Women’s Participation in Community Radio in Bangladesh

by

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ABSTRACT

WOMEN’S PARTICIPATION IN COMMUNITY RADIO IN BANGLADESH

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This study is about women’s engagement in community radio (CR) in Bangladesh which is a relatively new innovation in the country. The thesis seeks to describe the current situation of how CR facilitates women’s access to and participation in media content, organizational structure, and media facilities. The analysis focuses on various levels of women’s participation as listeners, programmers and managers in community media. Methods used in the study include key informant interviews, semi-structured interviews, and observation. Community radio creates interest among women listeners in communities by using local content in local languages as well as providing opportunities for women to be involved with local media. The study finds however, that women are not participating at a level where they can manage communication processes or use their own knowledge and resources. The study concludes that in order to sustain community media, women need to be recognized and involved as an important part of the community. This study supports that women want to own their communication processes through developing their capacity in community radio.
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Community radio (henceforth CR) is a media initiative with the potential to have a remarkable impact on rural communities and their development and empowerment (Girard, 1992). Around the world, CR has created access to information for the poorest of the poor. CR has broken barriers created for the illiterate by the use of radio technology. It serves as a platform for sharing local knowledge and voicing the opinions of the marginalized sections of a community (Girard, 1992; Jallov, 2012).

Women’s access to media and information and communication technologies (ICTs) including radio, has remained a challenge, especially in developing countries. Women in developing countries are often deprived of social, economic, and political development due to their inaccessibility to the information society (Hafkin & Odame, 2002; Huyer and Carr, 2002). CR has been found to be an effective community medium that provides demand-driven information for women to increase their participation in community development.

Background

The idea of CR is not new in communication development studies or practice; however, implementing the idea in the rural and peri-urban areas of Bangladesh is innovative. When the political party, Bangladesh Awami League, came into power in 2008, it had the vision to foster ICTs across the country. With nearly three quarters of Bangladeshi families earning their living in rural areas by farming, one of the main goals identified by the government was to bolster rural communities through the decentralization of broadcasting services along with the promotion of equitable and needs-based information and knowledge (Reza, 2012).

Historically, radio has had high public value in Bangladesh. People in Bangladesh had an emotional connection to radio as it played an important role during the Bangladesh War of
Liberation in 1971. During the liberation war, radio inspired the freedom fighters through its programming and kept people updated with information and news. Since 1971, the state-owned broadcasting system, Bangladesh Betar, has been serving the people of Bangladesh with social and national development messages through its 15 radio stations throughout the country (Ullah, 2010). In the age of liberalization, several commercial radio stations are also transmitting programs through FM radio stations, mostly surrounding the big cities in the metropolitan divisions of the country. However, these two broadcasting services are criticized as being controlled by either urban-based bureaucrats or government where people’s participation is neglected in the media climate (Reza, 2012). In addition, unidirectional broadcasting services fail to reflect grassroots’ input and feedback on media content.

In order to democratize and decentralize the communication system at the grassroots level, community radio, therefore, emerged as a third tier broadcasting service in Bangladesh in 2010 along with the country’s state-owned and commercial radio. Considering the increasing number of successful CR stations all over the world with respect to improving communication in rural communities, the Government of Bangladesh approved the ‘Community Radio Installation, Broadcast and Operation Policy’ in 2008. A total of 14 community radio stations (as of June, 2013) are operating at the local level to help more rural communities reap the benefits of radio and one is going to start very soon.

**Overview of the Country**

Bangladesh achieved independence in 1971 after the nine months War of Liberation. Before that, it had been a part of Pakistan from 1947 to 1971. Geographically, Bangladesh lies to the east of the South Asian subcontinent with India to the west, north, and the east, and Myanmar to the southeast. It also faces the Bay of Bengal to the south. Bangladesh is one of the most
densely populated countries in the world, with a population of over 150 million people living in an area of 147,570 square kilometers (BBS, 2013).

The country has seven administrative divisions with 64 districts. Each district is then divided into several upazillas (sub-districts) and each upazilla into unions. Each union is further composed of nine wards, with each ward being a cluster of villages. There are 492 upazillas, 4,501 unions, 40,509 wards, and 87,310 villages. For smooth running of administrative work, the urban areas have ten city corporations along with 277 municipalities. Of Bangladesh’s total population, 28 percent lives in urban areas while the majority live in the rural areas.

The majority of the population is Muslim (90%), but other religions such as Hindus, Buddhists, and Christians are also present. The official language is Bangla. English, however, is also spoken by literate communities. The national literacy rate of the population aged above fifteen is about 60 percent, and the female literacy rate is about 56 percent (BBS, 2013). Television has become a major form of media in the country; therefore, although more than 50 percent of households have radio sets, radio listenership had reportedly declined 16 percent in 2011 as access to television had increased (Media Action, 2012; Ullah, 2010). In 2011, national radio listenership was documented at 3.92 percent whereas it was 20.16 percent in 2004 (BBS, 2011).

Bangladesh has an agrarian economy, where agriculture contributes to 22 percent of the country’s GDP and employs the majority of the rural labor-force. In the manufacturing sector, ready-made garments contribute to about 17 percent of GDP. This sector employs more women than other sectors in the country. Overall, female participation in the labor market is 57.2 percent compared to 84.3 percent for men (UNDP, 2013).
Bangladesh’s head of government and leader of the opposition party are both women. This does not, however, represent the status of women in the country. Bangladesh ranks 147 out of 187 countries in the Human Development Index (UNDP, 2013). The Gender Inequality Index (GII), places Bangladesh in the 111th position out of 148 countries (UNDP, 2013). Though women make up half of the population of the country they do not enjoy the same rights as men do. Women in Bangladesh hardly have any say in their personal lives or in the decision-making process of the family. Moreover, the patriarchal family system forces women to lead their lives under the influence of their father, husband or sons. Due to prevailing socio-cultural norms and regulations, women’s movement is restricted; often their social network is confined to their family ‘bonding’ ties rather than ‘bridging’ ties (Hossain & Baresford, 2012). Therefore, women in the country are excluded from a wide range of information and knowledge particularly in the public sphere. Gender discrimination against women makes them disadvantaged socially, politically, and economically. Women are vulnerable group in relation to social issues such as dowry, early marriage, and other social violence.

**Problem Statement**

Due to the fast growing information and communication technologies (ICTs), it has been argued that the world has become a global village where people are able to connect to each other and share their knowledge in order to achieve their desired development (Elnaggar, 2008). However, women in developing countries are disconnected from the wider information society due to their inaccessibility to ICTs and low levels of participation in communication and decision-making processes associated with these media. As a result, resource-poor women typically remain the most marginalized members of the mediated global village often deprived of social, economic, and political development (Hafkin & Odame, 2002).
Women do not have access to ICTs due to affordability issues associated with a lower literacy, lack of technological skills, lower economic status, and poor infrastructure (Huyer & Carr, 2002). In addition, social norms and cultural expectations influence women’s ability to own and/or access ICTs facilities in public places (Odame, 2005). Added to these problems, the content associated with these technologies may not reflect women’s needs as women are rarely consulted or do not participate in content development (Huyer & Carr, 2002).

For the last few decades, CR has significantly improved its strategies for involving women (Myers, 2009). Community radio has several advantages over the other media: its local nature in terms of language is ideal for illiterates, it is affordable and cheap in terms of initial equipment investment, it operates at the community level which facilitates easy access to all and it reflects the specific community’s needs that it seeks to serves (Fraser & Estrada, 2001; Gumucio Dagron, 2001; Tabing, 2002). Furthermore, CR allows access to and participation in media content in order for users to own communication processes (Jallov, 2012).

Research indicates that community radio provides an excellent platform to raise women’s voices on the issues that are affecting their lives (Dahal, 2013). Some studies show that community radio provides opportunities for women to participate in CR in a range of roles from program producer to broadcaster (Dahal, 2013; Fortune & Chungong, 2013). In the general context, some questions are still unanswered in the literature. What levels of participation do various social groups of women have in CR? How does CR facilitate women to overcome socio-cultural barriers in order to access communication processes? How are women facilitated to develop their skills in managing communication processes by themselves? Finally, how often are women taking part in the decision-making processes of CR activities, especially when CR is
owned by an external actor from outside the community such as a non-governmental organization (NGO)?

This study is focused on the following goal and objectives in order to examine the above questions with regards to women’s engagement in community radio in Bangladesh.

**Goal**

The goal of this study is to explore the effectiveness of community radios in Bangladesh as media that facilitates the participation of women for sustainable and equitable community development.

**Objectives:**

1. To analyze women’s access to communication processes;
2. To assess the levels of women's participation in community radio stations and in programming; and
3. To analyze how different external organizations facilitate women’s ownership of community radio.

**Significance**

The results of this research are significant for several reasons. First, as community radio is relatively new to Bangladesh, the findings of the research should help scholars, planners, donors, practitioners, and policy makers to have a greater understanding of the current scenario of women's participation in CR activities. Next, recommendations from the study should further improve community radio's strategies and policies to involve women effectively in communication processes. Improved strategies and policies should help community radio to achieve their main goal which is to provide equal access for all community members in this media. Finally, there has not been any research done in Bangladesh that looks at how community radio
radio facilitates women's access to and participation in media content, organizational structures, and media facilities. Therefore, the research should open up future research ideas to investigate based on the results of this study.

**Overview of the Thesis**

The thesis is composed of seven chapters. Chapter Two is a literature review that highlights the evolution of participatory communication theory. It identifies key discourses of participation along with its advantages and disadvantages for involving local people in communication processes. In addition, it focuses on the levels of participation that lead local people to the ownership of processes. The chapter explains how Lawrence’s (2006) framework for understanding participation is useful for CR. Furthermore, the chapter highlights the characteristics and principles of community radio and how community radio acts as a development tool for social change. Missing in the current literature on CR in Bangladesh is how it facilitates women to raise their voices through participation in communication processes. The chapter thus concludes with a conceptual framework for the research project based on the need to explore the effectiveness of community radio for women in expressing their views and voice through access to and participation in media production, organizational structures, and media facilities.

Methods used for data collection in the study are presented in Chapter Three. The logic of the research process is based on a feminist research approach to understanding the situation in which women are involved in communication processes for reflecting their needs and concerns for community development purposes. To allow for a triangulation of results, a combination of qualitative research methods such as key informant interviews, semi-structured interviews, and
direct observation were used in the study. A sample of five community radio stations was selected to examine women’s involvement in community radios in Bangladesh.

The research context is presented in Chapter Four and highlights the emergence of CR in Bangladesh. Community radio in Bangladesh is a decentralized communication service that seeks to provide needs-based information for mostly rural communities and peri-urban through ensuring their participation in community media. This chapter further elaborates the operational activities of CR focusing on the stations’ staffing, sources of funding, and other administrative and organizational activities.

The findings from the study are presented in Chapter Five. It presents the findings related to the participation of women in the stations’ programming activities. Furthermore, it presents the findings of women’s access to the information and communication technologies in order to listen to community radio programs as well as sending feedback to the stations.

Chapter Six presents the discussion based on the findings of the study. Discussion is focused on how community radios offer voice for women and how the stations facilitate women to develop their skills in order to manage the communication process by themselves. It further discusses the perspectives of the external organizers and the possibility of transferring ownership of the stations to the communities.

Finally, Chapter Seven provides a final summary of the study in relation to the achievement of its objectives. It provides conclusions and recommendations that speak to the study’s focus on women’s ownership of communication processes and the sustainability and equity of community radio and development in Bangladesh.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter examines literature that explores the idea of how community radio helps rural women to be connected and involved in rural communication processes. It highlights participatory communication approaches, benefits, and challenges; different levels of participation; and effectiveness of community radio as a development tool especially for rural women community development.

The chapter concludes with the conceptual approach for the study based on the existing gap in the literature. There is a lack of information on how and at what levels of participation women have in media production, organizational structures, and media facilities while community radio stations are initiated not by a community, but by external actor outside of a community.

Participatory Communication

Participatory communication focuses on people-centric development and assumes that people are the key agents of change. Participatory communication facilitates interactive and transformative processes of dialogue through engaging people in the communication process that enables them to realize their own welfare (Singhal, 2001). It tends to stress the importance of “listening” rather than “speaking” so that people’s voices can be heard in development agendas (Servaes & Malikhao, 2005). The goal of participatory communication is to empower community members to be a collective unit of decision-making authority in development activities at a local level (Manyozo, 2012).

The discourse of participatory communication gained momentum in the 1970s with the criticism of the top-down and trickle-down communication approaches of development
communication (Waisboard, 2001). The mode of communication in the fifties and sixties was unidirectional, based on the sender-receiver model. Western development professionals’ assumption was that due to the lack of information, people in the underdeveloped countries (in the South) cannot achieve the desired development like those in the West with democracy, social justice, freedom of speech, and equal rights (Waisboard, 2001). The aim of communication was to change behavior through information dissemination and technology transfer. Mass media was used as a development tool with an aim of spreading information quickly to those who need development. Using social marketing strategies, development messages sent by the professionals from the top to the bottom without considering beneficiaries’ needs, interests and opinions, made the term “development” questionable (Waisboard, 2001).

In the next decade, communication focuses not only on using mass media, but also on interpersonal communication. Rogers (2003) argues through his “Diffusion of Innovation” theory that transferring technologies and knowledge is a gradual process consisting of several stages: awareness, knowledge and interest, decision, trial, and adoption/rejection. All people in a society do not make decisions adopting new innovations in the same way. For Rogers, there are a few who adopt innovations quickly (early adopters) and they act as a model for development in a society. The majority are slow in making decisions about adopting innovations (Rogers, 2003). According to Rogers, mass media has a great impact in increasing awareness to the people; however, at the stage where decisions are being made about whether or not to adopt innovations, interpersonal communication is far more likely to be influential (Servaes & Malikhao, 2005). Rogers’ work recognized that communication channels involving mass media and interpersonal communication are powerful. However, critique of his approach argues that the flow of communication remains unidirectional and linear and does not consider beneficiaries’ views.
Referred to as a “trickle-down” model of communication it is a one-way perspective on communication process (Waisboard, 2001).

The alternative paradigm emerged in mid-1970s and emphasizes multiple interaction and participation in communication processes (Manyozo, 2012). The primary theoretical framework for this paradigm draws upon constructs of dialogical pedagogy proposed by Paulo Freire, a Brazilian educator-philosopher who incorporated ideas on dialogue, participation, transformative process of learning, critical reflection, and democracy in communication processes (Freire, 1998).

There are two major, but interrelated, approaches to participatory communication widely accepted today (Servaes, 1999). The first approach is the dialogical pedagogy of Paulo Freire and the second approach, often broadly labeled as the participatory community media approach, centers on the ideas of access, democratization, and self-management articulated in the UNESCO New World Information Order debates of the 1970s (Servaes & Malikhao, 2005).

In the first instance, Freire is best known for his book, Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1970) in which he emphasizes the need for dialogue among the oppressed that leads to education. Freire (1970) argues that true participation involves subject-subject relationships, and does not involve subject-object relationships. Freire stresses transformative education, where everyone can learn by sharing their experiences and knowledge with each other through dialogic communication, rather than “banking mode of education” where experts deposited/imposed education to the learners (Singhal, 2004). According to Freire (1970), transformative learning through dialogue helps to create awareness and stimulate the critical reflection (concientization) of individuals about their problems. Although Freire’s dialogical pedagogy gives a new dimension in participatory communication, it also has received critique on several issues.
Servaes and Malikhao (2005) argue that Freire’s ideas only focus on the oppressed and do not consider elites, even elites in the developing countries. They also argue that Freire’s theory of dialogical communication is based on group dialogue and face to face communication and does not consider role of mass media such as radio, television, and print media for communication. Moreover, Freire gives more attention to communicative actions rather than to language or the form of communication (Servaes & Malikhao, 2005). It has also been argued by feminists that Freire’s model is gender blind ignoring the power of men over women.

The second approach to participatory communication comes from UNESCO’s language about access, democratization, and self-management from the 1977 meeting in Belgrade, in the former Yugoslavia. According to Servaes and Malikhao (2005), the final report of that meeting defined the terms of participation in the following way:

1. Access refers to the use of media for public service. It may be defined in terms of the opportunities available to the public to choose varied and relevant programs and to have a means of feedback to transmit its reactions and demands to production organizations.

2. Participation implies a higher level of public involvement in communication systems. It includes the involvement of the public in the production process, and also in the management and planning of communication systems.

3. Participation may be no more than representation and consultation of the public in decision-making.

4. On the other hand, self-management is the most advanced form of participation. In this case, the public exercises the power of decision-making within communication enterprises and is also fully involved in the formulation of communication policies and plans (Servaes & Malikhao, 2005, p.96).

Servaes and Malikhao (2005) focus on some differences between the two approaches to participatory communication. They argue that the “UNESCO discourse includes the idea of a gradual progression. Some amount of access may be allowed, but self-management may be postponed until sometime in the future. Freire’s theory allows for no such compromise” (Servaes
& Malikhao, 2005, p.97). They also argue that UNESCO’s discourse talks about “the public” whereas Freire talks about “the oppressed” (Servaes & Malikhao, 2005). Furthermore, they argue that UNESCO discourse puts the main focus on institutions and community media whereas Freire’s dialogical pedagogy based on group interactions and underplay the role of the mass media (Servaes & Malikhao, 2005).

Participatory communication has many advantages in sustainable development and social change. Gumucio Dagron (2001) distinguishes between participatory communication and other communication strategies for social change, as listed in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: Differences between participatory and non-participatory communication strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participatory communication</th>
<th>Non-participatory communication</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Horizontal communication where people participate in lateral communication</td>
<td>Vertical communication where people considered as passive receivers of top-down information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process in which people engaged in continuous dialogue along with control over decision-making process</td>
<td>Campaigns that help to mobilize people without building capacity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long-term process of communication for sustainable change</td>
<td>Short-term communication focuses on “output” rather than “outcome” of actions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collective consensus reflect majority’s opinions</td>
<td>Individual behaviour change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With the people’s participation in communication processes</td>
<td>For the community, but overlook community’s needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific in content, language, culture, and media</td>
<td>Massive and broad-based in diverse cultural setting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People’s needs and interests are focus</td>
<td>Donors needs are focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication processes owned by the community itself</td>
<td>Access determined by socio-cultural, economic, and political factors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consciousness raising for critical thinking about the practical situation</td>
<td>Persuasion for short-term behaviour change</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Gumucio Dagron (2001), adapted by author

Essentially participatory communication favors a two-way communication process through engaging community members in deliberative conversations. Participatory communication mobilizes individuals to identify their own problems and analyze their own situations and makes them capable of planning for their own as well as their communities’
welfare (Romanow, 2006). Moreover, participatory communication focuses on “listening” rather than “telling” that fosters trust building between sender and receiver. Building trust makes communication effective and helps to address and reduce social gaps among the members in a society (Servaes & Malikhao, 2005). With all these advantages, the term “participation” makes the latest version of communication theory more attractive to donors, planners, and all other stakeholders.

However, a number of scholars have found several challenges with participatory communication processes. One of the fundamental hindrances to the participatory communication is an issue of power (Gumucio Dagron, 2001). Participation in the decision-making process requires equal power distribution among the stakeholders. For Gumucio Dagron (2005), it is easy for many people to gain power, but it is not easy for power holders to release their power for others. Thus, balancing equal power between powerless and power holders threatens genuine participation in participatory communication process (Manyozo, 2012).

Another challenge in participatory communication is conflict. Romanow and Bruce (2006) argue that conflict and participatory communication are closely interrelated. Scholars give emphasis to good communication skills for handling conflicts in order to bring consensus for both participatory communication and to move towards a development goal (Gumucio Dagron 2009; Romanow & Bruce, 2006).

Another challenge is the inclusion of marginalized views in communication processes. Participatory infrastructures are mostly based in urban areas, thus people who live in rural communities tend to be left out from participatory decision making process (Berkowitz & Muturi, 1999 cited in Romanow & Bruce, 2006). Manyozo (2012) also argues that women in a
patriarchal society may not be allowed to speak in the public sphere; therefore, they may be deprived of presenting their views in the development arena.

While participation is widely used in different development programs, there is no consensus about the definition of participation among different development stakeholders (Tufte & Metalopulos, 2009). Different stakeholders define participation from different perspectives. Some stakeholders have an institutional perspective which defines participation as a tool for including people’s needs and interests to reach a goal defined by external actors. Others have a social movement perspective which defines participation as the mobilization of people for social justice and equal power distribution among all (Tufte & Metalopulos, 2009). These scholars, however, point out that the aim, objectives, and scope may differ in different programs, but primary stakeholders and end users should be at the center of any intervention (Tufte & Metalopulos, 2009).

Participation is not confined to listing people’s problems; rather it encourages equitable and active involvement of stakeholders in the formulation of development policies, implementation, monitoring and evaluation (FAO, 2004a). It creates environments for communicative dialogue between and among different parties helping to make collective decisions about development activities along with trust, commitment, and ownership (FAO, 2014). It enhances people’s capability for identifying their own problems and resolving them without automatically accepting outsiders’ thoughts (Hickey & Mohan, 2004). Thus, participation implies access to decision-making processes, horizontal communicative relationships, and minimal or total liberation from oppressive power relations (Manyozo, 2012).

Participation embraces a wide range of possible meanings as well as interpretations (Lawrence, 2006). A number of scholars have developed typologies based on their
interpretations. Arnstein (1969) presents a typology “ladder of citizen’s participation” where she interprets levels of participation based on power structures in a society and how they react to each other. She describes three forms of participation: a) nonparticipation, where powerful elites impose their decisions to the citizens; b) tokenism, when citizens get chances to express their views and aspirations about interventions and power holders treat these as “input” but maintain the status quo; and c) citizen power, where citizens’ voices are heard and responded to by powerful elites and citizens have control over the processes that affect them.

The main problem with Arnstein’s typology is that it focuses on different levels of participation related to power relation that may not be applicable in all contexts. For instance, in UNESCO’s participatory communication approach, it is expected that stakeholders are involved in a democratic and deliberative dialogue where power relations may not necessarily exist. Moreover, in a Freirian participatory communication process, transformative learning tends to empower all stakeholders that help to reduce the hierarchical gap if one exists. Therefore, the Arnstein typology may not be relevant to interpreting levels of participation in both participatory communication approaches.

Lawrence (2006) develops a comprehensive typology that focuses on the idea that empowerment should lead to the transformation of the participation of those people and structures involved in the process (Reed, 2008). Lawrence outlines four levels of participation: consultative, functional, collaborative, and transformative (see annex 1). In the typology, levels of participation focus not only on empowerment, but also on other variables: actor roles, process outcomes, methods, resources, and scale. For Lawrence, power can take many forms and has strong connection with knowledge, social inputs, social capital, and experiences (Lawrence,
2006). She argues that in practice, participants’ levels of participation vary with the change of variables related to different forms of power.

In her typology, Lawrence uses the terms ‘central’ (experts and decisions makers under the status quo) and ‘local’ (including those conventionally considered to have less knowledge and power) as shorthand to express different actors. She also uses two terms for different forms of participation: instrumental participation, which is participation in a task defined by others; and transformative participation, where participation is considered to be a process that changes meaning, power, or social organizations (Lawrence, 2006).

Lawrence herself notes that a top-down version of participation is consultative where participation is initiated and controlled by central actors for pre-established goals. A more bottom-up version (i.e. transformative) reverses this. The other two intermediate types of participation involve sharing knowledge and labor among the stakeholders in relationships: functional participation, where decisions are made by central; and collaborative, where both the local and central share decisions (Lawrence, 2006).

For Lawrence, instrumental participation (consultation and functional) aims to provide data for development planning, publicity for initiatives, and gives more legitimacy for development initiatives by the local. The transformative (transformative and to some extent collaborative) types of participation might result in stakeholder (including actors and volunteers) who are committed to development initiatives through collaborative, collegial, and communicative learning (Lawrence, 2006). It is interesting to note that this typology gives an idea about different versions of participation along with functions of participation at each level.
Community Radio

Community radio often applies participatory communication approaches (Girard, 1992). It provides public space for deliberative dialogue that helps to build trust and horizontal social networking among stakeholders at a local level (Gumucio Dagron, 2001). It engages its audience not only with listening to a station’s programs, but also with taking part in station’s management, program production, and evaluation (Jallov, 2012).

Community radio is a non-profit broadcasting service which is owned and managed by a particular community, either through a trust, foundation, or association (Fraser & Estrada, 2001). Additionally, its operations depend mainly on the community’s own resources. Community radio addresses the community’s specific needs that are not covered by other public or private media (Fraser and Estrada, 2001). Several scholars claim that CR acts as a tool for social change and has several advantages over the other media: a) it is cost-efficient in terms of investment which will facilitate its sustainability; b) its local nature in terms of language which is ideal for rural illiterate people; c) its programs reflect local information needs and interests; d) it values local culture, practices, and traditions; and e) it allows community access to and participation in station’s management and operational activities (Fraser & Estrada, 2001; Gumucio Dagron, 2001; Jallov, 2012). In addition, the convergence of CR with internet (for instance, the recently closed Kothmale Radio in Sri Lanka and Local Radio Network in Indonesia) are relevant examples of a new dimension in content development and social networking (Gumucio Dagron, 2001).

By definition, community radio is by and for the community it seeks to serve. Since its origin in Miners’ Radios which originated in 1949 in Bolivia, true community radio is conceived, established, operated, and managed by its listeners and advocates and mandate used to fight for
social injustice and poverty (Gumucio Dagron, 2001; Fraser & Estrada, 2001). However, in the modern context community radio stations across the world are not necessarily owned only by a particular community, but created with external actor support including government, local and international NGOs, donors, and others (Gumucio Dagron, 2001; Jallov, 2012).

Costa (2012), however, claims that there is a negative correlation between excessive dependency on external funding and CR’s sustainability. He argues that when a CR is initiated not by a community but by external actors, then it is not easy for a radio station to build community’s participation, trust, perceived ownership, and need; thus there is a chance to dry-up all communication initiatives if the external actors withdraw their support (Costa, 2012). These types of community radio stations often suffer from a lack of community leadership and ownership in the communication processes along with available funds which lead to questions about the sustainability of CR (Conrad, 2011 cited in Costa, 2012).

Owning a community radio station may not be possible by a community for many reasons, but ownership of the communication process through the participation of community members in the station’s program production and management fosters community ownership of the medium (Jallov, 2012). Scholars argue that individual community members and local organizations are the primary sources of information for a community (Tabing, 2002). Thus, building a horizontal social network helps a community reduce dependency on external inputs (Gumucio Dagron, 2001).

A community should have the responsibility for all activities of CR although the station is not initiated by the community (Gumucio Dagron, 2001). Community involvement in communication processes helps to build trust among the stakeholders along with a commitment towards the station’s initiatives (FAO, 2014). Ray (2010) questions the idea of full engagement
of community members in communication processes. He argues that existing power structures might not allow the oppressed to express their views in the decision-making structure of a station’s management, therefore, too often community radio stations struggle with becoming the voice of power holders.

**Women and Community Radio**

Women have less access to information and communication Technologies (ICTs), including radio and especially in developing countries (Huyer & Carr, 2002; Acilar, 2011). Scholars argue that there are many things that prevent women from being connected with ICTs: social and cultural norms, low level of literacy and numeracy, lack of basic technological skills, lack of capacity building, poor infrastructure, limited available time for leisure, and insufficient social security. (Huyer and Carr, 2002; Odame, 2005; Elnaggar, 2008). Furthermore, existing power relations in patriarchal societies do not allow women full involvement in the decision-making processes, thus depriving them of many opportunities that ICTs offer (Hossain and Baresford, 2012; Olatokun, 2009).

In addition, scholars argue that women are not benefitting from ICTs because when a new technology is introduced, it may overlook women’s perspectives (Huyer & Carr, 2002). Women are treated as passive recipients of ICTs and technology developers do not engage or even consult with women during the designing, planning, and implementing phases of technology interventions and content development; resulting in a failure to focus on women’s needs (Huyer & Carr, 2002; Olatokun, 2009). Experts suggest that, along with easy content, low cost technology can enhance women’s access to information technology (Hafkin & Odame, 2002; Cecchini & Scott, 2003).
Experts claim that community radio has the potential to overcome barriers posed by other ICTs and enhance women’s access to and participation in information technology (Huyer & Carr, 2002; Myers, 2009; Hafkin & Odame, 2002). Community radio gives voice to the voiceless who conventionally remain out of development debates (Costa, 2012). Voiceless does not mean that marginalized people do not have anything to say, but it does mean that there is nobody who cares to listen to them (Servaes & Malikhao, 2005). In the context of communication for development, voice means access and representation in the media (UNDP, 2009b cited in Dahal, 2013). Community radio listens to and amplifies marginalized voices in development debates (Fraser & Estrada, 2001). A study by Dahal (2013) of Radio Mukti, a women’s community radio in Nepal, reveal that community radio empowers women by giving voice to them to speak out on the issues that affecting their lives.

Furthermore, scholars argue that community-based broadcasting service, community radio, enhances communicative dialogue among relevant stakeholders through interactive and two-way communication processes. Providing an example of women’s CR stations such as Radio M’thyiana in Mozambique and MAMA FM Radio in Uganda, Jallov (2012) argues that CR helps women access to information society and it gives them the opportunity to be heard by decision-making structures that ultimately bring solutions to the issues affecting women’s lives.

While CR may offer the greatest reach and accessibility to women, several scholars argue that women have fewer opportunities to be involved with communication processes due to their workload, restricted social movements, and their lower status in the community (Hossain & Baresford, 2012; Wanyeki, 2001). Others claim that unidirectional broadcasting services of CR can still limit women’s involvement in communication social networks (Sterling, O’Brein, & Benett, 2009). Fortune and Chungong (2013) also argue that male-dominated CR station do not
focus women’s issues properly according to their needs. They argue that male-dominated community radio stations focus women’s issues by considering women primarily as wife, mother, and homemaker and not on economic and political issues faced by women. With the research findings from six communities across three Western African countries, it was concluded that women are listening to community radio, but CR stations are not listening to women (Fortune & Chungong, 2013). Numerous studies, however, argue that radio stations should have some initiatives that may enhance women’s listenership and their access to community radio (Gumucio Dagron, 2001; Girard, 1992; Sterling, O’Brein, & Benett, 2009).

**Conceptual Approach**

This study is viewed from the standpoint that women’s participation in community radio is intrinsically important for reflecting women’s views and opinions on the issues that affect their lives. Community radio provides a public platform for women where they can raise their voices on issues that reflect their needs and interests in development agenda. Community radio increases horizontal social networks in which women are being able to connect with more individuals and organizations that ultimately help women access the information society and benefit from it.

Community radio is staffed by volunteers. Volunteers are responsible for program production and management of the stations. However, some women may not be able to volunteer at the stations. Some women listen to CR as well as volunteer in program production and management of the stations and they are referred to here as active listeners. Other women listen to community radio and may share their opinions on the station’s activities by participating in listener clubs or by sending feedback to community radio stations. They are referred to here as passive listeners.
The main characteristic that distinguishes community radio from public and private media is the participation of its community members that it seeks to serve (Fraser & Estrada, 2001). Participation is not confined to listening context, but also to the station’s management and operational activities that lead a community towards ownership of the community-based medium (Gumucio Dagron, 2001). However, in the study context, where all CR stations are initiated either by the government department or by NGOs, it might not be possible for communities to become owners of the stations. Several scholars argue that a community might not be the owner of the community radio station, but must be the owner of communication processes (Gumucio Dagron 2001; Jallov, 2012).

Source: Adapted from Carpentier, 2011 with including of Lawrence (2006)
Figure 2.1: Conceptual Framework
Ownership of communication processes means that women have access to and are involved with the media production of radio stations. In addition, women may be able to make decisions not only in programs’ content development, but also in airing and operational activities.

Women’s participation may increase if the initiators facilitate women’s participation not to an end, but to as means of communication. Therefore, station’s policies on gender issues, strategies for involving women in a communication process, and strong commitment to address women may enhance women’s ownership of the communication process through their active participation in all activities of the community radio stations.

Participation is conceptualized in this study not as a single entity but rather it varies from minimum to maximum involvement of women. Lawrence (2006) argues that participation varies with a change of variables along with different forms of power. Lawrence (2006), therefore, outlines four levels of participation in her typology: consultative, functional, collaborative, and transformative. Transformative participation, the highest level of participation, allows women’s ownership of communication processes where they have control over the ideas, processes, and resources. On the other hand, consultative participation is the lowest level of participation, women are being treated as information receiver, but the decision has been made by initiators, do not help women to be an owner of communication processes.

Participation and communication are interrelated (Gumucio Dagron, 2001). However, “all participation is communication-driven, but all communication is not participatory” (Fraser & Estrada, 1998 cited in Singhal, 2004). While participation that encourages interaction between the sender and receiver in a two-way communication processes is supposedly a primary condition of a CR station, little is published in the literature about whether women own a communication process through their active participation in community radio stations. There are
few success stories involving only a handful of CR stations operated by women (Dahal, 2013, Jallov, 2012). Therefore, this study will examine how the lens of Lawrence’s typology of participation could help to understand women’s participation in communication processes in CR. Theoretically; these processes should be initiated by women and not by external actor including male-dominated entities.

Summary

Participatory communication has evolved as a bottom-up and two-way communication approach which is opposed to a top-down and unidirectional mode of communication approach in the modernization paradigm. While there are many challenges in participatory approaches, participation is still widely regarded as a replacement for previous top-down methods of development.

Community radio applies participatory communication approaches; thus it enhances horizontal communication among marginalized people including women. The study acknowledges the potential power of CR but suggests that little information exists on exactly how effective the medium is for promoting and encouraging access and participation of rural women in CR stations.

Women in developing countries have socio-cultural and economic barriers in their access to the use of ICTs including radio. In addition, women’s participation is expected to be influenced by their active or passive activity as well as by other actors’ views of community radio stations. In the research area, for instance, all stations are initiated not by women or community members, but by external actors. How then do CR stations when initiated by external actors facilitate women’s participation that reflects women’s issues and voices in communication and development processes?
The following chapter addresses the methodology used to explore these issues as they relate to CR in Bangladesh. It highlights the different methods used to address the research objectives and questions. It also highlights the analytical process used to determine the findings of the study.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter explains the underlying logic of the study’s research design and methods. It discusses the sampling procedures, the process of data collection and data analysis for the study. Finally, it presents the limitations of the study.

The research was an exploratory analysis of community radio in Bangladesh. The study was designed to gain a broader understanding of how community radio stations facilitated women to be involved in communication processes for expressing their opinions about the issues that affect their lives. As described in the research context, women in Bangladesh are a subordinate and disadvantaged group especially, in rural areas. For exploring women’s involvement in communication processes, it was important to focus on women’s perspectives about what kind of experiences they have in different social structures, what they know, and how they understand their lives. Their experiences, points of view, and voices needed to be heard in this research. Therefore, in order to conduct a study related to women’s involvement in the community media, it was imperative to do so from a feminist standpoint.

Epistemological Perspective

The study involved qualitative research which “involves the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data that are not easily reduced to number. These data relate to the social world and the concept and behavior of people within it” (Anderson, 2010, p.1). Qualitative research is effective for exploring a phenomenon that is not well studied or understood. This approach was appropriate for gathering information on how community radio stations facilitate women’s access to the information society, women’s involvement in the process of “self-expression”, and women’s ownership of communication processes.
In the qualitative research, “the data based on human experience that is obtained is powerful and something more compelling than quantitative data” (Anderson, 2010, p.3). However, qualitative research is often criticized as it sometimes focuses on small scale results and fails to make connections to larger situations. Furthermore, the researcher’s role is considered an important factor because the researcher has to learn the situation by participating in it; research can easily be influenced by the researcher’s personal biases. So, using multiple data sources to triangulate results is necessary (Denzin, 1970). In addition, qualitative research is time consuming with respect to data collection, transcription and translation, analysis, and interpretation of findings.

In the study, the focus was on women’s levels of engagement in CR as listeners, programmers, performers, and managers of communication processes. During the research it was important to visit the study areas for in-depth data collection involving observation and interviewing radio staff, volunteers, and women listeners on issues such as women’s access to and participation in the media production as well as in media facilities. Several methods were selected for data collection. Table 3.2 outlines the link between the research objectives and methods in data collection along with guiding questions and data sources.

Qualitative data were collected from the primary source, which were the words and actions of the people being observed and interviewed. To achieve triangulation, the qualitative research method for this study also employed key informant interviews, semi-structured interviews, and participant observation.
Table 3.2: Link between objectives, research questions, methods and data sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Sources of Data</th>
<th>Key concepts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Objective-1</strong></td>
<td>To analyse women’s access to communication processes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.1 Do women listen to community radio?</td>
<td>Semi structured interview</td>
<td>Women at household level will be conducted for interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.2 Do women have access to ICTs?</td>
<td>Program schedule (weekly) analysis</td>
<td>Listener clubs will also be considered for passive listeners’ interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.3 Are women’s issues and ideas depicted in community radio?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.4 Do women have access radio listener clubs?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Objective-2</strong></td>
<td>To assess the levels of women's participation in community radio stations and in programming</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.1 Are women involve in various stages of programs production?</td>
<td>Key informant interview</td>
<td>Key informant: Station Manager/ Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.2 To what extent women participate in decision-making process of CR?</td>
<td>Semi structured interview</td>
<td>Volunteers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.3 Do women participate in feedback processes in CR activities?</td>
<td>Direct observation</td>
<td>Women will be given emphasis for interview.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Objective-3</strong></td>
<td>To analyse how different organizations facilitate women’s ownership of community radio</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.1 What are the policies do government and non-government organizations have that facilitate women’s participation in community radio activities?</td>
<td>Key informant interview</td>
<td>Executive committee members at local and national/regional level will be considered as interviewer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Secondary data</td>
<td>Women will be given emphasis for interview</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sampling

A sample of five community radio stations (from a total of 14) was selected for the study. The sample size was determined based on the time frame and budget allocated for the research. It was the largest possible sample size for the time frame and within the budget in which research needed to be done. Sampling was random and stratified geographically. Out of the five stations, four were operated by several NGOs and one was by the government department-run community radio station in the country (Table 3.3).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of station</th>
<th>Date established</th>
<th>Town</th>
<th>District</th>
<th>Region</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Krishi Radio</td>
<td>January 2012</td>
<td>Amtoli</td>
<td>Barguna</td>
<td>Barisal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio Lokobetar</td>
<td>May 2010</td>
<td>Barguna Sadar</td>
<td>Barguna</td>
<td>Barisal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio Pollikontho</td>
<td>January 2012</td>
<td>Moulvibazar Sadar</td>
<td>Moulvibazar</td>
<td>Sylhet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio Bikrampur</td>
<td>May 2012</td>
<td>Bikrampur Sadar</td>
<td>Dhaka</td>
<td>Dhaka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio Mahananda</td>
<td>February 2012</td>
<td>Chapai Nawabgonj Sadar</td>
<td>Chapai Nawabgonj</td>
<td>Rajshahi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Selection of the above radio stations was done after my arrival in Bangladesh in June 2013. I met with AHM Bazlur Rahman, Chief Executive Director of Bangladesh NGOs Network for Radio and Communication (BNNRC) within a few days of arriving in the country. He provided me with a list of community radio stations along with the stations’ contact numbers and details. First, Krishi Radio was selected purposively from the list because it is the only government department-run CR station in the country. The next CR station, Radio Lokobetar, which is near to Krishi Radio, was selected as it is operated by an NGO. These two community radio stations are situated in the same district but in different upazillas (sub-district). The reason behind the selection of the two stations from the same district was to compare the government
with the non-government facilitating community radio stations with respect to women’s participation. The other three stations were selected geographically, ensuring that stations from other parts of the country were involved in the study. Also these three stations, Radio Pollikontho, Radio Bikrampur, and Radio Mahananda were selected based on their willingness to participate in the study.

**Key Informant Interviews**

At each of the stations selected for the sample, key informant interviews were conducted to gain a greater understanding of how community radio stations worked and how the stations facilitated women to be involved in the stations’ activities. Key informants are knowledgeable and help to articulate ‘insiders’ perspective on social action in the field situation (Schwandt, 1997). These interviews were held with station managers, executive members of advisory and/or management committee who had strong knowledge and involvement with the radio stations. Both male and female respondents were selected for interviews but preferences were given to women respondents, if available. A total of ten (n=10) interviews were conducted for key informant interviews. Among them four were female key informants.

Although initially I had planned to conduct five interviews from the stations managers, unfortunately, two station managers were unavailable during my visit to the stations. One assistant manager from NGO-run radio station gave the interview instead of the station manager. Questions asked for key informant were related to the basic information regarding the station’s activities and how the station facilitates women’s participation in the communication processes (Annex-2). Out of four station managers interviewed, one was female.

Meanwhile, six executive members were selected for key informant interviews. Although I had a plan to do five interviews of executive members from the five sample stations,
fortunately, I had six of them. To select the committee members, I collected the list of advisory and management committee members from the each station. Then I contacted the members and asked for their schedules for interviews. Preference was given to women and who were available at the local level. Out of six respondents interviewed, three were women executive members.

During the interviews, questions asked for their opinions on how the CR facilitated women’s participation in the communication processes and the role of his or her organization to ensure women’s involvement in the CRs (Annex-3). Key informants interviews mostly occurred in the community radio stations or in the respective interviewee’s office premises.

**Semi-Structured Interviews**

A total of forty-six (n=46) respondents was selected for semi-structured interviews. All respondents were women. Emphasis was given to those who were (frequent or infrequent) listeners of community radio. Women who listened to the radio were categorized as active or passive listeners. Active listeners were those, who listened to CR and were involved in the station as volunteers. On the other hand, passive listeners were those who listened to the radio but were not involved as volunteers at the stations.

From each radio station, at least three volunteers were interviewed. In some radio stations, more volunteers were interested in participating in the interview. Therefore, altogether eighteen active listeners were interviewed. They were selected randomly in each community radio station and upon their availability and willingness to take part in the interviews. Questions asked related to their experiences as volunteers at the stations (Annex-4).

Meanwhile, passive listeners were selected either from listener clubs or from a household within the broadcasting area of the CR stations (up to a distance of approximately 17 km). From each sample radio stations, I conducted at least five interviews with passive listeners. In two
radio stations, three women were interested to take part in the study. Therefore, altogether twenty eight women were interviewed who listened to community radios. Women were selected using a snowball sampling technique which started by an initial contact from the listener clubs of the respective stations. I visited listeners clubs and conducted an interview with the first woman whom I met. Then, I used the snowball sampling technique to find another respondent. I continued my visit to another club until I had five interviewees from each station.

During the interviews, questions were asked related to women’s accessibility and opportunity to participate in the station’s activities (Annex-5). Semi-structured interviews with rural women were conducted in their home or near the listener club house. Interview sites were chosen by respondents, but a request was made to select a place which was free from disruptions and where privacy could be maintained. Before starting an interview, I approached the respondent in such a way that they would feel comfortable to speak about their views and opinions. Therefore, I created rapport with the respondents before starting to collect the information.

Rapport building helps to create a level playing field for fluid conversation and to make a bridge of understanding between the researcher and the respondent. If the respondents do not feel comfortable with the researcher, they might not express their opinion and views. This is very important for feminist research (Maguire, 1987). I tried to make the interview session as informal as possible so that respondents felt comfortable to express their views and experience.

**Direct observation**

Observation is the step taken by the researcher in the field where “observational techniques include direct observation where the researcher is a neutral and passive external observer and is not involved in the phenomenon of interest” (Bhattacharjee, 2012, p.106). Unlike
scientific observation, field observation in qualitative and feminist research involves observing the context or natural setting without any overt tool such as questionnaires or any other recording devices.

The goal of observation was to obtain information on the general daily activities of program production and broadcasting the CR, working environment, engagement of women in the community radio activities, and the cultural context in which the station operated. I did my observation mostly in the stations, but I continued my observation outside of the stations during my interviews with women listeners in a community.

During my observation at the radio stations, I focused mainly on program production, broadcast, and management of the station. I tried to get an answer to the following basic questions during my observation. Who is involved with what? Who decides what to air every day? What is the percentage of women are involved in community radio activities and what do they do? I observed the activities of the staff and volunteers of the station without hampering their daily work. Sometimes I asked questions to the staff if I required classification on any of my observations or topics discussed with community members who were there to visit the stations.

My observations of the research context were noted down in my reflective journal. During my observation, information was also collected from documents, photos, banners, sign boards, and from any other sources. Observation was structured with the use of reflective questions with which I documented my findings. At the end of the day, the journal allowed me to compare my thoughts and observations with the interview information provided to me by the station managers, radio staff, volunteers, or women listeners.
Ethical considerations

The draft questionnaires were pretested with the station staff members and changes incorporated based on their suggestions. All questionnaires were translated into Bengali before conducting the interview with respondents. There were closed questions and open-ended questions in the questionnaires.

Prior to the interviews, I requested respondents to sign the consent form which was also translated into Bengali. The consent form contained a detailed outline of research purpose, possible time commitment, confidentiality, and respondent’s right to participate in the study. I took their consent either in written form or verbally. However, all of the respondents felt more comfortable with verbal consent rather than signing the form. During interviews, I recorded their verbal consent as well as our conversation with their permission to do so. I also took notes during the interviews. Respondents were given assurance that their information would be kept confidential, and the final paper would not contain any identifying information. They were also assured that what was discussed in the conversation would only be used in the research and not for any other purposes.

During the interview, I was cautious of ethical issues. Most of the respondents were women in the study, and they were not from the same social positions nor had the same education levels or age. Questions were asked in such a way that it would not offend anyone nor attack anyone’s emotions. Before interviewing these rural women, I made sure that their husbands or other family head (if any) had provided consent for the women’s participation in the study in order to create a congenial environment for the interview by valuing their social system. I was very careful about the duration of interview (one hour), so that it did not hamper their regular family work.
Finally, I tried to be careful about not being biased as a woman researcher from the same country. I performed as a facilitator with more emphasis on listening and less on talking. I encouraged respondents to play an active role in the study and allowed them to talk as much as they wished.

**Data Analysis**

In this research, data was collected from interviews and participant observations. Before analyzing the data, I started transcribing the taped interviews which were in Bengali. During this process, I listened more than one time and transcribed each and every word. Then I translated the transcribed materials into English. I also transcribed and translated my other notes from my reflective journal. Then I categorized or classified individual pieces of data through coding. Babbie (1975) states “coding is the process whereby raw data are transformed into standardized form suitable for machine processing and analysis” (p. 492). All data were then analyzed with the help of NVivo10 software by the researcher.

**Limitations**

I started data collection from July 2013 and continued up to August 2013. Time played a crucial role in my study. The Muslim religious event “Ramadan” lasts a whole month and started from July 2, 2013. During this period, people’s movement is limited as they mostly engage with religious activities. It was almost impossible to arrange interviews with women, especially in the village, early in the morning before 10:00 a.m. or late afternoon after 3:00 pm. Therefore, I faced problems fitting all interviews into a short period of day time. Also, there was a festival in August 2013, Eid-ul-Fitr, which is one of the biggest festivals for Muslims. People were away or too busy to participate in interviews during this holiday period.
As well, Bangladesh’s political situation was not favorable during the research. Though I made my travel plan according to consultation with five station managers, I was not able to follow the schedule on time because of the political situation. During my visit in the country, there was political unrest including a frequently-called hartal [strike] which made free movement within the city and across the country difficult. While I was travelling to the southern part of the country to visit radio stations, I was delayed for three days due to the hartal. Therefore, I had to change my travel plans which affected the next schedule of interviews.

In addition, I faced several challenges to interact with women, especially in the rural areas. First, there was often a lack of proper interview sites in the villages, particularly where privacy could be maintained during the interviews. While I was interviewing women in their yards or outside their homes or sitting under a tree, other rural women were crowded there and were passing their comments on our conversation. This situation may have had an effect on the respondents’ opinions or views. Next, it was challenging to concentrate on the interview questions due to over curiosity of women regarding my personal biography. They seemed more interested in asking me questions rather than answering my research questions. Lots of questions back and forth hampered the completion of the questionnaire as well as lengthened the time frame for the interview schedules. Nevertheless, the “give and take” or dialogue-type interview was appropriate for the type of feminist standpoint research process I hoped to achieve.

**Summary**

The study was approached from a feminist perspective to explore women’s involvement in community media. Information was collected from key informant interviews, semi-structured interviews, and observation at the five community radio stations. Although time was a crucial
limitation during the data collection in the field, the methods collected data on respondents’ views in order to respond to the questions of the study and achieve the research objectives.

The next chapter highlights the research context in which information was collected for the study. The chapter also discusses how CR evolved in Bangladesh as third tier of broadcasting service along with state-owned and commercial broadcasting services.
CHAPTER FOUR: COMMUNITY RADIO IN BANGLADESH

Introduction

The chapter presents a brief account of community radio in Bangladesh. The first part of this chapter discusses the context in which community radio has evolved in the country. It then discusses the present scenario of the visited community radio stations. As discussed in the previous chapter, five community radio stations were studied by the researcher to collect information on women’s involvement in this participatory community medium, which is a new innovation in the country. Detailed information regarding these five community radio stations are discussed in this chapter.

Development of Community Radio in Bangladesh

A third tier of broadcasting service, community radio, has emerged with an aim to provide a demand-driven broadcasting service to rural communities in the country. The other two broadcasting services, Bangladesh Betar (official name of the state-owned broadcasting service) and the commercial radio stations are often disseminating information from a top-down approach where general audiences are considered as passive listeners of unidirectional flow of information. Moreover, the media is influenced either by the government or by urban-based cosmopolitan elites in the country with no room left for grassroots audiences to participate in media content that reflects their views and opinions (Reza, 2012; Ullah, 2010). Hence, a wide range of people are deprived of accessibility to information that is appropriate to their development needs. Therefore, broadcasting services in the country are further decentralized by establishing community radio stations at a local level thus recognizing the accessibility of grassroots people to their needs-based information as a key concern for equitable rural development.
The initial demand for establishing community radio was initiated by groups of media activists, civil societies and NGOs in Bangladesh during the late 1990s (Reza, 2012, Ullah, 2010). A media NGO, known as Mass Line Media Centre (MLMC), submitted an application in 1998, for the first time, to the Ministry of Information for establishing a community radio station in Patuakhali district, in the southern part of the country. This CR’s objective was to support coastal people’s needs-based information (Ullah, 2010). The initiative received support from development activists and media supporters (Ullah, 2010). A coordinating organization, Bangladesh NGOs Network for Radio and Communications (BNNRC), was established in 2000 to continue advocacy programs for community radio in the country. Several international donors and development partners joined in the advocacy programs; they provided financial and technical help to organize different workshops, seminars, training along with technical supports for the government for preparing national implementation strategy (Reza, 2012). Finally, the government approved the “Community Radio Installation, Broadcast and Operation Policy-2008” on March 12, 2008.

The policy states the fundamental principles and eligibility criteria for applying for a community radio licence: 1) the organization/institution should be constituted as non-profit; 2) it should have a proven record of providing community service for at least five years; 3) the community should be well specified; 4) it should have an ownership and management structure that is reflective of the community; 5) the program content should cover gender, social, educational, economic, and cultural needs of a community; 6) it should be legal entity; and 7) preference should be given to rural communities that are deprived of mainstream media. Based on the criteria stated in the policy, the government gave permission for the set up of 14 community radio stations (as of June 2013) in Bangladesh (Figure- 4.2).
Figure 4.2: Locations of community radio stations in Bangladesh (as of June 2013)
The Community Radio Stations

Among the fourteen radio stations, five were visited for the purpose of this study. Out of the five stations, four were established by the NGOs and one was a government-department run community radio station. The following sections of this chapter examines the context of these five CRs and highlights stations’ implementing agencies, on-air broadcasting hour, staffing, and community engagement through listener clubs. Challenges faced by these five CRS are also discussed in this section.

Stations’ profiles

The surveyed community radio stations were either established by the government or by NGOs. Krishi Radio is the only community radio station in the country that is established by the government through the Agriculture Information Service (AIS). The organization, AIS, is one of two government bodies under the Ministry of Agriculture responsible for agriculture extension services and rural access to information through the use of mass media. The other organization, Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) is responsible for providing agriculture extension services to the grassroots level through their extension staff throughout the country. AIS’s organizational structure is mainly divisional based; therefore, staff from the DAE is responsible in AIS to run the community radio station at the local level. The rest of the community radio stations are implemented by several NGOs (see Table 4.3). Moreover, the CRs examined in this study are operating the stations in rented premises with the exception of Krishi Radio and Radio Mahananda. Krishi Radio has its own building on the government land while Radio Mahananda is operating the station’s activities in a two storied building that is owned by the NGO.

The community radio stations are permitted to operate across a broadcasting range of 17 km where each community radio stations air programs for their targeted audiences in their
respective communities. All radio stations visited in the study broadcast their programs (on average) more than 6 hours per day. It is noted that only Krishi Radio and Radio Pollikontho split their air time into two shifts, morning and evening, while other radio stations are broadcasting non-stop. Moreover, two community radio stations, Krishi Radio and Radio Lokobetar, which are based on coastal region, broadcast for longer periods during any climate disasters.

Table 4.3: Community radio stations’ profiles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Radio Station</th>
<th>Name of implementing organizations</th>
<th>Weekly hours of broadcasting</th>
<th>Radio stations’ manpower</th>
<th>Listener clubs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Radio staff</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>male female</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Volunteers male female</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Krishi Radio</td>
<td>Agriculture Information Service (AIS)</td>
<td>56 hrs</td>
<td>4 1</td>
<td>20 10 35 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio Lokobetar</td>
<td>Mass-line Media Centre</td>
<td>35 hrs</td>
<td>6 -</td>
<td>77 66 149 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio Pollikontho</td>
<td>BRAC</td>
<td>56 hrs</td>
<td>6 4</td>
<td>3 7 20 690</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio Bikrampur</td>
<td>Environment Council Bangladesh</td>
<td>69 hrs</td>
<td>4 -</td>
<td>8 7 19 70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio Mahananda</td>
<td>Proyas Manobic Unnayan Society</td>
<td>49 hrs</td>
<td>4 8</td>
<td>11 13 36 250</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each community radio station is operated by radio staff and volunteers. The radio staff are paid representatives of the respective implementing agencies. The radio staff are not necessarily from the respective community but have working experiences in the local areas. A few members from the community are recruited as radio staff in the stations. In addition, volunteers receive a small allowance from the NGOs for their service at the community radio stations in order to cover their travel expenses. Krishi Radio does not have funds for covering
travel expenses for volunteers; therefore, volunteers in Krishi Radio provide their service and their own expenses. Furthermore, each community radio station has an advisory and a management committee at the local level. Advisory committee members are formed by government and non-government officials from the local level while the management committees are formed with the radio staff, local elites, and community members from the local area.

The community radio stations also have listener clubs in their broadcasting areas. The listener clubs consist of both male and female members. The clubs are not only focused on adults, but also focus on youth and child listeners. For example, Radio Lokobetar and Radio Mahananda have child listener clubs. Furthermore, some radio stations have formed listeners clubs with tribal communities. However, it was not clear how the community radio stations form these clubs for facilitate local participation because none of the radio stations have a guideline or stated procedures for establishing and operating these groups.

**Challenges faced by the stations**

Community radio stations in Bangladesh face challenges with funding. The CR stations do not have any contribution from community members to support the stations’ activities. BNNRC does manage some funds from different donor agencies to support capacity building of the stations’ staff and volunteers. The CR stations are therefore entirely dependent on external funding. Among all CR stations, Krishi Radio is suffering the most as it does not have any fixed source of income. The station was initially supported by the rural communication project that was funded by FAO and the Ministry of Agriculture. The project lasted for two years and ended on December 2012. Since then, the Agriculture Information Service (AIS) has not developed any project or plan for sustaining the station’s funding.
It was found however, that some CR stations generate small funds from local advertising. For example, Radio Lokobetar procures funds from local NGOs by airing their development messages for the community. Local NGOs use the radio station for informing the community about their services. Station managers reported that they do operate under specific restrictions on advertising in the CR policy. Therefore, they are not able to generate sufficient funds from commercial advertising alone. All station managers and staff commented that they would like to see the policy reformed in this respect.

Although the community radio stations in Bangladesh are well equipped with broadcasting equipment, the radio staff do not have sufficient skills and replacement parts for repairing and maintaining the equipment. Therefore, they have to rely on experts from other organizations. In addition, the stations face irregular power supply problems. They often have to spend extra money for generators and their functioning and repair. Due to the fund crisis, the staff from the Krishi Radio reported that they had to stop broadcasting when there is no electricity for a long time.

Summary

Community radio in Bangladesh was not established or initiated by the communities, but by external organizations and the elite groups with the community. Inclusion of community radio, however, creates a new phenomenon in the media system of Bangladesh. The CR stations are not situated in the metropolitan cities of the country, but in small towns that are close to rural communities. This type of “narrowcasting” or decentralized broadcasting service is potentially able to focus on specific listeners’ needs and interests, at least within the stations’ broadcasting range of 17 kilometres. Furthermore, the CR stations create an opportunity for their community members to be involved with media through for example listener clubs. They are also operating
with from the community. Nevertheless, the CR stations are heavily dependent on external funds that are available in part from BNNRC and donor projects. The lack of funds for the stations is a crucial issue, according to staff and generation of funds from advertising is limited. There are reportedly insufficient funds to manage the stations’ existing activities or undertake new activities.

The next chapter highlights more findings of the study. The findings are an output of the data collected in the field using the methods of key informant interviews, semi-structured interviews, and participant observation.
CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings derived from the study end related to the engagement of women in community radios. The findings emerged from the key informant interviews, semi-structured interviews, observation at the community radio (CR) stations, and analysis of secondary documents related to community radio and women listeners in the study area. As the study is viewed from a feminist perspective, emphasis was given to the views of female in order to evaluate the effectiveness of CRs as participatory media for women’s livelihood development.

The chapter presents the findings on women engagement in five community radio stations. The first section of the chapter presents the demographic characteristics of women listeners and considers whether CRs address all types of women in a community. The chapter then focuses on how CR programs reflect women’s needs and interests in the community medium. The third section of the chapter reports the findings on the accessibility of female listeners to the CR programs. It also explores how and why they listened to the CR programs. The chapter then focuses on findings related to how CRs facilitate women’s participation in station management. Finally, it presents views of the female listeners about the CRs in their communities.

Demographic characteristics of women listeners

A total of 46 women were selected for semi-structure interviews. Among them, 18 were active listeners, who listened to community radio as well as volunteered at the station. The rest of the 28 women were passive listeners, who listened to CR, but were not involved as volunteers at the stations. Respondents’ demographic characteristics such as their age, location, education, marital status, and occupation are presented in Table 5.2.
It was found that all of the active listeners were within the age group of 18-34. Among the respondents, all of the active listeners resided in urban areas near the CRs within 2-3 kilometers. Furthermore, as the active listeners were from the urban areas, they had access to education facilities. Therefore, all had a literacy level that ranged from secondary to college or university level education. In addition, among the active listeners, 89% women were unmarried while a few were married (11%). Furthermore, most of the active listeners (94%) were students, and some (6%) were housewives. Interestingly, none of the active listeners were employed.

Table 5.2: Demographic characteristics of women listeners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Active listeners (%)</th>
<th>Passive listeners (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(n=18)</td>
<td>(n=28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-24</td>
<td>56.0</td>
<td>14.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>44.0</td>
<td>25.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45+</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>21.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-total</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Location</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>21.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>79.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-total</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illiterate</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>32.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary (grade 1-5)</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>25.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary education(grade 6-10)</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>18.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher secondary(grade 10-12)</td>
<td>33.0</td>
<td>14.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College/university</td>
<td>61.0</td>
<td>11.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-total</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Marital status</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>71.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unmarried</td>
<td>89.0</td>
<td>22.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widow</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-total</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Occupation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>11.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home maker/Housewives</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>68.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>94.0</td>
<td>21.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-total</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Among the passive listeners, women of all age groups listened to CR. In addition, most of passive listeners (79%) were from the rural communities while a few (21%) of them from urban areas. As most of the passive listeners were from the rural communities; they had less education compared to the active listeners. Almost 90 percent of passive listeners were either illiterate (32%) or up to 12 grade of schooling (57%) and only 11% of them had college level education. Additionally, among the passive listeners, most were married. Furthermore, the highest number of passive listeners (68%) was home makers, followed by 21% students, and 11% were employed women.

In conclusion, although women regardless their age, location, level of education, marital status, and occupation listened to the CRs, only young women joined as volunteers at the stations. However, women who joined the stations mostly were mostly young students (aged 18-34) and unmarried, literate, and living near the stations. None from the respondents from rural communities were involved as volunteer at the CRs.

Radio Programming

Radio programming is one of the basic aspects of community radio. The study explores what percentage of such programming is designed for women, and more importantly, how CRs’ programming reflects women’s needs and interests.

In the surveyed areas, community radio stations had a variety of programs. To identify programming types, program schedules were collected and analyzed by the researcher. Common topics were coded under a program type; six types of programming were then identified after analyzing the program schedules (Annex-6).

Each type of programming had different content: a) entertainment, which included music and non-music; b) educational, which included topics for livelihood development; c)
informational, which included programs for dissemination information on local, national, and international issues; d) edutainment, which related to programs and campaigns for creating awareness on social issues; e) women’s programs, which focused on women’s needs and rights; and f) other, which included promotions, advertising, and announcement between the programs. All CRs had the same types of programming, however, broadcasting time for each type of programming varied among the different CR stations.

**Programming Time**

Each programming time was further analyzed by the researcher to see how the total broadcasting hours were distributed for different types of programming. Figure 5.3.1 shows that a high percentage (43%) of entertainment programming is used in all radio stations followed by informational (17%), educational (16%), edutainment (6%), other (14%), and relatively lower percentage (4%) of women-centered programming.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of programs</th>
<th>% Hours of programming by community radio stations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Krishi Radio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edutainment</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informational</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (%)</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Meta analysis by the researcher
All stations allocated the most time to entertainment programs. However, among all radio stations, Krishi Radio aired the most hours of entertainment programs. One staff from Krishi Radio reported that they did not have enough volunteers to make programs on different topics. Furthermore, in order to collect information from different places within a community would involve travel costs for volunteers, which Krishi Radio did not have the funds to provide. Thus, they covered their air time by mostly with playing music.

All radio stations allocated less time for women-centered programming compared to other categories of programming. Interestingly, none of the stations had allocated more than five percentage of the total air time for women-centered programming. However, stations staff and volunteers reported that other programs also aired information time to time that met to the women’s needs.

**Program development**

In the surveyed areas, community radio stations made women-centered programming in the different ways. In NGO-run radio stations, volunteers (women) were involved with content development. They created the topics by consulting among themselves and other radio staff. Volunteers said that they traveled to the community and talked with the local women to create the content for the women-centered programming. Many volunteers reported that women interviewees did not always co-operate with the volunteers when asked to discuss their issues. Women did not want to disclose their issues to the volunteers as they were not known to them. However, more than 90 percent of volunteers reported that they could not travel to the rural communities because they did not have money for travelling; therefore, most of the time they interviewed women who lived near the radio stations. Furthermore, volunteers collected information from different organizations including government and NGOs that were available at
a local level. Ten volunteers reported that they had to visit several times to make an appointment with specialists for their expert suggestions. According to the volunteers, the lack of knowledge about the community radio caused the communities to co-operate less with volunteers.

In the government-run radio station, programs were mostly made by the radio staff. Furthermore, the radio staff had support from the national broadcasting headquarters to make program content. A radio staff from the CR station reported that they did not have the funds for volunteers to produce content with the help of women from the community. Therefore, they mostly played music or re-broadcast pre-recorded programs that they had in their archives.

**Women’s access listening to community radio**

Women had limited access to technologies that would help them listen to CR programs. Only 44 percent of women surveyed had radio sets. Among them passive listeners in the rural communities had more radio sets compared to active listeners. This finding might be due to the fact that in rural areas radio is still an affordable and pervasive medium for leisure compared to other communication technologies such as television and internet. However, rural women who had radio sets did not necessarily have frequent access to the CR programs. Many women, especially from the rural areas, frequently cannot afford to buy batteries for their radio sets. They had to depend on their male household members who took a long time to purchase the batteries. One woman listener expressed her limited access to radio.

“I love to listen to CR with my radio set, but often cannot listen to it. Very often we need batteries for radio sets. I have requested my husband to purchase batteries for the radio. He does not care too much about purchasing batteries, because he can listen to radio at shops or markets. Sometimes, I have to wait for a month to get batteries; during that time, I miss all programs from the CRs.”[Woman listener of Krishi Radio]

Interestingly, a majority of the women listeners (83%) had mobile phones in the surveyed areas. Among them all active listeners had their own personal mobile phones. On the other hand, passive listeners, especially who those lived in rural areas, had at least one mobile phone in their
household. Many rural women did not listen to CR on their mobile phones because many of them did not know how to use it to tune into the programs. However, a few of them who knew how to listen to CR using a mobile phone could not listen because male members of their families often took the phone with them when they left the house.

It was found that women had limited access to radio listener clubs. Although the community radio stations provided radio sets to different listener clubs, most rural women did not listen to CR at the club premises. A woman from Krishi Radio expressed her opinions about why she does not listen to community radio at the listener club.

“Although our club has a radio set, I never went there to listen to it. I am the only female member in the club; therefore, I do not feel comfortable listening to CR with other male members in the club. Moreover, the club is situated in a busy place, beside the main road, which is not accessible for me. If we had a listener club nears our house and only with female members, many women would be able listen to CR.”

During my visit to the five community radio stations, I did not observe any women listening to CR in the clubs.

The method of listening to CR varied among the different ages of women. Young women preferred listening to CRs on their mobile phones since they were portable and they did not have to buy batteries. Rural women preferred listening to CR programs with radio sets. Rural woman also preferred to listen to CR at their friends’/neighbors’ house and in a group, especially, when they had their leisure time during the evening.

Women’s participation in community radio activities

Most women in the community radio stations were volunteers. This is because the administrative, technical and financial posts were paid and recruited by the respective organizations. When these organizations recruited people for the CRs, they mostly hired men and therefore, there was a lack of women in the administrative positions in CRs. Station managers
and the radio staff were responsible for making decisions in the administrative, technical, and financial aspects. For instance, in NGO-run radio stations the station managers and the radio staff decided who will be involved as volunteers at the radio station. In general radio staff usually selected educated and experienced women who were available to be involved as volunteers at the stations. A female volunteer expressed her pleasure when she was selected as a volunteer at the radio station.

“There were almost 100 people including women who came for an interview. I was so nervous, but finally they selected me as I had experience working with Grameen Phone (a mobile phone company in the country). I was so happy.”

[Female volunteer at NGO-run community radio station]

Women’s participation as volunteers was mainly confined to program production in the NGO-run community radio stations. Although they were involved in the areas of program planning, content development, and broadcasting, they did not have decision-making power over all aspects of program production. They participated in program production by sharing their labor and knowledge, but station managers and radio staff made decisions on the whole process of program production. For instance, in most of the NGO-run community radio stations, women did not engage with editing programs electronically. Instead the radio staff decided that male members (staff or volunteers) should be involved with editing the programs. Station managers and radio staff from these radio stations stated that they plan to train the women volunteers gradually, although they did not have the exact time frame for doing that. Moreover, volunteers were allowed to make programs only on development issues. Therefore, many development problems experienced by women were not discussed in the radio programs. A woman volunteer expressed her opinions about the broadcast programs in the community radio station.

“During my visit to the community, I found several issues related to violence against women. I wished to share these issues with our community members through our radio programs, but was not allowed to broadcast these issues. Radio staff only allowed us to
broadcast development issues. I am not sure how we can solve our problems if we do not raise the issues and discuss among ourselves. Sometimes, I feel very helpless for not being able to do anything for those women.”

[A women volunteer from an NGO-run radio station]

Meanwhile, in the government-run community radio station, women had even lower involvement in program planning and content development. They were mostly engaged with broadcasting of programs in the radio station. A volunteer from the radio station mentioned that she volunteered at the station by presenting news several days in a week, but the content of the news were produced entirely by the government radio staff. When I asked how they covered community news, one staff reported that they collected information from the internet and national and/or local news papers to prepare the radio scripts or programs. Volunteers mostly helped with live show programs on entertainment in which they played music according to the choices of their community members, and in some programs, shared their views during the programs. Other than that volunteer involvement in program planning and content development was minimal.

Nevertheless, women volunteers felt proud and confident being involved with community radio stations in both NGO-run and government radio station (Table 5.5). They felt that their position had changed in a community due to their interaction with different organizations and with the community members. They felt proud to do something for their community. Women volunteers from an NGO-run radio station stated that they were able to create awareness to stop early marriages of girls who were under the legal aged of 18 in their community. Another NGO-run radio station raised funds for a woman who suffered serious burns on her body, and needed financial help from the community. However, most of the volunteers (94%) reported that they tried to make contact with more women in a community, but failed due to their economic constraints.
Table 5.5: Active listeners’ opinions about programming

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opinions</th>
<th>Responses (n=18)</th>
<th>Total Responses (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cannot reach rural women due to lack of funds for travel cost</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We need training on program production and technical aspect</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel proud to do something for our community</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel confident to talk in front of male members in an open forum</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community radio stations act as learning centre for us</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faced limitations involved with media being a woman</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involved in planning, content development, and broadcasting</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involved in editing the programs</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involved in only broadcasting programs</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Finally, volunteers felt inspired when community members appreciated them for their work. Not all community members appreciated women being involved with media. Volunteers stated that there were some people in a community who believed that media is for men and not for women, and thus did not cooperate with women volunteers when they visited them to discuss their issues.

**Women’s participation in the feedback process of community radio stations**

Women in a community felt valued as the radio stations asked for their opinions in the stations’ programming. However, a majority of them did not send feedback to the stations. Station staff and volunteers from all surveyed community radio stations mentioned that they got more feedback from male rather than the female audience members. They also stated that women felt insecure about disclosing their name and phone numbers to the stations. In addition, the lack of literacy and cost involved with sending feedback via mobile phones or by letters also discouraged women from sending feedback to the stations.

In the research area, less than a quarter of respondents participated in the feedback process of community radio stations. The respondents shared their opinions with the stations
regarding program content and schedules. However, in various ways women sent their opinions to the stations. They sent feedback via personal contact or calling by phone or sending SMS to the stations.

Women, who participated in the feedback process of the community radio stations, gave feedback to the volunteers or radio staff when they saw each other in person. Also, women listeners felt comfortable giving feedback to women volunteers. A staff from an NGO-run radio station mentioned that they preferred to have more women volunteers to establish a better network with other women in the community. He expressed idea about how to reach more women. According to him,

“Women feel comfortable to talk with women volunteers; therefore, we have a plan to include more women volunteers, so that they will reach to more women audience for the community radio station.”  

[A staff (male) from an NGO-run community radio station]

A staff member from another NGO-run radio station said that the radio staff visit listener clubs to collect feedback from club members which were then discussed afterwards in staff meetings of the CR station. However, it was not clear how often the radio staff visit listener clubs for feedback. Furthermore, during my visit to that station, I did not find anyone who had a plan to visit listener clubs any time soon.

Three NGO-run community radio stations used SMS so that community members, including women, could send their feedback to those stations. A station manager from one of these stations reported that by June 2013, they received 33,000 SMS within the past year from their community members. However, the radio station did not have any database that could indicate how many women sent their opinions through SMS. Another station manager reported that usually the CR station received SMS from young women.
Meanwhile, the government-run community radio station neither had SMS panel nor did the radio station have mobile phones for the station to receive text messages from the audience. The station had a land phone on which it received a few phone calls from women. Volunteers from the radio station mentioned that the CR station got feedback from women mostly through personal contact. A few women sent their feedback during live entertainment programs.

**Women’s knowledge of community radio**

Women both active and passive listeners liked CR (Figure 5.7). Many of them felt proud to have a medium that focused on their communities. Women reported that they liked CR for various reasons. They listened to CR programs because they could hear the voices of people from their own community who spoke in local language. They also listened to their CR because it broadcasted local news which they could not hear from any other radio stations. Furthermore, some women listened to CR because they benefited from knowledge gained from listening to it.
For example, two passive listeners from one of the radio stations who were interviewed informed that they listen to CRs because some of the programs help their children to learn English. Therefore, they did not have to send children to private tutors to learn English, which saved them money while providing their children with learning opportunities.

Figure 5.7: Listeners' knowledge/opinion (in percentage) about community radio

The research found that active listeners especially believed in community ownership of community radio stations. They felt that although NGOs and the government had given financial and technical support to the radio stations, the organizations could not run the stations without the community’s support. However, compared to active listeners, only a few passive listeners believed that community itself owns and manages the radio stations.

A female executive member of an NGO-run radio station mentioned CR as leisure activity or “amusement” for community members because she heard that many community members made requests for songs or sharing their greetings in the live shows of the entertainment programs. Similarly, many women listeners in the rural communities said that they liked the CRs because they could hear many people from their communities talk in the radio.
Women enjoyed the radio programs because it broadcast in their own dialects. Although women preferred listening to CR, only a few of them said that CR could serve their information needs.

Nevertheless, women expressed interest in community radio. Although passive listeners’ involvement in the radio stations activities was low in terms of visiting or attending the rallies organized by the stations, women did know the stations’ locations (Figure 5.7). Findings indicated that women listened to community radio and they had interest in it as a local organization.

**Summary**

Community radio has created interest among women. CR attracts women listeners to radio through its community-oriented programs, use of local dialect in the programs, and involvement of local people in program production. It also creates to some extent an opportunity for women to be involved in media at a local level.

In Bangladesh, community radio faces many challenges to reach all women in the community. Findings indicate that there was still gap between rural and urban women, in terms of access and participation in the affairs of the community radio stations. In addition, community radio has not focused on participatory approaches to radio programs or involved women in two-way communication processes.
Chapter SIX: DISCUSSION

Introduction

The concept of community radio is based on participatory communication approach (Girard, 1992). Community radio facilitates community members to participate in a communication process as well as to be owners of the station’s managerial and functional aspects (Girard, 1992; Gumucio-Dagron, 2001; Jallow, 2012). However, there is no one model of participation. There are various levels of participation from consultative --when outsiders control over decision-making process and peoples are treated as an audience of the process—to transformative when peoples have skills enough in managing the activities with their own resources and have control over the decision-making process (Lawrence, 2006). This chapter explains how the findings of this study suggest that levels of participation in community radio stations vary in different contexts depending on several factors. These include ownership, sources of funding, control over resources, and policies of community radio stations. Additionally, cultural and socio-economic factors, especially for women also affect participation in community radios.

However, through the lens of Lawrence (2006)’s typology of participation, the study sought to explore how women’s engagement in various aspects of community radio occurs in the context of Bangladesh. This chapter also discusses how this medium facilitates women, who are marginalized section of a population, through participatory communication processes.

Community radio as voice and mouthpiece of women

Community radio (CR) is a decentralized community-based medium that emphasizes community’s needs and interests it seeks to serve. Additionally, CR is credited as being a medium that amplifies the voices of a marginalized section of a community (Gumucio Dagron,
2001). In other words, it provides a counter-public space for women to discuss the issues that affect their lives (Dahal, 2013). There have been however, many unsettled questions in the discourse of CR on women’s development: Who is setting agendas for discussion in the public-sphere? Who speaks more in the discussion? What are the mechanisms for consultation with women that facilitates discussion, especially in a male-dominated society? These questions are relevant for understanding the practical and theoretical implications of this study.

First, it is clear that community radio stations can address women's issues through specific programs with a target audience being the women. This is the case of CR in Bangladesh. The programs’ topics focus on women's issues associated with education, health, family planning, child care along with emphasizing on creating awareness among women about their rights. There is no doubt about the necessities to know all this information for the improvement of one's life; however, the question that should then be asked: who wants to discuss these issues in community radios? For instance, an NGO–run community radio station might have been credited as being able to stop early marriage for under aged young girls, but there may be other issues to be discussed in community radio which are more important for women to bring about their community development.

Some members in the community radios feel that because they have female volunteers from the respective communities, they know the needs of female communities. In addition, they feel that as volunteers are capturing individuals’ voices, therefore, women voices are amplified in the community radios. However, giving a microphone to the individuals does not equate to women's voices represented in and magnified through the community medium. Moreover, while the volunteers are not representing female communities of the respective areas, it is not expected
that the voice of the local female audiences as a whole are reflected by these few women volunteers.

Programs in Bangladesh’s community radios are not being able to reflect the needs of the female communities if women are not involved and consulted in programs’ content development. Although women are listening to community radios in the study areas, a few of them (32%) recognized that community radios could serve their needs. It might be because of women in the study areas are not asked what issues they need or want to focus on in the community radios’ programs or the way in which they are being asked is not sensitive to women’s social position, literacy or spaces of public interaction. The staff and volunteers of the community radios select topics for the programs they thought important for women; therefore, they impose their perspectives on women for development and do not focus on beneficiaries’ perspectives.

To focus on beneficiaries’ perspectives, there is a need to ensure their participation in communication processes through an interactive dialogue between subject to subject that helps to express their critical thinking about their needs towards development (Freire, 1970). The dialogue should be treated as a continuous process where women need to speak more and CRs need to learn how to listen to these voices.

Although the CRs have several listener clubs, the clubs are not a viable or suitable platform for women discussing their issues. Not very often are women in a patriarchal society allowed to express their views in an open forum (Manyozo, 2012). In addition, they do not feel comfortable discussing their issues in front of male community members. Furthermore, women are not able access to these clubs due to the location of clubs or the mixed sex (male and female)
membership of listening clubs. Radio staff are not considering the socio-cultural barriers that prevent women access to a discussion and action platform.

Women are core to any community (Jallov, 2012). The findings of this study suggest that including a few women volunteers in the radio stations does not appear to represent to women’s voices in the community medium. Without creating an enabling environment for women to access CR women cannot involve themselves in a conversation in order to develop and provide feedback on media content. As a result, community radios may be sacrificing their ability to be a community medium, particularly losing the opportunity to be mouthpiece for women and for social change.

**Women’s participation in community radios’ activities**

Community radio (CR) is credited as a participatory medium in which community members have an opportunity to participate in establishing, operating, and manage activities within radio stations (Fraser & Estrada, 2002). However, participation of community members in CR does not only depend on the community's decisions, but also on the decisions of others, especially when a community is not involved in the initiation and establishment of the community radio station in their area. For instance, all surveyed community radios in Bangladesh were established with the full support of administrative, technical, and financial resources from external organizations outside of respective communities. It is important to note that local perspectives about CR have been disregarded during the initiation phase of the stations (Reza, 2012). However, community is asked for their participation in the CR stations after establishment of the stations. The radio staff who are representatives of the external organizers control all major aspects of the community radios’ affairs and determine which community members can participate through a process of volunteerism. This is a type of “controlled
volunteerism” that is not the same as local ownership and voluntary or genuine participation.

Furthermore, the radio staff not only decides the type of participation from volunteers, but also determines the levels of participation of community members. For instance, women volunteers are involved in certain areas of program production. They are involved in sharing their knowledge and labor in content development and broadcasting of the programs; however, their participation is not at the level where women make decisions by using and expanding their own knowledge and resources. Women are directed through production tasks. It might be because of they are not yet enough skilled in managing the process by themselves. Certainly, they do not have control over the resources for making their own decisions. Thus, women depend on the external organizers and the male radio staff for support in administrative and technical activities.

Excessive dependency on external resources is argued by analysts to have a negative impact on a community’s ownership of community radios (Conrad, 2011). It is not expected that external organizations will continue their support forever. As a result, when the supports are withdrawn, community radios cannot sustain themselves and function as a development tool for long-term social change (Costa, 2012). A community itself needs to own its communication processes, even it is not initiated by community itself (Jallov, 2012). The question that should then be asked is: do the community radios proceed in such a way that helps women to own communication processes? According to the findings of this research, this is not the case.

To own the communication processes, women as volunteers and staff have to be skilled not only in program production, but they also need to be skilled in station’s management in respect of administration, technical, and financial aspects. In rural Senegal, women are being trained for journalism and station management, which enables rural women to make radio
content while engaging with other women in rural communities (World Education, n.d). However, organizing training should not be the only option for the capacity development of women. It is important to create an environment where women have access to the communication structures (organizations and public spaces) along with an opportunity of ongoing transformative learning. For instance, at a community radio, Radio Mukti, in Nepal, rural women own the station and manage the station’s activities by themselves. Women in that community radio station are not media professionals, but have become skilled in managing the station because they had access to the resources with full liberty for making decisions.

The literature suggests that if women have the opportunity to develop their skills they can take on the responsibilities of producing and maintaining the CRs (Dahal, 2013). In the study areas, Radio Pollikontho, the NGO-run community radio station creates such an environment where women volunteers are relatively more involved in program production than women in other radio stations. In Radio Pollikontho, women are not only involved with content development, but also involved in editing the programs. Additionally, they provide and receive feedback on a regular basis. The station has received an award for the Best Media Production 2013 for its program on issues related to mother and child health care. Interestingly, the program was made by a woman who did not receive much training on media professionalism, but had access to the resources of that community radio station in which she developed her skills.

In the study areas, CRs attracted women volunteers; although they are not making decisions in the radio activities. Men are dominating all CRs both in member of staff and positions of power within CRs. Male domination in the administrative and technical position of media are not new phenomenon (Mitchell, 2004). While community radio is credited for providing equal access to community members, this does not mean that women have access
equally to all positions in the community radios.

Male dominance of community radios is biased as a one sided perspective, and overlook the perspective of women while claiming that CR is a new strategy for involving local people in media and development. For example, most of the NGO-run CRs have initiated a SMS panel without considering socio-cultural and economic barriers of rural women for accessing the initiative. On the other hand, while the majority of women want to share their views through personal contact with volunteers, community radios do not have such strategies that could enable women to participate in stations’ activities, particularly, with their feedback through personal contact. By limiting women’s involvement, community voices are silenced.

Not all women in a community are expected to be involved in CR activities in the same manner. Some may be involved directly in the radio stations’ activities. Others may not be able to participate directly as staff or volunteers. Many women, urban or rural can contribute by providing their formative feedback to the CRs. There is a need for the collective capacity of women to be strengthened by women themselves. This could lead to systemic, social change through CR if there was the “combination of attributes that enables a system to perform, deliver value, establish relationship, and to renew itself” (Morgan, 2006, p 7).

Although women are not consulted during the initiation phase of community radios, they need to be involved in the communication processes that lead to the ownership of the community radios. It is not enough to urge participation or feedback from women, but awareness needs to be created among women that community radios require women’s support for its sustained existence in a community. If women are involved in planning, implementing, and evaluating the affairs of community radios, they will feel that the station is their own property. The literature suggests that their feelings of ownership will help sustain the radio stations (Gumucio Dagron,
In conclusion, in Bangladesh, there is a lack of ownership at the grassroots levels because the initiatives of community radios’ is predominately top-down in nature. Also the community radio stations examined in this study do not have enough time or a sufficient strategy to transfer ownership to local people. The collective action of women is needed to sustain the community radios in the country. In order to own the communication processes, women need to be expert not only in program production, but also build their expertise in administrative, technical, and financial aspects of the stations’ management.

**Accountability of community radio stations**

In the areas of the study, the community radios were established by external organizations rather than by the community members themselves. No community collectively asked for establishing community radio stations in the country. It might be because of the majority of the population in the country are not aware that a community can own and manage a broadcasting service by themselves for the sake of their own development (Ullah, 2010). Several NGOs and the Agriculture Information Service (AIS) of Bangladesh have come forward to establish community radio stations at the local level. It is important to note that none of the CR station in the country has initiated by any community; all CR stations established by external organizations and after that the organizations have asked participation from the community members in the stations’ activities. While external organizations are responsible for establishing and operating the radio stations, are they accountable to the community members for whom the broadcasting service is designed?

Although community radio is a relatively new concept in Bangladesh, it creates interest among the women listeners. Active listeners who have volunteered at the stations appreciate the
concept because it provides an opportunity for women to be involved with media which they enjoy. Community radios entertain and educate listeners. They also help women to become a communication agent for their community. On the other hand, passive listeners feel interested in listening to the community radio because it focuses on local dialects, identifiable local voices, and local content in the radio programs. Moreover, women in the study area feel proud to have the local radio stations as local institutions in their area. Women do not realize yet that the community radio is not only for the community, but it should be operated by the community where women as community members have the responsibility to manage the radio stations through their participation in the stations’ activities (Jallov, 2012).

Like the women listeners, local development organizations of the respective communities do not have a clear idea about the aim and objectives of the community radio. Many of them assume that the community radios are a part of the activities of the respective organizations (NGOs or government). This assumption might be due to the weak networking among the local service providers. For instance, during an interview with a local organization, who is also a member of the advisory committee of NGO-run radio station, it was mentioned that the respondents do not know the detailed activities of the community radio station. Even though, his organization provides information (if it is asked to do so by the volunteers), there is no form of continuous interaction between the organization and the community radio station’s members. Radio staff and local development organizations blamed each other for weak networking among the local organizations. In fact, hierarchical power relations do not allow local organizations and community radio stations to reach a consensus that would allow community radio stations to act as an information hub of local knowledge and information resources. Women who volunteered at the community radio stations do not have enough experience with message development,
scripting, production or editing. In order to develop such media production skills, local resources need to be used by strengthening horizontal networking in a community (Tabing, 2002).

The staff of the community radio stations which are examined in this study focus on projectable outputs rather than on women's benefits and outcomes that benefit all of the community. For instance, all surveyed community radio stations have broadcasted several programs on women's issues; however, none of the stations have conducted surveys to know whether women are benefitting from these programs. In addition, staffs and the volunteers of the community radio stations have made efforts to establish a number of listeners clubs; however, they are not focusing on whether such clubs facilitate women's access to the communication processes. Furthermore, station managers and radio staff are satisfied with the amount of feedback they receive from the communities. However, they are not concentrating on whether all types of women are participating actively in the feedback processes. Community radio stations are not accountable to all of their communities (women), but more so to the respective funding organizations who are preoccupied with outputs and no benefits for the entire community.

One of the main reasons the government of Bangladesh established local community radio stations is due to the belief that such stations will allow the local marginalized people to raise their voices. Therefore, the policy has to give more emphasis to women. In light of the policy, some members of the community radio stations in the study area advertise women’s participation by including a few women as volunteers in the radio stations often from a certain area of the respective communities. They do not recognize that including a few women does not mean widespread representation of the female community. Moreover, they assume that they are addressing all women in the community by broadcasting programs on women's issues. The danger of their assumptions is that they forget that participatory communication is a continuous
process of interactive conversations where women have to participate actively with community radio stations. Women themselves are diverse and they have changing points of view which are not recognized by the CRs.

**Summary**

Community radio is a relatively new phenomenon in Bangladesh that creates an opportunity for women to be involved in media and development at the local level. It creates interest among the women listeners with its program contents using simple and lucid language in local vernacular. CR can help women to become a communication agent by increasing their capability in program production, but this is not the case in relation to the findings of this study.

There is still a gap in terms of women’s participation in communication processes facilitated by CR. A wide range of women are still considered as passive listeners of unidirectional information of community radios. Although a few women participate in as volunteers or staff in community radios, they are not yet in a position that allows them to individually or collectively manage their communication processes by themselves or independently of male dominance.

Community radio was initiated in Bangladesh from the elite people’s perception that many people are not aware with its potential as a development tool (Reza, 2012). Therefore, no community collectively asked for establishing radios in their communities. Community radios were established by some external organizations outside of the community with the result that the community itself needs to realize its potential to own the communication processes enabled by radio. Without participation from the community, the community radio stations’ existence will be weak or threatened. Women are an important part of any community and they need to be involved equally to own their processes of communication. Furthermore, women need to gain
capacity in such a way that they can manage communication processes by themselves not only by taking on key tasks in radio production and broadcasting, but mobilizing their own knowledge and resources.
CHAPTER SEVEN: FINAL SUMMARY, CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

Final Summary

Community radio (CR) is a relatively new phenomenon in Bangladesh. The study was designed to investigate women’s involvement in media production, structural organization, and media facilities in CR in the country. The goal of the study was to explore the effectiveness of CR in Bangladesh as a medium that facilitates the participation of women for sustainable and equitable community development. The study achieved the goal through the collection of information from interviews with women CR listeners, radio staff, and other persons involved with CR; analysis of weekly program schedules and secondary documents; and observation of women's participation in CR stations’ activities. Information was collected from the five community radio stations of which four were NGO operated CR stations and one was a government department-run CR station. All stations were visited by the researcher with field work conducted June-August 2013.

Community radio is credited as a participatory community medium that offers equal opportunity for its community members to express their views and opinions about development issues (Girard, 1992; Gumucio Dagron, 2001). Therefore, CR has the ability to 'narrowcast' programs that reflect the needs of very specific groups of people. However, there was often a lack of information about how women participated in expressing their views despite socio-cultural and economic barriers to the access to communication processes, especially when the station was not owned by the community, but by others outside of the community. For the purpose of this study, the main research objectives were to assess women's access to communication processes in CR in Bangladesh; to assess their participation in the stations’
activities; and to assess how the external organizers facilitate women to own the communication processes.

The process of engaging women in CR in Bangladesh faces many challenges as found in this study. Women had limited access to communication processes underway in CR in Bangladesh. Often women faced limitations listening to CR as well as sending feedback to the stations. More than half of the women who were surveyed did not have radio sets. The few who had radio sets, especially women in rural communities, often faced problems purchasing batteries thereby hampering their listening to CR. Interestingly, cell phones were available to most of the women interviewed in this study. Social factors such as age, residency, and literacy did not affect cell phone access. However, most women did not listen to radio on their cell phones with an exception of young urban women. Rural women did not know how to use cell phone to tune CR.

Additionally, women did not have access to the listener clubs’ radio sets for listening to CR. Each CR has several listener clubs in the respective broadcasting areas. Comparatively the NGO-run CR stations have more listener clubs than the government-run CR station. However, most of the clubs consisted of both sexes and were in open busy places. Women did not feel comfortable listening to these radio sets. Furthermore, the clubs did not create an environment where women could discuss their issues among themselves and could send their feedback to the CR stations. In addition, women preferred to send their views via personal contact with volunteers (women) from the CR rather than to use cell phones for calling or text messaging. The CR stations in the study areas were also found to be failing in efforts to reach out to a wide range of women listeners for their feedback.

CR stations focused on speaking to women rather than listening to women’s opinions. Programs were created in the CR stations with minimal, if any, consultation of women in the
respective communities. In the NGO-run CR stations, the radio station staff and volunteers selected the topics for discussion in the women-centered programs. In the government-run CR station, volunteers’ participation in topic selection was even poor compared to the NGO-run CR station. The radio staff were mostly engaged with program production where volunteers (women) were involved in broadcasting the programs. In general, programs in CR stations were focused on information dissemination and awareness creation with the aim to change the behavior of community members, including women. Efforts to mobilize women’s knowledge and resources were not apparent from the findings, although the findings indicate that women are very interested in CR. There were no platforms in which women were able to discuss among themselves, work alongside CR stations on a regular basis, or amplify their voices about the issues that affect their lives. Therefore, the programs were broadcasting from a top-down approach and not from a bottom-up approach to communication which is important for participatory communication (Fraser & Estrada, 2001).

A few women actively participated in CR stations' activities. However, they were not representative of the overall females within the CR community. Women who volunteered at the station typically lived near the CR stations. Moreover, mostly young women and most of them were students, volunteered at the stations. No one from rural communities participated as volunteers at the stations. Moreover, women from the respective communities were not involved in administrative, technical, and financial positions at the stations. Therefore, they did not have a chance to make decisions about the stations’ major activities.

Women who volunteered at the stations were only involved in program production. However, their participation varied in different CR stations. Comparatively volunteers were more involved in planning, content development, recording, and broadcasting of program
production in the NGO-run CR stations rather than the government-run CR station. In the Government-run CR station, women were rarely consulted with planning and content development of program production. Furthermore, among all NGO-run CR stations, women in Radio Pollikontho involved more actively in all stages of program production including editing the content. In general, women’s participation in program production, however, was confined to lower levels of participation where women completed tasks and provided knowledge without decision-making control over the production processes. Women involved in the CR stations did not participate at the levels where they could build their capacity to learn and handle the whole process of communication by themselves with their own resources without the help of the radio staff.

Nevertheless, CR created interest among the women in the communities. Some women indicated that they would like to be involved with the local media. Women who were familiar with CR felt that their social status had changed by volunteering at the stations. They felt proud for doing something for their communities. However, most of them admitted that they could not solicit the opinions of other women including those who lived in rural communities. The primary constraints mentioned were their limited travel allowances but also their apparent lack of capacity and authority to do so.

CR also created interest among the women who were involved not as active listeners, but as passive listeners of the stations’ programs. Women in Bangladesh enjoy CR because they hear local peoples’ voices, local news, and local dialects in the CR programs. However, women did not realize yet that CR is not only a radio for listening to its programs, but also a platform that could be used to raise their voices in order to reach their development goals. Thus, CR appeared
to be a local amusement or entertainment to women rather than as a tool for social change and development.

The study found that women’s ownership of communication processes is still non-existent. The NGOs and the government department, AIS (Agriculture Information Service) of Bangladesh, did not have any plan to transfer ownership of the stations and control over programming to the entire communities including women. They did not have any strategies for engaging women listeners in a transformative participation approach in order to develop a system focusing on collective action of women in message design, in content development, in innovative broadcasting, and in evaluation of the whole media system. The CR stations provided a small amount of space for some women volunteers to participate in program production, but other than that women in general were not consulted in planning, budgeting, implementing, and evaluating the stations’ activities. The NGOs and the government department personnel interviewed in this study felt that they were performing as per the national policy by allocating some scheduled time (which is found not more than 5 percent of the total weekly broadcasting hours) for women-centered programs and by including a few women volunteers in the radio stations. The external organizers focused on how to collect funds from donors by showing quantifiable outputs of the CR stations. They did not engage women to discuss how to mobilize their knowledge or resources from the community or how to share local resources in order to ensure the community owns the communication processes. Additionally, the study found that weak horizontal networking exists among the local government, non-government, and other community organizations and did not help women to gain capacity in media professionalism.
Conclusions

Two major conclusions can be drawn from this study:

1. The purpose of community radio needs to be well understood among the entire community.

Media activists, NGOs, civil societies, and other elite peoples in the country recommend establishing community radio stations in Bangladesh (Reza, 2012; Ullah, 2010). However, during the initial phase of establishing CRs in the study areas, community people were not widely consulted. Therefore, a wide range of community people, including diverse social groups of women, do not have firsthand knowledge about CRs; they are largely neglected in stations’ activities or assumed within a vague description of listening audiences.

Community people feel proud having media in their locality that focuses specifically on their community and uses local languages. They do not know that their community radio is not only for listening to radio programs like other public and private radios, but they can use CR to raise their voices on issues of concern to them. Like the women, the entire communities including local organizations (government, non-government, private) that are available providing services to the communities do not understand that CR is a medium that works for community well being and that CR will sustain itself by accessing all kinds of support from local resources.

For this reason, it is not well recognized in the community that the community itself has to manage and own the CRs with the community’s own resources. Any external support may help for the time being, but the CRs will not sustain themselves if the community itself does not own the station (Girard, 1992; Jallov, 2012). The NGOs and the government department-run CRs need to have strategies to develop the entire community’s capacities in order to transfer the ownership of CRs. In addition, the NGOs and AIS of Bangladesh need to perform as facilitators
by establishing CRs as decentralized media that would work as a platform for communication as a means, not to an end to development in Bangladesh. Therefore, emphasis should be placed establishing well connected community knowledgeable and supportive of the aim and objectives of the community radios.

2. A gender policy is needed for addressing women in the CR stations in Bangladesh.

Community radio stations are permitted in the country due to the belief that the stations will focus on marginalized sections of a community who do not have access to communication and media structures to express their views as well as receive information. The policy of CR in the country emphasizes that women are to be focused on in the community radios. However, the policy does not specify how women are represented widely and equally in community radio stations. In light of this policy, CR stations advertise that they have women’s participation in the CRs by including a few women from the respective communities. The radio staff and volunteers forget that it is not enough to have a few women in the stations, it is important to have a range of female representatives from the communities and to engage them in ways that do not make the subservient to the CR or male-dominated process of community.

In addition, there is a need to define clearly the term “participation” as well as to define the levels of participation of women in the CRs. This study recommends critical use of the framework proposed by Lawrence (2006). Women’s participation is not same within or across the different radio stations. Context of the local communities needs to be taken into account. NGOs and the government department-run CRs also operate different with respect to women’s participation. It is not enough to have women’s participation only in content development and broadcasting of the programs; it is more important to provide an enabling environment where women participate and develop their capacity both in media production and in organizational
management with their knowledge, resources, and skills. It cannot be achieved overnight, but without a policy and effective delivery of the policy it cannot be achieved at all.

**Recommendations**

As a result of the study, there are several recommendations that can be considered for the existing CRs, future CRs, and the communities and women. In addition, there are several recommendations for future research. The main recommendations are:

1. Community radio stations should develop and implement their gender policy to ensure that women have equal access to and participation in media production, structural organization, and media facilities;

2. Community radio stations should focus on proper representation of women within their communities in the stations’ activities including content development, structural organization, and media facilities;

3. Aims and objectives of community radio should be well circulated among the entire community in order to increase the sense of collective ownership of community itself;

4. Community radio stations should ensure enabling environment for women to increase their capacity so that women could manage communication processes by their own knowledge and resources;

5. Community radio stations should focus on developing separate female listener clubs in order to provide them with better access to a radio set and to interactive communication processes among the community members along with the radio staff of the stations; and
6. Horizontal networking should be strengthened to enrich community radio stations with local resources.

The study was designed to interview with purposive sample of women who were frequent or infrequent listeners to community radio. In order to have a real picture about what percentage of women in a community are listening to CR as well as their perceptions about CR, further research is needed focusing on audience survey in the study areas. Furthermore, an examination is needed highlighting male’s perspectives about how they understand their ability to facilitate women’s participation in the CR stations in order to achieve the collective actions to own community radio by themselves. In addition, research is needed to see how women are gradually increased their participation towards self-management after one or two years of their involvement in the CR stations in Bangladesh.
REFERENCES


## Annex 1: Typology of Participation

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of participation</th>
<th>Actors</th>
<th>Methods</th>
<th>Power</th>
<th>Resources</th>
<th>Scale</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Consultative</strong></td>
<td>Centre</td>
<td>Centre invites to respond in questioners and documented proposals</td>
<td>Status quo maintained; experts considered to be at the main focus of structures</td>
<td>No net flow of finance, but flow of knowledge from local to centre</td>
<td>Can be wide scale; treats public homogenously, or compares and balances views of different stakeholders</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Centre invites to respond in questioners and documented proposals</td>
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<td><strong>Functional</strong></td>
<td>Centre</td>
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<td><strong>Transformative</strong></td>
<td>Centre</td>
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</table>

Source: Lawrence (2006)
Annex-2: Interview Guidelines for Key Informant

Questions for Key informant
(Station Manager)

1. Name of interviewee: ___________________
2. Volunteer/paid: __________ Length of time at station: ______________
3. Name of community radio station: __________
4. Address/Location: Village _________, Upazilla _________, District__________
5. Radio frequency: __________ Date of station established: ______________
6. Total number paid staff:
   Full time: Male_________ Female_________ Total________
   Part time: Male_________ Female_________ Total________
7. Total number volunteers:
   Male_________ Female_________ Total________
8. Where did start-up funding come from?
   Advertising_______ Local donations____ International funding/donations____
   Volunteers____ In-kind contributions____ Government_______
   Other (Please specify)____________
9. Current funding sources and average percentage of each:
   a. Advertising_______ b. Local donations____ c. International
   d. funding/donations____ e. Volunteers____ f. In-kind contributions____
   g. Government_______ h. Other (Please specify)____________
10. Does this funding cover all costs?
    If not, where do the extra funds come from?
11. Could you please describe your program types and daily/weekly schedules? [May I have a copy or photo of the schedules]
12. Number of hours per week you broadcast music programs:_____
13. Number of hours per week you broadcast non-music programs:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of program</th>
<th>Length of the program</th>
<th>Hours per week</th>
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14. Number of hours per week you broadcast programs that cover women's information needs?

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<tr>
<th>Name of program</th>
<th>Length of the program</th>
<th>Hours per week</th>
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15. Where do you get the information from for the themes of the programs you produce?
16. In your opinion, who produces programs for the community radio?
17. How are the decisions on production usually taken?
18. How did you get feedback from women listeners?
19. In your opinion, does the community radio effectively address rural women's information needs?
   a. Yes  b. No  c. Don't Know (Please explain your answer)
20. Do you feel that community radio could be an effective information source for rural women in the community? Please explain your answer.
21. In your opinion how do you facilitate women's involvement in all activities of community radio?
22. In your opinion, what limitations are there to women's participation in the community radio?
23. In your opinion, what could be done to involve more women in the community radio?
24. In your opinion who owns the community radio?
25. In your opinion who runs the community radio?
26. In your opinion who finances the community radio?
27. In your opinion does the community radio make any profit or not?
   a. does  b. does not  c. Don't know (Please explain your answer)
28. If yes, who keep the profits?
29. In your opinion what is the greatest strength of the radio station?
30. In your opinion what is the greatest weakness of the radio station?
31. Any other relevant information/questions/comments
Annex-3: Interview Guidelines for key Informant

Questions for Key Informant
(Executive Member)

1. Name of interviewee:
2. Name of community radio station:
3. Occupation:
   a. Self employed   b. Employed by others   c. Unemployed   d. Other (Please specify)
4. If employed, then name of organization and designation:
5. How are you/your organization connected with the community radio?
6. How do you/your organization facilitate programming on community radio?
7. How do you/your organization facilitate women’s participation in the community radio station?
8. In your opinion, does the community radio effectively address rural women's information needs?
   a. Yes   b. No   c. Don't Know (Please explain your answer)
9. Do you feel that women have easy access to the community radio station?
   a. Yes   b. No   c. Don't know (Please explain your answer)
10. In your opinion, what limitations are there for women's participation in the community radio station?
11. In your opinion, what could be done to involve more women in the community radio?
12. In your opinion who runs the community radio station?
13. In your opinion what is the greatest strength of the radio station?
14. In your opinion what is the greatest weakness of the radio station?
15. Do you have any other comments for this study or suggestions for community radio in Bangladesh? Please feel free ask any questions you may have about this study.
Annex-4: Interview Guidelines for Semi-structured Interview

Questions for Semi-structured Interview
(Active listener/Volunteer)

Name of community radio station: Address: Village----, Upazilla ----, District--

16. Name of interviewee: ________________

17. Age:
   a. 18-24yrs    b. 25-34yrs    c. 35-44 yrs    d. 45 yrs and above   [ ]

18. Marital status:
   a. Married      b. Unmarried    c. Widowed      d. Divorced       [ ]

19. Educational level:
   a. Illiterate   b. Primary (grade 1-5)  c. Secondary (grade 6-10)  
      d. Higher Secondary (grade 10-12)  e. University/College Graduate  [ ]

20. Occupation:
    a. Employed    b. Home maker/House wives  c. Student       [ ]

21. Volunteer paid/unpaid:_________    Length of time at station:______________

22. How did you get inspiration to be a volunteer in the community radio station?

23. Could you please describe your volunteering experiences in the radio station?

24. Do you have any limitations to work as volunteer in the radio station? If so what are they?

25. Could you please describe about program types and schedules daily/weekly broadcasted from the community radio?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program type</th>
<th>Name of program</th>
<th>Length of the program</th>
<th>Hours per week</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Music/Non-Music</td>
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</table>

26. How are the decisions on production usually taken?

27. In your opinion, does the community radio effectively address rural women's need?
   a. Yes        b. No        c. Don’t know        [ ]

28. How did you get feedback from women listeners?
29. Do you feel that women have easy access to the community radio?
   a. Yes  b. No  c. Don't know  [ ]
30. In your opinion, what limitations are there to women's participation in the community radio?
31. In your opinion what could be done to involve more women in the community radio?
32. In your opinion who owns the community radio station?
33. In your opinion who runs the community radio station?
34. In your opinion who finances the community radio station?
35. In your opinion what is the greatest strength of the community radio station?
36. In your opinion what is the greatest weakness of the community radio station?
37. Do you have any other suggestions for community radio in your area? Please add any other information or ask any questions you may have about this study.
Annex-5: Interview Guidelines for Semi-Structured Interview

Questions for Semi-Structured Interview
(Passive listeners)

Name of community radio station  Address: Village: ------, District------

1. Name of interviewee:
2. Date of Birth/Age of respondent:
3. Marital Status:
4. Educational level:
   a. Illiterate   b. Primary (grade 1-5)   c. Secondary (grade 6-10)
   d. Higher Secondary( grade 10-12)   e. University/College Graduate
5. Occupation:
   a. Employed/Business   b. Home maker/House wives   c. Student
6. Is this a female headed household?
   a. Yes   b. No
7. Is this a female managed household?
   a. Yes   b. No
8. What type of information do you need usually?
   a. Agriculture   b. Animal husbandry   c. Health   d. Education
   e. Childcare   f. Family planning   g. Politics   h. Loan
   i. Religion   j. Weather   k. Other (Please specify)
9. What sources of information do you use? (Check all that apply)
   e. Neighbours/friends   f. Field workers   g. Other
10. What are the main two information sources that you prefer most?
11. Why do you prefer those sources?
12. Do you have any limitation access to those preferred information sources?
    If so what are they?
13. Do you listen to the community radio?
    a. I do   b. I do not
    If the answer is "a" then please move to question 17.
14. If you do not listen to community radio, what are the reasons?

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15. If you do not listen to community radio, do you think that community radio could serve your information needs?
   a. Yes  b. No  c. Don’t know

16. Because you do not listen to community radio, in your opinion, what initiative has to be taken by the community radio to satisfy your information needs?
   Move to Question 53

17. How many times a week do you listen to the community radio?
   a. Daily  b. Once in a week  c. twice in a week  d. More than twice in a week  e. Other

18. If you listen to the community radio, then in general how long do you listen to the radio at a time?
   a. Half hour or less  b. ½ hour to 1 hour  c. 1 to 2 hours  d. 2 to 4 hours  e. More than 4 hour’s  f. No answer/don’t know

19. What time of a day do you listen to the radio most often?
   a. Morning  b. Afternoon  c. Evening

20. Do you have radio at your house?
   a. Yes  b. No

21. Where do you listen to the radio most often?
   a. At home  b. Listener club  c. Friends/neighbours’ place  d. Other

22. Usually what are the radio programs you listen to?
   a. Entertainment  b. Education  c. Health  d. Agriculture  e. Family planning  f. Child care  g. Other (Please specify)

23. Among the programs aired from the community radio in your area, which are the first three programs you like the most?
   a. First program … b. Second program… c. Third program…

24. Why do you prefer those programs?[ Ask for each program]

25. Do you feel that the programs developed by the community radio could satisfy your information needs and improve your livelihoods?
   a. Yes  b. No  c. Don’t know

26. Do you feel inspired to change your behavior or activities after listening to the radio programs?
   a. Yes  b. No

27. If yes, what initiatives did you take after listening to the radio programs?

28. In your opinion, what types of programs should community radio add to their schedule?

29. Is there a radio listening club in your community?
a. Yes       b. No       c. Do not know  
If the answer is "Yes" then go to the Question 32-34.

30. Are you a member of the listener's club for community radio?
   a. Yes       b. No

31. How many times a week do you listen to the radio in a group?
   a. once       b. twice       c. More than twice

32. Why did you decide to join the radio listener club?

33. Have you visited the community radio station?
   a. Yes       b. No

34. If yes, how many times in a year do you usually visit it?
   a. Once       b. Twice       c. More than twice       d. don’t know

35. Have you heard your name or your friends/relatives/ neighbors name broadcast from the community radio?
   a. Yes       b. No

36. Are you a member of the community radio station?
   a. Yes       b. No

37. If yes, which type of member?
   a. General       b. Executive Committee Member       c. Other

38. Have you ever provided voluntary service to the community radio?
   a. Yes       b. No

39. Have you ever sent feedback to the community radio?
   a. Yes       b. No

40. If yes, how many times in a month do you do so?
   a. Once       b. Twice       c. More than twice       d. don't know

41. What was the subject matter?
   a. Entertainment       b. Education       c. Health       d. Agriculture
   e. Family planning       f. Child care       g. Other (Please specify)

42. Was your feedback aired from the station?
   a. Yes       b. No       c. do not know

43. How do you send your feedback to the community radio station?
   a. SMS (Via mobile)       b. Mail       c. Computer       d. Personal contact
   e. Via group leader       f. Via field staff       g. Other
44. Do you have access to a mobile phone?
   a. Yes   b. No

45. Do you have access to a computer?
   a. Yes   b. No

46. Have you participated in any assembly/meetings held by the community radio station?
   a. Yes   b. No

47. Have you ever provided financial support to the community radio?
   a. Yes   b. No

48. If yes, how much and when?

49. In your opinion who owns the community radio station?

50. In your opinion who runs the community radio station?

51. In your opinion who finances the community radio station?

52. As an existing or potential audience, member of community radio, what is your overall opinion of community radio?

53. Do you have any other suggestions for community radio in your area? Please add any other information or ask any questions you may have about this study.
Annex 6 Coding of Programming

- Radio a1
  - Music
  - Sports
  - Drama
  - Poem, Jokes, Funny Stories

- Radio a2
  - Health & sanitation
  - Agriculture
  - Youth/Child
  - Religious
  - Civic & Developmental Programs

- Radio a3
  - Market Information
  - Community Events
  - Local History and Culture
  - Local Public/Private Services
  - Laws and Regulations

- Radio a4
  - Local Music / Drama / Educational Messages on Social Issues
  - Awareness Programs with entertainment

- Radio a5
  - Women Rights
  - Woman/Child Health
  - Awareness Programs on Women's Related Social Issues.

- Entertainment
- Educational
- Informational
- Edutainment
- Women’s issues related programs
- Other

Other

Promos
Station ID
Azan (Call for Muslim Prayer)
Local Advertisement
Appendix 7: Photographs of the community radio stations in Bangladesh

Photograph 1.1 Krishi Radio (Government department-run community radio station)

Photograph 1.2 Radio Lokobetar (NGO-run community radio station)
Photograph 1.3: Presenters at Radio Pollikontho

Photograph 1.4: Presenters at Radio Bikrampur
Photograph 1.5 Radio Mahananda (NGO-run community radio station)

Photograph 1.6 Presenters at Radio Mahananda