

Community media are widely recognized by governments, international development agencies, and civil society organizations alike as key agents of participatory development. Their reach and practices are a unique way of reaching and involving people. This is particularly true of community radio, the most prevalent of all community media, which is a vital alternative both to state owned and commercial private radio. Community radio's affordability and reach make it a powerful agent of social change.



Recognition of community radio as a legitimate and key element in development efforts and the potential to empower marginalized and disenfranchised communities, has pushed a number of countries to introduce laws and regulations that acknowledge community radios as a distinct media sector. In those countries an enabling environment for community radios has been created.

Despite these advances, challenges persist at global and regional level and in their joint 2010 statement the four international special UN mandated rapporteurs on freedom of expression expressed their concerns at the lack of specific legal recognition of the community broadcasting sector in licensing systems which are based on criteria that are appropriate to this sector as well as the failure to reserve adequate frequencies for community broadcasters or to establish appropriate funding support mechanism.

The Ministry of Information of the Government of People's Republic of Bangladesh has declared Community Radio Installation, Broadcast and

# Strengthening Rural Voices through Community Radio in Bangladesh

By **AHM Bazlur Rahman**  
Chief Executive Officer, Bangladesh NGOs Network for Radio and Communication

Operation Policy 2008, which was the citizens' expectation since 1998. Accordingly in April, 2010, the Ministry of Information approved 14 community radio stations to operate for the first time in the country.

After the approval of license the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) allocated frequency allowing community radio stations to start broadcasting from 2011.

Now 14 community radio stations are on-air in the country, aiming to ensure empowerment and right to information for the rural community. They are broadcasting altogether 120 hours program per day on information, education, local entertainment and development motivation activities. Around 536 young men and women are now working with those stations throughout the country as rural broadcasters.

These programs are quite supportive of the activities reflected in 6th 5-year plan of Government of Bangladesh, UN World Summit on the Information Society (UN WSIS) Action Plan, and UN Millennium Development Goals (UN MDGs) and UN Convention against Corruption (UN CAC).

The success of the 1st batch of community radio stations has earned appreciation from all levels because of their commendable success. For that we give our thanks to those initiating organizations.

We also thank the Ministry of Information for making possible a full-fledged community radio policy, the only one in South Asia. India has got only a guideline to operate community radio stations, while Nepal does not have any of this kind. In 2012 the Ministry of Information declared a National Strategy for Community Radio to support implementation of Community Radio Installation, broadcast and Operation Policy.

Bangladesh NGOs Network for Radio and Communication is promoting the advocacy with the government in relations to community radio with other organizations since its emergence from 2000. BNNRC has been addressing the community radio and community TV access issue for over a decade, helping to bridge the information gap of rural Bangladesh.

Today the bondage between the community people and local-level community radio stations is getting strengthened day-by-day. Community radio has now become part of their life. Community Radio becomes the instrument for the livelihood battle of the rural people.

## Potentials of Community Radio in Bangladesh

- a. Community Radio has created scope for the poor and marginalized

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### Community Radio Stations in Bangladesh



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community to raise their own voice; it becomes the voice for the voiceless. This neo-media outlets opened scope to establish their rights of Information and communication in social, political, cultural and environmental arena.

- b. Scope widened for poverty reduction and sustainable development because of the rights to raise voice of the community and accessibility to knowledge and information.
- c. Scope opened for exchange of dialogue between local elected representatives, govt. and NGO professionals for the sake of establishing good governance.
- d. Direct linkage established between the community and the main sectors reflected in MDGs and 6th 5-year plan.
- e. Scope created for social debate, inclusion and preservation of cultural diversity by ensuring the inclusion of the marginalized community.
- f. Community radio is now able to play more active role in Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) due to establishment of effective linkage between the govt. departments and local/rural community.

Already the community radio programs have been widely accepted among the local community. 14 community radio stations presently cover more than 4.6 million listeners. This journey was not a bed of roses, we are to cross ups and downs every day we are to face newer challenges.

The Community Radios are becoming an active ground for organizing dialogues at rural level. These dialogues will help the rural mass to find out their own voice and ensure leverage their free opinion in respect of social, economic, political, cultural and environmental issues.

Bangladesh NGOs Network for Radio and Communication established the Community Media News Agency (CMNA), Community Media Academy (CMA) and Monthly Community Media to share development news & building capacity for the community media sector in Bangladesh.

We have started advocacy with the Government of Bangladesh to open up Community Television for Development. We hope that community television will come into being within a short time in Bangladesh.

# National Kazakhstani TV Anticipates New Program on Foreign Adoption

By **Aida Haidar**  
Strategic Marketing Manager

The Kazakhstan Republican Television and Radio Corporation will soon launch one of the most important TV projects of the new 2013-2014 television season – “Adopted Children from Kazakhstan.” The new program explores the lives of Kazakh adopted children in their new families and their new homelands.

Ms. Zhanar Baisemizova, Head of the creative association “TV Production” JSC RTRC “Kazakhstan” nourished the idea about this project for about six years way before she joined the family of the Kazakhstan Republican Television and Radio Corporation, where her initiative found its realization. She is the winner of the first international creative essay contest “Discovering America,” organised by the Embassy of the Republic of Kazakhstan in the U.S.

Foreign adoption has been one of the most talked about issues among Kazakhstani media makers. Some think that there should be laws with strict regulations on foreign adoption; others support the flat ban on the adoption by foreign citizens. There hasn't been any consensus on the issue.

Ms. Baisemizova says, “When I finally had a chance to work on this project, I was trying to look at it with an open and clear mind. I didn't want to have any prejudices or notions that would hold me back from doing my job as a journalist.”

The author's initial goal was to show the lives of ex-Kazakhstani citizens abroad

as it is. However, as she was meeting new families and children, her initial goal changed. Many children knew that they were from Kazakhstan, however they never thought that their homeland is still interested in their lives.

Zhanar Baisemizova says that the Kazakhstan National TV channel's main focus is to preserve our national identity. She also said she was able to start the project at this network not only because it was her dream for a long time, but also because the network needed to strengthen its position as a frontier media when it comes to the national interest.

“We hope that the Kazakhstan National TV's project will help to enhance discussion in our society about the issue of foreign adoption and give more insight information about the lives of our children. I believe the program will help our society find the right solution to the problem. Me and everyone at the network want to emphasize that they are our children and always be. They should always know that no matter where they are, they will always have a home here, in Kazakhstan.” Zhanar Baisemizova said.

