

Jagannath International Management School

Vasant Kunj, New Delhi-110070

(Affiliated to Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University, New Delhi)

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The Department of Media and Communication Studies and Radio JIMS Vasant Kunj 90.4 MHz organized a National Media Seminar on Community Radio and Democratic Communication on 23 October 2021 in collaboration with the Community Radio Association (CRA). The webinar saw Mr. Gaurishankar Kesarwani, Additional Director (CRS), Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, CRS Cell as Chief Guest. The distinguished speakers were Dr. B.S. Panwar, President, Community Radio Association; Dr. Archana Kapoor, Film-Maker and Founder of SMART NGO and Radio Mewat; Ms. Usha Bhasin, International Media Advisor & Trainer BBC Expert, Retd. Deputy Director General Doordarshan, Dr. Shreedher Ramamurthy, Tele Learning and Community Radio Practitioner, Dr. Ravi K. Dhar, Director, JIMS Vasant Kunj. The webinar was attended by nearly 200 participants and more than 20 radio stations across the country.

The webinar commenced with a welcome note by Dr. Neeru Johri, Head, Department of Media and Communication Studies followed by enlightening notes on the need for Community Radio in a country like India by Dr. Ravi K. Dhar, Director, JIMS, Vasant Kunj. Mr. Gaurishankar Kesarwani, Additional Director, CRS, Ministry of I&B addressed the participants and highlighted that the Community Radio Station serves as an important bridge between public issues and community mobilization in times of distress, such as the COVID pandemic. He also complimented the department and the CRA for collaborating on organizing the National Media Seminar and bringing together distinguished experts in the area of Community Radio on one platform.

Dr. B.S. Panwar, the president of CRA and the co-host of the webinar, highlighted the stellar role CR stations played during the pandemic. They shared vital information with their local community members for the adoption of preventive measures and the encouraged the community members to adopt preventive measures that might ensure the safety of community members. Despite the slender staff with which they worked and the hesitant attitude of various agencies to share information with them, the Community Radio Stations could emerge winners.

In fact, the ministry was approached so that they might accord the status of reporters to the Community Radio staff at par with that of the mainstream media outlets. He also highlighted how the CR stations created confidence among community members so that they may face the challenges of the pandemic. CR stations performed a noble service to the community by busting fake news that was circulating on social media and lowering the confidence of people. Also, the Community Radio Stations collaborated with NCERT for audio classes and with the ministry of Ayush to popularise Yoga and the concept of Immunity. Dr. Panwar also thanked UNICEF for extending financial support to tune of 2 crores towards working for COVID relief. This was distributed among 172 stations to keep them afloat during COVID.

Ms. Usha Bhasin, International Media Advisor and Trainer BBC Expert, Retired DDG Doordarshan shared her views on how Community Radio has played an effective role in creating awareness about relevant programs and policies. She stated that the Community Radio gains strength from communities at grass root level. She elaborated from her experience that the issues highlighted through Community Radio are never discussed by the mainstream media. Ms. Bhasin also emphasized that if used judiciously, Community Radio can act as the catalyst for development.

Ms. Archana Kapoor, filmmaker and founder of SMART NGO & Radio Mewat spoke about Empowering Rural Communities through Community Radio.

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“Community radio reflects the power that influences the direction of change. It finds solutions within its own community and through the wisdom of the people that it serves” said Ms. Kapoor. While stating that empowerment is power, she emphasized how Community Radio has played a major role in uplifting the women belonging to rural communities. Radio Mewat has played a key role in providing a platform to women and empowering them to participate in the decision making process by contesting panchayat elections.

She believes that Community Radio stations are a mirror image of democracy because they are by the people, for the people and of the people. Both the sessions by Ms. Bhasin and Ms. Kapoor respectively ended with a Q & A session. The enthusiastic participants voiced their thoughts and opinions and put them forward with the required emphasis.

Dr. R. Sreedhar , Tele learning and Community Radio Practitioner expressed his views on the role of Community Radio as a catalyst to social change. He addressed the concern that Radio & TV will become redundant with the rise of the Digital world while emphasizing on the fact that radio might not be the most popular medium but the audio will continue with in the form of Podcasts. He spoke about newer ways of using audio. ‘Narrow cast’ and ‘Media Highway’ were two other concepts that he elaborated upon.

The webinar was followed by the Case Studies presented by the selected CR Stations including CR Mattoli, CR Kisanvani, Sironj, and CR Waqt Ki Aawaz, Kanpur Dehat.

To conclude Dr. Neeru Johri, HoD, Department of Communication & Media Studies delivered the vote of thanks to all the dignitaries and panelists.