

General Guideline and FAQ

Community Radio

Set-up in Bangladesh

Ref: Community Radio Installation, Broadcast and Operation Policy, 2008 by
Ministry of Information People' s Republic of Bangladesh

What is Community Radio?

A 'community' is considered to be a group of people who share common characteristics and or interests such as sharing a single geographical location i.e. a specific town, village, or neighborhood; sharing of economic and social life through trade, marketing, exchange of goods and services.

Community radio is, in effect, a form of public-service broadcasting, which serves a community rather than the whole nation. Community radio is an own resource of a community, which will reflect the outlook and attitude, norms and culture and thought and ideology of the very community people.

A non-profit service will be in charge of 'Community Radio' broadcasting activities. It should be owned by a particular community, usually through a trust, foundation, or association. Its aim is to serve and benefit that community and create opportunity of flourishing the folk culture, socio-economic practices and life-style of the community people.

Fundamental Principles of Community Radio:

- The organization/institution intending to operate a community radio must be explicitly constituted as a 'non-profit' organization.
- The institution / organization should have a proven record of providing service to local community for at least five years.
- The community radio station must serve the specified and defined community people.
- It should have a management structure that is reflective of the community that the CRS seeks to serve.
- The program contents should cover educational, health, social, women rights, economic, rural development, weather, environmental and cultural fields relevant to the needs and with the proper participation of that particular community.
- The institution/ organization must be a Legal Entity.
- Preference should be given to rural communities during the pilot phase. The focus must be for communities deprived of the reach of mainstream media outlets.

Eligibility to obtain license/permission for the establishment and operation of Community Radio

- Government research institutions and development organizations, which satisfy the conditions listed at "Para 2" of the Community Radio Installation, Broadcast and Operation Policy – 2008 declared by the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.
- Non-government development organizations or institutions, with at least five years of operation and involved in poverty alleviation or media & ICT sector, which satisfy the basic principles listed at "Para 2" of the policy. The organization should be a legal entity or registered from NGO Affairs Bureau.

The following shall not be eligible to run a Community Radio:

- Individuals and partnership firms;
- Political Parties and their affiliated organizations such as students' wings, trade unions, etc;
- Organizations and companies both local and foreign where profits are distributed to the owners/shareholders;
- International NGOs and foreign broadcasters/channels and
- Organizations or institutions banned by the Government.

Conditions for getting license of Community Radio:

- Proven record of community development work for at least five years in the area wished to be served in association of local people with a community radio station;
- A broad outline of the type of program to be broadcast should be prepared and submitted with application to the licensing authority.
- Indication of the level of community's participation in management structure of the proposed station and its program preparation and broadcasting shall be spelt out in writing.
- The criteria will also include the sources of funding for the Radio Station. If donor fund is obtained then necessary approval of the NGO Affairs Bureau as per existing law shall have to be obtained.
- Priority will be given to the applicants managed by and/or looking to serve the disadvantaged and backward sections of the population.

License Fee:

Initially license fee for each station has been decided to be 20,000.00 (Twenty Thousand Taka) **[286 US \$]** and seize-able deposit is 1,00,000 (One Lac Taka) **[1429 US \$]**.

Moreover, frequency fees shall be decided by Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC).

Technical Structure of Community Radio

Each Community Radio Station will cover a range of 17 km. from its centre. Maximum limit for transmitter power could be 100 watts.

The permitted power could be decided on the basis of the licensee's area of work and/or geographical dispersion of the target audience. In this case an ERP of maximum 250 watts can be considered. Requests for higher transmitter power above 100 watts and up to 250 watts will require approval by the National Regulatory Committee and Technical Sub-Committee constituted under the Ministry of Information.

The antenna tower's height from ground level will not exceed 32 meters. But in sparsely populated areas such as islands, the mentioned height can be restructured with prior approval of the licensing authority to achieve the desired coverage. In all cases antenna gain must be kept limited under 6 DB.

Frequency shall be allocated in F.M band as per National Frequency Allocation Plan after selecting the place of Community Radio station.

Type of community radio programme

The programs should ensure community peoples' inclusion from the point of participation, choice and sharing. The community people will participate in program planning, implementing, operating and evaluating.

- The licensee will develop plans to facilitate and promote community participation besides setting out the station's programmatic values in context to the community to be served.

- Speeches of government officials at Upazilla level on development issues and policies would be broadcast by the Community Radio Stations.
- Through participatory process a specific program should set its spotlight on local information, events and notifications, local culture, identity, and local language.
- The format, subject, presentation and language of programs must reflect the local culture.
- As the community radio serves the purpose as local medium, thus, local development news will be permitted. Nonetheless, any kind of political broadcasts and voting propaganda will be strictly prohibited.
- Community Radio stations can broadcast recreational and documentary programme recorded at home or abroad in a limited range maintaining the Radio Sensor Policy.
- Community Radio stations can not broadcast any live or recorded news, current affairs related programme, discussion and talk show of any foreign broadcasting organizations or channels.

Advertisements in Community Radio

Advertisements related to development services will be permitted while community radio program broadcasting based on the following conditions:

- The commercials should be related to development services relevant and limited to the specified area.
- Community stations will ensure that the sponsors of programs do not influence the content or the style of individual programs or the overall programming of the Community Radio Station and its code of conduct.
- Existing government regulations shall be followed for commercials.

Community Radio stations can not broadcast the program which:

- Offends decency, criticizes other countries or endangers the friendly relations of Bangladesh with other countries.
- Openly or in veiled manner attacks any religion, community or ethnic group or in any way creates animosity between communities or groups of people or tries to promote sectarian views which may lead to communal discontent or disharmony.
- Contains anything obscene, defamatory or false information against person (s), groups or institutions or is partisan in nature;
- Is likely to encourage or incite violence or contains anything against maintenance of law and order or which promotes anti-national feelings/attitudes.
- Contains anything amounting to contempt of court or anything affecting the integrity of the Nation;
- Contains aspersions against the dignity of the State and, Government.
- Criticizes, maligns or slanders any individual in person or any group or segment of society in the country;
- Encourages superstition or blind belief;
- Degrades women;
- Degrades children;
- Degrades human in disabilities.
- Encourages or supports the use of drugs including alcohol, narcotics and tobacco;
- Stereotypes, incites, vilifies or perpetuates hatred against anyone or any group or attempts to demean any person or group on the basis of ethnicity, nationality, race, gender, sexual preference, religion, age or physical or mental disability.

- Tries to exploit religious sentiments or susceptibilities;
- Undermines religious views and beliefs of those belonging to any particular religion or religious denomination.

How Government will monitor Community Radio broadcasting

- Government assigned official or representative will monitor community radio broadcasting and verify its documents. Every month a copy of CD containing the recordings of broadcast programs of community radio station will be provided to the local authority prescribed by the Government.
- A local advisory committee will be formed under the UNO, Officer-In-Charge of local police stations, and Regional director of local Radio station Principal of locally situated education institution. The committee will monitor the community radio station activities in regular basis and submit a confidential report to the Ministry of Information per month.
- The advisory committee will provide suggestions based on the strengths and weaknesses of the community radio station broadcasting.
- The advisory committee will encourage the participation of upazila level government officials in the community radio programs.
- The advisory committee will encourage producing development advertisements /government advertisements through community radio.
- The advisory committee will provide necessary counseling service to improve the quality of programs.
- Central Monitoring Committee formed by Ministry of Information shall supervise the overall operation related to Community Radio and shall inform the Ministry on a regular basis.

General Questions About Community Radio in Bangladesh

(Have a look at your queries)

Q. As a man of business sector could I or my representative set up a community radio individually or institutionally?

Ans. No permission will be given to set up a community radio to any individual or commercial business institution. The organization/institution intending to operate a community radio must be a 'non-profit' organization and should have a proven record of providing social service to local community for at least five years.

Q. Could I set up a community radio in urban area?

Ans. It is mentioned in the community radio policy that, "Preference should be given to rural communities during the pilot phase. The focus must be for communities deprived of the reach of mainstream media outlets". The urban people are not deprived of the mainstream media outlets.

Q. Could I set up a community radio in Dhaka or any divisional headquarter?

Ans. There are various mass media in the divisional headquarters. Setting up a community radio here will increase the number of mass media only. Community radio is only for the rural communities who are deprived of the mainstream media.

Q. How much does it cost to set up a community radio?

Ans. Establishment of a community radio might cost from 10 to 15 Lac Taka. It mainly depends upon what type of studio you wish to set up and which instruments of how much capacity and configuration you want to buy.

Q. Is there any possibility of returning the money which I will invest to establish a community radio?

Ans. Community radio is not merely a commercial house. So this radio can not fully depend upon advertisement. But it needs income for its sustainability. Advertisements related to development services will be permitted for community radio broadcasting. But community radio stations will ensure that the sponsors of programs can not influence the content or the style of individual programs or the overall programming of the community radio station and its code of conduct. It is possible to earn money for community radio thus strategically. Moreover, community radio might get donation or subscription in many cases. For instance, the labourers of a coal mine in Bolivia donate their salary of one day for the sustainability of their community radio. Thus community radio may have income.

Q. What is the difference between community radio and commercial radio like Radio Today, Radio Foorti, Radio Amar etc.?

Ans. These radio stations are commercial ones. The objectives of these commercial FM radio stations are to gain profit through the programs and advertisements and to disburse the profit among the proprietors at the end of the year. On the other hand, community radio is quite a non-profit station and its main objective is the welfare of the community members. Commercial radio stations do not produce program for the people of any certain geographical area and they also do not represent their culture. They represent the culture of the whole nation and country. On the other hand, community radio represents the society and culture of the community people of a particular area. Its objective is the development of that society.

Q. Where and how should I apply for community radio permission?

Ans. For the permission of community radio, you have to take a prescribed application form by a pay-order of 100 Taka deposited to Secretary, Ministry of Information, the People's Republic of Bangladesh. After fulfilling the application form accordingly, you have to submit it along with all other documents and papers to a particular room of the Ministry within the fixed time.

Q. I do not have any organization/institution. Can I establish any community radio?

Ans. No body can apply to set up a community radio individually.

Q. Can any religion-based organization/institution establish any community radio?

Ans. No. Any religion-based or political organization can not apply for community radio set-up.

Q. Will a community radio be in the name of any NGO? If no, then how will it be operated?

Ans. No. A community radio can not be in the name of any NGO. Any non-profit non-government development organizations or institutions having a legal entity or registered from NGO Affairs Bureau, with at least five years of operation and involved in community development or human rights issues, can apply for community radio set-up and operation. They can select the name of the community radio consulting with the community people. It might be named after the name of the area such as "Radio Sonarchar" or "Sonarchar Betar".

Q. Can the Management Committee share the profit of the community radio among themselves?

Ans. No. The income and profit of the community radio is the property of that community. It can not be distributed among the members of the Management Committee. It can be invested for further development and extension of the community radio. It can also be spent to arrange any radio-related grand community assembly for the local development, which can play far-reaching effect upon the local development in future. For example, if there is a wide range of dowry system and women repression in a community. The

community radio can arrange a grand meeting on dowry system in that area where officials of local administration, elected people's representatives, experts might attend. That can also be broadcast as a program from the community radio. As a result, it is expected that it might alleviate dowry system and domestic torture from that community.

Q. What type of news can a community radio broadcast?

Ans. It is mentioned in the community radio policy, as the community radio serves the purpose as local medium, thus, local development news will be permitted. Programs of Bangladesh Betar (Radio) would be relayed or re-broadcast in the Community Radio Station as and when these are of national importance or of relevance to the people of the area. Special program such as address of the President, Prime Minister/Chief Advisor, special program of national days celebrations and weather bulletin and community based broadcasting program can be broadcast as live or relay through community radio stations with its prior permission.

Q. Can any political advertisements be broadcast from community radio?

Ans. Broadcasting of any kind of political advertisement, ideology, election campaign and advertisement from any community radio has been strictly prohibited.

Q. How will Government monitor community radio?

Ans. Government assigned official or representative will monitor community radio broadcasting and verify its documents. Every month a copy of CD containing the recordings of broadcast programs of community radio station will be provided to the local authority prescribed by the Government. For details, you can revisit the Article 8 of the Community Radio Installation, Broadcast and Operation Policy – 2008.

Q. What type of Government support can we get to operate a community radio?

Ans. As community radio is the property of the community, it should be operated by their own subscription, donation and financial support. But as it plays significant role in achieving national development issues locally, Government might provide grant to operate community radio effectively.

Q. What will be the administrative framework of a community radio and what posts are needed for that?

Ans. The administrative framework of a community radio might be as follow: a Station Manager, a Producer (News, Program and Technical) and some volunteers.

Q. What will be the posts in the Management Committee?

Ans. As community radio is of the, for the and by the community people, this committee should represent the whole community properly. The posts in this committee might be Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer and three General Members. The number of the members of this committee might vary based on the volume of the community. But it should be ensured that no community radio be branded by any NGO or any other institutions.

Q. How can the Management Committee be operated and what will be their responsibilities?

Ans. Actually this Management Committee will be the owner of the community radio. That is why, Management Committee should be formed in such a way that it should reflect the whole community and be acceptable to all. There will be a constitution and the Management Committee will work in accordance with this constitution. This committee will work in preparing goal, objective and programme schedule of the community radio. Gradually this Management Committee will build up to get a separate registration for the very community radio. The community radio will be operated as a sustainable station under the leadership of this committee. Though the community radio will start its operation under the banner of a NGO through this committee, the total ownership and responsibility of the community radio have to be handed over to this Management Committee through an action plan. Then the concerned NGOs will play the role of merely a facilitator to run the radio.

Q. Can anybody from the applying institution be included in the Management Committee?

Ans. Yes. It is possible.

Q. Please, tell me about the program planning.

Ans. The programme of a community radio depends upon aptitude and necessity of the respective community listeners. They might choose the songs of their own area much more than general songs. If the community members are fisheries, they need much emphasis on programme related fishery business and sector. It is better to plan and prepare programme schedule with the suggestion of the community members.

Q. Could you tell us about financial planning?

Ans. Community radio establishment is main part of the financial planning. It includes studio set-up, purchasing instruments, setting up transmitter and antenna. The next stage is operating cost. It might include office rent and salary. It will depend upon how many paid and unpaid staff is involved in the operation. Another regular cost is for purchasing CD, cassette/tape, repairing instrument and development.

Q. Can the programme be broadcast in the regional dialect?

Ans. The participation of the community people will be given priority in the community radio programme. That is why, it is inevitable to be in the dialect. But some general programmes which are equally appropriate for all communities and nationally produced for all people can be broadcast in the standard Bangla language.

Q. How can people listen to community radio? Is it possible to listen to community radio by the traditional radio sets available in the market?

Ans. Government allocates FM frequency for community radio broadcasting. So FM Band must be available in the radio set to listen to community radio. Generally traditional radio sets include FM Band in the functional option. Yet you have to be confirmed of the availability of FM Band option while purchasing any radio set for listening to community radio programmes.

Q. Will community radio be open for 24 hours?

Ans. It mainly depends upon the needs of the listeners and on the capacity of the radio station. Usually, community radio stations broadcast programmes at a certain period of the day. If any community demands, they can run it for 24 hours a day.

Q. What type of technical person do we need to operate a community radio?

Ans. Operating a community radio means running transmitter, operating some sound receiving machines, operating console or mixture machine to modulate different sound system etc. So some training on operating these machines is enough for technical operation of a community radio.

Q. What type of power supply do we need to run a community radio?

Ans. The instruments of a community radio can run usually by 220 Volt electricity. Even these machines can run by solar electricity or battery.

Q. Can I contact with a community radio over mobile or telephone?

Ans. You can certainly contact with community radio over mobile or telephone and it is also possible to give interview over phone and can be broadcast live by community radio.

Q. I am a simple villager. What benefit can I have from a community radio?

Ans. Community radio will be established mainly for you, because the main target of a community radio is the general villagers who will be its listeners. Its main objective is to cooperate and entertain you. Its duty is to give you information on agriculture, production, business, weather update, emergency alert or cautionary messages etc.

Q. What role can a community radio play in case of any serious accident, robbery, fire incident in the area?

Ans. In these cases, the role should be two dimensional. Firstly, community people should inform the community radio of the accident and then community radio station can reach the people of other area, police and fire service department very fast. If a robbery is happening in a house in the southern part of the area and the police station is in the northern part, community radio can inform the police station as soon as they get the information.

Q. How can we, the illiterate, be benefited from community radio?

Ans. One of the main objectives of community radio is to run its programme based on the needs of the illiterate people. As community radio does not use the bookish language rather broadcasts using the local dialect, it will be easy to understand for the illiterate people. Moreover, community radio can broadcast different life oriented education programme for them.

Q. How can we, students, be benefited from community radio?

Ans. Community radio can broadcast school and college curriculum based education programme for the students who can not attend the regular educational system. Even a class can be broadcast live through a community radio. For example, there is no school in the Rasulpur village. Students of this village go to schools situated at the Upazila head quarter. But due to the heavy flood they can not attend the classes for some days. Then Radio Rasulpur can broadcast the major classes of that school live. Students of the Rasulpur village can also have answer from the teachers by asking questions over mobile or telephone.

Q. We are adolescent. Can a community radio be helpful for us?

Ans. There is no good system of getting information about the problems and issues of the adolescent period for the young boys and girls in our country. Community radio can discuss their problems in very easy language. It can also highlight their duties and the responsibility of their guardians in this regard.

Q. I am a housewife. How can I be benefited from a community radio?

Ans. All housewives know how to cook, but many of them do not care about the nutritional standard of the food items. For example, most of the housewives wash vegetable after cutting it into pieces. But it is better to wash it before its cutting, because its nutritional quality disappears with its washing after its peeling. Again some vegetable is to cook covered, if it is cooked without cover, it might lose its nutritional advantage. Community radio can give you the way how you can increase your income working in your small yard. From community radio you can come to know how to preserve the warm clothes in the summer season, because you are to perform the most significant household duties in the family. If you learn something necessary, it will benefit all the members of the family.

Q. I am an unemployed young man. How can a community radio benefit me?

Ans. Community radio can help you by providing you with the information of working facilities like where are working opportunities in your area, how to cultivate fish, how to cultivate vegetable, where to get bank loan for small entrepreneurship, where to market your products etc. Possibly there are customers of your products in your village, but they do not that you have this product. Community radio can help both of the parties.

Q. I am a farmer. Can a community radio work for my benefit?

Ans. Farming is going on with the help of modern technology in the whole world. Agricultural technology is changing everyday, because it is not enough to increase production rather it needs high rate of increasing. But the farmers of our country know little of the modern technology. The farmers of the European and American countries are producing 100 times more crops than the amount of crops our farmers cultivate in an acre of land. So our farmers need the information of the modern technology and novel strategy for agriculture. Community radio can be their real friend in this regard.

Q. I am a cultivator and preserver of seed and saplings. How can a community radio help me?

Ans. Community radio can help you to market your seeds and saplings very promptly. There might be several villages under a community radio. The customers will be able to know what type of seeds and saplings you have. At the same, community radio can help you by providing you with different methods and strategies of seed and sapling preservation.

Q. What type of help can a community radio offer regarding the Government facilities and services such as VGF, Elderly Grant at the Upazila and Union level?

Ans. The villagers will easily get the information like who deserve the Government support, where to get, how and how much you can get and from which office of the local administration and government you can get these facilities. For example, many mass media announce that you can get this facility in your nearest Union Council office, but many of you can not understand it clearly. Community radio can tell you specifically that you can get VGF at Sujanager Union Council. You have to contact with Mr Keramat for the VGF in the Upazial office. Thus community radio can give you information regarding Government facilities and services.

Q. How can we get help of community radio for local news and to solve the local problems through local administration?

Ans. Community radio can broadcast such a programme where Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) or Union Council Chairman might be present and listeners can ask or inform them some problems through the community radio programme directly. If UNO is busy, he also can reply the questions of the listeners even staying in his office. Moreover, he can also be a regular listener of the community radio. Then he can easily get the information of the local problems easily from the community radio.

Q. How can the oppressed women get help from community radio?

Ans. The oppressed women need urgently a legal support. Most of the people in our country fear or avoid legal aspects but legal aid is not tough to receive now in Bangladesh. Especially a number of Government and non-government organizations are working in the country to provide legal support to the oppressed women. Community radio can reach this information to the oppressed women. For example, Acid Survivors' Foundation of Dhaka provides emergency treatment to the women acid victims. They also bear transport cost for the poor women acid survivors to travel from and to Dhaka. Besides emergency and effective treatment, they also provide legal support and alternative employment facilities to the women acid victims. Community radio can broadcast this information regularly. Community radio can also arrange and broadcast discussion meetings on what to do regarding domestic torture, acid attack, rape or sexual harassment and where to communicate to get help etc. for the oppressed women.

Q. What benefit can a community radio provide to the development workers?

Ans. The development workers are closely involved in different development works of the communities. But due to various businesses they can not remain updated with all information of the communities. Through community radio everyday they will be able to know all details of what is happening in the communities. At the same time, if they have any information necessary for the communities, they will be able to disseminate it easily through the community radio.

Q. We are petty businessmen. Can a community radio help us to know the market price?

Ans. The petty businessmen often count loss due to their inefficiency of presenting their products in the right market at the right time. It is often found that when he goes to a market with his products, he sees that either there is no customer for his products or there is huge supply of the same products in the market. Community radio can collect and broadcast the market price of almost all products available in all near markets. If petty businessmen reach the right markets with their goods in accordance with the information of the community radio, they can make a good profit.

Q. What can a community radio do for the transport workers?

Ans. If there are roads and streets and a number of vehicles ply there in the coverage area of a community radio, it can produce and broadcast programmes for the transport workers. Many times transport workers face serious accidents due to their lacking in necessary information. Moreover, community radio can broadcast regular programmes on traffic rules to raise awareness of the transport workers. General information such as when and where people can use which train, bus or launch to go to other districts or areas can be useful for the community radio listeners.

Community Radio Academy

This academy works for the flourishing of community radio in Bangladesh. Community Radio Academy (CRA) implements its activities under three Units:

Research and Development	Capacity Building	Technical Cooperation
- Baseline survey	- Training	- Training and technical support to studio set-up and maintenance
- Research	- Exchange visit	- Technical support in broadcasting
- Policy advocacy	- Exposure trip	- Schedule exchange
- Monitoring and evaluation	- Preparing radio schedule	- Exchange visit
- Feedback	- Programme	- Help desk
- Listeners survey	- News	- Trouble shooting
- Publishing newsletter	- Talk show	- National and international networking
- Publishing community radio handbook	- Capacity building and development training on producing, editing and presentation of radio programme	
- Library and archive	- Support to budget and planning	
- Community radio web portal	- Broadcast management	
- Case studies on success and failure	- Preparing scripts	



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