

COMMUNITY RADIOS AGAINST POVERTY

AMARC ASIA-PACIFIC NEWSLETTER

"We are about people having a voice through radio"



USING DRAMA TO PROMOTE COMMUNITY DISCUSSION

Theatre or drama is an important performing art that presents experiences that may be real or imagined before an audience. It gets us to think about how we speak and how we share what we say. Although drama denotes the written or printed script of the play while theatre is the play's onstage production, the words are being used interchangeably here. Theatre helps make a program engaging and participatory while the radio is the theatre of the mind. Radios are most accessible to the rural population and radio dramas can serve as effective means for behavioral changes.

There are four main forms of drama-comedy, tragedy, tragicomedy, and melodrama. Out of this, comedy as a form is very old and part of the oral tradition. As laughter is missing from the radio and the voice has become very serious and formal, comedy can serve as a means to break the monotony. Comedy is a form of storytelling that allows one to present a personal perspective thereby helping in the discussion of various issues in the community.

In This Issue

- Using Drama to Promote Community Discussion
- Role Of Community Media In Addressing Poverty
- Interviewing For Radio
- Community Research for Community Radio
- Knowledge-Sharing Session
- Participants' Feedback

Why Radio Drama?

- ❖ Drama helps in connecting with the audience/listeners on an emotional level
- ❖ Drama combines fact and fiction
- ❖ Drama uses metaphors to underline the message
- ❖ Drama uses local dialect
- ❖ Drama challenges the stereotypes

Tips for Radio Drama

- ❖ Know your audience
- ❖ Use a narrator
- ❖ Create action through dialogue
- ❖ Use sounds effects to bring it to life
- ❖ Include music to set the mood of the play
- ❖ Create believable characters
- ❖ Be precise and clear with language

*Based on the webinar session by Ashish Chandra Sen, India

ROLE OF COMMUNITY MEDIA IN ADDRESSING POVERTY

- Dr. Ramnath Bhat

Poverty is usually seen as the absence of wealth. In the neoliberal economy and cultures that surround us, individuals are encouraged to work harder if they are to get out of or avoid poverty. Such an impression is created by granting significant autonomy to a concept called “the economy” – as if it has a life of its own. Its consequences can be devastating including unemployment, precarious labour, price rise and so on and yet no one quite seems to have a hold on managing it. We seem to have forgotten that the economy is meant to serve the people rather than the other way around. Granting too much power to the economy results in societies losing a sense of collective agency, in imagining a better future, in changing the present.

Poverty then, is not just the absence of wealth, but also the experience of powerlessness both at the individual and collective levels in society. For the individual, it dictates every aspect of his/her life – from deciding one’s occupation, mobility, food and nutrition, family structure, housing, intellectual activity and so on. For groups, poverty manifests as institutional failure in public education, health, housing, employment etc. and lack of political representation to change policies in their interests. Poverty is also intimately tied to culture since our beliefs and attitudes are oriented to maintain the status quo rather than change it. When one acknowledges the ways in which poverty permeates everyday life, it is clear that poverty has both physical/material and psychological aspects that need to be tackled.

There is a need to think about the role of media in relation to this broad perspective on media. In a complex society, it is no longer possible for individuals to know each other. We depend on media and communication systems to tell us about the world beyond our own narrow personal networks. We also depend on them to educate us about complex topics that transcend our individual contexts. The media thus becomes the intermediary institution through which we get to know about each other. However, we know that the media’s intermediation is not an innocent one. Privately owned media intermediate in favour of profits sought through advertisements, entertainment, celebrity culture, and in general pushing for greater capitalist consumption. Public media is typically controlled by government actors, and in many countries the state controls the narrative on these media.

In such a situation, community broadcasters can play an important role in combating not just the symptoms but the very root causes of poverty. Given their local footprint and editorial independence through community ownership, these broadcasters can provide a powerful understanding of how poverty is produced in each region. The production of poverty requires a nuanced understanding of economic exploitation, which in turn requires an accurate identification of which groups are dominant and which groups are dominated through what kind of economic, political and cultural relations. The mapping of such relations exposes how individuals and groups become dominant at the expense of others. The role of community broadcasters is to stand behind the dominated groups – on the basis of caste, class, gender/sexuality, language etc.

Broadcasters can bring the lifeworld of the dominated groups into the public sphere. This means bringing their struggles to the centre of the society through a diverse and creative programming strategy. Programming should acknowledge both the material and symbolic aspects of poverty – from lack of access to crucial infrastructure to sense of powerlessness in individuals. Broadcasters can become the platform through which these groups can represent their interests to the state, to build consensus for progressive people-oriented policies. Finally, broadcasters can also amplify the voices of groups that do not accept their exploitation or domination. Efforts towards resistance can be both documented and amplified by community broadcasters thus becoming a key ally for combating poverty at the grassroots level.

After the economic damage in the context of a post-pandemic world, millions of people have been pushed back into poverty eroding the benefits of welfare capitalism slowly accumulated over several decades. It is no surprise that societies around the world have seen a marked deterioration in not only standards of living but also psychological health. Climate change, increasing political authoritarianism, disinformation and rampant capitalist consumerism are all actively compounding the general production of poverty. If our future generations are to have any chance at all of building a better world, it is incumbent on people's media to stand and fight for dignity and fraternity, equality and liberty.

INTERVIEWING FOR RADIO

Some of the points to keep in mind while preparing for an interview are:

- Research on the topic and resource persons
- Prepare questions beforehand
- Interviewer should be flexible with questions, time, and location
- Be conversational: Follow-up questions can be formulated from the answers given by the interviewee
- Start with safe questions
- Remember the audience

Tips for conducting the interview:

- ❖ Be relaxed and make the other person comfortable
- ❖ Take consent to broadcast
- ❖ Ask clear and short questions
- ❖ Use 5W1H (What? Who? Where? When? Why? How?)
- ❖ Announce the end of the interview with the "last" question.
- ❖ Repeat the person's name, position, organization, and the topic

COMMUNITY RESEARCH FOR COMMUNITY RADIO



Community research is research conducted for the community members. Community members and experts work together to gather information particularly community needs.

Community radios conduct research to identify issues for target audience and learn about the unique needs of the unique community. Research also helps in identifying unique media pattern of the community. However, the researcher should be from the same area with geographical and demographic knowledge and understanding.

Process of the Research:

- ❖ Identify the purpose of the research and its objectives
- ❖ Gathering background information
- ❖ Designing research and deciding whom to talk
- ❖ Designing research tools
- ❖ Data collection
- ❖ Data processing and analysis
- ❖ Preparing a research report

Like all types of research, challenges are faced while conducting community research and they include:

- ❖ Time issue
- ❖ Not being able to make the interviewees understand
- ❖ Time-consuming
- ❖ Coordination issue
- ❖ Credibility: Why information is being collected?
- ❖ Authenticity
- ❖ Interviewees may not be focused

KNOWLEDGE-SHARING SESSION

An online training workshop was conducted from 24th January to 9th February, 2022 to empower community radio journalists (CRJs) to address COVID-19 related poverty helped in capacity development of CRJs in four countries - Bangladesh, Indonesia, India and Nepal. The workshop also involved a knowledge sharing session among participants.

Some of the questions asked during the knowledge-sharing session were:

How do you identify the marginalized communities and their issues?

“Conducting research helps us know who the listeners are and how many there are and also provides information about the target audience.” – DN Chaudhary



“Visiting the people either in their houses or at their work like farms help with collecting information.” – Novia Etik Setyaningsih

“The needs of the community are identified by filling out questionnaires with the help of the community volunteers.” – Anis Purwanti



“We conduct Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and divide the communities into various groups depending on the topics which helps in the collection of accurate information.” – Sharmila

What did you do to help the community during the pandemic?

“The community radio started broadcasting radio classes despite not receiving any help from the government or other organizations. We trained the teachers to run radio broadcasts.” – Rinaldi



“We persevered despite the various challenges we had to face like lack of transportation and funds to provide accurate information to the community.” – Md. Noyon Ali

“We would receive phone calls from people in need of assistance during the pandemic. So, we helped connect with the organizations and places providing assistance like food and other basic needs.” – Preeti



“As many people started returning to the villages during the pandemic, we started various programs to increase productivity and engagement.” – Nirmaya Gurung

How did you address the spread of misinformation during the pandemic?

“We would first verify any information received and broadcast only the correct information.” – Urmila Danuwar



“We participated in the COVID-19 task force team and shared information via social media channels like Facebook.” – Latief Rochyana

What were your main learnings from the training sessions? What was new and what was already known but helpful?

“The talk show/programme production techniques session was helpful to me and relevant to my work. Likewise, the mentoring session during the programme production phase was equally helpful.” – Arjun Shrestha



“Although I found all the sessions helpful and relevant to my work, I would love to learn more about the technical aspects like mixing, editing, recording, etc.” – Deepak Khatri



“The sessions were interactive and practical and I could put what I learned straight to practice.” – Samjhana Karki



A total of 16 webinar sessions were conducted by AMARC-AP on varied topics such as using drama and stand-up comedy in program production, community research, violence against women, gender equity, talk shows, and production techniques, role of campaigns, etc.

PARTICIPANTS' FEEDBACK

“After I learned about community research in the training, I have started going for field visits. I am now more aware about how the poor in my community live, and their problems and what issues/problems should be addressed through our radio programmes. Nonetheless, I do face problems in collecting information as the people in our community do not wish to speak about it and they do not understand the importance of education or the harmful effects of child marriage. I along with my team now visit different localities and inform the people to put an end to child marriage and send their children to schools. In future, if I get a chance to attend similar trainings, I would like to learn more about how to produce effective programmes that can contribute to behavioral changes.”



Pata Dey Brishti
Radio Sagorgiri
Bangladesh



Arjun Shrestha
Radio Dhading
Nepal

“Following the training, our radio station has started giving priority to gender issues. We also make it a point to make our programmes inclusive that reflects the diversity of our community. But, we do face challenges as victims and survivors do not share their predicament with us. Further, despite our continued efforts, when the problems or issues we raise are not addressed, it disheartens us at times. In spite of such challenges we continue to produce programmes on the real problems of the community.

Although the training has been very helpful to me, I would like to learn technical skills like photo and video editing in future. As the digital technologies have been advancing rapidly, I feel we too need to keep ourselves updated.”

“This was the first time I had attended such a training linking Poverty and the Covid-19 pandemic along with participants from another country so it was great learning about the issues of another country and it seemed similar to my own country. I particularly found the training session on radio drama format useful and interesting. Now, our radio station has started producing radio dramas. However, we do face challenges while trying to make our production directly touch the grassroots level as sometimes it is difficult to engage the community despite our continued efforts. The training has helped improve my radio programme production skills. And, if get to attend another training in future, I hope to learn more on how to produce interactive and effective radio programmes.”



Rosmayanti
Rasi FM
Indonesia



Urmila Danuwar
Radio Udayapur
Nepal

“The training has contributed to increased community participation at our radio station. We now consult the community before producing any radio programmes. The training made us realized the importance of involving the community while choosing a theme/topic for radio programmes. However, at times it is difficult to find out about the issues or problems faced by the community as the community members do not feel comfortable sharing their issues with us. Nonetheless, we try our best to produce programmes that reflect the community’s reality. Although the training we received has been very helpful to my work, I would like to learn more about stand-up comedy that was briefly discussed during the training. In addition, I am also interested in learning podcasting and improving my skills in video editing and mixing.”

“After attending the training, we have started using comedy/radio drama format to highlight serious and sensitive issues in the community. This has proven to be a more effective format as we can lightheartedly talk about serious issues plaguing the community without any hesitations. Further, the mentoring sessions that were held after the training was over, helped in improving our drama production skills. However, when I use comedy format for sensitive issues, I always fear that people may not give importance to it and the message behind the comedy may be lost. Therefore, I would like to learn more about different programme formats if I get a chance in future.



Preeti
Gurgaon Ki Awaaz
India

Note: Please click <https://soundcloud.com/amarc-ap> to listen to the programs produced by the participants of “Addressing pandemic-related poverty in rural regions of South and Southeast Asia Program”

The “Addressing pandemic-related poverty in rural regions of South and Southeast Asia Program” is implemented by World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC Asia-Pacific) with the support of Catholic Media Council (CAMECO) and the financial assistance of the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

AMARC ASIA-PACIFIC

SANEP, LALITPUR-2
NEPAL

Phone: +977 1 5454811

E-mail: ro@amarc-ap.org

AMARC Asia-Pacific is the regional autonomous chapter of the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC International). AMARC Asia-Pacific is constituted by the members of AMARC from countries in the Asia-Pacific region. AMARC Asia-Pacific has sub-regional governance structure that consists of South Asia, South East Asia, the Pacific and East Asia.