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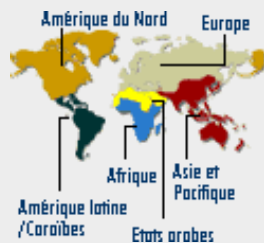**WebWorld**   **Communication et information Ressources**

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Recherche avancée

Forum Theatre popularizes concept of Community Radio in Bangladesh

09-08-2006 (New Delhi)

What does one do when communities have not been exposed to the potential of community media? The UNESCO-supported Youth Community Multimedia Centre (YCMC) in Sitakund sub-district of Bangladesh adopted an innovative approach to find answers.

After a ten-day training workshop on 'Forum Theatre', volunteers of the CMC produced two interactive plays explaining the role of community media and contextualizing it to the lives of the rural poor. These plays are now regularly being performed in different rural areas to raise awareness and public demand for community radio legislation in Bangladesh.

Explaining the background to the audience
© Debobroto (Debu) Chakraborty

Unlike other theatre approaches which follow a one-way message delivery mechanism or collects feedback after the performance, Forum Theatre follows a live and runtime feedback mechanism that allows viewers to express opinions during the play and for characters to change their roles according to public reaction. This unique characteristic of Forum Theatre was explored to create a virtual community radio platform in many villages in Sitakund.

Each play begins with a story on a local issue and in the local language. The first performance ends with a negative conclusion followed by an interactive discussion on rural problems and the lack of local community media in which such issues could be raised and addressed by the community. Then the same play is performed again, but this time the audiences have access to a virtual community radio that gives them the opportunity to interrupt during the play, protest or demand changes in the roles of the characters. Audiences have to justify with substantive reasons their demands for change and final decisions are taken based on group consensus. Finally it is the local community that gets to determine the end of the story and in most cases; the negative story becomes a positive one.

YCMC has discovered that the importance of this kind of an approach is manifold: first, it reminds people of existing local negative

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Source
- UNESCO Office in New Delhi

Bureau hors Siège
- UNESCO Office in New Delhi

Liens de référence
- UNESCO Community Multimedia Centre Initiative

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practices; secondly, it raises awareness about the lack of access to mainstream media and demonstrates how local communities can use community radio and other media to change their society.

Following his involvement in one of the performances, Ashraf Ali, a sixty-nine year old farmer, says "I now understand that community radio is a medium that I can use to help people to change their negative attitudes towards poor people".

Bangladesh at present does not have a broadcasting policy favouring community radio. After a long period of advocacy by development organisations, a draft broadcasting act recognising community broadcasting has recently been proposed; however it is yet to meet with official approval. To advance the community radio movement the Youth CMC in Sitakund has involved itself in initiatives to strengthen the 'demand side' of community media in Bangladesh.

The Youth CMC in Sitakund developed out of a UNESCO supported network on ICT innovations for poverty reduction, part of a cross-cutting theme on the eradication of poverty. The establishment of the community multimedia centre has been supported by UNESCO's International Program for the Development of Communication (IPDC) and the International CMC Initiative, supported by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation.

The CMC uses the local cable network for content dissemination reaching about one thousand households in Sitakund. For those without television sets, the CMC plans to set up loudspeakers directly from the studio. YCMC volunteers will generate locally relevant content in the local language (Bangla) daily for one and half hours.

Story contributed by Debobroto (Debu) Chakraborty.

Multiple street and court yard shows are performed by YCMC volunteers on community radio
© Debobroto (Debu) Chakraborty

Demonstrating how the deprived can use community radio to voice their concerns, 1st show at Guliakhali village.
© Debobroto (Debu) Chakraborty

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