significant role in a society where illiteracy and poverty are the key hurdles on the way of achieving human right and development goals.

05. We belong and support all the efforts and activities for Community Radio in International, Regional and National level.

06. We reaffirm the Verdict of Indian Supreme Court where it is pronounced that 'Airwave is public property'.

07. We recognize that Community Radio can play a vital role in saving lives and assets from different disasters.

08. We recognize that Community Radio can ensure free flow of information and minimize the information gap.

09. We recognize that Community Radio can help the preservation and promotion of local culture and indigenous knowledge.

10. We believe that Community Radio would be able to contribute in the sphere of ensuring accountability of government and nongovernmental organizations and all public representatives of every level.

11. We recognize that the Community Radio can ensure the women's and different marginalized people's participation in the decision making process.

Considering the above points :

12. We call our policy makers and government for formulating policy and laws in favor of Community Radio as soon as possible.

13. We urge our government and other institutions to recognize Community Radio's potentiality and possible role in achieving the millennium development goals.

14. We request all the interest groups and civil society to be united for raising a public demand for Community Radio.

Recognizing every potential and overall situation, this alliance schematized their further steps in favor of immediate establishment of Community Radio in Bangladesh as follows :

15. Formation of a National platform accommodating all the enthusiast community media and development organizations and practitioners.

16. Organizing AMARC (The World Association of Community Radio broadcasters) Bangladesh as a country wing of AMARC International accommodating the Community Radio initiators right at this moment, which would be turned towards broadcasters by the nearest future and would be conducted in accordance of AMARC regulations.

17. We hope, this two association would declare and implement their own programs where establishment of Community Radio would be included as a common agenda.

Compiled by : Mr. Kamrul Hassan Monju
Chairperson, Steering Committee, National Consultation on Community Radio
Executive Director, Mass-Line Media Centre
Mr. A H M Bozlur Rahman
Member, Steering Committee, National Consultation on Community Radio
Chief Executive Officer, BNNRC
Mr. Ahmed Swapon Mahmud
Member, Steering Committee, National Consultation on Community Radio
Executive Director, Voice
Mr. Mohammad Sahid Ullah
Member, Steering Committee, National Consultation on Community Radio
Executive Director, Focus
Mr. Arifur Rahman
Member, Steering Committee, National Consultation on Community Radio
Executive Director, YPSA
Mr. Zahidul Islam
Event Manager, National Consultation on Community Radio

Appendix F: Copy of 'National Declaration on Community Radio', compiled by the steering committee members (who also represented a number of communication NGOs) at the National Consultation on community radio. The declaration was useful for the CR advocates to plan for an advocacy strategy. (Source: personal archive)

Appendix G

List of Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

Community Radio Stations (CRS) & Broadcasting Areas	Participants in FGDs
Radio Naf Teknaf, Cox's Bazar	Community women
	Community men
	Listeners' club members (young people)
	Listeners' club members (male/female)
	Volunteers/producers/fellows
	Community business people
	Fisher folks
	Rakhain villagers/listeners
	Civil societies
	Non-initiator NGO/INGO staff
Radio Pollikontho Matar Kapon, Moulvi Bazar	Community women
	Community men
	Listeners' club members (young people)
	Listeners' club members (male/female)
	Volunteers/producers/fellows
	Journalists/civil societies
	Monipuri community
	Kuli/day labourer
	Non-initiator NGO/INGO staff
Radio Bikrampur Deobhog, Munshigonj	Community women
	Community men
	Listeners' club members (young people)

	Listeners' club members (male/female)
	Volunteers/producers
	Journalists/civil societies
	Farmers
	Fisher folks
Radio Nalta Kaliganj, Satkhira	Community women
	Community men
	Listeners' club members
	Volunteers/producers/fellows
	Community leaders/opinion makers
	Shopkeepers/listeners
	Initiator NGO staffs
	Social/religious minority (women)
ETV Radio Kathmandu Valley, Nepal	Initiator and NGO staff
	Volunteers/producers
	Female listeners
	Male listeners
Radio Karnali Jumla, Nepal	Initiators/NGO staff
	Volunteers/producers
Metro FM Kathmandu Metropolitan City	Producers
	Listeners

Appendix H

List of Interviews

Names of Interviewees (not in alphabetical order)	Position/Designation & Organisation/Affiliation
Tarikul Islam	Executive Director, Alliance for Cooperation and Legal Aid Bangladesh (ACLAB)
Ruma Parveen	Programme Officer, ACLAB
Siddiqur Rahman	Station Manager, Radio Naf
Aminul Islam	Former Station Manager, Radio Naf
Lal Miah	Fisherman/community leader, Teknaf
Munni	Senior volunteer/programmer, Radio Naf
Harun Rashid	Senior Producer, Radio Naf (also a journalist)
Ani Sharma	CR Fellow, Teknaf/Radio Naf
Rahimullah	Volunteer, Radio Naf
Ram Chandra	Fisherman, Teknaf
Meena Aktar	Community woman (homemaker), Teknaf
Rani	Volunteer (female), Radio Naf
Ana Minz	Director, Community Empowerment Programme (CEP); Integrated Development; Gender, Justice & Diversity, BRAC
Chittaranjon Sarkar	Archive Analyst, Advocacy Programme, BRAC
Mehedi Hasan	Senior Station Manager, Radio Pollikontho
Juliara Tania	Producer, Radio Pollikontho
Professor Harun	Consultant, Basic English Language for Outreach Radio Audience (BELFORA)
Joyti Devi	Female listener from a minority community, Moulvibazar

Kanai	Fisherman, Moulvibazar
Harun Or Rashid	Station Manager, Radio Bikrampur
Mushfiqur Shihab	Senior Producer, Radio Bikrampur
Arif Sikdar	Executive Director, Ambala Foundation (formerly EC Bangladesh)
Zabed Ali	Farmer, Munshigonj
Julia	Volunteer, Radio Bikrampur
Lalu Lal	Dalit male, Munshigonj
Abu Sufian	Station Manager, Radio Nalta
Rina Das	Programmer (female),Radio Nalta
Protima Rani	Producer, Radio Nalta
Ambika	Woman from minority community, Kaliganj, Satkhira
Asish Sen	Director, Voices, India; Vice President, AMARC-AP (ex-officio); & independent media consultant
Dr. Brain Shoesmith	Adjunct Professor, Communication & Contemporary Arts, Edith Cowan University (ECU); & former Professor, University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh (ULAB)
Zahidul Haque	Former Programme Officer, Bangladesh NGOs Network for Radio and Communication (BNNRC)
Md. Kamruzzaman	Programme Officer, BNNRC
AHM Bazlur Rahman	Chief Executive Officer, BNNRC
Rashid Al Amin	Editor, *Community Media*; Radio & TV presenter
Raghu Mainali	International CR trainer; a founder of Radio Sagarmatha; & Director, Nepal Forum of Environmental Journalist (NEFEJ)
Min Bahadur Shahi	Executive Director, Karnali Integrated Rural Development and Research Centre (KIRDARC), Nepal
Rabindra Bhattarai	Association of Community Radio Broadcasters Nepal (ACORAB)

Suman Basnet	Regional Coordinator, World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC – Asia Pacific)
Dr. Pradip Thomas	Associate Professor, School of Communication Arts, The University of Queensland; & former Director of Studies, World Association for Christian Communication (WACC)
Dr. Vinod Pavarala	Professor, Department of Communication at Sarojini Naidu School of Performing Arts, Fine Arts & Communication, University of Hyderabad; & UNESCO Chair on Community Media
Kamrul Hasan (Monju)	Executive Director, Mass Line Media Centre (MMC)
Faroha Suhrawardi	Communications Officer, British High Commission, Dhaka; former Regional Director, Bangladesh Betar; & CR researcher
Dr Jahangir Alam	Director, Agricultural Information Service (AIS)
Arifa Sharmin	Communication Manager, UNICEF Dhaka Office
Faruq Faisal	CR expert and communications consultant
Ms Zaman (not real name)	Senior Programme officer (Rights & Governance), a media development donor agency
Dr. Monirul Islam	Professor of Sociology, University of Dhaka
Dr. Santanu Majumdar	Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Dhaka
Late Dr. Helaluddin Arefin	Professor of Anthropology, University of Dhaka
Dr. Gitiara Nasreen	Professor of Mass Communication and Journalism, University of Dhaka
Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO)	Teknaf Upazila
Upazila Chairman	Teknaf Upazila Parishad
Upazila Fisheries Officer	Teknaf Upazila
Upazila Agriculture Officer	Teknaf Upazila