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Community Radio Installation, Broadcast and Operation Policy 2017

Preamble

No: 15.00.0000.022.34.022.13-28 At the age of the enormous development of science and information technology the world turns to be a 'Global Village'. It has been assumed that the importance of radio has declined at the age of the global domination of electronic media but in reality the importance of radio hasn't decreased in developed, developing & least developed countries. Moreover, radio is playing vital role by its new initiatives of creative programming to develop education, culture, humanitarian values, and awareness for cross section of people of the society. In continuation of these realities, a number of community radios have been installed which are dedicated to the different grass root communities and population of the society of Bangladesh. These radio stations, known as community radio have been operating in local dialects of the peripheral communities, and with their participation and management. Community Radios are engaged with the help of modern knowledge and technology to bring positive change in the society by local folk culture.

2. Community radio is the "Voice of the Voiceless". To expand and smoothen the role of community radio as a tool of social progress, it was felt to formulate a new and timely policy by terminating the existing community radio installation, broadcast and operation policy. As a result the Community Radio Installation, Broadcast and Operation Policy 2017 have been formulated.

By the order of the President

Md. Mojibur Rahman
Deputy Secretary

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Community Radio Installation, Broadcast and Operation Policy 2017

In terms of immediacy, availability and reach, the role of radio as a means of communication is undeniable. Therefore, even following the unprecedented development of Science and Information Technology (IT), the importance of this medium hasn't decreased in developed, developing and least developed countries. Hereafter, radio in Bangladesh, which started its journey in a small scale on December 16, 1939, has evolved in quality and quantity over the years into this present shape. Alongside, providing information, entertainment and education as the oldest and single largest public service broadcaster, Bangladesh Betar (Radio) has also been serving the important responsibility of raising public awareness and above all involving the general public of all levels in national development for around last seven decades.

In the age of free flow of information, private owned commercial FM radio stations are now operating in the country to fulfill the demand of multi-dimensional appropriateness. FM radio stations, mainly urban centric, usually broadcast entertainment programs. In continuation of that, as per the policy of 2008, some radio stations dedicated for different communities in rural Bangladesh have been installed. Those radio stations, known as community radio, have been operating in the local dialect of the marginalized communities, as well as with their active participation and even by their management. As a result, based on expectation of rural communities the radio stations contributing a lot by nurturing the indigenous knowledge, resources, culture of rural communities combining with modern knowledge and technologies to build a better rural society.

To expand and smoothen the role of community radio, as a tool of social progress, it was required to formulate a new community radio installation, broadcast and operation policy by terminating the previous one, and thus the new policy has been adapted..

1.0 Concept of Community Radio:

- 1.1 A Community is considered to be a group of people who have common folk heredity socio-economic and cultural attributes, who are living in a specific geographic location such as in a specific town, village or locality, and they share indifferent social and economic livelihood by participating in mutual exchange of business-trade, marketing, service and goods. .
- 1.2 Community Radio, a broadcasting medium, shall be owned, managed and operate by grass root community. It is run by non-profit manner. It aims to serve the particular community and create scope to flourish their folks, socio-economic and cultural life. Community Radio works in direct participation with people of a specific geographical area. Moreover, it is a property of the community that reflects thinking, mind-set, and thoughts of the particular community.
- 1.3 Community radio is such a medium which gives voice to the grass root people and helps them to express themselves and develop, and it works as their primary communication channel. Moreover, it strengthens the democratic process of the society.
- 1.4 Community radio is known as third model beyond the government-run and Commercial broadcasters.

2. Fundamental Principles of Community Radio:

Internationally recognized and accepted fundamental principles of community radio will also be followed in Bangladesh. Any organization or institution intending to operate community radio must fulfill the following conditions:

- 2.1 Community radio will run as a non-profit entity by any organization, institutions or community;
- 2.2 The broadcast programs schedule must include education, agriculture, health, society; locality based rural development of women, environment, weather, climate change, disaster management, culture and other development issues, and publicity against violence, militancy and drugs.
- 2.3 Community Radio will be committed to serve the targeted community and include them in its program broadcasting;
- 2.4 With the participation of local community, the broadcast system will be operated.
- 2.5 Communities who don't have access to the mainstream media will get preference to establish community radio.;
- 2.6 Those institutions or organizations, which are working for marginalized or disadvantage people of society will get preference for establishing community radio;

3.0 Eligibility criterias to get permission /license to establish and operate community radio in Bangladesh

- 3.1 The following types of organizations/institutions shall be considered eligible to apply for installing and operating of Community Radio:
 - 3.1.1 Research and development organizations, and educational and training institutions which are certified by the proper authorities
 - 3.1.2 Non-government development organizations or institutions, which have at least five years of experiences of working on poverty alleviation/mass media/information technology and development interventions at the community level
 - 3.1.3 The organizations or institutions must have a legal status or be registered with NGO Affairs Bureau (NGO AB)
 - 3.1.4 The concern institutions or organizations must have a management committee, who have immense understanding on the thought and values of the community and marginalized people and committee will be run under a bylaws.

3.2 The following organizations or institutions shall be ineligible to run a community radio:

- 3.2.1** Either individual or joint business organization;
- 3.2.2** Political Parties or their affiliated and associated organizations etc.
- 3.2.3** Companies or organizations, both local and foreign, which distribute profits to the owners/shareholders;
- 3.2.4** International/Foreign NGOs or foreign broadcasters/channels; and
- 3.2.5** Organizations or institutions banned by the Government; and
- 3.2.6** Organizations or institutions which is declared bankrupt or convicted in criminal offenses by an appropriate court.

4.0 Licensing process:

- 4.1** The following procedures will be followed to establish a community radio station:
 - 4.1.1** For public interest, aiming to give permission and licence, the government will call for applications in prescribe format from eligible institutions and organizations;
 - 4.1.2 In addition to the documents required in the application form, the following documents should also be included –**
 - a.** A brief outline of the type of programs should be provided which the applicants like to air;
 - b.** Descriptions of the targeted population
 - c.** Indication of the level of community’s participation in honorary management structure and making of a program and broadcasting guideline of the proposed radio station shall be stated clearly;
 - d.** The sources of funding for installing the radio station shall be mentioned. If any support is taken from any non-government organization or organization itself as an initiator, then necessary approval from the NGO Affairs Bureau as per existing law shall be obtained.
 - 4.1.3** The Ministry of Information shall form a Regulatory Committee and a Technical Sub-Committee for the assessment of received applications and selection of eligible applicants;
 - 4.1.4** The Technical Sub-Committee shall submit list of the eligible applicants to the National Regulatory Committee after scrutinizing the applications along with recommendations.
 - 4.1.5** The Ministry of Information will take the security clearance from the Ministry of Home affairs about the applicants’ organizations or institutions;
 - 4.1.6** Before giving approval, the Ministry of Information shall take a ‘Probability of Frequency’ report from Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC). Besides the organizations or institutions those have a license have to take the permission/ license about frequency allocation and radio equipment’ from the BTRC before starting the broadcasting activities.

- 4.1.7** The government will give temporary license to install a single community radio at the preliminary phase to the eligible applicant who fulfilled the criteria aforementioned;
- 4.1.8** The applicant shall set up Community Radio Station within 1 (one) year after receiving the temporary license. Otherwise, the license will be considered as terminated. But, the government can extend the deadline if the organization or institution can raise satisfactory rational. ;
- 4.1.9** Existing laws and regulations must be obeyed for the import and install of any radio equipment for the establishment of community radio station. Beside organizations and institutions shall fulfill the conditions of BTRC in this regard.
- 4.1.10** The test transmission/broadcasting activity shall be started within 1 (one) year after the installation of the station. In case of failure the government can confiscate the security money and starts the procedure of cancellation of the license.
- 4.1.11** The duration of the test transmission/broadcasting will be for one year. After end of this period, if the test broadcasting activity satisfies the government, the organization or institutions will get the regular license upon the condition of following specific terms and conditions. By paying of fees, it could be renewed in yearly basis.
- 4.1.12** Upon the government permission, any institution or organization, which has already received regular license, could establish and operate two more community radios. In that case geographical coverage will be considered.
- 4.1.13** After receiving regular licence and satisfactory broadcast operation, the community radio can streams its programs online subject to acquire pre-approval from the government and follow concern rules and regulations..

4.2 License Fee and Deposit:

Considering community radio as a development initiative and non-profitable entity, the government has fixed the following reasonable fees:

- 4.2.1** Approved institutions have to pay taka one lac (BDT 100,000) around 1250 US \$ each as deposit money while taking regular license and have to pay twenty thousand Taka (BDT 20,000) around 250 US \$ as license fee.
- 4.2.2** After test broadcasting, community radio station have to pay ten thousand Taka (BDT 10,000/) around 125 US \$ while taking regular license.
- 4.2.3** Frequency fees shall be decided by Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC).
- 4.2.4** The Government reserves the rights to re-fix these fees and deposit at any time.

4.3 Renewal of License:

- 4.3.1** Annual license renewal fees will be ten thousands Taka (BDT 10,000) around 125 US \$
- 4.3.2** To renew the license, organization/institution has to apply 30 days before the end of the fiscal year and in case of failure to apply in due time, it has to pay three thousand Taka (BDT 3000/-) as surcharge and get the licence by 30th September of the next fiscal year. The Government reserves all rights to re-fix the surcharge.
- 4.3.3** The Government reserves all rights to re-fix this fee and surcharge.

4.4 Rules and regulations for changing Name/ transferring license:

The name of community radio cannot be changed or the ownership of license cannot be transferred without prior permission from the government. For restructuring, the organization or institution has to take written permission from the Government. No community radio can be named after a locality or organization. .

4.5 License Postponed and Cancellation:

The Government can postpone or cancellation license for one or more than one reasons described below:

- 4.5.1** If licensee fails to pay dues of government against license or agreement within the given time;
- 4.5.2** Violation of any condition on frequency allocation of BTRC; and
- 4.5.3** Violation of any condition/conditions of this policy.

5.0 Technical Structure/specifications:

- 5.1** Each Community Radio Station will cover a range of 25 kilometers radius from its center. Maximum limit for transmitter power could be 250 watts.
- 5.2** The maximum height of antenna tower will be 32 meters from ground. But for sparsely populated areas such as islands and hills area, the mentioned height can be varies upon prior approval of the licensing authority to achieve the desired coverage. In all cases antenna gain must be kept limited under 6 DB;
- 5.3** Frequency shall be allocated in FM band according to area specific National Frequency Allocation Plan.

6.0 Broadcast related terms and conditions:

- 6.1** Terms and Conditions related to Broadcast: The licensee (institution or organization) shall ensure that the broadcasting programs will not include the contents which:
 - 6.1.1** Contains any form of mockery or insult to National principles or purpose, humiliation of people, group or community, and offending to the integrity or solidarity of Bangladesh as an independent country;
 - 6.1.2** Promotes hatred against races and classes to create unrest and division, criticism, insult or attack against any specific religion, creates hatred or division against any particular race or faith group ;
 - 6.1.3** Programs or advertisement should be synchronized with the existing laws, values and practice, heritage and culture of the country;;
 - 6.1.4** Carries criticism and unnecessary propagation against the country or the government
 - 6.1.5** degrades women and children;
 - 6.1.6** degrades persons with disabilities;
 - 6.1.7** Encourages or supports the use of drugs including alcohol, narcotics and tobacco;

6.2 The following information should not be broadcast:

- 6.2.1** Private or confidential or disgraceful information about any individuals shall not be broadcast;
- 6.2.2** Any information that could hamper the security of the state shall not be broadcast;
- 6.2.3** Any incident or formatting or distortion of information that could be harmful for any community, history or dignity of the state shall not be broadcast;
- 6.2.4** Any incident related to any rebellion, anarchy and violence that could interrupt public interest shall not be broadcast;
- 6.2.5** Any program or advertisement that encourages corruption directly or indirectly shall not be broadcast;
- 6.2.6** Broadcasting any program or statement that hurts religious values, non-communal spirit or encourages breaching the law and order or creates sympathy to violate laws and order are strongly prohibited.

7.0 Conditions for Advertisement:

- 7.1** For bearing organizational cost, commercial advertisement can be broadcast maximum 10 (ten) percent of total broadcasting time.
- 7.2** Advertisement should be related to development and mass-awareness and must be limited to specific areas of interest;
- 7.3** Cannot broadcast any program or advertisement which may create discrimination or division among different religions or their followers;
- 7.4** Advertiser/ sponsoring authority cannot influence the program or programs contents or style and policy of the station; and
- 7.5** While airing advertisement, the radio will broadcasts existing government announcement and laws/regulations/instructions given by government and updated in course of time.

8.0 Other Instructions:

- 8.1** Each of the licensed radio station will have a Management Committee. Active and inclusive participation of the target community members must be ensured in the operation and management of the station. At the time of program production community participation should be ensured.
- 8.2** Regarding station management and programming, the licensed radio station will promote equity and justice with special priority to the marginalized communities considering their race, caste, religion, physical disability and gender
- 8.3** The station authority builds capacity of the community people through formal/informal training with a view to enhancing skills;
- 8.4** If Bangladesh Betar (state owned national radio) broadcasts any programs related to the local issues, the community radios could exchange those programs among themselves. .Programs of Bangladesh Betar (Radio) must be re-broadcast in Community Radio Station if the programs have any national importance or relevance to the people of the area.

For example, special program such as address to the nation of the president and prime minister, special program to mark national day celebrations and weather bulletin or any program sent from Bangladesh Betar or government must be on aired or rebroadcast by the community radios. Also, programs concerning the area or community or government's directives serving public interest shall be broadcast through community radio stations without any fees.

- 8.5** The program contents of the community radio broadcast service have to give priority on agriculture, adult and children education, gender issue, primary health care, environment and weather, social welfare, legal aid, market prices, demand of agro products, rural and community development, child care, maternity health care, family planning, national bulletin of Bangladesh Betar), income generation of the local community and other development issues. That means the interests and demands of the particular community should specially be represented in the programs of community radio;

- 8.6** The community people will participate in planning, implementing, operating and evaluating programs broadcasted in community radio;
- 8.7** The licence holder will plan out to increase the participation of community besides evaluating the programs by providing incentives;
- 8.8** The radio stations will allow the field level government officials to talk about development issues and policies;.
- 8.9** Through participatory process, a specific program should set its spotlight on local information, events and notifications, local culture, identity, and local dialect ;
- 8.10** Standard Bangla language will be used in programming, besides that it should be ensured to reflect the local culture, issues, presentation style and dialect in the program.;
- 8.11** As the community radio works as a local medium, thus broadcast of local development news will be permitted. Nonetheless, broadcasting any kind of political and election related speeches and advertisement will be strictly prohibited. Community radio stations in a limited scope, can broadcast pre-recorded domestic or foreign entertainment and documentary program, which must follow Betar's (Radio) censor rules and regulations. It will not be permitted to broadcast any news of a foreign broadcasting organization/channel and any programs, discussions and talk shows relating to current issues, through joint production whether that is live or recorded version.
- 8.12** For public interest, any local administration could supervise the activities of any community radio station if necessary;
- 8.13** The licensee should provide bimonthly report to the Central Monitoring Committee with copy to Ministry of Information. The licensee will preserve records of broadcasted programs. In case of failure, the government will have the right to revoke the license;
- 8.14** The Government or its authorized representative shall have the right to inspect the community radio station and can see the establishment and may collect information leading to public and community interests;
- 8.15** The Government will have the right to take over or postponed the any or entire Community Radio Station services for the interest of national security or national emergency/war or conflict or during any similar type of situations. Government has reserved the right to revoke/terminate the licenses/permission and can take administrative action against institution/organization or person Based on existing law.
- 8.16** The location or place to install community radio station, government's decision shall be the final. To broadcast any special message as may be considered desirable to meet any emergency arising out of natural emergency, or public interest or natural disaster and the like, and community radio shall be obliged to comply with such directions of government.

- 8.17** The permission holder (institution/organization) shall be required to submit their audited annual accounts and annual report to the Government within three months after completing the fiscal year;
- 8.18:** The Government may take initiatives to create a Community Radio Development Fund as supplement for the community broadcaster's own resources for capacity building, improvement in quality of technology, and conduct research & evaluation ;
- 8.19** The licensee (organization and institution) shall comply with all conditions given by Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission(BTRC) for the use of frequency and radio equipment;
- 8.20** Tower installed for community radio operation shall not be given for the use to private telephone operators. These towers shall not be used in any private activities;
- 8.21** Organizations/Institutions installing community radio stations shall arrange armed ansars by its own funding for overall security of the station; and
- 8.22** For the public interest, the government preserves all rights to modify or amend the policy, /part of it.

9.0 Monitoring Broadcasting Activities:

- 9.1** Any official or representative or organization assigned by the government can monitor the community radio station activities and examine the documents;
- 9.2** A copy of Compact Disk (CD) or any other recorded formats containing the recordings of broadcasted programs of community radio station will be provided as per the demand of aforementioned authorities or compelled to submit to other authorities following their instructions.

10.0 National Regulatory Committee:

10.1: "National Regulatory Committee" will be formed comprising of the officials and eminent citizen mentioned below to install, broadcast and operate a community radio:

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|-----|---|------------------|
| 1. | Secretary, Ministry of Information | President |
| 2. | Additional Secretary (Broadcast), Ministry of Information | Member |
| 3. | Director_General, Bangladesh Betar, Dhaka | Member |
| 4. | Representative, Public Security Division, Home Ministry (Minimum Joint-Secretary) | Member |
| 5. | Representative, Law and Justice Division, Law, Justice and Parliament Affairs Department (Minimum Joint -Secretary) | Member |
| 6. | An appropriate representative from BTRC (Director or above) | Member |
| 7. | Representative from Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Professor Level) | Member |
| 8. | Senior Engineer, Research and Receiving Center, Bangladesh Betar, Dhaka | Member |
| 9. | Eminent Citizen (Nominated by the Government) | Member |
| 10. | Joint-Secretary (Betar), Ministry of Information | Member-Secretary |

10.2 Procedure of the National Regulatory Committee:

- a. To observe the implementation process of Community Radio Installation, Broadcast and Operation Policy. Besides taking the initiative to change, and amendment of the policy
- b. To review the law/Act, rules and regulation of community radio broadcasting matter and provide advice for timely amendments;
- c. Submit final list to the Government recommended by the “Technical Sub-committee” for the consideration in respect of Community Radio Installation, Broadcast and Operation.
- d. To take necessary measures, after reviewing the reports of the “Technical Sub-Committee” and the “Central Monitoring Committee”.
- e. If necessary, the committee could invite any specialist in the meeting to seek opinion.

11.0 “Technical Sub-Committee” of National Regulatory Committee:

11.1: “Technical Sub-Committee” will be formed under the National Regulatory Committee” consisting of the officials mentioned below to install, broadcast and operate community radio:

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|----|---|------------------|
| 1. | Chief Engineer, Bangladesh Betar (Radio) Dhaka | President |
| 2. | Senior Engineer, Bangladesh Television or a Representative (Above the position) | Member |
| 3. | A representative from BUET (Minimum Assistant Professor) | Member |
| 4. | An appropriate representative from BTRC | Member |
| 5. | Senior Engineer, Research and Receiving Center, Bangladesh Betar, Dhaka | Member-Secretary |

11.2 Procedure of the Committee:

- a. Examining minimum professional and technical standard for establishing Community radio;
- b. Preparing a merit list by scrutinizing overall professional and technical issues and submits it to the National Regulatory Committee for consideration;
- c. Will give opinions for test broadcasting after an on the spot visit to examine whether all technical stuffs have been maintained at the newly established radio;
- d. Cooperate “Central Monitoring Committee” in different issues if necessary.
- e. If necessary, the committee could invite any specialist in the meeting to seek opinion.

12.0 Central Monitoring Committee:

12.1 “Central Monitoring Committee” will be formed comprising of the officials and specialist representative mentioned below for establishing, broadcasting and operating a community radio:

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|----|---|------------------|
| 1. | Director General, Bangladesh Betar, Dhaka | President |
| 2. | Director General, Department of Mass Communication, Dhaka | Member |
| 3. | Deputy- Director General (Reporting), Bangladesh Betar, Dhaka | Member |
| 4. | Chief Engineer, Bangladesh Betar, Dhaka | Member |
| 5. | Deputy-Secretary (Betar-2), Ministry of Information, Dhaka | Member |
| 6. | Representative of BTRC | Member |
| 7. | Community Radio Specialist (Nominated by government) | Member |
| 8. | Deputy- Director General (Program), Bangladesh Betar, Dhaka | Member-Secretary |

12.2 Procedure of the Committee:

- a. To monitor whether the conditions of section number 6, 7 and 8 of this policy are followed flawlessly;
- b. To monitor whether the conditions of technical structure violate stated in section number 5 of this policy. The committee would seek help from the technical sub-committee in this matter if necessary;
- c. Giving opinion regarding the final broadcasting of community radio;
- d. Monitoring the overall operation of community radio; and
- e. Submitting a quarterly overall monitoring report to the Ministry of Information.
- f. If necessary, the committee could invite any specialist person in the meeting seeking opinion.

13.0 Local Advisory Committee:

13.1: For monitoring the activities of community radio at the local level, a “Local Advisory Committee” will be formed comprising the officials mentioned in below:

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|-----|--|-------------------|
| 1. | Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) | President |
| 2. | Local Municipality/ Elected representative of Upazila Parishad | Member |
| 3. | Upazila Agriculture Officer | Member |
| 4. | Upazila Health and Family Planning Officer | Member |
| 5. | Upazila Engineer | Member |
| 6. | Upazila Education Officer | Member |
| 7. | Officer-in-charge of Police Station | Member |
| 8. | Upazila Youth Development Officer | Member |
| 9. | Upazila Social Welfare Officer | Member |
| 10. | Representative of District Information Officer | Member |
| 11. | Representative of the nearest center/ unit of Bangladesh Betar | Member |
| 12. | Women Affairs Officer of Upazila | Member |
| 13. | Eminent Citizen of the area (Nominated by UNO) | Member |
| 14. | Representative of local electricity authority | Member |
| 15. | Representative of particular community radio | Member- Secretary |

- a. Chairman of the respective Upazilla Parishad shall be an advisor of the committee to give advice and direction to the advisory committee.
- b. If the radio station is situated at a district town, the district council chairman will be advisor and the committee will be formed comprising the aforementioned officials worked in those institutions chaired by an additional deputy commissioner (ADC). The respective Upazilla Nirbhahi of Sadar Upazilla will act as a member of the committee.
- c. Committee can be co-opted with one or more than one member.

13.2: Procedure of the Committee:

- a. Will monitor the activities of community radio and submit bimonthly report in a fixed format to the Monitoring Committee and the Ministry of Information;
- b. Provide recommendations based on the strengths and weaknesses of the community radio station;
- c. Encourage the participation of district/upazila level government officials in the community radio programs;
- d. Encourage officials to provide the development advertisements and government advertisements for broadcasting through community radio
- e. Provide necessary counseling service to improve the quality of community radio programs.

14.4 Self-defense Opportunity:

- 14.1** Before canceling the license, the concerned institutions should be given the opportunity for self-defense;
- 14.2** If any license holder gives its self-defensive statement on due time, considering that the government can fine or confiscate the deposit money or to take the appropriate corrective measures, the government can give order to hold the license for a fixed period of time; and
- 14.3:** During stay or cancellation of the license, if any immediate action required, the government can hand down the order to seize particular or all equipment of a station to hold the broadcasting of the particular broadcaster.

15.0 Repeal and Protection:

When this policy will come into effective, “Community Radio Installation, Broadcast and Operation Policy 2008” will be considered as nullified. But any decision taken by under the abolished policy will be considered as accepted by this policy, too. Fees and other related subjects will be determined after declaration of national broadcasting law and by its rules.

16.0 Power of Amendment and Change of this Policy:

National regulatory committee preserves all the power for entire or partial change, refine, addition, deletion, and any types of correction of this policy.

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If any confusion arises about the Community Radio Installation, Broadcast and Operation Policy 2017 in that case bangla version on community radio policy of Bangladesh gazette will be treated as a final.