

Educating grassroots girls and women through Community Learning Programme - CLP using Community Radio in Bangladesh

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BACKGROUND

The primary education system in Bangladesh is one of the largest systems in the world. Though the country has undertaken a number of measures to improve primary education since its independence, but recent Ministry of Primary & Mass Education statistics report shows that 51% girls get enrolled in primary education but do not complete the stage and dropout rate is 64%. Similarly, 59% of the adult illiterate is women.

INTRODUCTION: What Community Learning Programme is Delivering?

Community Learning Programme (CLP), the educational project of Rupantar is concerned with the education of illiterate and semi-literate listeners, especially women and girl, spread out mainly in the rural areas (hard to reach areas) of Bangladesh.

Currently, we are working with three community radio stations in Bangladesh (Community Radio Sagargiri, Sitakund, Chittagong; Community Radio Jhenuk, Jhenidah and Community Radio Mahananda, Chapainawabgonj) using Community Learning Programme (CLP) method in north, south and south-west of the country.

Placing great emphasis on involvement and active participation of community male-female in planning, designing and production process we have already developed three plans on health and designed a series of radio production, which is going on with the partnership of Commonwealth of Learning.

The target people and area (from 3 particular part of a village) are vulnerable to the selected health topic. The topics are Adolescent Reproductive Health (10 – 19 years old girls), Reduce women suicide through mental health support (15 to 60 years youth, women and male) and Prevention awareness on Filariasis disease (30 - 50 years old women).

Though this is an age of digital technology, more than 75% people of Bangladesh still live in the villages and hard to reach area. Their main occupations are farming, cottage industry, fishing, small business or day laboring. There are regular long hours of either power cuts or power fluctuations; moreover 60% household is waiting for power connections. Most families do not have television sets. Furthermore many people especially women and girls are still illiterate or semi-literate and do not go to school. Reading newspaper is not their habit. Hence radio still dominates over all other media in these villages or dark area.

Community Learning Programme focuses on different topics (i.e. local disease, adolescent reproductive health, arsenic, superstitions, herbal treatment, water, sanitation and hygiene behaviors etc.) to form consciousness and encourage the target learners to bring about change into their own lives and become agents of change in the process.

METHODOLOGY

These programmes are produced based on regular visits to the field by the Community Learning Programme production team members to obtain suggestions for topics, record discussions, interviewing, drama, etc. Particularly, around 70% of the programmes are produced in the field with the participation of the target learners (community male-female), most of them are semi-literate and illiterate.

Community Learning Programme has some certain methodologies that are followed from the beginning. They are-

a. Base line Survey & Assessment

A Base line survey on programme content of 10 Community Radio Stations (CRS) out of 14 CRS was conducted to find out the on-going Programme list of Community Radio stations,

particularly program on health issues. 5 CRS were visited to review and verify the completed survey information and discuss any outstanding questions or issues or any unusual information.

b. Selection of Community Radio Station (CRS)

Based on this survey 3 Community Radio Stations are selected to pilot the Community Learning Programme (CLP) for this year. They are,

CR Sagargiri FM 99.2, Sitakund, Chittagong
Initiator Organization: Young Power in Social Action (YPSA)

CR Mahananda FM 98.8, Palsa, Chapai Nawabgonj
Initiator Organization: Proyas Manobik Unnayan Society

CR Jhenuk FM 99.2, Pabahati, Jhenidah
Initiator Organization: Srizony Bangladesh

c. Selection of Stakeholder

Selection of community representative and stakeholder is done before the workshops. The ideal number of participants is 12. They are from health department, local government representative, community, local development organization, media and youth.

d. Program Planning Workshop

A Program planning workshop is conducted To Identify programme content and Target audience. This is a 2 half day workshop with community and stakeholders. The workshop introduced a programme planning template to make the plan.

After completed planning a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) is done with the target audience to finalize the planning on health issue.

e. Programme Design Workshop

2 full days Programme Design Workshop is conducted to prepare programme and episode plan based on the planning.

Participants designed the programme using Message Matrix tool and prepared episode planning with programme clock for the programme.

f. Programme Production Workshop

In this 4 days' workshop, participants get skilled in scripting, interviewing and programme production. They also composed title song, radio spot, jingle, promo for the programme. Interviews were community experience sharing, expert opinion, case study, success story, etc.

2 pilot episodes were produce in each workshop.

WHOM TO DELIVER

The main aim is to impart non-formal education through Community Radio, interactivity between the learners (listeners) and Community Learning Programme project staff (from Community Radio station) is through field visits, face to face discussions with the learners, letters and SMS. Regular weekly visits help the project keep up to date with the rural people.

HOW IS OUR EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMME UNIQUE?

It is unique for three reasons,

- 1) that we produce programmes for the rural illiterate and semi-illiterate women and girls on reproductive health including other health issues
- 2) that we continue to keep in touch with them through weekly field visits and field recording
- 3) that we listen to the programme with a group of target learner every week and discuss about the program to know their comments and suggestions. Community Radio Station's volunteer also helps the illiterate learners to fill out a questionnaire given as quiz in the programme. The successful

learners (who will send correct answers of each question) will be certified at the end of the programme.

ROADMAP

Community radio stations are appropriate partners for this type of approach to participatory non-formal learning as other national media like Bangladesh Betar (state own radio) does not reach most rural areas for technical or frequency limitations.

Our Community Learning Programme through community radio is creating important and timely impact on these illiterate or semi-illiterate girl and women who do not have adequate opportunity to receive formal education from school.

IMPACT IN THE COMMUNITY

CR Sagargiri, Sitakund, Chittagong

300 Adolescent girls of Hard to reach area are learning on reproductive health and practicing it. Their family (216) members become aware on reproductive health and its importance directly.

Indirectly, 5,800 women and 12,700 male from the community are getting awareness on this issue.

CR Mahananda, Palsha, Chapai Nawabgonj

30 Filaria affected people between 30- 50 years old are learning about Filariasis. Their family with members are being sensitized about Filaria.

100,000 women and 300,000 male are getting awareness indirectly within 17 km broadcasting area.

CR Jhenuk, Pabahati, Jhenidah

100 women (16 – 60 years old) are directly sensitized about mental health and it will reduce prone to suicide and suicidal rate in the area. Besides their family (25) members are also getting awareness about suicide and its effect on family and society.

7,010 women and 8,175 male from the broadcasting area are indirectly being benefited about suicide and mental health.

CONCLUSION

Community Radio is new media to Bangladesh. As part of Community media, it is far more so than national broadcasters and international online media that prioritizes and determines programme content with the participation of local community. It functions in local languages and are relatively accessible, both in terms of the knowhow required and the costs involved. Ideally, they also model their communication on traditional cultural forms rather than mainstream state or commercial media.

As part of Non-formal education community radio is the appropriate media to participatory non-formal learning in the community.

It has been observed that participants who were already experienced in the development and awareness-building activities have now developed the knowledge and skills to formulate content for Community Learning Programmes. So, this community Learning Programme can be expanded to other areas (11 Community Radio) to wider coverage for the hard to reach area's listeners.

Rupantar is very encouraged with the progress of work so far and to see the interest and commitment of various stakeholders to the community learning program piloted in these 3 Community Radio. Rupantar will continue this open and distance learning effort through other Community Radio Stations in Bangladesh.