



Women's Participation in Community Radio

Maraa in collaboration with CEMCA

June 1, 2014

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Maraa has successfully completed the CEMCA project by completing two cascade workshops, one in the North India and one in the South India for which we have submitted reports.

Following the workshops, the radio stations (9 in the north and 7 in the south), Maraa has been in touch with the stations to mentor via phone, skype and email.

The stations were entitled to ten hours of mentoring each. From the Maraa team, we involved five mentors (Ekta, Monica, Devi Leena, Vandana and Anushi) who have spent over ten hours with most of the stations.

Resulting from the mentoring sessions with each of the radio station, we worked towards enabling these stations to produce design documents that were translated into actual radio programs.

All the stations from the North belt have designed their message matrices and arrived at their episode plans. All the nine stations from the North have produced two programs, some even three.

From the South, we have had a weak response. From the seven stations we signed a contract with, only three stations managed to complete their message matrix and episode plan – Radio Vishnu, Radio Active, Radio Siddhartha. They have also produced three programs.

All the stations from the North and South have successfully completed their cascade workshops.

As mentors, we tried our best to organize group skypes where all stations could interact over skypes. We also wanted to mentor them on common sessions, for example on how to use message matrix, how to design an episode plan. However, we managed only two skypes where not all the radio stations participated. We realized that it will have to happen one on one, given that internet access is also a concern. Further, we had to translate several materials in Hindi – formative research, message matrix, episode plans, since most of the materials were in English. All communication with the radio stations also happened in Hindi, since we were directly interacting with the stations. Mentoring on the phone was tedious, and it worked with some stations, because we could see results in the documents. There have also been experiences, where there was no correlation between mentoring and actual design documents. All the programs will be uploaded on Edaa as well as on Manch.

We paid the second installment to all nine stations from the North and three stations from the South. The money was disbursed based on deliverables that we received from the stations.

Outcomes:

- We have selected nine stations from the twelve stations who received the installments for the follow up workshop we organized from July 28th to 1st July 2014. Selection of these stations was based on the quality of their design documents, commitment to the CLP process and their radio programs.
- These selected stations will go on to produce a program series with the support of a seed grant from COL by September 2014. A programme series will be launched by this period, which will comprise of a minimum of sixteen episodes spread across four months from the date of broadcast.
- The selected stations will revise their design documents and improve the quality of production of the audio production.

Status of CLPs across stations:

S No.	Name of the Station	Name of the programme	Theme of the programme	No. of episode plans made	No. of episodes produced	Date of launch/plan to launch
1	Gurgaon Ki Awaaz	Chahat Chowk	sexual health related matters	15	10	Second series on-air right now.
2	Waqt Ki Awaaz	Ghar ki Lutiya Khet na jai hai	Importance of using toilets	15	3	Plan to launch by August last week.
3	Radio Mewat	Aao school chalen	Children don't go to school regularly	6	0	Plan to launch by August first week.
4	Hentral Vani	Khushiyon Ka Aangan	Ensuring safe and healthy deliveries for pregnant women	6	2	Plan to launch by 15 th August
5	Kumaon Vani	Didi Behen Ka Khyal	Effect of excessive workload on women's health	9	3	Plan to launch it in July.
6	CMS Radio	Zamana Badal Gaya	Dreams and fears of adolescents	3	2	-
7	Voice of Azamgarh	Nai Pahal	Myths around menstrual cycle and promoting Hygiene	11	0	-
8	Radio Dhadkan	Phool Murjahye Se	Malnutrition	6	2	-
9	Alfaz E Mewat	Khushi hai wahan Shouchalay hai jahan	impact on women health due to lack of toilets at home	6	2	Plan to launch it by September.
10	Radio Active	Ruthumati	Sexual health amongst adolescents	6	3	The programme is already on-air
11	Radio Siddhartha			3	3	

Mentoring Experience

Most of the community radio (CR) stations have a very enthusiastic and energetic team, always eager to experiment with new methods and procedures. The teams have been very prompt in learning and adapting the CLP process and are pro-active in approaching Maraa with their queries and work for feedback.

In the process, the community radio stations have developed better relations with their community. But initially, one of the major challenges faced by the CR teams was go to the community and explain them about CLP process and concept. The challenge was to build trust and rapport with the community so that they are comfortable to speak about such sensitive and intimate issues tackled in various CLPs. For example, one of the stations has been working on the issue of education but they have chosen health as an issue for their CLP. The relationship between the reporter and the community was not so strong, and because the women in the chosen villages were not allowed to speak openly about their issues, it was hard to work on health issues.

Most of the stations have been prompt in responding to the needs of the program. However in some CRs, due to paucity of staff the action has been delayed and too many deadlines have been crossed. However, the spirit of the stations has always been very high and despite administrative hurdles they have managed to fulfill most of the requirements. In one of the stations, the key person who was working in Delhi for the CR conceptually grasped the concept rather quickly. This learning through distance mentoring was then relayed back to the CR team who attempted to implement the same on the field. This process in itself is tedious and affects the efficiency of the CLP. Also field experiences do not come out very clearly for the mentor and it is difficult to assess the field engagement.

A couple of stations were very enthusiastic about the CLP process and were always involved in every activity, and responded to every email that was sent. On their CLP, they were never over confident and were open to learn from other stations. They have always asked questions, and clarified doubts at every stage, for every episode. They have always taken the responsibility to stay in touch and guide them for the smallest things – such as how to organize the cascade workshop, how to identify stakeholders, how to acknowledge the efforts of the community. At all stages they have asked us for feedback. They have always acted on mentoring and training efforts from our end, and it is very evident in their design documents. Their work is in depth, and it reflects in the programmes produced. They have not been complacent, and have always been curious and excited to try new things.

Often CRs are involved with many projects at a time. In this regard, it became a little difficult for the key person to be able to dedicatedly work on the CLP. This results in work being deadline driven and not of the expected standards. The team often had to be pushed to work and meet deadlines.

We mentored six CRs located in South India from March 2014 to mid-June 2014. They had lesser time than North stations to work on CLP, since the workshop only happened in last week of February 2014. While all the stations in the South conducted their cascade workshops, only a few were able to take the process forward. Maraa sanctioned the second installment only to the three stations - Radio Active, Radio Siddhartha and Radio Vishnu.

The teams were very keen to learn, receptive to mentoring and were always prompt but we had very little time to understand the functioning of the radio stations in South. There were a couple of issues with the stations such as- at one of the stations there was only one person working on the CLP. There was no supporting staff and the assigned person had several other things to do as well. Moreover, the programs finally produced sounded like awareness programmes. Another CR may not be able to continue CLP development, due to issues with the management.

Some of the stations from the South were unresponsive to mentoring and did not show any interest in the process like others. There was an assumption that they were already aware of this process, and could do without mentoring etc. The assumption was also that this was a radio program, when in fact it was a learning program.

Challenges Radio Stations are facing in implementing the CLP

CLP is a long and complex process and radio stations have been facing challenges in the process. Some stations took a long time to decide upon the issue but they eventually nailed it by getting an issue from the community which is much nuanced and a very practical problem in the area. One of the major challenges faced by most CRs was to go the community and explain them about the process. It was difficult to build trust and rapport with the community so that they are comfortable in speaking about their sensitive and intimate issues. Usually, during the initial stage, the community is hesitant to speak to the CR team; it takes time to build rapport and trust with the community.

Another challenge faced by CR teams is time management. Since the team at a CR is usually small, managing time and responsibilities is hard. As a result, the team is not able to work with much focus on the CLP process along with other projects at the radio station. The stations have been responsive and are open to feedback but at times are too tied up with other work to actually work on the feedback or suggestions given. Also, just one person working on CLP also becomes an issue at times because CLP is a team effort and cannot be done by just one member. Moreover, the stations are not very familiar with documentation process and this kind of extensive documentation of their work is not something that the stations usually practice. With little handholding they did pick up but would always be wary of documentation. Sustaining listener clubs is also difficult; moreover, there is a high possibility that other stakeholders depend on the CR which results in CRs getting stuck in managing all the processes by themselves.

Other challenges faced were poor internet connectivity, working within the hierarchical structures of the CRs. In some areas like, Supi and Chamba, hard weather conditions and regular power cuts, especially during monsoon and winters, regularly test the dedication and commitment of the staff to the CLP process.

Challenges Faced as Mentor

Overall, it has been a good experience as most of the CR teams have been pro-active and keen to learn. Major effort was put in deciding the issue, how to do FGDs, making message matrix and at the final stage of producing the programme.

Initially there was a slack at some of the stations but once they got the push they kind of held on. Also, the process was staggered because of the complexity of the structure at couple of radio stations. One of the stations was not that interactive and it was very difficult to get in touch with them. It was hard to keep up with mentoring week after week with the stations which have started broadcasting. It was always not possible to incorporate feedback in the episodes. With some stations, the things moved too fast to gauge the authenticity of the CLPs produced and understand the level of community participation. As a mentor, the fear is community participation was more of a checklist practice than actual engagement.

In general, distance mentoring requires a lot of time and patience; at times it becomes difficult to explain things over phone or Skype.

Suggestions to proceed with this station

On the basis of the work done so far by the stations and the programmes produced, seven stations were selected for further mentoring. Seven stations selected are- Gurgaon ki Awaz, Kumaon vani, Henval vani, Alfaz-e-Mewat, Waqt ki Awaz, Radio Mewat and Radio Active.

Challenges with the process

While the CR teams have started doing formative research and making message matrix and episode plans and producing episodes, the major requirement at this stage is to enhance production skills of the teams. The teams have worked hard on each stage of the CLP process but it often does not get culminated into good quality programmes due to poor production skills.

Poor internet connectivity and lack of manpower are the other major challenges faced. CLP requires a lot of time and effort and often the staff at the CR is involved with more than one programme. Hence, it becomes a little difficult for the key person to manage CLP along with other programmes. Also at certain CR stations, there is a need for direct communication between field staff and mentors.

In case of the stations where the series is already on air, while there is commitment from the CR team there are also some challenges with the sustainability of stakeholders given the context. But one should try that financial resources should not come in the way of the process. Especially when the demand of the programme series is slowly growing in the community and in a way is becoming the identity of the station.

Conclusion

Overall, it has been great experience to mentor all the stations. All of them have shown keen interest and adapted the CLP process as per their need and requirement. Most of the stations have started producing the episodes and will go on air in the coming months. It is at this crucial stage that the stations need maximum help and guidance and Maraa is more than willing to do the same.

We have sent all documents to CEMCA that we have received from the stations. As for Maraa, we intend to continue work with stations we select from this list based on their design documents and commitment to the process. We hope these stations remain engaged till they are able to sustain the program, and in turn contribute to the station's sustainability with the participation of the community.
