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# BANGLADESH'S COMMUNITY RADIOS: WHAT THEY BROADCAST AND WHO LISTENS

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**Abstract:** *In the age of globalization and ICTs revolution, conventional media are playing sine qua non role in providing news, information services, and entertainment. Besides, in some countries, community radios (hereafter CRs) are contributing to positive changes in grassroots governance and development. Based on a reality, this paper tries to unravel the following research objectives i.e. i) to get an overview of the program contents of the community radios in Bangladesh; ii) to identify the profiles of the listeners of the CRs in Bangladesh. In a bid to achieve that a mixed method approach was followed. For quantitative data, survey method was used which was followed by some qualitative tools in order to achieve triangulation in research. The findings reveal that there are 18 community radios in Bangladesh and they are providing all sorts of development information at the grassroots. It was found that most of listeners both comprised of male and female were very young and 44% of them were students. A 40% of the respondents have SSC and above level of education. A 70% listeners used to listen CRs using mobile phone. The contents of the programmes of the CRs included a wide range of developmental issues i.e. agriculture, fisheries, livestock, climate change, disaster mitigation, women empowerment, education, news and newspaper, entertainment with music and drama, special programmes of national and international days, learning English, beautification and cooking, programmes for children and minority people. Through their diverse programmes these CRs are providing lots development services to the grassroots societies.*

**Keywords:** *Community radio; profiles; listeners; broadcast; Bangladesh*

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## Introduction

In an overwhelming globalized world, community radio has been playing an important role in some countries. Recently, a number of radio stations was established in Bangladesh under a policy formulated in 2010. All these radio stations, known as

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community radios, are being run with the active participation of the marginalized people. Provided that the community radio in Bangladesh is a recent phenomenon and there might have dearth of academic paper on the programs they broadcast for the community and the profiles of the listeners of the community radios in Bangladesh. Against such a backdrop this research study is aimed at delving into two objectives such as: i) To get an overview of the programs of the community radios in Bangladesh; ii) To identify the socio-economic characteristics of the listeners of the CRs in Bangladesh.

## Literature Review

Community radio (CR) connotes the idea that it is radio to “voice of the voiceless” (Sterling, O'Brien, Bennett, 2009). Community radio is a welfare broadcasting medium owned, managed and run on a non-profit basis. Its purpose is to provide services to the community and to create opportunities for the development of local folk, socio-economic and cultural life. Community radio operates through the direct participation of the grassroots people in a particular small geographical area. It is the community's own resource that accurately reflects a community's own ideas, judgments, and thoughts (Patil, 2015). Being located at the rural population, CRs broadcasts diverse programmes namely, CRs airs information in areas of agriculture, social welfare, education, health and environment and help in creating rural networks for the rural cottage and village industry. Access and participation are the foundations of CRs (Bora & Lakhendra, 2012).

The pioneer of community radio, South African's Jen Ibrahim Said, 90% of community radio is the community itself and the remaining 10% is radio (Obaid, 2019). The community radio is a media which is run without any commercial motive, it is run for the community people, by the community people and controlled by the community and the main function of such radio is to work for the betterment of the community (Jewel, 2006). It is substantially proved that information and communication helps in gradual socio-economic and cultural progression of a country (Schramm, 1964). Access to information helps to empower people (Harun & Mahamud, 2014). In fact, ensuring freedom, participation of people, and community ownership are the key to the success of the Community Radio (Reza, 2014). It was evident that in the capitalist society, apart from a few public broadcasting centers, most of the public media are corporatized, market and profit oriented (McChesney, 1999). As an effective tool of communication it ensures establishing transparency and accountability of the public administration at all levels and thus it helps to contribute to establish good governance in the society (Ullah & Ferdous, 2007). Nirmala (2015) found that in CRs women have started to reflect on their abilities and aspirations on other women's lives through media and at an interpersonal level. It was found that community radio seeks to advance women in rural regions by providing them with a mechanism to amplify and publicize their distinctive considerations, knowledge, and needs. The approach followed by the CRs could be a useful resource for poor NGOs working in rural parts of developing countries as it allows marginalized communities to express their views often ignored by mainstream media (Waters, James, & Darby, 2011). It was found that health care services during

pregnancy, and newborn care was delivered in both morning and evening sessions of community radio. Moreover, information regarding local government services and schemes for better health of mothers and adolescent girls were communicated to them by the local health workers in their local language (Rajana, Prasad, & Madhavi, 2020).

## **Methodology**

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

### **Sources of Data**

Data were collected from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data were collected from different stakeholders such as listeners' club, officials of the radio stations and beneficiaries of the CRs. Primary data were collected using survey and case studies whereas secondary data were collected adopting content analysis. Both researchers and experience data collectors collected data from the research areas.

### **Selection of Study Areas**

Data were collected from all the 18 community radio stations, which are situated at remote, coastal belts and plain areas in order to get a clear picture of the CRs and its developmental impacts at the grassroots. These CRs are operating in 7 divisions, 18 districts and 18 Upazilas in Bangladesh. The details of the research areas were given in Table-1.

### **Research Methods Employed in this Study**

Here mixed method was employed. For quantitative data, survey method was employed to get information regarding profiles of the listeners and the role of the CRs in Bangladesh. For content analysis authentic literatures like books, research reports, journal articles, conference and seminar papers etc. were consulted. To obtain an overview of the profiles of the community radios, expert consultations were made with the managers, assistant managers, programmes procedures and other office bearers. The researcher's observations were also recorded. For qualitative data, case studies method was adopted to achieve triangulation and credibility.

### **Sampling Techniques**

Quantitative data were collected from three types of samples for this study. In category 1, station managers and office bearers were selected and on the other hand, category 2 represented members of the listener's club and category 3 were the general villagers and beneficiaries of the community radios. In this study 70 listeners from each community radio

were interviewed through a pre-tested structured questionnaire and the total sample in this category was  $(70 \times 18) = 1260$  respondents. In each CR station, taking 3 officials and managers, the total respondents were  $(3 \times 18) = 54$ . Lastly, taking 10 beneficiaries from all CRs, respondents of this category were  $(10 \times 18) = 180$  respondents. In all cases, respondents were chosen purposively. The numbers of samples were given in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Sampling Design of the Study

Sample Category	Types of Respondents	Sample Size
Category 1	Station Managers and Officials	$3 \times 18 = 54$
Category 2	Member of Listeners' Club	$70 \times 18 = 1260$
Category 1	Beneficiary	$10 \times 18 = 180$
<b>Total Sample</b>		<b>1494</b>

Source: own creation

## Brief Profiles of the Community Radios in Bangladesh

In order to start community radio, Bangladesh NGOs Network for Radio and Communications (BNNRC), in conglomeration with other development organizations and civil society entities, began consultation with the government in 1998. With the active participation of the legal experts on media, university professors, experts on development communications, NGO representatives, foreign donors and development partners and representatives of civil society organizations a three-days round-table conference was organized at Dhaka and at the end of that conference “a Dhaka declaration of 2006 concerning to community radio” was made (Haq and Uddin, 2018). Under this declaration, a prompt action from the government of Bangladesh to establish community radio was recommended. After this due to ceaseless advocacy for starting community radios, the ministry of information in a press release, dated 22 April 2010, declared that government would set up 14 community radios at the initial stage. This declaration was made in line with the “Community Radio Installation, Broadcast and Operation Policy 2008” (BNNRC, 2010). In later days, government updated that policy and finally on 8 February, 2018 a government gazette notification was published on the “Policy of Establishment of Community Radio, Broadcasting and its Operation 2018” (Huq & Uddin, 2018). Ministry of Information and a2i programme of Prime Minister’s Office signed a MoU among 14 community radios on 27th May, 2014 where the main objective is to support the community radios stations considering the existing limitations, obstacles and challenges and encourage the vision of Digital Bangladesh at the grassroots level or local level community (Khan et. al, 2017). According to the Bangladesh NGO Network for Radio and Communication (BNNRC, 2010), about 61 lakh people in 115 Upazilas (sub-districts) of 16 Districts are enjoying the benefits of community radios. At the community radio station level, 5,000 'listener clubs' have been formed with listeners. At present 18 community radios are broadcasting various programmes and serving the diverse communities in Bangladesh (List of CRs is given in Table 1). All these community radios mainly focused on the life and livelihood at the grassroots level. The voices, thoughts, rights and opportunities of the deprived,

vulnerable and poor peoples are mostly emphasized in the contents of the programmes of the community radios in Bangladesh (Khan et al., 2017). So far, about 1000 staffs are working in 18 community radio stations in the country, having received training from various government and private organizations. They broadcast 480 programs for about 160 hours per day and more than 1120 hours a week, of which more than 80 hours is live and it is broadcasting 8 hours' program for the small ethnic groups and Dalits. About 70 lakh people in 125 Upazilas and 25 Districts are accessing community radio (Quoted in Obaid, 2019).

### Division-wise Distribution of Community Radio Centers in Bangladesh

Table 2 illustrates the division-wise location of the CR stations in Bangladesh. It was observed that among the 8 Divisions of Bangladesh, there is no community radio station in the Mymensingh division. The highest number of Community Radio (4 for each division) are concentrated in both Barishal and Rashahi Divisions, whereas there are 3 Community Radio stations in both Khulna and Barishal. On the other hand, in Dhaka and Sylhet division there is only one CR in each division.

**Table 2:** Division-wise Distribution of Community Radio Stations in Bangladesh

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

Source: Field data 2022

## Content of the Programs Broadcast by Bangladesh's Community Radios

In order to fulfill 3<sup>rd</sup> objectives it is known that community radio is extremely rich in content. Community radios in Bangladesh are used to broadcasting diverse types of programme with huge magnitude. Most of the community radios are situated at remotest areas which are sporadically established with special purposes. Since its inception these radios are playing formidable roles at the grassroots level. These radios unlike the national radios are getting popular day by day to the local administration, cultural workers, small businessmen, fishermen, farmers, indigenous and small ethnic groups and workers. General mass of the surrounding areas of the community radios have gradually become interested in these Community Radio in Bangladesh. Through a heuristic and meticulous scrutiny of the programmes broadcasted by the community radios, the contents and issues have been organized in the following manner.

- ✓ **Agriculture:** In a country like Bangladesh, agriculture is the mainstay of rural people. Lots of programmes in agricultural practices and modernization are broadcasted by the community radios in Bangladesh. Almost all the CRs organize such programmes in different matters on agriculture, such as *Krisbi o Jibon*<sup>1</sup> (Agriculture and Livelihood), *Sbonafola Mati* (Soil that produces gold), *Fosholer Math* (A Crop Field), *Syfolo* Naogaon (Good Harvesting in Naogaon). Other programs include *Krisbi o Krisbok* (Agriculture and Farmers), agriculture awareness programs, *Amader Krisbi* (Our Agriculture), *Khet-Khamar* (Land and Farm), *Goyal Ghar* (The Cow Shed), *Bhumihin Byaktir Kotha* (Saga of Landless People). These programmes are in fact providing some basic knowledge on agriculture, which are contributing to increasing products of various agricultural commodities. Some successful cases on agriculture and best practices on agriculture are helping the farmers of Bangladesh in various ways. Agro based programs have already gained much popularity, where local farmers are being assisted by the Upazila Agricultural Officer with important information on agriculture.
- ✓ **Fisheries and Live stocks:** Most of the CRs organizes programmes of fisheries communities. Especially radio Meghna and Naf are broadcasting programmes to help the fisheries communities and they are also providing legal support through CRs. Such Programmes include hatchery, domestic animals, Fisheries, *Jele Jibon* (Life of a Fisherman), *Pranisompod* (Live Stocks Resources).
- ✓ **Programme on women's empowerment:** Innumerable programmes relating to women's empowerment are being broadcasted by all Community Radios. Such programmes include programmes against eve teasing, dowry, and other social curses that downgrade women's interest in the society, women's awareness program *Nari Kantha* (voices of the women flock) aired by the Radio Pollikontho, *Narir Kotha* (stories of women) by Radio Borendro, *Narikantha* (women's voices) by Radio Padma, are devoted to raising awareness among the people by uncovering different kinds of stories about violent against women. Radio Meghna promotes programmes on social issues and their

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<sup>1</sup> The words in the Italics are in Bangla, which were translated into English in the parentheses.

solutions for taking care of women, mother and children, disabled women. Such important issues concerning prevention of trafficking in women and children, women's health, nutrition, sanitation, women's empowerment, anti-dowry agenda, prevention of violence against women and children, gender discrimination etc. *Jago Naari* (vigilant women) are being broadcasted as weekly magazines by the Radio Jhenuk is a very laudable program. Programmes on violence against women, prevention on early marriage *Maa Amar Maa Sofol Naari* (mother, my mother is a successful women) by the Radio Meghna, 'Banglar Nari' (Bengal Women) by the Grameen Krishi Radio are in fact allowing rural women to ventilate their problems and prospects of the grassroots women. All these programmes are helping vulnerable women to consolidate their socioeconomic and cultural position of the rural women in Bangladesh.

- ✓ **Children's Programme:** Community Radios are broadcasting programmes on young and infant children. Such programmes include programmes on resistance to child marriage and suicide prevention. Protection the children from the curse of child marriage is highly advocated by the government of all developing countries but the success rate is not yet praiseworthy. So this is very important programme for the children to take care. *Ajker Shishu* (today's child) is a popular programme of Radio Meghna. Not only that there is a weekly program for children *Iache Ghuri* (Kite for making a wish list) for the children to render essential knowledge on children issues and other social issues that are causing enormous harm for the children community in the rural areas. Radio Meghna are regularly airing programmes on anti-drug program for children and prevention of child marriage which are of enormous values for the remotest rural areas.
- ✓ **Programme for the Adolescent youths:** There are some programmes on teenagers and adolescent young boys and girls which are being broadcasted by the various community radios in Bangladesh. The programme on *teenager dot com* by the Radio Jhenuk is a very popular programme. Other programmes of such typologies include *Tarunno* (youthfulness) by the Radio Padma and *Dosh-Unisher Mor* (Turning point at the juncture of 10 to 19 years) by the Grameen Krishi Radio and *Amra Kishor Amra Kishori* (we are adolescent boys and we are adolescent girl) by the Radio Meghna. Such programmes uphold the voices of the adolescent youths. CRs are contributing to immensely to protect the interest of such youth people which represents demographic dividend for Bangladesh. Therefore, such programmes are in fact, salutary for the youth people to protect themselves from various social ills, which are really very dangerous such an age in every country. *Dosh-Unisher Mor* is a campaign programme that combines media activities and community-level interventions to reach adolescents, religious leaders, community leaders and school management committees through: i) community radio program on Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health (ASRH) and Gender Based Violence (GBV) aired on Grameen Krishi Radio. This promotes events and competitions held at schools and clubs that generate discussions and raise awareness on ASRH and GBV issues. This programme aims at enhancing community-level street dramas that develop awareness on ASRH and the ways gender inequality make

women and girls vulnerable. Meghna radio are concerned with various problems of adolescence and health information. These adolescent programmes are providing cautionary signals to the young adolescent youths and giving important lessons to be learnt for this very dangerous age group.

- ✓ **Education and Entertainment Programme:** Lots of programmes containing educative and entertainment components are being aired in the CRs of Bangladesh. Such programmes are also equally demanding. Some of such programmes are : entertainment, adult and child education, the educative and entertaining program *Bayu*(Air), *Janar Ache Onke Kichu* (There are lots of things to know), English educational program *Engreji Sikhe Sofol Hobo* (Learning English we will be successful), social awareness programs, educational programs, *Gyan Bhandar* (Store of Knowledge) and *Shoptabo Jure Ajker Rajshahi* (Rajshahi by whole week), humor based shows and entertainment shows, education and other matters, *Esbo Engreji Sikhi* (Lets Learn English) to express their thoughts and talents, *Bachte Hole Shikhte Hobe* (We ought to learn to survive). *Padma Parer Jibon* (livelihood of the people of the river Padma), the special program *Chaii Tomar Bandhutto* (seeking your friendship), local entertainment and development are inspired by the community radio. Other programmes like human rights, prevention of terrorism and militancy, disability by Radio Naf; right to information, issues and possibilities of the community, information about public-private services are also some important programmes. The noon session includes programs on awareness and information sharing by the CRs. Other educative programme like *Gunijon* (The Scholars), *Itihasbar Batighor* (History and lighthouse), SDG (Sustainable Development Goals) related programs and various problems of local people by the Radio Boral; Tourism, about life and professionals and important issues like budget, local arts and crafts, social security allowances, programs for the students, talk of Wiseman by the Borendro Radio has been working on various issues such as- entertainment, elderly citizen programs, investigative talk show *Jhenuker Dorpon* (a mirror of Oyster) and *Dekhar Majhe Odekha* (unseen what is seen) by Radio Jhenuk; rural folk entertainment- a talk show with prominent figures by the Radio Chilmary.
- ✓ **Programmes on Arts, Literatures and local/indigenous Culture:** Programmes like local cultural events, songs, plays and folk songs are also included in the schedule of Community Radios. Other programmes on such category are: literature (Radio Sagordip); ceremonial programs, song-poetry shows participated by local artists (Radio Borendro); local arts and crafts (Radio Boral) etc. are some mention-worthy programmes. The indigenous language show *Baba Sondesh*(Tasty Sweets) is very popular in the aboriginal countryside, traditional *Gambhira*<sup>1</sup> songs program *Gamcha Mathol* (Performing

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<sup>1</sup> *Gambhira* is a type of song originating in South Asian Country. In West Bengal (India), gambhira performances are centred around the Malda District whereas Chapai Nawabganj District is the main centre of Gambhira performances in Bangladesh. The tradition is also popular in the nearby districts of Rajshahi and Naogaon. It is performed with a particularly distinctive rhythm and dance with two performers, always personifying a man and his maternal grandfather, discussing a topic to raise social awareness.



Drama putting on traditional cotton towel), *Sadhu Sangha* (Association of Saints) for Baul artists (local folk artist) by Radio Mahananda; plays, drama by Nalta Radio, poetry and literature programs *Shankhabhil* (The Vulture); programs related to local culture, *Kobir Kobita Bhalobasbar a-Pith o-Pith* (Poems and poetry and dissecting love affairs), *Tarai Tarai* (the talks among the drama artists) etc. are some good programs in this category.

- ✓ **Programmes on Science and Technology:** Development of science and technology are basic factors for becoming a developed nation. Without proper knowledge of science and technology no nation can flourish. Such programmes include *Biggan o Projukti* (Science and technology), *Projukti o Jibon* (Technology and Life), education information technology etc.
- ✓ **Environment, Weather Forecast and Disaster Mitigation:** Community Radios are playing formidable roles in weather forecast and disaster management. Such programmes aired by the CRs of Bangladesh are: Disaster warning signals, area based disaster safety drill reports are among the programs that are aired by the Radio Sagorgiri, disaster management by Radio Bikrampur, recent weather update fast during natural calamities through Radio Sundarban, information related to natural disasters by Radio Chilmari, various awareness programs by radio Chilmari, Weather and Disaster forecasts and news on environment and biodiversity awareness by Radio Naf, lessening the danger of calamity by Radio Sarabela, weather updates, awareness messages by Lokobetar radio, weather forecast and weather news are also being broadcasted. *Durjog Prostuti* (Preparation for disaster mitigation) by Radio Meghna; local weather forecasts and saving the Noboganga River, protection of the environment by Radio Jhenuk; Climate Change, *Durjoge Amra* (we are in time of crisis) by the Grameen Krishi Radio. Thus CRs are saving the environment and livelihood of the people of the coastal belt and other isolated places.
- ✓ **Voices of the marginalized people:** CRs are paying equal attention for the downtrodden people of the society. They are organizing programmes like the *Prantojoner Kotha* (sharing life story of the marginalized people), Dalit (schedule caste), Common gender (transgender people), Dalits and Horizons<sup>1</sup> (Schedule caste and tribe), programme on *Rakhine* (a minor ethnic groups originated from Myanmar). These are some unique programmes through which the backward class people can ventilate their problems, life style and culture. Thus, unheard voices are coming out through their own mouths to the society and community radio have emerged as a platform for upholding their thoughts and aspirations.

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<sup>1</sup> The Dalits and Horizons belong to the scheduled caste and they are known as the 'untouchables' in many parts of South Asia. They face discrimination at all levels in the society. Like India, they have been given a low status in the society in Bangladesh. Enjoying a backward position with a poor outlook they are mostly illiterate falling prey many social problems such as child-marriage, dowry and superstitious behaviour in general. Sometimes they face severe forms of human rights violations, torture, destruction of houses, land grabbing, eviction from land, threats and intimidation in Bangladesh.

- ✓ **Programme on Development Activities and Rural Community development:** Some CRs are playing role of keeping villagers and local people aware about development activities and programmes carried out by the government. Programmes like rural community development (Radio Nalta), various development programs (Radio Mukti), local developmental news (Radio Borendro) undertaken by public authorities deserved special mention in this regard. Broadcasting programmes like *Unmoyondhara* (Development Trends) broadcasted by the radio Padma is a programme through which local people are getting snapshot of government development efforts. Thus, villagers are getting chance to update their knowledge on development activities by the public authorities, private sectors and NGO development programmes in Bangladesh.
- ✓ **Health related programme:** Lots of peoples are listening to various health programme in the CRs. People are getting utterly conscious for their good health. The types such programmes are: coastal people's health and surroundings; *Apnar Doctor* (Your doctor) where a doctor talks to the listeners directly, family planning program *Suroksha* (Protection), *Shushtho Thakun* (Keep in good health), *Shekorer Shondhane* (In Search of Origin), welfare programs for children and women, health awareness programs to raise public awareness on health, rumors awareness and prevention of dengue and malaria; health-based- *Bhalo Thaki* (Keep healthy), *Shastho Kotha*(health talks), *Sasthoi Shukh* (Good health is happiness), *Pushti Kotha*(Nutrition), *Deho-Mon* (Mind and body). The rural people are basically marginalized and vulnerable and a lion's part of the rural people do not have means to take care for their health during drug removal, safe drinking water by Naf Radio. Some CRs are organizing health programmes to provide health care knowledge through health programme for the poor people. Sometimes many patients are getting help from a doctor through live programmes organized by the CRs.
- ✓ **Programme on IQ and general knowledge:** Quiz Quiz, *Dhiman* (Talent Hunts) are some popular programmes aiming at promoting young students and talent hunts. These are helping young students to keep updates and having command on various general knowledge issues like games on sports, history and culture, international affairs, contemporary world politics, issues and problems of Bangladesh society and important issues and concern of Bangladesh.
- ✓ **Programmes on Games and Sports:** At this moment Bangladeshi people have become very much interested to keep themselves updated about the sports world. In a bid to satisfy the demands, CRs are broadcasting various programmes on sports news and they are sharing news containing local, national, regional and International Sports News from all over the world. Bangladeshi people are very fond of cricket and football couple with long tennis, volleyball for males and females. Irrespective of caste, sex, age, birth or origin, economic status, living place everybody in Bangladesh wish to get news of sports from the globe and CRs are helping the process. Such programmes include *Kreera Kantho* (Voices of Sports) by the Padma Radio; local, national

and international sports (Sagardeep Radio); and sports news (Radio Jhenuk) and so on.

- ✓ **Programmes on Legal Matters:** Some of the CRs are presenting programmes on legal issues. Rural people are used to becoming worse victim to their ignorance of complex rules and regulations that govern the socio-political milieu of Bangladesh. Therefore, informing legal matters and its implications and usages are no less insignificant to survive and sustain their livelihood in the rural society. Poor people are extremely vulnerable to the influential rural power mongering rural elites. Sometimes their vulnerabilities are augmented manifold by the negative imposition/implication or misinterpretation of legal matters. In such a situation CRs are bolstering rural marginalized people by orienting themselves with proper legal armament of the Bangladeshi society. *Ain-Kanun* (Rules and regulations), legal ideas belong to this category of programmes.
- ✓ **Market News:** The pivotal feature of a globalized world demands fulfilling of myriad needs and requirements and the local people wish to get updated information about the price list of all sorts of commodities they badly need to continue their normal life in the rural society. CRs are providing various kinds of market news for the rural population some of which are daily market news and local market rate (Radio Lokobetar), news related to the trade, *Kanar Haat Bajar* (Market for the blind people) (Radio Padma), public-private information services (Radio Lokobetar), marketing of the local goods (Radio Boral).
- ✓ **Local Govt. Activities:** Now-a-days it is the demand of the rural people to get sufficient information regarding the development activities carried out by the local government activities (Radio Lokobetar). CRs are sharing information on local development and socio-economic development project being sponsored by the local govt. Thus, local people are getting knowledge and information of local government, which help develop a stake and sense of ownership of the rural people.
- ✓ **Liberation and war of independence:** Bangladesh achieved its independence through a nine month bloody armed struggle with a loss of 3 million people of the land. Provided this fact in the hearts, many of the community radios are broadcasting lots of programmes that include *Amader Mukti Joddho* (our liberation war) by Radio Padma, liberation (Radio Mukti), liberation war-related talk show *Muktir Kotba* (talks on liberation war) by Radio Nalta, freedom fighters by Radio Jhenuk. These are very popular programmes broadcasted by the CRs.
- ✓ **Employment seeking:** CRs broadcast various kinds of programme for the unemployed youths such as The *Jibikar Janala* (Window of employment) program helps unemployed youth with a variety of job news. Self-initiated jobs, Job Market, *Chakerir Khobor* (Job news), *Kormokorta* (Officers) etc. All these programmes aim at facilitating unemployed rural people to meet their need to seek for suitable jobs at the urban areas or city areas.

- ✓ **Saaj Sojja:** Community Radios are cautious about women's fitness and beautification programme. *Saaj Sojja* (Decoration for Beautification) is one of such kind of programmes, which is broadcasted by the Meghna Community Radio. Through this programme rural women are getting hygienic way for keeping themselves smart.
- ✓ **Cooking Programme:** Some CRs are giving knowledge on various culinary programmes and village women are keeping themselves updates on different food preparations. *Amader Rannaghor* (Our Kitchen) by Radio Meghna is a popular programmes of such type.
- ✓ **Religious programme:** Values and ethics are important to morally developed nations. So some CRs organize programmes on religion to equip the rural society with moral armament. Religious program *Poroshmoni* (touch of religious gems) by Nalta Radio is a good programme on religion.
- ✓ **Social awareness programs for precautionary measures:** Programmes like prevention of fire outbreak, safety against accidental deaths, are prescribed by Radio Chilmarī. Social Awareness Programme by Radio Pollikontho; interviews of cooperative youths by Radio Jhenuk are important.
- ✓ **Listeners' club:** There are interactive programmes aired by the CR i.e. daily contact with the listeners based on SMS where listeners can listen to their requested songs in the Jhenuk Radio. Apart from this, regular arrangements of listeners clubs meeting, listeners' groups, and local and modern music programs, direct live programmes with the listeners, listeners' participation program are special programs aired by the CRs. To inspire others to join such programs different initiatives have been taken like Facebook reactions, mobile reactions and reading of listener's letter and their responses are important to mention.
- ✓ **Musical show/songs:** *Gaaner Vela* (Musical Program) by radio Jhenuk, Radio Meghna broadcasts music shows, *Gaaner Bhela* (Time for music), Songs, To-let *Tomay Gaan Shonabo* (entertainment with music), *Bhalobasho Mor Gaan* (love my songs), *Baul Mon* (a program for folk songs), *Gaane Gaane Adda* (chatting with songs), *Bhinno Shader Matir Gaan* (songs of the soil with different taste), *Banglai Gaan Gai* (singing Bangla Song), various music *Onurodber Ashor* (songs on request), local songs and folk songs, *Kotha Shilpir Kotha ebong Sona Monider Ashor* (Talk show with an artist and programmes with children), *Bauler Ashor* (musical program for the local/folk singers) are also included in such category.
- ✓ **Local News:** Programmes like local news, Padma news, news-based program *Ajker Chapainawabganj* (today's Chapainawabganj), *Nijhum dwip<sup>1</sup> news* (News of

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<sup>1</sup> *Nijhum Dwip* is a Bangla word meaning 'Silent Island' It is a small island under Hatiya upazila. It is situated in Noakhali District in Bangladesh. Once it was called *Char Osmani*, *Baluar Char*, *Golden Island*. A cluster of islands (mainly, Ballar Char, Kamlar Char, Char Osman and Char Muri) emerged in the early 1950s as an alluvium in the shallow estuary of the Bay of Bengal on the south of Noakhali. These new sandbanks first drew the notice of a group of fishermen, who named it Baular Char (literally, the alluvium of sand) later transformed into Ballar Char.

Nijhum Dwip), local radio news, news from the newspapers, newspapers headlines, local development news, daily events stream belongs to such programs. Apart from this, various events, talks, and interviews are aired in the CRs.

- ✓ **Celebration of public days:** Almost all the Community Radios are used to broadcasting various public days either those are of National or International significances.

i) Programmes on national days: The programmes of important national days broadcasted in the Community Radios include different national days such as the Shaheed Dibash (21 February) (Martyrs' Day), the Independence Day (26 March), Pahela Baishakh or Bangla Navabarsa (New Year's Day, 1<sup>st</sup> day of the Bangla Month) and the Bijoy Dibash (Victory Day, 16 December) are the national days commonly observed in Bangladesh.

- **Shaheed Dibash:** The 21st day of February (EKUSHEY FEBRUARY) is being officially observed as the Shaheed Dibash (Martyrs' Day) since the emergence of Bangladesh. On this day in 1952, students and youths, rose in protest against the imposition of Urdu by the then government as the lone state language of Pakistan. The day has also been accorded recognition by the UNESCO as the INTERNATIONAL MOTHER LANGUAGE DAY in 1999, and the day is being observed accordingly throughout the world since 2000 AD.
- **Independence Day:** The independence of Bangladesh was declared on 26 March 1971 following the crackdown by the Pakistani army on the night of 25 March 1971. Since then, the day has been observed as the Independence Day. On 3 October 1980, the government headed by President Ziaur Rahman decided to observe it as the National Day as well. On this occasion the National Flag is hoisted atop all public buildings, and the streets and houses are draped in banners and festoons. In the morning, the school children take part in parade, games and sports, and in the evening, cultural and film shows are presented and the streets are illuminated. Special diet is served in hospitals, orphanages and prisons marking significance of the day.
- **Pahela Baishakh:** The Bangla Navabarsa or Pahela Baishakh has been part of the country's folk tradition since time immemorial. Baishakhi Mela or festival is the oldest and biggest secular event of the year and very much a part and parcel of indigenous Bangali culture. Bangla calendar is intimately linked with the economy and productivity of the country and forms the basis of Bangali nationalism. The calendar is rooted in agricultural cycle, and this association is evident from the fact that the

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During winter, thousands of migratory bird flock in to island. The fishermen use the airy and sunny land as an ideal place for drying their catches from the sea. Sometimes many of them also construct straw huts on the island as seasonal residences.

Bangla year was also known as 'fasli year' or crop year. It has no religious bias, and draws freely on both Sanskrit and Perso-Arabic tradition.

- ***Bijoy Dibash:*** It is known as the (Victory Day, 16 December) for the Bangladeshi people because on this day in 1971 (16 December) the Pakistan occupation army surrendered to the allied forces of Bangladesh and India at Suhrawardy Udyan in Dhaka. The day is observed with due solemnity and nationalistic fevour. The first ray of the morning is heralded with a 31 gun-salute. In capital Dhaka, there is usually a ceremonial military parade in which all uniformed services are represented. Hundreds of thousands of people gather at the National Parade Square to watch this parade. Floral wreaths are laid at the Jatiya Smriti Saudha (National Memorial Monument) at Savar near Dhaka in memory of those who sacrificed their lives for the liberation of the country.

ii) The Community Radios broadcast special programmes of some of the important international days. Some of the significant international events the CRs arranged special programmes are as follows:

- **International Mother Language Day (21 February):** They aired programmes on International Mother Language Day on 21 Feb. to commemorate the significance of the day. This February 21 day is remembered globally and it is observed as the *shabeed* day or mother language day as well. On this particular day some Bangladeshi valiant students namely Rafique, Jabbar, Salam, Barkat were killed while the police opened fire in the procession on 21 Feb 1952. The students demanded for Bangla to be given the status of the state language. It is so important incident that no other nations but Bangladeshis have laid down their blood shed for establishing the rights of their mother tongue. In recognition of the struggle and sacrifices of the heroic Bengalis, and to promote and sustain every language in the world the UNESCO declared 21st February as international mother language day in 1998.
- **International Women's Day (8 March):** International Women's Day is celebrated on the 8th of March every year around the world. The purpose of this day is to celebrate the social, economic and cultural achievements of women in various walks of life. In spite of strong women's rights moments and feminism moments around the world, they have not achieved equal rights in many parts of the world. Women play an important role in building society as well as in building families. The problem that women rights movement addresses are female infanticide, equal pay, women safety in public places. domestic abuse. child marriage etc. Irrespective of what laws are in place, unless we change our mentality towards women, it will be difficult to create a just society in the world.

- **International Day of the Girl (11 Oct):** Besides being a fundamental human right, gender equality is essential to achieve societies with economic growth and sustainable development. Yet in many places, discrimination and violence against girls and women is still rampant. International Day of the Girl (October 11) aims to shine a light on these injustices and the many challenges girls still face. The origins of the annual event go back to 1995 with the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the most comprehensive policy agenda for women's empowerment to date. Since then, more girls have gone on to attend school while fewer are getting married or becoming mothers while still children themselves.
- **May Day (1 May):** May Day or International Workers Day is observed on May 1 all over the world today to commemorate the historical struggle and sacrifices of the working people to establish an eight-hour workday. It is a public holiday in almost all the countries of the world. The day is marked in order to ensure better working conditions, better pay and better lives for the working people.

## **Summary of the programmes contents of the CRs in Bangladesh**

The programmes of the community radios in Bangladesh are so diverse that it can cater the needs and aspiration of the grassroots level vulnerable and marginalized communities sometimes those are generally bypassed by most of the mainstream media institutions and CRs here have come forward to voice their needs and aspirations of the million tolls. The contents of the programmes of the CRs are very rich which include all areas of knowledge, development and governance. The wide ranges of issues the community radios deal with are: agriculture, fisheries, live stocks, crop diversity; women empowerment, problem of child marriage, youths and adolescents women; women trafficking, violence against women; job seeking problems for the unemployed youths, environmental degradation, bio-diversity, climate change, disaster management and mitigation, lots of educational programme on entertainment, SDG, Budget, marketing of agricultural products, drama and poetry, musical programme for classical, modern and local folk songs; news programmes, daily newspapers headings, religion, talk show on contemporary political, social and economic issues, local news, programme for intellectual discourse, quiz competition, wisemen's perspectives, talk show on the important and heartthrob dramatists, interview of the

successful entrepreneurs, businessmen, market news, celebration of both national and international days, warning of disaster preparedness, accidents and earthquake, programme for fishermen community, special local programme, to represent dominant local and indigenous culture of the various areas, listening clubs, learning English, finally broadcasting of national news from the Bangladesh betar and so on.

## Listeners' Profiles of the Community Radios in Bangladesh

Here some basic data of the listeners of the community radios in Bangladesh are presented with brief analysis.

### Age Distribution of the Respondents

Table 3 shows the age category of the responders which falls into six groups. From the table, it is clear that the majority (36%), of the respondents was aged between 10-21 years old with 458 respondents and the number of lowest respondents was 21 (2%) that belonged to the age of above 61 years. Percentages of respondents belonging to the age group of 21-30 years, 31-40 years, 41-50 years and 51-60 years were 30%, 17%, 11%, 4% and 4% respectively, followed by the lowest 2% who belonged to 61 years plus age group. The findings imply that most of the respondents were found under the age of 21 years and they were actively engaged with various programmes of the Community Radio. It is mention-worthy that community radios are playing an important role to educate these rural youths who are the hopes and last resorts of future Bangladesh and whose leadership are exigently crucial for a country like Bangladesh.

**Table 3:** Age Distribution of the Respondents

Age group	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
10-21	458	36%
21-30	375	30%
31-40	211	17%
41-50	140	11%
51-60	55	4%
61+	21	2%
Total	1260	100%

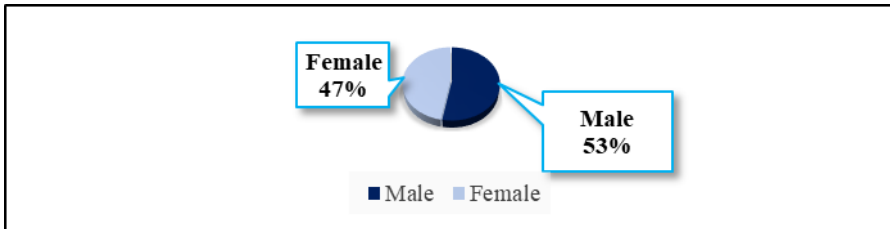
Source: field data 2022



## Types of Gender of the Respondents

From Figure 1, it is evident that the majority 662 (53%) respondents, out of 1260 respondents was male. The number of male respondents is higher than the female entrepreneurs by around 6%, which was 598(47%). This result reveals that both male and female students were engaged with the community radio programmes of Bangladesh.

Figure 1. Types of Gender of the Respondents



Source: Field Data, 2022

## Occupational Pattern of the Respondents

From the occupational status (Table 4), it was found that the majority (44%) of the respondents were students. Besides a good number of respondents were housewives i.e. 260 (21%), which was followed by respondents belonging to 10% in business, 9% in agriculture and 7% were involved in service. Very few respondents were found involved in day labourer, fishermen, driving and various professional group. The findings revealed the fact that students, housewives, business people and agricultural workers were the prominent listeners of the community radio programmes in Bangladesh.

Table 4: Occupational Pattern of the Respondents

Sl. No.	Name of Occupation	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1	Students	559	44.37%
2	Housewives	260	20.63%
3	Business	127	10.08%
4	Agriculture	118	9.37%
5	Service	92	7.30%
6	Day labors	39	3.10%
7	Fishermen	23	1.83%
8	Drivers	20	1.60%
9	Various professions	15	1.19%
10	Unemployed/Retired/Old	7	.55%
	Total	1260	100%

Source: Field Data, 2022

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- i) **Various profession includes:** Mason, Dyeing, Carpenter, Electrician, Tailor, Barber and Blacksmith.
  - ii) **Drivers include:** Drivers of Rickshaw, Van, Auto, Bus and Truck Driver.

### Educational Status of the Respondents

From Table 5 it is found that the majority (26%) respondents had education of 6-9 classes. Besides a good number of respondents were SSC<sup>1</sup> (17%) and HSC<sup>2</sup> passed (19%) and 12% were graduate. Very few respondents (2%) had a Master's degree. It is interesting to note that 48% of the respondents were under SSC level education and another 50% had more than SSC level of education. Unfortunately, only 14% respondents who listened to Community Radio Programmes had at least graduation level education, which implied that very few graduate people used to involve with the rural society. The findings corroborated the findings of the Table 3 which showed that undergraduate students were the main listeners of the Community Radios in Bangladesh.

**Table 5:** Educational Status of the Respondents

Level of Education	No of the Respondents	Percentage
Illiterate	20	2%
Can Sign Only	24	2%
1-5 Class	274	22%
6-9 Class	324	26%
SSC	208	17%
HSC	235	19%
Graduate	147	12%
Masters & Above	28	2%
Total	1260	100%

Source: Field data, 2022

### Use of Mobile Phone to Listen Community Radios

From Figure 2, it is found that the majority i.e. 877 (70%) of the respondents informed that they listened to the community radio program using their mobile phones. The rest 30% respondents opined that they did not listen to the community radio program on mobile. It is observed that a large number of people listen to the community radio

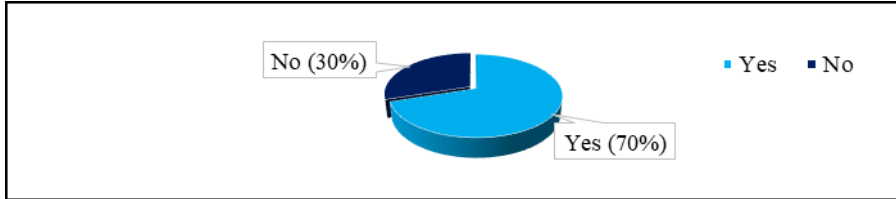
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<sup>1</sup> In Bangladesh, SSC means School Secondary Certificate examination. After 10 years schooling if any student passes SSC examination arranged by the board, he or she gets SSC certificate. It is equivalent to matriculation.

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

program, which revealed that among the listeners of community radio, using mobile was the most popular way to get engaged themselves with the CRs in Bangladesh.

**Figure 2.** Listening to the Community Radio Program on Mobile



Source: Field Data, 2022

### Reasons for Listening to the Community Radio Program

According to the Table 6, most of the respondents i.e. 48% listened to the community radio program to get information. Besides, 46% respondents listened to CRs for entertainment purpose, whereas 13% listen to community radios for educational purpose. On the other hand, 9% and 7% respondents replied that they listened to the community radio programmes for spending their leisure time and enhancing awareness respectively. The above findings implied that community radios helped the villagers to get various information which was quite important to the listeners and they could involve themselves in various development activities through getting required information from the CRs and thus CRs served the rural society in a very significant way.

**Table 6:** Reasons for Listening to the Community Radio Program

Sl. No.	Reasons	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1	Entertainment	405	46%
2	Educational Purpose	115	13%
3	Getting Information	418	48%
4	Raising Awareness	60	7%
5	Spending Leisure Time	80	9%

Source: Field Data, 2022

### Summary of the listener’s profiles

*Most of the listeners are relatively young and 44% of them were students having educational qualifications up to SSC level and above. Most of the listeners listened to the CRs with a view to know news and information all over the world and entertainment. Seventy percent listeners use mobile phones for listening to the CRs in Bangladesh.*

### Policy Interventions & Recommendations

In a bid to make community radios more effective at the grassroots level, the following suggestions are made based on the field data and rational understanding:

- ✓ The CRs in Bangladesh are sporadically located in various locations in Bangladesh, which do not follow any particular pattern. It is found from the study, there are 18 CR stations in 17 districts in Bangladesh. It was observed that among the 8 Divisions of Bangladesh, there is no community radio station in the Mymensing division. Efforts should be taken to set up Community Radio in the Mymensing division so that it can serve the inhabitants of this division.
- ✓ It was evident from the field findings that 63% of the responders belonged to the young age group (up to 30 years) and only 6% respondents were above 50 years of age. The findings imply that most of young students were actively engaged with the Community Radio. It is certainly something positive for the Bangladeshi society because in such age students can easily be derailed from their moral obligation and involving with listeners' club they have become a part of togetherness and thus they can help develop their knowledge base with moral characters.
- ✓ Majority (53%) respondents was male and the rest 47% were female students who were engaged with the community radio programmes of Bangladesh. And thus community radio is playing an important role to educate these rural youths irrespective of being male and female, who are the hopes and last resorts of future Bangladesh and whose leadership are exigently crucial for a country like Bangladesh. Therefore, these youths can be properly mobilized for bringing positive change at the grassroots.
- ✓ Regarding the occupational status of the respondents, it was found that the majority (44%) of the respondents were students and others were housewives, business, agriculture. Concerning the educational status of the respondents, it is found that 26% of the respondents had education of 6-9 classes. Apart from that, 36% respondents were at least SSC passed and 12% were graduate and 2% of the respondents had a Master's degree. Most of the listeners belonged to the high school level and it is really a good platform for them to develop their leadership with diverse knowledge and experience. It is therefore necessary to guide themselves in the best possible way so that they can provide effective leadership for the society.
- ✓ Among the respondents, 70% of the respondents shared that they listened to the community radio program using their mobile phones. Parents should come forward to render their support to help their children in listening to the programmes of the Community Radios.
- ✓ Most of the respondents i.e.79% listened to the community radio program for recreation purpose. Besides 65% listened to community radio for educational purpose. Responding to the same query, 48% informed that they listened to the community radio program to get information which is followed by 46% respondents who listened to CR for entertainment purpose.
- ✓ It was evidently observed that in most of the community radios in Bangladesh listeners used to listen community radio for entertainment purpose, therefore

it is exigently essential that CRs should organize such entertainment programme with healthy and salutary content. Songs with patriotic feelings, folk songs and programmes containing elements with indigenous culture and drama should be broadcasted in the CRs of Bangladesh.

- ✓ One of the major duties and responsibilities of the CRs is to educate the local gentry and listeners. Therefore, apart from broadcasting programmes on health, agriculture, life styles and livelihood pattern of the grassroots people, all CRs should broadcast special programmes on language, more specifically programme on learning English language should be emphasized more on CRs, which will help educate local students.

## **Conclusions**

Through this paper an attempt was taken to have a brief profile of the Community Radios in Bangladesh and a few profiles of listeners of these radios were also recorded. The study was done using both quantitative and qualitative approach. Primary data were collected using survey, case study and focus group discussion. Secondary data were collected adopting content analysis method. The study revealed that there 18 community radios in Bangladesh sporadically located in 18 districts that covered 7 divisions of Bangladesh. Among 18 CRs, only one is running by government and the rest 17 CRs are being operated by the private owners. The filed data revealed that among the listeners most of them are school students and they listened to the Community Radio using mobile phones and mostly used CRs for entertainment and getting various information and news. Community Radios in fact are used to providing lots of important development services to the community all over the country.

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