

# Community Radios in Bangladesh: Change Maker at the Grassroots Society

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## Abstract

Community radios are playing very important role in the firmament of grassroots level change and development in many ways. In the era of globalization, mainstream medias are dominating for providing news, information services and entertainment. Besides, in Bangladesh, community radios (hereafter CRs) are contributing to positive changes in grassroots governance and development. Based on a reality, this paper tries to unravel the following research objectives i.e. i) to get an overview of the profiles of the community radios in Bangladesh; ii) to provide a brief profile of the CRs in Bangladesh; and iii) To assess the role of the CRs in bringing change and development at the grassroots level. In a bid to achieve that case study method was followed where qualitative data were analyzed in line with the objectives. To substantiate qualitative data, few other tools such as focus group discussion(FGD), content analysis and observation methods were employed. The findings of case studies reveal that there are 18 community radios in Bangladesh, mostly situated at the remotest areas-they are providing all sorts of development information at the grassroots. These community radios were able to form listeners' club through which huge numbers of school going children have got a platform to involve themselves in lots of creative endeavors. Some marginal communities such as fishermen, women, village farmers, rural poor communities, indigenous people are getting lots of development services from the community radios. Thus they are able to bring enormous change, development and transformation at the grassroots society.

**Keywords:** Community Radio, Profiles, Listeners, Broadcast, Bangladesh

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## ชุมชนวิทยุใบบังกลาเทศ : ผู้เปลี่ยนแปลงสังคม ชั้นรากหญ้าของสังคม

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### บทคัดย่อ

ชุมชนวิทยุมีบทบาทสำคัญต่อความเปลี่ยนแปลงในสังคมชั้นรากหญ้าและการพัฒนา  
ด้านต่าง ๆ โดยที่ในยุคโลกาภิวัตน์ สื่อกระแสหลักมีบทบาทสำคัญ ต่อการจัดทำข่าว สารสนเทศและ  
การบันเทิง นอกจากนี้ในประเทศบังกลาเทศ ชุมชนวิทยุ (หรือ ซีอาร์) ส่งเสริมให้มีการเปลี่ยนแปลง  
เชิงบวกในการปกครองระดับรากหญ้าและการพัฒนาตามรากฐานของความเป็นจริง วิจัยนี้มี  
วัตถุประสงค์ เพื่อ 1) ศึกษาภาพรวมของโปรไฟล์ชุมชนวิทยุของ ประเทศบังกลาเทศ 2) นำเสนอโปรไฟล์  
โดยสังเขปของซีอาร์ ในประเทศ บังกลาเทศ และ 3) ประเมิน บทบาทของซีอาร์ ในการเปลี่ยนแปลงและ  
การพัฒนาในระดับรากหญ้า ทั้งนี้มุ่งหวังให้เกิดเป็นวิธีกรณตัวอย่าง โดยใช้ข้อมูลเชิงคุณภาพ วิเคราะห์  
ตามวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อยืนยันข้อมูลเชิงคุณภาพ มีการใช้เครื่องมืออื่น ๆ เช่น การสนทนากลุ่ม (FGD)  
การวิเคราะห์ เนื้อหาและการสังเกตการณ์ ผลการวิจัยแสดงให้เห็นว่า มี 18 ชุมชนวิทยุในประเทศ  
บังกลาเทศ โดยส่วนใหญ่อยู่ในพื้นที่ห่างไกล และทำหน้าที่ให้ข้อมูลการพัฒนาต่าง ๆ ต่อคนระดับ  
รากหญ้า โดยชุมชนวิทยุดังกล่าวสามารถแจ้งสมาคมผู้ฟังที่ประกอบไปด้วยนักเรียนจำนวนมาก ได้มี  
ช่องทางในการมีส่วนร่วม ในการแสดงความคิดเห็นสร้างสรรค์ ทั้งนี้ชุมชนรายย่อยเช่น ชาวประมง สตรี  
ชาวสวนหมู่บ้าน ชุมชนยากจนห่างไกล ชนพื้นเมือง ยังได้รับการ ด้านการพัฒนาจากชุมชนวิทยุ  
ด้วย ดังนั้นจึงเป็นปัจจัยหนึ่งที่ก่อให้เกิด ความเปลี่ยนแปลง การพัฒนาและการแปรสภาพ ของสังคม  
ระดับรากหญ้า เป็นอย่างมาก

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## 1. Introduction

In an overwhelming globalized world, it is deemed that the need for community radio has diminished but in reality the importance of this medium has not diminished rather community radio has been playing an important role to bring socio-economic transformations at the grassroots level. Recently, a number of radio stations was established in Bangladesh under a policy formulated in 2010. All these community radios are being run with the active participation of the marginalized people. Community radio is engaged in the positive development of the local folk culture with the help of modern knowledge and technology. The role of information and communication in development is undeniable. The more developed the country, the better its information and communication system is. Appropriate means are needed to ensure access to information to a large population deprived of information and communication facilities of this rural country. In this case, community radio can play an important role in the development of the rural population. To this end, it is necessary to examine the role of community radio in rural development and how community radio have played its role to promote rural development, provide various services and contribute to changing and development in fulfilling the demand for information, education, and entertainment for the rural population. It is evidently observed that community radios played an important role in overcoming the Covid-19 pandemic. To reduce the incidence of corona, rural people were made aware of the dangers of the epidemic and that in turn helped the government, civil society organizations, health workers and the public to take concerted actions. It is important to conduct this study to keep people's livelihoods normal and to enhance cooperation between local markets, civil society organizations, and the government, and reduce information inequality in cities and villages. Provided that the community radio has been rendering different services to the grassroots level vulnerable population and now it calls for to appraise that how they are serving the community and what is their overall output to the society and how they helped the community in bringing transformation and development at the grassroots. Provided that the community radio in Bangladesh is a recent phenomenon and there might have dearth of academic paper on the community

radios and its developmental role in Bangladesh. Against such a backdrop this research study is aimed at delving into the following objectives.

## **2. Objectives of the Study**

The specific objectives of the paper are the followings:

- i) To get an overview of the profiles of the community radios in Bangladesh;
- ii) To assess the role of the CRs in bringing change and development at the grassroots level.

## **3. Literature Review**

A community radio station is one that is operated in the community, for the community, about the community and by the community. The community can be territorial or geographical—a township, village, district or island. It can also be a group of people with common interests, who are not necessarily living in one defined territory. Consequently, community radio can be managed or controlled by one group, by combined groups, or of people such as women, children, farmers, fisher folk, ethnic groups, or senior citizens. What distinguishes community radio from other media is the high level of people's participation, both in management and program production aspects. Furthermore, individual community members and local institutions are the principal sources of support for its operation<sup>1</sup> (UNESCO, 2002 & AMARC, 2010<sup>2</sup>).

To be very specific, community radio can be dubbed in diverse ways. As such Community Radio can be called as 'rural radio', 'cooperative radio', 'participatory radio', 'free radio', 'alternative', 'popular radio', 'educational radio'. They are located in isolated rural villages and in the heart of the largest cities in

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<sup>1</sup> This statement was made Mr. L. Tabing during his personal communication on July 20, 2002.

The above definition, which is usually endorsed by UNESCO and other organizations that promote community radio such as AMARC.

<sup>2</sup> AMARC is the French acronym for the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters headquartered in Montreal, Canada.

the world. Their signals may reach only a kilometer, cover a whole country or be carried via shortwave to other parts of the world. Some stations are owned by not-for-profit groups or by cooperatives whose members are the listeners themselves. Others are owned by students, universities, municipalities, churches or trade unions. There are stations financed by donations from listeners, by international development agencies, by advertising and by governments.’’<sup>3</sup> These CRs are operated, owned and influenced by the communities they serve by using the participation of men and women from the community and helps in catering their specific needs and necessities and works as an innovative tool in bringing social change. It has the scope to promote health education in their community in their local language with their local people’s voice (Record, Sherbrooke, & Nov, 2008). In that context community radio can be an easily accessible mass media which provide significant information through its programs and guarantees nearest to the community folks (Nandakumar, & Sridharraj, 2015).

All over the world community radio is playing a sine qua non role in development in Latin America, Africa, Europe and in many developing countries from time immemorial (Asaduzzaman & Khatun, 2019). Community radio comprises the “community” character which “operate in the community, for the community, on the community and by the community” (UNESCO, 2002). Community Radio (CR) is a type of Radio service that caters to the interests of a certain area, broadcasting material that is popular to a local audience but is overlooked by more powerful broadcast groups. The term has somewhat different meanings in the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, and Australia. In the UK, it originated in the many illegal pirate Radio stations that came about from the influx of Afro-Caribbean migrants in cities such as London, Birmingham, Bristol, and Manchester in the 1970s. Therefore, “Community Radio” remains synonymous with “Pirate Radio” for many people there. In America, it is more commonly a non-profit and non-commercial service, often using licensed class D FM band transmitters, although pirate radio outlets have been operated in many places. Canadian and Australian CR stations operate somewhat similarly to their American counterparts (Bora & Lakhendra, 2012).

<sup>3</sup> This statement was made in the conference entitled “Waves for Freedom». Report on the Sixth World Conference of Community Radio Broadcasters. Dakar, Senegal, January 23-39, 1995.

Community radio basically originated in Latin America, which started its journey in 1948 to protest against poverty and social injustice. Minor Radio in Bolivia in 1948 and Radio Sutatenza in Colombia were pioneers in the history of community radio. Inspired by that, these radios are still being set up in different parts of the world. Miners Radio acted as a middle ground between the Marxist and capitalist systems. The program was to organize the people for a suitable working environment and employment for the miners. This radio was operated and broadcast by the workers. Radio Sutatenza became so popular with the general public that it received about 50,000 letters a year. Sutatenja became a people's radio in the true sense of the word.

The age of the community radio is about 75 years because the first community radio "Radio Sutatenza" in the developing word was established in 1947 in Columbia (Myers, 2011). Following this model, the labours of the tin mines of Bolivia develops a community radio named as "miners radio". These experiences set a trend, even if today's concept of community radio has evolved considerably. For example, the Minors Radio in Bolivia was working in the decades of inner conflict between Marxism and capitalism. Thus, their main focus was to bring together the community of miners to combat for improved and better working environment (Khan et al., 2017). Systematic efforts by Radio Sutatenza to educate community people by radio created a progress that was later consolidated through LAER, the Latin America Educational Radio Broadcasting Association. Inter – linkage of radio and education was the main thrust to the concept of public service and marked the inception of community broadcasting media in Latin America (Fraser, 2001).

Community radio(CR) connotes the idea that it is radio to "voice of the voiceless" (Sterling, O'Brien, Bennett, 2009). Community radio is a welfare broadcasting medium owned, managed and run on a non-profit basis. Its purpose is to provide services to the community and to create opportunities for the development of local folk, socio-economic and cultural life. Community radio operates through the direct participation of the grassroots people in a particular small geographical

area. It is the community's own resource that accurately reflects a community's own ideas, judgments, and thoughts (Patil, 2015). Being located at the rural population, CRs broadcasts diverse programs namely, CRs airs information in areas of agriculture, social welfare, education, health and environment and help in creating rural networks for the rural cottage and village industry. Access and participation are the foundations of CRs (Bora & Lakhendra, 2012). The pioneer of community radio, South African's Jen Ibrahim Said, 90% of community radio is the community itself and the remaining 10% is radio (Obaid, 2019). The community radio is a media which is run without any commercial motive, it is run for the community people, by the community people and controlled by the community and the main function of such radio is to work for the betterment of the community (Jewel, 2006). It is substantially proved that information and communication helps in gradual socio-economic and cultural progression of a country (Schramm, 1964). Access to information helps to empower people (Harun & Mahamud, 2014). In fact, ensuring freedom, participation of people, and community ownership are the key to the success of the Community Radio (Reza, 2014). It was evident that in the capitalist society, apart from a few public broadcasting centers, most of the public media are corporatized, market and profit oriented (McChesney, 1999). As an effective tool of communication it ensures establishing transparency and accountability of the public administration at all levels and thus it helps to contribute to establish good governance in the society (Ullah & Ferdous, 2007). Nirmala (2015) found that in CRs women have started to reflect on their abilities and aspirations on other women's lives through media and at an interpersonal level. It was found that community radio seeks to advance women in rural regions by providing them with a mechanism to amplify and publicize their distinctive considerations, knowledge, and needs. The approach followed by the CRs could be a useful resource for poor NGOs working in rural parts of developing countries as it allows marginalized communities to express their views often ignored by mainstream media (Waters, James, & Darby, 2011). It was found that health care services during pregnancy, and newborn care was delivered in both morning and evening sessions of community radio. Moreover, information regarding local government services and schemes for better health

of mothers and adolescent girls were communicated to them by the local health workers in their local language (Rajana, Prasad, & Madhavi, 2020).

The Community Radio can help us in addressing social, economic, cultural, educational, health, water and sanitation and disaster related issues more effectively and strategically (Khan et al., 2017). Community radio is that kind of radio which is owned and controlled by a community and always broadcast those programs which are related to that community interest (Khan et al., 2017). These programs focus the views and thoughts, rights and scopes of the disadvantaged community people (BNNRC, 2015). Community radio as the media of citizens of a particular community has become popular and new opportunity for both the media practitioner and grassroots people. Community radio helps to avail utilities and amenities for various development aspects of our society like education, health, water and sanitation, protection from natural disasters, address social issues at the community level and connect rural population with the government. It can be useful for the development of a particular target group like elderly, women and children (Khan et al., 2017). CR aims to enrich the livelihood of the local people, through the content that is created by the people and for the people of the community (Wadia, 2007). Community radio is also defined as non-profit agency which is considered to serve specific local communities; thereby broadcasting programs and contents which are relevant to the community and with organizational structures that represent the community the radio station work for (Fleming, 2002). Usually, these radio stations operate on a low budget with fewer staff for various jobs (Bora & Lakhendra, 2012). CR aims at enhancing participation of the people in the development process and capacity building in rural areas, through education. It provides opportunities to the people to upgrade their skills and enhance their creative talents, besides preserving and promoting the traditional wisdom, knowledge and skills. Thereby they help to promote and project the local language, arts, craft, culture and traditions (Bora & Lakhendra, 2012).

In the countries of South Asia, Community Radios are playing very important role in grassroots governance and development. Nepal was the first country in



South Asia to launch such a radio. India, on the other hand, introduced the first community radio policy in South Asia in 2006. As of 2011, there are about 6,000 community radio stations in India and 3,000 in Thailand (Khan et al., 2017). Community radio has been working successfully since 2001 in collaboration with UNESCO in poverty-stricken Africa, Mali, Mozambique, Senegal, some parts of Asia and the Caribbean (Khan et al., 2017). It highlights that DZJO Radio's on-the-air school activities in the Philippines are playing an important role in rural development as well as spreading the light of education among the extremely poor, school deprived people living in remote areas of the country. In the Philippines, community radios significantly contribute in many areas like education, health and improving law and orders and other social problems (Patil, 2010). Community radios are playing very important role in developing agriculture, removing superstitious believes and reducing the disparity and social inequality in many sectors in Nepal (Patil, 2010).

Community radio was originally introduced to Sri Lanka under an UNESCO-DANIDA funded project called Mahaveli Community Radio (MCR). When MCR was introduced to Sri Lanka in 1981, it was the first of its kind in South Asia and soon became a prototype for the region. But it was largely initiated and implemented through international cooperation and funding, as a development communication tool to assist re-settlement of rural farmers uprooted by a large dam project (Seneviratne, 2011).

In the South Asia, India first prepared policy for community radio in 2006 (Myers, 2011). In India, considering the level of education, community radios broadcast programmes both for the literate and illiterate people (Patil, 2010). After much advocated by the NGOs and civil society organization, in December, 2006, the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting (MIB) of Government of India(Gol) had taken positive decision by announcing that even NGOs and voluntary organizations with a good track record would be allowed to apply for license and set up CRs. Up to 2011 Nepal government approved license of 150 Community radios there, which helped increased coverage of 62% people of Nepal (Dahal & Aram, 2011). Nepal has subsequently witnessed a rapid growth in both private and not-for-profit

radio: as of July 2007, 216 licenses had been issued, of which 93 were for non-profit groups, and 31 of these were operational in May 2007 (Pringle and Subba 2007: 4).

In Bangladesh government has drafted a policy on community radio, which has come into operation in 2012. First, 23- community radios were approved and gradually up to 2022 a total of eighteen (18) community radios came into operation. The communities living in very distant places and untrodden by the main stream media have been receiving lots of community services in Bangladesh from the community radios, which are narrated in this paper.

## **4. Methodology of the Study**

Methodology part comprises of issues like data sources, selection of study areas, and data collection methods, research methods used in this study. The sample selection procedures along with sample size has also been described here.

### **4.1 Sources of Data**

Data were collected from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data were collected from different stakeholders such as listeners' club, officials of the radio stations, community people as well as beneficiaries of the CRs. Primary data were collected using survey, case study, Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and observation methods, whereas secondary data were collected adopting content analysis. Both researcher and experience data collectors collected data from the research area. For qualitative data especially for conducting case studies and FGDs at the field level, researcher was pro-actively engaged in the naturalistic settings.

### **4.2 Selection of Study Areas**

Data were collected from all the 18 community radio stations, which are situated at remote, inaccessible, coastal belts and plain areas in order to get a clear picture of the CRs and its developmental impacts at the grassroots. These CRs are

operating in 7 divisions<sup>4</sup> 18 districts<sup>5</sup> and 18 Upazilas<sup>6</sup> in Bangladesh. The details of the research areas were given in Table-1.

### 4.3 Research Methods Employed in this Study

A mixed method approach was employed in this study where quantitative method was the predominant method which was supported by few other tools of qualitative methods.

**Quantitative Methods:** Here mainly survey method were employed to get information regarding profiles of the CRs, socio-economic characteristics of the listeners and the role of the CRs in Bangladesh and it would be substantiated by few other methods in order to achieve triangulation.

**Qualitative Methods:** As a tool of qualitative approach, case studies, Focus Group Discussion(FGD), content analysis, interview with community radio officials and beneficiaries were done to analyze the role of the radio stations. For content analysis authentic literatures like books, research reports, journal articles, conference and seminar papers etc. were consulted. To obtain an overview of the profiles of the community radios, expert consultations were made with the managers, assistant managers, program procedures and other office bearers. The researcher's observations were also recorded. Some statistical tools were used for quantitative data analysis.

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<sup>4</sup> The administrative structure of Bangladesh comprises of Divisions, Districts, Upazilas and Unions. Division is the highest level administrative unit in Bangladesh. In the administrative structure of Bangladesh there are eight divisions in Bangladesh. These are: Barishal, Chattogram, Dhaka, Khulna, Rajshahi, Rangpur, Mymensingh and Sylhet.

<sup>5</sup> Below divisional level there are Districts. In Bangladesh there are 64 districts in Bangladesh.

<sup>6</sup> An Upazila, formerly called Thana, is an administrative unit in Bangladesh, functioning as a sub-unit of a district. It can be seen as an analogous to a county or a borough of Western countries. Rural Upazilas are further administratively divided into Union Parishad areas. Bangladesh has 495 Upazilas at this moment.

4.4 Sampling Techniques

**For Quantitative Methods:** Quantitative data were collected from there types of samples for this study. In category 1, station managers and office bearers were selected and on the other hand, category 2 represented members of the listener’s club and category 3 were the general villagers and beneficiaries of the community radios. From the 3 types of samples, the numbers of samples were given in Table-A.

Table-A: Sampling Design of the Study

Sample Category	Types of Respondents	Sample Size
Category 1	Station Managers and Officials	3x18= 54
Category 2	Member of Listeners’ Club	70x18=1260
Category 1	Beneficiary	10x18=180
Total Sample		1494

In this study 70 listeners from each community radio were interviewed through a pre-tested structured questionnaire. These respondents were chosen from the listeners’ club of each community radio purposively and thus the total sample from 18 community radios were (70x18) = 1260 respondents. In each community radio station, taking 3 officials and managers, the total respondents were (3x18) = 41. Lastly, taking 10 beneficiaries from all community radio station, respondents of this category were (10x18) = 180 respondents. Thus the total respondents were 1494<sup>7</sup>.

**For Qualitative Methods:** In the main research, 7 case studies were conducted on community radios and 7 cases were made on individual listeners and 4 Focus Group Discussions were employed in such a way so that the qualitative samples represent the whole Bangladesh. In Bangladesh there are 18 community

<sup>7</sup> Calculating the population of 18 radio stations that were totaled 7500000 people having average 4,16000 listeners, at 5% error and 98% confidence level, the total sample would be 543 using sample formula and the same population at 5% error at 95% significance level the sample would be 385. Therefore, in this research the total sample in case of listeners’ club members were selected 1260, which was much greater than the scientifically designed sample.

radio stations, which are situated sporadically in different places of the country. This paper is a part of broader research study. In the main research, data were collected using quantitative and qualitative method. But this paper is fully based on case study method. As a tool of qualitative approach, case study and content analysis methods were employed to analyze the development role of the radio stations at the grassroots society. While preparing these cases for this paper, all those cases were to some extent rewritten because in the main study, scopes were huge. Considering the space, word limit and size of the paper, from the overall qualitative data set, 2 types of cases were presented here to assess the role and impacts of the community radios in this paper. Firstly, 4 cases on community radio were selected. Secondly, 4 cases were selected on the listeners.

To prepare this paper for NIDA case research journal, these 2 types of cases were chosen in such a way so that in can cover all different socio-cultural zones and almost all 8 divisions of Bangladesh. In fact, these cases cover all 7 divisions where community radios are located in Bangladesh. Only one division i.e. Mymensing Division remains outside the purview of this paper because there is no community radio in this Division. Therefore, all these cases are in fact representing the whole of Bangladesh. The details of cases studies are presented in Table-B.

**Table-B:** Selection of Study Areas

Sl. No.	Types of the Cases	Name of the Community Radios	Names of the Districts	Division
1	Radio Station	Naf Community Radio	Cox’s Bazar	Chittagong
2	Radio Station	Meghna Radio	Bhola	Barishal
3	Radio Station	Radio Chilmari	Kurigram	Rangpur
4	Radio Station	Radio Borendro	Naogaon	Rajshahi
5	Listener	Radio Pollikantho	Moulavibazar	Sylhet
6	Listener	Radio Bikrampur	Munshigong	Dhaka
7	Listener	Radio Chilmari	Kurigram	Rangpur
8	Listener	Radio Jhenuk	Jhenaidaha	Khulna

Source: Prepared by the author, 2023

#### 4.5. Achieving Triangulation and Credibility in the Research

The term triangulation is used to ensure validity of the research findings in social research and equally applicable for both qualitative and quantitative research. In the social sciences, “it refers to the combination of two or more theories, data sources, methods or investigators in one study of a single phenomenon to converge on a single construct, and can be employed in both quantitative (validation) and qualitative (inquiry) studies.” (Yeasmin & Rahman, 2012, p. 156). According to Miles & Huberman (1994) “triangulation in social science research refers to a process by which a researcher wants to verify a finding by showing that independent measures of it agree with or, at least, do not contradict it.” In triangulation researchers make use of multiple and different methods, investigators, and theories to provide corroborating evidence (Ely, Anzul, Friedman, Garner, & Steinmetz, 1991; Erlandson, Harris, Skiper, & Allen, 1993; Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1988; Miles, & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 1980, 1990). Miles, & Huberman(1994) distinguished “five kinds of triangulation in qualitative research: 1) triangulation by data source (data collected from different persons, or at different times, or from different places); 2) triangulation by method (observation, interviews, documents, etc.); 3) triangulation by researcher (comparable to inter-rater reliability in quantitative methods); 4) triangulation by theory (using different theories, for example, to explain results); and 5) triangulation by data type (e.g., combining quantitative and qualitative data).” The type of triangulation chosen depends on the purpose of the study. Of course, more than one type of triangulation can be used in the same study. In this study, triangulation was maintained by triangulation of method and triangulation by data sources, as the data were collected using different methods and from different sources. Triangulation by method is more commonly known as methodological or multi-method triangulation, however methodological triangulation is also used to refer to the combination of qualitative and quantitative data (Erzberger, & Prein, 1997).

## 5. Brief Profile of the Community Radios in Bangladesh

With the active participation of the legal experts on media, university professors, experts on development communications, NGO representatives, foreign donors, development partners and representatives of civil society organizations through a three-days round-table conference “a Dhaka declaration of 2006 concerning to community radio” was made (Haq and Uddin, 2018). In its wake, a government gazette notification was published on the “Policy of Establishment of Community Radio, Broadcasting and its Operation 2018” on 8 February, 2018 (Huq & Uddin, 2018). Ministry of Information and a2i program of Prime Minister’s Office signed a MoU among 14 community radios on 27th May, 2014 with objective to support the community radios stations and encourage the vision of Digital Bangladesh at the grassroots level or local level community (Khan et al., 2017). According to the Bangladesh NGO Network for Radio and Communication (BNNRC, 2010), about 61 lakh people in 115 Upazilas (sub-districts) of 16 Districts are enjoying the benefits of community radios. At the community radio station level, 5,000 listeners’ clubs have been formed with listeners. At present 18 community radios are broadcasting various programs and serving the diverse communities in Bangladesh. All these community radios mainly focused on the life and livelihood at the grassroots people. The voices, thoughts, rights and opportunities of the deprived, vulnerable and poor peoples are mostly emphasized in the contents of the programs of the community radios in Bangladesh (Khan et al., 2017). So far, about 1000 staffs are working in 18 community radio stations in the country, having received training from various government and private organizations. They broadcast 480 programs for about 160 hours per day and more than 1120 hours a week, of which more than 80 hours is live and it is broadcasting 8 hours’ program for the small ethnic groups and Dalits. About 70 lakh people in 125 Upazilas and 25 Districts are accessing community radio (Quoted in Obaid, 2019).

### 5.1 Division-wise Distribution of Community Radio Stations in Bangladesh

From Table 1 it was observed that among the 8 Divisions of Bangladesh, there is no community radio station in the Mymensingh division. The highest number

of Community Radio (4 for each division) are concentrated in both Barishal and Rashahi Divisions, whereas there are 3 Community Radio stations in both Khulna and Barishal. On the other hand, in Dhaka and Sylhet division there is only one CR in each division.

**Table 1:** Division-wise Distribution of Community Radio Stations in Bangladesh

Sl. No	Name of Community Radio Stations	Division	District	Upazila	No. of CRs in the Division
1	Radio Bikrampur	Dhaka	Munshigonj	Sadar	1
2	Radio Shagordip	Chittagong	Noakhali	Hatia	3
3	Radio Sagorgiri		Chattagram	Sitakundu	
4	Radio Naf		Coxesbazar	Teknaf	
5	Radio Lukobeter	Barishal	Borguna	Sadar	4
6	Radio Meghna		Bhola	Char Fashion	
7	Radio Krishi		Borguna	Amtoli	
8	Radio Mukti		Bogura	Sadar	
9	Radio Sundorbon	Khulna	Khulna	Koira	3
10	Radio Nalota		Sathkhira	Kaligonj	
11	Radio Jhinuk		Jhinaidaha	Sadar	
12	Radio Chilmari	Rangpur	Kurigram	Chilmari	2
13	Radio Sarabela		Gaibandha	Sadar	
14	Radio Mohananda	Rajshahi	Chapai Nobabgonj	Gomastapur	4
15	Radio Borendra		Naogaon	Bodolgasi	
16	Radio Boral		Rajshahi	Bagha	
17	Radio Padma		Rajshahi	Sadar	
18	Radio Pollikontho	Sylhet	Moulavibazar	Shrimongol	1
7 Divisions			Total No of Radio Stations		18

Source: Field data 2022



5.2 Community Radios in Bangladesh at a Glance

The short profiles of the community radios comprised some basic information regarding CRs in Bangladesh which included name of the CRs, frequency of program available at FM band; location, opening period, program coverage & listeners of the CRs in Bangladesh, broadcasting hours and awards received for the contributions of the programs of various CRs in Bangladesh offered by the different organizations in home and abroad. A short profiles of the status of Community Radios in Bangladesh is described in Table-2.

Table 2: Short Profiles of the Community Radios on Bangladesh

No.	Name of CRs with Founder & Opening Date	Coverage & Listeners	Broadcasting Hours & Achievement
1.	<b>Lokobetar 99.2 FM</b>  Founder: Mass Line Media Center (MMC)  <b>Opening Date:</b> 27 May 2011	It covers a 25 km. area and more than 1 million people are connected to the Lokobetar.	Lokobetar Broadcasts Program for 7 Hours, 3 to 10 pm.  <b>Award:</b> Yet to get any award
2.	<b>Boral FM 99.0</b>  Founder: Secchashebi Bohumukhi Mohila Shomajkollan Shomiti  <b>Opening Date:</b> 27 Apr. 2019	It covers 25 km and approximately 10 lacks people hear radio boral.	Boral Radio Broadcasts Program for once a day, 9 Hours, 3 pm -12 am.  <b>Award:</b> Yet to get any award

**Table 2:** Short Profiles of the Community Radios on Bangladesh (Cont.)

No.	Name of CRs with Founder & Opening Date	Coverage & Listeners	Broadcasting Hours & Achievement
3.	<b>Padma FM 99.2</b>  Founder: Center for Communication and Development Bangladesh (CCD Bangladesh)  <b>Opening Date:</b> 7 Oct. 2011	It covers 25 km area. The radio currently has 3 lac listeners who can provide feedback via SMS.	Padma Radio Broadcasts Program once a day for 14 hours, 10am -12.15am.  <b>Award:</b> Yet to get any award
4.	<b>Mahananda FM 98.8</b>  Founder: Proyash Humane Development Society  <b>Opening Date:</b> 15 Nov. 2011	It broadcasts throughout 25 km area. About 2 million people live in this range.	Mahananda Radio Broadcasts Program once a day for 10 hours, 3pm-1am.  <b>Award:</b> Yet to get any award
5.	<b>Mukti FM 99.2</b>  Founder: Landless Distressed Rehabilitation Organization (LDRO)  <b>Opening Date:</b> 31 Dec. 2011	It covers 17 kilometer area of Bogra city.	Broadcasts Program once a day for 14 hours, 12pm-12am.  <b>Award:</b> Yet to get any award
6.	<b>Grameen Krishi FM 98.8</b>  Founder: Agriculture Information Service, Ministry of Agriculture  <b>Opening Date:</b> 1 Jan. 2012	Covers 25 km and radio listeners are around 2 lac 50 thousand.	Broadcasts Program twice a day for 8 hours, 9-11 am, 3-9 pm.  <b>Award:</b> Yet to get any award

**Table 2:** Short Profiles of the Community Radios on Bangladesh (Cont.)

No.	Name of CRs with Founder & Opening Date	Coverage & Listeners	Broadcasting Hours & Achievement
7.	<b>Sundarban FM 98.8</b>  Founder: Advanced Welfare Foundation (AWF)  <b>Opening Date :</b> 1 Jul. 2012	The radio covers an area of 17 km.	Broadcasts Program twice a day for 5.5 hours, 911.30-am, 47-pm.  <b>Award:</b> Yet to get any award
8.	<b>Sagorgiri FM 99.2</b>  Founder: Young Power in Social Action (YPSA)  <b>Opening Date:</b> 24 Mar. 2012	About 1.5 lac listeners across 17 km.	Broadcasts Program once a day for 5 hours, 12pm -5pm.  <b>Award:</b> Yet to get any award
9.	<b>Meghna FM 98.4</b>  Founder: Coastal Association for Social Transformation Trust (Coast Trust)  <b>Opening Date:</b> 18 Feb. 2015	Covers 25 km. and it has about 4 lac listeners to the programs of this radio.	Broadcasts Program twice a day for 6 hours, 9am-12pm, 58-pm.  <b>Award:</b> Yet to get any award
10.	<b>Naf FM 99.2</b>  Founder: Alliance for Co-operation and Legal Aid Bangladesh (ACLAB)  <b>Opening Date:</b> 21 Apr. 2012	It covers 25 km. and about 5 lac residents regularly listen to the radio.	Broadcasts Program twice a day for 6 hours, 10am -1pm, 47-pm.  <b>Award:</b> Yet to get any award

**Table 2:** Short Profiles of the Community Radios on Bangladesh (Cont.)

No.	Name of CRs with Founder & Opening Date	Coverage & Listeners	Broadcasting Hours & Achievement
11.	<b>Sagor Dwip FM 99.2</b>  Founder: Bangladesh Dwip Unnayan Sangstha  <b>Opening Date:</b> 12 Nov. 2015	Covers 17 km, and about 2.5 lac people are listeners.	Broadcasts Program twice a day for 6 hours altogether Schedule: (9am -12 pm, 24-pm)  <b>Award:</b> Yet to get any award
12.	<b>Bikrampur FM 99.2</b>  Founder: Environment Council of Bangladesh and Ambala Foundation.  <b>Opening Date:</b> 1 May 2012	The radio station covers an area of about 17 km. and it has about 8 lac listeners.	Broadcasts Program once a day for 5 hours, 38- pm.  <b>Received Awards</b> ■ Bangladesh Community Radio Award in 2017
13.	<b>Sarabela FM 98.8</b>  Founder: SKS Foundation  <b>Opening Date:</b> 14 Apr. 2016	Covers more than 25 km which has more than 10 lacs listeners.	Broadcasts Program once a day for 16 hours, 7am -11 pm.  <b>Received Awards</b> ■ Asia Pacific Broadcasting (ABU) Awards, Right to Information (RTI) award in 2017; ■ UNICEF Meena Award in 2017

**Table 2:** Short Profiles of the Community Radios on Bangladesh (Cont.)

No.	Name of CRs with Founder & Opening Date	Coverage & Listeners	Broadcasting Hours & Achievement
14.	<p><b>Nalta FM 99.2</b></p> <p>Founder: Nalta Hospital and Community Health Foundation.</p> <p><b>Opening Date:</b> 3 July 2011</p>	About 7 lac people can listen to this radio program. The broadcast area of this station is 25 km.	<p>Radio Nalta Broadcasts Program 3 times a day for 12 hours, 8 -11 am, 27-pm, 9pm-1am.</p> <p><b>Received Awards</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ BD CR Radio Award in 2017</li> </ul>
15.	<p><b>Chilmari FM 99.2</b></p> <p>Founder: RDRS Bangladesh</p> <p><b>Opening Date:</b> 2 Jun. 2012</p>	The radio covers an area about 25 km. It has about 10 lac listeners.	<p>Broadcasts Program once a day for 4 hours, 38- pm.</p> <p><b>Received Awards</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Plan Bangladesh Girl Power Award in 2013; Meena Media Award 2015 &amp; 2016; ABU Award (International), Best writer Award, Anti-Tobacco Award, Family Planning Award in 2016;</li> <li>■ PIB A21 Media Award, RTI Award (CR), CR Award, SEMCA Video Challenge Award, Family Planning Award in 2017;</li> </ul>

**Table 2:** Short Profiles of the Community Radios on Bangladesh (Cont.)

No.	Name of CRs with Founder & Opening Date	Coverage & Listeners	Broadcasting Hours & Achievement
16.	<p><b>Jhenuk FM 99.2</b></p> <p>Founder: Srijoni Bangladesh</p> <p><b>Opening Date:</b> 17 Jul. 2012</p>	<p>It covers 25 km area. It has about 5.5 lac listeners.</p>	<p>Broadcasts Program once a day for 10 hours</p> <p><b>Received Awards</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ National Institute of Mass Communication Award in 2022;</li> <li>■ Family Planning Media Award- 2014, 2016;</li> <li>■ Meena Media Award 2014-2019(6 times);</li> <li>■ Girl Power Award by Plan International Bangladesh, 20132014-;</li> <li>■ Anti-Tobacco Campaign Award 2016;</li> </ul>
17.	<p><b>Pollikontho FM 99.2</b></p> <p>Founder: BRAC Bangladesh</p> <p><b>Opening Date:</b> 12 Jan.2012</p>	<p>The station broadcasts programs across a 17 km. area and more than 4 lac listeners regularly listen to Radio Palikantha.</p>	<p>It Broadcasts Program once a day, for 12 hours, 9am - 9pm.</p> <p><b>Received Awards</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ National Institute of Mass Communication Award in 2022;</li> <li>■ Meena Award in 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019 from UNICEF;</li> <li>■ ABU Award in 2015 and 2017;</li> <li>■ Family Planning Media Award in 2013 by UNFPA;</li> </ul>

**Table 2:** Short Profiles of the Community Radios on Bangladesh (Cont.)

No.	Name of CRs with Founder & Opening Date	Coverage & Listeners	Broadcasting Hours & Achievement
18.	<b>Borendro FM 99.2</b>  Founder: Human Rights Development Association of Naogaon  <b>Opening Date:</b> 8 Mar. 2012	The radio station has listener of almost 5 lacs across the 25 km. of Naogaon.	Broadcasts Program once for a day for 9 hours, 3pm -12am.  <b>Received Awards</b> ■ UNICEF Meena Media Award-2014, 2015, 2016, 2018; ■ Girl Power Award-2014; ■ (CEMCA) Community Radio Video Challenge Award-2015; ■ Anti-Tobacco Award-2016; ■ RTI Award-2017;

Source: Prepared by the author using both primary and secondary data, 2022.

Summary of the brief profiles of the CRs

*There are 18 Community Radios in Bangladesh namely, Lokubetar (Barguna)<sup>8</sup>, Radio Padma (Rajshahi), Radio Mahananda (Chapai Nawabganj), Radio Barendra (Naogaon), Radio Chilmari (Kurigram), Radio Sarabela (Gaibandha), Radio Mukti (Bogura), Radio Nalta (Satkhira), Radio Sundarbans (Khulna), Krishi Radio (Patuakhali), Radio Meghna (Bhola), Radio Pallikantha (Moulvibazar), Radio Sagardwip (Noakhali), Radio Sagargiri (Chittagong), Radio Naf (Cox’s Bazar), Radio Jhinuk (Jhinaidah), Radio Bikrampur (Munshiganj) and Radio Boral. In Bangladesh, Except Krishi Radio, other 17 community radios are operated by the NGOs. With a short span of time, they have become popular and making some positive contribution and impacts on the rural society of Bangladesh.*

<sup>8</sup> Name of the district is given in the parenthesis.

## 6. Findings of the Qualitative Data: Few Empirical Cases

In this part 4 case studies on community radios were presented. All the cases described here were provided with a case summary and analysis have been made in line with the 2<sup>nd</sup> objective of the study. Here out of 18 Community Radios, brief profile along with its coverage, objectives, mission, vision, programs, their achievement, and their development impact on the rural societies and transformation process of the 5 community radios were described in order to draw a token conclusion about the overall of the impacts of all the community radios in Bangladesh. After discussing about each community radio station, their overall impact on the society and livelihood of the grassroots people is presented briefly in the summary parts.

### 6.1 Community Radio Naf 99.2, Teknaf, Cox's Bazar

The slogan of the Naf Community Radio is: 'Radio Naf Prantiker Kotha Bole' and in English the slogan is: Radio Naf Speaks for Coastal People. It started its first broadcast on 21 April, 2012. The founder of the Naf Radio is Alliance for Co-operation and Legal Aid Bangladesh (ACLAB). At present, the frequency of Community Radio Naf has been raised to 250 watts that coverages 25 kilometers. About 5 lac residents of Teknaf and Ukhiya Upazilas of Cox's Bazar regularly listen to the radio. Naf Radio started operation with the objective of: i) Empowering the marginalized people and ensure their right of access to information and technology; ii) To promote and improve social justice and strengthen democracy to ensure their rights; iii) Furthermore, Naf focuses on gender equality and women's empowerment.

Teknaf coastal Upazila under Cox's Bazaar district of Chittagong division in Bangladesh with an area of 388.68 sq km at the bank of the Bay of Bengal and the Naf River. Radio Naf is working as community spokesperson and advocate for improving the socio-economic, creating peace & harmony, and cultural development of the disadvantaged communities. It covers people around 1 million living within 40 sq km. The Naf Radio started with the basic objectives to provide news and information services to the people of the coastal area. This was advocated by the ACLAB<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> ACLAB means Alliance for Cooperation and Legal Aid Bangladesh.



It did not receive any training facilities from the government.

Community Radio Naf 99.2 fm has been operating at Teknaf coastal Upazila in Cox's bazaar district with a permission from Ministry of Information, Government of Bangladesh since 2012. Community Radio Naf mainly exchange the socio-economic and development related information and knowledge with people living in rural area, side by side broadcast the information of govt. and non-govt. services through local language and also ensure the participation of community people in radio programs for enhancing skill, raising voice and empowerment. It plays role as an active mediator and platform for marginalized and disadvantaged people where they can share their needs, interest, problems and find out the solutions.

Key target population for having services from the Radio Naf: i) Marginalized poor people; ii) Women, children, adolescents, youth, aged; iii) Persons with disabilities, Dalit; iv) Farmers; v) fishermen; vi) Ethnic communities; vii) Rohingya. Radio Naf operates a total of 6 hours from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm and 4:00 pm to 7:00 pm. Local administration, cultural workers, small businessmen, fishermen, farmers, indigenous and small ethnic groups and workers have gradually become interested in Radio Naf. The programs that the radio is currently broadcasting are weather and disaster forecasts, news on environment and biodiversity awareness, prevention of child marriage, prevention of trafficking in women and children, health, nutrition, sanitation, women's empowerment, anti-dowry, program for the Rakhine, minor ethnic groups, prevention of violence against women and children, human rights, prevention of terrorism and militancy, disability, dalit, common gender, rumors, awareness and prevention of dengue and malaria, rights to information, fisheries and tourism, songs about life and professionals and important issues like safe drinking water. Besides, it celebrates special days and broadcasts various programs transmitted by Bangladesh *Betar* (Radio). Ten (10) regular staff and 15 volunteers are working on this community radio. Sixty (60) listeners' clubs have been set up in the area including local and *Rohingya* children, fishermen, ethnic groups, teenagers and women.

The people of Teknaf Upazila in the southern district of Cox's Bazar had no opportunity to listen to the radio, and even Bangladesh Betar (Radio) could not be heard from this remote part. Under this circumstance, ACLAB took an initiative to set up community radio in the socio-economically backward and natural disaster prone areas and started a community radio called Naf. Radio Naf has become the best source of information and entertainment for the local people, especially for the fishermen community. Most of the people in Teknaf are fishermen. They depend on deep-sea fishing for their livelihood. Radio Naf is assisting marine fishermen by providing accurate weather forecasts, the possibility of sea storms and tornadoes and important news in due time. Radio Naf is forecasting the weather by collecting data from the Meteorological Department and the Cox's Bazar Meteorological Office. Besides, various social issues have been regularly broadcasted. The goal of Radio Naf is to provide entertainment to all these backward populations, improve quality of life by providing accurate information, and providing services through local market prices and weather forecasts. Radio Naf is working to provide information services to the Rohingya people of Myanmar who have taken refuge in different refugee camps in Teknaf and Ukhia Upazilas of Cox's Bazar district of Bangladesh.

There is an Outreach Awareness Programs in the Rohingya Camp by the Naf Radio. ACLAB and Radio Naf 99.2fm implementing outreach activities for the Rohingyas as well as for local communities. Activities include orientation for community people on different issues, distribution of radio sets, setting up information booth/hub inside the camps, communication and meeting with stakeholders, communication with camp management authorities, coordination with local administration and camp management authorities, deployment of volunteers for relief distribution and information dissemination, formation of listener groups etc.

Naf Radio got grants/donation from some international organizations such as ILO, FAO, UNESCO, UNICEF, BBC Media Action, etc. It receives donation about 45- lacs from those agencies. There are 2 salaried staff supported by 18 volunteers among which 13 are male and 5 females. The number of listeners' club is 125 and listens are about 2 lacks. Two staff has got technical training from government.

The program broadcasted by the Naf radio includes new, education, health and COVID, weather, legal matters, natural disaster, education, entertainment, livelihood, agriculture, indigenous people, entrepreneurship development, women empowerment, climate change and physically challenged people, environment and foreign immigrants of Bangladesh. The problems that are hunted by the Naf Radio among others are financial crisis, no building for its own and dearth of volunteers. It was primarily selected for the *meena* award. Due to shortage of volunteers Naf Radio is to face problems to operate its programs sometimes. The future plan of the Naf Radio are: i) Radio Naf will mobilize the local resources for its sustainability; ii) Rado Naf will expand the broadcasting area; iii) Radio Naf will establish strong networking, coordination and cooperation with national and International stakeholders; iv) Radio Naf will conduct research and develop publication; v) Radio Naf will organize capacity building training for youth particularly young women and adolescents.

## Summary and Analytical Implications

- ❖ *Naf Radio on aired its first broadcasting in 2012. It covers people around 1 million living within 40 sq. km.*
- ❖ *The number of listeners' club is 125 and listens are about 2 lacks. Again, sixty (60) listeners' clubs have been set up special people that included local and Rohingya children, fishermen, ethnic groups, teenagers and women.*
- ❖ *Along with 10 regular staffs 25 volunteers are working in this community radio.*
- ❖ *Teknaf is a coastal belt under Cox's Bazaar district of Chittagong division in Bangladesh with an area of 389 sq. km at the bank of the Bay of Bengal and the Naf River. Radio Naf is playing its role as community spokesperson, which is improving the socio-economic contexts of the Teknaf area, creating peace & harmony, and cultural development of the disadvantaged communities.*

- ❖ *The Naf Radio is providing news and information services to the people of the coastal area.*
- ❖ *Community Radio Naf provided the socio-economic and development related information and knowledge with people living in rural area, side by side broadcast the information of govt. and non-govt. services through local language and also ensured the participation of community people in radio programs for enhancing skill, raising voice and empowerment. It plays role as an active mediator and platform for marginalized and disadvantaged people where they can share their needs, interest, problems and find out the solutions.*
- ❖ *Radio Naf is providing services to the marginalized poor people, women, children, adolescents, youth, aged people, persons with disabilities, Dalit; farmers, fishermen, Ethnic communities like Rohingya refugees etc.*
- ❖ *Naf Radio got grants or donation of about 45- lacs taka from some international organizations such as ILO, FAO, UNESCO, UNICEF, BBC Media Action, etc.*
- ❖ *Naf radio used to broadcast many programs which include news, educative program, health and COVID, weather, legal matters, natural disaster, entertainment, livelihood, agriculture, indigenous people, entrepreneurship development, women empowerment, climate change and physically challenged people, environment and foreign immigrants of Bangladesh and thus Naf radio is promoting the interest of poor people and updating their knowledge level.*
- ❖ *Fishermen communities are getting updated weather forecast, disaster preparedness news from this CRs. Most of fishermen depend on deep-sea fishing for their livelihood. Radio Naf is assisting marine fishermen by providing accurate weather forecasts, the possibility of sea storms and tornadoes and important news in due time. Radio Naf is forecasting the weather by collecting data from the Meteorological Department and the Cox's Bazar Meteorological Office.*

- ❖ *By broadcasting various social issues, the Radio Naf is providing entertainment to the backward populations, improving quality of life by providing accurate information, and providing services through local market prices and weather forecasts. Radio Naf is working to provide information services to the Rohingya people of Myanmar who have taken refuge in different refugee camps in Teknaf and Ukhia Upazilas of Cox's Bazar district of Bangladesh.*
- ❖ *During the COVID period, Naf radio plays an important role to establish rapport with the people and it provided the most reliable and scientific information to the grassroots people.*

## 6.2 Community Radio Meghna 98.4, Char Fasson, Bhola

Community Radio Meghna first started its broadcasting on 18th February 2015 with the slogan entitled 'Upokulio Manusher Konthosshor' (Voice of Coastal People) under the auspices of its founder, Coastal Association for Social Transformation Trust (Coast Trust). According to the program manager, the purpose of this community radio is to provide information services and develop consciousness among the marginalized people and uphold the voices of the vulnerable sections of the society. The meghna radio were blessed with some financial assistance in different point of time in course of its operation since its inception. Thus in its wake it received financial support from various organizations namely, UNICEF<sup>10</sup>, John Hopkins University, UNDP<sup>11</sup>, BRAC<sup>12</sup>, PKS<sup>13</sup>

<sup>10</sup> UNICEF refers to United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund.

<sup>11</sup> UNDP stands for United Nations Development program.

<sup>12</sup> BRAC means Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee. It is the largest NGO in the world. Apart from Bangladesh, BRAC is helping some developing countries in the world.

<sup>13</sup> Palli Karma Sahayak Foundation or PKS is a financial institution founded by the Government of Bangladesh to finance rural development and provide training and is located in Dhaka, Bangladesh. It offers financial and non-financial services to the rural people in Bangladesh.

and BNNRC<sup>14</sup>.

**Vision of the Meghna Radio:** We want equality and justice where human rights and democracy is ensured.

**Mission of the Meghna Radio:** We want to develop conscious citizen who can ensure human rights and instill a sense of climate change and resilience of disaster management among the marginal and vulnerable people of the coastal population through participatory and interactive programs by the Community Radio.

**The objectives of our program are to:** i) do consultation with the authority of the law enforcing agencies in order to contribute for the security of the isolated inhabitants of the micro islands and to protect the interest of the small fisheries community who are engaged in deep sea fishing; ii) contribute develop and preserve *hilsha* and other fisheries resources in the Meghna river basin and its management in collaboration with the local fishermen community and stakeholders; iii) help in ensuring food security to enhance the capacity building of the farmers in producing versatile and climate resilient agricultural products in the most disaster prone vulnerable people of the isolated coastal population; iv) help develop equity and equality of women by fostering a sense of violence against women and instilling a sense against child marriage; v) help reduce digital dividend and ensure justice against digital discrimination among the urban and rural area and thus to help increase develop knowledge base using ICTs for the neglected population of the isolated coastal area; vii) develop local people especially youth women and marginalized women

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<sup>14</sup> BNNRC denotes that Bangladesh NGOs Network for Radio and Communication (BNNRC), in special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council, considers community radio a special area for intervention. BNNRC has been promoting advocacy to the government in relation to community radio with other organizations since its emergence in 2000. As a result, The Ministry of Information of the People's Republic of Bangladesh announced the Community Radio Installation, Broadcast and Operation Policy 2008. Under this policy, The Ministry of Information approved 19 community radio stations for the first time in Bangladeshi history. To ensure the free flow of information to the people, the government enacted the Right to Information Act 2009.

to become program presenter and producer of the community radio so that they can contribute to the development of women flock through ensuring free flow of information and utilizing knowledge of the ITCs; viii) efforts will be taken to motivate the listeners in taking part actively in the various programs broadcasted by the community radio and thus to help develop an effective and sustainable livelihood of the local population where establishing human rights and practicing democracy will be the prime issue.

Radio Meghna has its own broadcasting area and listeners' clubs as well. Radio Meghna covers almost 18 unions including Char Madraz, Dokkhin Aicha, Sumraj, Abdullahpur, Abu Bokkorpor, Aminabaad, Aslampur, Jinnahgor, Char Monica, Rosulpur, Hazariganj, Monpura, Sakuchia, Kolmi and some parts of Lalmohon Upazila about 4 lac listeners can listen to the programs of this radio. Residents within the 25 kilometers areas can hear the radio station.

The Meghna Radio broadcasted programs for six hours every day in two times. The morning session starts at 9 am and lasts upto 12 pm. The afternoon session starting at 5 pm continued up to 8 pm. They broadcast programs on news, education weather, legal matters, disaster management, third gender, heal and corona, indigenous people, entrepreneur development, women's rights, environment concern and climate change issues etc. Radio Meghna promotes social issues and their solutions, various problems of adolescence, health information, mother and child care, programs on success and agriculture. Notable programs are-*Biggan o Projukti*<sup>15</sup> (Science and Technology), *Ain- Kanun* (Law, Rules and Regulations), *Pathsala* (School), *Durjog Prostuti* (Preparation of Disaster), *Chakrir Khobor* (Job News), *Sasthoi Shukh* (Health is Happiness), *Amra Kishor Amra Kishori* (We are Adolescent Boys and Girls), *Baba'r Sopno* (Father's Dream), *Bhumihin Byaktir Kotha* (Saga of Landless People), *Amader Rannaghor* (Our Kichen), *Pranisompod Kormokorta* (Livestock Activities), *Krishi o Krishok* (Agriculture and Farmer), *Maa Amar Maa Sofol Naari* (My Mother is a Successful Woman), *Jele Jibon* (Life of the Fishermen),

<sup>15</sup> The Words in the Italics are in local language, Bangla.

*Saaj Sojja* (Decoration), *Dhiman* (Quiz), *Ajker Shishu* (Today's Children) etc. Besides these, Radio Meghna broadcasts music shows and news. The remarkable broadcasting of this radio included broadcasting programs at a stretch 3 days during disaster time.

Radio Meghna is running on with eight (8) regular staff such as Station Manager, Two Assistant Station Managers, News Producer, Event Producer, Technical Officer and Editor. It also has 8 volunteers all those are females. Radio Meghna is being managed by the local young women (students) who are engaged in broadcasting, providing leadership and managed everything regarding the community radio. The volunteers get 4000 tk as a token honorarium. There are 40 listeners' club attached with this radio. No advertisement is aired from this CRs. The coverage includes Char Fasson, Lalmohan and Monpura Upazilas. The staff did not get any training from the government but these people have got training from NGOs. There are 12 trained manpower who are to prepare reporting, do editing and do presentation of news from this radios. There are no technical experts who get training from the NGO.

The exigencies of the Radio Meghna lies with the fact that it helps to promote and create equality and rights-conscious citizens for the climatically vulnerable and disaster prone coastal population of Bhola through participatory radio programs. Dissemination of development messages in the local language are increasing the knowledge base and skills of the community radio listeners in many areas. Radio Meghna has taken initiatives to make people aware by promoting programs on agriculture education, health, communication, disaster, climate change, environment and development. An important part of the people in the Char Fasson area is engaged with the fishing profession. Radio Meghna helps to get regular weather forecasts and improve their skills by broadcasting rules and regulations of fishing to fishermen. Radio Meghna is trying to create awareness on various issues including farmers' problem solving, education and empowerment of adolescents, reproductive health and hygiene.

In the words of the program manager, the positive aspects of the community radio are: to get information service from the community radio as a disaster prone



area, to raise awareness of the poor people and thus help to remove superstitions from the rural society. The strong point regarding community radio is that here the problems and the experiences of the poor people are shared from their own mouth and these people are upholding the voice of the general people and thus it helps develop a positive attitude among the inhabitants of the rural society. Another strong point is that while there is no electricity, people could listen to the programs of the community radio. Among the potentials of the community radios Ñ there is Facebook and websites and the broadcasting is made through audio-visual aids. In fact, now-a-days people do not listen to established public radio but the young students, old and middle aged people used to listen to CRs by using head phones in their mobiles. Community radio works for those who shared their own saga in their own speech broadcasted in the community radio, so the community people became so happy. Besides, CR arranged lots of programs for their own entertainment. The negative aspects of the of the CRs identified by one of the staff of Meghna Radio are that some of the expert media personalities those who are developed by the CRs quit their jobs permanently; some skilled manpower left community radio for better jobs in urban areas and sometimes some staff faced problems of security in the movements during nights in rural society. The threats of community radio identified by the local staff are that sometimes the battery of the broadcasting machine became useless and went out of order which nobody could mend that. Finally, despite all the negative points, community radios are rendering huge development services by providing required information for the community relating to agriculture, various educational programs, livelihood, climate change, biodiversity, live stocks, women's rights, law and order issues, health problems, music and drama, programs for children and adolescents etc. and thus community radio are translating the realities of the community people into practices and serving the needs and aspiration of the local people.

## Summary and Analytical Implications:

- ❖ *Meghna Radio started operation in 2015. It covers a huge area of 25km and its programs can be heard from 18 Unions of many Upazilas of an isolated island i.e. Bhola districts. The population is serving is about 810- lacks.*

- ❖ *It provided employment support of about 20 young people and delivered information support to the inhabitants and young students and thus they were getting educated on diverse issues.*
- ❖ *Fishermen community got direct help from community radio regarding weather forecast, legal support and became aware about many rules and regulation imposed by the government of Bangladesh and these fishermen contributed to preserving nature and biodiversity with knowledge of safe fishing and environmental protection. More specifically the people in the Char Fasson area are engaged with the fishing profession. Radio Meghna helped get regular weather forecasts and improve their skills by broadcasting rules and regulations of fishing to fishermen. Radio Meghna is trying to create awareness on various issues including farmers' problem solving, education and empowerment of adolescents, reproductive health and hygiene.*
- ❖ *It has formed 40 listeners' club having 2000 students. Meghna radio helped developing creation of media people using the platform of listeners' club. Getting chance to be associated with the community radio, many young students were getting conscious about their future role in the society and getting updated knowledge of many developmental concern and they could build their character keeping aloof themselves from many bad elements of the society.*
- ❖ *Lots of local artists, media people, singers, actors got a platform to develop their creativity by involving them with the community radio.*
- ❖ *The exigencies of the Radio Meghna lies with the fact that it helped to promote and create equality and rights-conscious citizens for the climatically vulnerable and disaster prone coastal population of Bhola through participatory radio programs.*
- ❖ *Through dissemination of myriad development messages in the local language this radio helped increase the knowledge base and skills of*

*the community radio listeners in many areas. Radio Meghna took initiatives to make people aware by promoting programs on agriculture education, health, communication, disaster, climate change, environment and development.*

- ❖ *The strong point regarding community radio is that here the problems and the experiences of the poor people are shared from their own mouth and these people are upholding the voice of the general people and thus it helps develop a positive attitude among the inhabitants of the rural society.*
- ❖ *Another strong point is that while there is no electricity, people could listen to the programs of the community radio. Among the potentials of the community radios Ñ there is Facebook and websites and the broadcasting is made through audio-visual aids. In fact, now-a-days people do not listen to established public radio but the young students, old and middle aged people used to listen to CRs by using head phones in their mobiles. Community radio works for those who shared their own saga in their own speech broadcasted in the community radio, so the community people became so happy. Besides, CR arranged lots of programs for their own entertainment.*

### **6.3 Community Radio Chilmari 99.2, Chilmari, Kurigram**

The first experimental broadcast of the Chilmari Radio began on 3rd November 2011. The official broadcasting of the Chilmari Radio began on 2nd June 2012, with the very popular slogan, ‘*Jago Baahe...Shono Baahe*’ (Wake Up...Hear Out). The founder sponsor of the Chilmari Radio was an NGO named Rangpur Dinajpur Rural Services (RDRS), Bangladesh. The Chilmari Radio covers an area about 25 kilometers and its listeners regularly listen to the programs of this radio. It covers about 10 lac listeners of Kurigram Sadar, Chilmari, Roumari, Rajivpur, Ulipur, Rajarhat Upazilas of Kurigram District. In addition, it also covers Sundarganj and Sadullapur Upazila of Gaibandha District and some parts of Pirgachha Upazila of Rangpur District.

Two types of manpower are working in the Chilmary Radio- these are regular and irregular staffs associated with this radio. The staff of the radio shared that there are 3 salaried employees and on the other hand, there is 26 volunteers among which 16 are men and 12 are female. The volunteers get a small amount i.e. 200-250 Tk. as their salary to work with this radio. The number of their listeners' club is 151 where a total of 4 lacs 80 thousand listeners are directly engaged with this community radio. They participate directly in various stages of creation of production of many matters for the radio and involved in broadcasting of Radio Chilmary's program. Besides, three (3) children's radio clubs have been created with 10 children in each club, where children are working to develop their talent.

This community radio has been broadcasting programs daily for five (5) hours. Start playing on radio sets or FM band of mobile phones since 3pm it continues playing different programs till 8:00 pm. Radio Chilmary, operated by the direct participation of the common people of rural villages, is changing not only Kurigram but also the lives of the deprived and backwater people of Gaibandha district and so on surrounded with Tista, Bramhaputra and Dhorola rivers. Every day the session contains the program of local and national development news, as well as information relating to natural disasters, various awareness programs, rural folk entertainment, education, agriculture, health, prohibition of early marriage, prevention of violence against women, fire outbreak, safety against accidental deaths, are broadcasted by Radio Chilmary. The whole program includes news, education, health and COVID, weather, legal matters, natural disaster, education, entertainment, livelihood, agriculture, indigenous people, entrepreneurship development, women empowerment, environment & climate change and physically challenged people. It also creates different packages program based on the listener's feedback and participation. This mass media is becoming increasingly popular with the people of the region.

Chilmary radio has bagged some outstanding achievements and received some national and international awards for its excellent contributions to change the livelihood of the common people of Kurigram and its surrounding areas. Community Radio Chilmary 99.2 has been awarded Family Planning Media Award

2016-17 in electronic media Radio Category in a nation-wide competition organized by Directorate of Family Planning of Ministry of Health and Family Welfare under the support of UNFPA. Community Radio Chilmari 99.2 took part in the competition with their program name *jago nari* magazine program in line with women empowerment in line with Good Health and Well-Being of Sustainable Development Goal.

It was awarded for Meena Media Award in the year 2015 and 2016. Chilmari radio obtained an international award such as Asian Broadcasting (ABU) Award 2016. It has got Press Institute of Bangladesh (PIB) A2i (Access to Information) Media Award in 2017. Some other national awards obtained by the Chilmari Radio are: Plan Bangladesh Girl Power Award in 2013, Best Writer Award in 2016, Anti-Tobacco Award of 2016, Right to Information (RTI) Award on Community Radio in 2017, Community Radio Award-2017. Chilmari radio got another international awards such as SEMCA Video Challenge Award in 2017.

Chilmari is basically a backward upazila which is located 30 kilometers away from Kurigram Sadar. In this age of science and information technology, community radio-Radio Chilmari 99.2 is a role model of Kurigram's information service. Radio Chilmari daily broadcasts various programs along with important news from Bangladesh Betar<sup>16</sup>. Radio Chilmari is directly involved in awareness-raising and development activities among the people of the area through direct interviews of many important people, prevention of violence against women, agriculture related information, prevention of child marriages, prevention superstitious practices and events; and prevention of social unrest issues.

Chilmari radio received grants/donation from both Bangladesh government and other international organizations and NGOs. Likewise, it receives grants from the Mass-communication Department of government. It receives donation about 10-12 lacs from JICA, USAID, EU, BBC Media Action, John Hopkins University, Action Aid and NORaid etc.

<sup>16</sup> Bangladesh Betar is the Name of Government Radio in Bangladesh.

No advertisement is aired from this radio. There are 4 staffs who got technical training from government organization. General people have interest in this radio. The weak side of the community radio is financial instability. Sometimes volunteers to work in the community radio are not available due to shortage of manpower in this sector. The opening and flourishing of new commercial FM radio cause negative effects on role of community radio. The involvement of the general people and their interest in the community radio are the real strength of the community radio.

## Summary and Analytical Implications

- ❖ *Chilmari radio first aired its program in 2011. Chilmari is one of the remotest districts of Bangladesh which is basically cut off from many mainstream facilities. In such an area, this radio covers 25 km area that serves about 10 lacks people of this district.*
- ❖ *It has 151 listeners' club where a total of about 5 lacks listeners engaged and moreover there are 3 children listeners' club with 30 members.*
- ❖ *A group of young students managed to get employment in this radio.*
- ❖ *The whole program includes news, education, health and COVID, weather, legal matters, natural disaster, education, entertainment, livelihood, agriculture, indigenous people, entrepreneurship development, women empowerment, environment & climate change and physically challenged people. It also creates different packages program based on the listener's feedback and participation. Thus this radio as a mass media is becoming increasingly popular with the people of the region and people are getting educated, entertained and conscious about many development concerns.*
- ❖ *Chilmari radio has bagged some outstanding achievements and received some national and international awards for its excellent contributions to change the livelihood of the common people of Kurigram and its surrounding areas. Radio Chilmari was awarded Family Planning Media*

*Award 2016-17 by Directorate of Family Planning of Ministry of Health and Family Welfare under the support of UNFPA. It got Meena Media Award in the year 2015 and 2016. Chilmari radio obtained an international award such as Asian Broadcasting (ABU) Award 2016. It has got Press Institute of Bangladesh(PIB) A2i (Access to Information) Media Award in 2017. Some other national awards obtained by the Chilmary Radio were: Plan Bangladesh Girl Power Award in 2013, Best Writer Award in 2016, Anti-Tobacco Award of 2016, Right to Information (RTI) Award on Community Radio in 2017, Community Radio Award-2017. Chilmary radio got another international awards such as CEMCA Video Challenge Award in 2017.*

#### **6.4 Community Radio Borendro 99.2, Ukilpara, Naogaon**

On 8<sup>th</sup> March 2012 Borendro Radio started its journey as a community radio. The founder of this radio is Human Rights Development Association of Naogaon. There are some regular staff and 34 volunteers are currently working at Radio Borendro for managing its regular programs. The ‘Borendro Radio Child Club’ has been formed by the students of five educational institutions. The Borendro Radio station covers a wide area across 25 km. of Naogaon and the number of its listeners is about 5 lac inhabitants who regularly hear the programs broadcasted by the Borendro Radio.

Borendro Radio is operating its regular programs for 9 hours from 3:00 pm to 12:00 am. Lots of programs are being aired in the Borendro Radio every day. Among its programs the program on *Narir Kotha* (Voices of Women) is a popular program on women empowerment. It helps to raise awareness of women among the people by uncovering different kinds of stories about violence against women, problems of child marriage, women battering/abuse. Apart from this, *Janar Ache Onek Kichu*<sup>17</sup> (Lot more things to know), family planning program *Surokha* (Limit your children with proper family planning), *Gaaner Bhela* (Music Time), English educational program *Engreji Sikhe Sofol Hobo* (We will become successful by

<sup>17</sup> The Italic words are in Bangla and the translated version is added within the bracket.

knowing English), *Jonaki* (lightning bugs), *Kingkortobbobimuro* (Do not know what to do), *Shastho Kotha* (Health Talks), *Sufola Naogaon* (Naogaon with Huge Harvesting), *Projukti o Jibon* (Technology and Life), *Bondhu Adda Hashi* (Chatting with Friends and Smiling), *Sonali Adda* (Golden Chatting), *Kotha Shilpir Kotha ebong Sona Monider Ashor* (Tale of Artists with the Children), *Prosongo Naogaon* (About Naogaon), *Ek Cup Cha* (A Cup of Tea), *Rodela Bikel* (Sunny Afternoon), *Tumi Sondhar o Meghmela Gallery* (You are Beautiful with Clouds), *Sonali Swapno* (Golden Dreams) have gained tremendous popularity in its coverage area of the Borendro Radio. Borendro radio has been working on various issues through its myriad programs such as education, information technology, agriculture, health, entertainment, disabled women, anti-drug program, children, budget, religious program, elderly citizen programs, listeners' participation program, a special program about *Dalits and Horizons*<sup>18</sup>, ceremonial programs, song-poetry shows participated by local artists, a talk show with prominent figures and local developmental news broadcasted five times a day. Radio Borendro is broadcasting programs on various topics including the national news of Bangladesh Betar (Radio) daily at 8.30 pm.

Since its inception to till date, Borendro radio achieves lots of awards for its contribution to the grassroots people. Thus it has got UNICEF<sup>19</sup> Meena Media Award, Girl Power Award, CEMCA<sup>20</sup> UNESCO<sup>21</sup> Community Radio Video Challenge, RTI<sup>22</sup> Award, Anti-Tobacco Award, Best Station Award, Best Producer Award, National Organization Award in different years of operation.

<sup>18</sup> The Dalits and Horizons belong to the scheduled caste and they are known as the 'untouchables' in many parts of South Asia. They face discrimination at all levels in the society. Like India, they have been given a low status in the society in Bangladesh. Enjoying a backward position with a poor outlook they are mostly illiterate falling prey many social problems such as child-marriage, dowry and superstitious behaviour in general. Sometimes they face severe forms of human rights violations, torture, destruction of houses, land grabbing, eviction from land, threats and intimidation in Bangladesh.

<sup>19</sup> UNICEF stands for United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund.

<sup>20</sup> CEMCA is an acronym of Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia.

<sup>21</sup> UNESCO- the full form of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

<sup>22</sup> RTI = Rights to Information.



Radio Borendro started experimental broadcasting by the initiatives of local non-government developmental organization ‘Human rights development association’. In order to understand its role and importance at the local level, an incident aired on this radio can be mentioned. A ten-year-old girl from Nandigram, Naogaon was treated inhumanely while she was working in a house for a year and a half. A descriptive report of this inhumane torture publicized by Radio Borendro stirred up the public. According to this report, law enforcement agency immediately took action against the accused. By creating many such examples, Borendra Radio has left an impression in people’s minds within a short period of time. ‘*Sthaniyo Sorkarer Daiboddhota*’ (Accountability of the Local Government) program has made people aware of their rights in remote areas. The use of accountability and transparency has begun through local government and community radio. Various problems, prospects and successes in the Borendro Radio broadcast area- has stirred the listeners. The abused children of the area can express their joy, sorrow and hope on this radio. A report on the possibility of organic farming has attracted widespread interest among local farmers. Many of its programs broadcasted by the Borendra Radio has brought about huge change and transformation in this remotest area of Bangladesh. The drug awareness program called *Ashokti* (Addiction) is very popular among the locals. Law enforcement, Drug Control Department staff and young representatives are participating in the program to raise awareness about the adverse effects of drugs.

## Case Summary

- *Radio Borendro covers 25 km and 5 lacks people can hear Radio Borendro.*
- *It Has Child Listeners clubs which has been formed with 5 educational institute.*
- *It broadcasts versatile programs through which people are becoming knowledgeable about lots of important issue. Teaching English to the students is one of the most popular program of the Radio Borendro.*

- *The case of maid servant torture broadcasted in the Radio Borendro helped attracted the attention of the general public and law enforcing agency was forced to arrest the accused quickly that testified the significance of the community radio at the grassroots.*
- *It played an important role to make the local government accountable to the community people for its local governance and thus ensure peoples right at the local level.*
- *The victims can express their grievances and pains through the community radio.*
- *The problems, prospects and success of the general public are broadcasted in the Radio Borendro and thus community radio has become the source of all hopes and aspiration for the marginalized people in Borendro area.*
- *People are able to know about organic farming and success of agriculture through Radio Borendro.*
- *Radio Borendro helped controlling drug abuse in the locality.*
- *Radio Borendro contributed to the better service to the rural society and as a recognition of it, Radio Borendro was able to get lots of awards for its performance.*
- *Thus Radio Borendro helped bring change and transformation at the rural society.*

## **7. The Listeners Perspectives of the Community Radios in Bangladesh: Empirical Evidence of a Few Individuals**

Here in this part a few cases of some beneficiaries' experiences were shared below. From the following cases some of the major features of the different community radios and their ramifications and implications for the society and community were reflected in their life experiences with the community radios in Bangladesh.

### 7.1 I am a regular listeners of the Radio Pollikantho

Ayesha Akhter Rumana, age 24 year, a female student of 3<sup>rd</sup> Year Honours, Village- Matar Kapon, Union- 7 No. Chandnighat, Upazila: Moulavi Bazar Sadar of Moulavi Bazar District. She is regular listeners of some of the major programs of the Pollikantho Community Radio. Among the list of some programs she regularly listened to were: *Ogo Bandhu Pashe Theko* (Oh Dear Friend Keep Beside Me); *Shu-Shathao* (Good Health); Arshinagar (Town of Mirrors). Aysa shared that she listened to the community radio because she gets lots of information and she really gets huge entertainment from the community radio. She switched on the radio in the morning and at night during her leisure time. She almost listened 34- hours. Ayesha was immensely benefitted knowing modern agricultural practices from the community radio and she came to know about making a GD (General Dairy in Police) while she was listening to ‘Law and Life’ in the community radio. From the CR, she could update her knowledge about COVID-19 and she was able to stop spread rumour in her locality. By the community radio lots of mass people of Moulavibazar were able to improve their livelihood pattern having participated in many of the programs broadcasted by the community radio. She attended some remarkable programs on ‘what to do during Corona Pandemic’ and they broadcasted regular updates of the corona victim and deaths at home and abroad every day. There is a program on ‘Nari Kantha’ that I listened with raft attention on a regular basis. This radio broadcasted a programs on adolescent youth entitled ‘Golden Adolescent Time’. There is a magazine rpogramme relating to violence against women and they organize seminar on damma life and I participated such programs. She also listened to *sonafala mati* (Golden Soil for Growing Crops) – a wonderful program on agricultural modernization. She attended talk show concerning environment and the program on environment “We are beside the Human Being” where the whole program put enormous importance relating to disaster management and environmental concern. She usually heard a program on local government issue entitled ‘The Saga of the Union and Talk’ of the Union where she came to know what services are available at the Upazila and how citizen could get all those services. In most of the various programs such as musical show, dance drama,

drama, and other cultural programs, local artists are performing in the community radio in Bangladesh now-a-days.

## Case Summary

- ❖ *Aysha shared that she listened to the community radio because she gets lots of information and entertainment from the community radio.*
- ❖ *Every day she listened 34- hours.*
- ❖ *From community radio Ayesha was able to know many new knowledge on many issues such as modern agricultural practices, what is a GD (General Dairy to Police), local government, voices of women, environment, disaster management in the community radio.*
- ❖ *From the CR, she could update her knowledge about COVID-19 and she was able to stop spread rumour in her locality.*
- ❖ *By the community radio lots of mass people of Moulavibazar were able to improve their livelihood pattern having participated in many of the programs broadcasted by the community radio.*

### 7.2 Apon likes health talk program of Radio Bikrampur

Sazzad Hossen Apon, 18, a student of SSC<sup>23</sup>, hails from Betaka, Betaka Hat Union of Tongibari Upazila of Munshigong District. Apon shared that he listened to agriculture, program for the students and recitation of the poem and musical program. He preferred most to listen modern songs in the community radio. He usually listened to the CR in the evening. Apon was motivated to do roof gardening in their building after he had listened a program on roof gardening on the community radio. I was immensely benefitted by listening educative program in the community radio. He informed us that many farmers and citizens got lots of

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<sup>23</sup> In Bangladesh, SSC means School Secondary Certificate examination. After 10 years schooling if any student passes SSC examination arranged by the board, he or she gets SSC certificate. It is equivalent to matriculation.

help from the community radio. He was personally helped by the community radio while he came to know program on the admission to get into the college. He became conscious regarding health matters. Jago Vogini (Sister: please keep alert) is the program on women's right what he heard many times. This is a program that helps us to be cautious about dowry and the importance about violence against women. The program on *Krishaker Hashi* (Smiling of the Farmers) is a good programme for the farmers and agriculture. He opined that by listening this programs lots of rural farmers were able to enhance their agricultural production. The most preferable program of Apon in the community radio is Kobitar Khata (The Note Books on the Poetry).

The environmental program taught us about dropping waste or garbage in the dust pot or a particular place. *Gaan o Adda* (Song and Chatting) is a heart touching program of the radio Bikrampur. He was very much interested to know educative program in the community radio. He was inspired to study more by listening on the community radio. The program on 'Amader Katha' (Our Says) helped the listeners to enhance their livelihood. He loved to join in a mazine program on educational program "Student Life". There are as many as 3 program on health i.e. *shatho katha* (Health talk), *Aponer Shastho* (Your Health); and *Hello Doctor*. By attending such health related programs he got two good habits that to wash hand with soap before taking food and during sneezing he had to use a tissue or handkerchief. Amar Canpus (My Campus) is a very entertaining program broadcasted by the community radio.

## Case Summary

- ❖ *Farmers used to lots of assistance from the community radio.*
- ❖ *By getting in touch with the CR, Apon was able get admitted into the college.*
- ❖ *Health programs were very much impressive to Apon. He became conscious regarding health matters.*
- ❖ *On hearing the program on 'keeping alert the sister' she was cautious about dowry and the importance about violence against women.*

### 7.3 Tonatunir Golpo is the most favourite program of Mr. Rubel in Chilmary Radio

Mahmudul Hasan Rubel, aged 14 years, lives in Ramna Union of Chilmary Upazila Kurigram District. He is an HSC<sup>24</sup> student. He informed us that he could listen community Radio from his residence. Some of his favourite programs are: *Tonatunir Golpo*<sup>25</sup> (Tale of Tiny Tots); No Problem.com, *Ain Jiggasha* (Question on Legal Matters), *Ananda Adda* (Joyful Chatting), *Unnayan Sandbad* (Development News). Rubel listens to Community Radio to get various information required for him and to fulfill his entertainment needs. He listens to CR in the afternoon. He usually passed 2- 3 hours on the Community Radio. He was immensely benefitted to know the legal matters from the community radio. He got earlier forecast regarding disaster situation many times. Mahmudul Hasan informed that community radio directly contributed to the livelihood of the people of Chilmary through enhancement of agricultural production. He attended another educative programs on the CR i.e. voice of English. While taking interview with him he shared that he listens to two programmes- one is on *Narir Katha* (Talk on Women Affairs/Issue) and *Shastho Barta* (Health Tips). He prefers regular updates on the COVID-19. Some women related programs were also demanding to him which were: the curse of child marriage, child abuse and dowry. There was a program broadcasted for the adolescent awareness in the community radio. The aftermath of violence against women is a good program he listened to the CR. The programs of 'Krishi Dibanishi' (Agriculture by Day and Nights) and Talk Show on Agriculture were very popular. Chilmary Radio regularly aired a popular program entitled Pachpura which is directly related to disaster management. The radio also made a program on local government through which he knew the importance of construction of local roads, bridge and culverts. He opined that the artists performed on the CR are all local artists. Community radio always

<sup>24</sup> Likewise, HSC stands for Higher Secondary Certificate examination. It is equivalent to 12 years' study. After getting passed SSC, students enter into college for 2 years and if they pass it successfully they get HSC degree.

<sup>25</sup> Words in the Italics here are in Bangla. English version is added in the bracket.

broadcasted programs relating to the local culture. He loves much the educative programs on the CR. Moreover, he came to know about facebook and use of technology from the CR. He loved to listen to attend awareness raising program on the mass consciousness and to listen to the musical program. He underscored the need of the CR in developing the interest of the cow fattening and rearing of milking or milching cow. He likes program on drama very much.

## Case Summary

- ❖ *Rubel listens to Community Radio to get various information required for him and to fulfill his entertainment needs.*
- ❖ *He listens to CR 23- hours in the afternoon.*
- ❖ *He was immensely benefitted to know the legal matters from the community radio.*
- ❖ *He got earlier forecast regarding disaster situation many times.*
- ❖ *Mahmudul Hasan informed that community radio directly contributed to the livelihood of the people of Chilmari through enhancement of agricultural production.*
- ❖ *The program on learning English (voice of English), agriculture: day & night, COVID-19, local government, cow fattening, local culture and drama were special to Hasan.*

## 7.4 Parvina likes the program on problems of adolescent children in Radio Jinuk

Parvina Sarker, 30, a housewife, read up to class IX of Arappur, Jhenaidah Sadar Upazila, Jhenaidah District, listened to the Radio Jinuk on a regular basis. She loved programs on Agriculture, Health and Environment. Her intention to listen to the community radio was to look into the news, information and for entertainment. He listened to CR in the afternoon and evening. She usually listened to CR approximately for 2 hours. Parvina Sarkar thought that she was able to become

conscious about health and encouraged to rear poultry from the community radio. She remarked that listening to the CR they were able to reduce various risks of rural life. She considered that the programs on agriculture in fact changed the livelihood of the villagers of his area. The educative program on women's education and compulsory education, programs on nutrition were very enjoyable to her. The program on COVID was very helpful because she knew the importance on wearing mask during covid time in 2019-2020-. The program entitled 'Sishu Sram Ke Na Bolun' (Say No to the Child Labour) and 'Kishor Boyosher Samosha o Samadhan' (Problems of Adolescent Children and Its Solution), equal rights of women, program on livestock, environmental development, weather forecast are some of the popular program. Among other she loved most the entertainment related program. She listened to the CR for entertainment and education purpose. She became enlightened and got encouragement to achieve the goal of her life. Having listened to the community radio, she thought that people are getting health care knowledge and various information on the agriculture. She shared that by listening to the community radio many students and unemployed youths have chosen to become entrepreneur in the near future. CR helps to teach us about health, women's education and program on teen agers, women's equal rights and empowerment, program on live stocks, conservation of bio-diversity and ecological balance, development planning and among all other programs she liked most the program on health.

## Case Summary

- ❖ *Parvina Sarker, a housewife, listened to the Radio Jinuk on a regular basis. He listened to various programs for 2 hours on an average.*
- ❖ *CR helps to teach the villagers on Agriculture, Health and Environment, COVID, women's education and program on teen agers, women's equal rights and empowerment, program on live stocks, conservation of bio-diversity and ecological balance, development planning and among all other programs she liked most the program on health.*
- ❖ *She shared that by listening to the community radio many students and unemployed youths have chosen to become entrepreneur in the near future.*



- ❖ *She remarked that listening to the CR, villagers were able to reduce various risks of rural life. She considered that the programs on agriculture in fact changed the livelihood of the villagers of his area.*

## 8. Suggested Policy Interventions and Recommendations

Based on the empirical knowledge derived from the survey, case study and researcher's personal observation, the following policy recommendations are suggested to address the limitations and to improve the performance of the community radios in Bangladesh.

- ❖ *The CRs in Bangladesh are sporadically located in various locations in Bangladesh, which do not follow any particular pattern. It is found from the study, there are 18 CR stations in 17 districts in Bangladesh. It was observed that among the 8 Divisions of Bangladesh, there is no community radio station in the Mymensingh division. So, immediately some CRs should be set up in Mymensingh division because lots of ethnic people live here. For catering their needs and aspirations, some community radios in this district should be installed soon.*
- ❖ *It was found that respondents were benefitted immensely from obtaining knowledge of various subjects like health issues, agriculture, fishery, cooking, importance of oral saline, child rights, women's rights, discrimination against women, development activities of the area, social development. Listeners were able to receive various information, some were able to raise their awareness level, some were able to stop child marriage in their areas. CRs helped increase agriculture and fish production, employment creation, get knowledge on corona treatment, get weather forecast to take shelter and prepare themselves for necessary measure. Not only that some were able to remove their superstitious believe, learn about different rules and regulations and modern technology, know about bad effects of drug taking and they were inspired on social forestry. Therefore, more CRs can be established in the backward areas of Bangladesh.*

- ❖ *Most of the young students are involved with the community radios through listeners' clubs and thus these young people are getting right attitudes and proper knowledge to build their characters in the best manners. In this way, community radios are giving best values to the grassroots societies in Bangladesh.*
- ❖ *Overall findings implied that community radios were playing a formidable role in grass-roots level development and these community radios were serving the rural society in providing entertainments, required information and news, updating the health knowledge, promoting agriculture and raising their knowledge on diverse issues.*
- ❖ *Each of the community radio has listeners' club on its own and members of those listeners' club should be provided with small portable radios free of cost. Apart from it, keeping radio set in all the fishing boats those who are fishing at the coastal areas should be made compulsory so that they can get message from the community radios and can prepare themselves during disaster period. Besides, radios and accessories of these radio sets should be made available with lower and affordable costs.*
- ❖ *One of the major duties and responsibilities of the CRs is to educate the local gentry and listeners. Therefore, apart from broadcasting programs on health, agriculture, life styles and livelihood pattern of the grassroots people, all CRs should broadcast special programs on language, more specifically program on learning English language should be emphasized more on CRs, which will help educate local students.*
- ❖ *CRs are providing services to the marginalized poor people, women, children, adolescents, youth, aged people, persons with disabilities, Dalit; farmers, fishermen, Ethnic communities like Rohingya refugees etc. Some Community Radios are ceaselessly assisting marine fishermen by providing accurate weather forecasts, the possibility of sea storms and tornadoes and important news in due time. The CRs are helping*

*fishermen to provide weather forecast by collecting data from the Meteorological Department. Being aware about govt. rules and regulation regarding environment, these fishermen contributed to preserving nature and biodiversity with knowledge of safe fishing and environmental protection. The advantages of community radios are that these are playing an important tool for empowering marginalized sections of society across the world, transforming lives through giving them access to relevant, up-to-date information. All these positive ramifications justify the existence of the community radios in Bangladesh.*

## 9. Conclusion

Through this paper an attempt was taken to have a brief profile of the Community Radios in Bangladesh and a few profiles of listeners of these radios were also recorded. This paper is fully based on qualitative approach. Primary data were collected using case study, focus group discussion and observation. Secondary data were collected adopting content analysis method. The study revealed that there 18 community radios in Bangladesh sporadically located in 18 districts that covered 7 divisions of Bangladesh. Among 18 CRs, only one is running by government and the rest 17 CRs are being operated by the private owners. The case studies revealed that these community radios were able to form listeners' club through which huge numbers of school going children have got a platform to involve themselves in lots of creative endeavors. Some marginal communities such as fishermen, women, village farmers, rural poor communities, indigenous people are getting lots of development services from the community radios. Community Radios in fact are used to providing lots of important development services to the community all over the country. Thus they are able to bring enormous change, development and transformation at the grassroots society.

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