

Community Radio and its Impact over the Community Development in Sri Lanka

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Use of radio being the widest and quickest media to disseminate any kind of information for any community has being very effective and universally acknowledged. The great potential of radio communication for dissemination of information community development such as agricultural, health, economics, industrial, finance, government and local government, development information, economics and industrial etc. has been proven highly effective through many community studies conducted at ground level relating to various geographical areas. However potential usage and its impact of this powerful media has not explored extensively in Sri Lankan context. It was observed that the impact and further potential of improving remote community lives through 'community radio' is a significant area to be investigated as for some remote and special communities the wireless communication is the only potential channel of information access. Main objective of the study is to explore the status of radio channels broadcasted as a community information service. As specific objectives the study expects to explore the behavior of these channels in reaching communities and whether these channels deliver intended information required by the community categories identified and to study the impact areas that had resulted through community information delivered by these channels. Population of the survey is 961 listeners randomly selected from 47 divisional secretariats areas in seven randomly selected districts (Colombo, Matale, Matara, Hambantota, Ampara, Polonnaruwa and Badulla). Data was collected by administering a questionnaire. Findings of the study indicates that people listen to the radio specifically for the latest news and new inventions, next entertainment and for religious programs. Another important information obtained from the community channels is the economic information for marketing of agricultural produce. It was also gathered that there is a demand for economic development programmes and home economics programmes. According to the study most popular channel opted was Hiru FM and second option was Neth FM. Certain amount of responses received for Buddhist channel as well. When analysing the programme content, most people used the radio to update their knowledge by listening news and most popular service was news paper reading. This was highly popular among senior citizens. There is a higher range of responses to know about new inventions and female specific programmes such as cooking and beauty culture, women health issues etc. According to the main findings of the study it was noticed that there is a high potential to use the community radio as an effective channel to reach, unreached communities for many socio-economical/developmental, socio-technological, socio-political purposes and social welfare purposes. It was also gathered that this unleashed potential communication avenue can be used for the enhancement of community lives in many aspects such as community health, community

development, community financing, community education, industrial development especially in the lines of self employment and self financing programmes productively. Above all the channels that are being broadcasted at present need reviewed meticulously to see whether they deliver what the community need on service basis, rather than delivering the content of commercial focus. The paper present core areas identified by the communities which are treated as important for them listen.

Keywords: *Community radio, Community development, Radio programs, Community outreach, Mass media.*