

Presentation of Social Issues in Community Radios in Bangladesh

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Abstract

This study shows the ways how community radios can work on present social issues with the participation of community people. Content analyses of purposely selected radio programmes of two community radios of Bangladesh has been done to understand the depth and message on particular social issues. For understanding the approach community radio authorities towards this issues FGD has been done with program makes. This research shows less than 5% of air time are allowed for social issues based programmes. Where community the main objective of community radios are to present the issues and problems of community people. Detail programme analysis has been done in this study to understand the effectiveness of contents. To improve this scenario some suggestions are there in the very last part of the study.

Keywords: Community radio • Social issues • Problem • Bangladesh • Content analysis • Radio programme

Introduction

Media plays a very important role in human life. It constitutes, shapes, improvises the life of human being to a certain extent. The mainstream media focuses on the mainstream part of the population. Because of many reasons like political influence, economic impact, advertisements, ownership, mainstream media cannot contain the picture of the marginalized people. Through the mainstream media the marginalized portion remains neglected. Community radio rises to come out from this situation. Community radio tells about the life of the community, gives the audiences the taste of their ownership, lets the others to smell the fragrance of their lives, and makes others imagine the color of locality. The power of community radio is to mobilize groups and bring change to societies. Community radio is generally the best tool for sending information to illiterate and poor communities, as it requires neither reading skills nor money.

Community radio serves a recognizable community and encourages participatory democracy. It offers the opportunity to any member of the community to initiate communication and participate in program making, management and ownership of the station. It is committed to community wellbeing, not on commercial considerations as well as it promotes and improves problem solving. Thus the community radio serves the purpose of identifying and solving the social issues of a specific community radio. The history of community radio is nearly a hundred years ancient which was originated in Latin America. In 1948 to protest against poverty and social injustice *Miners Radio* in Bolivia and at the very same year in Columbia *Radio Sutatenza* were established and these were the foot markers of establishing community radios. The main aim of establishing *Miners Radio* was to organize the community people to create suitable environment for the mine laborers. Mainly, the *Miners Radio* was the representative broadcasting media established by the labor union and the money source was the income of the laborers [1].

In many countries mainstream media are concentrated in capital cities and biased towards urban and elite people. They seldom produce contents for the grassroots. Community radio on the contrary provides the opportunity of reaching powerless communities and giving them a voice. Even in the areas

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where national media coverage is available, the impact of a community radio broadcasting in a local language or languages is incomparable.

The media of Bangladesh refers to the print, broadcast and online mass media available in Bangladesh. The Constitution guarantees press freedom and freedom of expression within "reasonable restriction", The Bangladeshi media is ranked at 120th out of 178 countries on the Reporters Without Borders Press Freedom Index, with 1st being most free. (Worldwide Press Freedom Index). The media in Bangladesh is a mix of government-owned and private media. The print media is private and consists of hundreds of weekly publications, presenting a vast array of viewpoints. Television is the biggest medium for news in Bangladesh In 2006 there were 15 television stations. There are 30 Television Stations, 15AM and 13FM radio stations available in 2014. (Country profile: Bangladesh, BBC News Online). The print media is private and consists of hundreds of weekly publications, presenting a vast array of viewpoints, though some outspoken papers have faced pressure in the past.

These newspapers, radio stations, online radio stations and the TV channels are the main media of Bangladesh. With a close observation on these media houses, their broadcasting policies and their publishing history it can be opined that, the houses and the corporation bear some common characteristics like [2]

- Profit seeking,
- Excessive advertisements,
- Town and city centered,
- Helping to serve the purpose of the multinational and corporate houses,
- Excessive sex, money and scandalous topics and so on.
- Unawareness on the marginalized area and population,
- Political and commercial ownership,
- Tendency to present negative news,
- Serve the purpose of the political agendas.

Community radio emerged to overcome the difficulties of the mainstream media. The social issues are very much crucial in the remote area of a country like Bangladesh. The marginalized people are the victims of various social problems. Education, health, pre-disaster warning, post-disaster activities, agriculture, market, culture etc. are the sectors in which they need information, knowledge skill and participation. Community radio is developed to play a very important role in these areas. Promoting the right to communicate, speeding up the process of informing the community, assisting the free flow of information and therefore acting as a catalyst of change are few major tasks are to be

done by community radio. It also upholds creative growth and democratic spirit in the community level. The Ministry of Information of People's Republic of Bangladesh has announced the Community Radio Installation, Broadcast and Operation Policy 2008. Under this policy Ministry of Information has approved 14 Community Radio station for installation, broadcast and operation first time in Bangladesh. To ensure free flow of information and people's right to information government enacted Right to Information Act 2009. Community Radio approval is a strong step to empower rural people of Bangladesh in this regard. Community radio is considered an alternative, effective mass media for the rural disadvantaged population to express their thoughts in their own voice using their own style.

Social issues and Community radio in Bangladesh

There are a lot of definitions roaming around all of us for social issues. Though all the definitions contain almost the same message, each is distinctive from others in terms of their language, their presentation and mode of expression. A social issue (also called a social problem or a social illness) is often the consequence of factors extending beyond an individual's control and local geographical environment. In some cases, a social issue is the source of a conflicting opinion on the grounds of what is perceived as a morally just personal life or societal order. Different societies have different perceptions, and "normal" behavior in one society may be a significant social issue in another society. A social problem or a social issue is a social condition (such as poverty) or a pattern of behavior (such as substance abuse) that harms some individuals or all people in a society and that a sufficient number of people believe warrants public concern and collective action to bring about change [3].

As one of the emerging prosperous country of world, Bangladesh faces many social issues. The most of the people still live in the villages or countryside. Most of the population are not educated enough. Moreover, the awareness is still lacking among them to know and get their rights. The main social issues of Bangladesh in a brief way are - Over Populated country with high density of population, Poverty at a shadow layer, Corruption, Prevalence of Child Marriage, Child labor, Inward & Outward Violence against Women as well girls, Acid violence, Eve Teasing, Juvenile delinquency, Dowry, Unemployment, Drug addiction, Fatwa, Gender inequality, Suicide, Human Trafficking and so many.

Since community radio is a form of public service broadcasting, it has an approach that is different from the conventional broadcasting enterprises. Its main aim is to make the audience its main protagonist by involving them in all of its aspect of its management and program production and by providing them with programming that will help them in their development and their social advancement. When radio fosters the participation of citizens and defends their interests; when it reflects the tastes of the majority and makes good humor and hope its main purpose; when it truly informs; when it helps resolve the thousand and one problems of daily life; when all ideas are debated in its programs and all opinions are respected; when cultural diversity is stimulated over commercial homogeneity; when women are main players in communication and not simply a pretty voice or a publicity gimmick; when no type of dictatorship is tolerated, not even the musical dictatorship of the big recording studios; when everyone's words fly without discrimination or censorship, that is community radio. Radio stations that bear this name do not fit the logic of money or advertising. Their purpose is different; their best efforts are put at the disposal of civil society. Of course this service is highly political: it is a question of influencing public opinion, denying conformity, creating consensus, broadening democracy. The purpose when the name is to build community life [4].

In the commercially dominated media system community radio means radio in the community, for the community, about the community and by the community.

The historical philosophy of community radio is to use this medium as the voice of the voiceless, the mouthpiece of oppressed people and generally as a tool for development. Over the years, community radio has become an essential tool for community development. People can recognize themselves and identify with community radio, in addition to communicating among themselves. At the moment, positive and supportive condition is prevailing in our country. Because; Bangladesh Government has already acknowledged the importance

of community radio and announced the Community Radio Installation, Broadcast & Operation Policy. Bangladesh is the 2nd country in South Asia in formulating policy for Community Radio. Now 14 Community Radio Stations are on-air in the country, aiming to ensure empowerment and right to information for the rural community. Radio Mahananda and Radio Padma is one of them.

Methodology

This research adopts a qualitative approach. In brief, quantitative data with qualitative interpretation are presented in the table. Since the main aim of this research is to investigate the

social issues into the community radio programs, the researcher has employed two methods in this study which are content analysis and focus group discussions (FGD).

The current study has two methods to analysis the status of contemporary social issues in community radio in Bangladesh. For that Multistage sampling² has been used in the present study. The present study has applied steps of sampling. Five steps of sampling has been used for content analysis.

Community Radio station selection

Time selection

Date selection

Final Sample selection of the Content.

Purposive sampling has been used for taking two community radios of Bangladesh from the existing 14 radios. Radio Padma and Radio Mahananda have been selected purposively in this study.

Multistage Sampling has been used by the researcher here to sample the days among the six selected months between the two community radios.

Community Radio Padma 99.2

Radio Padma began its transmission on October 7, 2011 in Rajshahi, a city on the banks of mighty river Padma. The community radio is named after the river Padma as the education, culture and lifestyle of greater Rajshahi region are moving surrounding the river. Radio Padma 99.2 is a social initiative among their large varieties of activities. The key achievement of Radio Padma is building a young and efficient team through adequate training, who are currently working with sincerity to broadcast program and run the station. BNNRC website sited Radio Padma has begun broadcasting their programs apart from 18 hours every day. In addition, all staffs of this radio are now regularly receiving remuneration, which is also a great achievement for a community radio. Regular payment is enabling the staffs to be more attentive to the radio, resulting in better program qualities.

Community Radio Mahananda 98.8

Community Radio Mahananda 99.2 was officially inaugurated in Chapai Nawabganj on February 1st, 2012, through initiatives taken by Proyash Manobik Unnoyon Society. Listener's choices are given top priority in producing the programs of Radio Mahananda, especially news programs based on local problems & possibilities have earned most popularity. Moreover, Chapai Nawabganj related national programs also get enough importance in the news, while listeners eagerly tune the radio at 6.30pm and 9.30pm to listen to the news programs of the radio.

Twenty eight (28) participants have taken part in the focus group. Each group is consisted keeping in mind the gender responsiveness. That's why each group has two female group members containing seven members as a whole. Social issues in community radio of Bangladesh: Major Findings and Analysis

The main focus of this study is to explore the present situation of contemporary social issues broadcast in community radios of Bangladesh. Therefore, the present chapter discusses the condition of contemporary social issues broadcast in community radios of Bangladesh. The first section contains the details with the analysis of the contents from sample radios. In the second section the result begotten from the conducted FGD with the program related

personnel has been analyzed. In the very last section the data and analysis of the first two sections have been described in the basis of the objective of this study and the main results and findings have been narrated.

The present section describes the situation of the program related to social issues of the two community radios (Community Radio Padma and Community Radio Mahananda) between the timeframe of six months starting from January'2014 till June'2014. The program category of Community Radios, the social issues being addressed by Community Radios, the program planning, design and format to broadcast social issues, the time and duration of airing the programs on social issues, the participation of community people in identifying social issues, message and program development activities, the comparison between entertainment program and awareness based and the types of the programs based on social issues of the community radio have been presented through a number of sorting cluster. Here, through graphs, charts, diagrams and tables the researcher has analyzed the topic quantitatively and describing those quantitative analysis the qualitative analysis has also been tried. In this present research from the two selected community radio specifically seventeen (17) programs from Radio Mahananda and twenty (20) programs from Radio Padma have been found which are related to contemporary social issues of those individual Table 1.

From the above Figure: 1, programs of radio Padma in the sampled 24 days for their total broadcasting time have been divided into seven categories (News, Live- Entertainment and Informational, Music, Contemporary Social Issue Based Programs, Educational, Health and Others). In these 24 days, the numbers of programs, the items / titles of the program and their broadcasting time (minute) has been counted and numbered as well as presented in the above table. In radio Padma in the sampled 24 days, the researcher has found total 280 programs under 33 titles which have been broadcast for 17,280 minutes. Among these criteria, the news programs are highest in number which is 120 when counted broadcast under 2 titles (Good Morning Rajshahi & Ajker Rajshahi) and the total broadcasting time is 2880 minute. Moreover, total 72 programs of live programs (Entertainment & Informational) under 11 titles (Duronto Rajshahi, Rajshahi).

Express, Bondhu Tomar Jonno, Friend Circle, Golper Hat, World Music, Valobasar Epith Opith, Jober Bapar, Night Guard, Sathe Thakun Sunte thakun, Amader Kotha) have been broadcast for 10,800 minutes. Total 33 programs regarding music under 07 titles (Gane Gane Adda, Tomay Gan Shunabo, Valobasho Mor Gan, Desh O Jagoroner Gan, Baul Mon, Mone Rekho Amay, Ektara) have been broadcast for 1260 minutes. Among these criteria, the contemporary social issue based programs are fourth highest in number which is 20 in number when counted broadcast under 5 titles (Nari Kontho, Youth Voice, Valo Shikhon, Ogrojatra, Oporajita) and the total broadcasting time is 1020 minute. Besides, total 14 programs regarding education under 03 titles (English Boli Bajumat kori, Amar Campus, Amader School) have been broadcast for 1050 minutes. Total 10 programs regarding health under 02 titles (Sustho Thakun, Janar Ache Sekhar Ache) have been broadcast for 445

Table 1. The division of the programs in the sampled time Programs of Radio Padma.

Category of the program	Number of the program	Program Titles	Time (minute)
News	120	2	2880
Live (Entertainment and informational)	72	11	10800
Music	33	7	1260
Contemporary Social Issue based	20	5	1020
Educational	14	3	1050
Health	10	2	445
Other	11	3	2715
Total	280	33	17280

minutes. Along with these criteria, the other programs are the lowest in number which is 11 in number when counted broadcast under 03 titles (Ain Kanun, Kobir Kobita, Amader Muktijuddho) along with advertisement, promo, intro, exit, link etc. which cover the total broadcasting time of 2715 minute.

In the figure 2 the percentage amount is shown where the live (entertainment and information) holds the highest position covering 54%. Then comes the news part consisting 14% of the total amount and the other comes to next holding the third position with 13% coverage. The contemporary social issue based programs and the music related programs are of the same amount with just 06% coverage. The educational coverage holds the 05% and the rest 02% is covered by the health based programs Figure 1.

From the above pie chart and the table it is clearly shown that the contemporary social issue based programs just holds a little amount of time among the total time length of the overall program. From the figure 3, the programs of radio mahananda in the sampled 24 days for their total broadcasting time have been divided into seven groups / criteria like the programs of the radio Padma has been divided earlier. (News, Live-Entertainment and Informational, Music, Contemporary Social Issue Based Programs, Educational, Health, Others) Table 2.

In these 24 days, the numbers of programs, the items / titles of the program and their broadcasting time (minute) has been counted and numbered as well as presented in the table. In the radio Mahananda in the sampled 24 days, the researcher has found total 282 programs under 29 titles which have been broadcast for 10,080 minutes. Among these criteria, the news programs are highest in number which is 72 when counted broadcast under 2 titles (Bulletin, Ajker Chapainawabganj) and the total broadcasting time is 1200 minute.

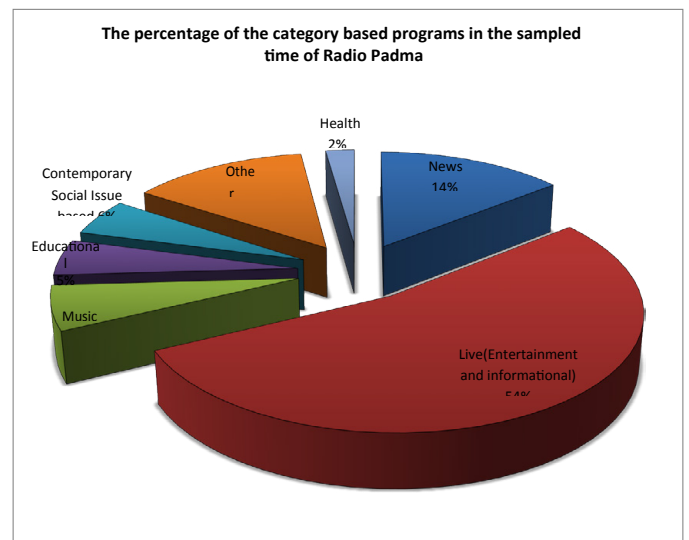


Figure 1. Distribution of time of programs of Radio Padma.

Table 2. Programs of Radio Mahananda.

Title of the program	Number of the program	Item	Time (minute)
News	72	2	1200
Live (Entertainment and informational)	67	6	1795
Music	42	4	680
Contemporary Social Issue based	17	6	440
Educational	4	1	120
Health	8	1	240
Other	72	9	5605
Total	282	29	10080

Moreover, total 67 programs of live programs (Entertainment & Informational) under 06 titles (music club 98.8 fm, Chirodiner sur siprar sathe, sondha prodip mouer sathe, rater pakhi mithilar sathe, rater nilanjona, cinemala) have been broadcast for 1795 minutes. Total 42 programs regarding music under 04 titles (Desh o Jagoroner gan, lokosongeet, jhornadhara, band-er gan) have been broadcast for 680 minutes. Among these criteria, the contemporary social issue based programs are fourth highest in number which is 17 in number when counted broadcast under 6 titles (Valo shikhon, Ektu Vabun, Shishu Kontho, Shopner Thikana, Alor pothojatri, Gamcha Mathol) and the total broadcasting time is 440 minute. Besides, total 4 programs regarding education under 01 titles (Amader campus) have been broadcast for 120 minutes. Total 08 programs regarding health under 01 titles (swastho kotha) have been broadcast for 240 minutes. Along with these criteria, the other programs are the remaining in number which is 72 in number when counted broadcast under 09 titles (harge gram, bahasandish, e masher krishi, krishi o jibon, projukti dot com, langra pach foron, aponsokti, monishider kotha) along with advertisement, promo, intro, exit, link etc. which cover the total broadcasting time of 5605 minute Figure 2.

In the figure 4 the percentage amount is shown where the other holds the highest position covering 55.63%. Then comes the live (Entertainment & Information) part consisting 18% of the total amount and the news comes to next holding the third position with 12% coverage. The the music related programs are with 07% coverage. The contemporary social issue based coverage holds the 04.37% and the rest 02% is covered by the health whereas the remaining 01% is education based program.

From the program analysis of Radio Mahananda it can be observed that the contemporary social issue based programs are lesser than 05% of the total programs in the broadcast programs Figure 3.

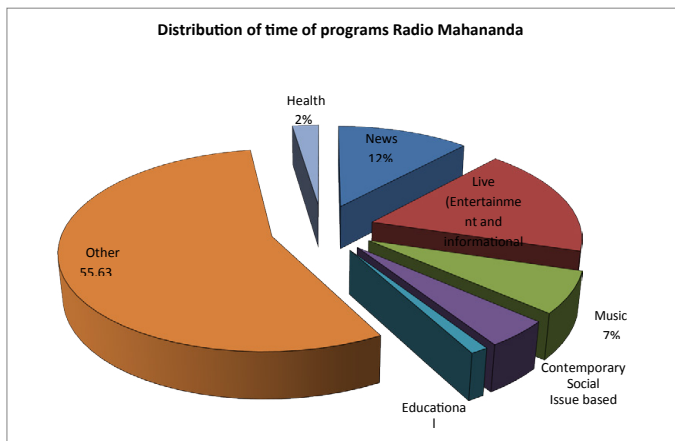


Figure 2. Distribution of time of programs of Radio Mahananda.

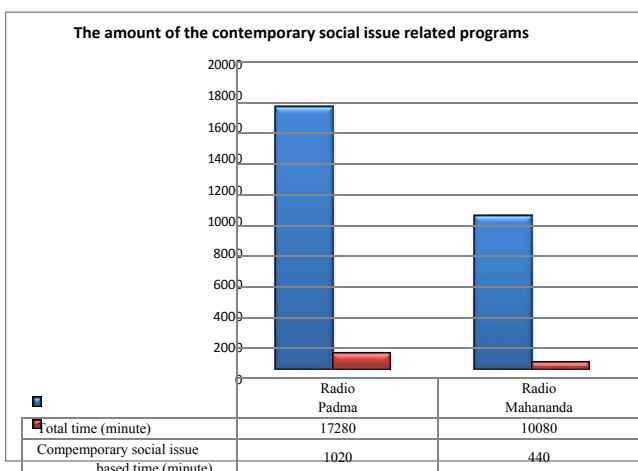


Figure 3. Total amount of time for the contemporary social issue related programs.

Here in the Figure 5 the amount of the social issue based programs is shown in 2014 from the month January to June in the sampled 24 days for each community radio. In the community radio Padma the broadcast time is 12 hours 3 a day. According to that time the amount of total time is (24 days x 12 hours x 60min.) 17,280 minutes among which the total amount of broadcast programs regarding contemporary social issues is 1020 minutes. In the community radio Mahananda the broadcast time is 07 hours a day. According to that time the amount of total time is (24 days x 07 hours x 60min.) 10,080 minutes among which the total amount of broadcast programs regarding contemporary social issues is 440 minutes Figure 4 and Figure 5.

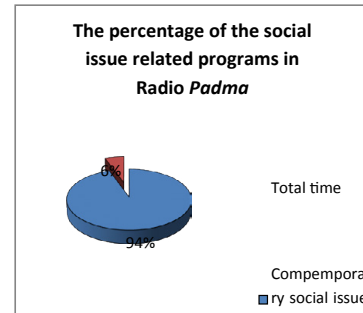


Figure 4. Percentage of social issue related grams of Radio Mahananda.

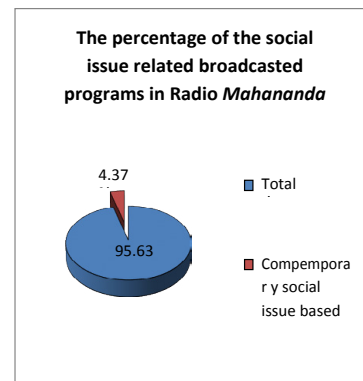


Figure 5. Percentage of social issue related pro programs of Radio Padma.

In the above pie charts, the percentage of the contemporary social issue related broadcast programs are shown in comparison with the total amount of time. In the radio Padma, just 06% of the total programs are contemporary social issue based. In the radio Mahananda, just 04.37% among the total programs are social issue based. In the perspective of Bangladesh, the amount and percentage of the contemporary social issue based programs are very tiny and insufficient.

The program design, format and structure are almost identical:

Analyzing both the programs of the community radios it has been found that the designing, formation and structure of the programs broadcast on the community radio Padma and Mahananda are almost same. There is nothing inventory in the program designing and formation. Moreover, the structure of the programs is not very different rather both the community radios follow some traditional and regular structure for their programs. Throughout the sampled content the contemporary social issues of the community are not being fully identified, described and enough preventive as well as protective measures are not being taken.

Insufficient time duration for the contemporary social issue based program:

As the researcher has gone deeper into the program analysis, it has been revealed that the time duration of the contemporary social issue based programs on the community radios is very short. Almost all the programs in radio Mahanada like Valo Shikhon Songlap, Ektu Vabi, Gamcha Mathol, Alor Pothjatri, Shopner Thikana, Shishu Kontho are broadcast for around 30 minutes rather than some exception. Within this short time, it is almost

impossible to identify, define a contemporary social issue as well as the present situation and the solving way.

Fixed broadcasting time of airing the contemporary social issue based programs:

Most of the programs on contemporary social issues of the community radios like Nari Kontho, Valo Shikhon Songlap, Youth Voice, Agrojata, Oporajita in radio Padma are aired during either the afternoon period or the early evening period with some exception.

The participation of the community people is not satisfactory:

As the community radio is supposed to be in existence because of the community people, the participation of the community people is one of the most important factors. But it has been revealed that the participation of the community people is less and inadequate in the social issue based programs. The community people rather like to participate in the entertaining programs.

Participation of experts in the program is inadequate

Contemporary social issue is not just something for discussion among the general people. Rather it requires some experts to analyze the issue and recommending the way of solution. But both the community radios have been found to be reluctant to ensure the presence of experts in such program.

Vague idea of the program related personnel on contemporary social issue

Through the focus group discussion (FGD) with the program related personnel the researcher has found that the program related personnel lack clear ideas on contemporary social issues. If the program related personnel like the radio jockeys or the reporters do not have adequate knowledge on contemporary social issue of that community, then it becomes quite unrealistic to expect the best outcome from them on the contemporary social issue based program.

Absence of some major contemporary social issues in the program

There are a lot of contemporary social issues in the communities. It is quite impossible to address all the social issues of any community. But there are some major contemporary social issues that need to be addressed properly. Both the community radios lack in this respect. The contemporary social issues the community radios broadcast very often miss some of the major contemporary social issues in their programs i.e. drug addiction, poverty, juvenile delinquency, population, unemployment etc.

The effects of social issue based programs of the community radios:

As both the community radio Padma and Mahananda broadcasts some programs related to contemporary social issue of that individual community the focus group discussion then has been moved towards the effects of these programs on that community to understand whether these programs are able to bring any change for the community people. All the participants agreed on this topic that the programs have been successful to bring out changes for the community people as the community people are being able to

- Identify their social issues for that individual community
- Send SMSs or letters informing their social issues
- Prevent child / early marriage
- Bring the disabled people under the government survey
- Know the importance of being educated
- Develop the agricultural sides of their community
- Increase their awareness on the adolescent issues
- Become aware
- Collect information on the indigenous people related topics

- Provide warm cloths to the distressed people in winter
- Organize themselves to protest any injustice

Opinion on the social issue based programs in respective community radios:

When the participants of the focus group discussion (FGD) have discussed about their opinion on broadcasting contemporary social issue related programs in their community radio, they have mentioned a good number of points to express their opinion. According to the opinions of the participants of the participants, the contemporary social issue related program need to be focused on some major issues where the tales of the victims of various social injustice and violence, the options of the experts, the consents of the guardians, the health related information and analysis, the education related information and analysis, the remedies of the problems, the prevention of the child labor, violence against women (VAW), the teenager issues, the presence of the community leaders, representatives, elected members and personnel and such various issues have turned into some must. According to the participants, the programs need to be focused on the issues of the people that need to be mentioned. To develop the lifestyle and the quality of the livelihood of the community people the necessity of the contemporary social issue related program in the community radios are mention worthy from various aspects.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The mass media have been established to bring out the voices and the pictures of the people. But because of the economic effect and power practice they turn into a mechanism of persuading the general people where the content and the information the content provide are designed for the mainstream people. For this reason, the mass media cannot provide the voice of the 'other' people. For this insufficiency of this media, the community radio has evolved. From the different chapters of this research it has been shown that community radio is one of the major tools of information sharing and exchanging.

Based on the findings of the study, some recommendations to cover the contemporary social issues and for enriching the contemporary social issue based programs of the community radio have been drawn underneath.

The quantity as well as the quantity of the program related to contemporary social issue should be increased. The contemporary social issue based program is outnumbered by the other programs which should be changed.

Qualitative change is very much needed for the programs broadcast in the community radios based on contemporary social issues.

Contemporary social issue based program should be regular in the week. This type of the program should be broadcast on a regular basis in the community radios concerning their individual community.

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