

# REACHING THE COMMUNITY THROUGH COMMUNITY RADIO

## *Readjusting to the New Realities*

*A Case Study Investigating the Changing Nature of Community Access and  
Participation in Three Community Radio Stations in Three Countries  
New Zealand, Nepal and Sri Lanka*

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**By**

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**Dedicated to my beloved parents:  
Abdulla Nafiz and Rasheeda Mohammed Didi**

# ABSTRACT

Community radio is often described as a medium that celebrates the small community life and where local community members plan, produce and present their own programmes. However, many believe that the radio management policies are now increasingly sidelining this aspect of the radio. This is ironic given the fact that the radio stations are supposed to be community platforms where members converge to celebrate their community life and discuss issues of mutual interest. In this case study, I have studied three community radio stations- RS in Nepal, KCR in Sri Lanka and SCR in New Zealand- investigating how the radio management policies are positively or negatively, affecting community access and participation.

The study shows that in their effort to stay economically sustainable, the three stations are gradually evolving as a 'hybrid'; something that sits in-between community and commercial radio. Consequently, programmes that are produced by the local community are often replaced by programmes that are produced by full-time paid staff; and they are more entertaining in nature and accommodate more advertisements. The radio stations also actively seek the sale of airtime to well-funded NGOs, giving agency-driven programmes priority over local community programmes. This means the stations have become vehicles that help agency objectives. Hence, although 'hybrid' initiatives have merits financially, while depicting as local community representatives, they are marginalising the voices and interests of the very people that gave the radio stations their community characteristics and identity. Hence, in the interest of earning more revenue to secure market survival, the 'hybrid' initiatives are in fact, settling for a lesser community role.

This study also shows that although management policy decisions aimed at greater financial sustainability have impacted on local community access and participation in the way they used to be, by readjusting to the new realities of modern-day communications, the three stations are also providing a second 'hybrid' pathway, a new interactive radio environment enabling stronger community access and participation. As this new platform facilitates unhindered local community access and participation in the radio, it is also viewed as a solution that will help them to utilise more of their on-air time for revenue-generating programmes. The new platform is also seen as the answer to reach the new generation youth and increase their participation, thereby, in fact, further strengthening community participation in the radio.

# LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

<b>ABC-</b>	Australian Broadcasting Corporation
<b>ACORAB –</b>	Association of Community Radio Broadcasters
<b>ACAB-</b>	Association of Community Access Broadcasters
<b>AIBD-</b>	Asia-Pacific Institute of Broadcasting Development
<b>AIR-</b>	All India Radio
<b>AMARC-</b>	World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters
<b>AOL-</b>	America Online
<b>APC-</b>	Association for Progressive Communications
<b>APM-</b>	Audio Programme Management
<b>BBC-</b>	British Broadcasting Service
<b>BBS-</b>	Bhutan Broadcasting Service
<b>BCNZ-</b>	Broadcasting Corporation of New Zealand
<b>BNNRC-</b>	Bangladesh NGO’s Network for Radio and Communication
<b>CBA-</b>	Commonwealth Broadcasting Association
<b>CBAA-</b>	Community Broadcasting Association of Australia
<b>CBS-</b>	Crescent Broadcasting Service
<b>CD-</b>	Compact Disc
<b>CDC-</b>	Centre for Development Communication
<b>CEO-</b>	Chief Executive Officer
<b>CMA-</b>	Community Media Association
<b>DANIDA-</b>	Danish International Development Agency
<b>DIB-</b>	Department of Information and Broadcasting
<b>DIY-</b>	Do-It-Yourself
<b>DVD-</b>	Digital Versatile Disc or Digital Video Disc
<b>DVR-</b>	Digital Video Recorder
<b>EAP-</b>	Edirisinghe Group of Companies
<b>EPG-</b>	Electronic service and Programme Guide
<b>EU-</b>	European Union
<b>FES-</b>	Friedrich Ebert Stiftung
<b>FM-</b>	Frequency Modulation
<b>GPS-</b>	Global Positioning System
<b>I4D-</b>	Information for Development
<b>GUL-</b>	General User Licence
<b>ICT-</b>	Information Communication Tool
<b>ICT4D-</b>	Information Communication Tools for Development
<b>ISBS-</b>	Indian State Broadcasting Service
<b>IT-</b>	Information Technology
<b>ITU-</b>	International telecommunications Union
<b>KCR-</b>	Kothmale Community Radio
<b>LPFM-</b>	Low-Power Frequency Modulation
<b>MIBS-</b>	Ministry of Information and Broadcasting Services

<b>MMC-</b>	Mass-Line Media Centre
<b>MNBC-</b>	Maldives National Broadcasting Corporation
<b>NAFTA-</b>	North American Free Trade Association
<b>NBS-</b>	National Broadcasting Service
<b>NEFEJ-</b>	Nepal Forum of Environmental Journalists
<b>NGO-</b>	Non-Government Organisation
<b>NWICO-</b>	New World Information and Communication Order
<b>NYAB-</b>	National Youth Association of Bhutan
<b>NZBB-</b>	New Zealand Broadcasting Board
<b>NZBC-</b>	New Zealand Broadcasting Corporation
<b>NZLPFM-</b>	New Zealand Low Power FM
<b>NZOA-</b>	New Zealand on Air
<b>PDC-</b>	Participatory development communication
<b>PEMRA-</b>	Pakistan Electronic Media Regulation Authority
<b>RBC-</b>	Radio Broadcasting Company
<b>RNZ-</b>	Radio New Zealand
<b>RS-</b>	Radio Sagharmatha
<b>SCR-</b>	Samoa Community Radio
<b>SLBC-</b>	Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation
<b>SMS-</b>	Short Message Service
<b>SOE-</b>	State-Owned Enterprise
<b>SRN-</b>	Student Radio Network
<b>TVM-</b>	Television Maldives
<b>TVNZ-</b>	Television New Zealand
<b>UK-</b>	United Kingdom
<b>UN-</b>	United Nations
<b>UNESCO-</b>	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
<b>US-</b>	United States
<b>VCD-</b>	Video Compact Disc
<b>VOM-</b>	Voice of Maldives
<b>WAR-</b>	Washington Access Radio
<b>WTO-</b>	World Trade Organisation
<b>WTV-</b>	World Television

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# CHAPTER ONE

## Introduction

### 1.1 Communicating through community media

Community media may also be referred to as ‘alternative media’, ‘radical media’, ‘citizen’s media’, ‘grassroots media’, ‘participatory media’ ‘tactical media’ or ‘community-based media’ (Rodriguez, 2001; Rennie, 2006:17; Downing, 2001:40; Fontes, 2010). They are known as media that usually facilitate ordinary members of the community to “access and participate in the media”, to express their own views, concerns and interests (Rennie, 2006:23). These are also regarded as their defining characteristics (Lewis, 1993). The Bolivian miners’ radio stations are some of the world’s earliest examples of community radios and as Dagon (2007: 202) points out:

...originated...because ...community voices needed to be heard...Initially, they wanted to communicate better with their community and with their constituency on daily issues. They wanted to call for meetings, to broadcast music the miners liked, have dedications, announce the arrival of letters and postal parcels, read messages from miners’ families and make known when fresh provisions arrived...

Similarly, in the Philippines, a small rural community “raised poles with cone speakers on top creating community audio towers” (Dagon, 2004:47) as their means of communication that would enable their voice to be “heard” in the wider arena. For the community residents, it was the only available way to express their concerns and pressing needs. Community access and community participation are therefore, the very heart and soul of community media.

Describing the use of different forms of alternative media, Downing (2001) suggests, in some communities people go as far as singing songs, dancing on the streets, reciting poetry, telling jokes and drawing posters, murals and graffiti to convey their intended messages.

Others simply distribute leaflets in their bid to self-express their alternative thoughts and ideas to others. Hence, what is evident is that in different parts of the world, in different needy times, people of different cultures use varied methods of alternative communications to convey their message to their target audience. Such alternative methods are the lifeblood of community communication especially when communities are minorities who are less important and marginalised in their societies and who do not have access to mainstream media channels that positively focus or voice their concerns, interests and community events. They are media that “allow diverse groups space in which to construct their own representations and to publicly express minority or opposing views” (Stein, 2002:135). It is thus a strong participation of local individuals addressing their own local people and discussing their local community issues and interests, that creates the real environment for community communication and community media.

Although alternative forms of media communication have been widely used since the 1970s, community media as a subject was a ‘late entry’ to the broader field of media studies and hence has “received... little scholarly attention within the field” (Rennie, 2006:16). Downing notes that radical alternative media is something that was there before. It is only new in the sense the effect of alternative media has not entered as a subject that has been studied. “They are simply newcomers to the established research and theory agenda which has a predilection for seemingly obvious and the easily counted.” (Downing, 2002:V). Atton points out that “alternative and radical media hardly appear in the dominant theoretical traditions of media research” and highlights that this was “surprising, since some theoretical accounts seem to have space for them” (Atton, 2002:7). Similarly, Jankowski and Prehn (2002:5) note:

Despite the range of developments and widespread acknowledgement of their place in the overall media landscape...and though the number of courses given at colleges and universities related to facets of these media is growing, no suitable text has been published that concentrates on these media.

Many media academics see the birth of community media as a separate field of research to UNESCO’s communication debates of the mid-1970s that addressed the distribution of

information flows within and between the developed and developing countries. Rodriguez (2001), in fact, describes the emergence of NWICO (New World Information and Communication Order) as the main motivation that led to an “explosion” of media research (Rodriguez, 2001). Hence, it was the NWICO debates and its aftermath that activated an interest in community media in the academic world; subsequently addressing the “shortfall” in the study of community media (Rennie, 2006:16).

Rodriguez (2001) notes two distinct types of academic research available on alternative media. They are: “descriptive pieces where a case of alternative media is explained in detail, from its origin, to its funding sources, and its types of programming” and another that “develops a theoretical analysis that attempts to capture the essence of alternative media...to explain the (ir) importance as processes of communication and democracy” (Rodriguez, 2001:11).

A large amount of the available research on community media is focused on ‘success stories’, and “failures, vulnerability and their uniqueness in communicating with grassroots” or on the attempts to counter the “imbalances in communication” between the media-powerful (powerful media companies) and the media-powerless (powerless countries whose media environment is dominated by the media-powerful) by filling in as the alternative media that reaches and addresses the interests of everyone (Rodriguez, 2001:11). Works by media scholars such as Downing (1984, 2001), Rodriguez (2001) and Carpentier, Lie and Servaes (2007) provide a strong theoretical base for understanding community or alternative media as a tool that empowers the underdogs, the small communities, interest groups, social movements and the civil societies. Publications by scholars such as Girard (1992), Hochheimer (1993), Dunaway (1998), Atton (2002), Jankowski and Prehn (1992 and 2002), Howley (2005), Rennie (2006), Fuller (2007), Bailey, Cammaerts and Carpentier (2008) are sources of rich literature that have helped to bridge the “shortfall” (Rennie, 2006:16) adding much research on different theoretical aspects and role of community media as a growing field of media studies.



In addition to “a handful of academic studies” and “a few narrow-market publications...a range of monographs prepared by policy agencies and supporting institutions” (Jankowski and Prehn, 2002:4-5) add to the growing literature on small-scale electronic media. Publications and community radio workshops and seminars that are prepared in different countries by organisations such as UNESCO, AMARC and AIBD have helped in this regard. Besides, UNESCO and AMARC, the Alliance for Community Media, the National Federation of Community Broadcasters, Pacifica Radio, the Association of Community Networking and the Organisation for Community Networks give a support role to strengthen community radio (Jankowski and Prehn, 2002:5).

In UNESCO and AIBD-sponsored community radio workshops, some of which I had the opportunity to attend, the discussions were mainly focused on the functioning of radio stations, their sustainability, programming, community participation and their use as a tool to promote community development. This was the norm as non-government organisations, various international development agencies as well as donor countries that work in the developing countries, recognise community radio more as an important tool for poverty reduction and community development (McQuail (1994) rather than as a medium that gives a voice to those marginalised communities who are not represented in the mainstream media (Opel, 2004).

Much literature on community radio has also been published by Community Broadcasting Association of Australia (CBAA). Although CBAA work is focused on community radio in Australia, it is a rich resource of information and knowledge. Some of the CBAA studies were done by leading Australian scholars such as Meadows, Forde and Foxwell who have made important contributions to the field of community radio research. As Australia is one of the world’s leading countries in developing and institutionalising community radio as a separate tier of broadcasting, I believe that Australian experiences are a must read for media scholars and community radio practitioners.

Research on the development of community media in the South Asian region, where I come

from, is currently quite limited. However, works by Indian media scholars such as Vinod Pavarala and Kanchan Malik among others are helping to bridge the gap. International agencies, especially, UNESCO, through its regional workshops and seminars, have published information on community media initiatives which are now important sources of literature on the development of community radio in South Asia. Among the scholars who have contributed to UNESCO-led community media research initiatives and publications in South Asia, especially Sri Lanka and Nepal are, Ian Pringle (2002; 2007), Wijayananda Jayaweera (1998) MJR David (1992) and Jo Tacchi, Jerry Watkins and Kosala Keerthirathne (2007).

Indian community radio activists who initially led the campaign and later the movement, to establish community radio in India have established an Internet-based Community Radio Forum that brings community radio enthusiasts, activists, practitioners and academics into a single platform where radio discussions are held and information exchanged to develop better community radio. As members from other countries in South Asia, such as Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, the Maldives and community radio practitioners in other parts of the world join the Forum discussions, it has already become a common regional platform to discuss community radio in all its aspects, be it local, regional or global. The Forum is also an important resource from which regional parties and would be community radio practitioners get insight and advice in pursuing their own community radio projects.

Other Indian organisations such as Voices, Bytes for All and I4DOnline are also at the forefront in assisting communities to increase community radio awareness and literacy as well as publish articles on community radio and provide help to establish community stations in India (A. Sen, personal communication, June 13, 2007).

## **1.2 The purpose of doing this study**

The main purpose of having community radio is the members' desire to communicate and to come together on one platform to appreciate the life and works of that community (Hochheimer, 1999:451). In this sense, true access and participation in community radio or in any community media is only prevalent when local community members play "an active role

in the process of collecting, reporting analysing and disseminating news and information” (Bowman& Willis, 2003:9) and telling their own stories in their own voices (Rodriguez, 2001). As stated by Louie Tabing, one of the pioneers of community radio in the Philippines, while giving an interview to this author:

It is the ability of the community radio to bring its own community together, help them participate in the radio, fulfil the community information needs and make the radio activities a real community event that makes the radio, a real community radio (L. Tabing, personal communication, June 15, 2007).

Emphasising the importance of community participation in community media, Hochheimer, (2002) notes:

...community-based participatory media...provide substantial hope that people can best make decisions affecting their own futures if provided the contexts within which to establish media for themselves to address their own problems as they construct them (Hochheimer, 2002:319) ...

Democratic communication in practice implies that there is broadly based support and participation from communities....The radio listeners...do not constitute an audience or a market; rather, they are intimately involved in planning and production of programming (Hochheimer, 2002:321).

Hochheimer also suggests that it is the community members who should decide “on their own terms” which “issues” should be discussed on the radio. It is also the community members who decide “what the legitimate voices to be heard on an on-going basis” on their community radio (Hochheimer, 2002:323).

From the above quotes, it is clear that there is an inter-active and an on-going relationship between the local community members and their community radio; that the community radio should be accessible for the local communities to access and participate to produce programmes that matter to them and that are of interest to them. Access and participation being at the very heart of community radio, they are thus the two key concepts that are addressed in the different chapters of this study. The main purpose of this study is therefore, to explore and investigate the nature of community access and participation within three

selected radio stations; Radio Sagharmatha (RS), Kothmale Community Radio (KCR) and Samoa Capital Radio (SCR). This study will identify how these stations nurture and cultivate community communication within their community while balancing a challenging walk on the tight rope of community radio, where on one side is the need to stay sustainable and on the other, the need to stay attached with the local communities-the very source of their existence and the very product they promote to attract the financiers.

Unfortunately, for many members of the community, the ability to access and participate in radio is challenging. The reality is that for some in the community, it is not an opportunity they get and for others it is a privilege. For example, in Australia, studies done by Barlow (2002) showed those who had access were the ones whose thinking conformed with the management and whom the management was happy to give the opportunity to produce radio programmes. In this case, it was the chosen community members who had the privilege of gaining access to radio infrastructure and participate in programmes. The community members who were not liked by the management had no access to local participants to do programmes of their own choice. This meant community participation in their community radio station was a choice made by the station instead of being a community member's own spontaneous decision to participate and engage in community radio. This shows that community access and participation can be denied and that they are very much linked to the preference of those who own or manage the radio station. By bringing in like-minded people who do not express the different opinions of that community, radio stations do not necessarily encourage equal access for all of their community members. The "process of exclusion" ensures that access to broadcasting is limited to those whose views best represent a station's values, purpose and interests (van Vuuren, 2003).

Barlow also notes that of the three stations he had studied, no station gave "free access time" to community members to visit the station, meet the staff or arrange an appointment; or even express an opinion on air. The radio stations also did not air notices that would create community interest among the local listeners to visit the station and do work for the station. This lack of engagement meant that local community listeners remained "as passive listeners

of the information and entertainment that was provided” by the radio stations. Similarly, there were no mechanisms in place enabling the members of the community to have direct access to a microphone to address issues of their own choosing (Barlow, 2002:155-157).

The head of a prominent organisation in Nepal who was committed to public broadcasting and had previously worked for Radio Sagharmatha (RS) in Nepal as a reporter and later as a board member of NEFEJ- the parent organisation of RS, expressed a similar view in an interview with me. According to him, his country’s first community radio station, Radio Sagharmatha was no longer open for the community. In “those days” when he used to work there, the “doors of the station were wide open for all the members of the community to make programmes and participate in the radio activities”. However, now he says, the radio favoured more NGO-produced programmes and operated more like a public radio and less of a community radio. He says, by changing the way radio operates, it is unable to bring the voices of the local communities which are supposed to be the radio’s main objective (personal communication, June 14, 2007).

Kothmale Community Radio (KCR) in Sri Lanka is another South Asian radio that has come under much criticism for the way it operates. Nalaka Gunawardene, an independent media writer and a leading media commentator based in Sri Lanka said the station was fully owned by the government and was managed by a government-appointed employee. Hence, those in the community who can get access to the radio or participate in producing programmes are fully supervised. Disapproving of the way KCR operates, Nalaka Gunawardene (2007) said:

...the channel involves local people in programme production, and it maintains a strongly agrarian audience, but listeners have no say in running the stations – these are managed by a tight bureaucracy in the capital Colombo, whose rigid guidelines control content: strictly no politics and nothing remotely against the government in office.

For Gunawardene, KCR is government broadcasting in ‘disguise’. Any attempts at “criticising the government... the jackboot of the Big Bad Babus of SLBC will come down with thunderous effect” (Gunawardene, 2007). Describing the state’s interest in keeping

community broadcasting under scrutiny, media analyst Gunaratne observes that the current style of government/public partnership in community broadcasting in Sri Lanka could best be described as “mildly, occasionally and tokenistically participatory” (Gunaratne, 2000).

Malik (2007) also notes that in India, the government has given priority to NGOs to own and operate community radios. The Indian government guideline on establishing community radio permits only NGOs and similar developmental organisations do so for the purpose of achieving their developmental objectives. These obligatory requirements ensures that from the very outset, the community radio in India is an NGO tool rather than a channel open for the community to access and participate for their community communication purposes (Official Memorandum, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 2008).

Although increased NGO involvement is good for community radio in the sense that it helps programme content, there is a lack of genuine local community participation in the radio and radio programmes (Malik, 2007). Often NGOs or their funding agencies have “narrowly defined goals” (Rennie, 2006:137) such as empowering women, promoting community financing, preventing communicable diseases, eradicating illiteracy etc. It is therefore, likely that community interests, especially those that do not fall in line with the NGO interests could be excluded from getting on air. Hence, there is the fear of ‘NGO-isation’ of community radio to simply fulfill the NGO objectives (Malik, 2007). It also means that ordinary citizens are squeezed out from participating in their local community radio in favour of the established NGOs and the elites who wield much financial power. Highlighting the importance of the role of ordinary people participating in the community media, Carpentier, Lie and Servaes (2007) state:

‘Ordinary people’ (i.e., those who are not part of a societal elite) are given the opportunity to have their voices heard. Topics considered relevant for the community can be discussed by its members, thus empowering them by signifying that their statements are considered important enough to be broadcast. Especially, societal groups that are misrepresented, disadvantaged, stigmatized, or even repressed can benefit from using channels of communication opened by community media strengthening their internal

identity, manifesting this identity to the outside world, and thus enabling social change and/or development (Carpentier, Lie and Servaes, 2007:225).

Hence, although access and participation of the ordinary members of the community was, in theory, an important and an inherent characteristic of the community radio, in the light of the discussion above, there is good reason to believe that in practice this access and participation was not always a given community right, privilege or prerogative. For many in the community, instead of becoming active participants in the radio, they simply become passive listeners of non-community programmes, often the productions of prominent and financially powerful parties such as NGOs who influence the radio management.

As I have already mentioned in this chapter, the critics who point their fingers at both Radio Sagharmatha and KCR, say that community access and participation in these two radio stations was a selective process that was very much influenced by the management and therefore could not be described as true participatory, community radio stations. Their sentiments, regarding the nature of access and participation in the two South Asian community radio stations, were similar to the findings of Barlow (2002) on three Australian community radio stations.

As I maintain good contact with the managers of both RS and KCR, I had the privilege of discussing these criticisms with them. This study was therefore, an opportunity for me to examine and question the management on the current practice of community radio at these two stations. The feedback I received from them was one of the main reasons I included the two stations in this study. It was also one of the *raison d'être* that motivated and encouraged this study. Through my research, I also had the opportunity to get an insight into their radio stations and to give them an opportunity to share their experiences.

The second main reason for this study was that in 2005, I initiated a project to introduce community radio to the Maldives. Therefore, it was a personal satisfaction to study and identify the role of community radio in South Asia of which the Maldives is a part alongside

the community radio work I was doing in the Maldives. Therefore, examining the nature of access and participation in two South Asian community radio stations was an exercise that gave me valuable insight to fine tune and redresses my community radio project.

Using case study methodology, I have explored and investigated the nature of community access and community participation in three different community radio models: SCR, a community-owned station, KCR, a state-owned radio and RS, an NGO-owned model. Researching three stations whose ownership was very different provided with an opportunity to investigate how community access and participation were offered in three very different and challenging radio ‘environments’.

### **1.3 The research questions**

As investigating the nature of community access and community participation is the main purpose of this study, using case study methodology, I aim to examine the following aspects:

- A.** The existing nature of community access and participation in community radio;
- B.** The level of influence wielded by the radio management on the involvement of the local community in broadcasting. What sort of impact it is having on the nature of community access and participation? Whether and in what ways are management decisions impacting to strengthen or lessen the opportunities for community access and participation or helping to make the radio stations true community platforms for community communication. In this regard, I investigated how the management has planned to create more space for local community access and strengthened participation in the radio, making it a true platform for the communities to have their voices heard.

In exploring (a), that is, the existing nature of community access and participation that is currently available at the radio, I have identified the specific roles of each community radio, examining their existing community participatory strategy that is aimed at providing community communication within their local community. In this regard, my focus is: to



identify who produces programmes; who in the community really participates in programme production and; how the radio stations facilitate community members to get access to the community through their community radio. I have also done a news analysis to identify: the nature of the news; the types of news that was available on the community radios and to ascertain what proportion of local community events gain access to news bulletins; and whether the volume of news that was disseminated through the radios make them the carrier of the community voice.

In exploring (b), my investigation particularly addresses the challenges they face due to the need for sustainable radio and in particular, how external forces such as NGOs and other agencies that fund community radio are affecting community access and participation. I have identified management strategies that have been put in place to rectify any rising 'deficits' that hinder them to be their community's 'voice'. In this regard, I have discussed how the three radio stations have set their eyes on an expanded Internet-based radio platform as the future roadmap for creating opportunities for their communities to come on board and help them truly 'reclaim' community radio as their medium of community communication. Furthermore, the study also explores possible ways in which Internet-based platforms such as social media can be effectively 'merged' with the community radio to establish, even in developing rural communities such as Sri Lanka and Nepal, a 'hybrid' radio environment for enhanced community access and participation in community radio. From my interactions with the members of the two selected radio stations in Nepal and Sri Lanka, there is no question that even in the South Asia region, especially with the new generation youth, Internet use is growing at a fast rate. The increasing number of cyber cafés and the demand for Internet by the youth in both countries are a testimony to this rising popularity of Internet as their new medium of choice.

There is also a growing belief among the three radio staff as well as the different radio practitioners and officials that I met during the course of this study that doing community radio in the traditional style- that is, broadcasting to those who carry a simple pocket radio in their pockets which is designed for an old generation community- may be decreasing its

popularity as the new generation youth grows. This shows that there is a need for the community radio stations to reinvent themselves and re-equip so that they also have attractive features that converge the best of Internet and the best of radio on one platform, so that they can take on board the new 'Internet generation' and provide them spaces to access and participate; and strengthen community interactions through community radio. Hence, I believe a migration to a broad-based Internet platform will be the next big step forward for any small community radio in its bid to transform and strengthen community communication and enhance community access and participation in the radio.

Although widespread Internet use in Sri Lanka and Nepal may be years away, and the full use of an Internet-based community radio is a colourful 'dream' yet to happen, it is noteworthy that the radio stations I have included in this study have already begun developing an Internet-based platform and it will be just a matter of time before they are using it fully. Given this new development, my discussion addressing how community communication through community radio in rural settings could be expanded and strengthened via an Internet-based inter- platform is perhaps an important aspect in this study as it is most likely that the future of doing real participatory community radio, even in rural settings, will most probably cost-effectively thrive on an Internet-based inter-active hybrid radio platform.

#### **1.4 The three selected stations and why I have chosen them**

The stations I have chosen for this study are Radio Sagharmatha (RS) in Nepal, Kothmale Community Radio (KCR) in Sri Lanka and Samoa Capital Radio (SCR) in New Zealand. All three stations are well-known and are leading community radio stations in their countries. Each radio has been serving the community over a decade and hence is well placed and positioned in their respective communities.

However, no matter how long they have been in service, they still have their critics. For example, in Nepal, there are those who believe that RS has expanded its coverage area in search of more advertisers and financiers who are willing to support the station financially.

According to them, as a result, community access and participation in RS has been severely restricted due to favouring programmes that attract larger audiences and hence, in their view is no longer doing real community broadcasting as it used to.

Similar to RS, KCR is subject to many criticisms. Being a community radio that is owned by the government media company, the Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation (SLBC), there are media critics in Sri Lanka who label community broadcasting at KCR as government-broadcasting in 'disguise' (Gunawardene, 2007). For them, KCR being government-owned, there is good reason to believe that community access and participation in this radio would be limited to those in the community who fall in line with government thinking.

SCR, on the other hand belongs to a community trust, the Wellington Samoa Capital Radio Trust. The radio station is the country's first ethnic radio. Given the close-knit relationship of the Samoan community living in Wellington and the station's position as a radio of the Samoan community, the station is well-placed to attract strong community support. Hence, unlike RS or KCR which are both susceptible to the influence of their owners, an NGO and a government, respectively, SCR, being fully owned by a local community trust, there is reason to believe that the station is an ideal radio model that would provide community-wide access and participation, enabling its communities to experience the true spirit of real community radio.

Given the different nature of ownership, I believe the three stations provide three different radio 'environments' that are ideal to study how local community access and participation in radio is encouraged, denied, 'managed' or promoted within their communities. Furthermore, by choosing the three stations, especially, RS and KCR, it gave me the opportunity to get answers from the management on the criticism that they no longer represent true community radio ideals and that the radios are run in a manner that fit the 'taste' of the management instead of the community.

## **1.5 The methodology for this study**

In exploring as well as finding answers to my research topic, I have used case study methodology as the main methodological tool for conducting this research. In doing so, I have sought the use of both qualitative and quantitative methods such as in-depth and semi-structured interviewing, focused group discussion as well as doing a content analysis. The methodology was focused on identifying the following aspects:

- study each station at organisational and management level, identify the role of the radio and its plans and strategies for doing sustainable radio
- identify who produces the radio programmes and how the radio keeps in touch with the communities and enables them to have a stake in producing, presenting and planning the programmes, examine the strength of each station as a community platform that promotes and enhances participatory communication or community dialogue within the local community
- analyse the news bulletins to identify the nature and volume of the coverage of local community events and news and ascertain the strength of local news bulletins in informing the community about the community issues and events. I believe that it is the volume as well as the richness of the availability of local community news and information that really enables any community radio to be a true ‘voice’ of its communities.

## **1.6 How I have outlined this study**

As I have already said in this chapter, this is a study of three selected community radio stations from three selected countries. My aim is to identify and explore the nature of community access and participation that is practised at the three selected community radio stations. Hence, chapter one outlines and introduces my research topic within the context of community radio and community media.

Chapter two gives a theoretical setting to community media and community radio as an alternative medium of community communication. This chapter defines community and community media and gives a theoretical background to community media. In addition, the chapter highlights community radio, positioning community radio within the realm of community media.

Chapter three discusses community radio broadcasting in the seven South Asian countries, namely, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka and the Maldives. For each country, I have given a separate short background on radio broadcasting, focusing on the community radio development in each country. The chapter gives a comprehensive picture of the status of community radio in South Asia.

As I have chosen a New Zealand community radio as an example of a developed country, chapter four discusses broadcasting in New Zealand. The main aim is to give a background on New Zealand broadcasting and focus my discussion on the development of the New Zealand community radio sector. The chapter highlights the different community radio models in New Zealand.

The discussion in chapter five is focused on case study as a research method which is the methodology I have used in this study. The chapter gives a definition to case study and describes different aspects of case study as a method. Case study methodology was a useful tool to discover in depth, the role of the local radio in the community through the eyes of those who managed the radio station and produced and planned radio programmes.

In chapter six, I present my case study findings. In this chapter, I have included a general overview of the three community radio stations that I selected for this study. In giving a background to each station, I have limited my discussion to giving a brief historical background of the radio stations, stating their objectives, describing their administrative set-up, the works of producers, volunteers and news reporters as well as the programme making and the news gathering process. In addition, the chapter discusses how the stations help the community to

gain access to the radio station and subsequently how community participation is promoted, strengthened and enhanced.

Chapter seven discusses a content analysis of radio news at the three stations. Content analysis was used to identify the nature of news dissemination by the radio, in particular, the provision of local news to the community. My analysis focuses on identifying the community focus, community relevance and the depth of local news coverage in the news bulletins. As giving out community news and information is an important function of community radio, I was interested to identify how well this function was carried out by the three stations. I believe that the more a radio station included local community news, the stronger would be the radio station's position as a truly community radio. However, my news content analysis covered only a period of two composite weeks spanning a 14-week period and hence may not give the result of a comprehensive content analysis done over a longer period of time. Hence, I do believe that to get a good picture and a conclusive result on the nature of the news flow, one has to do a content analysis of the news over a longer time-frame. Unfortunately, I had neither the resources nor the capability to embark on such a comprehensive study. Doing such an analysis was therefore beyond the scope of this study.

Chapter eight turns to a discussion on the use of Internet as a channel of community communication and traces the attempts of the three stations to migrate to an Internet-based platform and looks at how they plan to enhance community access and participation through the new platform. As social media is now a strong platform within the realm of the Internet, I also discussed how the radio stations could use social media as a tool to promote community communication

Chapter nine concludes this study, giving a wider reflection of my discussions, particularly in chapters six, seven and eight.

This study thus, mainly identifies the role of the selected community radios and investigates the nature and strength of community access and participation as it is practised by the

selected three radio stations. In doing so, the study sheds light on how the radio stations are seeking ways and means to accommodate and promote community access and participation in a manner that would help them stay connected to their community as economically sustainable community stations. In this sense, the radio stations are increasingly adopting a 'hybrid' broadcasting format where revenue-making commercial formats are mixed with the more informal community broadcasting formats.

In addition, as a way to expand and strengthen their broadcasting reach especially to bring on board the new generation youth, the three radio stations have also begun migrating to an Internet-based 'hybrid' platform. The expansion and strengthening of Internet use is widely believed as the next big step that would uplift community communication and community media to a new height and open up more spaces in the radio for local communities to access the station and use it as a common community communication platform.

It is my hope that this study would help to enrich the already available research on the three selected radio stations by shedding light on the strength and/or weakness of local community participation in their local radio. It is also my hope that this study sheds light on how the three stations are planning to redress community participation by mixing Internet with radio. As my discussion highlights the different possibilities where Internet and community radio can be integrated under a single platform to strengthen community participation, I hope the discussion offers ample light on the use of community radio as "a means of social organising and social engagement" in addition to being a simple radio (Coyer, 2007:113). As two of the three radio stations I had chosen for this study belong to South Asia, it is my hope that doing this study would add to the growing case study literature on community radio stations in South Asia.

# CHAPTER TWO

## The Community and the Community Media

### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses several topics that help define and understand community media in general. As a first step, the chapter attempts to define the community and the community media, bringing together the views on media globalisation; its affect on community media and how community media grew and expanded along the contours of a global media democratisation process. In discussing media democratisation, the chapter particularly focuses on the NWICO debates and the affects of Internet which is regarded as the ongoing ‘wave’ of media democratisation.

The second main part of this chapter focuses on community media theory, exploring specific theoretical perspectives of community media. In this regard, the chapter specifically discusses the ‘Radical Media Theory’ and the ‘Citizens’ Media Theory put forward by Downing (2001) and Rodriguez (2001) respectively. In addition, the chapter explores community media in a multi-theoretical approach as put forward by Carpentier, Lie and Servaes (2007). I have also briefly discussed community media and its connections to the Democratic Participant Theory.

The third and final part of this chapter focuses on theorising community radio. In this section, I have highlighted the different definitions of community radio and the widely regarded essential characteristics that define community radio. Community access and community participation being the two defining characteristics of community radio, these two areas are the main focus of this discussion.



## **2.2 The community-a definition**

A definition on the notion of the community can be achieved through Communitarian/Libertarian theoretical arguments. For example, Liberalism promotes the individual over community and sees individual's rights as sufficient for meeting the communities' needs and "asserts that individual rights must be the primary concern of political society, as through the protection of individual rights that good life is most likely to occur" (Rennie, 2006:26-27).

For the communitarians on the other hand, they argue that the "emphasis on individualism" in liberal thinking helps to create "an amoral, fragmented society" that "represents a colder, unattached... way of living devoid of cooperation and social cohesion" (Morris and Morton, 1998:12, Bailey, 2008:8). For the communitarians, what matters is "the primacy of society over the individual" (Rennie, 2006:26-27). For the communitarians as Rennie (2006) notes:

Our culture, ideas, material circumstances and values do matter and it is through our interaction with others that society exists. A focus on individual rights overlooks the duties and values that are fostered by community and that are necessary for a well functioning society (Rennie, 2006:27).

Communitarian thinking therefore, promotes "that people in groups are capable of participating in, and defining, their society in a meaningful way through their shared collective interest" (Rennie, 2006:25-27).

In line with the communitarian thinking, community and community effort are therefore best described as doing things collectively by what Morris and Morton (1998:12) describe as the "big family" that makes up the community. Although "the 'big family' concept portrays the existence of some form of "homogeneity within the community", it is however, as Downing (2001:39) suggests "exceptionally hard to give the term community a lucid and exact sense". This is partly due to the manifestation of varying types and forms of groups that can be identified under the umbrella of the concept of community. For example, it could mean a group of people living in a specific geographic location. Although everyone living within the

confines of a distinct geographic location could be described as belonging to that particular geographic community, there could be further sub communities who could be divided on “racial, caste, class and gender lines” (Myers, 2000:100).

Rennie (2006) states that “community is uncalculated, formed through a sense of affinity and identification, a recognised essence, or a sense of belonging. It also involves processes of group formation, mobilisation, and public participation” (Rennie, 2006:40). A community can also be defined in terms of “interest, language and cultural groupings” (Rennie, 2006:3). Although these features help fine tune the nature of a particular community, it should also be noted that even within any single distinct community group, there exists further ‘social rifts’ (Downing ,2001:39) that create smaller sub units within the community. Hence, the use of the word ‘community’ to show a distinct group of interest also makes “idiotic assumptions about the absence of class and other serious social rifts within the local issue” (Downing, 2001:39).

Downing also suggests other types of communities such as working class communities and gay communities as well as scientific communities, the “Black Community” and the “Jewish Community”, the latter two being huge communities whose focus is centred on their religion or race. The “Community Standards of Decency” which describes acceptable standards of good taste is again another meaning of community (Downing, 2001:39).

There are also communities of practice. They are as Wenger, Dermott and Snyder (2002) describe:

groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis...These people don’t necessarily work together everyday, but they meet because they find value in their interactions (Wenger, Dermott and Snyder, 2002:4).

With the introduction of the Internet, it has become possible to establish ‘virtual’ communities where people interact “with sufficient human feelings to form webs of personal relationships in cyberspace” (Rheingold, 1993:5). Virtual communities are similar to

communities of interest. However, being online communities, members can be anywhere in the world. The formation of cyber communities also means the communities no longer need a 'fixed' space to become a community as they cut "across conurbations, nations and continents" eliminating the need to stay within the bounds of a specific geographic or physical locality (Lewis, 1993:13).

In this regard, it is worth noting the use of social media networks as a medium of participatory communication as well as a medium of new community formation. For example, through virtual sites such as IMVU, Hotel and Fubar, we are offered new and innovative 'cyber' places where we can visit, sometimes representing ourselves as avatars in 3D, and interact with other avatar friends; visiting 'cyber' beaches, having 'cyber' dinners, parties, picnics and ceremonies or fishing or on boat trips. In this new frontier of community communication, we are constantly making 'cyber' friends and growing our 'cyber' communities with others who share similar views and want to be and preferably stay as cyber friends in a virtual 'cyber' world. Through the flick of a button, we enter and exit those different worlds through available special social media channels.

Similar to the imaginary 'cyber' worlds and the 'cyber' friends, in the real world, real virtual friendship is established through social media sites such as facebook, MySpace and Google Plus and we are interacting with our friends through a host of ways such as sending and sharing videos, calling for meetings or having text chatting through instant messaging. Through these networks, we are creating new 'cyber' communities that are reaffirming new bonds of friendship as well as forming new movements that are pursuing their own agendas and developing their own redefined shared social languages and symbols and demystifying the mass media culture and cultural citizenship. Thus, just as the traditional community media platforms evolve around local communities and help them in "strengthening the symbolic dimension of everyday life; that is opening social spaces for dialogue and participation, breaking individual's isolation..." (Rodriguez, 2001:63), the social media are, in a similar fashion, evolving around the new 'virtual' communities, reaffirming their community bonds through creating virtual spaces for community dialogue and interaction.

The existence of virtual communities also show that although, “community radio exists to create social networks” (Fairchild, 2010:25), the radios’ networking in its traditional sense was only available to those “geographically and locally located communities” or “geographically dispersed communities of interest” who receive, listen and participate in radio programmes that are broadcast live to them either through phone lines or through Internet. Hence, the arrival of “physically based virtual communities and geographically dispersed virtual communities of interest” (Hollander, 2002:32; Blanchard and Horan, 1998: 295) showed that the traditional community radio could not be in a position to meet the virtual needs of the virtual communities.

As Hollander, (2002) notes:

Digital networks technology has redefined the relationship between the global and the local...bringing geographically based digital community networks into the realm traditionally occupied by the old ‘new media’: community radio and television. The question then rises whether these digital community networks are simply a next step in a development that started with community newspapers, radio and television, or a totally new phenomenon based on new technological possibilities of the virtual community (Hollander, 2002:32).

Whatever the type of the community, the defining feature is, that it is a “big family” (Morris and Morton, 1998:12) where members “carry within them a set of shared moral and social values” (Etzioni, 1995:19; Rennie, 2006) and “duties and responsibilities that are essential to social cohesion” (Rennie, 2006:26). Hence, within the community, there is direct and frequent contact between the members who also show a natural feeling of “belonging” to that community (Fuller, 2007:223).

Within the community, there is also “a sense of affinity and identification, a recognised essence, or a sense of belonging. It also involves processes of group formation, mobilisation and public participation” (Rennie, 2006:40) and one of the most effective ways to foster community values is keeping the community engaged through a common community platform such as community media. “It is only when community members actively involve in

media productions that it allows citizens to be active in one of the many (micro) sphere relevant to daily life and to put into practice their right to communicate” (Bailey, Cammaerts and Carpentier, 2008:11) creating a local public sphere where relevant issues are communicated (Jankowski and Prehn, 2002:27) and discussed.

### **2.3 Defining community media**

Community media activities are known by a range of diverse terms. For example, in Denmark, it is local television while for many other European countries, it is simply local media. In the US, community media is the country’s micro radio and public access television. For the women of Bengal, it is their local newspaper and for many cities around the world, community media is the Indymedia which is available on the Internet and used by over 70 cities around the world (Rennie, 2006:3). Other terms by which community media is known as include, ‘free radio’, ‘participatory video’ and ‘street newspapers’ (Downing, 2001). Due to these variety of names by which the community media is known, Howley (2010) suggests that it lacks a “definitional precision” (Howley, 2010:15); and being an “on-going process” to which “nobody has a manual for it, a how to recipe” it becomes even harder to give a precise definition (Dagron, 2004:46).

However, community media can best be understood within the broad spectrum of alternative media. Hence, defining community media also means defining alternative media and understanding how and why forms of alternate communication mediums are set up by different communities to conduct communication processes within and between their communities (Downing, 2001).

As Downmunt and Coyer (2007) remark:

If you have blogged, vlogged or weblogged; read a fanzine of a new band, online or in print; admired a piece of colourful graffiti on a grim urban wall or subway station; taken a picture on your mobile at a demonstration on a street event and sent it to friends; being interviewed on a student radio station; or contributed to a student newspaper; then you have had an encounter of some kind with ‘alternative’ media (Downmunt and Coyer, 2007:1).

Hence, alternative media includes all forms of small-scale communication (mediums) that are seen as “more accessible and participatory, and less constrained by bureaucracy or commercial interests than the mainstream media and often in some way in explicit opposition to them” (Dowmunt and Coyer, 2007:1).

McQuail (1983) suggests “alternative approach to media...grew out of ordinary citizens’ dissatisfaction with existing mainstream media models that were seen to have ‘broken faith’ with people”. The community media was thus born out of the desire to have an alternative media access because of the inability of the mainstream public service media and the commercial media to accommodate the interests of the diverse communities. This was due to the existence of too many communities of interests and on the other hand, too few mainstream media to accommodate those interests (McQuail, 1983:98-102).

For Dagron, “alternative media...emerged as a need to counterbalance the state and/or commercial mass media...opposing established media channels...to offer a different perspective and more access” (Dagron, 2004:46). In the Third World context, “alternative communication grew in urban areas as an attempt to ascertain and deal with citizens’ rights and interests within communities that have developed in large urban areas of the Third World through several decades of intensive migration from rural areas” (Dagron, 2004:46). The community media therefore became “their own means” to “have a voice” and express their “suffering” (Dagron, 2004:46).

Describing the role of alternative media in the developed countries, Deane, (2007) states:

Alternative media is some way accountable to non-corporate, often community, interests and are explicitly focused on providing perspectives that are distinct from-often discordant with-the mainstream media. They are especially defined by being independent of, and often explicitly established as an alternative to, corporate oligopolies that control large sections of the mainstream mass market media. Their rootedness, together with their determination to avoid income sources that could compromise their independence, often mean they are small-scale and both limited and restricted in profit making (Deane, 2007:207).

Bailey Cammaerts and Carpentier, (2008) describe alternative media as:

...usually small-scale and oriented towards specific communities, possibly disadvantaged groups, respecting their diversity. They are independent of state and market... horizontally structured allowing for the facilitation of audience access and participation within the framework of democratisation and multiplicity. They are carriers of non-dominant, counter hegemonic, discourses and representations, stressing the importance of self-representations (Bailey, Cammaerts and Carpentier, 2008:18).

Alternative media thus, stresses the importance of the community's grassroots "right to communicate" as well as the right to "create their own media". "The right to communicate" being "at the heart of democratic society", alternative media is hence an "important means through which freedom of expression is enacted" (Dowmunt and Coyer, 2007:111).

Community media may be, therefore, generally described as "the study of communication structures and processes within" specific small communities that have "a distinct social setting-a geographical community or a community of interest" (Jankowski and Prehn, 2002:20). Hence, as Hollander and Stappers note, it becomes "a form of public communication, of making public and creating a public within the context of a specific community (geographical or community of interest)" (Hollander and Stappers, 1992:19). Hence, those who are engaged in providing alternative forms of community media have common interests and as "members of the same community, they have the same concerns and they are interested in the same topics because they share the same background" (Jankowski and Prehn, 2002:23). Hence, discussions in a geographic community would be as Hollander, (2002) points out:

...not politics in general, but local politics; not national sports but local sports; not crime in general but crime in the community. The same goes for membership of other types of communities not solely based on geographical proximity but, for example, on sex, religion, ethnicity, and/or culture (Hollander, 2002:33).

Therefore, what is important is that "community communication is not about people in general but about individuals in specific (local, ethnic, religions, cultural) contexts" (Hollander, 2002:33). Community media therefore, by taking into its realm, the issues that are

centred locally and by bringing out and converging the voices of the local community on the local community media, it helps to bring on board the communitarian argument which says that society has lost the togetherness that it once possessed; that the community is part of the society, “with ties to family, cultural groups, friends, work colleagues, and so on” (Rennie, 2006:27).

As Jankowski and Prehn (2002) note, the mediums of community communication being very “small-scale”, are rather than aiming to creating conflict with the authorities, “trying to create a local forum for articulation and discussion”. The topics and ‘issues’ they deal with are “too insignificant for the national or regional media to focus on and hence they won’t cater to such specific audiences and local topics” (Jankowski and Prehn, 2002:24-25).

The community media is, therefore, the media that gives the communities a voice, provides the communities with information on issues that they are interested to know. It is the media that discusses community issues using examples that are familiar to the general local community. Hence, it is the media that provides “spaces for people to discuss and debate issues” that their community is interested (Deane, 2007:210). Deane further states that the community media provides “a channel through which people in the community can make their voices heard in the public domain...and provide forms and accountability and transparency where people in authority in the community can be made accountable to their decisions and actions” (Deane, 2007:210). Therefore, for those communities who have “little or no access” to gain entry into mainstream media, community media provides “resources and opportunities ...to tell their own stories in their own voices, using their own distinctive idioms”. Community media has “thus become an important element for the local community” (Howley, 2010:5).

Community media is thus the medium through which those communities who are marginalised by the mainstream media get a voice. As marginalisation means deprivation from having a voice, it is as Charles Taylor (1994) describes, a “non recognition” which is also similar to “a form of oppression” where marginalised people live in a “reduced mode of



being” (Taylor, 1994:26). However, as Hackett and Carroll note, in many societies, especially capitalist societies, “where media are a business first, the capacity of dominant media to represent diverse interests, and provide the space for democratic dialogue, is never secure” (Hackett and Carroll, 2006:3). As a result, the “oppression” and the “non-recognition” continue, even though it is not only “a courtesy we owe people” but also “a vital human need” (Taylor, 1994:26). This also makes the provision of access and participation in media an important step in the process of media democratisation.

Defining community media as “adaptations of media for use by the community for whatever purposes the community decides” (Berrigan, 1979:8), he suggests that access and participation in community media, are the two most important features that identify real community media. Access refers to the ability of the community members to obtain media infrastructure to communicate with the local community. If community radio is meant to be a tool for the local community to access and “to choose varied and relevant programmes, and to have a means of feedback to transmit its reactions and demands” (Berrigan, 1979:18), then it is the the radio station’s ability to embrace this aspect that defines the true characteristics of community radio. By accessing media infrastructure, the community makes it “the means of expression of the community” (Berrigan, 1979:8) and they themselves become the participants as “planners, producers and performers” of the community media (Rennie, 2006:6) .This means the community members have a common “platform for all manner of individual and collective self expression, from news and opinion to entertainment and education” (Howley, 2010:16). Rennie notes that “access and participation... have been pursued out of a belief that people have a right to directly represent themselves within the media” (Rennie, 2006:6) to share “with like-minded others”, their own thoughts and experiences so that the collection of thoughts and experiences become a “means for the community to see and understand itself” (Rennie, 2006:23).

### **2.3.1 Community media versus the mainstream media**

Unlike corporate media which is controlled by commercial enterprises, the control as well as the ownership of community media belongs to the local community to which their media

content is targeted. Community media is energised by ‘social objectives’ and “empower people rather than treat them as passive consumers and they nurture local knowledge rather than replace it with standard solutions” (Howley, 2005:2).

The interest of corporate media in focusing on the society’s mainstream issues can largely be explained through the lens of Political Economic Theory of media which sees media as “a part of the economic system” whose main objective is to help the “economic interests” of the big businesses by helping them to establish and expand their markets. This being the case, the media should engage in producing material and content that help the businesses achieve their main business objective which is maximising profit. According to this Theory, maximum profit can be made in urban centres where there are more people living and hence where there is a bigger consumer demand and more spending power. Therefore, as vehicles for the businesses to help sell their products, media should aim at producing mainstream media content that would help attract big audiences who could then be put at the disposal of the big businesses to advertise their products. By favouring the wealthy, the larger communities who have the potential to yield more revenue and hence the potential to be a better market for the advertisers, the theory marginalises the interests and information needs of smaller communities (McQuail, 1983:61). Community media was thus born because of the inability of the mainstream public service media to accommodate the interests of the small and diverse communities (Mc Quail, 1983:98-102). Thus, as an answer to the “profound dissatisfaction with mainstream media form... content... and promoting community solidarity” (Howley, 2005:2), community media became the “vital alternative” to the mainstream commercial corporate media which are more focused and motivated towards making a profit (Dagron, 2004:48).

With the need to serve the mainstream communities, ‘mainstream’ media’s focus on disseminating more general news and programmes also meant that small and diverse local communities had little or no choice but to listen to news and information that never addressed interests of their community affairs, subsequently making the small communities tired of listening about everything happening elsewhere and being unable to know much

about what was happening among their communities. Thus, no matter how much interest there was among the local community to know what was happening in their own “backyard” (Forde, Meadows & Foxwell, 2003:232), this opportunity was never present in the mainstream or commercial media that standardised the unique characteristics and values of small communities in favour of creating a single “community media...that underlines local cultural expression” (Howley, 2010:4).

The local community media is therefore, about the local community communicating “with one another without the intervention” of corporate media or government media or “multinational global media” (Opel, 2004:3). Community media, therefore, became the protective “antibodies” (Lewis, 1993) that helped the local community find “their way out of the hegemonic media system building their own capacity to communicate” (Dagron, 2004: 48) and giving them the joy of experiencing their own community life and culture (Hendy, 2000) - the very thing they wanted but which was until the arrival of community media, marginalised and neglected by the mainstream media (Lewis (1993). Thus, it was the inability or the inadequacy of mainstream media to give ample access to address the realities that necessitated the local communities to come up with an alternative community media solution that could redress the communication gap between the national level and the community level and help the community to stay in tune with their own communities (Hendy, 2000).

Discussing the role of mainstream public media, Downing (2001:39) also suggests that the mainstream media focuses on the interests of the main government which are seen as ‘foreign’ when seen through the eyes of small local communities or communities of interest which have nothing in common with the mainstream media. The small community media operations are as Downing suggests simply efforts of local community members who as media producers aim at “consciousness raising” in their communities to mitigate the hegemony of mainstream media (Downing, 2001:16).

Unlike the corporate media or the mainstream government media, community media is a

media that is operated by small communities who do not possess a strong financial backing. The community media functions with “relatively small paid staffs, relying instead on volunteers to perform the tasks and functions associated with media production, distribution and”...it encourages “participatory decision-making structures” (Howley, 2010:4) that are ‘horizontally structured’ and hence does not give an ‘organisational stability’. Moreover, by focusing on “non dominant discourses and representations” that do not give the community media any financial resources (Bailey, Cammaerts and Carpentier, 2008:20) or attract any advertising revenue, the community media has to depend on its community, for survival. Hence, by relying on “donations, underwritings, and limited advertising, grant funding, in-kind contributions, and other non-commercial forms of support”, the community media is able to perform with an independence that is not seen in corporate controlled media. Although this independence comes at a cost, it does provide protective shielding “from the direct and indirect influence advertisers exert over media form and content” (Howley, 2010:4).

From the discussion above, mainstream media, if seen through the eyes of a local community, can be viewed from two perspectives. One is, the local communities are sick and tired of seeing media used by governments in the guise of public service media to disseminate information of their choice rather than what the communities want. The other is, the communities are sick and tired of the powerful and rich elitist media corporations that impose a corporate media hegemony over others, bringing media mergers nationally and internationally to a level that has imposed standardised music, programmes and news that cut across borders making the world a global village in terms of media, threatening the world of multiple cultures and communities. Media theorists have described these two perspectives in the following terms: media democratisation and media globalisation.

## **2.4 Media globalisation and media democratisation**

The discussions above have given a broad understanding to the definition of community media and where it stands vis-à-vis the mainstream media. However, to position and understand community media in a broader theoretical ground, two important media

developments need to be recognised. They are media globalisation and media democratisation.

#### **2.4.1 Media globalisation**

Media globalisation could best be described as a by-product of the economic philosophy of neo-liberalism that swept the world during the late 1970s and early 1980s and was promoted by US president Ronald Reagan and British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher. As neo-liberalism favoured the market forces to determine the outcomes rather than through state regulation, it created an environment that was conducive for corporate media to grow and expand globally and control the world media through the formation of “transnational media firms”. As a result, “large-scale communication conglomerates such as AOL/Time-Warner, Disney, News Corporation, Viacom etc. have expanded to the rest of the world through a wide range of technology and organisational forms controlling the world “media markets dominating media productions throughout the world giving people everywhere, media products that were created for universal use” (Zhao and Hackett, 2005:6-7). In non-western countries such as Mexico, Brazil and Japan, the same global transnational media corporations have established their subsidiaries thereby helping to distribute further their media products (Zhao and Hackett, 2005:7). As a result, large populations belonging to every culture and creed and living in different corners of the world, had to “simultaneously experience the same media forms, products, channels and spectacles” and be subjected to the same global “media affects” (Zhao and Hackett, 2005:6-7).

Media globalisation hence has erased the importance of cultural differences, the uniqueness of humans as individuals and their communities as important elements that help enrich the quality of communal human life lived and experienced in local communities. Hence, to protect against the forces of globalisation and the ‘homogenisation of culture’ that it brings, an alternative media that promotes community identity and culture (Girard, 1992) became a necessity. Opel describes community media, especially community radio, as a social force against media mergers which in turn are resulting in the increased use of “syndicated talk radio to standardised music formats” (Opel, 2004:1) and news bulletins that do not reflect the

local community news, views and perspectives. Disseminating constantly to local communities, news and information about others also made the communities tired of listening “about everything happening elsewhere, and hence, not knowing much of what was happening among them”. As a result, it made people more interested to know more of what was happening in their own “backyard” (Forde, Meadows and Foxwell, 2003:232). Hence, it was seen as the medium that helped the locals make their presence felt on the airwaves, to restore localism, their own voices and their own perspectives in “an increasingly franchised marketplace of ideas” (Opel, 2004:1). It is the media where the local community was able to “communicate with one another without the intervention of multinational global media corporation” (Opel, 2004:3). The community radio stations thus became alternative media outlets that were established as a community response against the globalisation of media (Herman and McChesney, 1997). As Herman and McChesney (1997) state, community media is the “most vibrant and hopeful response to the trend towards globalisation and commercialisation” (Herman and McChesney, 1997:200).

There was another dimension to media globalisation. Media globalisation also meant that the effects of media being felt globally and the ability of individual countries to regulate media became less effective, hence, that role had to be given to new international and regional organisations. Subsequently, “supra international organisations such as WTO, NAFTA, EU” had to assume “a greater role relative to nation states in setting policy frameworks “at global level” (Zhao and Hackett, 2005:8). This also meant that the “the provision of communication” became... a business activity that was “to be operated precisely on commercial logic” and that the “notions of public service and universal access are giving way to market principle and the interests of transnational corporations” (Zhao and Hackett, 2005:8). WTO and other trade bodies have replaced UN as prime mechanisms for regulating international communication services, significantly, under pressure from the United States and few developed countries. ITU has been reshaped giving member states and corporations the same rights (Zhao and Hackett, 2005:8). Unfortunately, this also means that instead of individual nation states that recognised their own public interests, the responsibility of media governance is left to organisations that have no national public and hence no specific national

interest to be mindful and to play the role of facilitators instead of simply acting as regulators (Zhao and Hackett, 2005).

#### **2.4.2 Media democratisation**

Zhao and Hackett (2005) have identified four ‘waves’ of media democratisation. One was the UNESCO debates of the 1970s and 1980s that were aimed at establishing a new world information and communication order. Many, in fact, regard the UNESCO communication debates of the 1970s and 1980s as one of the main media movements that instigated the universal debates of media democratisation. The debates began in 1976 with UNESCO establishing “a commission to examine international communications issues, in particular, the inequality of information flows between First and Third Worlds”. The ‘aim’ was to address this issue fairly and with a view “to bring about a new world information and communication order” (NWICO) that would help reduce the widening communication gap (Rennie, 2006:17).

The UNESCO initiative eventually culminated in the publication of what is known as the McBride Report (1980). The Report was quite clear in stating that there was a widening communications gap between the First and the Third World; and that there was a need to “democratise media” by establishing a new world information order that would help bridge the information gap between the developed and the developing world. Unfortunately, the UNESCO efforts “to rebalance for diversity in information and global access to communication technologies” was met by stiff opposition from the US and UK, prompting both countries not to endorse NWICO on the ground that it was a move against building a “free media market” (Kidd and Rodriguez, 2010:4), a media market in which the main stakeholders were media corporations that belonged to the US and the western countries. Hence, a support on NWICO also meant a loss for their media corporations (Hackett and Zhao, 2005:5). Subsequently, both countries decided to abstain from the organisation (Dagron, 2004:47-48). Being two very powerful countries whose endorsement was vital to the success of any UNESCO decision, their departure from UNESCO in 1984 also meant that the NWICO “discussion came to a halt” (Rennie, 2006:17).

“NWICO credibility” also “suffered as many national leaders who called for the democratisation of multilateral institutions on the world stage, brutally repressed movements for economic and cultural rights at home” and made way for “local political and corporate elites to dominate communications” (Kidd and Rodriguez, 2010:4). This also meant the initial drive that had pushed UNESCO to go for NWICO had weakened. Eventually, in 1985, during the UNESCO conference to formulate its 1990-1995 Medium Term Plan, a period in which UNESCO was already suffering financially due to the loss of a quarter of its budget due to the United States and United Kingdom pull out (Kidd and Rodriguez, 2010:4), the organisation had “dropped all the key issues” of NWICO “while endorsing the industry-friendly” free media market idea that was supported by the United States and western countries (O’ Siochru, 2005:291).

Thus, in line with the US, UK and other western countries, the way forward was the market-driven communication system whose foundation rested on concepts such as “privatisation, commercialisation, trade liberalisation and overall deregulation (or rather market-based regulation)” which are all forces that instead of helping the “national and public interest” issues to flourish in the media for the public good, put “constraint, in national media systems” to address these issues (Zhao and Hackett, 2005:5).

Hence, as Howley notes, the rejection of the McBride Report and the withdrawal of the United States and United Kingdom from UNESCO “set the stage throughout the 80s and 90s for the ascendancy of neo-liberalism—a regulatory philosophy that advocates market-based approaches to economy, social and cultural policy—and all but ensured that the debate over communication rights at the international level would put the interests of multi national corporations above those of individuals, communities and societies” (Howley, 2010:7). In other words, it simply paved the way to diminish “the state’s role... both as a provider of media services and as a regulator of media ownership and public interest obligations in broadcasting and telecommunication” (Zhao and Hackett, 2005:6).

Although the NWICO debates had lost their space on the UNESCO conference agenda,



leading participants of the debate gathered elsewhere to continue their discussions on the topic. For example, a meeting called McBride Round Table on Communication was organised in Harare in 1989. The organisers of the meeting included the South African Journalists Association, the International Organisation of Journalists and the Media Foundation of Non-Aligned Movement as well as the Consultative Club, “a loose coalition of Journalist bodies formed under the auspices of UNESCO in 1978” (Zhao and Hackett, 2005: 29). All these bodies had “played an important role throughout the NWICO debate” (Zhao and Hackett, 2005: 29). However, as O’ Siochru (2005) had noted, unlike the NWICO debates at the UNESCO, the Round Table did recognise the “central weakness of NWICO”; that it “had never broadened the debate to mobilise existing international resources” to promote the NWICO idea. The Round Table, therefore, recognised the importance of including “a network of interested NGOs...to promote dialogue...and advance new initiatives” that would bring NWICO ideals to a practical level (O’ Siochru, 2005:291).

A further problem was the need to develop grassroots alternative communication form intended as tools for population education and expression of mobilisation (Zhao and Hackett, 2005:13-14).

By the time the McBride Round Table was abandoned its main members, including international NGOs were already involved in the platform for Democratic Communication which had been founded in 1996. In this sense, this represented the transition from the “old guard” into the new environment, completing the move to a civil society-and grass-roots-driven network (O’ Siochru, 2005:292). Sighting the important role of NGOs in advancing NWICO ideals and broadening the media democratisation process, O’ Siochru, Girard and Mahan suggest, one of the main lessons of NWICO was “the way forward would have to be through democratisation of media and communications, rather than through state-or industry-led efforts” (O’ Siochru, Girard and Mahan 2002:79). This was seen as a “strategic shift” as it gave a leading role for the civil society to take up the task of democratising media through initiating and/ or developing alternative media projects (Kidd and Rodriguez, 2010: 4). As the McBride Report (1980), which was also the basis for NWICO, had outlined the “need to

develop grassroots alternative communication forms intended as tools for population education expression of mobilisation” (Zhao and Hackett, 2005:13-14), UNESCO too, found this as a way to use media for developmental purposes. Hence, UNESCO too “continued to support a redress of the skewed communications flow” which it had earlier experienced through NWICO, “by building capacity in poorer countries via local radio, video and internet projects and news agencies and training and exchanges for journalists and researchers” (O’ Siochru, Girard, Mahan, 2002:79-80; Kidd and Rodriguez, 2010:4).

Today, in addition to UNESCO, there are several leading NGOs, among them, the Rockefeller Foundation Communication Initiative, Frederich Ebert Stiftung, AMARC and APC that continue to give support to develop media in different parts of the world. The “international-level advocacy” (O’ Siochru, 2005:292-293) role played by AMARC and APC in media democratisation is particularly important in the sense that AMARC is active in empowering communities through strengthening community radio projects around the world ([www.amarc.org/about](http://www.amarc.org/about)) while APC’s vision is to ‘empower’ and ‘improve’ the lives of people by enabling communities to have “affordable access to a free and open Internet” so that they gain equal access and participation to have their say towards establishing “a more just world” ([www.apc.org/en/about](http://www.apc.org/en/about)).

Zhao and Hackett (2005) identified the second wave of media democratisation as:

...a drive for a public voice and participatory communication on the part of oppositional movements...comprising challenges to concentrated corporate control, hegemonic representations and commercial logic in mass media in the heartland of global capitalism-Western Europe and North America... These challenges grew out of the youth counterculture and the new social movements of the 1960s and 1970s-the antiwar, anti imperialist, and student-based New Left, the civil rights and black power movements in the US, ethnic minorities’ struggle for equity and women’s liberation campaigns, Quebec independence movement, environmentalism anti nuclear movements etc. (Zhao and Hackett, 2005:15).

As Hackett and Carroll (2006) suggest, “the energies of social movements” had affected media in two different ways. Firstly, it created an alternative media in the form of an

“underground press” that publicised the “political and cultural alienation of middle-class youth”. Secondly, it helped to energise the push for a reformed media by “minorities, women, children’s advocates, seniors, organised labour, education advocates, gays and lesbians” who saw the “mass media policy as a site of struggle for equity and access” (Aufderheide, 1999:18-19; Hackett and Carroll, 2006:92). The social movements are, by their very nature, ‘emotionally charged’ and resort to various forms of actions that require civil disobedience instead of using violent means to make a stand (Downing, 2001:24).

Hence, for Downing, “social movements, as a term, imply something active on the streets” (Downing, 2001:9). This also implies that social movements, by their very nature, “provide drama, conflict and action”. This also means that the activities and actions of social movements provide the necessary ingredients to make ‘colourful’ media reports (Gamson and Wolfsfeld, 1993:116-117). Thus, as Howley (2010) suggests the “compelling visuals such as public demonstrations and the like cannot be overstated” (Howley, 2010: 234). However, as Howley notes, the mainstream media “being under the influence of powerful corporate financial and political interests” means the social movements may not always “receive fair, accurate and ongoing press coverage” in a way that would satisfy the social movements (Howley, 2010:234). Furthermore, as social movements have “activities such as debate, communication, media-public conversations as issues of moment” that need to be promoted and communicated to establish an “on-going dialogue” between their sympathisers as well as members (Downing, 2001:30), the need to have a medium of communication for themselves, an alternative media managed by the movement becomes inevitable. This creates the need to establish their own self-managed and financed communication medium that would disseminate their views and opinions in a manner and style they prefer. This is where the significance of community media becomes relevant as an alternative media outlet (Howley, 2010:234).

Zhao and Hackett (2005) describe the third wave of media democratisation as the support that was given by the West to the East European countries that were “in transition from authoritarian to more liberal and/or nominally democratic forms”. Hence, the support was

particularly aimed at media reform, “in conjunction with political and legal reform” (Zhao and Hackett, 2005:16).

The era of the Internet which has “facilitated transnational civil society networks of and for democratic communication” is the fourth and most recent wave of media democratisation (Zhao and Hackett, 2005:16). Describing the Internet as “a new era for alternative media”, Ford and Gil (2001) note:

It consists of peoples’ participation in creating interactive forms of communication that act as a countervailing force to one-way flows inherent in commercial media... (and)... the Internet... (is)... proving already to be a powerful medium for global civil society...because many of the world’s people depend on traditional forms of communication, the merger of Internet with other media makes it a valuable resource- even for those without direct access- a possibility amply demonstrated by the Internet presence of Zapatistas as impoverished indigenous resistant movement from the south eastern jungles of Mexico (Ford and Gil, 2001:205).

The Internet is therefore becoming the means for the “small and media power-less” communities such as Zapatistas “to reach to the world and advocate their sentiments in the way they wanted it to be portrayed and without any filtrations from anybody. What Zapatistas described as a five hundred year struggle received global attention for the first time due to Internet” (Rennie, 2006:166).

Through the use of the Internet, “articulators of social movements” are “increasingly able to speak for themselves through documents posted directly to the Internet”. Through the existence of different platforms of interaction such as “personal and collective websites, news groups, e-mail, on-line chat sessions, conferencing, mailing lists and bulletin boards” (Ford and Gil, 2001:203), the Internet has proved to be the cheapest and fastest communication medium that is available and as Pippa Norris (2001) notes:

...the preferred choice of individuals and independent activists throughout the globe...to communicate in their own voices with an international audience of millions thereby giving them the opportunity to reach and mobilise global audiences for their causes” (Norris, 2001:172).

Although the Internet is regarded as the most widely available channel that enables “global connectivity” providing “a common forum for all the people”, the Internet as a medium of effective communication is often criticised on the grounds that “websites can be subjective... tend to move or disappear due to author’s changing circumstances, organisational instability and lack of resources” (Ford and Gil, 2001:205). However, as Ford and Gil note, these criticisms are weak in the sense that any media including the well-resourced mainstream media channels are often faced with the dilemmas and challenges of survival due to financial constraints and policy changes (Ford and Gil, 2001).

Whatever the criticism may be or the limited access it has in some parts of the world, the fact is that the Internet is growing even in “rural and impoverished regions” of the world (Ford and Gil, 2001:202) and is fast positioning itself as the medium that shows there is an “alternative way to structure communication; a structure in which access, cooperation and collaboration are the core organising principles” (Rennie, 2006:163). Moreover, as Rennie (2006) has further highlighted:

It appears that the early community media advocates were right about something at least: that media creation does not have to be for the talented few and that participation in media productions increases as equipment gets cheaper and easier to use. It means that people are expressing their fears, desires, thoughts and opinions to each other and forming media networks to pursue interests they share. Representing oneself to the world via media technologies has become the common practice through Internet (Rennie, 2006: 187-188).

## **2.5 Community media-a theoretical perspective**

As I have indicated, community media is known by several terms. For Downing, it is radical alternative media. For Rodriguez, it is citizens’ media. Community media is also known as participatory media which emphasises the participatory process. As Fontes, (2010) describes:

This array of terms emphasize different aspects of alternative media but also betray the difficulty the scholars have had in theorizing the panoply of alternative media practises, its goals, strategies and impact on diverse socio political contexts (Fontes, 2010:381-382).

Being “small-scale media” right from inception, it was regarded as a unique form of communication that was never “intended for a mass audience, with no intention of becoming mass media” (Hollanders, Stappers and Jankowski, 2002:22). The uniqueness also meant that “community media could not be easily conceptualised in terms of conventional theory and models available for the study of mass communication” (Hollanders and Stappers, 1992:16). However, theories such as the radical media theory put forward by Downing and Clemencia Rodriguez’s citizens’ media theory do explain the community participatory role of community media and hence offer valuable insights to the theoretical understanding of community media. The evolving nature of community media can also be understood through the lens of a multi-theoretical approach put forward by Carpentier, Lie and Servaes (2007).

### **2.5.1 Community media as radical alternative media**

Downing refers to alternative media as radical media that responds to the “voices and aspirations of the excluded” who have no place within the “narrow hegemonic limits of mainstream media discourse” and hence who have no interest to “censor themselves in the interests of media moguls, entrenched state power or religious authority” (Downing, 2001: 44). This puts radical alternative media not only as a voice against the mainstream media but also generally against anyone who perpetuates “hegemonic policies, priorities and perspectives” that marginalise them (Downing, 2002:v).

Stating that “everything is, at some point, alternative to something else”, Downing, (2001: ix), suggests that radical alternative media “generally serves two overriding purposes:

- To express opposition vertically from subordinate quarters directly at the power structure and against its behaviour;
- To build support solidarity, and networking laterally against policies or even against the very survival of the power structure (Downing, 2001:xi).

Downing’s theorisation makes alternative media, radical media that disseminate voices that would perpetuate disagreements, arguments, conflict and clashes between the establishment and those who call for change. As Downing (2001) describes it:

it is hopelessly naïve to see their operation as simply part of a war of ideas conducted by Queensberry rules...The story of radical media...is all too often one of survival and tension in the face of vehemently, sometimes murderously hostile authority (Downing, 2001:19).

This being the case, “depending on the vantage point of the observer, or the activist”, that is, for those who are with the establishment, the media becomes a “radically negative” force and for those who are against it, it becomes a “constructive” force (Downing, 2002: v). For “what might abstractly seem a bland and low-key instance, could, in a given context, be wielding a hammer blow at some orthodoxy...” (Downing, 2001:x). It has “one thing in common, it is that they break somebody’s rules” (Downing, 2001:xi).

As a voice to bring change to the existing power structure, radical alternative media “often have a close relationship with an on-going social movement” (Downing, 2001:44) whose work is to mobilise grassroots support and bring about radical social changes to the existing power structure (Downing, 2001:xi). As social movements often resort to violence to achieve their ends and/or are emotionally sensitive and energised to attain their causes (Cohen and Arato, 1992), for them, the resort to alternative media becomes a further step, rather a radical step “in their struggle against power, in their effort to reach out to their culture of resistance...and their network of exchange and debate” (Downing, 2001:19).

The association of radical alternative media with social movements as a force to mobilise grassroots support and solidarity against the established socio-political status quo (Downing, 2001:98) also mean it becomes a melting pot that helps form and solidify a common “alternative public sphere that emanate and converge around the movement’s activities” (Downing, 2001:30). The pot of radical opinion melts and continues forming the common alternative public sphere in a “slow burn” fashion or simply “keeps alive the visions of what might be, for a time in history, when it might actually be feasible” (Downing, 2001:9) to have enough strength to bring the desired change.

### 2.5.2 Community media as citizens' media

For Rodriguez, the traditional definitions of community media were an alternative to the mainstream, commercial or public media that was managed by the corporates or by the governments. According to Rodriguez, by defining it as an alternative, the role of community media is seen as a means to “counterbalance the unequal distribution of communication resources that came with the growth of big media corporations”. This also means alternative media can only be understood as a platform that survives “within rigid categories of power and binary conceptions of domination and subordination” (Rodriguez, 2001:3-4) which are the characteristics of the powerful media. Rodriguez’s “lived experiences” (Rodriguez, 2001: 3) during her research on four cultural communities (Rodriguez, 2001) made her realise that community media was more than an alternative to mainstream media. If community media is seen as an “alternative to something, this definition will easily entrap us in binary thinking: mainstream media and their alternative, that is alternative media” (Rodriguez, 2001:20). It also limits the role of alternative media to “their ability to resist the alienating power of mainstream media. This approach blinds our understanding of all other instances of change and transformation brought about by these media” (Rodriguez, 2001:20). This also positions community media in a “different realm” (Rodriguez, 2001:3) which makes it difficult to appreciate “the fluidity and complexity of alternative media as a social, political and cultural phenomenon” (Rodriguez, 2001:3-4). There was thus a need to depart from the rigid concept of the binary notions and focus on the cultural citizenship and hence re-theorise community media to “capture how democratic communication *happens* within alternative media” as activities (Rodriguez, 2001:10) where small cultural communities engage in their very own and uninfluenced way to conduct community media activities through “opening social spaces for dialogue and participation, breaking individual’s isolation, encouraging creativity and imagination, redefining shared social languages and symbols, and demystifying media” (Rodriguez, 2001:63).

Hence, as Rodriguez (2001) states:

Citizens’ media implies first that a collectivity is *enacting* its citizenship by actively



intervening and transforming the established mediascape; Second, that these media are contesting social codes, legitimised identities, and institutionalized social relations; and third, that these communication practices are empowering the community involved, to the point where these transformations and changes are possible (Rodriguez, 2001:20).

Thus, as Rodriguez (2001) further highlights:

...producing alternative media messages imply much more than simply challenging the mainstream media with *campesino* correspondents as new communication and information sources. It implies having the opportunity to create one's own images of self and environment; it implies being able to re-codify one's own identity with signs and codes that one chooses, thereby disrupting the traditional acceptance of those imposed by outside sources; it implies becoming one's own storyteller, regaining one's own voice; it implies reconstructing the self-portrait of one's own community and one's own culture... (Rodriguez, 2001:3).

By redefining alternative media as citizens' media, Rodriguez shows local communities can use citizens' media as a way to enliven and re-strengthen their uniqueness as cultural citizens. For different cultural groups and ethnic minorities whose citizenship is lost in the bigger multi cultural societies and nations, citizens' media activities become the ideal means to re establish their cultural citizenship and re-identify as micro cultural nations that only exist within the realm of citizens' media activities. Like "a multitude of small forces that surface and burst like bubbles in a swamp... these bubbles are a clear sign that the swamp is alive" (Rodriguez, 2001: 22). Citizens' media activities by different cultural groups are just like those bubbles showing that the cultural citizenship is alive and well.

Citizens' media thus shows the community's "ability to alter the community's symbolic environment...promotes a sense of self-esteem and empowerment, attributes that are rarely acknowledged, let alone cultivated by dominant media forms and practices" (Howley, 2010: 18).

### **2.5.3 Community media- through a multi-theoretical approach**

Carpentier, Lie and Servaes (2007) suggest a multi-theoretical approach that embodies four different theoretical frameworks to explain the functioning of community media in society.

Theorising the first approach, Carpentier, Lie and Servaes (2007) describe community media as a launch pad for ordinary members of the community to get engaged in community communication. Carpentier, Lie and Servaes state:

Ordinary people (that is those who are not part of a societal elite) are given the opportunity to have their voices heard. Topics considered relevant for the community can be discussed by its members, thus empowering them by signifying that their statements are considered important enough to be broadcast. Especially, societal groups that are misrepresented, disadvantaged, stigmatized, or even repressed can benefit from using channels of communication opened by community media strengthening their internal identity, manifesting this identity to the outside world, and thus enabling social change and/or development (Carpentier, Lie and Servaes 2007:225).

Hence, this approach, “stresses the importance of the community” (Bailey, Cammaerts and Carpentier, 2008:5).

Describing the second approach Carpentier, Lie and Servaes (2007) highlight community media:

...as an alternative to mainstream media, supplementing it on both organisational and content levels. At the organisational level, community media shows that media can exist independently from the state and market; as the pressure on mainstream media to become more market-oriented tends to be considerable, community media points that ‘third way’ is still open for media organisations.... On the content level, community media can offer representations and discourses that vary from mainstream media due to higher levels of participation of different societal groups and communities, and the aim to provide ‘air space to local cultural manifestations, to ethnic minority groups, to the hot political issues in the neighbourhood or locality (Carpentier, Lie and Servaes 2007:226; Jankowski, 1994:3).

Thus, it means, being available for various “societal groups with the opportunity to produce non-conformist views and counter-hegemonic representations” (Bailey, Cammaerts and Carpentier, 2008:17) which the mainstream media are often associated with.

The third approach which defines community media as a “third voice” (Servaes, 1999:260 that is, independent of the state media as well as the influence of the commercial media, sees it as an important tool of the civil society aimed at “deepening” the society’s democratic

roots by facilitating the civil society groups to organise and hold community forums within the society's public sphere (Bailey, Cammaerts and Carpentier, 2008:20).

Carpentier, Lie and Servaes' fourth approach describes the community media as rhizomes. Describing this approach Carpentier, Lie and Servaes state:

The approach of community media as rhizomatic makes it possible to highlight the fluidity and contingency of its organisations, in contrast to the rigid ways mainstream public and commercial media often (have to) function. Because of the elusive identity of community media, they can (by their mere existence and functioning) question and destabilize the rigidities and certainties of public and commercial media organizations. At the same time, this elusiveness makes community media (as a whole) hard to control and to encapsulate in legislation, thus guaranteeing their independence (Carpentier, Lie and Servaes 2007:231).

“As rhizomes, community media tend to cut across borders and build linkages between pre-existing gaps” (Carpentier, Lie and Servaes, 2007:231). Under this approach, as Carpentier, Lie and Servaes (2007) assert:

Community media not only function as instruments giving voice to a group of people related to a specific issue, but also as catalysts, grouping people active in different types of struggle for equality (or other issues)...and making “it possible to highlight the fluidity and contingency of its organisations, in contrast to the rigid ways mainstream public and commercial media often (have to) function (Carpentier, Lie and Servaes 2007:231).

Carpentier, Lie and Servaes (2007) further suggest:

This approach builds further onto the importance attributed to civil society and democracy; here, the main emphasis for describing the importance of community media is not their role as part of the public sphere, but the catalysing role they play by functioning as cross-roads where people from different types of movements and struggles meet and collaborate, such as people from different women's, peasants, students, and/or antiracist movements (Carpentier, Lie and Servaes 2007:230).

An important aspect of community media as rhizomes is that this approach cuts across both “the civil society approach and the alternative media approach” and enables both the approaches to be “radicalised and unified” as one, making it behave just like rhizomes, that is, being fluid and flexible, giving leeway rather than “operating within fixed set of rules” (Bailey, Cammaerts and Carpentier, 2008:27).

#### **2.5.4 Community media and democratic participant theory**

This normative theory shares many aspects with other media theories. However, what makes this theory special is that it highlights the negative side of commercial media and media monopolies which bring disadvantages to media access for diverse groups, minorities and individuals, who in addition to being small groups of people, often do not have the financial strength to get mainstream or commercial media interest.

The Democratic-Participant Theory advocates that although public broadcasting systems had raised high expectations of media to promote democracy and democratic values, these expectations had been let down by mainstream public broadcasting organisations that have become too ‘elitist’, and too close to the ‘establishment’. As a result, the needs of the society’s ordinary people have been overlooked in favour of those who yield political power and commercial influence in the society. The Theory proposes that the media exist primarily for their audiences and not for enhancing and promoting the interests of the state. According to this Theory, individual freedom to use media as a forum to disseminate individual and diverse views had failed due to the inadequacy and complicity that existed within the bureaucratic nature of media organisations themselves and due to their submission to the political influence (McQuail, 1983:97).

According to this Theory, rather than responding and rotating around the power hegemony of the ‘establishment’, the media institutions should be more closely involved with the social life of the ordinary and the less affluent, giving them fair opportunities for media access and participation on terms set by them rather than by those who control the media organisation (McQuail, 1983:96-97).

The Theory thus, advocates the freedom and rights of individuals and minority groups and their right to access media and the right to be served in accordance to their own determination and need. Under this Theory, media is all about individuals and society's right to relevant information; their right to answer back; and the right to use the means of communication process for their own interaction and among their own communities of interest. The Theory gives local communities the specific reason to organise themselves and establish their own local community media stating instead of having centralised, high-cost, highly-professionalised and highly bureaucratic state-controlled media, small-scale operations that are de-institutionalised and more focused on specific localities are better than large-scale media in meeting and addressing the needs of the individuals and individual communities (McQuail, 1983:97).

## **2.6 Theorising community radio**

As Dagron (2004) states:

Community radio is no doubt the alternative medium that has made the most widespread impact globally over the past 50 years. Since the early 1950s, several thousand community radios stations emerged, particularly in Latin America. During the 1970s, a similar phenomenon developed in Europe (Dagron, 2004:47).

In the continents of Africa and Asia too, people “have begun experimenting with community radio since early 1990s” (Dagron, 2004:47). Hence, today, it is regarded as “the dominant medium for community expression in most parts of the world” playing “an important cultural role by promoting local music, stories and opinions all of which reinforce community memory and history” (Rennie, 2006:4).

### **2.6.1 Community radio- a definition**

Coyer (2007) suggests that there is:

no one definition of community radio; however, it is generally understood to encompass stations that embrace participatory, open, not-for-profit practices, and made by and for the community primarily by voluntary labour values. It is a source of local,

neighborhood-based news, entertainment and information. It is radio run for its own sake, for the benefit of the community, rather than for the profit of station owners (Coyer, 2007:113).

For Hochheimer, the main purpose of having a community radio in the community is the desire of the community members to communicate and to come together on one platform to appreciate the life and works of the community (Hochheimer, 1999:451). Hence, as Dunaway suggests, by having one's own community radio, it is like saying "we may be citizens of a country but we are residents of a locality". It is the radio station that "balances these multiple identities in their programming choices" (Dunaway, 2002:76).

Bailey, Cammaerts and Carpentier (2008) describe community radio as an alternative to the mainstream media which includes the public service and commercial broadcasting which are media that are:

likely to construct and grant legitimacy to 'leading' social values... become ideological as they reproduce a constructed and preferred view of 'reality'.... giving priority to the ideas of the main social actors such as the state, politicians, and the private sector over the views of disfranchised minorities..." and "geared towards homogeneous audiences... carrying "dominant discourses and representations" (Bailey, Cammaerts and Carpentier, 2008: 16-18).

The World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC) defines community radio as:

a station that responds to the needs of the community which it serves and that contributes its development in a progressive manner promoting social change. It promotes democratisation of communication by facilitating community participation in communication. This participation may vary according to the context in which the radio operates (AMARC Website, n.d).

AMARC's definition emphasises the radio's participatory relationship with its community, requiring the active involvement and participation of community members in radio programmes by producing, planning and presenting them. The definition, however, does not require the radio to be owned by the community which is for many, an important

characteristic for any community radio (Oso, 2003). For example, Girard (1992:13), Berrigan (1979:8) and Jankowski and Prehn, (2002:7-8) note that in addition to making programmes, running the station, supervision or fund raising, ownership too is an important characteristic.

The Pacifica Radio founder, Lewis Hill identified four basic characteristics that differentiate community radio from other forms of radio. According to Hill, there should be an active participation of community volunteers who are marginalised by the mainstream media. In the listening population, it is not the 'listeners' quality' but the listening number that was 'paramount'. He says that it is the radio listeners who have the say in selecting programmes for listening as well as deciding the timing for broadcasting. The volunteers working at the community radio are seen as "an extension of the listening community" and not as an economic means aimed at getting the station works done cheaply (Dunaway, 2002:65).

An important characteristic of community radio is its ability to establish an on-going and continuous two-way communication process between the radio and the listeners. In other words, the people who produce radio programmes are also the same people who make up the listening community. Hence, the radio enables the listening audience to become actively involved in the programme production process as well. This is quite unlike the monolithic nature of the mainstream media where the listeners remain as passive listeners who have no means to get involved in the programme production (Atton, 2002:36). Another characteristic that separates the mainstream media with community media is unlike the former which uses highly trained staff, the latter uses untrained non professionals and volunteers to produce programmes (Jankowski and Prehn, 2002:7-8).

As Hochheimer (2002) notes:

Democratic communication in practice implies that there is broadly based support and participation from communities served by the media. The radio listeners, newspaper readers or cassette recipients do not constitute an audience or a market; rather, they are intimately involved in planning and production of programming. As such, they are the resources, not the targets of the station (Hochheimer, 2002:321).

Emphasising the importance of community participation in the community media, Hochheimer (2002) suggests:

The community media facilitators should also look within the communities to find means that community members can best decide who speak for them and on what terms. An on-going series of facilitated dialogue needs to be initiated within the community so that members can come together to find common purpose. They, not facilitators, need to define what issues are in their own terms, and who the most legitimate spokespersons are for them. They need to evaluate who decides what the legitimate voices to be heard on an on-going basis (Hochheimer, 2002:323).

By involving the local community members and elders who can command the good wishes of the community, it prevents the making of mistakes that is often the case when top-down developmental programmes are imposed on the communities. For example, often NGOs make the mistake of “attempting to create a need” in favour of disseminating information to “which there is a need” (Servaes, 1996:16 in Rennie, 2006: 134). Such actions do not help the community to come up with “specific bottom-up solutions” (Rennie, 2006:134) or provide “meaningful space” for community voices to “discuss and debate issues”, their views, concerns and perspectives (Deane, 2007:210). It helps the NGO agenda and objective which promotes their top-down agenda.

As Girard (1992) describes it, community radio is there “to serve people”, to “encourage expression and participation” and to “value local culture”. Its purpose is to “give a voice to those without voices, the marginalised groups and to communities far from large urban centres, where the population is too small to attract commercial or large-scale state radio” (Girard, 1992:ix). This being the main “community radio objective” (Deane, 2007:210), it is noteworthy that out of the different characteristics that distinguish the community radio, it is the ability for the community members to access and participate in community radio that explains what it means to do community radio. Hence access and participation are the defining two characteristics of community radio.



### **2.6.2 The nature of access and participation**

As noted in the above discussion, the “two concepts that are central to the theory and practice of community media” are access and participation (Berrigan, 1979:8; Jankowski and Prehn, 2002:11). Defining access, Coyer (2007) states:

By access, we mean both content...and infrastructure”. Content is provided by independent producers providing alternative programming. Infrastructure is the opening of airwaves for community groups to legally create radio and their own television stations (Coyer, 2007:111).

Defining access, Berrigan (1979) notes:

Access maybe defined in terms of opportunities available to the public to choose varied and relevant programmes and have a means of feedback to transmit its reactions and demands to production organizations (Berrigan, 1979:18).

For Lewis, access is “the process that permits users to provide relatively open and unedited input to the mass media” (Lewis, 1993:12). Hence, “for those with little or no access to mainstream media outlets, community media provide resources and opportunities for marginalised groups” (Rodriguez, 2001), the opportunity to “access, for information, education, entertainment, when they want access (Berrigan, 1979:8).

In community radio, “participation is...the participation of non-professionals in the production of media output (content-related participation) and in media decision-making (structural participation)” (Bailey, Cammaerts and Carpentier, 2008:11; Prehn, 1991 and Berrigan, 1979). Hence, unlike the mainstream media where highly trained media professionals are engaged in all aspects of media, in community media, it is the very ordinary members of the community who plan and organise the programmes and also who come to “tell their own stories in their own voices, using their own distinctive idioms” (Rodriguez, 2001). Thus, the channels of community media become “the means of expressions of the community, rather than for the community” (Berrigan 1979:8). This also means “community media is not just do-it-yourself (DIY) media, but as do-it-your-own-way” media (Rennie,

2006:186) where individual community members act as producers, planners and presenters doing community radio in their own style. The participants are also volunteers who live within the same community and who are part of the radio audience, “the traditional boundaries between sender and receiver are also blurred through the creation of” this “active audience” (Dreher, 2010:74).

Dagron (2007) observes that participatory and access are two words that can be interchanged. Giving an example of a radio established by the Mexican government in the 1980s, he says the locals had “the possibility of interacting with the station either by visiting the station headquarters” or interacting with the radio reporters who meet “the communities to tape interviews” (Dagron, 2007:198). This shows that interaction with staff could be a form of participation as well as access. The demarcation line is therefore, as Dagron (2007) remarks:

not easy to draw between the various levels, which is why the academic exercise of including some and excluding the rest could be dangerous and not really representative of what is actually happening on the ground. We are dealing with processes of communication that is, live social organisms that do not adjust to preconceived moulds (Dagron, 2007:198).

### ***2.6.2.1 Community radio as tool for community mobilisation and radical change***

The nature of and purpose for participation in community radio varies from community to community. For example, in some communities, the purpose of participating in radio could be to promote ambitious campaigns such as “demanding change” for radical social transformations. As Downing suggests, alternative media such as community radios “often have a close relationship with an on-going social movement and thus fairly spontaneously express views and opinions extruded from mainstream media, or ridiculed in them” (Downing, 2001:44). By providing easy access to radical alternative voices (to be heard), they become the medium of choice for many movements that demand radical social change in their society. For example, for the Bolivian miners, the radio was their “primary means of resistance through decades of upheaval...in times of peace, miners used the stations to campaign for better working conditions as well as education and cultural activities” (Rennie, 2006: 18). For the Greek students, in 1973, small-scale radio was their choice to voice out

their anger against the continuation of military rule in the country. Similarly, in Portugal in 1974, small-scale community radio played a 'pivotal role' in the removal of the country's fascist government. In Spain, too, after the death of Spanish dictator, Franco, in 1975, alternative radio created "alternative public spaces on the airwaves that were also quite intoxicating" (Downing, 2001:184).

Downing also notes that small-scale radio use by radical groups and movements in countries such as Algeria, Italy and France can be seen as further examples that show the "national impact" they were able to bring to their countries, especially in environments where "state jealously guarded its monopoly control over broadcasting (Downing, 2001:187).

#### ***2.6.2.2 Community radio as a channel for celebrating community life***

Highlighting the importance of community radio in enhancing community life, Bruce Girard (1992) states:

...its broadcasts are marked with a passion, rarely seen in commercial or large-scale State media. This passion arises out of a desire to empower listeners by encouraging and enabling their participation, not only in the radio, but in the social, cultural and political processes that affect the community (Girard, 1992:2).

Girard further notes:

The defining characteristic of a community station is the participatory nature of the relationship between it and the community. Most radio stations, community or otherwise, participate in some way in the lives of their listeners-announcing their news and events, presenting their music and reflecting their culture (Girard, 1992:9).

Community participation is therefore quite unlike the "conventional stations" where listeners are given the "chance to participate other than by requesting a particular song or to express an opinion on a topic defined by the radio during phone-in shows" (Girard, 1992:9). The focus is, building and enhancing community life through community communication. This was an opportunity that was never practical in the mainstream media channels that too often

standardise the unique characteristics and values of small communities, undermining the “local cultural expression” (Howley, 2010:4) through broadcasting syndicated radio talks, standardised music formats and news bulletins that offer standardised news that do not reflect the local community (Opel, 2004).

### ***2.6.2.3 Community radio as a tool for development***

In the developing countries, community radios also are used as tools for participatory development communication (PDC). Quoting Hochheimer (2002) whose quote I have used earlier:

community-based participatory media in a variety of forms provide substantial hope that people can best make decisions affecting their own futures if provided the contexts within which to establish media for themselves to address their own problems as they construct them (Hochheimer, 2002: 319).

This means that it is through community radios, that communities meet and discuss their problems and identify their solutions too. For Hochheimer, in the developing countries, community radio becomes a PDC. Describing PDC, Hochheimer (2002) describes it as:

a process that brings people into positions of decision-making about what types of programme content and styles they need, what works best for their social and cultural environment, and how these may best be developed for them. The most essential principal is that the people working within the projects are operating freely within a milieu that they believe fits for them (Hochheimer, 2002:318).

For example, if the community is rural and agricultural, then their radio helps them by airing more programmes and information that will help increase production, give answers to queries of local farmers and encourages people to work together, in community projects etc. (Eugenie Aw, 1992). This “bottom-up approach” (Rennie, 2006:134) which is synonymous with the community radio’s ability to establish a two-way communication line making the listeners or the audience active programme makers or content providers, is thus an important characteristic of community radio in developing countries (McQuail, 1994).

Addressing the important role played by the community radio, the former Indian

President Abdul Kalam, while inaugurating the Grassroots Summit in New Delhi in 2006, remarked, “the community radio should be like the multiple sails of a ship helping” the community to “move faster” and in the developing countries, this means there is a need for the radio to play a major role in partnership with the community for community development. In this regard, President Kalam suggests:

A prime responsibility of the community media is that of being a development partner which plays a pro-active role such as holding meetings with the villagers suggesting their ideas and how they think in their view which is the way forward for village development. Media become a partner of development; project the pain of the people where it was experienced, and celebrate the happiness and success where it was relevant and becoming a vehicle to transfer village ideas and village solutions to village people (Kalam, 2006).

McQuail, notes that the media’s role as an ICT (information and communication tool) in bringing change is greater in the developing countries and though it has the ‘potential’, the effect is less in the developed countries (McQuail, 1994).

## **2.7 Summary and Conclusion**

Community media is described in a variety of ways. Among them, ‘alternative media’, ‘radical media’, ‘citizen’s media’, ‘grassroots media’, ‘participatory media’ ‘tactical media’ and ‘community-based media’. As Howley notes, given this variety of names by which the community media is known, it lacks a “definitional precision” (Howley, 2010:15) and being an “on-going process” to which “nobody has a manual for it, a how to recipe” it becomes much harder to give a precise definition (Dagron, 2004:46).

As mentioned above, just as community media lacked a “definitional precision”, community media also has a short research history. The main motivation that led to an increase in community media research was attributed to the UNESCO debates of the 1970s that were centred around the unequal flow of information between developed and developing worlds which lead to the birth of (what was known as) NWICO, the New World Communication and Information Order (Rodriguez, 2001). As Rennie (2006) notes, the NWICO debates were the trigger that activated academic interest, subsequently addressing the ‘shortfall’ in the study of community media (Rennie, 2006:16). Zhao and Hackett (2005) describe the

NWICO debates and their aftermath as the first wave of world media democratisation, some of the other waves being the “drive for public voices participatory communication on the part of the social movements” and the power of the Internet which has a global affect on media democratisation unfolding a “new era for alternative media” (Zhao and Hackett, 2005:15-16).

Important academic work that has come out in the process of theorising community media includes, Downing’s theorisation of alternative media as radical media, linking it as a tool of the social movements. His theory highlights alternative media as a means of community mobilisation and grassroots participatory communication that are aimed at bringing radical transformations (Downing, 2001). In many respects, Downing’s theory emphasises the power of collective communication and participation in media through social movements. In this regard, the theory is also a discussion of broader aspects of alternative media as a powerful force of democratic communication and media democratisation.

The use of alternative media as a tool of the social movements which are collective bodies, however, limits alternative media use by others. For example, alternative media can be also used by individuals who use their own Internet blogs to express their radical views and calls towards bringing radical changes. Although these are also “weaker forms of alternative media”, they too have the capability to act as media outlets that could bring radical change (Atton, 2002:21). For example, on the recent world stage, we have seen that rather than through social movements, it was the use of social network sites such as facebook, Twitter, instant messaging through mobile phones or using Internet blogs by ordinary individuals that led to mass mobilisation and eventually to the formation of social movements that mobilised people powerful enough to bring down the rule of President Hosni Mubarak’s 30-year rule in Egypt in 2011. In the case of Egypt, it was widely regarded that an individual blogger by the name of Abdul El Fattah was responsible for the initial mass mobilisation (Aljazeera, 2011). This showed that just as alternative media created social movements, even a single person using a single medium such as one’s own personal Internet facebook page could also be effectively used to bring social mobilisation and later, the formation of more organised social

movements leading to radical change.

Besides Downing, the theoretical discussion in this chapter also highlights how Rodriguez (2001) has shown the effects of media democratisation within small cultural communities. For Rodriguez community media is not an alternative that is there for use of the powerless and the marginalised who are left out by the mainstream media. According to Rodriguez, such descriptions “will easily entrap us in binary thinking: mainstream media and their alternative” (Rodriguez, 2001:20)...and “blinds our understanding of all other instances of change and transformation brought about by these media” (Rodriguez, 2001:20).

Rodriguez shows how small communities use citizens’ media to reaffirm their citizenship (within them) at their own pace, strength and taste and hence being alternative to none. In many ways, citizens’ media theory is “the most in-depth attempt to understand self-representation” bringing “community media into contemporary thinking about power, citizenship and media use” (Rennie, 2006:188). “Rodriguez’s shift to “citizens’ media” does not remove the themes that have always been the focus of alternative media: protest and dissent, collective organisation and participation, culture and the media, viewing and producing” (Rennie, 2006:21).

The third and the final part of this chapter focuses on theorising community radio. Defining community radio, Coyer (2007) states:

there is no one definition of community radio; however, it is generally understood to encompass stations that embrace participatory, open, not-for-profit practices, and made by and for the community primarily by voluntary labour values. It is a source of local, neighborhood-based news, entertainment and information. It is radio run for its own sake, for the benefit of the community, rather than for the profit of station owners (Coyer, 2007:113).

Coyer also suggests that “community radio is more than just radio. It is a means of social

organising and social engagement” (Coyer, 2007:113). Girard (1992) describes community radio as a “radio that encourages expression and participation and that values local culture. Its purpose is to give a voice to those without voices, the marginalised groups and to the communities far from large urban centres, where the population is too small to attract commercial or large-scale state radio” (Girard, 1992:ix).

The community radio is described as an alternative to the mainstream media which are “geared towards homogeneous audiences...and carrying dominant discourses and representations” (Bailey, Cammaerts and Carpentier, 2008:18) and hence, sidelines the interests of the smaller communities and other minorities whose interests could not be taken on board. The community radio is mostly distinguished as the radio that is committed “to community participation at all levels” and where “community radio listeners are the producers, managers, directors and even owners of the stations” (Girard, 1992:2, Bailey, Cammaerts and Carpentier 2008:23). An important feature that is attributed to community radio is its ability as a means for community mobilisation and radical change as much as it is a channel for celebrating community life. In the developing world, the use of community radio for development communication purpose is an important feature. It is believed that “community-based participatory media in a variety of forms provide substantial hope that people can best make decisions affecting their own futures if provided the contexts within which to establish media for themselves to address their own problems as they construct them” (Hochheimer, 2002:319); the purpose being to help establish a two-way communication process enabling “specific bottom-up solutions” (Rennie, 2006:134) to community issues.

This chapter, in particular, has discussed the different characteristics of community radio; and notes community access and participation as the two defining characteristics that are mostly associated with community radio (Jankowski and Prehn, 2002:11). As much of this study is centred on community access and participation in the selected three radio stations, the theoretical discussion on access and participation in this chapter, in many ways, lays the theoretical foundation for my study. Hence, in the subsequent chapters, I have developed this



theme at varying levels. For example, in Chapter Six, I investigate the nature of access and participation as they are practised within the three cases I have chosen for this study. In Chapter Seven, I have done a content analysis of news of the three selected cases to explore the frequency as well as the nature of community news and events getting access to radio news bulletins. In Chapter Eight, I discuss the role of the Internet as the new future for community radio in providing a new pathway for communities, especially for the new generation youth, to access and participate in their community radio.

# **CHAPTER THREE**

## **Community Broadcasting in South Asia**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter gives an historical overview of broadcasting in South Asia. Given the ‘close proximity’ of this study to the South Asian region and community radio, I believe that the inclusion of this chapter in my study will give the big picture of the region’s broadcasting status, more specifically, the development of community broadcasting in the region.

In this chapter, I have discussed each country separately. The countries are not listed alphabetically nor are they placed according to their population or geographic size. As this chapter mainly discusses community radio, I have placed on top of the list, the oldest in terms of community radio development. The length and depth of discussion of community radio in different countries varies considerably as they depend mostly on the availability of information.

### **3.2 Sri Lanka**

The history of broadcasting in Sri Lanka goes back to 1922 when the country founded its Amateur Radio Society. The following year, Ceylon Telegraph Department began broadcasting gramophone music from a transmitter it had built using a radio set obtained from a captured German submarine. The successes of this experiment led to the launch of Colombo Radio on December 16, 1925. By 1949, the radio became a separate government institution and was known as Radio Ceylon (Lent, 1978).

During the premiership of Sir Dudley Senanayake, the government recommended that Radio Ceylon should be made into a corporation similar to the New Zealand Broadcasting Corporation (NZBC) and following this recommendation, Ceylon Broadcasting Corporation was formed in 1967(Lent,1978:264). The Corporation changed its name to Sri Lanka

Broadcasting Corporation (SLBC) on May 22, 1972.

### **3.2.1 Private radio broadcasting**

SLBC's firm grip over broadcasting came to an end in 1984 when the government granted licences to private parties to begin commercial broadcasting. Today, there are more than 24 FM radio stations. Most of the private stations in Sri Lanka are owned or managed by four media companies, Maharajah Broadcasting, EAP Group (Edirisinghe Group of Companies), Teleshan Network and Asia Broadcasting Company (Gunawardene, 2006).

Sri Lankan media commentator, Nalaka Gunawardene, however, observes that for all practical purposes, private broadcasting and liberalisation of broadcasting in Sri Lanka is "partial and lop-sided". The government of the day was always interested in giving broadcasting licences to family members or to close affiliates of the political parties. By doing this, the successive governments ensured that there was media that protected their interests especially during times of crises and elections (Gunawardene, 2006).

Although private broadcasting is now permitted in Sri Lanka, the government holds an absolute right to revoke broadcasting licence given to any party without having to give an explanation. This grim reality was brought to public awareness when the government shut down Raja FM, a private radio station owned by Colombo Communication Private Limited, on November 9, 2007 on the pretext that it had "broadcast anti-social and extremely repulsive and vulgar material that could corrupt the society, specially (sic) the younger generation" (Gunawardene, 2006:1). Hence, as Gunawardene describes "it's the Sword of Damocles that hangs over all privately owned radio and TV stations". For this reason alone, all private stations continue, very diligently, self censoring their content (Gunawardene, 2006:1). The action has also raised more concerns about the absence of transparency and due process in the government's dealings with stations that do not support the government (Gunawardene, 2006).

### **3.2.2 Birth of community radio**

In 1983, SLBC in partnership with UNESCO and DANIDA (Danish International Development Agency) established the country's first community radio (Fraser and Estrada 28:2001). The radio project known as Mahaweli Community Radio was the first in South Asia. The station was used as a model by UNESCO to develop similar radio stations in other Asian countries (David, 1992).

The Mahaweli radio concept was originally a modified 'version of the experience of Baandvaerkstedet' – the Tape Workshop, which was a public access radio programme of Radio Denmark. The concept of the station was first proposed by a Danish broadcaster while holidaying in Sri Lanka. He saw the need to establish a radio station to help the one million people who had been resettled in a new location under the government's Mahaweli River Irrigation Project. The idea was to use radio to give the new settlers the opportunity to identify themselves as a new community and help facilitate their socio-economic developments (David, 1992).

The success of Mahaweli Radio Project led the Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation to establish additional community radio stations in the rural areas. There are now a total of five community radio stations and they are located in Aralaganwila, Girandurukotte, Kothmale, Maha Illuppallama, Jaffna and Vauniya. Out of these, the first one was Mahaweli Community Radio in Kothmale, and the next one to follow was the Girandurukotte Community Radio in 1986. The Jaffna Community Radio was established in January 1997; the Vanni Service (Vauniya) in August 1997, and Pulathisi Ravaya (in Aralaganwila in the Polonnaruwa District) in April 1998. The latter is a new multi-ethnic community service (Gunaratne, 2000).

All the community stations were established under the Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation. This not only shows the state's continued interest in keeping community broadcasting under its domain, but also is an indication that the government is not yet ready to completely democratise public service radio. Gunawardene (2006) suggests that the government's

reluctance to liberalise the community radio sector was due to the fear that community radio could be “misused for anti social or political purposes”. There was also the fear that the radio stations could be controlled by terrorists to promote their interests (Laksmi, 2005).

### **3.2.3 Institutional support for community radio**

One of the biggest institutional supports for community radio in Sri Lanka comes from the Community Radio Association of Sri Lanka formed in 2002. The association is active in conducting community radio awareness workshops including workshops on how to do community radio. The association also helps communities to understand and appreciate the work of community radio better, explaining to them what the radio could do for the community, explaining the differences between a community radio and a non community radio station and why there is a need for the community to tune in to their radio (Udumalagala, 2003).

## **3.3 Nepal**

Until the 1950s, it was a crime for the ordinary Nepalese to possess a radio. Owning a radio was decriminalised in 1951 when the government established Radio Nepal. From the 1950s until the mid-1990s, Radio Nepal was the only broadcaster in the country. It was a time when private broadcasting was not permitted and hence, the government had complete control over the airwaves (Lent, 1978).

In 1990, there was a drastic change to the Nepali political environment. As described by Rajendra Prasad. Sharma, the deputy executive director of Radio Nepal, that change was the adoption of a new constitution in September 1990, giving Nepalese, the right to freedom of expression and the right to receive information on matters of public importance. The constitution also guaranteed the public the right to demand information that is of public interest. The constitutional freedoms were further clarified in 1993 when the parliament passed a new National Broadcasting Act which gave the public the right to begin private broadcasting (R. Sharma, personal communication, 29 August, 2005).

### **3.3.1 Beginning of private broadcasting and community radio**

Although the country's constitution gave the people the right to broadcast and the subsequent laws clarified that right, the government was not too ready to concede the broadcasting right to the public. The legal environment was tested in 1993 when the Nepal Forum of Environmental Journalists (NEFEJ), a non-government organisation that was created in 1987, applied for a radio broadcasting licence. The government was however, silent over the matter and NEFEJ could not proceed as there was no government support. According to B. Koirala, a senior member of NEFEJ, this was largely due to the influence of the state broadcaster Radio Nepal which saw the establishment of a second station in the country as a direct challenge and a threat to Radio Nepal (Koirala, 2000).

NEFEJ's campaign to begin private broadcasting took a new turn in October 1993 when it hosted an historical seminar on community broadcasting. The seminar recommended that the government permit community broadcasting in Kathmandu, the capital of Nepal. The proposal also had international endorsement, especially from the UN and donor agencies. Many local journalists as well as members of the civil society also showed their support, openly arguing that it was absolutely unconstitutional to keep broadcasting as a government monopoly (Koirala, 2000).

In 1997, the government ultimately gave in and Nepal's first radio, Radio Sagarmatha was established in Kathmandu. The launch of Radio Sagarmatha was thus the beginning of private as well as community radio broadcasting in Nepal (Mainali, 2003).

### **3.3.2 Institutional support for community radio**

Nepal has not only developed a well-established community radio network but has also established a strong public radio support network which is playing an important role in strengthening and expanding community and public radio in the country. As described by R. Mainali, head of the Nepal Community Radio Support Centre, leading organisations that are active in this regard include the Community Radio Support Centre, the Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (ACORAB), and Communications Corner (R. Mainali, personal communication, 8 July, 2007).

### ***3.3.2.1 Community Radio Support Centre***

The Community Radio Support Centre is an arm of NEFEJ and was established in 2004. One of the most important roles of the centre is helping small remote communities to do the paperwork needed to establish community radio. In this regard, the centre helps in preparing community radio projects on their behalf and submits them to foreign donors for financial assistance. The centre also plays a crucial role in lobbying the government to speed up community radio licensing in the rural areas. The centre's work is particularly helpful to remote communities who are keen to have one but have no expertise in establishing community radio (R. Mainali, personal communication, 8 July, 2007).

### ***3.3.2.2 Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (ACORAB)***

ACORAB was established in 2002 as an umbrella organisation to represent all the community radio stations of Nepal and give them a collective voice. Its works include capacity building of community broadcasters to enable them to support community development through community radio stations and to carry out community radio projects that need collective support of the different radios. The organisation also provides financial support to several small community radio stations to buy radio equipment. The money is received as small grants from international donor agencies (M. Bista, personal communication, 7 July, 2007).

At present, ACORAB is engaged in lobbying the government to make “community radio-friendly policies” that will help community radios remain sustainable in the market. At present, under the Nepal Law, there is no difference between a non-profit making community radio and the profit-making commercial radio stations. ACORAB has proposed that the government change laws distinguishing public service and commercial broadcasting and to define and recognise community broadcasting as a separate tier of broadcasting (M. Bista, personal communication, 7 July, 2007).

Currently in Nepal, there is a trend where community radio stations are being controlled by politically powerful and rich families. This means that although radio stations are established with the community in mind, often they are used as a tool for the owners' propaganda. A

UNESCO official who often works in Nepal told this author that factionalisation of community radio and ownership by politicians is a problem that is getting bigger and bigger, and given that there is neither a specific law governing community radio nor a community radio policy, she believes that it is only an organisation such as ACORAB that can address this issue and campaign to make community radio free from the rich and the powerful (S. Nair, personal communication, 14 June, 2007).

### ***3.3.2.3 Communications Corner***

Communications Corner founded in 1998 helps community radio by producing and providing radio programmes to community radio stations. The main objective is to promote democracy and strengthen community participation in development. Through its programmes, the organisation helps communities build up opinions on development and policy-related issues. These programmes are broadcast on different community radios so that the whole country is able to hear the opinions of other communities thereby making the voices of small communities a mainstream voice (Communications Corner website, n.d).

Communication Corner is also a community news centre distributing local news. The centre receives, distributes and shares local news among the community stations who have subscribed to its service. In addition, the centre plays an active role in producing specialised current affairs programmes and radio magazine programmes that are focused on the needs of a particular community radio. This service is especially useful to small radio stations that do not have much capacity and resources to produce issue-focused programmes about their communities (Communications Corner website, n.d).

## **3.4 India**

Radio broadcasting in India dates back to early 1924 when the government gave permission to operate amateur radio clubs. In 1927, a private commercial company named the Indian Broadcasting Company was formed with the establishment of a radio station in Bombay (Lent, 1978). Broadcasting was inaugurated in Bombay on 27 July 1927, just seven months after the creation of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) in the UK. From the very



beginning, the Indian Broadcasting Company had styled itself on the BBC borrowing “programme pattern as well as its philosophy and talent for development” (Kumar, 2003).

By 1930, the company having faced financial difficulties was taken over by the government and the name was changed to Indian State Broadcasting Service (ISBS). ISBS was the predecessor to All India Radio (AIR) which was formed in 1936 (CBA Handbook, 1993/1994; Kumar, 2003).

Kumar observes that over the past 70 years of broadcasting, AIR had adhered to the same set of principles of broadcasting it had received from its founding fathers. For example, the very first report on the progress of broadcasting in India written in 1939 and the AIR annual report of 2002 were quite similar. Both reports showed that “what puts national broadcasting on a proper footing” had not gone through any major changes. Hence, the main principles of AIR were based “in terms of growth, spread, and coverage, of area and of population, listenership percentages, programming pattern and the number of languages broadcast”. This showed that everything to achieve these objectives was laid down by a ‘top-down’ approach in which the central authority decided, planned and implemented the plans. There was little consideration given to incorporate the interests of those at the receiving end (Kumar, 2003).

### **3.4.1 Rural community broadcasting**

In 1956, with assistance from UNESCO, AIR organised what was known as “Farm Radio Forum”. The forum, based on a Canadian model aimed at establishing a two-way communication between people living in 150 selected villages in the State of Maharashtra and the programme producers (Pavarala, 2007). The theme adapted by the Farm Radio was “Listen, Discuss, Act!” In this respect, the radio was quite successful in getting community involvement and community participation in its programmes (Singhal and Rogers, 2001:70). The success of Farm Radio Forum led to a similar experiment when the government launched its “Green Revolution” in the 1960s. Under the programme “Radio Rural Forum” was established, again as a two-way communication process to connect the farmers and the

crop experts so that farmers could be given knowledge in agriculture and modern methods of farming and at the same time get answers to their queries (Pavarala, 2007).

Unfortunately, All India Radio did not make use of the vast knowledge it received from rural broadcasting experiments to develop a separate rural based participatory radio. Although in the 1960s, All India Radio did set up an 'experimental' rural station in the town of Nagercoil in Tamil Nadu State which could have been a prototype for 'development-oriented' community-based small local station, the potential of the station as a community radio was overlooked. For example, the station was staffed by AIR employees who were brought from elsewhere rather than recruiting from the same town. The staff had little or no local knowledge and was out of touch with the locals. However, in its programmes, it did bring the participation of listeners, but this did not convince the community to identify the radio as one of theirs (Kumar, 2007).

### **3.4.2 Deregulation of the airwaves**

In 1975 when Prime Minister Indira Gandhi declared a state of emergency, she used AIR as a government tool to achieve her propaganda. Her abuse of state media to her advantage was criticised by many AIR staff who did not want to see their neutrality eroded. Gandhi being adamant on her decision told the senior AIR staff that while they were employed by the government "they are bound to obey orders of the government. If they feel government policy is not right and they are unable to obey, they have some other views which they want to express; nobody is stopping them from resigning and joining another organisation where they will have that freedom". Similar to Gandhi's views her Information Minister, V.C Shukla said AIR was "not a forum run by the government to debate on the conflicting ideologies but to make people understand government policies" and that "as governments were run by parties, media must reflect the policies of the party in power" (White Paper, government of India 1977:8; Kumar, 2003).

When Prime Minister Gandhi's Congress Party lost power in the subsequent general election, a major priority of the subsequent government was to make the electronic media independent

of government influence. However, before the new government could proceed on this front, they lost power to Congress in 1980 and once again AIR's editorial independence suffered a setback (Kumar, 2003).

When the opposition won the election in 1989, it implemented the long-held promise of giving the government-owned media full independence through a parliamentary bill (Kumar, 2003). Although the government's direct control over the state media was officially gone, the Indian government had maintained a tight control over the airwaves until the late 1990s. This monopoly came to an end in 1995 when the Indian Supreme Court made a historic ruling on the case "Cricket Association of Bengal v/s the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting". In the ruling, the court said the "airwaves belong to the public and the government has no enduring rights of ownership, even if it has for historical reasons established a custodial monopoly over broadcast spectrum". The Supreme Court ruling further stated that the "allocation of rights over the spectrum needs to be done by an independent group that is attuned to, in some manner, the public interest". The Supreme Court ruling was thus a challenge to the government's continuous hold on the country's airwaves (Muralidharan, 2007).

In 1999, the Indian government deregulated the airwaves and for the very first time the dominance of All India Radio gave way to commercial operators. However, when deregulation was implemented, commercial broadcasters were not permitted to operate private news channels. The regulation only allowed music and entertainment programmes, traffic reports, and weather news. There was also no permission to broadcast any community news (Howley, 2005).

The Supreme Court ruling of 1995 also resulted in the decentralisation of the government-owned and managed All India Radio (AIR) network. As a result, AIR regional stations which were based in different regions of the country became local stations. These stations gave the local communities the opportunity to participate in the radio by purchasing airtime. AIR however, had the ultimate authority to decide what should be aired (Sharma, 2002). Although

the local community did not get an unrestricted channel in which they could express their views on subjects of their liking in the way they felt, Fraser and Estrada note that the decentralisation of AIR and the creation of local AIR stations was the closest India had come in the mid 1990s to setting up community radio (Fraser and Estrada, 2001).

### **3.4.3 The community radio campaign**

In 1996, at a consultation that had more than sixty delegates representing All India Radio, universities, NGOs, journalists and professionals from the broadcasting sector gathered in Bangalore to discuss the establishment of community radio in India (Kundra, 1997). The meeting produced what was called the 'Bangalore Declaration of 1996'. The Declaration called on the government to develop a legal framework for the establishment of community radio (Fraser and Estrada, 2001).

In July 2000, the Pastapur Initiative on Community Radio, which was a declaration issued by a UNESCO-sponsored community radio workshop held in Hyderabad, called on the Indian government to bring a total end to the state control over broadcasting creating a 'three-tier structure' so that the state and the private commercial operators as well as the non-profit community radio could operate side by side (Pavarala, 2007).

The Indian government initially did not heed to the Pastapur Initiative. However, in 2002, it came up with a new community radio guideline. The same year, permission was given to some known educational institutions to operate campus community radios. The first campus community radio was Anna University Campus Radio in Chennai (Madras). The radio was commissioned in February 2004, just five months after lodging an application to operate a community station. The government's reluctance to open up community radio to organisations that were not under government control could be understood from the comments made to a Washington Post reporter by the then Indian Information Secretary, Pavan Chopra. "We have to treat very cautiously when it comes to community radio....As of today, we don't think that villagers are equipped to run radio stations. People are unprepared, and it could become a platform to air provocative, political content that doesn't serve any

purpose except to divide people. It is fraught with danger” (Lakshmi, 2003). However, as reported by Nair, an Indian writer in an article in I4DOnline, the former Home Minister of India under the last BJP-led government, Hon. L.K Advani, while inaugurating the Anna Campus Radio, said, “India has lagged far behind in tapping the communication potential of radio....Radio has been in the government monopoly for longer than necessary. We ought to have begun reforms in this sector long ago. But better late than never...” (Nair, 2004).

#### **3.4.4 Early community radio stations**

Although the initial community radio policy gave permission to known college institutions, many community radio enthusiasts had challenged the community radio policy by launching their own radio. For example, in 2002, Radiophony, an Indian lobby group for community radio, sought assistance from the World Bank to get a low-power transmitter and radio equipment to a women's group in Oravakal village in the state of Andhra Pradesh. The station, known as Mana Radio, (Our Radio) used a village-focused developmental approach in programme making, but four months after it went on air, it was shut down and the equipment was confiscated by the Information Ministry (Lakshmi, 2003).

Although Mana Radio was shut down, a cable community radio “Namma Dhwani” (or Our Voice) which had been on air since 21 September 2001 in Budikote in the Kolar District of the state of Karnataka survived (Suparaja, 2004). Unlike Mana Radio, which sent its signal via transmitters, Namma Dhwani broadcast using cable network. As cable radio was not considered as true radio broadcasting, Namma Dhwani was able to escape from the government clamp down on illegal stations (Venniyoor, 2006).

The first individual to operate a community radio in India was, according to Nadini Vaish, a 21 year old mechanic who established a small community radio in 2001 in his electronic repair workshop in his ‘Mansoorpur’ village in the Vaishali district of the State of Bihar. His station which had a range of 5 Km, broadcast songs, jokes and gossip that were popular in his community. The radio gained a huge increase in popularity when it helped trace a missing village boy through its broadcasts. However, after five years of successful operation, in 2006,

the government had it closed down on grounds that he had no licence (Vaish, 2007). His radio was dubbed by the BBC as the ‘amazing do-it-yourself village FM radio station’ (BBC News, 2006).

### **3.4.5 The new community radio policy**

A decade after the historic Bangalore Declaration of 1996, on November 16, 2006, the Indian government came up with a more comprehensive policy for community radio. Unlike the policy of 2002 which limited community radio development to well-established educational institutions, the new policy allowed NGOs to set up their own radio if the NGO embarking on the radio project had a three-year track record of service. The new regulation did not give individuals permission to set up their radios. The new regulation also required the community radio ownership and management structure to be “reflective of the community” that the radio sought to serve (MIBS Press Release, 2006).

The government’s decision to launch the new policy was based on the premise that if community radio was to develop under its new guidelines, a developing country like India would “enhance pluralism and sustain diversity of cultures and languages, strengthen decentralisation and participatory governance and enable dialogues within communities and disseminate of information to the rural communities about the issues related to agriculture, education, health, social welfare etc.” (MIBS Press Release, 2006).

The Indian government’s new Community Radio Policy and Guidelines also has several other limitations. For example, in addition to banning news and current affairs programmes, sponsored programmes could also not be aired unless the programme was sponsored by the government. Advertisements and public announcements had to be limited to five minutes per hour and all the money earned from such announcements had to be spent on the station’s running costs. If there was unspent money or surplus received from advertisements, the money could not be used for the activities of the NGO which was responsible for the management of the radio unless there was written approval from the government (Muralidharan, 2007).

Although a new community radio policy has been implemented, there is much criticism against it. One such criticism is that though the Indian Supreme Court ruling on who could own and operate the radio spectrum for the public good was very clear, the Information Ministry's current rules necessitate the operators to meet a set of 'stringent procedures' to qualify for a licence. Critics are of the view that the public ownership of the media spectrum can best be seen when the community radio operators own their channels. At present, the government's current community radio policy "by definition should not encumber broadcasters-to-be by laying onerous eligibility conditions and hence should not narrow down. The government should have a narrow list of ineligibility criteria" (Muralidharan, 2007). The new policy also states that the community radio stations should be established to serve a "specific well-defined local community" and that the content of the radio should be 'relevant to educational, developmental, social and cultural needs' of the given community. Critics point out that the policy effectively defines a community only on geographic grounds and overlooks non geographic communities (Muralidharan, 2007).

Another strong criticism is the government's decision to uphold its ban on broadcasting news. Commenting on the absurdity of this regulation which has been in effect since 1999, media analyst Seema Chisti said, "A citizen of India is allowed to vote and change the government, but not in the assessment of successive governments, mature enough to choose which channel he wishes to turn for news" (Chisti, 2007). Although news and current affairs have been banned on private stations, and despite the government having said that "serious action would be taken if this continues", an Indian journalist Pankaj Doval observes that it is common practice to see radio operators "mixing news and current affairs content in their programmes" (Doval, 2007).

Indian community radio policy is also criticised for favouring elite NGOs. It specifically says that NGOs who had a service record of a minimum period of three years would get a licence. The policy thus neglected small NGOs in favour of NGOs which had been registered for ages but without much recent activity compared to the small hard-working recent NGOs (Malik, 2007).

### **3.5 Pakistan**

As Pakistan was part of India before its independence, the history of the origin of broadcasting in Pakistan was linked to the early development of broadcasting in India. Pakistan's initial broadcasting stations were the regional broadcasting stations of All India Radio in the cities of Lahore, Peshawar and Dhaka which was then the capital of East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). The stations were renamed as Radio Pakistan, which became the new state broadcasting organisation of the new nation (Lent, 1978).

Unlike India, Pakistan is a country whose politics are often influenced and interfered with by the military. The country's radio station was frequently used by the military government to 'promote government and government activities'. Political discussions other than what was supported by the government were not broadcast over the radio. Radio Pakistan's bias towards the government and the government's interest to use the media to promote its interests did not go unnoticed by the public. Eventually, public pressure forced the government to create a public media corporation in 1972. The new corporation, named the Broadcasting Corporation of Pakistan, was intended to be an independent body but this did not protect it from government control (Lent, 1978).

#### **3.5.1 Pakistan Electronic Media Regulation Authority**

In 2002, the government created a separate agency named Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Agency (PEMRA) to issue licences and enforce regulations on all private broadcasting organisations. PEMRA was unique in the sense that when it was created, it was the only such institution in South Asia. However, many view PEMRA as a dictatorial agency because of its wide range of powers. For example, the agency has the power to make regulations "as and when it considers necessary". The agency has the authority to ban stations, withdraw licences, confiscate broadcasting equipment and send the stations to court. Furthermore, PEMRA's action can not be challenged as there is no mechanism provided. Critics say that the establishment of PEMRA with its sweeping powers showed that the government on one hand had allowed private commercial broadcasting to flourish, but on the other hand, the government wanted to continue interfering with private broadcasting and that



it was still unwilling to completely give full independence to media. PEMRA was seen by many as a mechanism to curtail media freedom (Thakurta, 2007).

### **3.5.2 Community radio**

In Pakistan, the country's existing media laws and regulations have no provision to establish or operate community radio. Hence, radio in Pakistan is either state-owned public services or private commercial services (Pakistan Annual State of the Media Report, 2005/2006).

However, similar to the Indian government's initial approach in establishing community radios, Pakistan had given permission to several educational institutions to begin community radio stations. The first campus community radio was established at the University of Peshawar School of Communication and Journalism. The station was established in May 2001 with assistance from FES (Friedrich Ebert Stiftung) a German foundation (Amir, 2003).

At present, there are 12 campus radios (Pakistan Annual State of the Media Report, 2006).

In addition to universities, the Pakistan government allowed low-power FM radio in the 2005 earthquake-hit region. The earthquake had damaged the government radio and television infrastructure in the affected areas. This created a huge information gap. As a result, with intense lobbying from different international and national organisations, the government issued ten non-commercial FM radio licences to aid relief parties, to be used only in the earthquake zone. The radio stations were strictly permitted to provide humanitarian information that was critical for survival and recovery (Pakistan's Annual State of the Media Report 2005/2006). Hence, radio stations in the earthquake zone focused on producing programmes that uplifted the morale of the earthquake victims, giving them hope and happiness and advice on re-building life. The stations also helped to link the relief agencies and the victims so that relief agencies knew where help was needed most (Yusufzai, 2005).

Although Pakistan has no licenced community radios other than the campus-based ones, there are several illegal stations mostly located in the North-West Frontier bordering Afghanistan. Pakistan media report that several mosques in the North-West Frontier Province often use their own FM radio stations to disseminate their version of religion and propagate

their views on politics and on social issues (Venniyoor, 2006).

The only private party in Pakistan to have applied for community radio is an NGO named Taraqee Foundation. If the Foundation succeeded it would have become Pakistan's first NGO to obtain a community radio licence (Phipps, 2004).

Although there is no private community radio, a local civil society "Uks" established a radio production house in 2003, aimed at producing community-oriented public service radio programmes. Uks, an Urdu word for 'reflection' was founded in 1997 as a research resource publication centre. Radio programmes that are produced by Uks are distributed to several FM stations nationwide especially to remote and hard to reach areas where illiteracy is high and where other media often pay no attention to giving adequate coverage. In covering the remote areas Uks brings in the marginalised people, discussing their issues in the programmes and making them a forum to air their views. In addition to covering the marginalised, Uks also uses its programmes to address the negative ways in which women are portrayed in Pakistan media. Uks believes that 'stereotyped' derogatory views of women in Pakistan media are due to the under-representation of women in the media. Therefore, to overcome this, Uks has embarked on a project to train Pakistani women for media (Kakroo, 2007).

### **3.6 Bangladesh**

The early history of radio broadcasting in Bangladesh is shared with the early history of broadcasting in India and Pakistan. The first broadcasts were made in 1939 when the British government in India established a radio station in Kolkata (Calcutta) aimed at broadcasting to the Bengali region. At that time, the Bengali region was part of India and hence the development of broadcasting in Bengal was an extension of broadcasting to eastern parts of India (CBA, 1993/1994). When Pakistan was created in 1947, the territory which now comprises Bangladesh was transferred to East Pakistan. Hence, from 1947 onwards, until the creation of Bangladesh in 1971, Bangladesh broadcasting had a shared common history with the broadcasting history of Pakistan (CBA, 1993/1994).

### **3.6.1 Bangladesh Betar**

Today, Bangladesh Betar, (the local name of Bangladesh state radio) broadcasts nationwide and has 15 separate stations serving different parts of the country (Ullah, 2008). Islam (2006) observes that ever since the national radio was created in 1971, its broadcasting was closely related to a Pakistan style of state-controlled broadcasting. The station was used by the regime to disseminate ‘heavy doses of guidance shows that were aimed at moulding public opinion’ in the way the government wanted (Lent, 1978).

Bangladesh radio is thus a typical broadcaster firmly under the hands of the government and dutifully serving only the needs of the government. An associate Professor of Journalism at Chittagong University, Dr. Mohamed S. Ullah notes that the radio was also often used to propagate the government views by broadcasting interviews of eminent people who are pro-government; and that the known critics of the government did not get the opportunity to participate in national radio (Ullah, 2008).

### **3.6.2 Community radio campaign**

In 1997, the Centre for Development Communication (CDC) and Mass–Line Media Centre (MMC) and two NGOs presented the Government with a community radio proposal aimed at establishing community radio in the coastal area which is also an area that is often affected by natural disasters such as storms, cyclones and flooding. The government however, rejected the proposal saying radio would create division (Islam, 2006). The government’s position changed when a new government took charge in 1998, re-establishing democracy, and hence was willing to reconsider establishing community radio (Chakroborty, 2006).

In 2002, Bangladesh hosted a conference on “South Asian Broadcasting and Development” which was organised in Bangladesh by the University of Sussex in the United Kingdom. At the conference, participants called to have a balance of news and information flow that is shared equally from the urban and rural centres. The conference was regarded by many as an important step to develop community radio in Bangladesh (Ullah, 2008).

In December 2005, the Bangladeshi NGOs who were campaigning for community radio formed a loose association identifying themselves as the Bangladeshi NGOs Network for Community radio (BNNRC). The main objective was to play an active role in the campaign to establish community radio in Bangladesh. In December 2005, BNNRC held a national roundtable conference in Dhaka on ‘Designing an Enabling Framework for Community Radio’ in Bangladesh. The objective was to identify and inform the policy on a framework on how to proceed with establishing community radio and how to get a “level of government commitment” towards creating a favourable environment to establish community radio (BNNRC, 2006).

In Bangladesh, the government had earlier held back permission to establish community radio on the belief that the radio might be hijacked by groups for a “terrorist or a political” purpose. According to the chief executive of The Bangladesh NGO’s Network for Radio and Communication (BNNRC) which had been lobbying the government as early as 2000, the government authorities were unconvinced even when BNNRC suggested the new community radios should be operated jointly by BNNRC and the government (Islam, 2006).

In March 2006, the delegates who participated at the Roundtable Conference on Community Radio called on Bangladesh to expedite the passing of the new broadcasting law which allowed the establishment of community radio. The delegates called on the government to pass the law in accordance with the already proposed draft law formulated by the Bangladeshi NGOs (The Daily Star, 2006).

In October 2007, the Bangladesh Ministry of Information formed a Ministerial Committee to discuss the establishment of community radio in the country and develop a concept paper as well as a draft community radio policy and draft application forms for the would-be community radio broadcasters. The policy documents having been accepted by the government, in March 2008, Bangladesh declared its first community radio policy. In an article posted on the Community Radio Forum, BNNRC Chief Executive, Bazlu Rehman said that by April 2008 the Information Ministry had received 178 applications from

different parties wishing to begin community radio (Rahman, 2008).

Ullah (2008) suggests that there were several reasons for the slow progress of Bangladesh in establishing community radio. One was that the politicians were not very keen to give their support as they saw grass-roots radio as a threat to their power base. Secondly, the professional broadcasters and other media professionals felt community radio would produce popular community radio stars that would eventually be a challenge to their unrestricted and unchallenged fame on media. Thirdly, the government media professionals and executives felt that the national broadcaster Bangladesh Betar was doing a satisfactory job and hence there was no need for another media. Fourthly, the commercial stations were not keen as they felt community radio would diminish their audience. The liberal politicians also feared that the establishment of community radio, saying it would help to build up Islamic extremism in the country especially in the rural areas where community radio could be quickly infiltrated by the religious extremists for their use, eventually destabilising the rural communities (Ullah, 2008).

In April, 2010, the Bangladesh government finally approved 12 community radio licences (Rahman, 2010).

### **3.7 Maldives**

The Maldives is a nation of 1200 coral islands spread over a sea area of more than 90 thousand square kilometers in the central Indian Ocean. The islands have a combined land area of about 298 square kilometers and a population of less than 300 thousand people making it the smallest country in South Asia (Maldives Statistical year Book, 2005). Male', the capital is about two square kilometers and is home to a third of the population; the rest inhabit the 198 islands. The vast expanse of sea surrounding the islands makes transport and travelling difficult and costly. Ironically, it is also the surrounding sea that binds the islands together as an archipelagic nation in the Indian Ocean.

Given the difficulties of transportation and infrequent travelling within the rural islands,

radio is the main medium of choice for the rural Maldivians to find out what is happening elsewhere in the country. It is mostly through radio that they hear about government notices, private sector announcements, airline schedules and job vacancies as well as national and international news.

### **3.7.1 Early broadcasting - state as the broadcaster**

Although radio is an important mass communication medium, the history of radio and the history of broadcasting in the Maldives is not that old when compared to most countries of South Asia. The country's first radio was brought and installed at the Prime Minister's Office during the Second World War to monitor war news (DIB, 1993). The first radio station was established on December 29, 1962 by Cyneco, a public company which broadcast under the name Radio Cyneco. Cyneco Company, having run into financial difficulties, was dissolved in 1963 and in the same year, its broadcasting activity was taken over by the government (DIB, 1993).

The government, having assumed control over the Cyneco Radio changed its name to Male' Radio in 1963 and in 1966 to Maldives Islands Broadcasting Service. In 1969, the station was renamed as Radio Maldives and in 1980, as the Voice of Maldives (VOM). The latter change was brought by the country's president while addressing the nation on its National Day, stating that a name change was necessary to give a Maldivian identity to the station and connect it with the locals, especially those living in the rural Maldives to whom radio was the main window to the outside world. The president's speech was historic in the sense that it was the very first time the government had publicly acknowledged the role of radio in national development as well as the importance of radio as the main medium that connected the urban and the rural Maldives (DIB, 1993).

In 1980, the radio not only changed its name but also its style of broadcasting. The old style of being a channel that aired only news and advertisements was changed to a more informative channel with a focus on development. As described by Hussain Mohamed, one of the producers at the VOM who was in charge of bringing the changes said, that under the

new format, programmes were developed in areas such as eliminating illiteracy, increasing awareness on health, history, culture, education, agriculture, fishing, religion, youth and women in development. There were also programmes about schools, students, language teaching and programmes that gave tuition via radio. Hence, the Voice of Maldives was for many in the rural Maldives, the best school outside the formal school system (H. Mohamed, personal communication, July 28, 2007).

Although the VOM functioned as the state broadcaster, it was also at the same time, a government office that functioned under the Ministry of Information. Being an office, the government also supervised all the activities of the radio station, including the supervision of radio programmes and directing what should be covered in the news. For example, news was focused on the president, government activities, and the on-going development projects. According to Mohamed Waheed, the former head of the government department under which the VOM functioned, the radio never allowed the voice of the opposition, criticisms of the government or any interviews from people who may not be happy with the government (M. Waheed, personal communication, May 1, 2009).

### **3.7.2 Beginning of private radio**

From 1963 till 2007, broadcasting remained as a monopoly of the government. However, during this period, two individuals, one in the 1970s and the other in the 1980s received licences to establish their own radio stations. One of them, the then president of the country, Ibrahim Nasir established, in 1972, his own private radio known as Crescent Broadcasting Service (CBS). The station broadcast during the evenings and was popular among the youth as it had many popular film reviews and contemporary songs. However, as noted by Badru Naseer, the director General of Voice Maldives, after about a year in operation, CBS was closed down (B. Naseer, personal communication, 14, June, 2007). According to Mr. Naseer, the head of the Voice of Maldives, although CBS functioned as a privately owned station, its owner being the then president of the Maldives, many in the country viewed it as a quasi-government station (B. Naseer, personal communication, June 14, 2007).

The second station was established in 1983 by a radio engineer working at the government radio, the Voice of Maldives. The station known as Radio One was given permission to broadcast on FM, and only songs to the capital Male'. There was no permission given to read any news. Even with this limitation, the station, with its stereo music was an instant "hit" among the youth. Despite Radio One's popularity with the youth, the government shut down the station in 1985. Explaining as to why the station was closed, the then Minister of Information, Arts and Culture of the Maldives, Ibrahim Manik told this author that it was a time when there were no private radio stations even in the neighbouring countries such as India, or Sri Lanka and therefore it was deemed too soon for a small country such as the Maldives to begin private radio (I. Manik, personal communication, July 5, 2004). However, giving his own view on the closure, the owner of the closed FM radio channel, Maizan Ahmed Manik said the reason for closure was due to the "jealousy" of the government radio station, the Voice of Maldives (VOM) which at that time had no FM channel. According to Maizan Ahmed Manik, due to his FM stereo music channel, VOM's non-stereo broadcasting became out of fashion and unpopular among the youth and as this was having negative effects on VOM's position as the country's leading radio station, the government wanted to shut down his station; hence, the closure (A. Manik, personal communication, July 10, 2004).

It is also worth noting that in 2003, a member of the Maldivian opposition living in self-imposed exile in the UK founded a radio station by the name 'Miniwan Radio' which in local Maldivian Language means independent radio. The station registered in Salisbury in the United Kingdom was jammed in the Maldives on grounds that the radio was harming the unity of the people and helping political instability. In 2004, the station moved its operations to Sri Lanka and focused its programmes to mobilise the Maldivian communities against the then President Gayoom's rule. The programme content was mostly provided by the station staff and volunteers who were mainly opponents of President Gayoom, living in self-imposed exile in Sri Lanka. However, on January 13, 2007, Miniwan Radio ceased its shortwave operation and on the same day became an internet-based radio announcing that normal radio broadcasting would begin on FM once they secured a licence from the



Maldives government. Hence, until then, Miniwan Radio would be available on its website, [www.miniwanradio.net](http://www.miniwanradio.net) (Dhivehi Observer, 2007).

### **3.7.3 Towards a free and independent radio**

With the establishment of political parties in 2006, many opposition leaders expressed their concern over the government's continued control over the state media. Many viewed that for transparency and for good governance, state media should be independent and kept outside of government control. The country's largest opposition, the Maldives Democratic Party, on many of its rallies called on the government that the state-controlled media should be freed of all government influence before the country held its first multi-party election in 2008.

In April 2006, the Maldives' the then Information Minister, Mohamed Nasheed, announced that private broadcasting would begin in November 2006 and said there was a need to finalise the relevant legal framework before broadcasting could be privatised, citing that "if we let television and radio stations operate without jurisdiction, we would be providing media with its rights for freedom, but the rights of others maybe at risk" (Ministry of Information Press Release, 2006). However, in October 2006, the government retracted from its earlier commitment saying there was a climate of uncertainty and fear prevalent in the country and hence could not permit private broadcasting for the moment. According to a Ministry of Information media release, there was an "anxiety created by the call for an active preparation for a 'Georgia-style' revolution which was spearheaded by some individuals belonging to senior leadership of a leading political party". The government therefore, saw it as appropriate to temporarily halt radio licensing to private operators (Ministry of Information Press Release, 2007).

However, in March 2007, the government changed its decision in favour of speeding up private broadcasting despite there being no legal framework. The government said there was a need to establish private broadcasters sooner rather than later as doing it now would give the broadcasters and the political parties' the time to get organised for the country's first multi-party elections scheduled for 2008. The government further stated that it "believes that

the credibility of the country's entire political reform process depends directly in proportion to the extent of plurality of opinion available in the country". Hence, on March 27, 2007, the Maldives Information Minister, while addressing the parliament, announced that from "today onwards the government had opened the country's airwaves to private broadcasters" (Ministry of Information Press Release, 2007).

Since 2007, the Maldivians have been able to enjoy listening to stations that were not owned by the government. The new radio stations were established at a time when the country was on the verge of having its first multi-party election and the adoption of a new constitution that guaranteed, among other things, media freedom. These new developments being just a few months away, the government also relaxed media freedom to an unprecedented level even though it was restricted under then existing laws. According to the Information Minister, Mohamed Nasheed, the new freedom was inevitable to create a politically appropriate environment which was a necessity if the country was to hold free and fair elections (M. Nasheed, personal communication, August 1, 2007).

#### **3.7.4 Community broadcasting - the beginning**

Until 1980, community-focused broadcasting was non-existent in the Maldives. The very first community-focused programmes were initiated in 1980. The state-owned national radio station, the VOM began a daily 15-minute morning radio programme named 'Radio Haveeru' (meaning, evening radio). As explained by the then producer of the programme, Hussain Mohamed, the programmes were aimed at creating awareness among the country's rural communities on subjects such as fishing, agriculture, education, history, women, adolescence issues, health and current events of the world. During the programme, letters sent by the listeners were also read and answers to their queries were given (H. Mohamed, personal communication, July 28, 2007).

In 1994, VOM opened "Adhuge Adu" (which means "today's voice") as a new community radio channel for those living in Male', the capital. The new channel served as the community arm of the state broadcaster and was on air during the time the VOM was off air.

However, with the change of leadership at the Voice of Maldives, the new head of VOM, Badru Naseer, decided that “Adhuge Adu” service be dissolved. Consequently, in 2004, all of its programmes were incorporated into the VOM making it a 24-hour station (B. Naseer, personal communication, June 14, 2007).

The first real experiment in rural-based community broadcasting began in 1997 when the VOM, with assistance from the UNESCO, opened up an experimental media centre in Addu Atoll, the southern-most atoll of the Maldives. The idea of creating media centres was suggested to the government by UNESCO to give the rural communities an opportunity to participate in radio programmes directly from their own islands. This was according to the former Broadcasting Minister and head of the VOM, Ibrahim Manik, the best alternative for community radio as at that time the government was hesitant to begin broadcasting any form outside the capital city, citing security concerns (I. Manik, personal communication, July 5, 2004).

The first media centre became an instant success and UNESCO provided additional funding to replicate the same project in three more atolls. It was also planned that UNESCO would help build a media centre in every atoll and train rural producers in how to make community-based programmes (UNESCO, 1997). Currently, according to the information provided by the VOM head, Badru Naseer, there are six media production centres in the Maldives and nine more centres are in various stages of construction (B. Naseer, personal communication, June 14, 2007).

Although the media centres were built with the objective of involving community participation in making community radio programmes, having visited three of the six media centres in 2009, I found that the centres were very much centrally controlled by the Voice of Maldives and that it did not assist the centres to function as real community media production centres. For example, to one of the centres that I had visited in 2007, I found that VOM had dispatched a senior producer and a manager from another atoll. The two new staff could not speak the local dialect and this made it difficult for them to get assimilated with the

locals. Similarly, in another centre, there was only a single producer who was responsible for producing programmes, do all the relevant travelling, interviews, research and finally record and send the programmes to the VOM. Due to her workload and overwork, she had made things easier by limiting travel to neighbouring islands, and avoided arranging meetings with grassroots people, the farmers and fishermen, the real voices the centre needed to bring out in its programmes. Having listened to six weeks of programmes from three media centres, I found that in all three centres, programme after programme was made by using the same sources-often the island doctor, teacher, principal or the office administrators-who could be reached at any time during business hours. There was no serious effort made to involve the grassroots in the local community.

The centralised control of VOM was further evidenced in the current style of news production at the media centres. In the earlier days of the centres, the staff at all six media centres were given the freedom to compile their local community news bulletins and broadcast them in their own voice. However, since 2005, the VOM had stopped community news bulletins. A senior producer working at the Programmes Department of the VOM told me, on condition he remained anonymous, that the reason for cancellation was due to in-house conflict between the Programme Department and the News and Current Affairs Department of the VOM. This led the head of the News and Current Affairs Department to restrict news production by media centres which were staffed only by the Programme Department. Hence, a conflict between two departments of the state broadcaster had adversely affected the dissemination of rural community news. According to him, the head of the VOM News Department had accused the community news producers of the Programme Department, who were stationed at the media centres, of purposely holding important community news items so that the news could be first heard in the community news bulletin rather than through the national news bulletin. This made it difficult for the Voice of Maldives' News department to broadcast local community-related national events in a timely manner; and this was unacceptable to the VOM (personal communication, June 25, 2007).

Although producing local community news bulletins are no longer a function of the media

centres, I found the centres still continue to produce several local programmes that are focused on their local community. Some of the programmes are also produced in the local dialect. Hence, the media centres are the closest the Maldives has come in its long march towards doing real community radio.

#### ***3.7.4.1 The new community radio initiative***

The new initiative to establish community radios in the Maldives had its genesis in a meeting that I had with Dr. Jocelyn Josiah, the UNESCO Communications Advisor for Asia. We were attending the 2005 Annual General Conference of the Asia-Pacific Institute for Broadcasting Development which was held in Brunei Dar El Salam. During the meeting, I proposed the possibility of altering an already-submitted Maldives project to UNESCO which was aimed at getting UNESCO assistance to build atoll media production centres. Under, my proposal, instead of building additional media centres, the project should be revised in favour of converting the already established media centres to community radio stations.

The community radio initiative received a new impetus in July 2005 when a new minister was appointed to head the Information Ministry. As this was a time of political change aimed at bringing more people's participation into the country's political system, the new minister saw the need to create a media environment that helped to develop a politically pluralistic democracy. Hence, in line with the new policy, the ministry's mandate was revised. One of the new additions to the mandate was to work towards democratising mass media by providing the public more media outlets. In this regard, the new mandate highlighted the need to establish community radio as a means to widen the grassroots participation in the democratic process. The new mandate according to the Information Minister, Mohamed Nasheed, made it obligatory for the Ministry to support and promote community radio throughout the country (M. Nasheed, personal communication, June 12, 2007).

In September 2005, UNICEF took an interest in developing community radio in the Maldives. According to the head of UNICEF in the Maldives, Kenneth Maskall, the

organisation had substantial funds received as 2005 Asian Tsunami aid. The organisation wanted to utilise it for community radio development in the Tsunami-hit islands. The objective was to establish radio to aid the developmental works as well as to disseminate information that would help the displaced communities to adjust, resettle and re-build their lives. A second objective was to use radio as a monitoring tool to warn the communities about natural disasters, storms, tidal swells and tsunamis in the region so that people could be made aware of any approaching disasters (personal correspondence, August 9, 2005).

Although UNICEF's community radio proposal to build and equip a radio station was financially attractive, the Information Ministry's decision that the community radio stations should be built on islands chosen by the Ministry rather than UNICEF, led the organisation to keep the proposal on hold as according to UNICEF, it only had a mandate to spend money on Tsunami-stricken islands (K. Maskall, personal correspondence, August 9, 2005).

#### ***3.7.4.2 UNESCO support***

By the end of 2005, UNESCO had approved the Maldives community radio project. Under the project named "Reinforcing Community Broadcasting at Atoll Media Centres", UNESCO approved provision of financial assistance to train community radio operators in the selected islands, strengthen broadcasting capability and capacity at the media centres, and provide information to the island communities on how to run an independent community radio on their own. As explained by the UNESCO Communication Advisor in New Delhi, Jocelyn Josiah, under the project, UNESCO would conduct workshops to train trainers to develop community broadcasting using information communication tools so that the radio could become in addition to a source of news and information an important means for community development in areas such as health, education, fishing, agriculture and skills development (J. Josiah, personal communication, March 5, 2006).

In June 2007, UNESCO in association with the Ministry of Information held the country's first National Orientation Seminar and Workshop on Community Radios in the Maldives. The first ever national seminar on community radio in the Maldives was a personal satisfaction to me as I was given the opportunity to give the inaugural address of that August

seminar. The seminar was attended by several local media enthusiasts and community radio broadcasters and experts from Nepal, Sri Lanka, the Philippines and India as well as regional and international agencies that were involved in strengthening community radio in the South Asia region.

The objectives of the National Orientation Seminar and Workshop were:

- To introduce the concept of community based and community owned community radio
- To discuss the community radio management and review the best practises of community broadcasting experiences in the region.
- To discuss how the Maldives could move from a theoretical discussion on the introduction of community radio to a discussion of more practical planning and approach to begin community radio.
- To identify tangible challenges, issues and practical solutions as well as appropriate models for introducing community radio to the Maldives.
- To identify the technical and regulatory issues and requirements that are necessary to meet in order to launch community radio.
- To come up with a roadmap to establish community radio as the country's third-tier in broadcasting and present the government with a set of recommendations that will help in the formation of a national policy on community radio.
- To draw up an action-plan as a way forward to proceed in establishing community radio.

At the end of the workshop, the participants formulated a set of recommendations that included the following:

- To establish community radios within a period of three years.
- To carry out several workshops in order to make the island communities aware of the community radio concept and subsequently make them ready to accept and begin community radio on their own initiative.
- To establish a pilot radio project by state broadcaster Voice of Maldives (VOM) in

association with an island community, preferably through an existing island association or organisation.

#### ***3.7.4.3 Community radio - the challenges***

As a participant of the National Orientation Seminar on Community Radio and as a member of the UNESCO team to introduce community radio, I did some travelling to three islands in June 2007. In the islands we visited, there was not a single person who had ever heard of community radio. Everyone we interviewed saw broadcasting as a government activity. For them, radio meant the state broadcaster, the Voice of Maldives (VOM) and the phrase “listening to radio” was synonymous to “listening to VOM”. As a generation had grown up listening to the VOM and accepting that radio belonged only to the state, the biggest challenge we faced was to demystify the concept of radio broadcasting from being a complicated and expensive task that belonged only to the government to an affordable activity that even the local island communities could undertake without having the need to invest huge sums of money.

The communities we met, however, wanted UNESCO to provide them with equipment, training and technical help to set up and begin radio broadcasting. Agreeing to assist in the manner they wanted was a challenge, because in the islands, there was more than one organisation and it became difficult to favour one over the other. UNESCO was unwilling to fund the local communities directly, fearing it could create a vicious cycle in which the communities would always be dependent on UNESCO to keep their radio on air. As explained by UNESCO Communications advisor, Jocelyn Josiah, the organisation’s past experience showed that if they became the face of the project instead of a local organisation, there was the likelihood of the communities not taking the project fully in their hearts and this could prove to be difficult to make them accept or identify the local station as their own at a later stage (J. Josiah, personal communication, June 15, 2006).

The third challenge was the difficulty in defining a community in the Maldives’ context. As the Maldives, being a nation of islands, the initial thought was to define a community as an



island. However, as there were 198 inhabited islands and some of them very close to each other, it was not practical to establish a radio on every island. To overcome the disadvantages of selecting a single island as a community, the head of the state broadcaster, the Voice of Maldives, Mr. Naseer, suggested enlarging the community to include a cluster of islands (B. Naseer, personal communication, June 15, 2006). Again, due to transportation difficulties, cost of travelling and the lack of inter island ferries, there was the unsolved problem of how participation could be widened to different islands.

At the same time from past project experiences, it was an established fact that if a community on one island received any benefits from the government or from a donor, there was the common island culture of all the other islanders separately campaigning to receive the same benefits. Hence, identifying the viability of how to sustain a compromised community radio in a group of islands without making the individual islands unhappy was also a great challenge.

Given the smallness of the islands, lack of resources and because most of the men are out at sea fishing while women stay at home attending children, there was also the question of how unpaid volunteers could be found to make programmes and broadcast on a daily basis. Badru Naseer, who is one of the Maldives's leading and most experienced broadcasters, said that given the novelty of broadcasting in a country where there had never been any type of broadcasting and no opportunity, especially to the grassroots to participate in broadcasting, finding volunteers on a short-term would not be a problem. The challenge was finding people who had a love of broadcasting and would stay working on a longer term. "There will be a lot of enthusiastic volunteers for the first few weeks but as time goes, the interest will fade away and eventually the station will be struggling to stay on air" (B. Naseer, personal communication, June 16, 2007).

Although much groundwork had been laid as far as planning and doing feasibility studies was concerned, as yet, no decision had been taken on the size of the community or on how cost-effective community participation could be made possible among communities living on

several islands. There was also no agreed decision yet on a mechanism on how the radio should be funded on a sustainable basis once it went on air; whether the government should contribute a limited sum of money, on a regular basis, to meet the radio stations' operational costs or provide only the infrastructure and equipment costs to interested parties.

### **3.8 Bhutan**

Bhutan is a small landlocked Buddhist kingdom that borders with three South Asian countries, Nepal, India and Bangladesh. The country's population consists of about six hundred thousand Bhutanese. Bhutanese people speak four languages of which Dzongkha, spoken mainly in Western Bhutan, is recognised as the official language. The main occupation of almost 94 per cent of Bhutanese is agriculture, forestry and farming (Dorji and Pek, 2005).

The former ruler of Bhutan King Jigme Singye Wangchuk ruled the country as an absolute monarch until he voluntarily shelved most of his executive powers in 1998, in favour of a cabinet. In March 2005, the King presented to the people its first new constitution which paved the way for a two-party democracy (BBC, 2005). In March, 2008, a parliamentary election was held and Bhutan became a constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary form of government (The World Fact Book, 2008).

#### **3.8.1 Media freedom**

Under chapter seven of the new constitution of Bhutan, the people now have the right to information; the right to the freedom of press, radio, television and other forms of electronic dissemination of information and the right to freedom of speech, opinion and expression (Bhutan Constitution, 2005). The new constitution thus paved the way for a new democratic Bhutan where media freedom was protected by the constitution.

Although the constitution had given the Bhutanese, a free media environment, the Media Act of 2006 had placed several limitations on that freedom. For example, though the constitution gave the right to information, the Media Act had limited this right by giving the Information

Minister the power to withhold information in the name of national interest. Similarly, in times of crises, the Information Minister could suspend, control or direct media to fulfil the government policy needs. The Act also gave the Information Minister the power to revoke broadcasting licences as well as unlimited censorship powers (Adhikari, 2007).

### **3.8.2 Early broadcasting**

Unlike most of the South Asian nations, Bhutan's broadcasting has a recent history. The country's first radio station the 'Radio NYAB' which was owned by the National Youth Association of Bhutan (NYAB) went on air in November 1973. In 1979, the Bhutanese government took control of the station and renamed it Radio Bhutan. In 1986, the station's name was changed to Bhutan Broadcasting Service (BBS). The station broadcasts in the four main languages of Bhutan for 15 hours daily and reaches about 77 percent of the people living in all 20 districts of the country (Dorji, 2005). BBS has a plan to reach 100 per cent of the country's population by 2010 (Adhikari, 2007).

Bhutan has a literacy rate of about 42 per cent (Central Statistics Organisation, 1999) and hence, unlike the print media, radio being an oral medium, it has become very popular with the rural Bhutanese people. Recognising this, the government has placed a special emphasis to use radio as a tool for socio-economic development. The BBS now devotes about 75 per cent of programming on development related issues such as health, hygiene, environment, women, education, and child care. To help aid the recent political reforms in the country, BBS also placed a special focus on making the public aware of the new changes. Hence, programmes on democracy, importance of elections and good governance had been added to its programming (Adhikari, 2007).

### **3.8.3 Private broadcasting**

Bhutan has opened its airwaves for private broadcasting in 2006. The first private radio to go on air was Kuzoo FM which began broadcasting on September 28, 2006. At present, there are 4 FM radio stations serving the capital Thimpu and its surrounding valley. There is as yet, no private station operating outside the Thimpu Valley (Adhikari, 2007).

### **3.8.4 Community radio**

Bhutan does not have a community radio station. However, UNESCO in 2000 had established a multi-media centre at the Multi-purpose Tele-centre at Jakar to use the Tele-centre facilities for 'radio browsing' which means downloading Internet content that contained information requested by rural community members and then broadcasting it on radio. As the multi-media centre does not have broadcasting facilities, UNESCO has come to an arrangement with BBS to broadcast radio browsing programmes in collaboration with the multi-media centre (I4D Online, 2004).

## **3.9 Summary and Conclusion**

South Asia's first community radio was established in Sri Lanka in the early 1980s. The radio being government-owned was, for its critics, not a true community radio. Unlike Sri Lanka, it was in Nepal that community-owned private community broadcasting began. However, government regulations did not differentiate non-profit stations from that of commercial stations.

In India, at the beginning, community radio was only permitted in government controlled college campuses. However, in 2006 that the Indian government finally decided to give community radio licences to private organisations. However, NGOs were only permitted. This was criticised as a way of making and facilitating NGO stations that were aimed at achieving NGO interests instead of community interest. Even then no community radio was able to broadcast news.

In Bangladesh, after years of campaigning by non-government organisations, finally community radio licences was given in 2010 for the first time. In Pakistan, there are few campus community radio stations. However, after the 2005 earthquake, the government permitted some community radios in the area that was affected by the earthquake. The stations were opened to assist the aid distribution and were therefore closed when the aid work in the area was completed. Bhutan and the Maldives remain as the last two countries that have no community radio. However, in both countries, private broadcasting is already

giving the public an alternative listening choice to the state-owned radio. In the Maldives, some important work had already been done towards the development of community radio and hence, in this chapter, I was only able to provide the attempts that the Maldives has done so far on its bid to establish community radio.

A common feature in all the South Asian countries, whether it was India, Sri Lanka or Bangladesh was that until recently broadcasting was a state monopoly which was closely guarded; taking it in their hearts and believing that it was the governments' national responsibility to provide the service. Hence, many South Asian governments were unwilling or unhappy to free up the airwaves for community broadcasting and viewed community radio with suspicion. For example, Indian Information and Broadcasting Ministry secretary at that time, Mr. Pavan Chopra said: "We have to treat very cautiously when it comes to community radio....As of today, we don't think that villagers are equipped to run radio stations. People are unprepared, and it could become a platform to air provocative, political content that doesn't serve any purpose except to divide people. It is fraught with danger" (Lakshmi, 2003).

In Sri Lanka, the government believed if community radios were set up there was fear that they could be controlled by the terrorists (Lakshmi, 2005). In Bangladesh, the government had earlier rejected community radio on the belief that the radio might be hijacked by groups for a "terrorist or a political" purpose (Islam, 2006).

# CHAPTER FOUR

## Community Radio in New Zealand

### 4.1 Introduction

New Zealand is a small developed island nation in the South Pacific. Unlike the other countries in this study, namely, Sri Lanka and Nepal which are two developing countries in the Indian sub-continent, New Zealand is geographically and culturally quite different and economically, a 'world' away from them.

However, no matter how a big difference there exists between New Zealand and the other two countries, both economically and culturally, the fact is that community radio in New Zealand, Nepal and Sri Lanka share similarities. They are all non-profit ventures. They all share the same objectives of helping to meet their community's information needs by making the radio available for the community, for community broadcasting and for promoting community voice. As my research is aimed at identifying how effectively community radio reaches its communities to meet their stated objectives, I believe the study will be able to show how my chosen three radios from the three countries adhere to the common objectives and/ or the principles of community radio while broadcasting to their communities.

As I had already discussed the status of community broadcasting in Nepal and Sri Lanka in Chapter Three, in this chapter, my focus is on giving a broader background to New Zealand community radio. However, I have included in this chapter, a brief discussion of New Zealand broadcasting, giving an historical overview of the major developments that have shaped the New Zealand broadcasting sector over the years. I believe such a discussion is worthwhile in order to position community radio in the New Zealand broadcast media landscape.

In discussing New Zealand community radio, I have included a more detailed discussion on

the development of community access radio. Access radio is New Zealand's most established community radio model and I believe the story of community radio in New Zealand is mainly about community access radio. In addition to access radio, I have outlined the different community radio models that are found in the country. In discussing the community radio models, my discussion also highlights the use of Low Power FM (LPFM) radio by the small communities of New Zealand, as an affordable means to do community broadcasting.

Given New Zealand on Air's (NZOA) close relationship with community broadcasting, the chapter also discusses the statutory obligations of NZOA and its role in promoting the country's community broadcasting. Finally, the chapter focuses on the future of New Zealand community radio. Much of this knowledge is derived from various recent speeches given by Broadcasting Ministers at different events and occasions.

## **4.2 The Government as the early broadcaster**

Radio broadcasting in New Zealand began in the early 20th century. The country's first experiment in radio broadcasting began on November 17 1921 when Professor Robert Jack of Otago University made the country's first ever broadcast on New Zealand airwaves (Broadcast Archive, 2002). Initially from the very early stage until the mid 1920s, broadcasting was in the hands of various individual operators. However, by 1925 the country's first Radio Broadcasting Company (RBC) was established with the government on board and with a view to begin a national broadcasting service. By 1932, RBC was absorbed into a newly created but short-lived New Zealand Broadcasting Board (NZBB) which was itself dissolved by the then newly elected government in 1936 in favour of a government department named the National Broadcasting Service (Broadcast Archive, 2002).

By the 1930s, radio broadcasting was directly managed, controlled and regulated by the central government. The broadcasting philosophy of that time was aimed at 'nation building' and 'national unity' which rested on the premise that the primary role of the broadcaster was to help unite the disparate elements of a colonial society into a cohesive nation and to forge a sense of New Zealand cultural identity (Day, 1994). The government broadcaster was just

used as a source to help create the new New Zealand identity. It was also a time when news bulletins were produced and managed by the Prime Minister's office. The new philosophy gave the public a passive role in broadcasting as a mere receiver of the broadcast content provided by the government channels. The government's earlier notion of 'nation building' and 'national unity' had also excluded minority views from being heard on the broadcasting medium. This meant there were no alternative political, cultural and social perspectives or programmes that catered for non English speakers. There were also no programmes for Maori music (Day, 1994). The country's radio was more or less an institution managed and controlled by the 'Pakeha' for the 'Pakeha'. Hence, New Zealand's native Maori community remained as a marginalised minority that was excluded from radio (Smith, 1994).

NBS was the forerunner of New Zealand Broadcasting Corporation (NZBC), a government-owned but independently run broadcasting corporation formed, in 1962. The corporation had a name change in 1976 to the Broadcasting Corporation of New Zealand (BCNZ) and managed all aspects of broadcasting as well as the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra (Teoh, 2003). The new corporation, BCNZ, though it was an independent institution, functioned more or less in the same way when it inherited the broadcasting from the government. However, BCNZ brought in some significant changes, particularly, the introduction of Maori programmes and the start of New Zealand's first talkback shows. These developments were significant in the sense that talkback shows enabled for the first time the public to make use of the airwaves to give their opinions and input to issues of public interest. The introduction of Maori programmes had other significances because, for the first time, it enabled the NZBC to transform itself from a medium aimed at the country's majority (the Europeans) to one that also took on board the other significant citizens living in the country (Smith, 1994). Hence, unlike the early days when the government's initial broadcasting policy had excluded radical or alternative political, cultural and social perspectives, non-English programming and Maori music, language and cultural items, the introduction of Maori programmes was a recognition by the state that for a true nation building process through media, there was a need to take on board the country's minority communities.



### **4.3 Radio Hauraki-emergence of private radio**

As mentioned earlier, broadcasting in New Zealand was, in the very beginning, in private hands. However, it was not too long before the government intervened, taking firm control over broadcasting. The government's tight control over public broadcasting resulted in public discontent and there was a desire for change (Cocker, 1996 in Jeffrey 2004). The public's saturation to constant listening to government broadcasting came to an end when a private party established a pirate radio station, Radio Hauraki in 1966. Former employees of BCNZ Derek Lowe & Chris Parkinson together with David Gapes & technician Denis 'Doc' O'Callaghan initially tried to get a private broadcasting licence 'by the book' but the NZBC, the government's main arm in managing broadcasting, rejected their request (Radio Hauraki, 2009).

When the government turned down the request for a private broadcasting licence, the team successfully equipped a ship (M.V. Tiri) with a radio station and positioned it on international waters just outside New Zealand territory. Although the NZBC and the government, with the help of police, managed to stop the ship leaving NZ on its mission, a court ruling eventually helped the vessel to depart NZ on its 'rebel course', that is, to begin radio broadcasting to NZ from outside NZ territory after they had failed to win proper rights to do so in their own country. On November, 21, 1966, Radio Hauraki broadcast its first test transmission on 1480AM. Although Radio Hauraki's mother vessel, MV Tiri was damaged in a storm and the radio had to be stopped until a new ship was found, the radio had already earned its place in the history of NZ broadcasting as the country's first private but 'pirate' radio. The first song played on Radio Hauraki was 'Born Free' by Matt Munro. Radio Hauraki was also New Zealand's first 24-hour-broadcasting station (Radio Hauraki, 2009).

Radio Hauraki, while it continued to function as New Zealand's first private as well as the first pirate radio station, applied for a broadcast licence in 1969. This time, despite stiff resistance from NZBC, the newly formed Broadcasting Authority of NZ, which was established in 1969 with a mandate to study, consider and provide broadcasting licences to private parties who have submitted applications (Ministry of Culture and Heritage, 2003),

granted Radio Hauraki a licence on March 24, 1970. As a result, on June 1, 1970, Radio Hauraki became the country's first privately owned radio station, thereby breaking a 30-year State monopoly over broadcasting which was until then controlled by NZBC. Thus, in many ways the efforts of Radio Hauraki is widely regarded as the public's expression of their desire to end the government's tight control and monopoly over the air waves. The radio also symbolises the effort of those involved and the risks they were ready to take to make private broadcasting a reality.

In addition to Radio Hauraki, students also challenged the then existing system of state broadcasting and broadcasting legislation by establishing campus radios. For example, Auckland University's Radio Bosom went on air in 1969 as a capping stunt. However, it too was denied permission to continue even to do narrow-casting to student halls of residence. It was only when legislative changes, that were brought about in the mid 1970s, allowed radio broadcasting by special interest groups to mark special events and occasions such as capping ceremonies and student orientation programmes etc. However, later regulations, which de-regulated the broadcasting sector, removed the strict limitations put on student radios. As a result, student radios were allowed to broadcast throughout the term as well as broadcast some commercial programmes. By 1997, the Student Radio Network (SRN), known as b.Net, was joined by all the student radios belonging to New Zealand universities (Broadcast Archive, 2002).

#### **4.4 Deregulation, commercialisation and privatisation**

The late 1980s and early 1990s saw the introduction of several new legislations that helped the government loosen its once tightly held control over broadcasting. Among those legislations were the Broadcasting Amendment Act (No.2) 1988, the Broadcasting Act of 1989, the Radio Communications Act of 1989 and the State Owned Enterprises Act (SOE Act) of 1989. The Commerce Act of 1986 which came into force earlier than the other Acts mentioned here was also significant in the sense that it enabled broadcasting to be just like any other businesses in an open market (Ministry of Culture and Heritage, 2003).

Under the Radio Communications Act 1989, the public were given the right to buy and sell radio frequencies. The Radio Communications Act recognised the radio spectrum as a natural resource that was up for sale on the market for competitive prices. The Act not only facilitated private parties to own rights to 'spectrum blocks' nationwide but also enabled them to re-assign licences on the use of frequencies on the same spectrum blocks to other interested parties. Under the Act, radio spectrum can be sold or leased to the highest bidder, for a period of 20 years (Ministry of Culture and Heritage, 2003).

Under the Broadcasting Act of 1989, the government reduced the limits imposed on media channels' advertising time. The change was brought in with a view to bring in economic efficiency to the sector. This objective was further enhanced with the Broadcasting Amendment Act No. 2 (1988) which saw the dissolution of the BCNZ and the establishment of TVNZ and Radio New Zealand as separate companies. TVNZ was further separated into two channels, TV1 and TV2. Under the SOE Act, the new media companies were able to operate as SOEs and hence paved the way for them to work on a competitive broadcasting market environment which was commercially viable and profit-making while at the same time providing a public broadcasting service to the people (Ministry of Culture and Heritage, 2003).

The de-regulation of the broadcasting sector and the opening of the air waves brought in significant new developments. An important development was foreign ownership of New Zealand media. Hence, the sale of TV3 to CanWest, a Canadian media company and the establishment of TV4 through trading of spectrum rights and opening the door to media companies such as SKY to introduce its television channels and cable services to New Zealand were made possible. The restrictions placed on advertising time per hour on media were also relaxed so that broadcasters could place more advertisements in any given hour (Coleman, 2009).

The Act also brought in several new institutional developments. For example, the former Broadcasting Tribunal was replaced by the Broadcasting Standards Authority. A totally new

institution, the Broadcasting Commission, more commonly known as New Zealand on Air was created with the objective of providing funds for those who were in need of financial assistance to create locally produced programmes. Other developments that came as a result of the Act included the provision for election broadcasts, the granting of licences to several specific broadcasters and the provision of transitional arrangements for existing spectrum users and broadcasters (Ministry of Culture and Heritage, 2003).

As a result of deregulation and opening up the radio spectrum, there has been a significant increase in the number of radio channels. Today, there are over six hundred commercial radio stations and several other media outlets that have been established as a direct result of spectrum sales and the consequent changes that were brought in as a result of the deregulation that followed (Coleman, 2009).

The new change that was brought to the broadcasting sector helped the sector develop into four main broadcasting regimes. One is commercial licence holders who have secured their licences from auction. The other is Radio New Zealand which is a government-funded public service radio that functions under the Radio New Zealand Charter. The third is iwi radios that have been established to promote Maori language and culture and hence aimed at the Maori population. Finally, the non-commercial or semi-commercial radio stations such as student radio, community radio and community access radio which are licensed for a specific purpose and are not allowed to operate as full commercial stations (RBA, 2006).

#### **4.5 Protecting public interests**

The Broadcasting Act of 1989 and subsequent legislation had without a doubt helped the New Zealand media to operate in a deregulated commercial environment. However, the introduction of fully-fledged competitive commercial broadcasting also meant there were some disadvantages to the New Zealand public. As commercial broadcasting was mostly about maximising profit and minimising loss, broadcasters were more interested in ‘catching’ different population age-segments that could be sold to more advertisers and meet their needs

instead of taking into account the general public interests (Ministry of Culture and Heritage, 2000.)

Given the need to protect the New Zealand national and public interest and reflect its multicultural aspects through broadcasting, the government 're-emerged' as a "new broadcaster" to protect the interests of those who were missed out by the commercial broadcasters. In this regard, the government had taken two very important steps. One was the establishment of NZOA and the other, retaining the ownership of RNZ.

The Broadcast Commission, now known as New Zealand on Air (NZOA), was established under the Broadcasting Act of 1989 to promote and develop public service media programmes and ensure that the New Zealand broadcast landscape had a local content that accommodated New Zealand interests, the interests of Maori, women, youth, children, disabled persons, minorities in the community and special interest groups including ethnic minorities' (Yeabsley, Duncan, and James, 1994).

The Act seeks to preserve and promote the interests of those who may miss out from a totally commercialised broadcasting. Hence, under section 36, 1, of the Broadcasting Act, NZOA is given the following mandates:

- promoting programmes about New Zealand and New Zealand interests;
- promoting Maori language and Maori culture;
- maintaining and, where the Commission considers that it is appropriate, extend the coverage of television and sound radio broadcasting to New Zealand communities that would otherwise not receive a commercially viable signal; and to ensure that a range of broadcasts is available to provide for the interests of:
  - (i) women;
  - (ii) youth;
  - (iii) children;

- (iv) persons with disabilities;
  - (v) minorities in the community including ethnic minorities; and
- to encourage a range of broadcasts that reflects the diverse religious and ethical beliefs of New Zealanders (Broadcasting Act, 1989).

The Broadcasting Act thereby recognised the fact that the “tastes, interests and informational needs of minorities” in society are equally as important as the majority’s view (Ministry of Culture and Heritage, 2000). Hence, the role of NZOA is to provide state funds to different New Zealand media to uphold the state interests as stated in the Act. The agency is governed by a board appointed by the government. However, under the Broadcasting Act, the Broadcasting Minister cannot influence the decisions of NZOA or direct it to take a specific stance. Hence, by keeping the government ‘at arm’s length’, NZOA’s independence is preserved despite being a government body.

Under its mandate, NZOA was required to give “broad range radio access to non-profit community groups” (Maharey, 2004). In order to carry out its obligations, NZOA had set its primary radio transmission coverage goal as ensuring that as many New Zealanders as possible are able to receive a community radio service. In line with this, NZOA carried out a study in 2000 to identify communities which had a 500 plus population who did not receive a strong community radio signal. The study identified 22 such communities nationwide and NZOA helped the community stations in those regions to buy the necessary equipment to increase their broadcast strength. Through this project, NZOA has now successfully extended New Zealand community radio coverage to 99.96 per cent of the country's population (ACAB, 2006).

Statistics show that most of the access community radio stations, whose programme content mostly consisted of minority groups and other under represented groups in the community, were established after the birth of New Zealand on Air (Maharey, 2004). The establishment of NZOA was, thus, in many ways an institutionalised pathway created by the Broadcasting Act in the interest of minorities, ethnic communities and special interest groups who were,

until then, marginalised by the mainstream media.

As I mentioned earlier, in order to maintain and preserve NZ public interests in broadcasting, in addition to the creation of NZOA, the government also retained the ownership of Radio New Zealand (RNZ). The RNZ Charter required addressing issues of national interest, maintaining a rich diversity and independence in programme content and giving the New Zealand public, a quality broadcasting that addresses the majority as well as minority and national interests. In other words to meet the broadcasting needs of the New Zealand public in areas where the commercial stations may not get involved due to the very commercial nature of their operation. (RNZ Charter, n.d).

Although RNZ is a public service broadcaster, its Charter describes the RNZ as a Crown Company which may require, RNZ to carry out “activities to generate, on the basis of generally acceptable accounting principles, an adequate rate of return on shareholders' funds” (RNZ Charter, n.d).

Such obligations requiring the company to generate revenue may not be in the best interest of public services broadcasting. Hence, the present National government has put before Parliament, a Radio New Zealand Amendment Bill aimed at setting out the new principles. The new bill will also revise the Radio's Charter, strengthening further its role as a public services broadcaster and making it clear that the radio does not have any requirement to pay the government any dividend (Coleman, 2009).

Other additional steps taken by the government to protect public service in broadcasting include its continued support to fund media that addressed minorities, and those who made New Zealand-owned programmes, and those that are of national interest (Ministry of Culture and Heritage, 2000).

#### **4.6 RNZ as a community radio broadcaster**

Community-based radio has been an important feature in the New Zealand radio landscape since 1930. During the early years, rural centres such as Hamilton and Palmerston North

enjoyed the benefits of having their own radio station. However, the same period also saw the government taking over the ownership of broadcasting and hence, all the community-based, rural radio was absorbed into the government's national media corporation, NZBC (Busch, 1999).

However, with the abolition of NZBC and the creation of RNZ under the SOE Act of 1986, as a separate state-owned enterprise, Radio New Zealand had to operate with a margin of profit. This tilt towards commercialism meant RNZ had to sell or close its community radio stations which were basically there to serve the community interests instead of making any big profit. By 1996, RNZ had either sold or closed all of its community-based rural stations limiting itself to public service broadcasting only (Shanahan and Duignan, 2005). The action of Radio Zealand also reduced staff members in small towns, thereby lessening RNZ's capability to give good community coverage. Subsequently, for many small town communities, they lost their 'voice' on public radio. The SOE Act thus brought a negative effect on RNZ's community -based broadcasting (Busch, 1999).

The sale of small-town commercial stations saw not only the end of RNZ's involvement in community-based radio but also brought an end to the New Zealand government's more than 90-year involvement in commercial radio. With the sale of the commercial stations of RNZ, the government had sold all of its radio stations except Radio New Zealand's public radio service which consisted of National Radio, Radio New Zealand International and Concert FM (Ministry of Culture and Heritage, 2003).

Although the mid-1990s saw the sale of RNZ community-based radios, it should however be noted that as early as 1981, Radio New Zealand had begun a new experiment in community broadcasting which was in fact the beginning of today's New Zealand community access radios. RNZ had initially planned to carry out the experiment in Auckland where there was a sizeable Polynesian population. However, RNZ having no spare radio broadcasting infrastructure that could be used for such a venture decided to carry out the experiment in Wellington using its 2YB transmitter (Page, 1983). The new radio station used ordinary



community members who had no prior training or experience in broadcasting to produce and present programmes. The experiment was successful and proved to be very popular with the local communities. Thus, it laid the groundwork for modern day community broadcasting in New Zealand. As Cindy Beavis, the RNZ Community Radio Coordinator remarked, the experiment was aimed at giving “a voice to minorities who don’t have and would stand very little chance of getting their interests reflected in the way they want them to reflect in media....It was to be a parish pump type of thing- a meetings notice board, a platform for service groups...But, New Zealanders are not parish pump people. What they talk about in the pub or over the fence are things of an enormously wide range” (Tolerton, 1983). RNZ’s decision to begin radio programmes for the minorities was largely due to pressure from the growing number of immigrant communities in Wellington who expressed their need to have a voice (Pauling and Ayton, 2009).

It is worth noting that RNZ continued giving full funding to the ‘experimental’ radio until 1988, even after the radio became an independent community access radio, making it the only RNZ-funded community access radio in the country. However, in the same year, RNZ chief executive, Beverley Wakem citing that the cost of running the station was too high for RNZ alone, said there were already other community access radio stations in the country which did not receive any RNZ funding and therefore, giving money to just one station was at the expense of the other similar stations and suggested a user-pay regime as the way for future funding (The Dominion, 1988). Although the funding had stopped, the radio was housed in the RNZ premises, Broadcasting House. This association came to an end when the radio was relocated to its own premises in May 1994 (The Dominion, 1994).

#### **4.7 The new community radio environment**

The Ministry of Culture and Heritage, in its website, identifies the goal of New Zealand community broadcasting as providing “a range of broadcasting services” which also includes the provision of programme content and “formats for regional, local and community and minority audiences, including ethnic minorities, communities of interest and students” in all the regions of the country.

The objectives stated in the Ministry's regional and community broadcasting policy framework emphasise the provision of a diverse range of local broadcasting in a manner that reflects the community's local character and identity and gives the local community a sense of the existence of a medium that focuses especially on them in a world where broadcasting is now very much a globalised environment. According to the Ministry, the local community broadcasters need to be owned by the community and are to operate independently of national commercial networks. Hence, the Ministry supports local community broadcasters who provide opportunity for community participation in broadcasting and to those who give coverage especially to local news, current affairs, information, sports and cultural events. The Ministry's policy also anticipates that broadcasters will be strongly involved with their community and support community activities (Ministry of Culture and Heritage, 2006).

In the New Zealand community broadcasting scene, the above stated community broadcasting policy is mainly being fulfilled by four different types of community radio, they are: Iwi radio, ethnic community radio, access community radio and low-power FM radio. However, there are also other community radios on the scene such as student radio, radio for the print and disabled; and religious radio stations that are focused on specific communities.

#### **4.7.1 Iwi radio**

Maori language broadcasts were never a priority in the early days of New Zealand broadcasting and hence it was never heard on the airwaves. Even as late as the 1980s, Maori programmes were quite few. For example, in 1987, the total Maori language radio broadcasts on Radio New Zealand for a week was less than an hour (Smith, 1994: 127). The under-representation of Maori language on radio was an issue for Maori who wanted to have a wider presence. The Maori dream of establishing their own radio was realised in 1982, when the Nga Kawiwhakapumau I Tereo (the Wellington Maori Language Board) established the first Maori radio station which was named "Te Upoko O Te Ika" in Wellington (The Maori Directory, n.d).

The Wellington Maori Language Board also made a successful Maori Language claim at the Waitangi Tribunal in 1987, two years before the country's new Broadcasting Act came into effect in 1989 paving the way for Maori to become an official New Zealand language. As a result, when the Broadcasting Act came into force, the Tribunal, recognising the negative effects a competitive broadcasting environment would have on the Maori minority, recommended the government reserve radio frequencies for the exclusive use of Maori to preserve and promote Maori language and culture. Hence, it is widely accepted that the successful language claim and the subsequent recommendations of the Waitangi Tribunal laid the foundation for the establishment of iwi radio as well as Maori television throughout New Zealand (The Maori Directory, n.d).

With the establishment of New Zealand on Air in 1989, it took over the responsibility of funding Maori broadcasting in addition to the other specified roles the organisation had under the Broadcasting Act. However, in 1993, the government, recognising that there was a special obligation to protect Maori language and Maori culture, established "Te Mangai Paho" as a new funding body for Maori. This is, according to the radio manager at NZOA, Keith Collins, an independent body that reports to Parliament but gets funds from NZOA. The new body makes its own independent decisions on how funding should be distributed among Maori broadcasters. In addition to funding iwi radios, Te Mangai Paho also funds the Maori news service Ruia Mai as well as Waatea (Maori) news on Radio New Zealand National (Norris, Paul, 2004). However, NZOA still funds Maori programmes that are produced by the mainstream media for the general public (K. Collins, personal communication, November 24, 2009).

The style in which iwi radio operates and whether it really complies with the purpose to which it was established is in some cases not very convincing. For example, according to the Radio Broadcasters' Association (RBA), Mai FM in Auckland though it is quite popular with the young Maori and 'has a strong Maori ethos' 'does 'little in the way of overt promotion of Maori language and culture'. Similarly, another iwi radio, Uma Broadcasting, broadcasts some Te Reo programmes between 3am and 6am and 'emerges' as George FM for the

remaining 21 hours, broadcasting dance music, and its target audience is not necessarily Maori as it has a significant twist away from Maori audience (RBA, 2006).

#### **4.7.2 Ethnic community radio**

New Zealand's ethnic community radio consists of the commercial ethnic radio and the non-profit ethnic community radio. Both are operated by ethnic groups who mostly broadcast using their own mother tongue and hence specifically cater to their own ethnic communities.

#### **4.7.3 Non-commercial ethnic radio**

In the non-commercial ethnic community radio sector, Samoan Capital Radio in Wellington and the Radio 531pi based in Auckland are the two main broadcasters. Both are Pacific services and target mainly the Pacific Island communities in the two cities. The two stations receive limited NZOA funding and the rest of the expenses are raised through advertisements, sponsorships and donations. As I have already dealt with Samoan Capital Radio in detail in Chapter Six, here I will give a brief description of Radio 531pi only.

Radio 531pi, based in Auckland, the country's largest city and home to the largest Pacific Island communities, was the city's first ethnic community radio. The station began broadcasting in 1993, using the 531AM which was used by RNZ for parliamentary broadcasts and was heard in Auckland, Waikato in the south and Whangarei in the north. The station broadcast mainly music and talkback, beaming to all Pacific islanders irrespective of their nationality. The station broadcast in all the Pacific languages and saw itself as a forum for all Pacific islanders to discuss debate and have a say on Pacific and New Zealand issues that were of interest to them. The station had three to four Pacific news bulletins per day. Its evening programmes were run on a semi-access basis which meant it was open for different volunteer groups from different communities to produce and air their own programmes in their own languages (Wilson, 1994).

The station also frequently used English as a common medium to reach all the Pacific islanders so that through English they all could share their experiences and identify as a

single Pacific community. Given its focus on every Pacific community instead of focusing on a single community, the radio was described as the initiator of Pan-Pacific broadcasting in New Zealand (Alo, 2005).

Besides Radio Pacific 531pi, Pan-Pacific broadcasting is carried out by Niu FM. “Niu”, which literally means “young coconut” belonging to the “tree of life” (Radio Niu FM Website, n.d), was established by the New Zealand government in 2002 as a new “voice for the Pacific” (Gadsby, 2003). The radio station initially began as a 3-year pilot radio project- The National Pacific Radio Network Project- for the Pacific people living in New Zealand. The radio aims to reach the Pacific communities living throughout New Zealand helping them build their capacity and help narrow down the socio economic gap between the Pakeha and the Pacific communities. Another objective of the radio is to encourage the Pacific communities to ‘take a more active role in their civic responsibilities’ and make a greater contribution towards New Zealand’s economic development (Alo, 2005:100-104). As Niu FM’s first CEO, Sina Moore, remarked, Niu FM will be a vehicle that connects the Pacific communities; be a means to hear their mother tongue; a channel to air their views, hear their music; know about their cultures and successes and the contribution they make as New Zealanders (Alo, 2005). Hence, quite similar to its literal meaning, Niu FM, as stated in its website home page ‘*AboutUs*’ section “embraces the notion of life through broadcasts” (Radio Niu FM Website, n.d).

Niu FM targets Pacific Islanders who are between the ages 19 and 39 and mostly those who are born in New Zealand and hence are detached from their island culture, tradition and lifestyle. In addition to Pacific Islanders, many Maori and Palagi audiences also tune into this radio (Gadsby, 2003).

In 2007, Radio 53P1 and the Niu FM were merged bringing the two operations under a government-appointed National Pacific Radio Trust Board which was formed to oversee Niu FM. Commenting on the merger, the then Broadcasting Minister, Steve Maharey, had earlier stated:

The stations have common objectives and play a valuable role in promoting and maintaining Pacific languages and culture in New Zealand.... By joining forces they can operate in a way that plays to their individual strengths and reflects and reinforces the best of Pacific culture, news and stories (Radio New Zealand International News, 2006).

Niu FM established its first studio in 2002 in Auckland as a nationwide station. The second studio was opened in Wellington in 2007 and a third is planned for Christchurch (Laban, 2007). At the end of the radio's first three years, the government, having reviewed its status, decided to continue part-funding the radio (Ministry of Culture and Heritage, 2005).

Until the establishment of Niu FM, Pacific Island communities' broadcasting was available on different access community radios. Given the limited time the access radios could give to any one community and given the fact that there were several communities, both ethnic and communities of interest wanting airtime to reach their members, it was not possible for the access community radios to allocate enough time to give any one community enough time to meet their broadcasting interests (Alo, 2005). Thus, with the establishment of Niu FM, Pacific language broadcasting in New Zealand had attained a new height, a major milestone. However, some critics of Niu FM note that the radio plays too much hip hop music with not giving enough attention to community issues and news (RNZ International News, 2006).

#### **4.7.4 Commercial ethnic radio**

Most of the commercial ethnic radio stations broadcast in main urban centres and are not available nationwide. For example, in the Auckland region, the Chinese media organisation, World Television (WTV), founded in 2000, operates two radio channels broadcasting in the two main Chinese languages, Cantonese and Mandarin. This radio can only be heard by the Chinese community in the Auckland region. However, the radio is available on the Internet for Chinese listeners living in other areas. The same radio also broadcasts a daily Korean segment aimed at the Korean community. The Auckland region also has other significant commercial ethnic radio stations. Among them are, Apna Radio and Radio Tarana which are both Hindi channels aimed at the Indian community and Radio Samoa which is a Samoan

language radio in Auckland. These radio stations can also be heard on the Internet (Mediascape, 2009).

Among the commercial ethnic radio stations, Radio Tarana is in many ways a significant one when compared to all the other commercial ethnic radios. As stated on its website, home page, the station founded on June 15, 1996 and it is, currently, Auckland's leading Indian radio station (Radio Tarana Website, n.d). It has the ninth biggest share of the Auckland region's commercial radio audience. According to the commercial radio survey, "the measure of the number of listeners combined with the time they spend listening, rank it above the highly promoted mainstream radio channels such as Radio Live and Solid Gold FM" (Insight, 2007). Radio Tarana's audience is mainly Hindi and English speaking though within its programming it does cater for some programmes that are produced in other regional languages (Insight, 2007). Given Radio Tarana's success as a commercial ethnic radio, the government has selected it as one of the radios on which to experiment digital radio broadcasting in New Zealand (Coleman, 2009).

Commenting on the successful growth of ethnic media, especially in urban centres such as Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch, Jim Tucker, Head of Whitireia School of Journalism in Wellington, in an interview with RNZ says, the reason for their popularity is due to the lack of adequate representation of their stories and their interests in the mainstream media. Their growth can be described as mainstream media's failure to respond to the increasing ethnic diversity in their markets. "The problem is that we still don't have ethnic communities reported. Although there are some exceptions, still their stories are not being reported in any meaningful way" (Insight, 2007).

#### **4.7.5 Low-Power FM Radio or the 'Guard Band' radio**

Low-Power FM radios (LPFM) are a strong feature in New Zealand's community media landscape. They operate on very low power (maximum 300 milliwatts) to a range of just a few kilometers (NZLPFM network Website, n.d) and are found on the radio spectrum's 'guard band'. This band is a small width of frequency that is kept empty in-between the

different frequencies in order to keep a ‘distance’ between the frequencies so that the signal from one frequency would not ‘bleed’ into the other. ‘Guard band’ radio operates in the frequencies 88.0-88.8 MHz and at 106.63-108 MHz (Ministry of Culture and Heritage, 2003).

‘Guard Band’ radio is a useful medium for individuals and special interest groups who may want to do broadcasting for a community but cannot do so due to either lack of funds or the unavailability of a licence (Mediascape Website, n.d). It is also useful for anyone who wishes to launch their own broadcasting service to get hands-on experience and self-help training on one’s own. In the New Zealand broadcast environment, the LPFMs are filling a void created by mainstream commercial radio stations such as Newstalk ZB which, in Christchurch, has axed its local programming. As observed by Jim Tully, University of Canterbury journalism lecturer and media commentator, the proliferation of LPFM radios in New Zealand has great resemblance to what happened to the country’s newspaper industry in the 1970s. In an interview given to a reporter of the Christchurch newspaper, The Press, Jim Tully remarked:

...larger dailies decided to leave ‘parish pump’ news to the emerging giveaway community papers. In retrospect, it was a bad call. It could be that radio networks which eliminated local content, such as Newstalk ZB has in Christchurch, are going down a similar path (Steere, 2010).

Although LPFM’s are doing a great community service by filling a “void” created by the departure of the bigger radio stations (Steere, 2010), they do not qualify for NZOA funding. NZOA funds institutionalised radio stations which means the NZOA-funded radio stations should have to be managed by a community trust and have a properly licensed frequency. This deprives the LPFM stations as they do not qualify or require a radio licence. As not all small communities have access to a radio frequency or to a radio station that can qualify for NZOA funding, many small communities in New Zealand urban centres or in small towns such as Hokitika, Greymouth and Westport or islands such as Waiheke, get the joy of listening to a community radio only through LPFM. Unfortunately, as Brent Simpson, trustee and founding member of Radio Waiheke notes, given the current NZOA’s current



position, despite their great community service, no LPFM broadcaster can get financial help to increase the quality of their radio productions (B. Simpson, personal communication, October 17, 2009).

Then Broadcasting Minister Steve Maharey said “LPFM spectrum provides a valuable supplement to high power broadcasting services, providing for minority interests and increased choice” (Ministry of Culture and Heritage, 2003). Although the Broadcasting Act does not specify how the minority interests should be supported by media, the NZOA has identified that this should be done by funding only access community radios. Hence, the minorities on LPFM, though they can gain access to broadcasting through a General User Licence (GUL), they remain in the eyes of NZOA, a marginalised media group for having no proper broadcasting licence, ironically, the very type of people NZOA is supposed to protect under the Broadcasting Act of 1988.

The ‘guard band’ radios are only given a GUL by the Ministry of Economic Development which came into effect in July 2003 (Press Release, 2003). The detail of this licence is posted on the Ministry of Economic Development website. According to the Ministry, although the primary purpose of LPFM is to protect the services in adjacent frequency bands, it also facilitates a low-budget entry into local broadcasting. Under Low-Power FM, broadcasters are able to begin broadcasting free on any available frequency “without the need to obtain an individual licence or any other permission from the government. The general licence will be designed to ensure that the band is essentially self-regulating, minimising administrative cost to government and ultimately consumers,” (Ministry of Culture and Heritage, 2003).

According to the Economic Development Ministry, LPFM users are not easy to identify and hence, it is not easy to set a justifiable price and charge them. The general understanding is they should adhere to GUL and exercise self-regulation in using the spectrum (Ministry of Economic Development, 2005). However, I believe there is a need to have some sort of regulatory mechanism to ensure that LPFM stations are made accountable if they violate the self-regulatory mechanism and become a menace to other LPFM users. For example, there

are many stations that breach their contracts by using more power than allowed. The result of some not adhering to the self-regulatory mechanism means many other LFPMs operating within their transmission power limits in the same area are unable to operate due to other stations in the same vicinity using high power signals. An LPFM radio, Radio Chomsky which operates in Grey Lynn, has stated on the LPFM Network website its signal has been “drowned out in their backyard” by interference from another station using high power transmission (NZLPFM Network Website, n.d).

There is also a further need to have some sort of regulatory mechanism to ensure that LPFM stations operate as single community radios and not as LPFM networks that use several radio stations as ‘repeater stations’ broadcasting their programme content over a whole region or even to the whole country. They may thus look more like a national radio network instead of having the characteristics of a local LPFM beamed at a small community of interest. Theoretically, and for all the practical purposes as well, this further allows LPFM broadcasters to enter into a national network of their own and without having the need to pay any user fees. For reasons such as these, revision of the GUL is necessary to fine-tune the LPFM usage so that it remains as a small community broadcaster reaching a small community of interest.

Due to its free availability, congestion of LPFM frequencies is an issue in some major centres. At present, there are over 200 stations in the country representing about 67 locations—about 20 are in South Island and more than 40 are in the North Island. The greatest concentrations are found in Auckland with 43 stations and Wellington with 30. LPFM stations in all the other centres were less than 10 for each centre (NZLPFM Network website, n.d). In order to minimise congestion issues, user-groups have been formed in a number of areas to coordinate the use of the LPFM spectrum (Ministry of Economic Development, 2005).

I have also come to know that many LPFM radios get their news from Independent Network News, which is an independent news agency based in Lawrence in Otago and broadcasts on

88.2 FM. The network specialises in providing an audio news service to all LPFM and independent radio stations nationwide (NZLPFM network Website, n.d).

#### **4.7.6 Access radio**

As former Broadcasting Minister, Hon. Steve Maharey, remarked, “access radio stations open windows into aspects of New Zealand life which are often overlooked by the national media” (Maharey, 2007), bringing to the limelight, the life and the work of many New Zealand communities who may never get an opportunity to be heard on the airwaves. Describing access radio, the New Zealand’s first access radio manager, Cindy Beavis, in an interview given to Jane Tolerton of the New Zealand Women’s Weekly, said: “Access gives a voice to minorities who don’t have and would stand very little of getting their interests reflected in the way they want them (to be) reflected in media” (Tolerton, 1983). Access radio also provides for the immigrant communities, who are culturally and emotionally detached from their mother country, the “strongest link” to communicate in their mother tongues and get knowledge and understanding needed to assimilate into the culture of their new home, New Zealand (Coleman, 2009).

Access community radio broadcasting began in 1981 when Radio New Zealand announced its plan to offer broadcasting (facility) to anyone, including clubs, societies and individuals who wanted to use radio to make their own broadcasts and share their views with the community (The Truth, 3, March, 1981). Brian Pauling (2009), however, notes Radio New Zealand’s decision to open up its channels for community access broadcasting was a response to New Zealand’s many ethnic communities wanting to have some sort of presence over the airwaves addressing their interests and issues as well as having programmes in minority languages (Pauling, 2009). Access radio broadcasting thus had its origin much earlier than the Broadcasting Act of 1989 which made it a legal requirement that broadcasting be made available for the interests of minorities in the community including ethnic minorities.

The first access radio was established in Wellington. The station, known as Radio New

Zealand's Sunday Radio, began on April 5, 1981, broadcasting three hours from 9am to 12pm on its 2YB transmitter which was an 'idle' transmitter that came into action to broadcast National Radio programmes during the time when parliamentary sessions were broadcast over 2YA (Tolerton, 1983). Although Wellington got the first opportunity to begin access radio, originally, it was planned for Auckland, to address the interests of the Polynesians living in the city. However, the unavailability of a 2YB frequency in Auckland meant, the radio had to be initially established in Wellington where its 2YB transmitter was available (Page, 1983).

When Wellington's new access station began operating it was also an instant hit. Although initially, it was meant to broadcast just three hours per week, the popularity of the service meant that broadcasting hours had to be increased to 120 hours per month (The Dominion, 25.March, 1981). By 1984, Access radio was using an additional 12 hours of broadcasting during the weekends (The Evening Post, 4<sup>th</sup> October, 1984). The popularity of the Wellington Access Radio was also seen from the number of community groups that had used the radio. For example, in less than three years of operation, more than 600 different groups had used the radio. By 1983, the radio was broadcasting in 28 different languages (Page, 1983).

Radio New Zealand's successful experiment with access broadcasting in 1981 created an interest in other urban centres to come up with their own access community radios. The 1980s and 1990s thus saw the beginning of a new trend in establishing community access stations in the country. In the 1980s, the regions of Canterbury (Plains FM), Auckland (first as Access Community Radio Auckland and now as Planet FM), Wairarapa (Arrow FM) and Otago (first as Hills AM and now as Toroa Radio) established their access radio. By 1995, access radio was also in Nelson (Fresh FM), Invercargill (Radio Southland), Hamilton (Community Radio Hamilton), Hawkes Bay (Radio Kidnappers) and the Kapiti Coast (Coast Access FM). The latest access radio was established in 1997 in Palmerston North (Access Manawatu) taking the total number of access stations to 11 (New Zealand on Air Annual Report 2008-2009). All the stations receive a large proportion of their budget from New

Zealand on Air and they have the same objective of giving access to different community groups to have their voice heard over the radio (Maharey, 2004).

Until the introduction of access community radio, in New Zealand too, radio broadcasting was a highly ‘protected domain’ of professional operators and presenters. Community radio however, made people realise that professional media training is not necessarily a must in broadcasting and that ordinary community members with no prior training in broadcasting can “enjoy making radio” (Maharey, 2004) if they had love for their work, the passion to front up, sit behind a microphone and begin talking in the way they talk everyday. Hence, through access broadcasting, non-professional people became active broadcasters which was until then a ‘domain’ of highly-trained media professionals. Through small in-house, hands-on work experience training programmes, access radio stations have helped a wide range of community groups and individuals know how to make radio programmes, operate radio equipment and present live radio shows, thereby enabling them to share their knowledge and experience with their communities through radio (Coleman, 2009).

#### ***4.7.6.1 Weaknesses of access radio***

Although access radio provides several advantages to the minority groups, it has its disadvantages. For example, in access radio, even a single individual who has the money to buy airtime can broadcast their own views as a programme. The programme maker is thus simply a community member who has a personal interest to broadcast their voice and views to the community. There is no way of knowing whether the programme maker is presenting a programme that has community interest. Community interest for a programme can be identified through the feedback the radio gets from the community. I believe that if the radio sells airtime to broadcast programmes made by individuals to fulfill their own personal satisfaction, then the radio becomes a tool of the individual who bought airtime instead of being a medium that is there to serve the community.

Brian Pauling however, says, access radio is more importantly, more to do with what is happening in front of the microphone rather than what is being broadcast on air (Jeffrey,

2003). I believe that access radio being a community radio, the community interest should be more important than the person seated behind the microphone. Being a radio of the community, the radio should have a mechanism in place to whether monitor the programme makers actually reach their community with a programme that has community interest. If this is not monitored, the radio is no better than a tool of the programme makers instead of being a medium of the community for the community.

In her study on women's participation in community radio, Jeffrey (2002) found that a group of women broadcasters who belonged to an ethnic group was heavily criticised by their ethnic group for broadcasting content that was not liked by them. According to Jeffrey, their actions showed that the minority communities had an expectation that the members of their communities doing programmes were in fact representing their communities even though the presenters had not claimed such a role. The resulting conflict between the ethnic community and the programme producers over what should be broadcast and who should be broadcasting for the community often leads to the radio intervening and taking the "offending" programmes off-air (Jeffrey, 2002:51). This shows that the community does not always embrace or is ready to accept the volunteers or with those seated "behind the mic" "representing" their community. Hence, there is a need for the radio management to take into account the interests of the whole community too.

Hence, in order to avoid the 'empowered' programme makers from taking control of the station, the radio management needs to monitor the diversity of subjects being discussed; monitor the level of community interest the programmes attract by checking the level of community feedback as well as the level of participatory communication the programme makers have built in to their programmes. During my interview with the community radio manager at NZOA, I discovered that NZOA too, in providing funding for access radio, now requires the stations to show how the radio interacts with the different communities they serve. NZOA is particularly interested in knowing the different types of active roles that radios are playing in order to keep their listening community engaged in the radio programmes (K. Collins, personal communication, November 24, 2009).

As NZOA funding now requires showing the radio's interactivity, especially its active role played in keeping the community engaged, some access radio stations are already taking a similar approach. According to Nicki Reece, the manager of Christchurch-based community access radio, Plains FM, the station has plans to improve and expand the interactivity with the different communities the radio serves (N. Reece, personal communication, 17 October, 2009).

The radio management also needs to play a more proactive role with the programme makers in addition to simply managing the station administration. For example, the radio management needs to focus on bringing in diverse communities to do programmes. In this regard, instead of staying as a station that individual programme makers come on their own to do radio, the radio management should go out to the community to find un-represented communities within its coverage area and encourage them to come forward to take part in the radio. This is because if volunteers from a particular ethnic group take a lot of airtime, then there will not only be an over-representation of that community but also a tendency for other small communities to be discouraged from coming forward. This could be damaging for a station that identifies as a community access radio. It is not responsible community radio if the radio management sells only airtime and does not proactively work with the volunteers or programme makers to ensure that the volunteers bring community-interest programme content and attract community participation too.

Radio commentators also point out that access radio is required to fund part of its operational costs. Some of this cost is collected from programme makers who are often members of minority groups. Thus, access radio users, more specifically, the programme makers are faced with multiple payments in order to "access their public broadcasting need". That is, paying through taxation, paying user-charges for the radio and paying to gather resources for programme making. As Brian Pauling points out, "purists" are concerned with these multiple payments because on the other side of the same coin, "the white, male, educated, middle-class" New Zealanders can "access all their cultural and information needs" from the already established public media such as Radio New Zealand National and Concert FM which are

fully funded by the tax payer (Pauling and Ayton, 2009).

Access stations are criticised on grounds that a listener would not be able to listen to a harmonised schedule of programme. Instead, they would be listening to a host of different programmes that keep on changing communities and topic as well as language of presentation. As access radio simply sells airtime to interested programme makers who get only unsold airtime slots in the schedule to fit in their programmes, it creates an unrelated programme schedule that does not help listeners from the same community. For example, listeners from the same community might have an unrelated language programme sandwiching between two of their programmes. The break up of their two programmes does not give them a convenient listening time.

Christchurch Plains FM manager acknowledged that programme fragmentation was an issue common to all the access radios. The current style of placing the programmes on the programme schedule brings “little or no relationship vertically or horizontally making it less attractive to listeners”. According to the Plains FM manager, her radio has already circulated a new programming model for discussion among the programme makers. The objective is to revamp the current programme schedule by placing similar programmes in the same zone of the schedule. In other words, by exercising “stripping” that is, placing similar programmes in the same strip across the week on the programme schedule, the radio hopes to create a revamped programme schedule in which programmes in each strip have strong associations with each other and hence would appeal to audiences with similar tastes. By doing this, the radio aims to capture the same listening audience to the same programme zone across the week. The manager, however, notes that some of the programme makers have had the same slot for a very long time and hence a change to their programme times can only be made after the radio had received feedback from all the programme makers (N. Reece, personal communication, October 17, 2009).

However, as programme makers are the people who buy airtime on the radio and being a major source of income to the radio which is required to part-fund some of its costs, no



matter how ambitious a plan the radio has proposed, the ultimate success depends on its full endorsement by the programme makers rather than a unilateral decision by the radio management.

#### ***4.7.6.2 Access radio and NZOA***

Since its establishment in 1989, NZOA has become the main funding body of community access radios. Radio stations are required to submit proposals detailing the amount they require and how the fund would be spent. In providing funds, the NZOA takes into account the extent to which the station reflects the diversity in the community and in particular, the interests of women, youth, children, the disabled, minorities (including ethnic minorities) and non-profit community groups. NZOA sees that the strength of any community radio lies with the support it has with the communities' grassroots. Hence, funding is directly related on the strength of the grassroots support the station has, especially from community groups and organisations that are active in the community. According to NZOA criteria, a diversified programme content which includes different communities can only be practical in areas where there are more people. Hence, NZOA sees diversity as "a function of the size of the community" and access radio as "a product of those diverse communities" (Pauling and Ayton, 2009:149). Thus, the more populous a city or a region is the more qualified that region is for receiving additional funding.

In 2008, NZOA had a comprehensive review of its funding policies for both radio and television. The review identified that there was a need to fund all access radio, particularly to help meet the increasing demands of access radios in major population centres- which due to having a high concentration of different communities- produce a rich and diverse content (NZOA, 2008).

Taking into account, the proposals in the review, NZOA had, for funding purposes, re-grouped access radio in the country to the following four different 'tiers': Tier One which is the 'Large Metro' consists of only Auckland; Tier Two known as 'Large Urban' includes the cities of Wellington, Hamilton and Christchurch; Tier Three known as 'Provincial City'

includes Palmerston North, Hawke's Bay, Nelson, Dunedin and Invercargill; Tier Four or the 'Small regional' include Kapiti and Wairarapa (NZOA Annual Report, 2008/2009). Although the amount of funding a radio receives is directly related to its "tier", the funding is usually limited to about 60 per cent of a station's expenditure. This includes the payment of salaries to some limited key staff and money to buy or repair needed equipment. Any other fund the station may need has to be sought by the radio by sale of airtime to radio programme producers, advertisers, and programme sponsors or from donations (K. Collins, personal communication, November 24, 2009).

Although NZOA currently funds 11 access stations, its radio manager said that it was ready to fund more access radios if new stations came onto the airwaves. However, under the NZOA guidelines, for funding a new station, the radio must serve a population base of no less than 50 thousand people or its broadcasting range should reach a similar size of population. Any new station that qualified in this manner could get funding provided the NZOA had budgeted for the year to fund a new station. (K. Collins, personal communication, November 24, 2009).

NZOA also funds the Access Internet Radio Project. Access radio on the Internet enables radio stations to have live streaming and podcasting of their programmes so that specific communities of interest who miss out on programmes of interest can always access them on the Internet. According to NZOA findings, the demand for access radio programmes now exceeds ten thousand hits per month (NZOA Annual Report, 2008/2009).

#### **4.7.7 Other community radio stations**

There are three more radio stations that can be included within the broader definition of New Zealand community radio. They are the Radio for the Print Disabled which began service in May 1987 and focuses on the blind, Radio Rhema, which is a religious radio network that broadcasts programmes on Christianity (Wilson, 1994) and student radio. The first student station was founded in 1969 at Auckland University. Regulations prevent them from increasing their transmission power or targeting a broader audience other than students and

also from having too many advertisements. These restrictions ensure the student stations are focused on student communities and are not by any means a commercial venture.

Despite having a strict licence to comply with, student radio does not always comply fully to the conditions specified in the licence. For example, Radio Broadcasters Association (RBA) observes, that bFM in Auckland though it has a strong ‘student ethos’, functions just like any other fully-licenced commercial radio. Similarly student radio in Hamilton, Wellington or Christchurch does not always comply with their operating licences (RBA, 2006).

#### **4.8 ACAB**

The idea of forming an association of New Zealand community access broadcasters was first discussed in 1991 by access radio managers who for the first time met each other at an NZOA-organised meeting held in Wellington. The Association of Community Access Broadcasters (ACAB) was established in 1992 in Christchurch where Plains FM was host to New Zealand’s first ever national conference of access radio broadcasters (Christchurch City Libraries Website, n.d). The objective of the new association was, as explained in its website, homepage, to promote, develop and support community access broadcasting in New Zealand (ACAB Website, n.d). ACAB held its first national conference in 1995 in Dunedin. At the conference, members discussed their financial constraints, the challenges they face from the commercial broadcasters, strategies for volunteer management and the role community access radio can play in education (Cushen, 1995).

In its website ACAB describes itself as a “listening post” or as a “lobbying and resourcing organisation” which aims to provide a resource for stations and a link for potential broadcasters to the stations in their area. ACAB identifies its aim as to promote, develop, foster and support community access broadcasting in New Zealand. The association holds an annual meeting which is hosted by one of its member radio stations. During the meeting, the new executive committee is elected. The executive committee meetings are held either via the Internet, through tele-conferences or as face-to-face meetings. The association has no physical office or staff who are exclusively there to do its work. Hence, work is done on their

behalf by the different access radio stations (ACAB Website, n.d).

According to the information published on the ACAB website, the association is similar to the Community Broadcasting Association of Australia (CBAA) and World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC), which is the world body of community broadcasters and has world-wide regional branches that are active in promoting, defending and helping the development of community radio worldwide (ACAB Website, n.d).

However, from the literature I consulted, both AMARC and CBAA are bodies that are widely active and undertake proactive roles in developing, expanding and promoting community radio. For example, CBAA has full-time staff, its own online magazine and a physical location. The CBAA website can be used as a message board by members as a discussion forum, as a market place for sale, swap and buy radio-related equipment and as a place to network with other radios. CBAA has also arranged several other benefits for its members including the benefit of having an exclusive community radio insurance arrangement. According to the information provided on its website homepage, the CBAA, as a registered training institute, provides certificate-level radio courses for members, produces resources for training and has also joined forces with several agencies so that members can have discounted or free services such as special insurance policies and free legal advice (CBAA website, n.d).

I also found that both AMARC and CBAA had very informative websites. For example, on the CBAA website which is updated daily, there is a news column that provides updates and information that are relevant to Australian community radio and broadcasters. The website also has a discussion forum as well as a message board which Australian community broadcasters can access to discuss both technical and logistic issues that may arise or simply place small requests such as needing to buy used equipment by individual stations. The CBAA website also has information on community radio workshops and meetings it has scheduled for the year as well as a copy of the Australian Community Broadcasters' Handbook which is also published by CBAA (CBAA Website, n.d).

Over the past three years, I have checked the ACAB website regularly, but there were few updates. In fact, the website does not contain material that needs daily updates. The website does not provide information on different activities that are undertaken by ACAB. The site does not have a message board or a discussion forum where access broadcasters can converge and discuss matters of interest or share technical knowledge. Unlike its Australian counterpart, ACAB does not publish the New Zealand handbook of access radios. It is, according to the NZOA radio manager, an NZOA publication (K. Collins, personal communication, November 24, 2009).

The association does not have a physical location or any paid staff. All the work is done by different stations and the ACAB executive committee acts as a coordinator. ACAB also does not have full-time staff. Most of the co-coordinating work is carried out by the ACAB executive committee which consists of access broadcasters. According to Terri Byrne, the broadcast manager of access radio Planet FM in Auckland, ACAB's most important activity is the holding of its annual general meeting where community radio governors, programme makers and other personnel meet. The Association has not taken up any contracts or expanded to undertake any other form of activity (T. Byrne, personal communication, October 17, 2009).

Although ACAB activities are far less than CBAA, I believe that the existence of ACAB does mean that access community radio stations in New Zealand do have a single umbrella to campaign for their interests. For, example, ACAB as the collective voice of New Zealand access broadcasters can muster a stronger voice to campaign for the development and expansion of access radio, especially to regions such as the west coasts of South Island and North Island.

In October 2009, I had the opportunity to attend an ACAB conference in Auckland hosted by Planet FM. The conference was inaugurated by the Broadcasting Minister, Hon. Jonathan Coleman and lasted for three days. The sessions were filled with speeches from eminent guest speakers and touched on topics such as New Zealand and the world economy; engaging

community participation in radio; civil society participation; Internet and citizen journalism; working for love and managing volunteers; and the use of the Internet as a means to keep interaction between radio and the community.

During the conference, participants had the opportunity to meet each other, share their experiences, and discuss their issues and needs. It was also an educational meeting in the sense that the speeches given on the first day highlighted the importance of keeping the community close to the radio. As NZOA funding now requires showing the radio's interactivity, especially the active role played in keeping the community engaged, the topics of the day were focused on the importance and effectiveness of community radio and how it can be expanded for community benefit as well as expanding community interactivity and participation especially in this age of digitalisation. The conference was certainly an educational one that had helped me to broaden my knowledge of community broadcasting in New Zealand. For the participants too, especially the programme makers, the conference highlighted the need to improve and expand community participation in community radio and how to overcome the financial challenges they face. Most importantly, the conference gave directions on how they should produce programmes for the community rather than for themselves.

#### **4.9 Community broadcasting - the next step**

An October 2006 media release from the then Broadcasting Minister Hon. Steve Maharey said:

The government is committed to supporting local broadcasting in establishing stations that reflect the interests and diversity of their community....It is important that local communities have access to new formats and technologies as they become available so they continue to have a voice on the airwaves (Maharey, 2006).

One of the new technologies is the migration to digital broadcasting. Community radio would benefit from this change as it would open up new frequencies and hence give the radios a broader freedom to begin more community radios in different parts of the country or

to have the radio accessed via a digital receiver by any person who identifies as a member of that radio community staying in any part of the country. Furthermore, digital broadcasting also allows the listeners a “pause and rewind function” which allows listeners to go back and listen to any item they might have missed. As of yet, there is no set date to change to full digital radio broadcasting. However, it is envisaged the change would begin once the switch over of television to digital broadcasting takes effect by 2015(Coleman, 2009).

While addressing AUT students in Auckland in 2009, Broadcasting Minister Jonathan Coleman however remarked:

At present there doesn't appear to be a strong business case for digital radio, nor any particular consumer demand. There would have to be stronger interest before the government would turn its mind to whether there was a policy rationale for becoming involved (Coleman, 2009).

Minister Coleman's remark suggests that the migration to digital radio may take quite a long time. As digital radio can be heard over a digital receiver, the decision to buy one and listen to radio through it may not be that encouraging to any individual especially when there are a number of analogue stations giving a very good quality service to the average household. Hence, the probability of a long delay in the eventual availability of digital radio broadcasting may be the most likely scenario for the current times.

At present, according to the NZOA radio manager, a government digital radio broadcasting initiative is underway both in Auckland and in Wellington as a trial experiment. The trial broadcasting is carried out by Base FM, BBC World Service, RNZ National, RNZ Concert, George FM, Mai FM and Radio Tarana. These stations can be accessed by anyone who has a digital radio receiver (K. Collins, personal communication, November 24, 2009).

Although full digital radio broadcasting in New Zealand may be a few years away, community access radio stations have already entered the “digital world”. With assistance from the ‘Community Partnership Fund’ which has been created under the government

Digital Strategy to help communities to adapt to new technologies, three access stations, Wellington Access Radio, Fresh FM and Hamilton Access Radio have developed Access Internet Radio (Maharey, 2006). At present, seven access radios are live streaming their programmes on the Internet. Many of their programmes are available as podcasts on the Access Internet Radio website (Access Internet radio Website, n.d) enabling those listeners who may have missed out on the original live show due to the programmes' scheduled timing to revisit and listen again. It is anticipated that access radio on the Internet will not only help "deliver its services cost effectively" but also expand the radio listening communities by being able to attract listeners wherever they may be in New Zealand or elsewhere. As over 80 per cent of New Zealanders are already connected to the Internet (Maharey, 2006), it is anticipated that access radio on the Internet will help attract a bigger listening community and at the same time increase the community interaction with the radios.

As highlighted in Chapter Six, the SCR in Wellington, which is one of the cases that I have included in this study, is a small community radio station that is struggling to own a frequency of its own. For SCR, the migration to digital broadcasting offers the only hope to acquire a radio frequency of its own. However, as digital radio broadcasting may not be available in the foreseeable future, for the time being, the only option available for SCR, too, is to use the Internet as a means to increase local access and participation in the radio.

#### **4.10 New criteria for non-commercial licensing**

At present, the government is also reviewing and developing new criteria for the purpose of renewing non-commercial radio licensing. All radio licences given to non-commercial radios expire in April 2011 (Coleman, 2009). The National government policy on renewal of radio licences to non-commercial radio has not been finalised yet. However, the Broadcasting Minister Jonathan Coleman while addressing the ACAB Conference 2009 held in Auckland had indicated that the new criteria for non-commercial licences which are currently under development may include the following:



- Priority will be given to those stations that promote local broadcasting and provide a diversity of programmes that fill community needs that are not met by the commercial broadcasters.
- Priority will also be given to those who provide access and opportunity to communities who wish to make, hear or be involved in radio programmes, where their interests would otherwise not be met and those stations that have a long-term plan for technological progress, including transition to digital or to the web.
- Non-commercial stations should use the majority of hours in peak listening time to include programmes made by, and reflecting the interests of, the community it serves.
- Station should have a policy of identifying a range of potential programmes reflecting the diverse interests of the community at large or that identify as the focus of the station, such as students, a marginalised age group, ethnic minorities or religions.
- Station should seek out, train and encourage those in the targeted area of community interest to participate in programmes, as host/producer and/or guest contributor.
- Desirably, a station should schedule seminar-type training events where skilled broadcasters share their skills with potential broadcasters on the station.
- Where a station has the only non-commercial frequency in a town or city, care should be taken to include a range of programme genres.
- The station should investigate local internet services for possible extensions of broadcast material and/or join with local stations of similar interest to create a web presence for live streaming and/or podcast material.
- Access or student radio stations may have only one or two paid staff. Therefore, the integration of office and studio volunteers, and programme producers should have clear written procedures agreed by the governance body, the paid staff and the volunteers.

- A business plan indicating a consistent funding stream for the operation of the station will be crucial.

#### **4.11 Summary and Conclusion**

In the early days of broadcasting, NZ media was mainly targeted to Pakeha which is the country's majority population; the country's indigenous Maori were not a feature. However, since the 1980s, broadcasting by ethnic minorities has become an important feature of the NZ media landscape. Iwi radio and community access radio began to fill in the information needs of the Maori and other ethnic groups as well as the interest groups and communities of interests who were largely marginalised by the mainstream media.

Community broadcasting received a boost as a result of the passing of the Broadcasting Act 1989 which specifically required accommodating into broadcasting, the needs of children, women, the disabled, minorities and other interest groups in the community. For this purpose, a state funding agency, New Zealand on Air was created. The agency has a statutory obligation to fund communities that are under-represented or marginalised by the mainstream media. NZOA however, considers that any station it funds must have 50 thousand people in its radius of signal. This eliminates very small communities living in rural New Zealand as well as small geographic communities that live in small islands around New Zealand. As these small communities do not have 50 thousand, the only available option is using Low Power FM radio broadcasting. Unfortunately, Low Power FM broadcasts are not included in the NZOA funding regime.

New Zealand's larger community radio stations which are mostly community access stations are to a large extent funded by the government. Some critics argue that state funding is a way through which governments take a role and interfere with broadcasting. On the other hand, there are also valid reasons for a government to give support to access broadcasting in the sense that without the availability of government funding, it would be hard to sustain community broadcasting. Thus, in one way, government funding helps in providing the

finances to sustain a medium that delivers the community a democratic right they may never be able to exercise if there was no government support.

Although in New Zealand, access radios are the country's "mainstream" community radio, I believe that it is the LPFM that has uplifted New Zealand community radio to a new level, enabling anyone interested in radio broadcasting to do so without the need to obtain a prior licence to begin broadcasting. By giving the opportunity to any interested individuals to begin their own broadcasting and express their own ideas and views without the need to have their programme content changed by anyone in any organisation and by removing the need to pay for a licence, thereby bringing down the cost of broadcasting within reach of ordinary citizens, I believe the LPFM radio is in many ways, the medium that has truly democratised the airwaves. It is the only way where ordinary New Zealand citizens can access the radio spectrum and practice low-cost 'citizen journalism' on air.

New Zealand's community access radio umbrella organisation, ACAB represents all of the current access radios and hence can play a major role on their behalf. However, ACAB is at present not working fully to its potential. ACAB currently is an association of community access radio broadcasters only. This leaves out non-access community broadcasters. I believe the association's role needs to be expanded taking on board, a more proactive role to promote and strengthen all community radio stations in New Zealand.

The migration to digital radio broadcasting is seen as the next big step for radio broadcasting. Although digital broadcasting is carried out as an experiment, it is believed that digital radio may not be available nation-wide for a few years.

# CHAPTER FIVE

## Case Study as a Method

### 5.1 Introduction

This study is based on three radio stations in three different countries. The study involves different aspects of the radio stations including among others; identifying the organisational structure, the role of the stations; their programme production and planning capacity as well as programme making strategies; the way they keep in touch with their communities and how radios enable communities to access the station and participate in the radio; their future plans to strengthen the radio capacity and expand community access and participation as well as exploring their strategies for survival and sustaining radio operations in order to continue serving as community radios.

Given the focused areas of my study, and the fact that the study involves three independent stations, I opted to follow case study as my main method for this research. The case study methodology was also convenient in the sense that it gave me the liberty to approach and study each station in its own local, natural setting.

In this chapter, I have given an overview of case study as a research method. In doing so, I have included some definitions to case study and have identified the different types of case studies. The chapter also focuses on the cases in this study, explaining case selection criteria as well as how I designed this study. The chapter also addresses the limitations of this study as well as how I came to validate the gathered data.

In addition to the case study method, I have used content analysis as a second research method. A content analysis was carried out to analyse the news bulletins that I recorded from

the three radio stations. In doing the content analysis, my focus was to find out the nature of news that was disseminated by the radios and also identifies how much local community news went into the radio news bulletins. In doing the analysis, I examined whether community news events and how community concerns were well represented and whether the news bulletins showed that the radios were a voice that aired their community concerns, issues and interests. I have kept content analysis separate from the case study. All aspects that deal with content analysis, including how I designed the content analysis, are discussed separately in Chapter Seven.

## **5.2 Case study- a definition**

For Gerring, case study is defined as” an intensive study of a single case (or a small set of cases) with an aim to generalise across a larger set of cases of the same general type” (Gerring, 2007:65). For Robert Stake, “case study is both a process of inquiry about the case and the product of that inquiry” (Stake, 2005:144) and “is not a methodological choice but a choice of what is to be studied”. Stake suggests that “by whatever methods, we choose to study the case, we could study it analytically or holistically, entirely by repeated measures or hermeneutically, organically or culturally, and by mixed methods...” (Stake, 2008:119). For Creswell (2007) case study is:

a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a case), or a multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information, (eg., observations, interviews, audio visual material, and documents and reports) and reports of a case description and case-based themes” (Creswell, 2007:73).

Goldstone notes that case studies are “aimed at providing explanations for particular cases, or groups of similar cases, rather than at providing general hypotheses that apply uniformly to all cases in a suspected case universe” (Goldstone, 1997:108). Thus by studying selected cases, looking for their similarities, differences, and uniqueness etc. one is able to develop

theories and explanations with regard to why certain occurrences are similar or different and/or unique with regard to a particular case (George and Bennett, 2005).

As Hesse-Biber (2011) notes:

The unique contribution of a case study approach is that it provides the researcher with a holistic understanding of a problem, issue, or a phenomenon within its social context. Cases can be individuals, events, programmes, institutions or a society (Hesse-Biber, 2011:256).

### **5.3 Case study types**

There are nine types of case studies: ‘typical’, ‘diverse’, ‘extreme’, ‘deviant’, ‘influential’, ‘crucial’, ‘pathway’, ‘most-similar’, and ‘most-different’ cases (Gerring, 2007:88). Although nine distinct case studies can be identified, Stake (2005) categorises case studies into three main types. One is the ‘intrinsic’ case study’ where “the case is studied to explore its own special unique features” (Stake, 2008:121; Pranee, 2009:192). The second is “the single instrument case study” where the case focuses on a single “issue of concern” and uses a case to show how the concerned issue manifests within the case (Stake, 2008:123; Creswell, 2007:74-76). In other words, instrumental case studies deal with a specific topic of interest and are aimed at finding insights and generalisations with regard to the topic under investigation. The third is the ‘collective or multiple case study’ which is also described “as an instrumental case study”. Here too, an “issue of concern” is chosen for investigation but rather than a single case more cases are studied under the same lens. What is important is, as these are different cases, the findings should not be generalised “from one case to another because the contexts of cases will be different”. For generalisation, one needs to select representative cases (Stake, 2008:123; Creswell, 2007:74-76).

The three cases I have chosen can both be described as instrumental and collective and hence can be described as a multiple case study. The study is instrumental in the sense, I have chosen to study a specific area of interest which is to investigate and explore the nature of

community access and participation that is practised or prevalent at the three selected radio stations and identify how the three selected radio stations plan to nurture and strengthen local community communication through community participation. The study is collective in the sense, in each of the three stations, I am in effect, studying the same issue and identifying how it is manifested in each case.

#### **5.4 The three cases in this study**

The stations I have chosen are Radio Sagharmatha (RS) in Nepal, Kothmale Community Radio (KCR) in Sri Lanka and Samoa Capital Radio (SCR) in New Zealand. Each radio station has been serving the community for more than a decade and hence is well-placed and positioned in their respective communities. They are also well known in their respective countries. For example, Radio Sagharmatha is Nepal's first private radio station as well as its first community radio station. The station was founded in 1997 and is owned by a renowned local NGO known by its acronym 'NEFEJ' which stands for Nepal Forum of Environmental Journalists. The station only serves the Kathmandu valley region. As the country's first radio station that was not owned by the government, RS is a household name throughout the country (O. Khadka, NEFEJ Director, personal communication, July 9, 2007).

Kothmale Community Radio in Sri Lanka was founded in 1989 and is owned by the state broadcaster, Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation (SLBC). The station began, initially, as a radio project that was funded by the Danish International Development Agency and UNESCO in their effort to help minimise the emotional isolation of villagers who were relocated to new settlements when the Sri Lankan government built the Mahaweli Dam on the site of their original villages. Today, KCR is the country's leading community radio station (S. Wijesinghe, KCR manager, personal communication, August 6, 2007).

Samoa Capital Radio is in Wellington which is home to the country's largest Samoan community. The radio is owned by a Samoa Community Trust. The station had its beginning as a Samoan programme on Wellington Access Radio. However, as its popularity grew, it eventually became a radio station on its own right. SCR takes pride in describing itself as

New Zealand's first ethnic community radio. Although the station is registered as a separate radio station, it does not own a frequency of its own and hence continues to broadcast over Wellington Access Radio. Despite this disadvantage, SCR remains the favourite radio of the Samoans living in New Zealand (A.T. Moresi, SCR manager, personal communication, November 26, 2009).

#### **5.4.1 Case selection criteria- a discussion**

As “case selection is often influenced by researcher’s familiarity with the language, of a country, a personal entrée’ into the locale, special access to important data, or funding that covers one archive rather than another” and “pragmatic considerations are often-and quite rightly- decisive in the case selection process” (Gerring, 2007:150), my choice of selecting the cases, especially the two South Asian stations, was also influenced by the good relationship that I had developed with the stations over time and hence viewed them as convenient for me to access information easily. As I will discuss below, there are also other reasons for choosing the selected cases.

Stations from Sri Lanka and Nepal were included for three reasons. Firstly, I am from South Asia and studying how community radios operate in that region would also help me widen my regional knowledge on the different aspects of running a community radio in the region. Secondly, studying the regional radio stations was the best option given the fact there were no community radio stations in the Maldives, my home country, at the time I began this study in mid- 2007. Thirdly, I have also encountered some critics of the selected two cases who believed that the two South Asian stations I had chosen were not true community radio stations. This being the case, by selecting the two radio stations, it gave me the opportunity to study the stations and get answers from their management as to why critics call them not very community participatory radio stations.

I included a station from New Zealand because I was studying in New Zealand. The station I chose was SCR which broadcast in the Samoan language and was focused on the country of Samoa, Samoan issues, Samoan culture and interests and on the life of Samoans in New



Zealand. Selecting this radio station, which was focused on an immigrant community that had come to New Zealand from a developing country, was in many respects, like selecting a radio station from Samoa.

I had originally planned to study two radio stations from each country. However, having analysed the practicality of studying more radio stations as well as my financial constraints and the time available for me to complete the study, I had limited this study to three radio stations, one from each country. When there are more cases to study, it also means there is less time to spend on each case and hence the smaller the chance of each case getting an equal level of in-depth study (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995:37-44). In this sense fewer cases meant doing a better and focused study. If I had chosen cases from a single country, it could have provided me a more representative sample of cases and hence the better the findings would be as far as radio stations in the chosen country were concerned. No representative cases also mean there is less room for a wider cross-case analysis, something that could have added more strength to the research findings (Gerring, 2007:43).

The three different stations that I have chosen from three different countries are three unique stations that are independent and have three different types of radio ownership; one an NGO-owned, the other government-owned and the third, community-owned. Hence, ownership-wise, they are very different and can be classified as three unrepresentative cases. Being unrepresentative, I have studied each case independently as a single case, dealing with each of them in its own environment and presenting the findings separately in the way they unfolded individually. Hence, I have not done any cross-case analysis.

Although the three cases I have chosen are singular and not representative of each other and my findings could not be used as a basis to make a definitive generalisation or a conclusion on all types of community radios, I believe the individual results can be used to compare and contrast with findings from other similar or representative cases or used as a basis to “develop a working hypothesis”. In this sense, as Cronbach suggests “when we give proper weight to local conditions, any generalisation is a working hypothesis, not a conclusion”

(Cronbach, 1975:124; Lincoln and Guba, 2000). Lincoln and Guba (2000) suggest that working hypotheses that are formed from one case study can be used to understand other similar cases. “The degree of transferability is a direct function of the similarity between the two contexts, what we shall call ‘fittingness’. Fittingness is defined as the degree of congruence between sending and receiving contexts. If Context A and Context B are ‘sufficiently’ congruent, then working hypothesis from the sending originating context may be applicable in the receiving context” (Lincoln and Guba, 2000:40). Hence, as “conclusions derived in one context might be relevant to another context”, (Lincoln and Guba, 2000:38) I believe the findings in this study can be used to understand how they ‘fit’ to other similar cases.

I should also note here that there are researchers who do not support the ideas of generalising cases. For example, Stake (2000) sees each case as a bounded and separate system and hence he proposes that each case should be studied separately as studying cases together and generalising them may not do justice to each case, as generalisations may not show up the unique features embedded in each case. Stake suggests that in investigating a case, we should treat cases individually instead of opting to generalise the findings with other cases. The issues I have chosen as the topic of my study is the same for all three cases and the idea of the study was rather than doing a pure comparison between the three, to show a wide-angled view of the three stations showing how each case was enabling their communities to access and participate in the radio. Hence, this study should be viewed as a collection of three single cases which shows how the same issue prevails in three different and single cases.

One might say that, being an economically developed country, I could not compare a community radio from New Zealand with two community radio stations from the developing world. I do believe that there is a socio-economic disparity between New Zealand and South Asia. However, given the careful consideration I put in to choosing a station from New Zealand, I do not believe that my choice of stations will have a negative effect on the study on grounds of socio-economic differences. I should also emphasise here that this study is not a comparison of socio economic aspects of New Zealand, Sri Lanka and Nepal. This is a study about three radio stations and the chosen three stations have many similar

characteristics. As I stated earlier, SCR, the New Zealand station I chose was focused on information dissemination to the Samoan community in New Zealand. The radio belonged to a Samoan community trust and is located in Wellington, a region which is home to a lot of first generation Samoans living in New Zealand. The language of radio was Samoan. The station programmes were aired in Samoan and not understood by any other Kiwis if they had no knowledge of Samoan. It was therefore, a Samoan window opened in New Zealand to experience and appreciate and feel all aspects Samoan while in NZ. Being a radio that promoted Samoan culture; that promoted Samoan citizenship as cultural citizens living in new Zealand, the radio was in many aspects very much a 'slice' of Samoa in New Zealand. Many of its listeners were first generation Samoans in NZ and parents and family of Samoan Kiwis who had poor knowledge of English. Many of them were just like their counterparts in Samoa, in need of knowledge in areas such as education, health and lifestyle issues and life in NZ in general. Hence, in these aspects, the radio was more than a middle-of-the-road New Zealand community radio station, it was a special ethnic community radio that was broadcasting to a small 'cultural nation'- a slice of Samoa-rooted within multi-cultural New Zealand.

Therefore, viewing from a purely socio-economic aspect, I believe South Asia, as a region of developing countries, have similar characteristics with Samoa and with other countries in the developing Pacific, and given the above reasons for choosing SCR, I also firmly believe that it was a choice that had merit.

## **5.5 Case study design and data collection**

This case study was designed to collect data to fulfil the needs of the following objectives:

- to analyse the stations at organisational management level, identifying the role of the radio, its future plans and on strategies that are followed to maintain a sustainable radio;
- to identify who produces radio programmes and identify how much of a stake the local community have in producing, presenting and planning the programmes;

- to identify the strength of the radio as a community platform that promotes and enhances participatory communication or community dialogue within the local community;
- to assess the level of influence wielded by the radio management on the involvement of the local community in broadcasting and what sort of impact it is having on the nature of community access and participation;
- to investigate whether, in any way, management decisions are impacting to strengthen or lessen the opportunities for community access and participation or helping to make the radio stations true community platforms for community communication;
- to examine how the management have planned to create more opportunity for the local community access and participation in the radio.

#### *A Qualitative approach*

In order to proceed with my study, the first step was visiting the stations and familiarising with them, the working environment and the staff. During my visits to each station, I met the senior staff and introduced myself and the purpose of my visit. I also took time to listen to the radio programmes every day and familiarised with the programme schedules and the types of programmes that were aired. In addition, I also gathered where possible, any written articles about each station that was available at the station. Using the information I had gathered (from the materials I read, the programmes I listened to as well as the information I received from initial encounters with some key radio staff), I formulated key questions for my interviews with the radio staff.

As a second step, I finalised whom I should interview. I chose the radio managers, producers, presenters, reporters, editors, volunteers and a governing board member from each station. In the light of the different aspects that I needed to cover in this study, I used in-depth interviewing, both close and open ended as my main method of data collection.

The interviews were conducted to get an insight into both the organisation and history of the stations, identifying the role of the radios vis-à-vis the communities, ascertaining from the staff how the programmes were connected to the community and identifying how the radio

stations had created opportunities for the community to access and participate in the radio. I also believe that by interviewing the reporters and producers as well as editors, volunteers and the station managers, I would be able to get an insight into their interest, dedication and enthusiasm as well as the amount of energy they put in. By interviewing those who work and “live” a great part of their day at the radio station, one is able to gather information and narrate a story about the institution, its work and its relationship with the community in a manner that is “seldom” found in any other way (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005:652-653).

In designing the interviews, I decided I should go for both a structured interview as well as an unstructured interview. In the initial phase, a structured interview, was used so that I could use identical questions with staff in each radio station. By having a structured set of questions, the responses could also be uniformly coded for all the stations. However, as structured interviews do not give the advantage of exploring some of the materials that were received while conducting the interview, I also used more open-ended questions in order to tap into useful and new information that could only be gained through the use of an unstructured approach (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005).

With each person I interviewed, I managed to hold a minimum of two interviews. In the first meeting, I extracted the basic information that gave broad answers to my questions. The second meeting was more of a detailed discussion where I discussed further, the information I had earlier obtained in my first interview. As “conversing with the participant on two or more occasions” help to “make sure the participant’s views were “correctly represented”, the two meetings were also an opportunity to “re-triangulate’ with the interviewee and the findings I had gathered, thereby strengthening the validity of my interview (Yin, 2011:81).

All the interviews that I conducted were in-depth interviews. “In-depth interviews aim to elicit rich information from the perspective of a particular individual and on a selected topic under investigation” (Pranee, 2009:43). My aim was therefore, “to explore the insider perspective and capture... their thoughts, perceptions, feelings and experiences” in their own words (Taylor, 2005:39) in areas such as choosing subjects for programmes, what they

include in the programme content, how they get audience feedback and respond or how they encourage local community participation in the programmes etc. Given the nature of this study, all the interviews were mainly focused “around the themes of access and participation” (Barlow, 2002:149), the key focus of this study. In addition, “by interrogating the conceptual and operational characteristics” of each station, I also aimed to identify how “they influenced or impacted on access and participation at each station” (Barlow, 2002: 149).

By doing in-depth interviewing, it helped as Simons (2009:43) notes four important objectives. Firstly, it enables one to know from the interviewee what he “thinks and feels”. Secondly, it gives the opportunity to “ask a question and get an answer” and then through “more open-ended questions identify the real issues”. Thirdly, “through consistency in questioning” one would be able to identify the “emerging issues”. Fourthly, it is only through in-depth interviewing that one would be able “to get knowledge about things one cannot physically observe” (Simons, 2009:43).

However, as Yin (2008) notes although interviewing is a strong tool to gather information as it can be “focused” directly on case study topics and it is “insightful” and “provides perceived causal inferences and explanations”, I was also aware of the negative sides of interviewing. As Yin (2008) points out “poorly articulated questions”, “response bias”, “inaccuracies due to poor recall”, “reflexivity-interviewees” giving what the interviewer wants to hear are weaknesses. Hence, during the course of the interview, I was able to ask the same questions from people who were doing the same work so that I could identify any ‘memory’ failures as well as any gaps or disparities of the information that I received from different interviewees (Yin, 2008:101).

I did not tape all my interviews. Some interviewees, especially, some full-time staff and volunteers at RS and KCR did not want their voice to be taped. In such cases, I simply recorded interview information as written notes. Given the generous time I was given by the interviewees as well as their interest in helping me to make my note-taking accurate, often

they double-checked what I had written. Hence, I was quite comfortable that even though some interviews were not taped, the information I noted was quite accurate. All the interviews were dated, named and the place where the interview was given was identified in my notes. The interviews were conducted only by me. By doing all the interviews personally, I was able to get a thorough understanding of each station and this was as an added advantage as it helped to widen my knowledge and to see the big picture of how each station functioned as a separate entity. This was important when doing the case analysis. It also ensured that there was the same style of approach when dealing with everyone in each station.

At the beginning of each interview, I also asked whether they would be happy for me to identify them by using their names in the text. Most of the staff members and volunteers I interviewed did not mind me quoting their names in the text, but, as mentioned earlier, there were some staff and volunteers at RS and KCR, who for various personal reasons, did not want me to tape their voices or quote their real names. They were however, happy to include their names as interviewees in a single list at the end of this study. Pranee (2009) notes that not identifying the interviewees in places where they can be easily identified and not giving out “too much detail” in places where they can be identified “adds protection and credibility to their story” (Pranee, 2009:25). Hence, I decided not to give any identifiable information about those who had objected to the quoting of their real names in the text or to taping their voice during the interviews. Hence, their names are listed along with all the other interviewees I interviewed for this study. I also decided that in instances where a staff member or volunteer shared information with me that I felt might have a negative affect on their position in their organisation or to their relationship with other colleagues, I would simply keep them anonymous within the text and give their names in the reference list at the end of the study. The names of all the interviewees who were happy for me to quote them were quoted in relevant places in the text. The names of all the interviewees are also given at the bottom of the reference list for this study.

A total of 75 interviews were carried out at three stations. At KCR, I conducted 29 interviews. At RS, the number of interviewees was 32 and at SCR, I carried out a total of 14 interviews. The interviews were conducted with producers, reporters, volunteers, and managers. Some stations had fewer interviews because of fewer staff and this meant fewer resources to get a broad picture. However, as I used the same questions, I was able to keep uniformity in the collected information. Fewer staff also meant more time with interviewees and hence more time to fine-tune and verify the data. In addition to interviewing radio staff and volunteers at the three selected stations, I also interviewed several others from Nepal, New Zealand, Sri Lanka, the Maldives and other broadcasters and media experts whom I saw as relevant to this study. Their names are included in the reference list.

### **5.5.1 Main areas covered in the structured Interviews**

Hochheimer identifies that the radio should address (a) “Who speaks for which community of interest?” (b) “How community views are solicited or encouraged?” and (c) “To what degree does/can the station bring its audiences into the process of programme decisions for themselves” (Hochheimer, 1993:476-477). These are important aspects that need to be covered in any study on community access and participation in community radio. In formulating my interview questions, I incorporated these questions, followed the same style and came up with a similar set of questions that in my view would cover the areas that I needed to explore for this study. My questions were broadly based on the following areas:

- Role of radio and how the station keeps in touch with the community
- Nature of community participation in programme production, planning and presenting
- Opportunities available for community participation
- Station policy, rules when making programme and programme scheduling
- Radio management, programme producers and radio volunteers
- Programme content and quality control
- Target community and nature of collecting programme feedback
- Deciding which information is good for the community



- Who identifies community problems and concerns
- Nature of coverage of community events and community news
- Plans to make the station serve the community better and increase stronger community participation and access to the radio
- Station sustainability and challenges

In his cross-case analysis, identifying the nature of access and participation in three representative Australian radio stations, Barlow (2002) used the following areas to frame his questions:

- raison d'etre /mission;
- nature structure and style of organisation;
- nature and primary perception of workforce;
- source and nature of funding;
- broadcasting mode and reach, and programme derivation and focus;
- editorial stance and presenter/producer autonomy;
- provision of and attitude towards training;
- perception of listeners;
- perceived role re: the broadcast community and
- perceived role and image of the base facility (Barlow, 2002:149).

Close scrutiny showed that the subject areas that I had chosen were quite similar to the areas Barlow had already used to conduct his study. It was thus in many ways, a personal satisfaction for me to know that the subject areas I had chosen had already been tested and used in similar studies and that I was not going through uncharted territory. I therefore believe that the areas I had chosen were quite relevant in framing questions to explore the nature of access and participation in any radio model anywhere, representative or not.

In addition to interviewing, and with the help of a radio producer, I carried out an analysis of the daily programme schedules of each radio station. This was done to identify the following:

- Calculate the total number of programmes aired by each station per day.
- Identify the number of programmes produced by the radio stations' full-time staff, the community volunteers, the NGOs and other sponsoring agencies.
- Identify the number of programmes and airtime allocated in the programme schedule to broadcast music only programmes.

By studying the above three points, I was able to ascertain the strength of local community participation in programme production. These findings were then discussed with the radio managers to get their views on the broadcast content. As “both qualitative and quantitative methods can be employed in a case study” (Biber, 2011:256), I believe that the schedule analysis was in many ways a quantitative approach that had identified the local participation in the radio.

## **5.6 Data validation through triangulation**

Triangulation is the use of more than one method to validate data collected for an investigation of a particular study. Defining triangulation, Denzin refers to it as “comparison of data relating to the same phenomenon but deriving from different phases of the fieldwork, different points in the temporal cycles occurring in the setting, or, as in respondent validation, the accounts of different participants in the setting” (Denzin, 1978:198). There are several types of triangulations: data triangulation, investigator triangulation, theory triangulation and methodological triangulation. In data triangulation, one uses data that was collected from multiple sources; in investigator triangulation, it is the cross-checking of the same data received from a multiple sources and in methodological triangulation, it is the use of several methods to study the same data. Similarly, in doing theory triangulation, one uses more than one theory to analyse the collected data. There is also environmental triangulation which is closely related to the environmental conditions that are associated with the physical location of the place where the study is being done. For example, in environmental triangulation it could be the study of one place or similar places in different locations in

different periods of time or during different months of the same or different years (Denzin, 1978).

It should be noted that although triangulation is often used as a way to validate data or add credibility to one's findings, there are also scholars who, for example, question whether triangulation can yield the desired result. Although in a physical science study such as land surveying, triangulation could be successfully used to locate a position "from two others of known distance apart, given the angles of the triangle formed by the three points" (Clark 1951:145, in Blaikie, 1991:118), it does not mean that similar or matching identification can be made in a social science study whose evidence may not be as empirical and as precise as it is in a physical science. Hence, in social science one cannot count on the certainty that physical science gives (Massey & Walford, 1999; Blaikie, 1991).

For the data collection, I selected only the radio staff who were employed at the stations during the time of my visits. As the staff for the interviews were "purposively and carefully selected for their knowledge" (Pranee, 2009: 21), I believe their answers to be authoritative and reliable as the main source of information for my research. There is however, good reason to believe that being current staff currently employed, their opinions would be 'coloured' with their work experiences and hence would be biased and may not always reflect the truth. Therefore, it could be argued that if I had used former staff who had previously worked at the station, they would speak out more independently given the fact that they no longer had any attachment to the stations and hence would be in a better position to speak out and give a neutral view. Their opinions too could be disputed on grounds that there may have been interviewees who left the station with bitter feelings. They would have stronger opinions and hence would be biased in favour of their 'good old days' at the station.

Assuming that the old and current staff would give different view points in a discussion about the radio, I decided that I should use old and current staff as a source to 'triangulate each other's knowledge to strengthen my collected data. Hence, having obtained all the information from the current staff, I then formed a small core discussion group with whom I

could comfortably discuss my notes and the general observations I had made during the interviews. In this sense, through the use of a selected focused group that included people whose views were not necessarily the same, I was re-checking, correcting, discussing and adding relevant information to what I had collected from my interviews. As Pranee (2009) notes multiple methods can be used for a “methodological triangulation” (Pranee, 2009:26).

Therefore, my exercise was, in many ways, an exercise that was aimed at verifying my data through a multi-method approach; an approach that included on one hand ‘in-depth interviewing’ and on the other hand, a ‘focused group’. I should note here that my interviewees were quite informative and authoritative in their knowledge. Hence, I had full satisfaction that the data I had collected was quite accurate. Hence, my use of a methodological triangulation was not necessarily aimed at doubting or disregarding their credibility, the aim was simply to use it as a means to share my findings with them and get their thoughts and observations so that I gained a better perspective and good understanding of the radio station and hence, a stronger authentication of the data I had collected and the observations I had made through my interviews.

Here, I should also note that the “focus group” was not gathered for the purpose of doing a Focused Group Interview. It was rather a “group of people gathered together to discuss a focused issue of concern” (Pranee, 2009: 69) and in this case, to get their stamp of approval to my findings. By doing this, I would be able to ascertain that the information collected from the different sources was true and relevant with regard to the station in question. Furthermore, it was also an opportunity to “cross-check the consistency of perspectives and statements of certain individuals (Simons, 2009:49). The ‘focus group’ for RS and KCR consisted of two current staff, two current volunteers and two old staff. A group of about six people is regarded as the right size to “generate interest and maintain an active discussion” (Pranee, 2009:73). At SCR, however, the ‘group’ consisted of three people only. One was a full time staff, the other a volunteer and the third a former staff. Being a very small station that had very few staff, I had to settle for a group of three members.

In addition to discussing my findings with a core group of people, I cross-checked and compared notes I had gathered from the different interviewees. Sands and Roer-Strier (2006) suggest “researchers may triangulate transcriptions of different interviewees about the same topics” (Sands and Roer-Strier (2006:238-9). In this sense, my comparison was also an exercise that helped me to conduct further triangulation by identifying any similarities or differences, by way of facts, opinions and observations. Hesse-Biber and Levy (2005:651) note any similarity that one finds in one’s research helps to add “improved reliability”.

### **5.7 Limitations of the study**

There are many limitations to this study. One limitation is that the findings are limited to the three community radios in this the study. A second limitation is that I have also not identified the focused communities, towns, subject areas covered in the programmes, the types of different programmes that were produced or the variations in programme production. A third limitation is I have also not studied a detailed programme schedule showing its variations. I believe these aspects could be included in a study that spanned at least a year, covering different periods of time within the year. A longer period is needed because in different times of the year, there could be different factors affecting community participation. For example, an increase or decrease in community participation in radio or on radio programme production due to local politics, festivities etc.

A fourth limitation is that this study does not include an audience survey. It is only through an audience survey that one would be able to identify the viewpoints of the listening community on their community radio, identify the opportunities they have in participating and accessing the radio and whether in their view, the radio stations were fulfilling their daily information needs.

A fifth limitation is that the study has not utilised direct observation or participant observation as a method. If the study had included direct observation, then the study could have benefited in two ways. Firstly, by observing the staff at the radio station, I would have

known how the works were assigned within the organisation and identify who does what or what type of organisational hierarchy was there. Secondly, by observing who visits the station, I could also have identified how many people from the community visit the station on a day and who in the community visits the station and for what purpose and whether they were engaged in programme making or came to register their interest to participate in the station as a volunteer or came to give news scoops or simply engage in communication with the staff. Furthermore, I could have identified who at the radio meets the community members visiting the station and whom they want to meet and what sort of welcome the members get from the station as well as whether they were able to succeed in meeting the purpose of the visit. The data from direct observation coupled with an audience survey identifying how the community at large views the radio and how they see the position of the radio in their community would have given a strong input into identifying the relationship between the radio and the community.

Direct observation however, has the disadvantage of ‘reflexivity’, that is, the participants behaviour may not be natural as they are aware that they are under observation (Yin, 2008: 101). Although this could be minimised by observing for a longer time- long enough to make the observed participants think that the observer is one of them and hence revert to their natural way of doing things. In this study, I have not carried out any direct observations due to time and financial constraints.

For an effective observation, there is a need to study the station in different time periods. For example, if it was KCR, then the radio station needs to be observed during the religious festival period, the year-end period, the school holiday period and during each of these periods, observation would also need be done in the morning as well as in the evening as all these factors would effect community visits. As each of these factors being variable, varied patterns within a case can only be observed under different time periods (Gerring, 2007:20). Collecting this data in a similar pattern would also help to triangulate the data collected over different periods to spot the difference. These being significant angles to incorporate in a study that identifies the relationship between the radio and the community, I was unable to

incorporate them due to my time limitations as well as due to my financial constraints. These points are important to incorporate in doing a revised study as they would give a more holistic picture for the study.

# CHAPTER SIX

## The Three Cases

### 6.1 Introduction

This chapter profiles the three radio stations I have chosen for this study. As I mentioned earlier, the three radio stations are, Radio Sagharmatha (RS), Kothmale Community Radio (KCR) and Samoa Capital Radio (SCR). RS is NGO-owned in Nepal and KCR belongs to the state broadcaster, Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation (SLBC). SCR, on the other hand, is owned by the Samoan Community Trust in Wellington. They are, ownership-wise, three different types of radio stations.

In profiling the three stations, the chapter highlights on each radio station's coverage area, organisational setup, the staff, the radio volunteers, programme producers and programme production and aspects of sustainability as well as how the stations keep in touch with their communities, providing community access to the radio and giving them opportunities to participate in the radio. In the light of the information I gathered from my interviews, I have included in this chapter, a separate discussion of each radio station, specifically focusing on the prevailing nature of access and participation at each radio station, highlighting the strengths and weaknesses as I saw them in each station.

As the three stations in this study are three different and unrepresentative cases, in this chapter, I have treated them as three separate cases.

### 6.2 Radio Sagharmatha

Radio Sagharmatha is Nepal's first private radio station. The initial idea of establishing a community radio in Nepal was proposed by a UN (United Nations) agency, UNESCO during an international symposium on community broadcasting in South Asia held in Kathmandu in 1993. According to NEFEJ director and Radio Sagharmatha board member, Om Khadka, the



UNESCO proposal came at a time when “winds of political change and freedom” were sweeping across the world and they had positive effects on the Nepali political scene in the sense the country had a new constitution which guaranteed media freedom (O. Kahadka, personal communication, July 9, 2007).

Taking strength from the new constitution, an NGO, the Nepal Federation of Environmental Journalists (NEFEJ), with support from local organisations- the Himal Association and the Nepal Press Institute- together with support from the Worldview International Foundation and UNESCO, spearheaded the work to establish a community radio. The government at that time was supportive to NEFEJ and its partner organisations to begin community radio in Nepal. Unfortunately, as Khadka explained, due to a lack of parliamentary support, the government fell at that time and the subsequent government fell too, after a brief period in office. The third government was however, not supportive of the idea and hence withdrew their support for NEFEJ (O. Khadka, personal communication, July 9, 2007).

However, NEFEJ was determined to go forward even without a licence and challenged the government on constitutional grounds saying the country’s constitution gave the freedom of expression in every form to the Nepali people. Under this notion, and with support from international donors, NEFEJ began training radio staff, bought in radio equipment and set up a studio for their radio station (O. Khadka, personal communication, July 9, 2007). As a next step, NEFEJ applied for a temporary permit to begin test broadcasting. Unfortunately, “the request was met with silence” (Pringle, 2001:81). However, “acting on legal advice”, NEFEJ, unilaterally decided to begin “five days of test broadcasts” (Pringle, 2001:81), with a plan to formally open their radio station on 22 July 1997, which was the birthday of Lord Buddha, a day that was commemorated as a day of peace (Pringle, 2001). As expected, when test broadcasts began, “the government threatened strong” legal action, “reminding the station that their transmission was illegal” (Pringle, 2001:81). NEFEJ, on the other hand, warned that an anti-government media campaign would be launched if the station was challenged on legal grounds (Pringle, 2001). The Nepali government’s threats against RS, a small community radio station, also received international publicity and as a result, exerted

enough pressure for the government to finally give in (Pringle, 2001). Describing the events that led to the birth of Radio Sagharmatha as Nepal's first community radio, NEFEJ director O. Khadka said that it was “ a hard fought struggle to assert the people's constitutional right as well as a battle to bring an end to the government's monopoly over the air waves” (personal communication, June 23, 2007).

### **6.2.1 Location and coverage area**

The station began broadcasting in 1997 with a 100W transmitter donated by UNESCO and was initially broadcast to Kathmandu Valley which includes the districts of Pakundol, Lalitpur and Baktapur. The population in these areas is fairly homogeneous and they all speak Nepali language. Besides the Kathmandu Valley, the radio signals reach its neighbouring districts of Kavrepalanchok, Nuwakot, Dhading and Makwanpur (M. Bista, Radio Sagharmatha manager, personal communication, 9 July, 2007).

### **6.2.2 The administrative setup**

Radio Sagharmatha is housed in a small two-storey building. The front façade of the building is designed like an old fashioned radio with the knobs for volume, treble, bass and the tuning wheel well placed on the wall. From the street, the station building looks like a huge radio mounted on a wall.

According to the manager, RS has full autonomy over the day-to-day operations. NEFEJ has no direct influence in managing the station and only gives advice on broad policy matters. The station manager is the head of the station and is appointed by the radio board which comprises of four members from the NEFEJ Board, (the NEFEJ President, its Executive Director, General Secretary as well as its Treasurer) and the station manager as the fifth member. The station manager acts as board secretary. The radio board does not have any members representing Kathmandu City which is the station's general listening community. The board meets whenever there is a need but as a rule meets at least once a month and mostly this is to discuss and approve the plans that have been proposed by the radio. The board discusses mainly administrative, financial and policy matters. It also often discusses

on-going radio programmes, giving feedback to the manager. The board does not get directly involved in programme making but does suggest programme ideas (M. Bista, personal communication, July 9, 2007).

At present, there are 35 full-time staff (19 men and 16 women), eight producers, six technicians and five reporters. The remaining staff work in the radio's marketing and administration side. The staff work in three shifts. The morning shift is from 4 am to 12 pm. The afternoon shift is from 12 pm to 7 pm. The night shift is from 3pm to 11pm. Staff matters are dealt with by a separate sub-committee formed by the radio board (M. Bista, personal communication, 9 July, 2007).

### **6.2.3 The staff and the radio**

The radio station employs eight full-time producers who are responsible for producing all the programmes that are broadcast by the radio. Most of the radio's current full-time staff had worked before as volunteers.

The main head of the programme department and all the producers is the programme director. His main roles are monitoring programmes, helping producers in programme making and designing and sharing programme ideas. All the new programmes are initially designed by him and later given to the producers for further development. According to the programme director, Ghamaraj Luitel, it is his responsibility to organise weekly producers' meetings. During these meetings, he proposes his programme ideas and discusses issues and themes as well as chooses producers for making the proposed programmes (G. Luitel, personal communication, July 11, 2007).

In addition to the weekly meeting held by the programme director, every fortnight, the radio manager holds a general meeting where the senior radio staff discuss issues on management, finance, programme making, programme evaluation and current events. During the meetings, producers table their works and identify any difficulties they face in making programmes (M. Bista, personal communication, July 9, 2007). The work at the station is thus very much

formal, organised and well planned.

#### **6.2.4 The radio volunteers**

In the early days, most of the RS programmes were produced and presented by community volunteers who also assisted on the technical and administrative sides. This was a time when community radio and private broadcasting in the country was a novelty and hence volunteer interest was at its 'height'. According to the programme director, as time passed, that novelty was lost, consequently decreasing the roll of volunteers. It was the falling roll and the unavailability of sufficient volunteers to make programmes to fill airtime that prompted the radio to find full-time paid staff to make programmes instead of depending more on community volunteers. However, RS, being a community radio, still has a window open for volunteer recruitment.

From my interviews with the programme director, it was evident that the station now does not encourage volunteer participation in programme production. According to him, earlier experience showed that often volunteers behaved in an ad-hoc manner, appearing at their own convenient times. This was a worry as the stations had to ensure they had a stable supply of programmes and people to fill the airtime. Hence, instead of depending more on an 'unreliable' workforce, RS opted to recruit full-time paid staff who could be made accountable for their work (G. Luitel, personal communication, 11 July, 2007).

At the time of my interviews, the radio had 28 members listed as its volunteer force. Out of them, only seven volunteers were regularly contributing to make programmes. During my stay in Kathmandu, I met all seven regular volunteers. They were well-known professionals who were journalists, historians, lawyers and doctors. During my meetings with them, I was told that they were all invited by the programme director to do programmes that were related to their profession or to a subject that they had an interest in (G. Luitel, personal communication, June 26-28, 2007).

Out of the 28 volunteers, eight volunteers worked as programme presenters for the morning and afternoon shows. These volunteers did not do any production work. During my interviews with them, I learnt that most of them joined RS because they were interested in gaining experience in presenting radio shows and would remain at the station until they found a permanent job elsewhere. They saw RS as an ideal place in the sense that it provided a training ground, a place to do practicals and get work experience at no cost while they waited for their 'dream job' (G. Luitel, personal communication, June 26-28, 2007). This showed that more than doing community work, the volunteer mentality was finding a stable or permanent job that gave them an income.

Among the RS volunteer force, there were eight volunteers who were based in different rural regions of Nepal. They were however, full-time employees who worked for other news media organisations in different parts of the country. As they were based in places that were too far away to receive Sagharmatha Radio signals, geographically, RS's home community in Kathmandu Valley had no 'proximity connection' with them. I could not meet any of them as none were in Kathmandu during my stay. In addition to these eight, I also had no opportunity to meet five more RS volunteers. Although they were listed as volunteers, they did not visit the station during the time I was there and hence, I was unable to contact them.

What was significant about the RS volunteers was the absence of ordinary community members. According to the programme director, as a rule, the radio did not encourage ordinary community members to come and produce or present programmes. The radio programme director was of the view that there was no need to open the radio station for the ordinary community members to make radio programmes unless they could add 'value' to the community (G. Luitel, personal communication, July 11, 2007). Hence, for example, it was the 'stature' of the volunteers as renowned professionals in the community that prompted the radio management to bring on the 'elite' volunteers to make programmes. This meant the doors of the station was only open to the elite in the community with whom the manager had a good relationship.

### **6.2.5 The role of the radio**

As a community radio, it saw its main role as serving the communities' information needs. Hence, every effort was aimed at producing programmes that made the community feel that the radio was working for the improvement of the community. According to the RS programme director, RS always ensured that it was there for the people and for the community. The main task was giving a voice to the community and work on their behalf and for their improvement. The aim was to ensure everyone, especially those in the government, listened to the radio and recognised the needs of the different members in the community (G. Luitel, personal communication, 11 July 2007).

The programme director also highlighted that developing the general knowledge of the community was another main role of the radio. As Nepal had a large illiterate community and radio being an oral medium, he saw the ideal means to engage with them, disseminating basic awareness messages through the radio. The station also gave a special emphasis to develop the skills and talents of the community. This role was fulfilled by making programmes that included role-models in the community giving advice on how to be successful. The purpose was to build self-confidence, capacity and drive among the community members for building a productive life (G. Luitel, personal communication, July 11, 2007).

RS also sees it as a bridge that connects the rural communities with the capital city. In this regard, the radio manager remarked:

We always ensure that the radio is there for the people and for the community. Our main task is to get answers for the community on behalf of the community so that the community is happy and satisfied with our work. Being a radio station based in Kathmandu, the seat of the country's government, the radio sees that an important role is to make the radio a channel that aired the voices of the disabled, women, the ethnic minorities, the factory workers, the poor and the marginalised. The idea is to ensure everyone, especially those in the government listen to the radio and recognise the plight of the marginalised and understand their views (M. Bista, personal communication, July 9, 2007).

Being the very first community radio in Nepal, Radio Sagharmatha was often described as the “mother” of all community radios in Nepal. Prath Prateek Bhandary, a NEFEJ director who was also a Radio Board member and is now a trainer for Community radio Support Centre said that being the ‘mother’ radio, it had to showcase itself as the best model for other community radio station to follow. As the pioneer community radio station, the radio had also added a responsibility to give training in community broadcasting to interested parties in Nepal. In this regard, the radio hosts seminars and on-site free training workshops in different parts of the country (P. P Bhandary, personal communication, July 9, 2007).

#### **6.2.6 Keeping in touch with the community**

A senior producer at the station told me that the radio management encouraged all the producers to always listen to the community and do ‘social networking’ by conducting road conversations and identifying community concerns and their pressing problems. According to him, this was the main channel through which the producers received information on community problems as well as their interests (S. Adhikari, personal communication, July 6, 2007). As local community volunteers could not make their own radio programmes, this was also the main route through which they could access RS and present their views on air.

Each day the station was open to the public for one hour and during this time, the community members could walk in, meet the staff and discuss and share their interests. Visitors were also offered the opportunity to view the station’s equipment. The producer of weekly programme, Sagharmatha Sangheet, which basically hunts community talent, said during the open hour he also meets and tests the talents of locals. According to the producer Kiran Pokhrel, those who can sing are encouraged to participate in his programme which gives opportunity for the community members to come to the studio and sing so that they get known in the community. In addition to singing, he also identifies participants who are good at debating, giving speeches and writing poetry, songs and stories. Hence, through this programme, he said RS was able to help them build a career and at the same time strengthen the radio’s warm relationship with the community (K. Pokhrel, personal communication, June 24, 2007).

From time to time RS makes general public announcements requesting people from all walks of life to phone the radio station on specific matters of public concern and give their opinions. During the time I was in Nepal, the country was gearing up for its parliamentary elections. There was also much public interest about the fate of the King once the country became a republic. During this period, the station kept its phone line open to collect public feedback. Although this was great material for any participatory programme, the station never got to broadcast it. Urbashi Basnyat, one of the people who helped in the CD production said, she simply recorded them on CDs, labelled them as “public feedback on issues of national concern” and dispatched them to the relevant government authorities (U. Basnyat, personal communication, July 6, 2007).

One of the most important groups of people the station keeps in touch with is those living on the streets of Kathmandu. Like many in the developing countries, Kathmandu is no stranger to several types of street-dwellers who make the road their permanent home. They include the very poor, the disabled, the homeless and those who search the rubbish dumps on the street corners. On the street, there are also vendors, those operating footpath businesses such as boot polishing and repairing handbags. These are the people who use the streets as their source of income. Everyday, RS broadcasts a 15-minute programme that interviews people on the streets focusing on their lifestyle, their concerns, their hopes and their aspirations for a better future. In these programmes, the station also plays songs they requested. The only drawback of this programme was, according to Rishi Acharya, one of its producers, that it lasted only 15-minutes per day. Although this was a rich source for making real participatory programmes and keeping in touch with the very grassroots of the community, RS was unable to expand this time-slot due to programmes that were produced or sponsored by the NGOs and other similar organisations wanting their programmes to be fitted in during the evening hours (R. Acharya, personal communication, June 30, 2007).

As an attempt to engage the youth and those who have access to the Internet, the station has developed its own website. According to the manager, many listeners who are now living overseas listen to the radio podcasts on the website to keep in touch with what is happening



in the country and in their community. The manager told me that the station received many requests from Nepali expatriates wanting to listen to the radio live on the Internet. The radio had not yet made live streaming of its broadcasts on the Internet during the time I visited the station. However, now the station could be heard on the Internet. As Internet use was gaining popularity in Kathmandu, the manager viewed the Internet as the future road to keep in touch with not only the expatriates but also the next generation of Nepal youth who would most likely be accessing the radio from a computer instead of using a radio receiver. The radio manager said he already had a plan to develop its current website so that RS could engage the Nepali expatriates and those at home in a single forum (M. Bista, personal communication, July 9, 2007).

RS has never done a survey to find out listener numbers or get listener feedback. However, the station receives hundreds of letters every week and this was seen as an indication that the radio station was popular among the locals. Almost all the letters were song requests. According to the radio manager, “unlike requesting for a song, writing a letter especially about a programme was not easy, so people don’t write letters to discuss issues”. However, when he or the radio staff visit different parts of the city neighbourhoods, they discuss radio programmes and get community feedback. This was how the station identified and connected the programmes to the needs of the community (M. Bista, personal communication, July 9, 2007).

According to the radio manager, RS enjoyed much support in the local community. This was most strongly evident in 2006 when the government shut down RS saying it was supporting terrorism. When the local community heard the news, they organised a huge demonstration against the closure. According to the radio manager, until he saw the public support on the street, he never thought the public had such huge admiration for the work they did. Describing the demonstration the manager remarked:

The demonstration made us feel very proud as it made us realise we have really been doing a very good public service to the people. Until we saw the public demonstration on our behalf, we never thought the public had that huge admiration for our work. The shut

down and the public reaction against the shut down were in fact the best moment in the history of the radio (M. Bista, personal communication, July 9, 2007).

### **6.2.7 Programme production**

RS programmes can be divided into two “streams”. In the first stream are programmes that cover areas such as health, education, environment, women, poverty alleviation, law and legal issues. According to the programme director, these programmes give the station its character and hence, cannot be changed. Most of the programmes in this stream are produced and/ or sponsored by NGOs and other national and international agencies. Often the NGO-supported programmes are produced outside and the station receives them as a finished product. However, some NGOs produce their programmes at RS studios, using RS technical assistance (G. Luitel, personal communication, July 10, 2007).

The programmes that are produced by the local ‘elite’ volunteers also belong to the same stream of programmes I have discussed above. The ‘elite’ volunteers usually present radio commentaries that cover areas such as ‘world current affairs’ and ‘national politics, ‘world geography, environment’ and ‘health science’, ‘political and legal reforms’. According to Dr. D. P Bhandary, a nationally famous lawyer, his focus in producing the programmes was to present a product that was rich in knowledge and the information used could be local, regional or international. This being the case, rather than focusing the programmes on a specific local community, his programmes were aimed at giving a rich listening experience to anyone who was listening to the radio (Dr. D.P Bhandary, personal communication, July 7, 2007). Another ‘elite’ volunteer was Bhairab Risal, an 80-year-old writer who was also a well-known journalist throughout the country. During my meeting with him, he told me that the radio programme director had requested that he produce a programme of his choice that was focused on how life was in the ‘old days’ (B. Risal, personal communication, July 7, 2007).

Music is the second stream which is mainly songs and music. RS does not broadcast popular music. It mostly broadcasts traditional and folk music of different communities. The person

who heads the radio station's library Rami Bhattarai told me that the RS archive was one of the best sources of traditional and folk music in the country. According to him, many in the community tune in to RS, simply to listen to the old traditional music, something that was not available on other channels (R. Bhattarai, personal communication, 30 June, 2007).

In programme production, RS adheres to its published radio programme schedule. The schedule is followed strictly. The general programme schedule is kept unchanged for six months. At the end of the six months, a new programme schedule is made and basically includes the same broad topics (G. Luitel, personal communication, July 11, 2007).

All the programmes including the programmes that are presented by the 'elite' community volunteers are produced by the radio's full-time paid producers. The radio currently employs eight full-time producers who are trained to do any task involved in making programmes. Once a programme was finalised and ready for broadcasting, the programme producer had to give a review of the programme to both the manager and the programme director, before it could be aired. According to the programme director, during the review, he never listened to the programme. He would listen to a programme fully only if there was a complaint from a listener. According to him, the public could not question the producers. It was the programme director who was responsible for the public and he would answer to listeners. By doing this, the producers could be kept at ease, doing their work at their own pace and away from public pressure (G. Luitel, personal communication, July 11, 2007).

### **6.2.8 Providing local news**

There are a total of five full-time news reporters based at the station who work under the programme director who acts as the chief editor. Their job is mostly writing and compiling news that is received as faxes from different agencies. According to the programme director, being a small station that does not have much money to spend, sending reporters out on the field is a huge expense; therefore, reporters do not go out on the field to gather news unless the radio receives a scoop from an authoritative source in the community (G. Luitel, personal communication, July 11, 2007).

Most of the news is received from national sources such as Radio Nepal, Nepal Television or from media releases from national agencies. In addition, the station receives news from reporters who are employed by other media organisations such as newspapers, and magazines. They are based in different regions of the country to cover news of national interest happening in different parts of the country. According to the programme director, the station receives from these news reporters, those news items that are rejected by their organisations on grounds of poor news-worthiness, nationally. As such items have not been used by any other media, for the RS programme director, this is an advantage in the sense that they are original (G. Luitel, personal communication, July 11, 2007). However, in my opinion, such news items also pose a disadvantage. For example, the received news could be from any geographic area of the country and may have no local interest at all.

### **6.2.9 Financial sustainability**

In the early days, the station used to receive generous support from UNESCO and other international donor agencies. At that time, the radio had the support of many volunteers who also helped in doing the different work, especially in programme making. However, when foreign funding was reduced, the radio struggled to find the money to keep the station on air and this was a challenge. According to a NEFEJ director, members of NEFEJ had to pay the radio bills out of their own pockets and this was not practical on a continuing basis. This also meant the station was running at a loss and was creating a huge debt. The director said that many times they had thought of closing down the station. However, by then the station was quite popular among the locals who were also eager to have an alternative voice to the state broadcaster. For these reasons it could not be closed on grounds that the station had no money to keep running it (O. Khadka, personal communication, July 9, 2007).

As a cost-cutting measure, volunteer numbers were reduced in favour of a few full-time paid staff and with this move, the radio manager said quite a bit of money was saved on production costs and travel. Several programmes that were produced by the station's own budget were axed and the programme slots were sold to NGOs to make their own programmes. The station also redesigned the programme format so that ten minutes of

advertising time could be accommodated into each hour. Programmes were also redesigned to attract parties who would be willing to sponsor programmes (G. Luitel, personal communication, July 11, 2007).

Today, Radio Sagharmatha receives most of its revenue through advertisement, sponsored programmes, donations and sale of airtime to NGOs wishing to produce and air their own programmes. Although the station airs advertisements, it accepts only those advertisements that benefit the local community. Hence, advertisements that promote community work, community organisations, community services and cultural events are accepted while advertisements that promote fast food or soft drinks and cigarette smoking are not allowed. According to the radio manager, running a non-profit community radio does not mean doing community broadcasting at a financial loss. It means doing it in a sustainable way and without having to spend from one's own pocket (G. Luitel, personal communication, July 11, 2007).

#### **6.2.10 Community access and participation at Radio Sagharmatha-a discussion**

This discussion focuses on some of the policy decisions of RS that I see as factors affecting community access and participation in the radio. This discussion is based on the observations that I made from my interviews with the radio staff.

An important observation I made from my discussion with the senior staff was that the station had no policy aimed at increasing local community participation in the radio. There was no opportunity for individual community members to come on their own initiative and do programmes. For example, individuals in the local community could not buy programme slots or airtime to produce or present their own programmes. Local community members could only get airtime if the radio management provided the opportunity and this was done in a selective manner. As I discussed before in this chapter, only 'elite' local volunteers were given that opportunity.

Volunteer recruitment was also a selective process and therefore not open to the general

community. Explaining the criteria for volunteer recruitment, the radio manager said:

We just don't take in anyone who comes here telling us that they would like to be volunteers. We have a rigid process to follow. We check whether they are serious, committed, whether they had any previous experience or training before. We also study their background and cross check the information we gather with others who may know the person (M. Bista, personal communication, July 9, 2007).

During my interview with the manager, I found out that the station, being owned by a private NGO, did not have any plans to widen its board to include local community members or other local organisations. Similarly, the station does not invite other community organisations to participate and have open discussions with the radio staff to on identify areas for community focused programmes (M. Bista, personal communication, July 9, 2007). As I mentioned earlier, all the programme-making discussions, such as programme topics and identifying who would be assigned to do the programmes, are finalised by the programme director at the weekly producers' meeting. This means, the local community members or organisations do not have a direct or active role to play in making or planning programmes.

For the Radio officials, community access and participation in the radio does not necessarily mean that the local community members should organise themselves individually or in groups and come to the station to produce programmes. According to the programme director, community members get access to the radio only through the producers who interview them for programmes and this means giving a support role to those producers who meet them for interviewing (G. Luitel, personal communication, July 11, 2007).

The programme director also noted that although the local community did not participate in programme planning, there were other opportunities for them to comment on the aired programmes. For example, at the end of some selected programmes, RS occasionally announces that its phone lines are open to collect community feedback. Phone lines are kept open for about half an hour and suggestions are noted and if practical the programmes accommodate any useful suggestions. According to him, when lines were kept open, the

station would get about 15-20 calls per programme per half an hour (G. Luitel, personal communication, July 11, 2007).

The producers at the station also did not see the importance of local community participation in programme making. For example, according to three of the producers I interviewed, who were residents of the community and who were in constant touch with the local community, said they were already aware of the community issues. They make radio programmes with a view to present the community issues in the right perspective (Interview). The same three producers also told me that if an issue was raised by the radio in one of its programmes, it also meant the radio was raising the issue on behalf of the community and hence, the radio was their representative and their voice as well. The programme director added that as his producers were local people living in the local community, when they make programmes it was like the community members making programmes (G. Luitel, personal communication, July 11, 2007). However, I believe that by keeping everything within the radio staff, the station was becoming protectionist and by not providing diverse ways through which the radio station could open itself to share its activities with the local community, the station was also effectively, isolating its own local community and denying them access- the very people whose interests RS had to embrace and look after if it was portraying itself as a radio of the community, for the community and as a radio by the local community.

The station also does not have an immediate policy to begin talk-back programmes. During my meeting with the programme director, I suggested talk-back was the most convenient way for any community radio to maintain a strong community connection as it opened up more airtime for listeners to participate in discussion programmes. As he indicated to me earlier, local phone calls were expensive and he did not encourage locals phoning the station (G. Luitel, personal communication, July 11, 2007). I suggested that in the absence of talk-back shows, the station could invite about 20 selected community members representing different interests for a live discussion on the radio on local issues. He said he was supportive of the idea but, the current premises had no space for such a gathering and therefore, it could be done once the new radio building was in place, adding bigger studios and conference

space (G. Luitel, personal communication, July 11, 2007). However, when I visited the station in 2007, only the foundation stone of the building had been laid, and as the construction work was ongoing even in 2009, I believe that listeners will have to wait a few more years before they can experience live community discussion on their radio.

I should also note here that from the programmes that I listened to over the weeks, I was able to identify several discussion programmes that were produced by NGOs on a variety of subjects such as education, environment, health, agriculture, women, youth and legal issues. Most of the programmes were designed as round-table discussion programmes that were limited to one or two NGO experts who held discussions and were coordinated by a radio producer/interviewer. These programmes were also not open for public participation even through the phone line. This meant general community participation was effectively cut off from NGO-led and produced programmes.

It is however, worth noting that listeners do participate in entertainment programmes requesting songs or giving answers to questions posed by the presenters, sometimes listeners participate by singing a song or answering a quiz. Many from Kathmandu City call the radio for song requests and to participate in quizzes. This means the local community are making use of phones to participate in the radio in a limited way. It also meant if discussion programmes were made open for public comments, many in the community who could afford phone calls would take the opportunity to participate in them as well.

#### ***6.2.10.1 Role of NGOs***

From the interviews I had with the radio management, I felt that one reason for the limitation of local community access to the radio programmes was due to the increase in NGO productions. However, as NGO support was essential to keep the station running sustainably, the station had little choice other than keep a strong partnership with NGOs.

Many NGOs often produce programmes that could also be used for rebroadcasting elsewhere in the country. It is often said that NGOs working in different countries provide more



funding to radio stations that could broadcast NGO produced-programmes to geographically larger areas (Malik, 2007). This being the case, in order to get maximum benefit from NGO productions, RS had also formed a network with smaller stations around the country so that the same NGO programmes could be used for rebroadcasting by different radios stations in different parts of the country. By doing this, the station was able to widen its reach to different geographic regions of the country and gain more NGO funding. However, the downside of this action was that it portrayed RS as an NGO vehicle that carried the voices of distant communities in regional Nepal and that it could not bring in a local focus.

The radio manager's view was however, different. According to him, issues in Nepal were common to all the communities and hence what was important and relevant to one place was also equally relevant to other communities. Everywhere in Nepal, people faced hardships such as no good schooling, health services, no good transport and different communities also needed knowledge about government departments and what they did and which rules affected them and how. So, a programme that was made in one place would be good for re-broadcast by another station as the people in that area would benefit too (M. Bista, personal communication, July 9, 2007).

The manager also said that being a community radio station whose objective was giving good information to the public, there was not much a difference between an NGO and a community radio as both worked for the good of the public. Like the radio, the NGOs were geared up to develop the country and helping them too would also be a help to the communities. Being a public service radio, the station saw it had a responsibility to make people aware of social issues and as the station lacked resources and finances, getting help from NGOs who were also there to achieve similar objectives, joining hands with them benefitted both sides.

Therefore, partnering with NGOs was a convenient and cost-effective way to help the community get informative and awareness-creating programmes (M. Bista, personal communication, 9 July, 2007). However, I believe that by giving priority to NGOs to access

the airwaves at the expense of its own local community, the radio could not promote local participation or enhance localism within its own community. By becoming an NGO vehicle, the radio was weakening local connection which was what the community radios were supposed to strengthen and promote. Hence, there was the fear of 'NGO-isation' of community radio in favour of simply fulfilling the NGO objectives (Malik, 2007).

#### ***6.2.10.2 Increasing coverage***

Community access and participation has also been hindered by the increase of the radio station's coverage area. At the moment, RS covers the whole of Kathmandu Valley which is comprised of about 2.5 million people (Pant and Dongol, 2009). RS, which began operating with a 100W transmitter, was transmitting on a 500W transmitter in 2007. The station now uses a 1000W transmitter. This meant the station was beamed to an area wider than Kathmandu Valley, making RS more like a regional station than a community radio. A powerful transmission was needed, according to the RS manager, to give better signal to their current coverage area (M. Bista, personal communication, July 9, 2007). However, commenting on the expanded coverage area, a UN media consultant on community radio based in New Delhi told me that the increase in transmission was, rather than giving an effective signal to its current communities, a signal given to ensure the station was taking into account the needs of the political and business interests of those who backed the station. According to her, the programme content of some community radio stations in Nepal already showed this trend. She also said it was a pity to see the community radio stations adopting more commercial approaches and becoming politically factionalised and forgetting their community developmental roles. However, given the new democratic changes taking place in Nepal and due to the emerging new businesses and politicians and their interest in accessing the airwaves, this would probably be the reality for the moment (S. Nair, personal communication, June 14, 2007).

A 2007 UNESCO study on community radio in Nepal also noted that in Nepal "the issue of 'elite capture' raises the question of community radio's role in social change and development and whether it tends to reinforce inequities and empower the already

empowered. Domination by elite groups is especially problematic since community radio is generally understood to have an explicit mandate to empower and enable marginalised groups, a principle which was repeated frequently in interviews”(Pringle and Subba, 2007:15).

### **6.3 Kothmale Community Radio**

Kothmale Community Radio (KCR) which broadcasts on 98.4 MHz is one of the five community radio stations in Sri Lanka. The station is owned by Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation (SLBC) which is also the licence holder.

The station was established in 1989 with the assistance from UNESCO and DANIDA as part of the Mahaweli Community Radio project. The radio station which served the upper Kothmale region, was one of the stations established to serve the communities living in the Kothmale area and its surrounds. The villages are inhabited mostly by communities which had been relocated when the Sri Lankan government built a dam on the site of their original villages. When the dam was built it provided the main source of water for domestic use as well as for generating electricity to central Sri Lanka, but it also submerged their villages, dislocating them for ever from their homes. The villagers, having lost their homes as well as the resting grounds of their ancestors, were emotionally and socially isolated. This isolation was further aggravated by having relocated to a new settlement. The main purpose of the KCR was therefore, to help minimise their isolation, help them get to know each other and integrate them to their new settlement as a new community (S. Wijesinghe, personal communication, August 6, 2007).

#### **6.3.1 Location and coverage area**

The KCR was initially located in the mountain top village of Dhoragalle, in an old grand bungalow that was previously used by the Head who controlled the region’s main tea estate. The bungalow was a central location in the sense that the village community lived around the bungalow. The station was moved to its current location, a hill top in Mawathura in 1999. In

addition to relocating the station, SLBC had installed a 300-Watt powerful transmitter which enabled broadcasts to reach all the major urban centres in the country's central hills. The station was now clearly heard by over 400,000 people living in the region's main urban centres-Gampola, Hatton and Nalampitiya and the 65 small villages located in the Kothmale area. The signal of Kothmale can also be heard in some outlying suburbs of Kandy which is the central region's capital city (S.Wijesinghe, personal communication, August 6, 2007).

In the early days, the station broadcast just one hour of airtime weekly. In 1992, the station increased its weekly broadcasting time to a daily show of three hours. The station now broadcasts daily and has a morning and an evening session with a total of nine hours of daily programming. The morning session begins at 5.30 am and continues until 10am. Transmission then resumes at 4.30 and continues until 8 pm (S.Wijesinghe, personal communication, August 6, 2007).

### **6.3.2 The administrative set up**

During my visit to KCR, I found the station had 19 full-time paid staff. This included eight permanent administrative staff and eleven relief announcers (six women and five men). The administrative staff included the manager, the financial controller, three labourers, one operating assistant, one clerk and one technical assistant.

The radio manager was appointed by SLBC and he directly reported to SLBC. The manager oversaw administrative works such as hiring staff and volunteers, staff promotion, wage increase, procurement, preparing annual budgetd and general maintenance and repair work. In addition, the manager kept an eye on program production and news gathering. According to the manager, however, he had no authority over the income the radio received. The station's income and accounts were maintained by a financial controller appointed by SLBC and like the manager, the accountant reported directly to SLBC (S.Wijesinghe, personal communication, August 6, 2007).

The SLBC provided electricity and paid salaries for the full-time staff. The station's phone bills and maintenance costs were also paid by SLBC. SLBC also maintained the transmitters and transmitting station. For transportation purposes, SLBC provided a mini-van (S.Wijesinghe, personal communication, August 6, 2007).

### **6.3.3 The staff and the radio**

In the early days, the station had no full-time staff except the radio manager. The rest were all community volunteers who helped in programme production, presenting as well as looking after the place. According to the station manager, it was a time when broadcasting in the area, especially through a small community-based radio, was a novelty and hence, there were a lot of local community members who were eager to get involved in the radio in some capacity (S.Wijesinghe, personal communication, August 6, 2007).

At Kothmale Radio, the full-time paid producers are known as Relief Announcers. Relief Announcers research for programmes, produce and edit and eventually present them. Relief Announcers are usually chosen from the volunteers who work at the station. Usually, volunteers are elevated to Relief Announcers after three years' service. If a volunteer was exceptionally skilled and experienced, there was always the chance that he would eventually become a Relief Announcer (S.Wijesinghe, personal communication, August 6, 2007).

Most of the producers at the station were women and belonged to the Sinhalese community, the country's majority ethnic group. Three women producers told me they were working at the station because they preferred to work closer to home than travel far by bus (personal communication, August 8, 2008). Another woman producer said she preferred KCR because working hours at the station were short and this suited her life as she had to care for the family and could not afford to work longer hours (personal communication, August 8, 2007). Among the women producers, I also met one who said her reason for working at KCR was to keep in touch with radio work until she found a job, probably at a commercial station. She said producers were paid 50 Rupees (about 0.60 New Zealand cents) per hour and they could do a maximum of 150 hours per month which earned about 90 New Zealand Dollars. This

was far less than what a labourer would earn for a day's work. She said it was very sad to see SLBC not recognising their work (personal communication, August 12, 2007). She also said that lack of money was a reality they all had to face but none would want to talk about it openly or express their dissatisfaction over the pay. This was she said one of the main reasons for the lack of motivation among the full-time producers to do extra work or make more programmes (personal communication, August 12, 2007).

A male producer remarked that they also get limited amounts of overtime each month and this meant that they could not claim money for any extra time they had worked. According to the producer, given the nature of programme making, they could not stop work until the job was completed. Hence, as there was no reason to keep over-working for jobs that were not paid, they tried to do simpler programmes that took less time to finish (personal communication, August 7, 2007). His view was that at KCR, staff were willing to do more work only if they received a good pay. However, although pay mattered, they saw their work as a service to the community rather than just doing a radio job (personal communication, August 7, 2007).

Unlike what I heard from the producers, the station manager had very high regard for his paid staff. According to him, each one of them was gifted, creative, possessed exceptional capabilities and did multi-functional jobs. He acknowledged that the pay was small compared to the work they did but said they were just like him, employees of SLBC and it was for their employer to consider wage decisions. However, he said, in community radio, serving the community mattered more than receiving pay (S. Wijesinghe, personal communication, August 10, 2007). A senior producer working at the station agreed with the manager's viewpoint but added that in this day and age, money also mattered and it was not easy working especially at a radio station producing programmes that took too long and received little pay. He also said that community service was a responsibility of everyone in the community and not just a matter for the radio staff. According to him, the current manager joined the station in the very early days of the radio and had played a major role in getting full-time jobs for all the current staff. Hence, he was looked at as a father figure by

everyone at the radio station. Given his long-standing service to KCR, his words were never challenged; and as a show of respect, many producers simply worked without complaint. As one of the first employees of KCR, the manager also exerted much personal weight in deciding what changes should be brought to programmes, what should be aired or who should be recruited (personal communication, August 10, 2007).

#### **6.3.4 The radio volunteers**

As the radio manager had mentioned to me, in the early days, all the programmes were produced and presented by community volunteers. It was also a time when the local community radio was the only alternative voice on the air other than the government station. Hence, broadcasting being a novelty, the radio had the service of many volunteers who wanted to be a part of it. However, as time passed, the interest in the radio slowly dissipated and working at the radio became regular. The workload too was getting bigger and challenging, needing much time on the road, interviewing. Hence, the volunteer interest to work at the radio gradually faded. Hence, to overcome the challenges, SLBC created full-time jobs and employed all the regular volunteers who were recommended by the KCR manager (S.Wijesinghe, personal communication, August 6, 2007).

At the time of my visit, the station had fourteen volunteers. During my interviews, I learnt that out of those, five had joined the radio station because the manager had invited them. They included a government agricultural officer, a school principal, a temple monk, a lawyer and a shop owner. They joined the radio station at the invitation of the radio manager and it was agreed that they contribute to programmes that related to their field of work (personal communication, August 12, 2007). Among them, for example, the school principal was given the task of producing short programmes on topics such as history, proverbs and wise sayings (personal communication, August 12, 2007). The Buddhist monk provided daily religious hymns (personal communication, August 12, 2007) while the government agricultural officer produced a short programme on tree planting (personal communication, August 12, 2007). One of them browsed the Internet and provided information collected from different websites (personal communication, August 12, 2007). The shop-owner was

given the opportunity to produce a programme because he had a huge collection of very old songs that could not be heard anywhere else. Hence, the arrangement was that he should front up as a programme producer to broadcast his song collection.

Out the five 'elite' volunteers, two of them, the school principal and the agricultural officer had their programmes featured daily. In fact, both of them produced 28 programmes during the two-week period that I monitored and recorded the radio programmes. Each of their programmes was repeated once taking their total to 56 for the two weeks. This meant, for the two-week period I monitored, both of them shared 16.87 % of the station's total programmes. From my interviews with them, I also found that in their programmes, they did not bring in any local perspectives or provide any opportunity for the local community members to participate in their programmes. They simply narrated information that was compiled from different publications, mostly science, language and history books (G. V. Sooriya and V. Perera, personal communication, August 12, 2007).

According to the radio manager, their interest to participate in the radio and to give their valuable time showed that the radio was truly a community radio station despite it being owned by the government (S. Wijesinghe, personal communication, August 12, 2007). However, I found out that given their professions, and status in the community, they were more or less like 'elites' in the community who were assigned to do programmes rather than ordinary members in the community using radio on their own initiative.

In addition to the invited 'elite' volunteers, there were nine IT trainees, who were at the government-funded IT centre which was housed in the radio station's media centre. The IT students worked for the radio at no cost. According to the media centre coordinator, Koasala Keerthirathne, the arrangement was, if they worked free for the radio station, they would be rewarded by getting free access to computers and the Internet (K. Keerthirathne, personal communication, August 13, 2007). Their motivation to work as volunteers was thus connected to free training and open access to IT equipments at the centre at no cost. According to the media centre coordinator, once the students had completed the IT course,



the participants would still get the option to stay with the radio station and continue receiving free access to the Internet and to the computers; again, on condition they continued their free volunteer work for the KCR (K. Keerthirathne, personal communication, August 13, 2007).

Although the station pays no money, the volunteers do get opportunities to earn some money. For example, often volunteers help commercial companies to produce radio commercials or help to produce sponsored programmes. Often the companies involved in these productions pay a good remuneration to the volunteers for these works. The amount paid is entirely a decision of the sponsor as the volunteers simply work free for the radio and the station does not negotiate with the sponsors to give the volunteers any remuneration for their work. One IT volunteer told me he received more money doing radio work than the radio's full-time paid staff received. This was according to him, a reason that created some sensitivity between the volunteers and some of the full-time staff. The reason was that the full-time paid staff received a small wage and limited overtime and hence, had no huge motivation to do more work. The volunteers, on the other hand, were motivated to do extra hours of work because they received free Internet and free computer time which they used to produce radio commercials and graphic designs for local companies. This meant that their products fetched an income that was better than the salaries of the full-time staff (personal communication, August 13, 2007).

### **6.3.5 The role of the radio**

KCR's main role was serving the communities by addressing community issues. This being the case, its most important function was to produce community-focused programmes, giving community news and information and maintaining a good rapport with its community. The station aimed to make the community aware that it works for the benefit of the community and that through the radio, the community voices are heard by the concerned government officials so that they are aware of the community concerns (S. Wijesinghe, personal communication, August 6, 2007).

According to one of the most senior producers, in the earlier days, the radio's role was to

help forge a sense of community among the newly settled villagers. He was of the view that this role had been achieved and therefore, he believed that now there was a new role- that of promoting peace and harmony among the ethnic communities. According to him, unlike the old days when KCR staff were almost all, Singhalese, now there was a more multi-ethnic balance. Now there was a good representation of Tamils and Moslems. In the production side too, he said, there were Tamil and Moslem-focused programmes in addition to Singhalese and more Tamils and Moslems were taking part in radio programmes. This was really an achievement compared to the earlier times when the programmes were aimed mostly at the Singhalese, the region's majority community (P. Pavithran, personal communication, August 15, 2007).

The same sentiment was shared by Fawzia Hassan, one of the female Tamil producers. In fact she told me that the radio station was a peace maker and in her programmes, she always tried to bring together the views of different ethnic groups and helped the communities understand and appreciate each other. According to her, there was no radio station in Sri Lanka where one could find different ethnic people using the same studios and discussing with each other and sharing common ideas for programmes that would include the interests of different communities (F. Hassan, personal communication, August 15, 2007).

The manager highlighted that it was never the role of KCR to bring political news and political discussions into programmes. Being a radio of all the ethnic groups, he preferred the radio station to be a neutral place, devoid of politics and ethnic misgivings. According to the manager, the community radio should focus on community developmental issues and avoid politics as it was a matter for the mainstream national media. Hence, in his station, even though it was government-owned, reporting politics was abstained from and only the developmental aspects of community were promoted. This being the case, he said, he did not believe that a community radio station necessarily should be non-government owned. In fact, he believed that in developing countries like Sri Lanka or the Maldives, where the communities barely made ends meet, there was no money to spend on running community radio stations and therefore, it was better that the government ran community radio stations

on behalf of the communities. In his view, government funding was a necessity to operate a successful community radio. KCR was, according to him a good example that showed that even government-owned community radio stations could operate without political interference (S. Wijesinghe, personal communication, August 14, 2007).

### **6.3.6 Keeping in touch with the community**

The station's main strategy to keep in touch with the local community was strengthening local community involvement and expanding community access to radio and enabling them to participate in the programmes. Every day, the radio producers visit neighbouring villages, meet rural communities, share tea at local tea boutiques, discuss the on-going works in the community and enquire from the community members, about their lives. This was part of their daily schedule while on the road.

The station's most important tool used to reach its community was the E-Tuk Tuk which was a three-wheeler rickshaw. The driver of the three-wheeler was a producer/technician and according to him, he and another producer would travel daily to different villages to meet with villagers and record interviews for radio programmes. At the time of my visit, the E-TUK TUK project was funded by UNESCO and the radio station did not have to buy fuel. This meant KCR was able to save on transport costs through the use of E-TUK TUK. However, the rickshaw had to keep a log of what it did every day and where it went. The log had to be reported back to UNESCO (K. Keerthirathne, personal communication, August 13, 2007).

KCR is open throughout the day for the local community members to come and meet the manager and discuss or suggest programmes of interest at any time. However, the current location was a mountain-top that had many government buildings and permission had to be gained before one could head to the station. To overcome this inconvenience, the KCR from time to time would arrange for community elders, teachers, farmers and local shop owners to visit the station to discuss their interests. There was a similar arrangement with the local

schools to bring the students during the weekends to talk about school work and extra curricular activities (S. Wijesinghe, personal communication, August 14, 2007).

The station also played a major role in celebrating community events. In this regard, during cultural and religious festival times, the station would invite local community members to its premises so the facility could be used for community gatherings. During such times, the visiting community members would bring traditional food, milk, rice and other sweets to share with the radio staff. Local musicians also visit the station simply to participate and join in the festivities. Festivals as well as the radio anniversary day were according to the radio manager, a great opportunity to build confidence and trust with the local community. The manager also said he always encouraged the local community members to come and meet him and discuss or suggest programmes of interest (S. Wijesinghe, personal communication, August 14, 2007).

During my interview with the Listeners' Club Secretary, D.W. Abeykoon, I also learnt that once every three months, the station organised a meeting of about 15 to 20 members from the Listeners' Club to discuss radio programmes. This meeting provided an opportunity for the listeners to suggest and share ideas for future programmes (D. W. Abeykoon, personal communication, September 9, 2007).

One of the most important ways through which KCR kept in touch with the communities was through its digital story production. One of the volunteers producing digital stories Buddhika Dharshana said unlike the radio programmes, in the digital stories, the voices of the local members who were featured in the stories would be heard for a longer duration and this gave the participating locals a longer time to describe their life in detail. The digital stories were, however, not aired as usual radio programmes, instead, they were used as resources for programme production. Almost all the digital stories were copied on to CDs and sent to government offices, NGOs, charities and funding agencies so that the voices of the community would be heard in their offices (B. Dharshanna, personal communication, August

13, 2007). The discussion on digital story production had been shortened here as I had discussed it in detail in Chapter Eight.

### **6.3.7 Programme production**

Except for six programmes, all the programmes at KCR were produced by its full-time staff.

In the earlier days, the programmes were produced on topics and issues that the producers and the manager thought best for the community. A discussion among them and an approval from the manager was all that was needed to make a programme. However, according to the radio manager, now KCR had ‘democratised’ this process by involving its Listeners’ Club. The Club would organise a meeting of community elders once every three months to discuss radio programmes that were to broadcast as well as to identify new ideas from the club members for new programme production. Usually about 15 to 20 community elders from the Listeners’ Club would visit the station to discuss the programmes and meet the radio manager as well as radio producers who also attended the meeting which was usually chaired by the radio manager who was also the Club Chairman. The meeting was thus a rich resource for the radio programme production (S. Wijesinghe, personal communication, September 9, 2007). However, it was the manager who would select topics for programme making, from the ideas that were discussed at the meeting. It was also the manager who would assign a producer to work and research the topic until a programme had been developed (S. Wijesinghe, personal communication, August 14, 2007).

The station produces programmes on a variety of community-related subjects such as: farming, water, sanitation, power, low literacy levels, less livelihood opportunities, low health care facilities, ethnic discrimination, self-motivation, social isolation etc. In addition to locally focused themes, awareness programmes on issues of general interest, such as: law and order, women’s rights, human rights, children’s issues, child labour, international entertainment programmes, world leaders, social movements, etc. were other topics that the station included in its programme schedule which was revised once every six months. According to the manager, although KCR was a small station that focused on a specific community, occasionally, programmes that were focused on international aspects, such as

world history, geography and South Asia in general were also included in the programme schedule (S. Wijesinghe, personal communication, August 14, 2007).

Among the programmes that were produced by the radio station, there were two unique programmes that were regarded as the station's flagship programmes. They were, 'Bus No 17' and 'Kadamandi'. One of the Bus No 17 producers, Prasanna Dewapriya told me that in Sri Lanka, it was common practice to see beggars who were blind and disabled getting on public buses at bus stops and singing to the passengers on board, telling them about their life and about their conditions. At the end of the song, the passengers would offer gifts and money to the person. According to him, KCR had depicted this story telling format as a radio programme, giving the name 'Bus No 17'. In this programme, a radio employee in the studio would become a 'beggar' entering the bus. Instead of singing a song about his life, the KCR 'Bus No. 17 beggar' would sing for the listeners, a song that would be giving information on general health and education and awareness messages that the local community would need (P. Dewapriya, personal communication, August 14, 2007).

'Kadamandi', on the other hand, was a 15-minute long drama that was based on current affairs, news and community issues. 'Kadamandi' means tea boutique. According to the 'Kadamandi' producer, in Sri Lanka, it was common practise, by tradition, for the villagers to visit tea boutiques and sip tea while they chat over the day's work, discuss life and share gossip. Similar to what the producers of 'Bus No 17' had done, the 'Kadamandi' team had 'established' a tea boutique on the airwaves. According to Kapila Kumara Arathane, one of the producers of 'Kadamandi', in the radio's tea boutique programme, six full-time staff act as guests at the tea shop and while sipping tea, they discuss the news of the day and talk about what was happening in the town and neighbouring villages. The six radio staff who act as guests at the radio tea boutique 'Kadamandi' included a doctor, a teacher, a farmer, a police officer, a boutique owner and one ordinary villager. As they sipped their evening tea, they would answer the manager's queries about what was happening in their town as well as in the country in general, thereby disseminating the day's news as a drama, discussing the different aspects of news, giving in-depth information and linking the news to local situation

so that the listeners would understand how the news could be related to their village (K. K. Arathane, personal communication, August 14, 2007). During the time I stayed at the station, there was an outbreak of diarrhoea in the area. Hence, in the ‘tea boutique’, the doctor not only gave the latest news on diarrhoea but also explained to the other ‘guests’ in the ‘boutique’ what should be done to avoid diarrhoea and how to identify common symptoms as well as what should be done when one was sick and how the sick person should be cared for. Hence, in one sense, ‘Kadamandi’ was in-depth news coverage in drama form.

### **6.3.8 Providing local news**

The radio manager saw that a major objective of the station was providing local news. The station however, had neither a news room nor reporters. The manager played the role of news editor. The manager viewed that being a community radio station there was no need to have its own news reporters because in each of the town’s institutions, there was an employee who co-ordinated with the station to send information from their place of work if an important event took place. In addition, from time to time the radio staff co-ordinated with the village head, the village police inspector, the temple priest, the school principal and hospital nurse or doctor to get information about new developments in their areas. Sometimes, according to the manager, village officials just walked into the station to identify and arrange for relevant people to come to the radio and talk about news events happening in the towns (S. Wijesinghe, personal communication, August 6, 2007).

At KCR, the news reader was also the person who compiled, wrote and edited the news bulletin. As the station had no computers or typewriters that could write Sinhalese or Tamil, the news bulletins were hand written. The news items could be aired once the manager had given approval and put his signature on the bulletin. According to the manager the checking was, rather than to edit or change the bulletin, a measure taken to ensure that he knew what was broadcast as news (S. Wijesinghe, personal communication, August 6, 2007). The station broadcast four news bulletins. Two of them were SLBC’s national news bulletins relayed live over the radio. The third news bulletin, a 15-minute local news bulletin broadcast every morning was the station’s main community news bulletin. The local news bulletin was

compiled mainly from news items that were taken from the regional newspaper (S. Wijesinghe, personal communication, August 6, 2007).

### **6.3.9 Financial sustainability**

In the first ten years, the station was free from commercials. However, at that time the station was considerably supported by UNESCO and other international donor agencies that had an interest in helping the communities who had been relocated to new settlements when the Sri Lankan government built a dam on their village site.

When donor support ceased at the end of the resettlement project, the station was run by the SLBC funds. During the time SLBC assumed the full management of KCR, the state broadcasting company was going through its own financial problems. Hence, assuming the management of KCR became an added financial cost. For SLBC, it was unacceptable to have KCR as a total liability and therefore, KCR was asked to establish some mechanism that would help meet, at least partially, its own production costs. As part of this arrangement, KCR had dropped its community-focused morning session in favour of a 'commercial' type morning session that broadcast modern music. The morning radio was thus aimed at attracting advertisements from the region's businesses. The station was also asked to join with NGOs who would be willing to fund radio programmes. According to the SLBC director, Thilana Sooriya, the purpose of taking the new steps was, not to make the community station look more like a commercial radio, but, to make it realise that nothing was cost-free and that even the community radio station should work responsibly and in a financially sustainable manner. According to him, by creating a fear that if unsustainable, the station could be seen as a financial liability and faced being shut down if the trend continued, it would motivate the radio staff to work hard to keep it running. According to him, KCR's parent company, SLBC's survival was also depended on what it earned. Therefore, likewise, KCR as one of SLBC's small radio stations should walk on a sustainable path and this did not necessarily mean becoming a full commercial station (T. Sooriya, personal communication, August 17, 2007).



According to the SLBC director I interviewed, if an annual budget was handed to the station every year, the station would not be motivated to do much because whether they worked or not, they would receive their pay and the station would get its operational costs. Hence, by making the radio station 'earn' or face a cut in the budget if the station did not produce enough work for the year, would motivate them to work and generate revenue to match at least part of the expenditure. In one sense, it was more a strategy aimed at making the station more accountable to its work than work to earn more money he said (T. Sooriya, personal communication, August 17, 2007).

### **6.3.10 Community access and participation at KCR- a discussion**

For the two-week period I listened to the radio programmes, KCR had broadcast 332 programmes. Out of those, 128 programmes or about 38 per cent, were either presented or produced by local community members who could be described as 'elite' community members who had joined the station at the invitation of the manager. During the same period, KCR's full-time paid staff produced 190 programmes or nearly 60 per cent of the total programmes that were broadcast by the radio. This showed the radio relied more on its full-time paid staff to produce most of its programmes.

The radio station was open at any time of the day for the local community members to visit and discuss with the management just about anything that interested them. Although the community had an open invitation to visit the radio station, it was noteworthy that local community members rarely visited the station in days other than festival times. In a discussion I had with one of the radio producers to identify who in the local community produced programmes, he told me that there were no community volunteers making programmes except the five 'elite' volunteers. There were also no community organisations that were making their own local programmes (personal communication, August 13, 2007).

KCR was established to integrate several different village communities whose villages were submerged under water when a new dam was built on their old village site. The main purpose of the new community radio was helping them get established in their new

settlement as a new community. Hence, from the very inception of the station, being a beacon of hope for the local community, the new settlers had quickly identified with their station as it was their channel through which they expressed their sentiments. Highlighting the close connection with the radio station and the community, a former radio volunteer, Asanka Samarasinghe, who worked at the radio in its first decade told me that in the earlier days of the radio station, they had broadcast over the radio, the lack of transport to their villages and the difficulty they faced in marketing their produce. The Public Transport Authority, upon hearing the local grievances, agreed to provide a bus service on condition the community cleared a road. This was done, and a new bus route was established ending their grievances (A. Samarasinghe, personal communication, August 11, 2007). For the community, it was an event that showed them how KCR had given them a voice and empowered them. Recalling another such event, A. Samarasinghe remarked:

One evening there was a huge storm that brought down a huge tree on the power line cutting electric power to the village. At that time as the village had no telephones, public transport or motor vehicles. So, we broadcast on the radio seeking help. The station was heard by an engineer who happened to be visiting a nearby outpost and within an hour he came and power was restored (personal communication, August 11, 2007).

If there had been no radio station, the option was to climb down the mountain the next morning and lodge a request at the neighbouring town's powerhouse which was about 30 Kms away. According to Asanka Samarasinghe, given the speed of work at rural government offices, it could take two to three days before they could get any help and this would have meant spending few nights in the dark (A. Samarasinghe, personal communication, August 11, 2007).

According to Asanka Samarasinghe, even now the village elders talked much about the station's help in confronting the village's tea factory which was their single employer. Until the arrival of radio, arguing against the might of the tea factory or expressing their grievances was not possible as no one was prepared to stand against the strict factory policies, fearing they might lose their jobs. The factory controlled their life, livelihood and fate and the villagers had no way of and making their voices heard. However, with the arrival of the

station, everything changed. It aired their concerns making everyone aware of what the factory was doing to the villagers and it did not take too long for the authorities to intervene and require the factory changed its operational style and enable better working conditions (A. Samarasinghe, personal communication, August 11, 2007).

Unfortunately, at the end of UNESCO's involvement with the Kothmale radio project, the SLBC had relocated the station out of the village of Dhoragalle which was its home base for ten years. According to the KCR manager, the SLBC's aim for relocating KCR was to widen the coverage area to include more towns and more listeners instead of simply serving a few targeted communities which was originally the main objective of founding the station. Dhoragalle residents were unhappy with the SLBC decision and hence, had earlier protested the move, saying the station had brought many benefits to that community and therefore, if the station was relocated, the community would be once again left with no way to voice their concerns. As a compromise, the Dhoragalle community accepted the SLBC's offer to keep the transmitter in the town and move the studios to its current location in Mawathura, which was closer to the main urban centres of the province (S. Wijesinghe, personal communication, August 14, 2007). The community had no idea that it was the studios and the radio staff and not the physical structure of the radio mast or the transmitter that established the community connections.

A senior producer who was currently employed at KCR and who was unhappy with the move told me that the reality was the Dhoragalle community had lost access to the station from the moment the studios were relocated from Dhoragalle. He said even after a decade, the relocation was still raw in the hearts of many in the community who thought they were duped by the authorities (personal communication, August 14, 2007).

According to the same senior producer, the radio station's current site, being located in an enclosed area which also housed several government buildings, the area was fenced and for security reasons, it was closed at all times. Visitors to the station had to get permission, for every visit, from the area check-post to climb the hill-top where the station was. Hence,

although there was an open invitation for the local communities to visit the station at any time, for logistical reasons, for the villagers, easy accessibility was a problem (personal communication, August 14, 2007). Therefore, in many ways, it was quite disheartening to see a community radio that once was a joy to the communities who lived around it now having to sit isolated on a hill-top, totally detached from the communities with which it had once established a very close relationship. In many ways, it was also an irony in the sense that it created a situation where there was no community around the community radio station.

The station's new and enlarged coverage area together with its new and powerful transmitter meant that four hundred thousand people were added to its listening community (S. Wijesinghe, personal communication, August 14, 2007). This was a number that was too big for a small community station to handle. It also meant that the joy and the warmth of the close-knit relationship the station once enjoyed with its small township of Dhoragalle was lost in the new location.

Referring to KCR's enlarged coverage area, the same producer who was not happy with the relocation from Dhoragalle said the increased coverage was now more like a regional service and less like a community radio because it was now impossible to travel to all 65 villages and towns in the area and interview the communities. According to him, the relocation had actually brought more shop owners in the big towns closer to the radio station and this meant it could sell them airtime for their advertisements, something the villagers could not afford to do. He believed that attracting finances was the big motive for relocation (personal communication, August 14, 2007). The radio signal strength was therefore, made powerful to get hold of a bigger 'catchment', he said (personal communication, August 14, 2007). I believe that his opinion had some strength to it when taken together with what the radio manager had told me. According to the manager, unlike the earlier days, the station now received more advertisements and more businesses in the area and the businesses were more interested in using the radio for advertising purposes (S. Wijesinghe, personal communication, August 14, 2007).

### ***6.3.10.1 Participation through Listeners' Club***

Once every three months, the station organised a meeting of about 15 to 20 members from the Listeners' Club to discuss radio programmes. This meeting provided an opportunity to discuss programme ideas as well as gain listener feedback on programmes that had been aired. This was also viewed by KCR as an opportunity for the community members to have a say in the programme production and programme planning stages. Although the club discussed the programmes, everything was finalised by the manager and his KCR staff. The radio manager was present at every meeting of the Listeners' Club and as Chairman of the Listeners' Club, the radio manager had substantial influence over what was discussed at the listeners' meetings.

According to the secretary of the Listeners' Club, D. W. Abeykoon, KCR was a radio owned by a commercially operated government broadcasting company and foreign donors could not provide funds directly to KCR. Hence, instead of the radio station, it was the Listeners' Club that received donor assistance. In this sense, he said the club represented the 'community face' of the radio, playing a proxy role to seek finance and acting in the name of the local communities, smoothing any rough edges the radio station might have as a government - owned station (D. W. Abeykoon, personal communication, September 9, 2007).

The radio had no discussion programmes or talk-back shows. According to the manager, most of the listeners were rural farmers who spent most of the day in the fields and because the radio transmission ended in the evening, it was not practical to organise in-studio live discussions. During my interview with the secretary of the Radio Listeners Club, Mr. Abeykoon, however, he indicated that members of the Listeners' Club, just like they meet once every three months, could arrange similar community discussion meetings that could be recorded and aired over the radio (D. W. Abeykoon, personal communication, September 9, 2007). As KCR encouraged community participation, this could be a good way of bringing in more people and more community voices to the radio. However, for the moment, grassroots participation in live discussion programmes was an area that was not addressed by the radio.

### ***6.3.10.2 Radio access and participation through E-TUK TUK***

KCR's auto rickshaw, known as the E-TUK TUK, was developed to use as a means to increase local community access and participation in the radio. Being a small auto rickshaw, the E-TUK TUK had the ability to take the producers virtually up to the farmers who were working in the tea estates and record their interviews. However, an irony of the E-TUK TUK was that it was often not performing what it was meant to do. One of the surveyors who was a producer at the radio and who helped conduct a survey for UNESCO in 2007 on the use of E-Tuk Tuk, told me that since the arrival of E-Tuk Tuk, the radio producers had become totally dependent on it for gathering programme production material. The producers now preferred using E-TUK TUK instead of using buses to research for programmes. This also meant, unlike the days before the E-TUK TUK, now there were fewer producers on the field doing interviews. Furthermore, the E-TUK TUK having to satisfy each producer's production needs meant, it had to compromise on time by making shorter and easier trips covering the immediate neighbourhood (Koasala, personal communication, September 11, 2007). The development of the E-TUK TUK thus gave less radio access to the locals. According to the surveyor, he had met many villagers who had complained about the E-TUK TUK not visiting their villages and/ or not giving any focus to their village interests (Koasala, personal communication, September 11, 2007). By neglecting some towns, the E TUK TUK was therefore, further marginalising the very communities who had already been marginalised in their remote villages.

At present, the E-TUK TUK fuel costs were currently funded by UNESCO, which meant the radio did not have to meet any running costs. Past KCR experience showed that when foreign funding stopped, the activities also ceased. For example, when UNESCO stopped funding for the radio's Internet connection in 2003, the 'Internet Radio Browsing Programme' which gave the local community an opportunity to 'browse' the Internet through the radio also ceased functioning. As noted by Sujatha Tuladhar who visited KCR in 2005 as a Watson Fellow, "When the funding stopped and the Internet Radio Browsing Programme came to a halt, the community just accepted it as the reality and went ahead with their daily lives. There

was no initiative from within the community to continue this project that has helped them so much in the past” (Tuladhar, 2007). Hence, it remains to be seen what could happen once E-TUK TUK ran out its UNESCO funds.

## **6.4 Samoa Capital Radio**

The Samoa Capital Radio (SCR) or Siufofoga o le Laumua (the “Voice of the Capital”) is New Zealand’s first ethnic language-based community radio station. According to the radio manager, Afamasaga Tealu Moresi, the station was formally inaugurated in June 1992. However, the station founders made their first broadcast in 1989 as a weekly one-hour programme that was broadcast over Te Upoko o te Ika, a Maori station. The programme was later extended to two hours per week and broadcast on Wellington Access Radio (WAR) which is the radio station through which SCR now broadcast its daily programmes (A.T. Moresi personal communication, November 26, 2009).

### **6.4.1 Location and coverage area**

Samoans make up the largest single ethnic community in Wellington which is the station’s home base and about 22 per cent of the people living in this area are of Samoan or Pacific origin (Statistics New Zealand, 2006). According to the radio manager, the station is heard from Taupo in the North Island to Nelson, Picton and Blenheim in the upper South Island and with live streaming on the Internet, its signal can be heard almost anywhere (A.T. Moresi, personal communication, November 26, 2009).

### **6.4.2 The administrative set up**

Samoa Community Radio is owned by Si’ufofoga O Le Laumua Trust, established under the Charitable Trust Act 1957. The Board of Trustees consists of ten Samoans who include educationalists, religious leaders, and social and health workers (A.T. Moresi, personal communication, November 26, 2009).

SCR does not own its own premises or office building. The station was initially housed in the

same building as Wellington Access Radio (WAR) in the broadcasting premises of RNZ behind Parliament House. When the area was re-developed, Wellington Access Radio moved out in 1998 to a new location on Vivian Street, taking SCR along (A. T. Moresi, personal communication, November 26, 2009).

In 2003, WAR moved from the Vivian Street premises to a new building and offered SCR to join them (K. Parker, WAR manager, personal communication, November 16, 2008). However, according to the SCR manager, due to the small space that was offered to SCR in the new premises and given the fact that even in the existing building the space allocated for SCR was small, it decided against moving out with WAR to the new building. Instead, SCR opted to stay alone in the old premises and continue paying the rent on its own. As SCR had absorbed the space vacated by WAR, it was also able to organise community meetings and bring in everything it wanted under one roof. The added space also meant the station had room for its own small studio, a control room, a work room, a waiting room, a café, an administrative room, a meeting room, a room for recording interviews and conducting live shows as well as space to entertain community members who came to visit the station (A.T. Moresi, personal communication, November 26, 2009).

SCR does not own a radio frequency. Just as the station had jointly shared the office space with WAR, the frequency was also shared with WAR. According to WAR manager, Keldron Parker, under a contract between SCR and WAR since September 1991, WAR sells the airtime period between 7am and 1.00pm to SCR every week for the weekdays. On Fridays, SCR was given additional broadcast time which enabled them to continue broadcasting until 6pm. A further three hours were given every Tuesday evening from 9 pm till 12 am. The time periods that were used by SCR were the same time-slots that were reserved on WAR for the Maori. However, at the time of the contract, Maori had not made any use of the reserved time-slot and when the Samoan community approached WAR to obtain airtime, WAR negotiated with the Maori to provide their 38 hours per week for Samoan broadcasting. According to the WAR station manager, it was a time when WAR, having come out as an independent community access radio station, needed money to meet its growing costs.



Hence, getting a partner like SCR, which was willing to buy airtime on a regular basis, was an asset for WAR (K. Parker, personal communication, November 16, 2009).

As the station manager noted, one of the main goals of SCR was to acquire its own building and its own frequency. However, as there were no available frequencies for the time being, especially for a non-profit small community radio station, obtaining a frequency was not possible at the time (A. T. Moresi, personal communication, 26 November, 2009). Unfortunately, the station's only hope to get a frequency was simply a waiting game. That meant SCR had to remain without a frequency until New Zealand radio broadcasting was fully digitalised. In an interview given to SCR's morning programme, 'Interview', the Honourable Trevor Mallard, Minister of Broadcasting in the last Labour government, said, the government's priority was the digitalisation of TV broadcasting, therefore, full digital radio broadcasting would follow after that. As New Zealand's switch over to full digital TV would be completed by or after 2012, the hope of digital radio broadcasting becoming a reality was at least a few years away (Interview, 2009).

### **6.4.3 The staff and the radio**

At the time of my first visit to SCR, the station had three full-time staff. They included the station manager and two full-time producers who in addition to making programmes, also acted as presenters as well as technicians. In addition to the full-time staff, there were three part-time staff. One of them did the same work as the full-time producers. The second part-time employee was the station's sole female staff member who read the news. The third part-time employee produced and presented a weekly cultural programme on Tuesday nights. In addition to the producers, the manager helped in live interviews and talk-back shows and therefore, he was seen as an additional producer. All the full-time and the part-time staff at SCR, except the manager, who was paid by the station's own revenue, were paid by the NZOA (A. T. Moresi, personal communication, November 26, 2009).

#### **6.4.4 The radio volunteers**

In the earlier days when the station was new and local Samoan community broadcasting was a novelty, there were dozens of volunteers who came to the station wanting to experience broadcasting. During that period, all the radio programmes were produced and presented by interested volunteers from the community. It was also a time when individual community members came to the station on their own time to discuss making their own radio programmes. However, according to the radio manager, as time passed, the novelty of the radio was gone and the volunteer population dwindled to the extent it became difficult to produce programme content (A. T. Moresi, personal communication, November 26, 2009).

In 2008, SCR had a list of 14 volunteers. However, only seven of them were active in programme making. During my stay in Wellington, I met all seven volunteers and five of them told me that they had joined SCR because of a special request made directly by the manager. Their job was to help produce programmes that were related to their professional work. Out of the five volunteers, there were two teachers- one doing a children's programme and the other, doing a youth programme. The other volunteers co-produced a religious programme, a women's programme and a Samoan music show. Most of the volunteer-produced programmes were aired on Friday afternoon, which was the only day of the week the radio received a whole afternoon for broadcasting. According to two volunteers, Pule Malli Anfai, and Tafesila Fai, one doing the youth programme and the other, producing the children's programme, their programmes were a good way to meet the community and share their professional experiences with the community. Tafesila Fai, who was a kindergarten teacher, said she viewed her children's programme as a useful means to share her teaching experiences with the parents and give them information about teaching projects at her school (P.M Anfai and T. Fai, personal communication, November 21, 2009).

SCR also accepts Pacific media students at Wellington's Whitireia Journalism School as volunteers during their course of study. According to SCR manager, this was an offer given to students to use the radio facilities during their work experience rather than as a way of getting their help at the station to produce programmes and news bulletins (A. T. Moresi,

personal communication, November 26, 2009). During my stay in Wellington, the head of the Whitireia Journalism School, Jim Toker arranged a meeting for me with one of his former students who had worked at SCR as a volunteer. According to her she had volunteered during the time she did the news writing course at the Journalism school. However, her volunteering ended, when she got a full-time job elsewhere (personal communication, November 25, 2009).

According to the station manager, ideally, the station would like to better reflect the community views by having a bigger community input and a larger volunteer base that provided a stable and continuous supply of programmes. However, the reality was volunteers who worked for the station having no contract and no obligation, turned in to work on an ad hoc manner. The manager said this was unacceptable for any radio station that needed a constant supply of programme content to fill its airtime. This put a lot of pressure on the management, prompting them to find alternative ways for programme production. The manager said the station preferred a stable radio instead of depending on a team of unreliable volunteers who would not turn up at the most crucial times (A.T. Moresi, personal communication, November 26, 2009). At present, most of the SCR programmes were produced either by its own full-time staff or by its sponsoring agencies.

However, being a radio station of the Samoan community and given the need to have fresh Samoan voices heard on the radio, its doors are open for interested Samoan volunteers to meet the manager and discuss doing radio programmes, (A.T. Moresi, personal communication, November 26, 2009). Although the doors are open, the station does not advertise this on air. Instead, the manager meets with Samoan professionals and negotiates with them about making programmes that are related to their professions or jobs. The idea is to bring in professionals who by the very nature of the work could easily produce a weekly community programme without any extra cost to them or to their organisation. According to the manager, he preferred to bring in potential volunteers whom he saw as people who could add value to the programmes and be of benefit to the community. However, the manager said even the professionals were hesitant to come to the studio and do a short programme for the

community. During many of his arranged meetings with professional Samoans such as teachers, social workers, lawyers and doctors, most would express their interest to help and participate in making programmes but, when they were called upon they would say they had no time (A.T. Moresi, personal communication, November 26, 2009).

Volunteer recruitment was also an issue faced by some of the organisations that sponsored radio programmes on SCR. For example, the radio broadcasts a one-hour weekly Police programme sponsored and produced by the Police. Although the programme was popular amongst the Samoan listeners and received a lot of positive feedback, there were no Samoan police officers apart from one, who was willing to do the programme. The Wellington Police were unable to send Samoan Police volunteers from its own force who were ready to present the programme, hold live discussions and explain police work and what community should know. According to the Samoan Police officer Su'a Petelo Sagata, who had been doing the programme for the last six years, there was no other officer who had come to help him with the programme (S.P Sagata, personal communication, November 19, 2009. During my interview with the police officer he said:

There is simply no drive or interest or the energy to volunteer and do it despite the programme was produced and sponsored by the Police. Whenever I am absent, the radio has to air repeats of past programme (personal communication, November 19, 2009).

#### **6.4.5 The role of the radio**

At the time of the founding of the station, the Wellington region had a large number of new immigrants from Samoa. Most of them had little knowledge about New Zealand, their new country or its laws and other legal requirements. The new Samoan immigrants who came from a small homogeneous country to New Zealand, which was multi-cultural in every way, felt they were alienated in their newly adopted country, especially, because they did not know much English, or how to get help with issues to do with immigration, police, welfare, religion or in areas such as building, waste disposal, driving, or even doing business. Hence, for the Samoans, the establishment of the station was a ray of light that showed them the way

forward, making their lives easy and giving them happiness and comfort as they readjusted to their new life in New Zealand (Wilson, 1994).

Fa'amatuainu Tino Perreira, a former Radio New Zealand journalist, in an interview given to Sela Alo, remarked:

When we immigrated to New Zealand, there was a need for our communities to know what was happening in New Zealand....We often felt lonely here as Pacific Island people and we wanted to see what other Pacific Islanders were doing, which in my opinion was the main reason we came up with the community radio concept (Alo, 2005: 90).

Tupuola Malifa, one of the founders of SCR, in an interview given to Sela Alo, too said that he too wanted a radio that would focus on the Samoan community, especially the people that were more or less overlooked, forgotten by the mainstream radio stations that did not cater for the Samoan people, some of whom hardly speak a word of English (Alo, 2005). According to him, by establishing a Samoan community radio, such people would not feel left out and realise that there was media that was ready to listen and celebrate their lifestyle too (Alo, 2005).

Another reason for the establishment of SCR was to preserve and promote cultural aspects of the Samoan community. When the new Samoan immigrants began settling in New Zealand, they also found that being no longer in their islands, their island's cultural life could not be practised in their new home. For example, the immigrants had no local Samoan boats to go fishing. Many women found that unlike in the islands, there was no need and no place in New Zealand for them to practise their traditional mat weaving. The island's chiefs who had migrated to New Zealand also found that unlike Samoa, New Zealand society did not need them to act as chiefs. Thus, it was quickly realised that if the Samoans had to live a lifestyle that was detached from their cultural side, their children would grow up in New Zealand not knowing their island roots, its culture and lifestyle. For this reason, many leading Samoans in New Zealand felt the need to establish a Samoan community station that would play Samoan songs, speak Samoan language and narrate Samoan stories so that the children who grew up in New Zealand would know about life in Samoa and about their island culture. Emphasising

the importance of native language and culture, SCR founder, Tupuola Malifa, in an interview given to Alo (2005) said:

Number one in our vision is to retain Samoan language, to use the radio as an avenue to make sure the language is surviving in this environment, and to cater for the young children who are born here and don't have enough time to speak or learn the Samoan language in their homes and in their schools (Alo, 2005:91).

SCR was thus founded with the objective to keep the Samoan community together and to make them feel even in New Zealand, they are one community, sharing with each other, their knowledge and experiences and lending a hand to the needy in the community, in the same way they had done while they were in the islands. The SCR was meant to create a "Samoa in the air" where Samoans from all walks of life could simply tune-in to visit and be happy to know that it was their local island, their window of opportunity- giving them solutions in their times of need and happiness in their leisure times and something Samoan to think about while at home.

The radio's cultural programme producer, Toleafoa Afereti told me once the current old generation of Samoans was gone, the Samoan language as it was now spoken in New Zealand Samoan homes would no longer be practised, threatening the very survival of good Samoan language in Kiwi homes. Hence, she said the role of SCR in promoting the Samoan language would become more important in the days ahead (T. Afereti, personal communication, November 19, 2009).

#### **6.4.6 Keeping in touch with the community**

The station was well aware of the importance of getting involved and participating with the community during community events. However, being a very low-budget station with very few staff, the station was handicapped to participate in different community events. Tufue Fiso, the senior producer at SCR told me that the only event they always participated in was the Polynesian festival which gave them a great opportunity to meet and interview different

Pacific island community members and discuss their issues of interest (T. F. Fiso, personal communication, November 22, 2009).

According to the SCR manager, the most direct way the station kept in touch with its community was through talk-back programmes. Each week the manager hosts three talk-back shows. The talk-back shows focused on important current events that were matters of interest to all Samoans in New Zealand (A.T. Moresi, personal communication, 26 November, 2008). A former SCR volunteer who had moved back to Samoa in 2010 had earlier told me that talk-back show was quite popular with the Samoans living in Samoa as often the discussions in the programme had direct relevance to what was happening in Samoa, especially land issues and business activities. Hence, many in Samoa regularly listened to SCR talk-back shows via Internet (personal communication, October 10, 2009).

In addition to holding talk-back shows, the station also co-ordinate with talented musicians and singers in the community so that they could use the station studio to perform live shows. One such group was the Samoan Seventh Day Adventist youth singers who used SCR to reach new audiences. According to the SCR manager, the same invitation was also extended to members of Samoan community sports clubs in Wellington such as the cricket club, golf club and the Samoan rugby club to come and discuss their activities and programmes (A. T. Moresi, personal communication, November 26, 2009).

SCR also has an arrangement with the Samoan Community Council in Wellington to come to discuss issues that are of interest to the Samoan community. The Council consists of traditional Samoan chiefs now living in New Zealand. These chiefs have no similar role that to what they had while back in Samoa. They are however, a well respected community group among Samoans in Wellington. Hence, rather than for a political purpose, they now play a cultural role and use SCR as a means to strengthen cultural connections with the Samoan community in Wellington.

In order to further strengthen the station's contact with the community, SCR has begun a plan to redevelop its current website so that it can be used as an extended medium to access radio during its off-air time. Given the disadvantage of having no frequency of their own, the SCR manager said that by developing a strong website would be a viable option to offset some of the disadvantages of not being able to get more air time for the radio to stay in touch with the community (A.T. Moresi, personal communication, November 27, 2009).

According to the radio manager, SCR was in fact, the first station to have a website among all community radio stations in New Zealand. However, when NZOA began funding access radio streams on the Internet, including Wellington Access Radio, SCR had downgraded its website and removed its own online live streaming (A.T. Moresi, personal communication, November 26, 2009). At the time of my interview with the SCR manager, the radio website included very limited information and most of it was about how to get in touch with the radio for advertisement purposes.

Being the first community radio station to have developed a website in New Zealand, the radio station sees it as a strong reason to redevelop their website once again. It is the radio manager's hope the new redesigned website would, in addition to live streaming the radio, have added services such as answering listeners' questions and providing giving access to older programmes and Samoan songs as podcasts (A.T. Moresi, personal communication, November 27, 2009).

#### **6.4.7 Programme production**

The SCR Board has a policy to ensure that all the programmes are presented in the Samoan language. However, SCR Board member, Toleafoa Seti Tanuvasa, a Police officer of Samoan origin said, the radio could use English if a Samoan translation of the English segment was broadcast on the same programme, preferably, next to the English segment. According to him, the radio station Trustees required non-Samoan programmes to be no more than 20 per cent (T. S. Tanuvasa, personnel communication, November 24, 2009).



As most of the SCR airtime is sold to external parties to produce programmes of their own choice, the station is not directly involved in producing much of its programmes. According to the radio manager, it is the responsibility of the sponsoring agency to produce the programmes as well as find resource persons for their programmes. The station only plays the role of a facilitator to help the programme producing agencies to use the studio to record or broadcast their programmes. The manager says that being a small station and given its small number of staff, the most practical option to make programmes is to establish partnership with external parties (A.T. Moresi, personal communication, November 26, 2009).

At the moment, most of the SCR programmes are sponsored and produced by various Wellington-based government-supported institutions, agencies and NGOs. Among them are the Pacific Island Church Ministers' Association, the Police, Pacific Island Affairs Ministry, Whitireia Polytech, Victoria University of Wellington, Capital and Coast District Health Boards, Hutt Valley District Health Board, Pacific Pulse and the New Zealand Institute of Sports (Interview). The sponsoring agencies also have the full authority to produce the programme in their own style and broadcast them and do not have to get the radio manager's approval. However, the radio manager would need a general background and a summary of the programme topic that would be discussed but this did not involve detailed discussion (A. T. Moresi, personal communication, November 26, 2009).

The only programmes that are produced by SCR staff include the breakfast show and the lunch-hour Samoan music programme. According to the two hosts of the breakfast show, Tufue Fiso and Amani Akitiona, the programme comprises of several short sessions and includes New Zealand and Samoan news briefs, sports, traffic updates from the Wellington region and a lot of popular Samoan songs. As Samoans take pride in their sports and their sports personalities who are 'doing great' in New Zealand, they are also invited during breakfast time to discuss their achievements and their life in general. During the breakfast hour, everyday, the station announces family events such as weddings, birthdays, wedding anniversaries, births, christenings of new children as well as announcing deaths and death

anniversaries (T. Fiso and A. Akitiona, personal communication, November 16, 2009).

Besides the music programme and the breakfast show, the most popular programmes are its religious programmes. Given the strong religious background of all the Samoans, and religion being a very serious part of the life of every Samoan, the station broadcasts on a daily basis, several religious programmes that help the Samoan community to stay in touch with their church through radio and develop their spiritual side. All the religious programmes are produced in association with the local Samoan church in Wellington. According to Reverend Popo Sua, a church Minister who also contributes to SCR's religious programmes, the Samoan church in Wellington also co-ordinates with Samoan pastors in other main centres such as Auckland, Hamilton and Christchurch to broadcast recordings of their church prayers on SCR. The religious programmes include church news, upcoming church events, hymns and religious songs as well as sermons that take place in different churches attended by Samoans. Church ministers also conduct preaching and discussion programmes to answer queries from listeners. Church ministers were also available by telephone to ask questions both on and off air (P. Sua, personal communication, November 24, 2009).

Culture being one of the radio's greatest hallmarks, the station has a three-hour talk-back session every Tuesday night which focuses on Samoan culture, history and traditions. The programme is regarded as a platform for the first generation Samoans living in New Zealand to participate and discuss the good old way and lifestyle of Samoans so that the knowledge can be passed on to the new Kiwi Samoans who are born and bred in New Zealand. The producer who co-ordinates the cultural programme, Toleafoa Afereti said his aim is to reach the young Samoans so that they get to know how life was in the yester-years and what Samoan culture offers them and as a small island nation, how rich a tradition the country has to make every Samoan proud of. The night-time talk show is also an opportunity for the old Samoans who left the country long ago to 'revisit' Samoa in their memories and talk about the good old times they enjoyed in their island home (T. Afereti, personal communication, November, 19 2009).

The station also broadcasts several bilingual programmes where English and Samoan are spoken during the programme. The English content in the programme is translated to Samoan and this makes the programmes popular with the New Zealand-born Samoans as the programmes help them enrich their Samoan vocabulary. The SCR's current station manager also currently produces the bi-lingual programmes. He noted that it was only the bi-lingual programmes and music programmes that attract young Samoan Kiwis. He said, unlike the talk-back programmes which required speed and fluency in spoken Samoan to participate, for those who find it difficult to converse fluently in their mother tongue, especially the youth, the best opportunity to do 'practice exercises' in brushing up their 'rusty' mother tongue was listening to the bi-lingual programmes (A. T. Moresi, personal communication, November 26, 2009).

A noteworthy feature that was present in many of the social awareness programmes was the inclusion of a public comment segment at the end of the programme where community members could give feedback with regard to the programme or could let the programme makers know what the listeners would like to cover in the programme in the coming weeks. By including this segment, SCR was in many ways, providing a channel through which community input could be tapped for planning new programmes on similar topics, thereby making the programme more community relevant.

SCR has never carried out a survey to check the listenership or the views of the listeners on various programmes. However, at the end of each year, it carries out a live programme review with listeners. During the review, listeners are given a short summary of the programmes that are aired by the station and are then asked to give their views on the programmes. According to the manager of the station, the listener feedback he received from the review programme was used to prepare the programme schedule for the next year (A. T. Moresi, personal communication, November 26, 2009). Hence, in one way, the review programme was an approach by which SCR involved the local community in planning for future programmes.

#### **6.4.8 Providing local news**

Although SCR does not have a newsroom or dedicated reporters, news is a priority. News is mainly gathered from the newspapers, Radio New Zealand, Television New Zealand and also from different Internet websites. A lot of news, including important breaking news, is also received from ordinary Samoan community sources who either phone the station and inform them about what was happening in Samoa or in the Samoan community in New Zealand. For example, according to the radio station's former news presenter, Faaso'o Tautu Peilva, in 2009, the station received the Samoan Tsunami news from a Samoan source in New Zealand before it was confirmed on the mainstream media. This showed that no matter how basic the news gathering was, if the radio had good contacts, it could get big stories much faster than big news media outlets, he said (F. T Peilva, personal communication, November 16, 2009).

The station, until 2008, had a daily news report fed live from Samoa focusing on purely Samoan news and other stories of interest including the on-going gossip from Samoa. The service has been axed as a cost-cutting measure due to the financial difficulties the station faced during that year. However, according to the radio manager, the station even now, on a monthly basis, organises a 30-minute programme from Samoa giving in-depth analysis of political, economic and other current topics on Samoa (A.T.Moresi, personal communication, November 26, 2009).

#### **6.4.9 Financial sustainability**

In the early days, programme production was financed by a grant received from the Internal Affairs Department. The department continued to fund the station until New Zealand on Air (NZOA) took over the funding in June 1992 (Alo, 2005). According to NZOA community radio manager, Keith Collins, NZOA assistance was however, limited to programme production costs and for airtime lease from Wellington Access Radio. About 50 per cent of the rent paid for office space was also provided by NZOA. NZOA also paid for one full-time and one part-time staff member (K. Collins, personal communication, November 24, 2009).

According to the SCR manager, NZOA funding provided 50 per cent of the radio expenditure. The salary for all other staff, including the manager's salary had to be met through revenue that was generated by the station's own efforts. In the radio station's earlier days, finding this money was a challenge. It was a time when the radio had no advertisements that gave any financial return. The local Samoan businesses also believed that the station belonged to the community and, therefore, believed community advertisements should be aired free. There were no sponsors who financed the programmes. During that period, programmes were produced and aired free by amateur volunteers who did the work as a hobby rather than as a requirement. Thus, in addition to having no finances, there was also no consistency in programme production. The absence of an alternative source to obtain programmes also meant the station was under the mercy of few volunteers who were not serious about sustaining programme production on a regular basis. As a result, the manager said that the radio station had reached a point where it was a challenge to sustain radio broadcasting on a continued basis (A. T. Moresi, personal communication, November 26, 2009).

Hence, in 2002, the station policies were changed with a view to produce programmes that would help the station be financially sustainable and earn income. Under the new policy, all the community notices were charged and instead of making programmes on its own, the station sold its airtime to interested national institutes and to non-government organisations that were based in Wellington. A vigorous revenue generating campaign was also begun. At the same time, the manager said, he also launched a second campaign to make the Samoan community aware of the costs involved in radio broadcasting. As a result, unlike the early days, now the local Samoan community was more aware of the operational costs enabling them to understand the station's financial position better. To attract additional funds, SCR also began to use 0900 donations and radio phone-in programmes. Hence, the station now gets donations and grants as well from the community (A.T. Moresi, personal communication, November 26, 2009).

The SCR manager however, remarked that although broadcasting advertisements was a good

source of income, being a local Samoan ethnic community radio, it had limited capacity to attract too many advertisements. According to the SCR manager, being a very small station beamed at a small ethnic minority in New Zealand, and the fact that the station broadcasts in Samoan Language meant there weren't that many businesses that were keen to advertise on the radio. Advertisements are also minimal because, SCR, as a rule, does not accept advertisements that have no direct benefit to the Samoan community. As the manager remarked, given the fact that the station had to find 40 per cent of its running costs, the best way forward was to air advertisements and sell airtime to interested NGOs and government agencies (A. T. Moresi, personal communication, November 26, 2009). In addition, the manager said, SCR also broadcasts advertisements from finance companies helping Samoans, airlines flying to Samoa and freight companies that travel to Samoa.

#### **6.4.10 Community access and participation at SCR- a discussion**

SCR broadcasts 38 hours a week, giving a total of 103 programmes. An examination of the average weekly radio schedule showed that about 14 programmes were produced and presented by community volunteers and out of these, about half the programmes were produced by the Samoan pastors. The rest were produced and presented by the station's full-time staff or by the NGOs and other sponsoring organisations that were based in Wellington. Hence, the role of the community volunteers in programme production was quite small.

According to the SCR manager, the station welcomes volunteers who are reliable and that he is ready to discuss with them making community-focused programmes. However, he does not welcome short-term volunteers who are interested in producing an ad-hoc style or who wish to make just a few programmes. At the moment, the station has a list of 15 registered volunteers and out of them, about a third is actively involved in programme production on a continuing basis. All the volunteers were directly invited by the manager who had indicated that he favoured only volunteers who had 'stature' and who could add value to the programme (A. T. Moresi, personal communication, November 26, 2009). The manager's position as well as his policy in volunteer recruitment, thus, showed that he had full authority in deciding who in the community could volunteer for the community radio.

According to the radio manager, it is his responsibility to seek and/ or negotiate with sponsoring agencies that are willing to produce programmes for radio. The manager also personally conducts talk-back shows as well as phone-in shows. In this sense, choosing who should be involved in programme production is also under the prerogative of the manager. Furthermore, as talk-back host, the manager also has the say on choosing the subject areas to be discussed as well as deciding the course of the talk-back programmes and how they should be panned out during the on-air time (A. T. Moresi, personal communication, November 26, 2009).

Although there were not that many community members who accessed the station to produce their own programmes, community participation on the air waves was strong, in the discussion programmes and talk-back shows. The radio producer and the radio manager conduct the talk-back shows. Amani Akitiona, the talk-back show producer, told me that he gets about 30-40 callers for each show and out of them, dozens of callers could not participate due to lack of time. According to him, he received several requests everyday, asking the station to increase the talk-back time. Unfortunately, the station was for the moment, unable to meet the listener demand (A. Akitiona, personal communication, 15 November, 2008). According to the manager, SCR broadcasts on the same frequency as WAR and this means the station has to use the available time in the most economic and beneficial manner instead of giving too much time to one type of programming. At the moment, the radio hosts three weekly talk-back shows (A. Akitiona, personal communication, November 15, 2008).

Having examined the talk-back shows and having listened to them for two weeks, I found that all the shows were held during the morning hours. I also found that the participants were mostly women and older men. There were no youth voices. According to the talk-back producer, the reason was that young people were either at school or at work during the mornings and they could not participate. If the radio could get evening hours, especially nights to do talk-back, he said he was certain that the participants would include all age groups (A. Akitiona, personal communication, November 15, 2008). However, despite its

limitations, live talk-back and live discussion forums remain the best direct connection the station has established with its community.

Unfortunately, as I mentioned earlier, given the fact the station had no frequency of its own, increasing its currently available airtime was beyond the station's ability. At the moment, the lack of a frequency meant the radio had to use other means to expand its reach to the Samoan community. An option that was pursued was to use the Internet as a new platform that would complement the radio's broadcasting time, widening community access to the station during off hours. Through the Internet, SCR hopes to attract the Samoans living elsewhere in New Zealand to participate in the radio.

## **6.5 Summary and Conclusion**

### **6.5.1 Radio Sagharmatha**

RS was Nepal's first private radio station as well as the country's pioneer community radio. Being the first non-government-owned radio, its beginning was a fight against the government interest as the country's sole broadcaster. The legal battle, which was ultimately won, was fought hard on the floors of the court. It also made RS, famous internationally as well as a household name in the country.

At RS, programme making is now a very much a protected area. Radio programmes are either produced by the full-time radio producers or by the NGOs and other organisations who finance the station. Neither the local community members nor the local community bodies are involved in programme making and/ or programme planning. This was in sharp contrast to the early days of the radio when local community volunteers basically ran the station, raising funds, producing, planning as well as presenting programmes. Hence, although it was NGO-owned, the station was for all practical purposes owned by the community for their community communication.



However, as time passed, the novelty of the radio was lost, consequently decreasing the roll of volunteers and with them a decrease in programme content. At the same time, donor assistance too decreased and the pressure to sustain the station on its own grew especially given the fact the station was running at a financial loss to its owners who often had to pay from their own pockets to run the station. The challenges were solved by partnering with NGOs and other organisations that would provide programme content as well as finance. This meant, in the pursuance of economic sustainability, the station was voluntarily looking up to the demands of the NGOs and fulfilling their objectives. As the new measures were aimed at relieving their financial worries and generating enough revenue to survive and stay in the market, it also meant that the new measures had put financial interest above the community interest. Furthermore, the cost of doing that had drastically limited the role of the local community in the radio in the way they used to run the station. Hence, by favouring the NGOs over the local community members, the station has weakened the promotion of localism which was an important feature of community radio. There is therefore, a need to redress the local community participation and promote localism in the produced programmes.

Programme making opportunities are, however, given to a few 'elite' local community members chosen by the manager. They are chosen for their position in the community and for their expert knowledge. Local participation is restricted to those with whom the manager has a good rapport. The management believes that participation opportunities should be given to those who could add value to the programmes and be beneficial to the community. Participation is thus a selective process not open for ordinary community members. Participation is a management decision rather than a community right.

Local voices are often heard in the request shows and in quiz programmes only. The station management is reluctant to engage the local community in live talk shows on grounds that calls are expensive and opening up too many opportunities would be financially unhealthy for the locals who had little to spend on phone calls. However, on special occasions the station opens up its phone lines to receive calls from the local community areas that it

considered vital to have community input. Such calls were recorded and made into CDs and sent to the high government officials instead of broadcasting them on the radio for sharing with the wider community.

However, in some NGO-produced programmes, they use pre-recorded phone calls in the programmes. Hence, local participation in the radio programmes through phone calls is a choice of the station or the NGO management. The topic of discussion as well as which phone calls should be included in the programme is also an NGO decision and this fulfills their programme objectives rather than fulfilling purely community interests. This meant that it was a selective process that had restrictions. Therefore, it does not help create a free two-way participatory conversational environment that involved spontaneous community discussions.

As part of its cost-cutting policies, RS had opted to recruit only limited full-time paid staff who could be made accountable for their work, instead of depending on a large team of community volunteers who were seen as an 'unreliable' and high-spending on production. But, the cost of doing this was drastically limiting the role of the local community to access and participate in the radio in the way they used to. The station now believes that access and participation in the radio should be through interactions with its staff and the community rather than the community coming to the station to do programmes. The station has also put a time limit of one hour per day for the community members to visit the station venue. At all other times the station was closed to the locals unless there was a prior appointment. I believe that providing just one open hour a day was too short. However, if the radio station had utilised this daily hour to organise an hour of live discussion using the community who visited the station, it would have been a better strategy to keep in touch with the community and give them a participatory role in the radio.

The station's style of operation is also more formal and organised. For example, the staff are all full-time. They had to sign in for work and were accountable for what they did. The station had a well structured organisational chart. Decisions were made and delegated

through scheduled staff meetings headed by the station manager who had overall responsibility for administration, marketing, fund-raising as well as programmes. The radio also had a fixed programme schedule that was strictly followed. The station doors remained locked throughout the day except for one hour per day, which was the only time local community members could freely access the premises and meet radio staff. At other times, community access was strictly managed and restricted instead of letting it be a community privilege. Hence, gone are the days when the doors of the station were free and open to the ordinary community members to spontaneously access and participate in community radio in the way they desired. The station is now very much a formal and well-organised institution where only elite community volunteers, whom the management has chosen, have the opportunity to be part of it.

At the moment, RS has a single daily grassroots programme where local community members are invited by radio producers. As one producer told me, the programme was good and very popular but, the only drawback was its length, just 15-minutes. Although this was a good opportunity for giving the grassroots radio access and widening local participation in a popular community programme, due to the current tight programme schedule was designed to meet the needs of its sponsors, the station was unable to expand this time slot.

The station does not have any live talk-back or live phone-in programmes. As local phone calls are charged, the station does not encourage listeners to phone the radio programmes as this would be a financial cost to its listening community. RS, however, accepts many calls made to the station for song requests as well to participate in quizzes. It also from time to time, organises off-air phone-in opportunities to collect local opinion on issues of national interest. During my stay, such exercises were done to identify what locals would like to be included in the new constitution or what they thought about the monarchy in future. These were recorded on to CDs and sent to the authorities instead of airing them on radio. I believe that instead of sending them to the offices of the politicians and the bureaucrats, the content should be broadcast on the radio as it would be a great source of community views and hence, create an environment for further community participation in the radio.

The station has a plan to introduce in discussion programmes that include local participants. However, lack of space was an issue and it was believed that once the radio had completed the new building this could be accommodated. The completion of the building is still a few years away as only the foundation had been laid. This means, there will be a few more years of waiting before the local community can enjoy a live interactive discussion programme on the radio discussing issues of interest to them instead of listening to programmes that are produced by others.

The station has already made a plan to increase its transmission power. The promoted objective was to give a better service to its communities. However, many critics believed that rather than purely increasing the geographical coverage area, it was done to accommodate the political and business interests of those who back the station.

The RS board had no seat to represent the community members or the community organisations and hence, community interests were not represented. Being an NGO-owned station, the radio has no plan, either to widen its board other than to NGO members or to accommodate local community members. If local community representation was made on the board, it could have more legitimacy as a community radio. It could also have given the local community a symbolic community ownership of the station.

At present, Nepal laws do not differentiate community radios and commercial radio stations. There is also no legal mechanism in the country to monitor whether the radio is doing less community and more commercial broadcasting. The 2007 UNESCO study on community radio in Nepal also noted that in Nepal “community radio is poorly defined” and “many radios are in name only” and there was “no policy framework to guide the development of the sector”. As a result, there were many negative consequences that the sector was facing. Among them, the increase of transmission power and expanding coverage area for commercial reasons; the community radios’ ‘capture’ by the ‘elite’ and “poor representation of community groups, particularly on gender, caste and ethnic lines” risking the radio

stations and their programmes' "community orientation" and their "focus on public interest programming" getting weaker (Pringle and Subba, 2007:46).

However, as Nepal already has a strong community support infrastructure, an organisation such as ACORAB, which is already involved in different aspects of community radio development in the country as well as negotiating with the government to develop a community radio policy framework, could also be used to develop a mechanism that could keep a check on community radio programmes by auditing selected community radio programmes and radio advertising practises and identifying the role of community participation and community access; thereby redressing and guiding community stations in meeting their community roles and strengthening them as community participatory stations.

### **6.5.2 Kothmale Community Radio**

KCR has always been a government-owned station. It was one of the radio stations that were established to help the communities that were uprooted from their villages when Mahawelli Dam was built. The objective was to help the villagers get a new identity as a new community and make the radio an integral part of community development.

In the earlier days, the station was mainly donor funded and though it was government owned, government representation was only visible through the station manager who was a senior employee of SLBC, the government's national broadcasting company. The station was run by a large community volunteer base who served the radio in different capacities such as programme making, administration and caretaking. It was a time when the local community produced, planned and presented their own programmes. This gave the listeners a huge opportunity to play an active role in providing programme content. In this sense, despite being government-owned, the station was for all practical purposes, a true community radio.

However, with the end of donor assistance, and the initial objective of establishing the station achieved and subsequently, the SLBC, its parent organisation taking over the full management of the station, KCR underwent major policy changes and adopted a new

broadcasting strategy. Under the new SLBC policy, KCR had been asked to embark on a path that would provide a community radio service and at the same time generate revenue to help SLBC, reclaim some of the money it spent on KCR. Under the new path, the KCR morning session has been commercialised, thereby removing its long-held 100 per cent local community radio status. It also made the radio station a semi-commercial station rather than a full community radio and strengthened the critics' view that the station was managed to the tunes of the owner rather than to the needs of the local community.

SLBC had also implemented several cost-cutting measures as well as new financial policies that would encourage the station to come up with ways to give a financial return to SLBC. As part of the cost-cutting measures, travel costs and many programming costs were cut down. Equipment repair costs were also cut down, subsequently restricting their use due to fear of damage. The programme format was also changed making the KCR morning session a full commercial show. The creation of a full commercial morning session, instead of going for limited advertisements, blemished the station's image as a community radio that was devoid of commercial operations. Moreover, by slashing the radio's community-focused public service morning session to a 100 per cent commercial service the SLBC had effectively squeezed the non-profit making and community-focused public service programmes to the evening hours. This showed that whenever the station owners wanted a change, the interest of the owner always superseded the interest of its local community.

SLBC's financial restriction also meant that the radio station had to find alternative funding sources for programmes. Already the station was looking to bring on board more NGOs. At the time of this study, KCR was already negotiating with NGOs to produce radio programmes. As NGOs are known to use media to further their objectives, it is a foregone conclusion that any increase in their share of programme production will promote their agenda and further marginalise its communities as it will eventually reduce the station's own airtime to address community interests-something that has already been halved due to fully commercialisation of its morning show.

In its first decade, the station was also located in the town centre of a small town where the locals embraced the station as their radio. The location was, however, changed with the view that the new site would serve the whole region instead of focusing on just a small community living in few villages. Unfortunately, The SLBC's decision to change the physical location of KCR had negative effects on the community it served. Firstly, the relocation as well as the use of a new and powerful transmitter to broadcast meant the radio's new listening community was increased by hundreds of thousands of people who lived in a wider area than was originally thought as the radio community. Secondly, given the vast coverage area, the station, no longer had the ability to meet its listener demands and needs and hear their stories in the way it had done for its old community for over a decade. A producer at the KCR in fact told me that due to the need to serve several thousands, unlike those days when it served a small single community, the radio now found it difficult to meet its listener needs in the way it used to (personal communication, August 13, 2007).

The relocation was thus a change that brought an emotional blow to the local communities who had until the expansion, used the radio for their own community communications and to voice their concerns. For them the station belonged only to them as it was developed to help them adjust to their new community life. Hence, although the radio had, in the past, a home community with which it identified, the change of location and change of its format to a semi-commercial style, meant, their association with KCR was now no more than a fond memory. Gone were the days when the local villagers had the opportunity to experience their community radio giving strength to their collective voice.

Critics also point out the station's location change was made to widen the advertising market and hence it was widely believed as yet another decision that was made in the interest of the management instead of protecting its local community interest. The new enlarged radio community was hence, no better than a mere passive listener.

The SLBC's demand to do sustainable radio through the sale of airtime for unlimited numbers of advertisements meant the radio station's image as a non-profit community radio

would also be tarnished. Besides, SLBC's firm policy to close down 'unsustainable' community radio stations it owned, also meant, KCR had no choice other than to re-invent itself to 'appease' SLBC, if it wanted to remain financially sustainable. Although this new measure was aimed at relieving the financial worries and generating enough revenue to sustain and stay in the market, it also meant that the new measures were taken at the expense of local community participation- once again, putting financial interest above the community interest.

Currently, local community participation in radio programme production and in the programmes in general is limited. The SLBC has made most of its volunteers as full-time SLBC employees and made them work for a monthly salary. By doing this, the role of the local community volunteers who had earlier worked free for the radio was diminished, making it paid work that was done by full-time staff. This had thus removed their free community volunteer spirit.

Under the current policy, it was the radio manager who invited volunteers to make programmes. It was also a radio management choice to assign which programmes or work should be given to volunteers. Hence, selecting topics for programme production was no longer a free choice of the volunteers. Thus, choosing volunteers and doing work for the radio was a management decision rather than a community choice.

At present, there were a few volunteers who were regarded as 'elite' community members who had been chosen by the radio manager to produce programmes that were related to their professions. Being an 'elite' core group that was chosen by the radio manager, their participation in the radio was a given privilege rather than a community initiative and hence, could not be seen as broad-based community participation in the radio. Nonetheless, the Listeners' Club meetings that were held once every three months did provide the community members who attended the Club meetings, an opportunity to suggest programme ideas as well as give feedback on programmes that had been broadcast. The meetings were also attended by the KCR manager which meant listener discussions were shaped with his input



as well. However, the radio programmes were eventually produced and finalised by the manager along with his full-time staff in their weekly meetings and they had no obligation to take into account what was suggested by the Listeners' Club members.

Hence, discussing the programme ideas at the Listeners' Club meeting was not a guarantee that their views would be considered when making new programmes. The meeting was also not an opportunity for the radio listening community to discuss the possibility of them participating or producing radio programmes of their choice. What should be included in the programmes and who should make programmes was simply a management decision. In this regard, the club meetings were an exercise that helped the listening community to establish some form of dialogue between the community members, the radio producers and the radio manager. As a Sri Lankan media commentator, Jayewardene, fittingly observed, the government was never serious in involving the communities in community broadcasting. Right from the beginning of community radio in Sri Lanka, there was only a 'marginal involvement' of the local community in the affairs of the radio especially in programme making and production. Everything was done to fulfil the interests of SLBC (Jayawardene, 2007).

The station had no live talk-back shows or any phone-in segments in its other programmes where listeners could participate. According to the KCR manager, local telephone calls were not free and most of the communities were not financially capable to afford telephone conversations on radio, and therefore, it was not right to design programmes that would make locals spend to join programmes. Moreover, it was also pointed out that most of the listeners were rural farmers who spent most of the day in the fields and given the fact the radio transmission was closed in the evening, organising in-studio live discussions was not practical. However, I believe that if KCR had opened up for talk-back programmes, there would be many interested listeners who would be willing to participate.

Although this was a valid argument, it also, meant for the moment, there was no talk-back time on the radio and local communities could not use their radio station as a local

community forum where they could discuss their interests, express their concerns and share their thoughts with regard to their local community events. I also note that having listened to the radio programmes, I found that listener phone calls were quite often received in the song requests and in the radio quizzes.

I had discussed with the Listeners' Club, the issue of strengthening local participation in the radio programmes with their help. According to the club, it could organise community meetings that could be recorded for broadcasting. In the absence of a live phone-in show, such an arrangement could be a vital alternative to increase local participation that discussed local issues of interests. Hence, although there are ways to mobilise local community in a practical and sustainable manner so that community-interactive programmes can be broadcast at minimum cost to the station, for the moment, the radio management is not eager to pursue this line. I believe the station needed a strong commitment, a 'drive' on the part of the management to bring on board the local community. As the radio manager sits on the Listener's Club meetings and he being the chairman of the Listeners' Club as well as an employee of the SLBC, there is good reason to believe that his opinions would have much weight in making any decision regarding the radio. Hence, as critics point out, one could not eliminate the notion that the government interests would not seep in through SLBC and through the manager.

According to the secretary of the Listeners' Club, KCR being a radio owned by a government broadcasting company, it was not easy to get donor funds. Hence, the club was established to represent the 'community face' of the radio. The club therefore, played a proxy role to seek finance for the radio smoothing any rough edges the radio might have being a government-owned station.

The station has a mobile three wheeler, E-TUK TUK that could travel to different farms and towns recording interviews. However, a survey on E-TUK TUK coverage of local communities showed that it did not visit many communities and they had no high regard for it. It was described as behaving more or less like a 'tarmac friendly' vehicle that visited the

same towns on the main routes meeting same communities. By neglecting many towns from getting access to the radio station, the E Tuk Tuk was therefore, further marginalising the very communities who had already been marginalised in their remote villages. The E-TUK TUK was financed by UNESCO and it therefore remains to be seen what its fate will be once the UNESCO fund stops. Past donor-funded project experience at KCR showed that when external funding stopped, KCR stopped the services.

In order to increase radio accessibility and to keep in touch with its community members, KCR has begun using the Internet. The Internet was also seen as an effective way to reach its expatriate communities and attract local youth who were now spending more time in the cyber world or on digital technology rather than using the traditional radio. I have discussed these aspects in Chapter Eight which specifically deals with community radio using the Internet as a new platform.

### **6.5.3 Samoa Capital Radio**

SCR is NZ's first ethnic community radio station and it is owned by the Samoan Community Trust which represented the Samoan community in Wellington. SCR describes itself as the voice of Samoans in New Zealand. One of the main roles for establishing the station is to bring the Samoan community in New Zealand closer together and to celebrate their community life and help the Samoans to preserve and promote their culture and language through radio and make them feel that they are not left out and that their voice is heard over their community station. Another important objective of SCR is to disseminate the Samoan cultural knowledge to the new Samoan Kiwis born in New Zealand. In this sense, it was very much a community-focused and community-owned station.

Unfortunately, the radio is unable to serve in the way it wants to due to having no frequency of its own. The limited airtime it has is its main obstacle to serve its people. Due to having no frequency of its own, SCR had to fit in to 'spare' time that was leased by Wellington Access Radio (WAR). At the moment, the station broadcasts for a few hours daily and this means

that it is not possible for SCR to have a day-long daily broadcast schedule. As the station could not get more airtime due to WAR's tight schedule, it was also not possible to increase its broadcasting hours on WAR. This meant, by default, SCR had a built-in restriction on its capacity to use radio and reach its communities.

In the early days, SCR depended on the local community members for programme making as well as programme presenting and managing other aspects of the station. However, as time passed the novelty of community broadcasting was lost and with it the volunteer numbers dwindled, threatening the radio's ability to stay on air. This was a bad experience for the management and as a result it stopped using volunteers for producing or presenting the programmes. Today, the station was no longer open for local community members to produce their own programmes or use radio to reach their local community. All radio works, production, management or technical were now done by full-time or part-time paid staff.

In addition to the station's paid staff, programmes were also produced by NGOs and other national organisations such as the local city council, educational institutes and local churches. They also sponsor their programme airtime on radio. Content provision by such organisations was an important aspect as the radio had few staff. Thus, unlike the earlier days, instead of becoming a channel for the local community to produce their own programmes, the need to do sustainable radio meant, the station was now geared to appease sponsors and NGO's who could support its survival. Hence, unlike the earlier days, today, programme production at SCR is no longer a community effort.

SCR was partly funded by NZOA and much of it was spent on buying broadcasting time, paying rent and paying the salary for a full-time employee, the rest of the running costs had to be covered by the station. As SCR was an ethnic community radio that was broadcast in Samoan, it was also a challenge to sell airtime to advertisers who were ready to use the radio which had a very limited audience. Hence, for the radio management, a fitting strategy to maintain a sustainable station was finding sponsors who would not only sponsor programmes but also provide programme content and use radio as their medium to reach the Samoan

community.

SCR radio staff have no say over most of the programme material provided by the sponsors. The sponsors may or may not discuss the programme topic with the station in advance. However, a programme brief is given on the day of broadcast.

The SCR manager said, ideally the station would like volunteers to do all of its programming, but the reality was that past experience showed there was no guarantee that it could depend on a volunteer force who got no financial reward and had no obligation to work. According to him, the current programme format was aimed at sustaining the station on air everyday rather than with a view to increase the role of the community volunteers. The Manager's monthly salary came from the income of the radio rather than through NZOA assistance. This meant that the manager would naturally have an interest to sell more airtime as his monthly income depended on radio revenues earned through airtime sale. Hence, it was more likely that the radio be used as a means to earn more revenue than in making airtime available for non-revenue making programmes. I believe that sustainability should not be measured in financial terms only as it involves social and human capital too.

It was also worth noting that the community trust that owned the station gave huge powers to the station manager. For example, it was the sole responsibility of the manager to find advertisers or seek sponsors and negotiate with them to finalise forthcoming programmes. It was also his responsibility to recruit new staff or to make the radio's strategic plans. The manager also decided who, in the community, should be invited or not, to come and make radio programmes. According to the manager, only those in the community who were professionals and who could add value to the programmes should be given the opportunity. In this regard, the manager has 'recruited' some 'elite' volunteers from the Samoan community to produce programmes that are related to their profession. The volunteer involvement in SCR was thus a selective process that was carried out only by the manager.

It was also the manager who hosted the talk-back programmes and selected the topics for the

programmes. The manager was also the host for the weekly live interview programmes where the station brought in important local personalities and national politicians to discuss matters of mutual interest to the Samoan community. Hence, as there was no involvement of local community members in managing the shows, running the show was also a decision of the station manager.

The decrease in opportunities for the communities to participate freely in their community radio station diminishes the station's community characteristics. Therefore, as a community radio station whose interest lies with the local community, there is a social responsibility of the station to prioritise community involvement. Hence, minimising the station's operational costs by maximising advertiser-supported or NGO-sponsored programmes did not bring the radio closer to their communities or help the communities to identify with their stations. Contrary to the very ideals of community radio, this strategy isolated the role of the local community from the 'life' of the radio. I believe that by embracing a strategy that brings the radio station closer to their financiers, in fact, places them more in line with the advertiser-dependent commercial stations.

However, an important way the station keeps in touch with the community is through its talk-back shows. However, due to programme time limitations due to the radio's airtime limitations, the station was unable to expand the talk-back shows to meet the needs of most of the participants despite a community demand to have more talk time. At present, due to the restriction of broadcast times only to mornings, only those at home who had no work or were retired participated in the talk shows. This was thus a restriction on the participants and could not be solved unless the station had its own frequency.

Although there was no local community effort in programme production, the local community presence in the radio station was felt through its listener talk-back programmes. In addition to talk-back shows, the local community is also kept engaged with the station through the live phone-in segments that are included in most of its NGO-produced programmes. This enables listeners to ask questions and clarify areas in which they need

additional information. By doing this, SCR is able to add local voices to the programmes and bring in specific local issues that are relevant to its local community. However, the interactive segment is short and listeners have little time to discuss their questions. As a result, often SCR programmes ended up with several listeners unable to get answers to their questions. The listeners also have an option to phone the radio during the station's off-air hours and ask the questions. The station then forwards the questions to the organisation that produced the programme so that the issues can be addressed in the next programme.

In conclusion, I believe that in many ways, for SCR, it is the limitations on frequency use that is hindering community access and participation. In order to redress this issue, and the fact that acquiring a frequency is still years away, the radio management has an ambitious plan to use the Internet as a means to increase local access and participation in the radio. The Internet is also seen as a way to bring on board the participation of Samoans living in other areas of New Zealand who currently listen to radio through Internet live streams. I have discussed the station's use of the Internet in providing greater access and participation in chapter eight.

# CHAPTER SEVEN

## Analysing the News

### 7.1 Introduction

In Chapter Six, I discussed the three selected radio stations through the eyes of the staff who worked there. All my findings in that chapter were based on interviews that I had carried out, especially with the managers, producers, presenters and the radio volunteers at the three stations. Through their views, I identified the role of each station, its objectives, how it kept in touch with the community, how it brought community issues to the public eye and gave a voice to the community and how the radio helped the community to participate in the radio programmes.

An important way in which community news and issues were brought to the attention of the community was through news bulletins. Giving local news substantial ‘access’ to the radios’ news bulletins also adds strength to the fact that the radio stations are fulfilling an important community responsibility. The premise being, the more local community news is disseminated by a radio station, the more effective it becomes as a true voice to its community.

Hence, in this chapter, the objective is to discuss the nature of news dissemination by the three selected radio stations, namely, Radio Sagharmatha, Kothmale Community Radio and Samoa Capital Radio. I believe that analysing the news bulletins is a complementary aspect that gives further support to what I have discussed in Chapter Six.

In this chapter, I have included a brief introduction to content analysis as a quantitative research method. The chapter then highlights how this content analysis was designed, identifying the key focus as well as explaining the coding procedure I had undertaken for this analysis. The chapter also highlights some of the limitations of this analysis.



## **7.2 Content analysis as a quantitative method**

Berelson defines content analysis as a “research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication” (Berelson, 1952:147). Krippendorff, however, notes that Berelson’s definition has a narrow focus in the sense that his definition insists only on the quantification of the content. Although “quantification is important in many scientific endeavors, qualitative methods have proven successful as well”, especially in analysing propaganda content, as well as discourse analysis among others (Krippendorff, 2004:19). Krippendorff also points out that in Berelson’s definition, the reference to ‘manifest’ was “intended to ensure that the coding of the content analysis data be reliable; this requirement literally excludes ‘reading between the lines’ ” (Krippendorff, 2004:20) which is now often practised by analysts “with remarkable intersubjective agreement” (Krippendorff, 2004: 20). Unlike the ‘manifest content’, which is the content whose “meaning is easily understood or recognised”, by “reading between the lines”, what is uncovered is the ‘latent content’ whose meanings are present in the content but are hidden and hence cannot be readily seen (McMurray, Pace and Scott, 2004:207-208).

In defining content analysis, for Krippendorff, it is “a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use” (Krippendorff, 2004:18). The inclusion of ‘replicability’ and ‘validity’ in this definition fulfills Berelson’s reference to be ‘objective’ and ‘systematic’ in his definition (Krippendorff, 2004:19). In both definitions, what is clear is that they are similar and complementary and addresses the practical aspects of the content under study. In Berelson’s definition the focus is more on the text whereas in Krippendorff’s definition, by including the words ‘other meaningful matter’, the use of content analysis has been widened to include in addition to text, other media content such as “art, images, maps, sounds, signs” among others (Krippendorff, 2004:19). Hence, as Holsti, who defines content analysis as “any technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages” (Holsti, 1969:14) notes, what is noteworthy is that the changes in the definitions are a testimony to the fact that “definitions of content analysis have tended to

change over time with developments in technique and with application of the tool itself to new problems and types of materials” (Holsti, 1969:2).

From the above definitions, what is clear is that in using content analysis as a research technique, the aim of the researcher is to be ‘objective’, ‘systematic’ and search for ‘generality’ (Holsti, 1969: 3) and that it is a tool “developed specifically for investigating any problem in which the content of communication serves as the basis of inference” (Holsti, 1969:2).

### **7.3 Designing content analysis**

#### **7.3.1 Sampling and sampling period**

As this study is focused on three selected community radio stations, in the news analysis, I have used only the news belonging to the three stations. My news sample consisted of all the news bulletins that were broadcast by each station within a period of two ‘composite weeks’ (Shoemaker and Cohen, 2006:24). The two weeks were ‘constructed’ by taking a single day from each week. Thus, it was a Sunday from the first week, a Monday from the second week, a Tuesday from the third week until I was able to ‘construct’ two weeks. If a radio station was not broadcasting on any day of the week, then the day “following that day” was selected (Shoemaker and Cohen, 2006:24; Wimmer and Dominick, 2011:163). The two-week period was ‘constructed’ from a time period that spanned 14 weeks. The objective of having two ‘constructed weeks’ was to minimise the effects on the news content arising from major single events such as festivals or exhibitions. If that happened, it might last for a few adjacent days and could subsequently show a distorted coverage of some news items in some selected categories, if two adjacent weeks were taken.

As this study was not an analysis of how the selected stations had covered a specific news topic or a specific news event that was common to all the stations, I decided that there was no need to analyse the news bulletins of all the stations in the same period of time. This study was focused on identifying each individual radio’s own performance and how it served its

community, there was therefore, no need to study them in the same time period. Furthermore, as each station was located in a different country, it was more practical to study them separately in different periods. The period of listening and recording for Radio Sagharmatha and Kothmale Community Radio was from 20 June to 20 October 2007. The period of listening and recording news from Samoa Capital Radio was carried out from 25 July to 15 November 2008. All the news bulletins were recorded on to tapes and later translated by nationals from Samoa, Nepal and Sri Lanka.

### **7.3.2 Reliability**

As Weber (1990) notes, “in content analysis, reliability problems usually grow out of ambiguity of word meanings, category definitions, or other coding rules” (Weber, 1990:15). Hence, reliability being an important aspect of any content analysis (Wimmer and Dominick, 1997), I have given particular importance to naming and defining the categories and later in coding the different news items under the relevant categories. Before I began categorising the recorded news items for the actual news analysis, I listened to the recorded news bulletins of each radio for three separate days. This was in one sense a test trial. In each test trial, a day’s news item for each radio was categorised. This exercise gave me a clear picture of how I should categorise the news subject matter for each station. By doing the trials, I was able to address the coding differences and revise the coding of categories and this ensured reliability of the coding process. As Weber, (1990:23) suggests:

The best test of the clarity of category definitions is to code a small sample of the text. Testing not only reveals ambiguities in the rules, but also often leads to insights suggesting revisions of the classification scheme.

It was only after the manually done test trials that I completely hand-coded the entire news content. Each radio was done separately as each one was a separate analysis. In addition to the test trials that were also done manually, to identify the subject matter categories, I had also taken “a subsample of the data” amounting to 25% of the total data I had collected (Wimmer and Dominick, 2011:172). This was done to assess the reliability of my coding process. In taking a subsample, I coded a total of 415 news items from the three radio

stations. Out of this total, the news sample for RS was 290 items. This was 26% of the total news items that I had recorded (n=1116); For KCR, I had chosen a sample of 25 news items and this was 25% of the total news items recorded for the radio (n=100). For SCR, I had chosen 100 news items. This was 25% of the total news items that I had recorded (n=387). The coding was repeated to ensure it was done in the same way. Wimmer and Dominick suggest that a sample of data between 10% and 25% is an acceptable level “to calculate an inter-coder reliability coefficient” (Wimmer and Dominick, 2011:172).

The coding of all the news was hand-coded entirely by me. As I have already mentioned, the sampling period was short, and the coded categories were pretty straight-forward and the fact that I have been involved in content analysis of news before, it was not difficult to do the coding myself. List (2002) suggests that there is a high degree of uniformity and reliability in coding if it is done by a single person. As it was a single person doing the coding, it was irrelevant to identify any inter-coder coding differences. I, being the single coder, made every effort to do the coding very carefully in order to minimise any “individual inconsistencies” such as “carelessness, openness to distractions... or the tendency to relax performance standards when tired” (Krippendorff, 2004:215).

As I had done two separate coding exercises for each radio station by myself, I had to use the inter-coder reliability test  $C.R = 2M/N1+N2$  as an intra-coder reliability test where M is the total number of coding decisions that I made in the two coding exercises and N1 and N2 are the number of coding decisions I made separately in the two coding exercises (Holsti, 1969: 140; Wimmer and Dominick, 2011:172).

The two coding exercises when tested for intra-coder reliability showed a consistent number of 1.00 except for Crime news on RS which had a reliability coefficient of 0.95. The consistency was not surprising given the fact that my sample was not large enough to make me forget the coding decisions I had earlier done. Besides, the decisions I had taken in my initial coding exercises, were also quite fresh in my mind and hence, I recalled what I had coded during the first round. Furthermore, I merged all the sub categories under 15 main

subject categories that were pretty straight-forward and clearly defined making it quite easy to identify exactly which category a news item belonged to.

However, I do accept that due to time limitations, I was unable to allow a huge time-gap between the two coding exercises and it could be argued that a shorter time-gap between the two coding exercises may not yield the best result. This argument has strength as Krippendorff too notes that “stability is the degree to which a process is unchanging over time. It is measured as the extent to which a measuring or coding procedure yields the same results on repeated trials”. Hence, it is desirable that “one observer rereads, recategorises, or reanalyses, the same text, usually after some time has elapsed” (Krippendorff, 2004:215). In the content analysis, I had done, given the straight-forwardness as well as the broadness of the identified categories, I believe that there would not be much of a difference even if it had been repeated after leaving a bigger time-gap between the two coding exercises.

However, I do accept that if a second coder was used, there could be some inter-coder differences in categorising. But, again, given the straight-forwardness, as well as the broadness of the identified categories, I believe that the inter-coder reliability would not make a huge difference that would affect the result of this content analysis. Although using two different coders would give a better outcome, I should also note here Krippendorff’s remarks that even “two observers of the same event who hold the same conceptual system, prejudice, or interest may well agree on what they see but still be objectively wrong” (Krippendorff, 2004:213).

As Holsti notes, “defining an *acceptable level of reliability* is one of the many problems in content analysis for which there is no single solution” (Holsti, 1969:142). It is only “when categories and units of analysis become more complex, they may yield results that are both more useful and less reliable” (Holsti, 1969:142).

### **7.3.3 Limitations of content analysis**

Although content analysis is widely used as a quantitative analytical tool, especially in the study of media, it is not a true scientific process. This is because, in the analysis, value judgments had to be made in coding different items to different categories (Deacon, Golding, Pickering & Murdock, 1999).

Despite the limitations and disadvantages, content analysis still enables one to systematically code the content and subsequently enable the content to be measured in a mathematical form. In media research, it “is a popular technique” that helps to investigate the content of media (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011:179), identifying and quantifying the frequency of a certain occurrence or event or the existence or the lack of a certain feature or identifying the trends and patterns in the media content that is being analysed (Deacon, Golding, Pickering & Murdock, 1999). Hence, as a tool that is easy and simple to quantify and analyse media content, it is a popular method of media research (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011).

In this analysis, I focused only on the dissemination of the local news items. The analysis period was only three months. For these two reasons, I was only able to give a peripheral view on the intensity or the volume of local news that was used in the news bulletins. Hence, my content analysis was a very limited one.

Furthermore, this content analysis covered a period of two ‘composite’ weeks. I believe this was a short period that was not enough to prevent distorted and biased images arising due to the appearance of major events. As there are events such as election coverage, disasters or even festivals that may last more than a few weeks and sometimes months, a period of even three months might not be enough to remove news biases and establish uniformity in news coverage. The ideal way for analysing the news content of any radio station is to continuously record radio content of the selected radio station, using a longitudinal approach, which means studying the content for a longer period of time, (Baker, 1988). A longitudinal approach spanning about one year would have been a good time-span to get a better picture of the nature of the news disseminated over a longer period of time. However, due to my

time limitations and taking into consideration, my own financial ability to cover the costs involved, taking a three-month period was the best available option.

Content analysis also shows only what is in the content. This means, for example, it would not show all factors that had influenced a news director in deciding why a certain news item was featured in a news bulletin. In a content analysis, one might see the absence of a certain type of news or news about a certain small local suburb. As to why it was not featured could only be identified from interviewing the radio staff who were responsible for producing news. This shows that a qualitative approach such as interviewing is also needed to identify editorial decisions that influence the news director in deciding what goes on air as news of the day or why a certain community is not featured in the news.

I also note that the main objective of my research into the three selected community radio stations was not a full content analysis per se to identify a full panorama of news dissemination by each selected radio station. The content analysis in this study is limited in nature and only sheds light on one aspect of this study, which is identifying the focus given in the news to the local community issues and giving support to what I have discussed in Chapter Six.

I believe that doing a full content analysis is separate and a major study on its own. For such a comprehensive content analysis, there is a need to do a longitudinal study spanning about a year. Furthermore, such an analysis also needs to go into detail identifying the nature of news dissemination within the sub categories of each main category. Hence, a limited news analysis such as this one which covered a period of about three months could not do justice to making conclusive generalisations on the nature of news dissemination and news selection in the selected stations.

In this content analysis, I coded all the contents by myself. This meant there was no opportunity for in-put from a second coder. In this sense, this was an in-built limitation of this analysis.

I have also not discussed my findings with a selected group of listeners. I believe that discussing the nature of news dissemination with listeners is an important aspect as it would identify whether the listeners are satisfied with the type of news that is available on their community radio or whether they need any other news in addition to what they now receive or whether they are “more interested in positive or negative” news (Shoemaker and Cohen, 2006:32). Hence, an absence of these aspects in this content analysis could be seen as another limitation.

For a broad-based content analysis of the selected radio stations, showing the full nature of their news distribution and news concentration as well as identifying their sources of news, it is also important to do a cross-analysis of news from other media such as newspapers, TV and national radio to identify how much of the news was taken from these media. As such identification was not done in this content analysis, it was not possible to identify empirically, the exact number of news items the individual radio stations had obtained from other media sources. Hence, this was another limitation.

#### **7.4 Key focus of content analysis**

Through the use of this content analysis, I aimed to get answers to the following areas:

1. Identifying the types of news
2. Identifying news sources
3. Identifying the news distribution within the community.
4. Identifying the volume of community news that was used.

#### **7.5 Coding and categorisation of the news content**

There are two methods that are generally followed in coding of any content for content analysis (Krippendorff, 2004; Wimmer and Dominick, 2011). One is doing ‘a priori coding’ which means categories for coding are established before the analysis where “data are collected, based on some theoretical or conceptual rationale” (Wimmer and Dominick, 2011: 166) . The other method is “emergent coding” where subject categories are coded after doing a test run or “a preliminary examination of the data” that had been collected (Wimmer and



Dominick, 2011:165). In identifying how I should develop news subject categories for this analysis, I studied how news categories had been developed by Shoemaker and Cohen in their analysis of news content in ten different countries (Shoemaker and Cohen, 2006:41-44). In addition, I also referred to a list of news subject categories that was developed by SF Gate for its “news engine” to archive news for the San Francisco Chronicle. The SF Gate news categories are available on ‘cervisa.com’, a website belonging to John Coates, a former general manager of SF Gate (cervisa website, n.d).

Having studied the news categories that were developed by Shoemaker and Cohen, I then listened to each station’s news, noting the news subject categories that emerged. For each station, I developed a separate list of news subject categories. The three lists were then combined as a single list that covered all the subject categories that were used by the three stations. Except for minor differences, the subject-matter categories I identified were quite similar to the categories that were provided by Shoemaker and Cohen (2006).

However, I made some modifications. For example, I kept Arts and Culture as one category and Entertainment as another category. Agriculture and Farming was added as a new category as two of the radio stations I studied were close to rural farming communities. I also separated Health and Welfare into two categories so that I could identify the interest given to welfare issues. As Holsti notes, “subject-matter categories are usually developed specifically for the problem at hand; thus their variety is limited only by the number of different substantive questions one seeks to answer with content data” (Holsti, 1969:104).

As the purpose of doing this content analysis was to identify the types of news that was broadcast by the selected radio stations and to identify how much of a focus was given in the news to the local community, the categories were chosen to fulfill the needs of this content analysis. In this regard, as a first step, news was classified into different subject-matter categories that I had clearly defined before I began the analysis. This was done to ensure there was “consistency in the classification procedure” (Weber, 1990:12). As a second step, all the items in the subject-matter categories were further categorised into a second set of

categories that classified news into Local News, Regional News, National News and International News. These two steps were done separately. In the first step, all the items were categorised so that they were placed in one of the subject-matter categories, ensuring that all the coded items were 'exhaustive', meaning no item was left out. They were also 'mutually exclusive' meaning each news item was placed in "one and only one category" (Wimmer and Dominick, 2011:166; Weber, 1990:23). Once the subject-matter categories had been identified and all the news items coded under the relevant subject, I carried out the second step where all the coded items belonging to the different subject-matter categories were further coded under the second set of categories which I have explained below in section 7.5.2. In doing the second step, I followed the same procedure as I had done in the categorisation process in step one to ensure that all the items were made mutually exclusive and exhaustive.

In coding the content, all the 'raw data' was "systematically transformed and aggregated" (Holsti, 1969:94) to different subject categories. The unit of analysis for the news was the news item. Each news item was measured in minutes.

### **7.5.1 Subject-matter categories**

The Subject Matter categories are as follows:

1. Agriculture and Farming: This category includes news about fruits, crops, meat and dairying, infrastructure development on agriculture and farming and any other similar news.
2. Arts and Culture: This category includes news about arts, fashion, art, culture, and other related news.
3. Business and Economic Development: This category includes news about businesses, trades, tourism and tourist arrivals, taxes, inflation, business development, infrastructure development, employment and any other business or finance-related news.
4. Crime: Any immediate news about arrests, theft, murder, assaults, corruption, money laundering, police activities at crime scenes as well as police statements giving

information about a crime-related case or situation or any other crime-related news that was not on-going as a court case.

5. Disaster: Disaster news included news about road accidents, house fires, other man-inflicted as well as natural disasters such as floods, and other similar news.

6. Education: News about academic developments, students, school news including school extra-curricular activities and school sports were included.

7. Entertainment: This category includes concerts and music shows, celebrity news and other similar news.

8. Environment: Under this category, I have included news about waste and its problems, weather, pollution, environment management and other environment-related news.

9. Health: This category includes news about hospitals, pharmacies, health services, health service providers, diseases and epidemics, population issues and other health-related news.

10. Politics: Under politics, I have included any news that was related to the party in government, opposition parties and their activities, visiting foreign politicians, elections, governance, constitution, parliamentary news and other related political news.

11. Religion: This category includes news about religions, religious festivals, church news and other activities that were directly related to religion.

12. Sports: Under this category, I have identified the common sports and include hockey, tennis, rugby, football, cricket, news about sports development and any other sports news.

13. Transport and Travel: This category included news about traffic, traffic management, air and sea travel, all types of transport-related infrastructure development and other similar news.

14. Welfare: The category includes news about the poor, the homeless, services provided at slums for the betterment of the poor, donations given to the needy, provision of shelter and other housing issues and other similar news.

15. Law and Order: Under this category, I have included news about crime

prevention, law enforcement, police training and their activities that are not directly related to a crime-related case or a crime scene, news about on-going court cases, news from judges and other court-related news.

As the intention of doing this content analysis was to identify how the radio news bulletins covered the main 15 subject categories, I have not gone into depth identifying and/ or analysing how the radio stations covered the news under different sub-categories that could have been developed from the areas that I have identified for each of the above main subject categories. The purpose of identifying the subject areas was to explain in detail the types of news that I had categorised under each main subject category.

### **7.5.2 Other categories**

As I stated earlier, the main purpose of this content analysis was to identify the nature of the coverage of local community news by the three radio stations in their local news bulletins. This being the case, in addition to classifying under 15 subject-matter categories, I further classified all the subject-matter categories under a second set of categories.

The second set of categories includes the following:

- **7.5.2.1 National news.** In categorising the national news, I used the following criteria. If the subject discussed in the news item could be attributed to a government office, institute or agency based in the country's capital city, then the item was categorised as a national news item. Any news item that could be attributed to a national political leader who was in or out of the government or in the opposition was also categorised as national news provided the statement made had a national interest or a national implication. A statement made by a national leader while he or she was in the same geographic location as the selected community radio and if the news had a national interest then it was also categorised as a national news item instead of categorising it as local news. Similarly, any news that involved the activities of political parties, government and national agencies, national institutes, public companies as well as

major businessmen and famous and renowned personalities in any geographic location of the country was also regarded as national news if the news item had a nationwide appeal. Any bi-lateral news from foreign heads of government and ministers of foreign countries visiting the country was also included as national news.

- **7.5.2.2 Local community news.** In this analysis, local news meant mainly the news items that belonged to or were reported from the geographic area where the selected station was located. In this sense, even if a national politician, an official from a national office, agency or a public company or a famous celebrity or a foreign politician made an announcement or a remark while he or she was in the same geographic location as the selected community radio and if it had a local focus- such as, for example, visiting a local school- then the news item was regarded as local news.
- **7.5.2.3 Regional news.** News and events that happened in any part of the country other than the local towns and villages to which the selected radio signals were beamed. However, in choosing the regional news, I have not included those news items that had a national appeal as described in the “national news” category.
- **7.5.2.4 International news.** Any news item that was reported about or from a foreign country. In analysing the news items belonging to SCR, I categorised all the news items that belonged to Samoa as international news. As SCR broadcasts mainly for the listening interests of the Samoans residing in the greater Wellington region in New Zealand, Samoan news coming from Samoa could not be considered as Samoan community news no matter how close a relationship there was with the SCR community.
- **7.5.2.5 Focused towns.** The purpose of identifying the towns from which the news was reported was mainly aimed at mapping out the local community news coverage. By identifying the number of local towns that were covered in the local community news,

one would also see how wide or extensive was the coverage given to the small towns that were located within the radio station's coverage area.

- **7.5.2.6 Source of news.** This was one of the categories that I wanted to identify. Unfortunately, in the recorded news bulletins, there were many news items that had not identified the news source. Therefore, there was no identification of how or where the radio station had received the news item. During my interviews two radio managers told me they received local news from local community contacts such as local schools, hospitals, local clubs, regional newspapers and from local government officials based in the community. I had categorised the source for all the local community news under one collective name: "Local Media Sources". According to the three managers, the sources for all the national news and international news were from national newspapers, national radio stations, TV stations, news agency reports and Internet news websites. Hence, I had collectively categorised the source for all these news as 'Other Media Sources'.

## **7.6 Results: a discussion**

As I mentioned earlier, the main purpose of the content analysis was to identify how much of a focus was given to disseminate local news that belonged to the radios' own locality. As each station was regarded as a separate case in this study, in news analysis, I kept to the same principle. This being the case, no attempt was made to cross analyse the news nature.

### **7.6.1 Radio Sagharmatha**

RS broadcasts three different types of news bulletins. One is its morning magazine programme called "Newspapers Reading" which is as the name suggests involves reading news items from the country's major national newspapers. The programme is aired once in the morning. The second is BBC news in Nepalese which is broadcast once daily. The third is its own news bulletins which the radio staff compile on their own. For the purpose of this

analysis, I have used the latter. Each day, RS broadcast a total of ten such news bulletins per day. During the two-week period of this analysis there were a total of 88 news bulletins. The number of news items for the two-week period totalled to 1116 news items and accounted for 1238 minutes of airtime.

#### ***7.6.1.1 Distribution of news***

Table One (Appendix One) shows, RS had given the least coverage to local community news, just 1.8 per cent of its total news time. The coverage given to regional, national and international news was significantly higher. RS had given about 63 per cent of its total news time to cover national news and 4.6 per cent to cover regional news. A further 29.2 per cent was used to cover international news. The local news coverage therefore, showed that radio station was unable to give any significant coverage to the local news.

Table Two (Appendix 1) shows how the radio allocated airtime to cover news under different subject categories. The percentages shown in this table for each subject category were calculated by using the total airtime each radio had utilised to broadcast its own news bulletins. The table shows that out of the fifteen identified news subject categories, RS covered its local community news only in five areas. A glance at the different subject categories shows that the single most covered category by RS was politics. RS used 65 per cent (i.e., 51% National and 14% International) of its total airtime used for news to cover political news. Although politics was the most covered subject for RS, it also showed that the radio had not given any news coverage to its local community politics or to its local government. However, considerably large coverage was given to covering international political news. For example, RS had given about 14 per cent to report international political news.

In the socio-economic sector, important areas for any community would include health, education and agriculture and farming. The news coverage given to these areas, however, showed that RS coverage in these areas was fairly insignificant. For example, RS had not covered agriculture and farming from a local perspective. Table 2 shows that in its coverage

of education and health news that was focused on the local community, RS had a low percentage, covering only 0.3 per cent of local news on education.

An important area worth noting was the sports category. As sports is a popular activity in any community, big or small, poor or rich and irrespective of socio-economic or cultural differences, I expected to see good sports coverage, focusing on how the community members had performed on the field. Unfortunately, sports too did not receive adequate coverage. For example, RS had given no coverage to local sports while it had given 1.1 per cent to cover national sports. However, over 15 per cent of its total news airtime was allocated to cover international sports. I would say that international sports received good coverage compared to national or local sports.

In addition to the news bulletins, RS broadcasts a morning and an evening bulletin of community notices. Although all the notices were paid advertisements, the notices contained information of different events in the city. In this sense, they were quite similar to the news bulletins. However, although the community notices were broadcast as a short bulletin and contained a lot of community information, I have not included them in my news analysis as they were not considered news bulletins.

I discussed my news results with the radio programme director who was also the news director. My discussion was particularly focused on the local news dissemination. According to him, the station was now more of a community public radio and this meant RS had to give focus to other important national issues as well. He also said, being a station that was based in the capital city and whose community included the main political leaders, in many ways, RS could not divorce itself from national politics as they too belonged to the Kathmandu community (G. Luitel, personal communication, 14 November, 2007).

#### ***7.6.1.2 News distribution among the local towns***

In analysing the distribution of news further, I identified the number of small local towns and major town suburbs that were featured in the news during the period of analysis. Out of a



total of 1116 news items, about half the items (534) originated from Kathmandu City and almost all the 'city' news was national government news rather than the local community. Besides, Kathmandu City, there were only two news items that were reported from Lalitpur, a small town in Kathmandu Valley. News coverage of local towns showed only Kathmandu City was covered and the other small towns and villages in the whole Valley of Kathmandu- the radio station's community of interest- went unreported.

### ***7.6.1.3 News sources***

Similar to the coverage given to the local towns, there were few news items that were received from local sources. For example, RS had only 14 news items that could be attributed to a local community source. The rest of the news was received from other media sources such as national radio stations, television and national newspapers.

RS has few news reporters. However, they work at the radio station mostly in compiling the news bulletins using the received media releases and from other media sources. According to the programme director, for economic reasons, his reporters rarely go out of the station unless there is a real need. Travel costs were according to him, kept to a minimum (G. Luitel, personal communication, 14 November, 2007).

### **7.6.2 Kothmale Community Radio**

The KCR broadcasts two daily news bulletins. One was a local community news bulletin that was produced by the station. The other was the SLBC-produced national news bulletin that was relayed live on the radio. During the period of this analysis, KCR aired 32 SLBC networked national news bulletins giving a total of 760 airtime minutes or around 92 per cent of the total news minutes. In the same period, KCR broadcast only 28 news bulletins of its own, containing just 100 news stories. The station gave a total of 73.3 minutes to broadcast its own news bulletins or about 8 per cent of the total news minutes. This meant that most of the news that was broadcast over KCR was actually SLBC-produced national news. Although I have given the SLBC-relayed news as a percentage of the total news minutes of

KCR, for the purpose of analysing the KCR news bulletins, I have however, omitted the SLBC relayed news bulletins. The news analysis was thus focused only on the news bulletin that was produced at KCR.

#### *7.6.2.1 Distribution of news*

Table One (Appendix One) shows the local community news bulletin that was prepared by the station. As the table shows, KCR gave about 16.7 per cent of its total news coverage to local community news. Although local news received a low coverage, the station gave 83.26 per cent of its total news airtime to cover the Central Region. A higher percent of regional news showed that despite having a special news bulletin that was focused purely on the local front, KCR was unable to give significant coverage to local news.

The station's own news bulletin had no international news on its local community news bulletin. International news was provided by the national SLBC news bulletins which were relayed by KCR.

Table 2 (Appendix 1) shows how the radio station allocated airtime to cover news under different subject categories. The percentages shown in this table for each subject category was calculated by using the total airtime each radio had utilised to broadcast its own news bulletins. The table shows that out of the 15 identified news subject categories KCR had news in six categories only. A total of nine categories that I identified went unreported. This showed a lack of capacity and resources to cover diverse news.

As Table 2 shows, in the socio-economic sector, which includes important areas such as health, education, agriculture and farming, there was fairly insignificant coverage. For example, there was almost no coverage given to agriculture and farming and these areas also had no local perspective. As a community radio in a rural farming and agricultural region of the country, this was an important area.

The Table also shows that in covering health and education, a very low percentage of coverage was given to cover these areas giving a local perspective. The station had in fact, no

education news that was focused on its local community. However, by contrast, the station was able to give considerable news coverage (11.4%) to cover educational news from the Central District.

KCR gave about 2.7 per cent of its news time to cover local community health. Unlike education news, the station had not given a regional or national coverage to health news. In KCR local news bulletin, sport was another area that was inadequately covered. Local community sport received a total of 1.1 per cent of news airtime. In comparison, sports activities from the country as a whole received a coverage of 7.4 per cent even though there was no local connection.

During my discussion with the KCR manager, I highlighted the nature of news dissemination, particularly, on the nature of local news dissemination and the high concentration of Central Province news. According to him, 16 per cent coverage of local news for a period of two weeks was satisfactory given the fact the station had to rely totally on outside sources for news. According to him, Central Province news was prominent because the main source of news was a Kandy newspaper. Although Kandy City did not receive radio signals, Kandy being the capital of Central Province to which the central hills and Kothmale also belonged, he said, giving a wider coverage to Kandy was community relevant.

KCR also had its rickshaw, the E-TUK TUK, which could have been easily utilized to gather local news from its small village communities. However, it was used in programme production and narrow-casting radio programmes to village communities. According to the manager, E-TUK TUK use for news production was an option but since local news was already available in the newspapers and from community sources, its use as a vehicle for programme production and to bring in more local community participation in programmes was a better option for the moment (S. Wijesinghe, personal communication, September 9, 2007).

I should also note here that in addition to the local news items that were broadcast on the news bulletins, KCR also broadcast community notices in between programmes. The community notices were broadcast during the morning and evening sessions as well. Although the community notices were paid advertisements on the radio, such notices give out information to the community and hence had the characteristics of news. However, I have not included them in my news analysis.

#### ***7.6.2.2 News Sources***

KCR has a network of local news sources. Amongst the identified local news sources are police, local school principals, officials at the local hospital and other government officials both local and national who were stationed in the Kothmale region. Despite this rich source list, during the period of this news analysis, I found that KCR had not broadcast a news item that was obtained from its local sources.

During my interview with the radio manager, he said most of the news was obtained from the regional newspaper which was published in Kandy. Kandy being the region's capital, the newspaper had daily coverage of its region including the Kothmale region. Hence, even the local community news that was broadcast by the radio belonged to the Kandy newspaper. The station did not use Internet websites as a source of news (S. Wijesinghe, personal communication, September 9, 2007).

News items were written by hand by full-time salaried staff using the regional newspaper from Kandy. The KCR staff who wrote the news bulletin had no training in news writing. Each news bulletin could be aired on the radio once the manager had signed the bulletin (S. Wijesinghe, personal communication, September 9, 2007). Hence, although the news gathering process was weak and poorly managed, broadcasting of news was carefully managed and supervised by the manager.

#### ***7.6.2.3 News distribution among the local towns***

The coverage of different towns within the region of KCR showed that out of a total of 100

news items, there were 18 news items that were reported from three small towns- Gampola (10), Ulapane (6) and Hatton (2). These three towns were described as belonging to the station's community. Almost all the remaining news was reported from Kandy, the capital city of the Central Province.

### **7.6.3 Samoa Capital Radio**

During the two-week period, SCR broadcast 30 news bulletins which had a total of 387 news items. Table One (Appendix One) shows SCR used just 8.81 per cent of its total airtime to cover local community news. The coverage given to non-local news, that is regional, national and international news, was significantly higher. SCR used 26.7 per cent of its news airtime to cover national news, 26.35 per cent for regional news and 38.12 per cent to cover international news. As the table shows the coverage of local news was poor, while the coverage given to non-local news was significantly higher. This showed that although the station identified as a community radio station, it was unable to give adequate focus to their local community events.

Samoa Capital Radio did not broadcast any networked news bulletins or rebroadcasts of news bulletins that were produced by other broadcasters. However, until 2007, the radio station had a weekly news feed that was aired live from Samoa. The programme was cancelled due to the high costs. According to the radio manager, it was a popular programme and he certainly would like to restart it if there was enough revenue to spend on the programme (T. A. Moresi, personal communication, 28 November, 2009).

#### ***7.6.3.1 Distribution of news***

Table 2 (Appendix 1) shows how the radio allocated airtime to cover news under different subject categories. The percentages shown in this table for each subject category were calculated by using the total airtime each radio had utilised to broadcast its own news bulletins. The table shows that out of the 15 identified news subject categories, SCR had local news only in six areas. A glance at the different subject categories in Table 2

(Appendix 1) shows that for SCR, the single most covered category was politics. Out of its total airtime used for broadcasting news, 34 per cent of it was consumed by politics. However, this 34 per cent was used to cover national and international political news only; each of these two categories receiving about 17 per cent of the total political news coverage. In the coverage of politics, a significant observation was the absence of any focus given to the politics of the local community and the local government.

As mentioned earlier, in the socio-economic sector, important areas for any community would include health, education and agriculture and farming. The news coverage given to these areas, however, showed that SCR had no coverage at all. An important area was the sports category. As sports is a popular activity in any community, big or small, poor or rich and irrespective of socio-economic or cultural differences, I expected to see good sports coverage by the local stations focusing on how their community members had performed on the field. Besides, New Zealand, being a sporting nation, and given the fact that there are several Samoan sports personalities who are also nationally well-known in New Zealand, there is ample reason for one to believe that SCR, which identifies as a Samoan community radio, would have plenty of sports coverage. Unfortunately, sports did not receive adequate coverage. For example, SCR had given 1.36 per cent to cover local sports and 10.27 per cent to cover national sports. Its coverage of international sports was 2 per cent.

I put the question of low coverage given to local sports to the radio producer who compiled the news bulletin. His view was, although sports news coverage on the news bulletins was poor, on the whole, the station's sports coverage was quite adequate as there were many sports highlights in the breakfast programme. According to him, the radio does cover interviews from sports personalities and often discusses sports in Samoa and in New Zealand (T. A. Moresi, personal communication, 28 November, 2009). He also said that the station depended on what was available on the main media channels and if they had no local sports coverage then, it was unlikely the station would get any more unless a local club telephoned them to relay what was taking place. However, he emphasised that one of the main reasons for interviewing sports personalities during the breakfast programme was to offset the news deficit in local sports, especially the Samoans.

As well as local sports, local community news was on the whole weak in every identified subject category. The poor coverage or the lack of it was a significant factor especially for a community radio station. I put this question to the radio manager. The manager was in agreement with my findings. However, he pointed out that the radio broadcast daily about three minutes of community notices. As these notices were about the on-going events of the day such as meetings, church announcements and travel information to Samoa, he said, in a way this was local news coverage too. He said in the early days, when community notices were broadcast on the radio without a charge, the radio station received many community notices. However, since the radio station began charging for each community notice that was broadcast over the radio, there was a reduction in the use of radio as a means to notify the community. Now people used the radio only if there was a need to broadcast the notice on a wider scale, he said (T. A. Moresi, personal communication, November 28, 2009).

I should note here that all the community notices that were aired on SCR were paid advertisements. However, given the nature of the information that was provided in the community notices and given the style of writing, they more or less had the inherent characteristics of a news item. Hence, being quite similar in characteristics to news, they could be arguably regarded as local community news. However, not being pure news, I have not included them in my news analysis. For a broader analysis of the nature of community information dissemination by the radio station, I believe they need to be included.

It is worth noting here that during the period of the analysis, I had the opportunity of checking the Wellington newspapers and there were many local news items that could have been easily utilised by the radio station to compile a totally community-focused news bulletin. However, this was not practised. Instead, the station was using the national news items that were also available on the New Zealand mainstream media news bulletins. According to the radio manager, Samoans in New Zealand need to get a good grasp of the New Zealand national news and about other national events and happenings in the Samoan Language too. As there were a lot of Samoans who had a poor command of English, he said in his opinion, the station had a bigger responsibility to serve them to bridge this deficit (T.

A. Moresi, personal communication, November 28, 2009).

However, the station manager also agreed that, as a community station, SCR should also give adequate coverage to local community news and sports. For this to happen, he said the radio would need an additional full-time salaried employee and this was not possible as NZOA funding was only for one full-time staff and two part-time staff, and they had to work to their maximum to keep the programmes going (T. A. Moresi, personal communication, November 28, 2009). Hence, as news gathering at the radio was on the whole weak, sports news could also not be improved for the moment.

#### ***7.6.3.2 News distribution among the local towns***

During the period of the news analysis, SCR broadcast 387 news items. Out of them, there were 88 news items from Wellington City. The 'city' news was mostly centred on the national government and the happenings in the 'Beehive' (the Parliament house) rather than the local community. In this sense, the radio was no different to a main national TV or a radio channel. Other than central Wellington City, Lower Hutt and Porirua were the only two major suburban centres that were reported in the news. Porirua was identified by the radio station as the home of SCR's listening community and it is the area in the Wellington region where one would find the majority of the Samoan population (T. Fiso, personal communication, December 11, 2009). However, despite Porirua being its true home base, only three news items were reported from Porirua during the period of this analysis. Similarly, the other suburb, Lower Hutt, was featured in three news items. All the other Wellington suburbs went unreported.

During the period of this news analysis, there were 68 news items from Samoa and another 14 items from American Samoa. Thus, the coverage given to the motherland, Samoa, was far greater than the Samoan community in the Wellington region. In addition, there was good coverage given to events in other Pacific island countries. This showed that, the radio was in many ways helping the New Zealand Samoans to stay abreast of what was happening in their motherland and in the Pacific in general.



### **7.6.3.3 News sources**

Over 90 per cent of news was obtained from websites of national newspapers. The rest of the news was obtained from news websites of Samoan newspapers. According to the manager, occasionally, the station received phone calls from important sources in Samoa giving news, especially if there was a huge national event taking place in Samoa. According to the manager, the radio station has no regular local community contacts who provide news.

## **7.7 Summary and Conclusion**

In this chapter, the focus was to identify the strengths of the selected community stations in disseminating news, particularly local news.

The news analysis showed that in the dissemination of local news, RS had shown a poor performance. The station had few news reporters who were based at the station and who could be used to gather local news. However, as part of a cost-cutting measure, news reporters did not travel. Instead, they compiled news bulletins by re-writing news from other media sources. Hence, due to the inability to use the station's own reporters, there was poor coverage of local community news.

In the opinion of the RS news director, his station was a public radio and therefore, the focus of news was to report the activities of the central government, the national politicians and the political parties. However, I believe that RS, as a community radio that was meant to be focused on its community, needs to redress its local community news dissemination process, enabling it to be a voice of its local community as well.

In the coverage of news, the KCR manager highlighted the station had abstained from covering national news or political news. According to the manager, these areas belonged to the mainstream media. Instead, according to him, KCR news focused on covering developmental works. However, it was significant that in covering development news, KCR bulletins had focused on covering news that was received from Kandy, the capital city of the

Central Province. A Kandy bias was inevitable because the station used Kandy newspapers as its main news source.

Although KCR had no news reporters, the KCR manager had a list of local contacts who were supposed to be local sources who could provide news to the radio. The manager also acted as the news editor and he was solely responsible for liaising with the local community sources to get community news. Despite having such a list, there was no significant increase in local news. Therefore, the lack of local events in the news bulletins was an indication that their service was either not utilised or that there was little effort made to mobilise or encourage them to send community news.

At KCR, news bulletins could be broadcast only after the manager had signed them. Hence, the news gathering as well as news broadcasting was supervised by the manager.

In its news coverage, SCR gave priority to cover New Zealand national news. The radio manager's view was that rather than focusing on minor local community events, the station should aim at bringing the national news of New Zealand to those Samoans who had a poor command of English (T.A. Moresi, personal communication, November 28, 2009). Thus, the station's main source of news was national media sources such as the main TV channels and radio stations as well as national newspapers. Its news tended to be the same as one would hear on any mainstream medium. Hence, in the provision of news, the radio station 'behaved' more or less like a mainstream broadcaster. As the station had no regular local contacts who could provide local news, SCR had a poor coverage of local community news.

Hence, a common observation among all three stations was the inability to gather and/ or provide local news and information. This was due to the high cost of gathering news and due to having fewer local news sources. As I discuss in Chapter Eight under 'Internet as the New Platform', the stations have plans to develop social networking on the Internet where community members who have access to the Internet could share information and news about upcoming community events. Such a development has the potential to establish a

network of local ‘citizen’ journalists who could generate news about local community events at no cost, thereby strengthening the stations’ position as a provider of community news and information. In the absence of an Internet service, a phone service such as CGNet-in (discussed in Chapter Eight) could also be an option for the local community to ‘file’ and keep their stories so that the radio stations could access the service whenever local content was needed. Using platforms on the Internet or CGNet-in is thus a useful solution to generate local news content.

During my interviews with the radio managers and during the course of listening to the radio programmes of each radio station, I found that every station broadcast several community notices as paid advertisements. Although they were paid advertisements that were broadcast in between different programmes or at specific times of the day, they contained rich information and had all the hallmarks of a good news item. This being the case, I believe that a mere content analysis of news bulletins might not give a true reflection of the nature of the dissemination of local news or the local voices on the radios. Hence, to do a comprehensive study on the nature of local community information dissemination, there was a need to broaden the study to include all the community notices that were broadcast over the radio.

# CHAPTER EIGHT

## Readjusting to the New Realities

### 8.1 Introduction

During the course of my interviews with the radio management, I discovered there was a strong desire to link the radio with the Internet and to develop the Internet as a means to widen community participation in the radio. For all the three stations, the Internet was seen as a medium that would help

- to attract youth participation
- to widen the reach of the radio to a larger audience
- to enable the listening community to interact with the radio in their own time

This chapter is, therefore, a discussion of the three cases, focusing on their plans to integrate the Internet as a platform to increase community access and strengthen community participation in radio. The chapter begins with a short introduction, positioning the Internet as an important medium of global and inter-personal communication. The chapter then examines the nature as well as the current use of Internet at the three stations: Radio Sagharmatha, Kothmale Community Radio and Samoa Capital Radio.

In this chapter, I have also highlighted the use of mobile phones, the telephone network and the use of Internet-based social media networks as additional ways for strengthening community access and participation in the community radio. Finally, the chapter gives a short preview of the hybrid radio. I believe that the inclusion of a preview on what to expect in hybrid radio is quite fitting given the fact that the future hybrid radio is seen as a tool that would further empower the listeners by giving a free hand to access the radio station and choose their own personal 'listening' needs. For example, it is said that the future hybrid radio will enable the listeners to make their own playlists, 'rewind' and listen to on-air live programmes, rearrange programme listening to fit their needs and choices or instantly

connect and communicate with the radio station informing them about their listening preferences (Cridland, 2010).

As in the previous chapters, each case is discussed separately.

## **8.2 Internet-the new medium**

It was in the early 1990s when the Internet was made available for common use that “the medium was quickly transformed from a tool of academic communication and research, to a medium of communication” (Guglietti, 2010:134). With the development of the World Wide Web as a simple interface to Internet use it effectively brought a complete revolution in the way we live and interact with others; in the way we as “individuals and groups communicate inter-personally”; in the way we ‘conduct business’; ‘reorganise telecommunications’, develop “entertainment industries; provide education and medical care” as well as “suggest new possibilities for citizenship in a democratic society” (Harrison, Zappen and Prell, (2002: 249). As the cheapest, fastest and most cost-effective medium, it has also become the medium of choice for “individuals and independent activists through out the globe” (Norris, 2001:172). For many, the Internet is thus, the “common media through which people participate and interact” (Ford and Gil, 2001:202).

By “providing for the easy transmittal of simple texts as well as the means to combine and recombine a range of media formats and social actors” and through the use of different Internet platforms such as “personal and collective websites, news groups, e-mail, on-line chat sessions, conferencing, mailing lists, bulletin boards” ( Ford and Gil, 2001:203), people around the world as individuals and as community groups are communicating in their own voices, writing in their own language, tone and style and reaching to any number of people at any time in anywhere on this earth where Internet connection is available. Given this power of the Internet as a medium that has brought revolutionary changes to communication, the Internet is described as the “fourth and the most recent wave of media democratisation” (Hackett and Zhao, 2005:16).

“No matter how limited the Internet is to some parts of the world, the fact is it is growing even in rural and impoverished regions” (Ford and Gil, 2001:202). Already countries like Nepal and Sri Lanka which are affected by the “digital divide”, which is defined as “the unequal access to computers and the Internet” (van Dijk, 2004:156), Internet use, though restricted to urban areas, is gaining popularity. For example, in Nepal, there were over three million Internet subscribers as of July 2011 and this was about 10 per cent of the population. An Internet social networking site such as facebook is already popular with over one million users and the networking site is used by the youth to generate discussions and mobilise public opinion on areas of public interest and concern. Mobile phone use has also gone up quite considerably. For example, at the beginning of 2011, there were over ten million mobile phone lines meaning a mobile phone for every three Nepalese (Powell, 2011:7-17). In India too, South Asia’s largest and most populous country, the government has launched the ‘Aakash’ tablet which has a retail price of about one hundred New Zealand dollars- a product, according to the India Human Resource Development Minister, Kapil Sibal, that would “finally bring affordable computing and Internet access to the masses” (BBC, 2011).

In countries of South Asia such as Nepal and Sri Lanka, given their socio-economic inequalities, the proliferation of the Internet may be slow and may take a longer time to achieve, but, what needs to be noted is, even for them, the long march towards the brave new world of digital community communication is already underway. The interest taken by radio stations such as Radio Sagharmatha and Kothmale Community Radio to provide a radio service through a merged Internet platform also shows their determination to overcome the digital divide and stay abreast with modern-day communication media technologies.

### **8.3 The three cases: merging Internet and radio:**

In late 2009, I attended the New Zealand Access Radio Broadcasters’ (ACAB) Conference held in Auckland. At the conference, in one session, the discussion was focused on identifying new ways of increasing the number of radio listeners who participated in the radio. This discussion held by the community access broadcasters was by itself quite interesting given the widely-held view that in community radio, the focus of interest was

mainly on the person who was seated “behind the mic” rather than about the interest of the listening audience. Being a non-commercial and not-for-profit radio, the community radio theoretically eliminates the need for worrying about increasing listener numbers. However, the fact that a session was organised at the conference to discuss ways of increasing community participation in the radio programmes was an indication that in addition to simply broadcasting a radio programme that was produced by a single programme maker, it was equally important for the radio station to know whether the aired programme had a strong audience as well. The widely-held view was in this day and age, even community radios had to air interesting programmes that were liked by the community and attracted a good listener number. Many participants at the conference were of the view that a strong listener number gave legitimacy to continue making the same programme.

At the ACAB conference, the participants in particular discussed the use of the Internet to strengthen the radio stations’ community base and increase community participation. Some of the participants suggested that the Internet should be used not only to share ideas and have debates but also to get help in preparing radio content, or getting technical help. It was also suggested that all the community radio stations should have their own websites linked to social media networks such as facebook and/ or have Twitter accounts. These were seen as additional Internet platforms through which the stations could stay connected with their community, mobilise community support, and get community feedback about the radio programmes (ACAB Conference, 2009). Some of the participants also suggested the radio stations should use facebook to create community radio ‘news groups’ who could gather news about community events and directly post them on the radio website, thereby enabling the radio website to become a resource centre for community information.

Being a very computer literate country, there are already many Internet users in New Zealand who have their own blogs and web pages. Many local organisations also have their own websites and in many of these websites, relevant hyperlinks are given to access other useful websites for further information. Community radio stations simply need to browse through these websites to search for locally relevant material. Hence, there is already much user-

generated content available on the Internet that could be tapped into by the community radio stations.

In New Zealand, community access radio stations have already entered the 'digital world'. With assistance from the Community Partnership Fund which has been created under the government digital strategy to help communities to adapt to new technologies, three access stations, Wellington Access Radio, Fresh FM and Hamilton Access Radio have developed the Access Internet Radio Website (Maharey, 2006). At present, seven access radio stations are using this service to live-stream their programmes on the Internet. Many of their programmes are available as podcasts on the Access Internet Radio Website ([www.accessradio.org/public/live.php](http://www.accessradio.org/public/live.php)) enabling those listeners who may have missed the original live show due to the programmes' scheduled timing to revisit and listen again. Through the Internet, the participating access radio stations are already attracting listeners wherever they maybe in New Zealand or elsewhere. As over 80 per cent of New Zealanders are already connected to the Internet, it is anticipated that community access radio on the Internet will help attract a bigger listening community and at the same time increase the community interaction with the radios (Maharey, 2006).

Citing the importance that the New Zealand government places on a merged platform where community radio is connected and integrated with an Internet platform, the Broadcasting Minister Jonathan Coleman, while addressing the ACAB Conference 2009, indicated that the new criteria for non-commercial licences which are currently under development may include a requirement that:

The station should investigate local Internet services for possible extensions of broadcast material and/or join with local stations of similar interest to create a web presence for live streaming and/or podcast material (Coleman, 2009).

Minister Coleman's remark was an indication that in New Zealand, all future access community radio licences would be given to parties who had proposed an Internet-based community radio.



Unlike New Zealand, one might expect that for community radio stations in countries like Sri Lanka or Nepal, where Internet use is relatively poor, the possibility of the radio stations integrating with the Internet to be a very slow process. However, from my interviews with both RS and KCR, I found that their determination and interest to use the Internet as a new platform for doing community radio was as strong as SCR, (the New Zealand community radio station I had included in this study). Already, both RS and KCR have created their own websites and as I have discussed elsewhere in this chapter, their planned integration of the Internet with radio is already well underway and going from strength to strength.

### **8.3.1 Internet use at Radio Sagharmatha**

During my interviews with the RS radio manager and the programme director, I was able to gain much insight into why the station needed a strong Internet-linked radio platform. One of the main reasons was the decline of youth participation in the radio. For the station, attracting the youth was a huge challenge, partly due to its financial constraints. For example, the station was unable to purchase modern popular music which the youth preferred and which was already available on commercial radio music channels. It was also suggested that for the youth, the widespread availability of other communication and entertainment media such as satellite cable and terrestrial television and the increasing use of CDs, DVDs, VCDs, gaming machines, play stations, mobile phones, computers and the Internet meant the youth had little interest to listen to the radio, making it a huge challenge to attract the youth. Hence, the radio was gradually getting marginalised within its very own community (M. Bista and G. Luitel, personal communication, July 9-12, 2007).

One of the RS board members, whom I interviewed, Prath Prateek Bhandary, described RS as a marginalised medium when compared to the other available popular media platforms. He said, “gone are the days when RS was loved and listened to by everyone from their pocket radios. The new generation had no interest and no time listening to a radio that played mostly old songs”. According to him, unlike those old days when RS was the only alternative channel in town, Kathmandu has several media channels and this makes it quite challenging for RS as a traditional radio service to attract new listeners. Therefore, his view was, in

addition to providing the radio's current programme format which he described as 'the traditional radio service', the station should come up with new ways of interacting with the younger generation. According to him, over-crowded cybercafés in Kathmandu are commonplace. In almost every place, one would find youth customers earnestly waiting for their chance to get logged in to any available computer. This was testimony to the popularity of the Internet among the Nepal youth. Hence, his view was, in addition to radio listening, RS had to provide new services for the youth such as quizzes and competitions that they could participate in via the radio website. He was also of the opinion that the station should have its own multi-media centre-cum-cybercafé so that youth and students could visit to access the Internet and use the centre's IT services to do their school projects or fulfill their information demands (P.P Bhandary, personal communication, July 9, 2007).

A second reason for using the Internet was to strengthen the station's news gathering ability, especially to get local updates on information such as weather, road works, road closures, landslides, and accidents in rural areas. As telephone calls are expensive and often do not always work efficiently, especially in the mountainous areas, getting such information from radio contacts was not always an easy task. Therefore, collecting this information through community members who had access to the Internet was considered as a cheap and better option (M. Bista and G. Luitel, personal communication, July 9-12, 2007).

A third reason was to give wider access to its community, especially to those who live in far away places both in the country and abroad (M. Bista and G. Luitel, personal communication, July 9-12, 2007). Already RS live-streams and podcasts on its website are used by listeners who are in places where radio signals have never reached. Nepalese living in different parts of the country and overseas are accessing the Internet to listen to radio, request songs as well as send e-mails to the station, appreciating the radio services. I have met quite a number of Nepalese living in Canterbury, New Zealand who regularly listen to RS on the Internet. A Nepal student in New Zealand, Pramod Ghimire, said the time difference between Nepal and New Zealand made it very inconvenient to listen to live programmes and this disadvantage was overcome by listening to the podcasts. The Nepali

community in New Zealand is a good example of the type of audience that the RS was aiming to reach through the Internet (P. Ghimire, personal communication, February 19, 2008).

The next big step for the station is launching an interactive website with a live blog. The plan is to give access to listeners to post comments, ask questions, and use the website to publish their works and letters as well as share photos. According to the radio manager, a radio blog would be the ideal channel for anyone who has Internet access, to express their ideas and opinions. By opening up this space on the radio website, he said that RS would benefit immensely as the information available on the discussion blogs would be a diverse range of useful local community news and information that would be of benefit to anyone who accessed the website (M. Bista, personal communication, July 9, 2007).

In addition to providing limited web services, the station also broadcasts a weekly computer awareness programme over the radio. The programme is aimed at creating computer literacy and awareness among the local community. The programme provides basic information such as how to operate a computer, basic hardware and software information as well as how to do simple tasks such as making documents and tables, sending emails, opening the Internet browser and chatting on the Internet using programmes such as MSN Messenger or Yahoo Messenger. The programme also discusses how to download documents and upload photos, documents and attachments.

Currently, there are three staff members at the station who are getting on-the-job computer training in computer, computer software, graphics and web designing. According to them, once their training is complete, they will take full responsibility to develop and maintain the station website as well as other computer-related tasks. In addition to these three IT staff, there was one volunteer who belonged to a rural community radio station. According to him, he was sent by his station to get computer-related broadcast training at Radio Sagarmatha.

### **8.3.2 Internet use at Kothmale Community Radio**

Internet was initially established at KCR in 1998 with the help of UNESCO to begin an Internet-based radio browsing project. Under this project, information was downloaded from the Internet and broadcast over the radio on a special radio programme. In the early days, the radio station had its own internet café as well as ‘access points’ in three different towns where community members could visit and directly place their queries and questions. The radio team would then browse the Internet websites to get the requested information which were translated and made into an Internet radio browsing programme. The purpose of producing this programme, known popularly as Internet Radio Browsing, was to enable the local community to ‘access’ the Internet via radio (S. Wijesinghe, personal communication, 16 August, 2007).

The programme was an instant hit among the local community. However, UNESCO after doing its own assessment stopped the funding in 2003 in anticipation that there would be enough local interest to continue and financially sustain the project. Unfortunately, despite its local popularity, the project could not find local financial support to maintain an Internet connection. As Sujatha Tuladhar, a KCR volunteer, observed, “when the funding stopped and the Internet radio Browsing Programme came to a halt, the community simply accepted it as the reality and went ahead with their daily lives”. She also said that “there was no initiative from within the community to continue this project” despite the fact that it was a service that had “helped them so much in the past” (Tuladhar, 2007). When the station lost its connection, the radio manager wrote to SLBC, the owner of the Kothmale Community Radio, seeking assistance to have a re-connection. However, the company was not ready to pay despite its popularity and community interest. For SLBC, as a commercial broadcaster, this was money spent without a financial return (S. Wijesinghe, personal communication, August 16, 2007).

#### ***8.3.2.1 Internet-reconnected***

In 2005, the Sri Lankan President initiated an IT project called Nanasala Project (Knowledge Centre Project) which was aimed at strengthening IT in Sri Lanka by creating one thousand

tele-centres in the country. According to Koasala, one of the instructors at the radio station's multi-media centre, under the project, a free Internet connection and computers were given to rural towns that could provide free office spaces and electricity for local tele-centre use. The centres would be funded by the government for a period of three years after which the government would give no money to keep the Internet, but would continue providing free equipment. The centres would also need to generate enough money to pay for the Internet, maintain equipment and run the centres on their own (K. Keerthiratharne, personal communication, August 13, 2007).

Kothmale Community Radio station which was located in a rural area was able to meet all the conditions and qualified to house a tele-centre. However, being a station that was owned by SLBC, a broadcasting company, the project could not be awarded directly to the radio station. This was solved by awarding the project to the Radio Listeners' Club. As the Listeners' Club activities were already carried out at the Community Media Centre which was located in the radio station, the centre was converted into a tele-centre and the Internet was reconnected to KCR in 2006. Under the Nanasala Project, the Internet connection and the tele-centre had to be managed by the Listeners' Club and all the communications with the project had to be conducted and processed by the Listeners' Club. This meant the radio station had no direct role in the project (K. Keerthiratharne, personal communication, August 13, 2007).

The Nanasala Project also required the Listeners' Club only to run a tele-centre for the village youth and this meant, it had no obligation to produce an Internet radio browsing programme for the radio. However, as the tele-centre was housed at the KCR premise, the station manager successfully liaised with a local community member who would volunteer to produce an Internet browsing programme for the radio. Unfortunately, unlike the UNESCO days, there were no local community 'access' points in different towns and there were no arrangements at the station for the local community members to put forward their questions for the programme. The programme was thus produced simply to the taste of the volunteer (K. Keerthiratharne, personal communication, August 13, 2007). The hill-top location of the

radio station also meant it was not convenient for the local community members to visit the station simply to place a question for the new programme. Hence, a lack of listener participation was a drawback in the new Internet radio browsing programme.

In the early days, as the name of the programme implied, Internet radio browsing was all about browsing the Internet by the radio station on behalf of listeners and broadcasting a radio programme that was based on answers to their queries. At a meeting I held at the Radio Listeners' Club, I was able to meet six radio listeners who had participated in the Internet radio browsing programmes that were produced during the UNESCO days. They described those days as the "golden age" of Internet radio browsing. According to them, the current radio browsing programme had nothing that would be of interest to them as the current programme did not give any opportunity for the local community to lodge requests for the programme. In the early days, they said the station provided information that they needed on areas such as religion, cooking recipes, historical stories, agriculture and farming practises. The radio browsing programme also broadcast information that was requested by students for their school projects (personal communication, September 9, 2007). From their comments, it was clear that there was a need to return to the old format that would link the rural farmers with the Internet.

According to the current producer, unlike the days when UNESCO provided the funds, it was now financially not practical to provide community access points in various towns. Besides, due to her own full-time professional work, there was not enough spare time for her to get input from the local community and make a community-friendly programme. This meant, although Internet radio browsing had been restarted, unlike the old days, there was no community connection. However, she said that the radio station's rickshaw, the E-TUK TUK, occasionally collected queries from different communities while it carried out its daily radio rounds (personal communication, August 13, 2007).

I personally listened to a few Internet radio browsing programmes. The current programme content resembled a current affairs programme that gave a lot of general knowledge about

different parts of the world. The programme was produced using downloaded information about a selected topic.

#### ***8.3.2.2 A new website***

The KCR manager said the work towards migrating to a new Internet-based platform in KCR began with a simple observation he made after studying the needs of the youth visiting the radio station. His observation was that although there was a decrease in youth who listen to the radio, there was a marked increase in the interest among young persons visiting the radio station wanting to know more about the IT opportunities and training that was on offer at the tele-centre or about the availability of the Internet at the tele-centre. According to him, from his interactions with the youth, it was clear that if the radio station could provide Internet, multi-media facilities as well as a radio website in one place, it could open up a new gateway for strong community participation in the radio. Under his plan, the participants at the tele-centre would get free access to the Internet and use computers to play games on condition they help the radio station produce digital stories as well as content that could be posted on the radio website (S. Wijesinghe, personal communication, September 8, 2007).

The radio manager also said that unlike the 1980s when it was a joy to listen to their own community radio, that excitement was now lost. In those days, there was no alternative medium other than KCR if the community wanted to listen to a second radio channel. Now, the reality was, unlike the old generation, there were a number of commercial radio and TV channels available for the local community. Similar to the experience in Kathmandu, Kothmale youth were increasingly turning their attention to CDs, DVDs, VCDs, gaming machines, play stations and the Internet (S. Wijesinghe, personal communication, September 8, 2007).

It is also interesting to note that during my interviews with all the 11 participants at the tele-centre, I was told that they were volunteering to work for the radio not because of any great love of community radio but because of the opportunities they got to access the computers and free Internet (personal communication, August 13, 2007). Hence, their interest was more

centred on accessing the Internet and computers instead of accessing radio.

When the Internet was reconnected at KCR in 2005, one of the first moves was to develop its website. The new website provided opportunities for the local community to publish their stories, poems and photographs on the website. According to the radio manager, the site is already popular with the school students who use the website to publish their stories, poems and photos. Their involvement and interest in contributing to the website has brought radio closer to the very audience that it wanted to reach through the Internet (S. Wijesinghe, personal communication, September 8, 2007). The coordinating radio volunteer who managed the website told me that the children who contributed to the radio website were also eager to listen to their stories if they were broadcast on air. Hence, often, the children enquire whether and when their stories would be heard over the radio. This was seen as a huge achievement given the fact that there were not many youth, especially children, who were interested in listening to the radio. The website also has sections in English, Tamil and Sinhalese, thereby widening the participation in the site to the user of any of the three languages (B. Dharshana, personal communication, August 13, 2007).

Future plans aimed at strengthening the website include having live streaming of radio through the website as well as uploading podcasts of important programmes so that visitors to the site could access them in their own free time instead of listening to them live on the radio, something that was not practical for many. As Sri Lanka has huge expatriate communities in different parts of the world, uploading podcasts was also seen as a better way to reach the expatriate communities who may, due to time differences find it difficult to access the radio programmes even if the programmes were broadcast live on the Internet. Hence, uploading podcasts was seen as a way to increase radio listener participation (B. Dharshana, personal communication, August 13, 2007).

The radio also has a plan to begin a blog where listeners can comment on radio programmes, make further comments to feedback given by other listeners or simply discuss local happenings or upcoming events in their community. By providing such an interactive



environment where listeners not only interact with the radio but also among themselves, the radio would be able to uplift community access and community participation through radio to a new height (B. Dharshana, personal communication, August 13, 2007).

According to the KCR manager, there are local community members who post informative articles on the radio website. The radio has used some of these as resources for programme production. The manager also has a plan to create a local community network of people who have access to a computer and the Internet. The idea is to use them as contacts for getting information about local news and events taking place in different towns. Hence, a strong website that combined the radio with an Internet-based platform was seen as the best step to do future community radio.

### ***8.3.2.3 Other multi-platform digital media trials at KCR***

Important work that was carried out by the new radio tele-centre was producing ‘digital stories’ which were aimed at creating awareness among the community. A digital story is a three-minute long story on a CD which is told by using pictures, drawings and sounds. Digital stories are produced free by tele- centre trainees who work on condition they get free time to use the Internet or play computer games during after hours, for a set period of time for every completed digital story (B. Dharshana, personal communication, August 13, 2007).

The centre produces two types of digital stories. One is made for village children using stories from the community. These stories which can be played at home on VCD are children’s stories that help children learn to read and understand the language. These stories are quite popular in the provincial nurseries and at village homes and the media centre makes some money by selling these stories. The second type is produced from information that volunteer students collect by visiting different villages. Each digital story is developed around the life of a single person highlighting their life and living conditions in the village, focusing on the successes and failures of the person and identifying how obstacles in life had been tackled and problems solved (B. Dharshana, personal communication, August 13, 2007).

The digital stories are published on the Kothmale radio website. Digital stories are also sent by post to different local government offices as well as to leading politicians. The intention is to bring the problems to the attention of local authorities so that they can address the issues and if possible take action. The digital stories are also distributed to private businesses as well as to local firms and international organisations. Again, the purpose is making them come face to face with the villagers and understand their real issues so that assistance can be made to tackle those issues. As said by Buddhika Dharshana, a digital story producer, “Even in our very own country, there are hundreds of local organisations who are willing to help the poor. They will know the problems exist only when we send them. By posting them the digital story CDs, we hope at least they will do something good” (B. Dharshana, personal communication, August 13, 2007). Hence, through the use of digital media, KCR opens up an additional channel through which the voices of the ordinary grassroots can be heard in the offices of the decision makers.

According to the KCR manager, community access and participation in the radio station need not always be through the radio programmes. Digital story telling is a perfect example where KCR could play an active role on behalf of the local community even without the need to go on air (S. Wijesinghe, personal communication, September 8, 2007). Thus, by producing and distributing digital stories, KCR is able to play an advocacy role on behalf of its communities. However, some of the digital stories are also developed as features to be broadcast on radio programmes. By integrating them with radio, KCR is also able to increase grass-roots’ access and participation in the radio (S. Wijesinghe, personal communication, September 8, 2007).

### **8.3.3 Internet use at Samoa Capital Radio**

SCR has an ambitious plan to migrate to a strong Internet-based platform. The need to strengthen the station’s Internet capability is closely related to SCR’s inability to own a separate radio frequency of its own. At present, SCR uses leased airtime from Wellington Access Radio (WAR). This means it can only broadcast until the end of the leased airtime for the day. Hence, due to the limited airtime, the radio station is unable to produce more

programmes or even broadcast repeat programmes no matter how useful they maybe. This was frustrating for both the radio station as well as for those avid Samoan listeners who wanted more local radio time and more programmes in local language (A. T Moresi, personal communication, November 26, 2009).

According to the SCR manager the radio can only get a frequency of its own once New Zealand radio broadcasting goes digital and this is still a few years away and only possible after New Zealand TV goes fully digital, which will be well after 2015. Hence, the use of Internet is the only option available if SCR wants to stay in touch with its community once the daily on-air time has expired (A. T. Moresi, personal communication, November 26, 2009).

At present, the radio does have a website of its own. The site is used to give background information about the station. In addition it gives programme schedules as well as information on advertising on the radio. According to the manager, his radio station used to live-stream its programmes on its own website. However, this stopped when NZOA-funded live-streaming was extended to include Wellington Access Radio whose radio frequency was also used by SCR (A.T. Moresi, personal communication, November 26, 2009).

Although SCR is already heard on the Internet via WAR, the manager has a new plan to resume live-streaming on its own web site. According to the manager, the radio has a long-term plan to strengthen the station's website and use it to interact and communicate with the Samoan listening community. This meant that from now on there was a need for SCR to carry out most of its activities through its own website so that the Samoan community would get familiar with their own radio website instead of associating SCR with WAR. For the manager, having their own website and their own and independent live streaming would be a symbol of their independence and community pride and that distinction would be good for marketing purposes as it would make the radio a 100 per cent Samoan-community owned station at least on the Internet (A.T. Moresi, personal communication, November 26, 2009). The manager's long-term ambitious plans included the creation of a radio archive on the Internet where much of its historical and cultural programmes as well as Samoan songs

would be stored for Samoan listeners to access and listen to as 'on demand' programmes. His aim is to make the radio website better than any other community radio website in the country (A.T. Moresi, personal communication, November 26, 2009).

As current SCR programmes that are broadcast on air have limited airtime, podcasting on the Internet is seen as a way to continue longer and unabridged programme content so that people can have access to longer programmes once the shorter on-air version runs out of its live radio broadcast time. Furthermore, as there are many Samoans who cannot listen to their radio during the morning's normal live broadcasting hours due to work, podcasting is seen as a means to reach them as it enables them to listen to the radio in their free time.

Internet expansion is also planned with a view to strengthen community bonds. For example, the manager envisages that once the radio website has been finally developed, it will welcome community members to upload news and information about community events, send their photos, their own recordings, special songs and personal stories about their life and achievements so that they could be made available on the website for others to listen and share or if feasible to broadcast some of the good songs live on air (A.T. Moresi, personal communication, November 26, 2009). It was also envisaged that the widening of the Internet would bring in the new generation youth who are New Zealand-born to participate in the radio. This was seen as vital to the community for the long term. Currently, according to the manager, mostly first generation Samoans and new immigrants are using the radio (A.T. Moresi, personal communication, November 26, 2009).

SCR does not have an Internet radio browsing programme. There is also no programme that gives its listeners information on the Internet or computers. As most homes in New Zealand have Internet and people are already very computer literate, the radio does not see it as important to have a separate Internet programme for the community. The radio station however uses the Internet to access Samoan media sites as resources for its radio programmes and to obtain Samoan and Pacific news for its news bulletins.

#### **8.4 Access and participation-merging radio with mobile phones**

As van Dijk suggests “the advancement in mobile phone technology is making the boundary between the cellular phone as a medium of interpersonal communication and as a mass medium of the distribution of SMS, web pages, videos and games is dissolving” (van Dijk, 2004:156). According to van Dijk, the mobile phone “plays an important role in the process of media convergence” (Dijk, 2004:155-156). By connecting it to the Internet, the mobile phone enables its user to have access to the different social media network sites the Internet hosts. Its ability to transmit and receive voice and messages gives full control to the user and given the versatility, affordability and ease with which one is able to use it to connect to different social media networks, the Internet-based social media connectivity through the mobile phone could very well be the crest of a new wave of media democratisation.

In South Asia, already, mobile phone technology is being used by local villagers in India to voice their concerns. To address the constant negligence of the mainstream media in giving focus to local village issues and concerns, an IT specialist has come up with what is known as CGNet-in. This is a practical platform for any interested or concerned citizen to have his/her say over any local issue, and listen to the views of others on similar issues. The CGNet-in enables any citizen journalist located anywhere to use his mobile phone to dial a special number and read his ‘news’ item or listen to other news items already sent in by other concerned citizen journalists. Through this means, the grassroots have been given an open channel to voice their concerns on matters that are important to them (BBC, 2010). As CGNet-in can be accessed by the local community radio stations, they can select the available local content for use in their community radio news bulletins and this would enable CGNet-in to become an open source to tap into locally generated news media resources.

Sri Lanka and Nepal are countries where much of the population lives in rural areas and there is great merit in having such a connection. However, during my stay in both countries, I discovered there was no telephone connectivity in the style of CGNet-in where rural communities could phone and ‘post’ their concerns in the way I described. However, given the speed of developments in information technology, it is just a matter of time before we see

similar or even better technology being used by the communities and by community stations. After all, CGNet-in provided the concerned community members a totally new channel to access their community radio and freely participate at their own will and file their own news stories that were of concern to them and to their community. Such a platform could also be a useful solution for the community radios that do not have the ability to mobilize the local community to generate local news content, especially community news.

At RS, currently, rural reporters have developed their own “missed call” technique to communicate with the radio station. According to the RS news director, the radio contacts in the rural areas would send three missed calls to him if there was a ‘hot’ story or an emergency. The manager would then call back immediately thus saving call charges from the rural contact. If a reporter wanted to communicate with the station on a non-emergency matter, then a single missed call would be sent to the manager (G. Luitel, personal communication, July 11, 2007).

During my stay at the small remote hill-slope villages of the Kothmale region, I also discovered that listening to the radio on mobile phones was becoming the fashion among many local villagers. However, at present, mobile phones are used to receive in-coming phone calls or listen to radio rather than as a means to transmit. Due to the high cost of mobile phone calls, this was not a feasible option. However, instant messaging was an option that they could use as and when necessary. Its future potential for the rural communities as a means to communicate also depended on a decrease in phone cost. Once the cost of phone calls was reduced, the phones could become a handy tool for the villagers to communicate with the radio and hence through the radio they could keep in touch with the wider community at large enabling them to know and share information about what was happening elsewhere in the community.

## **8.5 Radio access and participation through social media**

As discussed earlier, all three community radio stations have an interest in using their

Internet websites to enable different communities to access the radio station. However, none of the radio stations I studied had established a radio platform that was also merged with social media networks. The only reference to the use of social media in strengthening community access and participation in community radio was made during the ACAB conference that I attended in Auckland, New Zealand in 2009.

Unlike New Zealand, social media channels such as My Space, Twitter and facebook are not widely used in Nepal or Sri Lanka. However, as I discussed earlier in the chapter, what is noteworthy is, just as the Internet accessibility had been extended to the rural village communities by Kothmale Community Radio, through its Internet radio browsing programmes, the community radios have the same potential to provide the local communities a radio platform that could combine and converge the social media networks with radio programmes. For example, by using the community radio facebook page the radio station could add local community members who were living in far away places as friends and family and produce a social media browsing programme that could be produced using the comments they posted on their facebook pages. In other words, through social media, the community radio could become an intermediary enabling the rural village folk to stay in touch ‘virtually’ with friends and relatives who were living in distant places. In this sense, community radio was also helping to build virtual communities.

In order to create a viable, two-way functioning rural social media network, on the communities’ side, the radio would need its rural listening communities to visit the station and write or dictate messages they would like to post on the radio’s social media page so that it could be seen and commented on by friends of the radio who were also friends of the community. The community radio’s ‘friends’ network could also be expanded by the local community by encouraging their relatives and friends living overseas or out of town to add their local community radio as a ‘friend’ so that they could also be listed as friends on the radio facebook page too. The community should also keep listening to the social media browsing programme on the radio to hear about the received messages and song dedications.

On the side of the radio station, it would need to browse through the facebook pages of the friends and family of the local community who have added radio as their ‘friend’ wherever they may be, and use the news available on the ‘message boards’ and on the ‘walls’ of their facebook pages as a resource for developing ‘social media browsing programmes’ to be broadcast on radio. This would encourage or create the need for the local community members who do not have access to Internet-connected computers, to use radio as a means to listen to the radio’s social media browsing programmes. By giving continued access to social media networks on the Internet through social media browsing programmes, the radios are giving the opportunity to listen and respond too, through the radio, to what their friends and family had posted on their ‘walls’. Hence, through social media browsing, the radio station would be able to create a symbiotic relationship between the local community and their local community radio to use the radio’s social media network as a virtual clearing house for sending and receiving messages between the two communities. This could be an ideal way for the radio station to act as an intermediary for those rural villagers who have no access to a computer or the Internet or are computer illiterate and establish for them a two-way interactive communication network between the two communities in question, thereby taking community access and participation to a higher altitude. However, the effectiveness of doing this can best be attained by increasing and promoting wider community participation in social media browsing through radio.

## **8.6 The hybrid radio**

As I discussed above, the advancements brought to the modes of communication through the Internet, combined with the advancements to communications technology through digital technology, is enabling the radio to become a multi-platform medium. Today radio can be accessed and listened to from a TV set, a mobile phone or on computer as Internet streamed radio (Radiodns.org).

Through the Radio DNS project, which is a “technical collaboration between the BBC, Global Radio (UK), and over one hundred broadcasters worldwide” including the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, experiments on ‘potential services’ of new hybrid technology are



already underway. They include, 'Radio VIS' which is 'visualised radio' that is aimed at "adding glanceable pictures to radio on all radio platforms"; 'Radio EPG' which is "a fully featured electronic service and programme guide, encouraging discovery and enhancing listening choice"; and 'Radio TAG' which lets the "listener to display interest and interact with elements of programming" (Radiodns.org).

The new digital technology will ultimately help the once ordinary and simple sound broadcasting radio to migrate fully to a hybrid digital radio broadcast format. As described on the homepage of Consumer Electronics Association website, through the use of a 'black box tuner' it was possible to deliver to the listeners, services such as giving "program information such as song titles, traffic data to in-car navigation systems, and fee-based information services." It also meant the radio would be able to "offer an audio program management (APM) feature that time-shifts programs for later listening, much like digital video recorders (DVR) and can be programmed to record TV programmes for later viewing" (Consumer Electronics Association (n.d).

James Cridland, a UK-based media consultant and managing director of Media UK, who describes himself as a "radio futurologist", in one of his blog articles, "What can 'hybrid radio' do?" published in James Cridland Blog, identifies several futuristic ideas that could be made possible through a hybrid radio. Among the hybrid features he has listed, I note the following: the ability for the radio station to display its programme schedule; enable the listener to send instant feedback to the station through chatting via text or through voice; tagging selected programmes so that they could be accessed for late listening as on-demand podcasts or simply download programmes to listen later; rewind part of a programme to hear a repeat if one misses part of it; buying instantly any music that was being played on the radio or simply to "create one's own play list" (Cridland, 2010:1-3).

Cridland also notes that future hybrid radio would include facebook-type features such as having a "Like" button that would enable listening friends to interact with each other enabling other friends to know and if need be to listen to the same information at that moment

in time or later. Cridland also suggests that the radio could do multi-tasking such as using the radio for “subject browsing” by ‘dialing’ the radio. If at the end of a radio programme, a listener wanted to get more background and information on the subject discussed in a programme, or simply use the radio along with an in-built GPS to leave the main radio channel and re-tune their radio to receive very localised information such as the selected town’s traffic flows or identifying the best route to the nearest supermarket in that town, as Cridland describes “without having to go near a keyboard”. Other interesting features include muting “until the next bit of the programme comes on” or in case one has no interest in the aired programme, pressing the “not interested button”. By doing this, the radio station would know the reactions of its listeners and hence would be able to rearrange the programmes to listener choice (Cridland, 2010).

Although no community radio stations that I have discussed in this study had attained any level even close to the level of ‘hybridism’ that I have brought to light in this chapter, it is noteworthy that all three stations have already begun to merge traditional radio broadcasting with digital technology providing an Internet-based platform. The new platform is already enabling the community to have greater access and participation with their radio, online and live, at times of their choice. In this sense, the long march towards full hybridism has already begun.

## **8.7 Summary and Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have basically discussed the three radio stations, focusing on the existing nature of their Internet use and the planned future use of the Internet to enhance community access and participation in radio.

From this study it is noted, that the three radio stations are already making use of the Internet to increase community access and participation in the radio. The three stations have already created their websites and are poised to make the Internet the new gateway for the community to access and participate in the radio. Although not every station has live-streaming yet, it is in the pipeline and so are the planned expansion projects to widen

community usability of their website. At present, both RS and KCR have down-loadable programmes as pod-casts which are, according to the radio managers, very popular with people living abroad as it enables them to listen to programmes and stay in touch with the station. A similar plan is in place for SCR's website expansion project. Hence, through the Internet, the three community radio stations are already experiencing and/or paving way for a new level of community access and participation in the radio.

At the moment, none of the stations' websites has a radio blog where visitors can engage in live discussions. However, they do recognise the need to create blogging as an important outlet for radio listeners to keep in touch with the radio and to discuss community events and happenings. The comments on the radio blog could also be used as resources to re-shape their programmes to the interests of the listeners. Blogs also give an opportunity for community members to access the radio at their own leisure and post information on topics of interest as well as relevant sources for interviewing so that the radios can produce programmes to listener taste. Hence, having a live radio blog would not only give unlimited space to access and participate in the radio; it is also an important tool for strengthening community communication.

It is noteworthy that just as Internet accessibility was extended to the village communities through Internet radio browsing, the community radios have the same potential to bring the benefits of social media networks to the community. By having its own social media networks such as facebook and Twitter, community radio stations would be able to add and/or accept members of its community who are also members of the same social media networks. Such a social network gives the radio station, the potential to develop social media browsing programmes that the local community could listen to and at same time use the radio to send their responses too. This would enable the radio to create a two-way communication platform by combining radio with listening communities and with social media. By connecting members of the same community who are living far apart, through radio enabling them to constantly access the radio to know what was happening at each end, the radio station is also able to create a symbiotic relationship- a need for both communities

to stay in touch with the radio in order to stay in touch with each other.

Moreover, through the social media networks, the listening communities could also make the station know their tastes. This would in turn help the radio stations to better project their programmes to the liking of the community thereby creating additional interest to hook on to the radio listening. Doing social media browsing on the radio is thus in many ways, a bottom-up approach for community building and community communication through community radio.

In conclusion, I should note that it is my belief that the traditional community radio has reached a cross-road in community communication. It is clear that, to meet the demands of the 'facebook' generation (the virtual communities), the traditional community radio has to redress its traditional broadcasting styles by creating new participatory opportunities for the new generation. Hence, the traditional community radio has to converge with new media platforms such as the Internet, especially, the Internet-based social media platforms. In this day and age, where updates of news, views, events and even new ideas pertaining to our own physical communities through tweets, or are discussed, debated and shaped by virtual communities using a social media network, it is essential that communities in the community radio are also connected with virtual communities in social media so that what is happening there could be conveyed to the listening interests of the radio communities. It is only then, that the real effects of community participatory communication through community radio can reach the apex of media democratisation which has been revolutionised since the advent of the Internet.

# CHAPTER NINE

## Summary and Conclusion

### 9.1 Introduction

This chapter concludes my study. As the chapter is a reflection on the whole study, I have re-emphasised the issues and the purpose for doing this research and summarised the theoretical framework on which I have based my research questions. In the light of the theoretical framework, I have presented a summary of the three cases in this study, identifying the common observations on the nature of community access and participation in the selected stations. The chapter concludes with my observations on how the three stations are gradually migrating from a pure community radio format to a ‘new’ hybrid format which is basically a survival strategy that embraces the revenue-generating practices of the commercial radio. Although the ‘new’ hybrid format has, to some extent, negatively impacted on local community access and participation in the radio, I have shown how the three stations are re-organising and strengthening the nature of community access and participation using an internet-based platform. As a final part of this chapter, I have identified further areas for research, especially, the need to explore how rural community radio stations in developing countries are merging with the Internet, and using different Internet-based social media platforms, to mobilise community support for stronger community communication.

### 9.2 Identifying the issue

One of the main purposes of having community radio is to enable the community members to communicate and to come together on one platform to appreciate their life and works (Hochheimer, 1999:451) and this is best realised when the local community radio enables the local community members to tell their own stories in their own voices (Rodriguez, 2001) and play “an active role in the process of collecting, reporting analysing and disseminating news and information” about their local community (Bowman& Willis, 2003:9).

Unfortunately, for many communities, the ability to access and participate in radio is quite challenging. The reality is that for some in the community, there is no opportunity whilst for others, it is simply a privilege. As I have stated elsewhere in this thesis, a community radio study by Barlow of three Australian radio stations showed that usually those who had access were the ones whose thinking was in conformity with the management and whom the management was happy to give the opportunity to produce radio programmes. The community members who were not liked by the management had no access to do programmes of their own choice (Barlow, 2002). This meant community participation in their community radio station was a management choice.

Radio Sagharmatha (RS) and Kothmale Community Radio (KCR), two of the radio stations that I included in this study, have come under similar criticism from noted individuals in the respective countries, saying the radio stations were not doing real community radio as local community members from the respective communities could not get access to them. For example, a head of a prominent organisation in Nepal who was committed to public broadcasting and had previously worked for Radio Sagharmatha (RS) in Nepal as a reporter and later as a board member of NEFEJ- the parent organisation of RS said the radio station favoured more NGO-produced programmes and operated more like a public radio and less of a community radio. According to him, by changing the operational format in favour of NGO-produced programmes, RS is now unable to bring the voices of the local communities which are supposed to be the radio's main objective (personal communication, 14 June, 2007). There is thus the fear that RS is becoming 'NGO-ised' at the expense of its community. Similarly, at KCR, critics point out that the station is fully owned by the Government and is managed by a government-appointed manager. Hence, who in the community gets access to the radio and/or participates in programmes is often seen as a personal decision made by the radio manager. At KCR, its parent company SLBC has also imposed on it a fully commercial programme format for its morning session. As SLBC was under severe financial constraints, this was seen as a decision that was based on a financial interest and aimed at recovering production costs. Hence, this decision overrode the wider community interests in their community radio.

At both RS and KCR, the management has to balance the need to stay sustainable and the need to stay attached to the local communities. Hence, I believe that the radio management decisions at both RS and KCR are shifting the balance and, as a result, are directly affecting the characteristic qualities of community radio- at times negatively.

This study was, therefore, an opportunity for me to investigate their style of doing community radio, and to get answers from the stations on how they keep in touch with their communities or plan to strengthen further community access and participation. As explained in chapter one, the purpose was to explore and investigate the nature of community access and participation within the selected radio stations and identify how the stations nurture and cultivate community participatory communication within their community.

By way of a case study method, as explained in chapter five, my study, in particular, explored:

- the current nature of community access and participation in the community radio
- the level of influence wielded by the radio management on the involvement of the local community in broadcasting and what sort of impact it was having on the nature of community access and participation
- whether in any way, management decisions were impacting to strengthen or lessen the opportunities for community access and participation or helping to make the radio stations true community platforms for community communication
- how the management have planned to create more opportunity for local community access and participation in the radio

In addition, using content analysis, I also examined the strength of the radio stations in disseminating local community news and discussed how the stations were disseminating community information and being a voice for their communities.

In the light of my research purpose as outlined above, I focused on three aspects:

- to focus on the nature of access and participation as it was observed among the three

cases as highlighted in chapter six

- to identify the nature of news flow, by way of content analysis and examine the volume of local community content as highlighted in chapter seven
- to examine how the three stations were gradually leaning towards an Internet-based platform for community communication as outlined in chapter eight. In addition, I also discussed in chapter eight, how community radio could be merged with social media to create an even stronger Internet-based platform for community access and participation in community radio

### **9.3 Community media and community radio- a theoretical framework**

In chapter two, I presented two discussions: community media and community radio. In discussing community media, I gave an overview of the community and community media with a focus on its evolutionary process, placing community media in a general theoretical setting. In particular, I discussed community media through the lens of John Downing's Radical Media Theory as well as through the Citizen's Media Theory proposed by Clemencia Rodriguez. I also discussed community media through a multi-theoretical approach as proposed by Carpentier, Lie and Servaes.

The second part of the chapter focused on theorising community radio. The main characteristics that define the true nature of community radio as discussed in chapter two are summarised below. They are also the key features of community radio that form the theoretical framework for this study and hence, a yardstick by which I could evaluate how my selected radio stations had fared in providing participatory community radio.

As highlighted in chapter two, community media is often described as the informal and decentralised media where:

“Ordinary people” (i.e., those who are not part of a societal elite) are given the opportunity to have their voices heard; and where topics that are considered relevant for the community can be discussed by its members, thus, empowering them by signifying that their statements are considered important enough to be broadcast (Carpentier, Lie and Servaes, 2007:225).



Hence, community radio, being an important arm of community media, is portrayed as the radio that is committed “to community participation at all levels” and where “community radio listeners are the producers, managers, directors and even owners of the stations” (Girard, 1992:2, Bailey, Cammaerts and Carpentier, 2008:23). Coyer (2007) describes community radio stations as those:

that embrace participatory, open, not-for-profit practises, and made by and for the community primarily by voluntary labour values....It is radio run for its own sake, for the benefit of the community, rather than for the profit of station owners (Coyer, 2007: 113).

Coyer also suggests that “community radio is more than just radio. It is a means of social organising and social engagement” (Coyer, 2007:113). It is regarded as a medium where there is no professionalism involved- a medium that is considered as “not just do-it-yourself (DIY)” but “do-it-your-own-way” (Rennie, 2006: 186). Hence, doing community radio is supposed to be a very ordinary and an unprofessional process where the local community faces and interacts with the local community for their own joy and pleasure and in their own choice, space and time. The participants are volunteers who live the same community and who are part of the radio audience.

There are also many other salient features that are attributed to community radio. For example, it is regarded as a means for community mobilisation and radical change (Downing, 2001) as much as it is a channel for celebrating community life; giving community groups the right to access and the right to be served in accordance to their own determination and need; participating in the ‘lives’ of their community by playing their songs, announcing their community notices and events, giving community news, and promoting community culture (Girard, 1992); and narrating “stories and opinions all of which reinforce community memory and history” (Rennie, 2006:4). The community radio stations thus inform the community about what was happening in their own “backyard” (Forde, Meadows, and Foxwell (2003). In the developing world, the use of community radio for development communication purposes is also an important feature (Hochheimer, 2002). Therefore, the main purpose of having a community radio station is to provide access to a

common community media platform to communicate and to come together and appreciate the life and works of their own community (Hochheimer, 1999:451). Thus, it is significant that community radio is a platform where ordinary members of the community are able to converge and participate in a manner and style that they decide. Community access and participation are therefore the two key concepts that are at the very heart of community radio. As much of this study is centred on community access and participation in the selected three radio stations, the discussion on access and participation in chapter two, in many ways, lays the theoretical foundation for my study.

#### **9.4 Community broadcasting in South Asia and New Zealand**

In chapters three and four, I gave an overview of the chosen community radio stations in South Asia and New Zealand. The chapters provided a broad background of the community radio environment in the relevant countries.

Chapter three showed that many South Asian governments were initially (and some still are), suspicious of the local communities and were not comfortable, and in some cases were reluctant, to open up community broadcasting giving free access to communities to participate and create programmes of their choice. For example, in India, the then Indian Information and Broadcasting Ministry secretary, Mr. Pavan Chopra, said: “We have to treat very cautiously when it comes to community radio... it could become a platform to air provocative, political content that doesn’t serve any purpose except to divide people. It is fraught with danger” (Lakshmi, 2003). In Sri Lanka, too, the Government was of the view that if community radio stations were set up in different parts of the country, they could be controlled by terrorists to promote their interests (Lakshmi, 2005). Instead, the Government saw that it should expand community radio under SLBC, the State broadcaster (S. Wijesinghe, personal communication, August 6, 2007). In Bangladesh, the Government had earlier held back permission to establish community radio on the belief that the radio might be hijacked by groups for a ‘terrorist or a political’ purpose (Islam, 2006).

Chapter four provided an overview of New Zealand community radio broadcasting. In New

Zealand, community broadcasting is partly funded by the Government and at the moment, government funding policies favour community access radio stations that are beamed to populations of at least 50,000. Such an audience can be only attained mainly by access radio stations in major urban centres. Hence, government policy deprives small community radio stations, especially the low-power FM stations (LPFM stations), which are active among small communities of interest in small towns, suburbs in major cities and rural areas.

The LPFM stations truly reflect the community radio spirit, giving the opportunity to any interested individual in the community to express their own ideas and views without the need to have the programme content changed by anyone in any organisation. By removing the need to pay for a licence or register a frequency not only removes the bureaucratic regulatory barriers for broadcasting but also brings the cost of broadcasting within reach of ordinary individual citizens. Hence, I believe the LPFM radio is, in many ways, the medium that has truly democratised the New Zealand airwaves, giving the ordinary New Zealand citizens the opportunity to access the radio spectrum and practise affordable radio broadcasting in their own time, taste and tone.

What is evident from the discussions in chapters three and four is that while community radio broadcasting in New Zealand is based on a very free and open policy, in South Asia it is a closely guarded area where respective governments are hesitant to open up the airwaves for local community-led initiatives. Hence, permission is generally given to respected NGOs and public institutes to use broadcasting as an aid to further their development objectives. This means, the local communities and the interested local individuals who are interested in broadcasting who do not belong to NGOs do not get the opportunity to do community broadcasting. By contrast, the New Zealand community radio environment allows any party to broadcast as long as they can get access to a radio frequency or airtime. The New Zealand LPFM band, under a General User License (GUL) agreement, also allows individual members of the community to setup their own home-based broadcasting initiatives. In this sense, New Zealand offers a wealth of experience and knowledge for the South Asian community radio broadcasters and media planners to develop their current community

broadcasting model and policy framework from being a centrally managed ‘top-down activity’ to a community-led and community-focused ‘bottom-up’ initiative.

### **9.5 The three cases in this study**

The three stations chosen were: Radio Sagharmatha in Kathmandu, Nepal, an NGO-owned station; Kothmale Community Radio in Kothmale in the Central Province, Sri Lanka, a government-owned station; and Samoa Capital Radio in Wellington, New Zealand, a station owned by a community trust. These are three stations in three very different radio environments and in three very different countries.

In chapter five, I discussed case study as a research method. In chapter six, I discussed how the nature of access and participation unfolded in my investigation and how radio station management was readjusting the nature of community access and participation in order to make sustainable community radio.

As chapter six showed, a feature that was common to all three stations was their interest in reaching a wider audience. For some critics, this was a strategy to attract advertisers. However, for others, increased coverage also meant leaving the local community. As Louie Tabing, one of the pioneers of community radio in the Philippines remarked:

To be a real community radio there is a need for the radio to broadcast the voices of the community as it is an indication that the radio is connected with its own community. No radio can become a community radio unless the radio has established an effective community link that connects and bonds the radio with its community. Any radio with a large coverage area or with a large population, cannot effectively establish a strong community link to its community. If a radio has no effective community link, then the radio cannot be a community radio. The community members must have the confidence that their radio listen to them, and is loyal to them, and is there to help discuss community concerns as they are on the community side (personal communication, June 15, 2007).

Tabing also remarked:

Powerful radio signals may reach a larger geographic area but it also means more communities, thereby, making it more difficult for the radio to reach all corners of the community. My experience in the Philippines had shown that if a community radio station broadcasts to a population over 30 thousand people, it was practically not possible to reach its community in terms of meeting the community needs and interests through radio. As big radios are there for big broadcasts, the very fact that there is a huge area covered or an interest to have an increased coverage area, removes the community characteristics of the radio and hence cannot ideally be described as community radio even if the radio has the name 'community' included in its name (personal communication, June 15, 2007).

At all three stations, there was a trend to embrace NGO-produced programmes. Management was quite eager to negotiate for increased partnership with the NGOs. By giving the NGOs, the power to produce development-related programmes of their choice, instead of creating spaces that would mobilise local community participation, the radio stations were simply making their airtime available to those who were ready to finance programmes. Hence, by putting the community interest behind NGO interests, there was a tendency towards 'NGO-isation' of the community radio (K. Malik, personal communication, 12 June, 2007). It also meant the stations were more open to listen to and be a medium for their sponsors instead of being a medium of the community for the community. As Kanchan Malik suggested during a conversation I held with her while she was attending a community radio symposium held in the Maldives, "sustainability should not be measured in financial terms only as it involves social and human capital too" (K. Malik, personal communication, June 12, 2007).

Both RS and SCR already had quite a strong NGO/sponsor presence. At KCR, the station manager indicated that its parent company had encouraged the station to increase its NGO-produced programmes as a way to minimise programme production costs. In NGO-produced programmes that were broadcast on the three stations, the community had no role to play in programme making. The subjects were chosen to fulfil NGO needs and the talking was also done by NGO officials or leading experts in their fields. Although some of the experts and NGO officials may reside in the local community, their involvement in the radio programmes

was more or less to fulfil an NGO job. Hence, when communities participate in the radio to “express an opinion on a topic defined by the radio during phone-in shows” (Girard, 1992: 9), or to take part in a similar programme that was produced to achieve an NGO objective, their involvement in programmes could not be viewed as true local community participation. They are, as Southern African Broadcasting Corporation secretary-general, John Musukuma, told the AIBD Conference in Brunei in 2005, community participants who had been “cajoled by interest groups or people with their own agendas” and hence it was not genuine or “willing” participation (Musukuma, 2005).

At both RS and KCR, I was also told that the ‘voices’ that were used in NGO-produced programmes were not necessarily from the local community. They could be from different communities in different parts of the country. They were more or less used to provide local support to the subject that was discussed in the programmes and hence, achieve an NGO agenda. As Rennie, suggests, “participatory communication cannot be a strategy to make target audiences ‘feel’ more involved, and therefore, more acquiescent to manipulative agendas. It is not a means to an end, but legitimate in its own right” (Rennie, 2006:23). Moreover, when tailor-made programmes that are produced and presented by NGOs and packaged as ‘knowledge’ that is passed on as a ready-made package rather than being the result of dialogue with the local community, it becomes “non-participative” (Bailey, Cammaerts and Carpentier, 2008:12) in the sense that there is no spontaneity and no local community initiative.

From my interviews, I also knew that at RS and KCR, the NGO-produced programmes were simply productions that were made for the whole nation instead of a specific local community. Although the RS programme director claimed that the NGO productions reflected the local community situation as everywhere in the country the communities faced similar socio-economic problems, I believe his views were made to defend the station’s use of NGO-produced programmes rather than to prove their community relevance or focus. I also believe that embracing NGOs was a strategy that brought the radio station closer to its funders rather than to their communities. Hence, it did not help the communities to identify with their stations.

At all three radio stations, the management had turned the stations into professional organisations. The stations operated on a strict schedule and there was no atmosphere of informality and flexibility within the station. The stations had full-time paid staff who measured their work against the pay they received. For them, their participation in the radio had more to do with earning an income instead of serving the community. Therefore, paid-staff, doing full-time work, could not be regarded as local community members participating in their community radio in true community spirit.

The community volunteers, too, did not play any part in programme planning and production or managing the station. At the three stations, the local community could not come on their own and organise themselves to make programmes of their choice. Only, the radio manager could bring in volunteers or other members of the community to do programmes. All decisions with regard to management and programme production rested with the station managers. Hence, the idea that community radio stations are “rhizomes” where there is a horizontal management style and where everyone is equal in decision-making and participation was not evident. Instead, there appeared to be a top-down approach in management where the station managers ensured that their staff were meeting the demands of the radio management. The style of operation was formal, centralised and inflexible instead of being informal and flexible which was supposed to be the true nature of community radio.

As I referred to earlier in this chapter, community media theorists agree that any ideal community radio station should have some degree of community ownership. This can be achieved by having a strong community volunteer group to help the stations in administrative work and producing, planning and/or presenting programmes. At every station, this was the case in the early days: it was the community volunteers who did most of the work including programme production and presentation. However, as time passed by, the novelty of broadcasting withered and according to all three stations, as a result, volunteer numbers decreased to the extent it became challenging to produce programmes. This was a main reason for all three stations to recruit their volunteers as full-time salaried staff who could be

made accountable to what they did instead of relying on volunteers who operate on an ad-hoc basis. Although this was a good decision in the sense that it gave the volunteers the security of having a permanent job, by becoming salaried staff, they effectively “have left volunteerism behind” even though they were once “tied to the volunteer ethos” (Dunaway, 2002:79).

None of the stations now actively encourages voluntary participation or has a volunteer-recruitment programme to increase the volunteer-strength or widen the roles of volunteers. There are no advertisements to recruit volunteers or ask them to come and participate in programmes and no established mechanism to recruit volunteers. Therefore, without a major contribution and involvement from community volunteers, the stations lack the main feature that identifies them as radio of their communities. After all, a station becomes community radio only when it takes on board community members, especially community volunteers who come on their own free will to participate and to contribute to their radio. As Ogu Enemaku, Mass Communication Lecturer at the University of Lagos (2003) stated:

Programmes must be community-driven...and the people must be part and parcel of the station if a radio wants to be identified as a true community radio. Paid staffs don't represent a community as they are there to do a job and earn an income rather than serve their communities (Enemaku, 2003:135).

However, at each station, from time to time, as and when the management determines, ‘elite’ community volunteers are brought in to work on selected programmes. They are all invited by the station manger due to their ‘stature’ and availability of space on the radio schedule. The ‘elites’ in the community who have been given the opportunity to participate in radio were those with whom the station managers have a good rapport and those who are liked and approved by the managers (Barlow, 2002). Such actions could be seen as controlling ‘floodgates’ to keep out the unwanted (van Vuuren, 2003). The power of the managers to handpick volunteers or personally decide whose voice should be broadcast on the radio, or conversely whose voice should be heard by the community, also questioned how democratic the radio stations were in promoting free community participation.



Describing the practice of free access and participation in many community radio stations in South Asia, a media official who works at the UNESCO office in New Delhi told me that it was a concept that was much talked about rather than something that practically occurred every working day of the stations. According to her, in part due to the need for the radio stations to survive, NGOs and other financiers who were ready to fund the stations got more access to the airwaves consequently squeezing out the local community, who were supposed to provide the backbone for the station.

For all three radio stations, a growing trend was the lack of interest in the youth to listen to their community radio. In Sri Lanka and Nepal, the availability of other media such as the Internet, mobile phones, DVD and CD players, play-stations and the availability of commercial music radio channels and TV channels meant the young listeners now do not listen to the radio in the way they used to as it was a time when their radio was the only available alternative.

In order to increase the local community participation in the radio programmes, KCR has in particular launched innovative and attractive community media projects such as the Internet radio browsing and the use of E-TUK TUK. Given their innovative nature, as a means to increase community participation in the radio, these projects received much international attention and assistance. However, as I had pointed out elsewhere in chapters six and eight, the intended objectives of these projects were never fully realised and, given the way the projects were currently managed, the local community had many misgivings. However, being very innovative community media projects that have the potential to strengthen local community participation in the radio, they often attract the interests of international donors and NGOs who are ready and willing to support the projects. In this sense, I feel that they 'do' a far better job in creating donor interest instead of creating greater community interest and participation in the radio. Hence, in many ways, they are arguably no more than 'set-pieces' that are showcased to generate media publicity and increase the radio station's profile both at home and, more importantly, abroad.

Chapter Seven focused on a news analysis of the three radio stations. The news analysis showed that there was a lack of local community news on news bulletins. The stations were mainly relying on national, regional and international news sources to gather news. None of the stations had an effective local network of local community members who could provide local news. Hence, there was a poor coverage of local news. However, as the three stations regard the Internet as a means to strengthen their news gathering and news dissemination capabilities, I believe their local news production and news dissemination too could be strengthened if the radio stations could mobilise those among the community who had Internet access to publish on the radio websites what was happening in their circles and in their suburbs and communities of interest. Furthermore, as discussed in chapter eight, social media networks such as facebook could be used as an added pathway for their users to share knowledge of what was happening in different localities in their community. Hence, by using facebook as a local community news resource, the stations could broadcast facebook-generated local news on the radio thereby creating an opportunity for those who do not have access to the Internet to listen to the same news on the radio.

The discussion in chapter eight highlighted how the three radio stations are gradually turning towards the Internet as the new platform to reach their communities. Already the three radio stations have established their own websites. Both SCR and RS are now live-streaming their radio programmes while KCR has selected podcasts available on its site. At all three stations, plans are in the pipeline to create other ways of using the Internet as the new platform for the community to access and participate in the radio. One such plan was, to begin a live blog that could be used by the interested community members to access and participate in the radio whenever they wanted without having to worry about limited space and time on radio. This would enable those in the community who get access to the Internet, to participate and access radio in their own right and in their own time and need. The use of the Internet also meant that the radio stations could keep their on-air broadcasting time to broadcast their revenue generating NGO/sponsor-funded programmes and open up the Internet as an alternative medium through which the local community could access and participate in the radio without any time limits or constraints. Furthermore, as the Internet was already increasing in

popularity, particularly among youth, the integration of radio with the Internet was seen the way forward, if the stations were to attract young people.

## **9.6 Conclusion**

This study identifies the current status as well as the role of the selected community stations and the nature of community access and participation. The study shows that at all three stations, the nature of community access and participation is carefully managed in a manner and style the management preferred and with a view to staying financially sustainable. For all three, the bigger worry is meeting the operational costs and to survive in the media market rather than facing a lack of local community participation. What matters more is survival, continuity and sustainable radio. Hence, doing community radio is now more like embracing the interests and needs of the funders over the interests of the community.

This study shows that in their effort to stay economically sustainable, the three stations are evolving from a purely traditional community radio station to a 'new' hybrid community radio station- something that sits in-between the traditional not-for-profit-making informal community radio and the more professional commercial radio. Hence, it is basically a more institutionalised radio format that embraces the revenue-generating strategies that are often the norm in commercial broadcasting.

The migration from a purely traditional community radio to the 'new' hybrid radio format means that the bigger objective of each station is to become more self-sufficient and to rely on a full-time paid workforce who are made accountable to their work and who can implement the needs of the radio management to accommodate more externally-produced and sponsored programmes, more advertisements, 'infomercials' and infotainment programmes. Programmes that are produced by the local community are also often replaced by programmes that are produced by the stations' full-time staff. As a result, the stations are departing from their traditional volunteer base and that there is a decrease in the number of programmes made by the local community volunteers and consequently, a decrease in airtime that is available for the local community. Under the 'new' hybrid strategy,

entertainment shows that are usually heard on commercial channels are also added to lure listeners, especially the youth, who would otherwise be listening to other entertainment channels. Although entertainment programmes are added as a remedy to reverse the community stations' dwindling audience, especially youth, it is disheartening to note that this decision has ironically narrowed the difference between community and the commercial radio.

The three radio stations also actively seek the sale of airtime to well-funded NGOs, giving agency-driven programmes priority over local community programmes. By sacrificing the local community productions, the stations are becoming vehicles that help to meet agency objectives. Hence, access and participation in the radio is now more of an economic decision instead of a service for the community that is freely open and accessible for the local community to organise, plan and present their own programmes.

Although such moves have financial merits, the radio stations, while presenting themselves as the representatives of the marginalised, are in fact, marginalising the voices of the local community, the very people that gave the stations their community characteristics and identity and the very 'product' that was widely promoted to earn revenue. Therefore, in the interest of earning more revenue to secure market survival, the 'new' hybrid radio format is settling for a lesser community role, making one conclude that the practice of community radio does not necessarily have to follow the theory due to the need to do sustainable radio. It also strengthens the position of RS and KCR critics who argue that the current style of broadcasting and the nature of community participation do not help them to qualify as local community radio stations.

As one of the radio managers told me, more than local community participation, what matters most is not what is produced or who produces what, but survival. This being the case, his radio station's programming was increasingly being marketed to stable and credible programme-makers who were willing to buy the airtime to produce programmes of their choice. Instead of community volunteers, it was the sponsors and funding agencies who

accessed the radio station, playing a major role in programme planning, production and presenting. This was a satisfactory arrangement as it helped the station stay on air (personal communication, November 26, 2009). In the manager's words:

The greatest strength is the fact that the radio station continues to go on air every day giving the locals an identity on the airwaves; to hear the sound of their mother tongue every day on air is simply a reminder that their community does have a functioning radio which they can be proudly called theirs (personal communication, November 26, 2009).

Although community stations are there to provide a unique non-commercial and a community participatory format, the strength and influence of the more entertaining commercial radio stations in taking the younger listeners away from the community stations raises the question whether community radio, as we have known it should be 'revamped' in favour of a hybrid of community and commercial radio or whether there is any need and/or a place in the community for a purely traditional community radio station. An even bigger question is, whether the non-commercial and not-for-profit community radio stations should, at all, be adapting commercial radio strategies for their survival.

Although management policy decisions that aimed at greater financial sustainability have negatively impacted on local community access and participation, they also have paved the way for community radio to merge with an Internet-based radio platform thereby embracing a second 'hybrid' environment or a digital 'hybrid' pathway, where radio is more than merely a listening activity but also an on-line activity. This means the station's virtual visitors-irrespective of their physical location- can listen the radio online and also use the radio station's website as a platform to engage in interactive communication with the radio and with each other, providing in addition to listening, virtual community communication and virtual community links as the basis for stronger community access and participation with their community and their community radio.

The reality is, in an ever-challenging media market dominated by public radio stations and commercial stations, the small-scale community radio stations are constantly faced with the challenges of fighting for survival. Hence, I believe that an Internet-based hybrid format of

community radio seems the ideal and the viable option. A format that also combines community radio with social media platforms would be economical as it provides the radio station with the opportunity to enrich its community content by incorporating diverse discussions on the social media. Furthermore, it also paves way for more community members, through social media, to get access to the radio thereby expanding the level of community participation. I believe this is community radio's future.

By incorporating the Internet, I believe traditional community radio has found a way to bring on board the 'facebook' generation (which I refer as the interconnected members who, irrespective of their geographic location, belong to the growing number of the new and different virtual communities) whose support and participation is central to future community communication.

Finally, I note that the decision to go web-based demonstrates that as much as survival and money matter, the local community is very much in the mind of each station that I studied. It was also a recognition that the community access, participation and community support was the real strength and success of the radio station, giving its true identity as a community 'product' and, hence, the legitimacy to broadcast in the name of the local community.

## **9.8 Further research**

I have done this study only through interviewing those who work at the radio stations. This study therefore, unfolds only one side of the story. The other side, the audience, is not included. I was unable to incorporate an audience survey due to my time limitations as well as due to my financial constraints. An audience survey is an important aspect in doing a revised or similar future study as they would give a more holistic view on the true nature of access and participation in the radio stations. It is only through an audience survey that we can identify whether the selected radio stations were "hitting their target" (Jallov, 2005: 23). It is through an audience survey that one would be able to identify the viewpoints of the listening communities on their community radio, identifying the opportunities they have in

participating and accessing the radio stations and whether in their view, the radio stations were fulfilling their daily information needs.

There is also a need to do a text analysis of selected programmes of the selected radio stations. In doing a text analysis, it is important to select programmes that are produced by NGOs as well as the radio stations' full-time paid staff. By doing a text analysis of the programmes we could identify the level of local community focus, their community relevance as well as the length and breadth of local community participation in the selected programmes.

Through a comprehensive audience survey and together with a text analysis of selected programmes, we can ascertain the real community connection and identify whether a selected radio was “working effectively, involving all communities in the community, and applying the participatory, open and access-based principles it ideally advocates” (Jallov, 2005:23).

In the discussion in chapter eight, I have highlighted how the selected community radio stations are blending with the Internet. I also discussed how community radio could be used, even in rural communities in Sri Lanka and Nepal, to join social media platforms such as ‘facebook’, paving the way, ultimately, to merge the traditional community radio’s on-air broadcasting with online feeds from the Internet thereby taking community access and participation in community radio to a new height. As this is a cross-road where traditional community radio meets social media networks- the new community media- and interacts with the ‘facebook’ generation, which is the new community, there is a further need to explore how community stations, especially, in the rural settings of countries such as Sri Lanka and Nepal, are merging with the Internet and social media platforms to provide community news, community information and mobilise community support for stronger community communication.

Table 1

Appendix 1

<b>Distribution of News Types by the Three Radio Stations</b>						
<b>Showing Total Minutes and Percentage</b>						
<b>News Type</b>		<b>Radio Sagharmatha</b>		<b>Kothmale Community Radio</b>		<b>Samoa Capital Radio</b>
<b>Local News</b>						
Total Min		22.16		12.26		25.89
%		1.79		16.73		8.81
<b>Regional News</b>						
Total Min		56.69		61.07		77.47
%		4.6		83.26		26.35
<b>National News</b>						
Total Min		795.82		0		78.53
%		63.5		0		26.7
<b>International News</b>						
Total Min		363.44		0		112.12
%		29.22		0		38.12
<b>Grand Total (Min)</b>		1238.11		73.33		294.01



Table 2

Appendix 1

News Distribution Among Different Subject Categories by Three Radio Stations (Showing total Airtime in Minutes and %)												
Subject Categories	Radio Sagarmatha				Kothmale Radio				Samoa Capital Radio			
	Local (Min & %)	Regional (Min & %)	National (Min & %)	International (Min & %)	Local (Min & %)	Regional (Min & %)	National (Min & %)	International (Min & %)	Local (Min & %)	Regional (Min & %)	National (Min & %)	International (Min & %)
Agriculture & Farming	0	1.3 (0.1%)	13.3 (1.1)	0	0	7.8 (10.6)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Arts & Culture	0	0	6.4 (0.5%)	0	2.4 (3.3%)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Business & Economics	0	0	38.4 (3.2%)	0	1.7 (2.3%)	14.5 (19.7)	0	0	4.7 (1.6%)	0	18.5 (6.3%)	19.5 (6.6%)
Crime	3 (0.2%)	9.2 (0.7%)	36.4 (2.9%)	0	0	0	0	0	4.6 (8.6%)	25.3 (8.6%)	0	5 (1.7%)
Disaster	9.9 (0.8%)	27.1 (2.2%)	5.1 (0.4%)	0	2 (2.7%)	0	0	0	6 (2.0%)	22.3 (7.6%)	0	7.7 (2.6%)
Education	4.0 (0.3%)	3.0 (0.2%)	5.1 (0.4%)	0	0	8.3 (11.4%)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Entertainment	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Environment	0	3.6 (10.3%)	10.1 (10.8%)	0	0	0	0	0	5.2 (1.8%)	0	0	19.8 (6.7%)
Health	4.1 (0.3%)	10. (0.8%)	1.8 (0.2%)	0	2 (2.7%)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Law & Order	0	1 (10.1%)	1.1 (0.1%)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Politics	0	0	634.8 (51.4%)	173.3 (14.0%)	0	0	0	0	0	0	49.7 (16.9%)	50.2 (17.1%)
Religion	0	0	0	0	3.3 (4.6%)	5.2 (7.1%)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sports	0	1.2 (0.1%)	14.2 (1.2%)	190.1 (15.2%)	0.8 (1.1%)	5.4 (7.4%)	0	0	4 (1.4%)	0	10.2 (3.5%)	5.9 (2.0%)
Transport	1.1 (0.09%)	0	29.0 (2.3%)	0	0	15.1 (20.6%)	0	0	1.4 (0.5%)	29.9 (10.2%)	0	4 (1.4%)
Welfare	0	0	0	0	0	4.8 (6.6%)	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>22.2 (1.8%)</b>	<b>56.7 (4.6%)</b>	<b>795.8 (63.5%)</b>	<b>363.4 (29.2%)</b>	<b>12.3 (16.7%)</b>	<b>61.1 (83.3%)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>25.9 (8.8%)</b>	<b>77.5 (26.4%)</b>	<b>78.5 (26.7%)</b>	<b>112.1 (38.1%)</b>

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## **Field interviews conducted at the three community radio stations**

### **Radio Sagharmatha, Kathmandu, Nepal.**

**Period interviewed:** 20<sup>th</sup> June-10<sup>th</sup> July 2007; 10<sup>th</sup> September-15<sup>th</sup> September 2007

#### **Interviewees**

Acharya, Rishi, Junior Reporter  
Adhikari, Nimesh, Co-Producer  
Adhikari, Sanjeev, Producer  
Aryal, Deepak Babu, Junior Reporter  
Aryal, Laxaman, Volunteer  
Bajracharya, Suraj, Bir, Volunteer  
Basnet, Shanta, Junior Producer  
Basnyat, Urbashi, Receptionist  
Bhandari, Punya Prasad, Junior Reporter  
Bhandary, D. P. Volunteer  
Bhattarai, Rami, Librarian  
Bista, Mohan, Radio Manager  
Blon, Bhakta, Bir Volunteer  
Byanjankar, Sura, Volunteer  
Karki, Durga, Producer  
Luitel, Ghamaraj, Programme Director  
Maharjan, Anil, Volunteer  
Manandhar, Pramila, Volunteer  
Manandhar, Rabi, Volunteer  
Manandhar, Sulochana, Volunteer  
Mubahang, Balkrishna, Volunteer  
Pandey, Deepak, Co-Producer  
Pokhrel, Kiran, Producer  
Pokhrel, Sharada, Volunteer  
Ranabhat, Nira, Junior Reporter  
Rijal, Sharda, Junior Reporter  
Risal, Bhairab, Volunteer  
Shrestha, Bhoj Narayan, Co-Producer  
Sigdyal, Krishna, P. Volunteer  
Subba, Roshna, Co-presenter  
Timilsina, Bikram, Volunteer  
Yonjan, Buddha, Volunteer

**Kothmale Community Radio, Kothmale, Sri Lanka.**

**Period interviewed:** 6<sup>th</sup> August-18<sup>th</sup> August 2007; 7<sup>th</sup> September-9<sup>th</sup> September 2007

**Interviewees**

Abeykoon, D.W. Secretary, Radio Listeners' Club.  
Arathane, Kapila Kumara, Producer (Relief Announcer)  
Buddhika, Nishan, volunteer  
Bowala, Sajith, Volunteer  
Damangathi, Chandrika, Producer (Relief Announcer)  
Danushaka, Hiran, Volunteer  
Dasanayake, Nishani, Deepashika Producer (Relief Announcer)  
Dewapriya, Prasanna, Producer (Relief Announcer)  
Dharshana, Buddhika, Volunteer  
Fernandes, Sashika, Volunteer  
Hassan, Fawziya, Producer (Relief Announcer)  
Heshani, Dhilshika, Volunteer  
Keerthirathne, Koasala  
Liyonarachi, Irosha, Producer (Relief Announcer)  
Nangita, Nirosha, Volunteer  
Panaboake, Aruna, Volunteer  
Pavithran, Preethiraj, Producer (Relief Announcer)  
Perera, Vajira, Volunteer  
Pramasinghe, Chandra, Producer (Relief Announcer)  
Samrakoon, Panduka, Volunteer  
Samarasinghe, Asanka, Volunteer  
Saredhana, Piri, Volunteer  
Sathiyathan, Sandanam, Volunteer  
Shantha, Sunil Producer, (Relief Announcer)  
Shiyapali, Priyanka, Producer (Relief Announcer)  
Sooriya, Gamini Varna, Volunteer  
Vikramasinghe, Asanka, Producer (Relief Announcer)  
Wijarathna, Sunil, Volunteer  
Wijesingha, Sunil, Radio Manager

**Samoa Capital Radio, Wellington, New Zealand.**

**Period interviewed:** 14<sup>th</sup> November 2008-28<sup>th</sup> November 2008

**Interviewees**

Afereti, Toleafoa, Producer  
Akitiona, Amani, Producer  
Anfai, Pule Malii, Volunteer  
Fai, Tafesila, Volunteer  
Fiso, Tufue, Producer  
Gagau, Sera, Volunteer  
Ioane, Tanuvasa, Volunteer  
Kasiano, Savelina, Producer  
Moresi, Tealu Afamasaga, Radio Manager  
Peilva, Faaso'o Tautu, Producer  
Sagato, Su'a Petelo, Volunteer  
Su'a, Popo, Volunteer  
Tanuvasa, Toleafoa Seti, Member, SCR Board of Trustees  
Tufuga, Fatu, Volunteer

**Media executives, consultants, scholars and media practitioners I had communicated and/or contacted:**

Ashish Sen, Vice President, AMARC and Director, Voices, a development communications NGO, India.

Badru Naseer, Director General, Voice of Maldives, Male', Maldives.

Brent Simpson, Trustee and Founding Member, Radio Waihike.

Dilli Bastola, Information Officer, Ministry of Information, Kathmandu, Nepal.

Frederick Noronha, from Goa, India, Indian community radio campaigner and Founder of BytesForAll, an Internet-based ICT4D network in South Asia.

Hussein Mohamed, Executive Director, Television Maldives.

Ian Pringle, UNESCO Advisor based in Paris, France.

Ibrahim Hussein Manik, Minister of Information, Arts and Culture, Male', Maldives.

Jim Tucker, Journalism Programme Leader, Whitireia Community Polytechnic, Wellington, New Zealand.

Jocelyn Josiah, UNESCO Advisor based in New Delhi, India.

Kanchan Malik, Lecturer, University of Hyderabad, India.

Keith Collins, Community Radio Manager, NZOA, Wellington, New Zealand.

Keldron Parker, Radio Manager, Wellington Access Radio, Wellington, New Zealand.

Kenneth Maskall, UNICEF Representative in Male', Maldives.

Louie Tabing, Executive Director, Tambuli Foundation, Philippines.

Madhu Acharya, M. Director, Antennae Foundation of Nepal and NEFEJ Board Member, Kathmandu, Nepal.

Maizan Ahmed Manik, Founder, Radio One, Male', Maldives.

Mohamed Nasheed, Minister of Information and Arts, Male', Maldives.

Mohamed N. Faleel, Acting Country Coordinator, Fund for Relief and Development, Colombo, Sri Lanka.

Mohamed Waheed, Former Director General of the Department of Information and Broadcasting, Male', Maldives.

Nicki Reece, Radio Manager, Plains FM, Christchurch, New Zealand.

Ohm Khadka, RS Board Member and Director Nepal Federation of Environmental Journalists, Kathmandu, Nepal.

Pratheek Pratap Bhandarary, Senior Staff Member, Community Radio Support Centre, and former NEFEJ Board Member, Kathmandu, Nepal.

Raghu Mainali, Head, Community Radio Support Centre, Kathmandu, Nepal.

Rajendra Prasad Sharma, Deputy Executive Director, Radio Nepal and former Board Member of Radio Sagharmatha and NEFEJ, Kathmandu, Nepal.

Sajeewani Abeykoon, presenter/producer, E FM, (former Capital FM), Colombo, Sri Lanka.  
Seema Nair, UNESCO Field Officer based in New Delhi, India.

Simon Young, Social Media Consultant and Catalyst/ Co-founder, iJump.co.nz Auckland, New Zealand.

Terri Byrne, Radio Manager, Planet FM, Auckland, New Zealand.

Thilana Sooriya, Director External Relations, Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation, Colombo, Sri Lanka.

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