

CR manual

Gram Vaani Community Media New Delhi, India

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1. What is community radio

A community radio station can be roughly defined as a short range radio station that caters to the information needs of communities living in surrounding areas. CR stations often involve local community members in program production, centered around topics including discussions on civic amenities in the area, health and hygiene, advice on common economic activities such as agriculture, and even local folk songs and cultural events.



This notion of community radio is somewhat restrictive because it specifically defines communities along geographic boundaries. A community can however be geographically dispersed and Internet radio can be used to connect community members not collocated with each other. But we will go with this simple definition for now.



Although technically a CR station is just like a normal AM or FM radio station, its focus on locally relevant content, often socially motivated, distinguishes CR from private and commercial radio stations most of which generally broadcast songs and entertainment related content. Community radio, although new to India, has been known to be an empowering medium since a long time. Radio Sagarmatha in Nepal played a seminal role in restoring democracy. Dialogues on CR between the Hutu and Tutsi tribes in Rwanda helped reconciliation efforts after the genocide. All across the world, in Brazil, Bolivia, Poland, Thailand, community radio has provided a voice to the people to air their thoughts and opinion.

2. Community Radio in India

India has been a latecomer to community radio. Although educational institutions were allowed to set up a CR station on their campus, typically referred to as a campus radio station, a specific community or group or non-profit organization was not given a broadcast license. However, in late 2006 a new CR policy was drafted and non-profits were allowed to apply for licenses as well. India has seen a steady growth in CR stations since then, and as of Oct 2009 there are now almost 45 CR stations out of which some 8 stations are being run by non-profit organizations.

3. How to set up a radio station

If you plan to start your own community radio station, there are a few things you need to know. First, you need to gain experience in radio journalism and audio program production. Quite a few training agencies in India provide guidance to do this. Second, you need to put the technology in place for running the radio station. The Nomad India Network has considerable experience in setting up CR stations. Third, you need to get a license to broadcast on air. This can be a complicated process and you are encouraged to get the ball rolling as soon as you can. And while the license process is moving along, you can still do narrow-casting instead of broadcast. Last but clearly not the least, you need to have sufficient funds to cover the capital and operational expenditure of your CR station.

3.1. Training and narrow-casting



Even if you do not have an FM broadcast license, you can still narrow-cast transmissions through loud speakers or by playing them on transistors in women listener groups. This is called narrow-casting. The Kutch Mahila Vikas Sansthan (KMVS) has done this very successfully in Gujarat, where being located close to the India-Pakistan border they were not given a license. They instead used women self-help-groups to share information and get feedback. We would suggest that you start with narrow-casting in any case, just to gain more experience in program production and journalism in general.



Once you are sure that you want to go ahead, you need to first get trained on audio recording and editing, and the basics of radio journalism. Organizations like CEMCA, Maraa, and Ideosync organize workshops for such trainings. To stay updated, we suggest that you subscribe to the cr-india mailing list, and also periodically check their websites.

- CR Forum: <http://www.crforum.in/>
- CR India mailing list: <http://mail.sarai.net/mailman/listinfo/cr-india>
- Cemca: <http://www.cemca.org/index.asp?>
- Maraa: <http://maraa.in/>
- Ideosync: <http://www.ideosyncmedia.org/>



It is worth adding that if you do not have a broadcast license, you can still set up a mobile narrow-casting platform such as the one done by the eTukTuk project!

- eTukTuk: <http://www.etuktuk.net/>

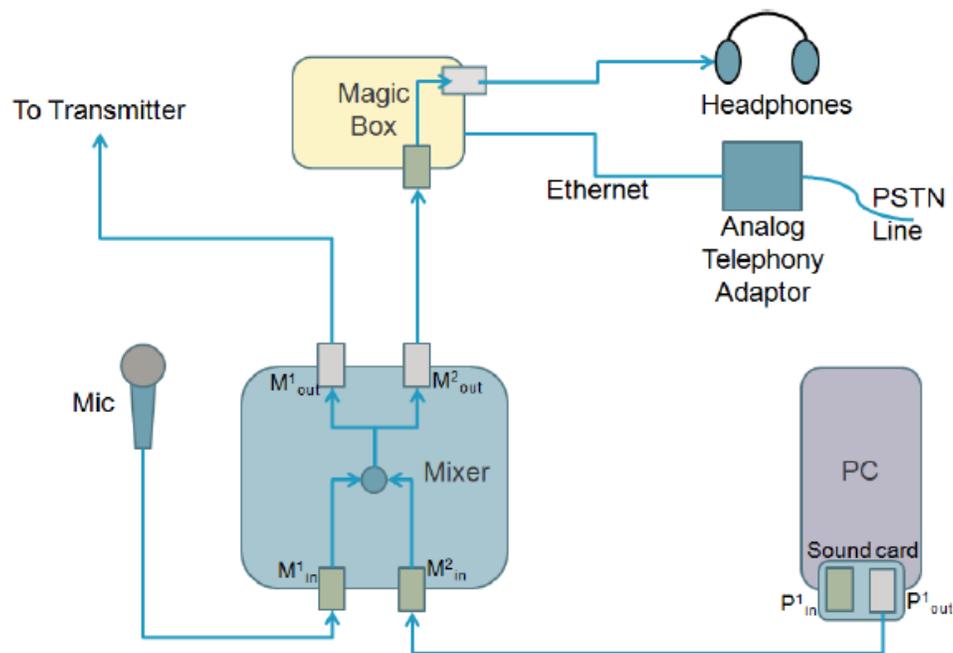
3.2. Technology



A radio station has many technology components. If you are not technically inclined, it is best suggested that you get in touch with some experienced organization such as Nomad, Ideosync, or Gram Vaani.

- Nomad India Network: <http://www.nomadindia.net/>
- Ideosync: <http://www.ideosyncmedia.org/>
- Gram Vaani: <http://www.gramvaani.org/>

You will need quite a few components. Inside a studio, the minimum requirements are for a mixer, a mic, a computer, and a pair of headphones. The computer will be used for transmitting audio when the station is live, and for audio editing otherwise. Typically though, you may want to use more than one computer each for different tasks. As the radio station matures, more components can be added for telephony so that people can call into the radio station and for Internet connectivity so that content can also be streamed to the Internet. Shown below is a schematic diagram for a setup using Gram Vaani's GRINS magic box.



In addition, a transmitter and antenna will be needed for broadcast, and a few USB audio recorders for field recordings.

3.3. Getting a license

Getting a license in India is mostly not hard but it can be quite time taking and complicated because of the number of approvals and multi-stage process. So a license is not as simple as a single permission, but a whole series of permissions. Thankfully, Ram from Ideosync has written a comprehensive guide to do this. The process requires you to first submit an application to the Information and Broadcasting Ministry, after which you will have to appear for a screening committee meeting and justify your case for wanting to set up a CR station. If all goes well, you will be allotted a letter of intent and will have to make an application for frequency allocation. Once a frequency has been allotted, an additional approval called GoPA is required, and you are

expected to start broadcasting within three months of receiving the GoPA. If you fail to do so, you stand the risk of having your license canceled.

Please also note that only non-profits more than three years old can apply for a license, and the ministry does strict checks to make sure that the non-profit has been in good standing. So put in good effort to find an appropriate partner if your organization does not have the necessary credentials.

- Ministry of Information and Broadcasting: <http://www.mib.nic.in/>
- MIB guidelines (included)
- Community radio license guide (included)

3.4. Funding

This is a rough estimate of the kind of expenses you need to be prepared to start and operate a community radio station. Note that these are bare minimum costs and you may want to put in additional funds for a more extensive setup.

Component	Task	Approximate cost (INR)
Mixer	Audio mixing	10,000
Mic	Recording and live speech	10,000
1 computer	Playout and editing	30,000
Gram Vaani's GRINS box	Scheduling, archiving, telephony	50,000
USB recorders	Field reporting	30,000
Transmitter and antenna	FM broadcast	1,50,000
Studio setup	Soundproofing, AC, Generator	50,000

This comes to an initial expenditure of Rs. 3,50,000 to Rs. 4,00,000. Add to this running costs for staff salaries, electricity, generator fuel, travel, etc of Rs. 30,000 per month.

If you do not have these kind of funds yourself, we suggest that you apply to agencies like UNESCO and UNICEF for grants.

3.5. Internet radio

If you feel that the community you plan to serve has good Internet access and they would like to listen to radio on the Internet, you can also use all of the above technologies to set up an Internet radio station. You can then eliminate the cost of a transmitter/antenna and any narrow casting equipment, and budget a good Internet connection at your radio station.

4. How to run a radio station

The real job starts now! Running a radio station is not easy in any way. Your team will have to multitask across many jobs. Right from traveling into the field to take interviews, to intelligently putting together an interesting script, doing audio editing, answering phone calls, sales and marketing for advertising revenues, and a lot more. Learn as you go along, and be prepared to change! That is the mantra. A number of manuals are available to make you aware of the different issues in community radio.

- How to do community radio (included)
- UNESCO community radio handbook [pdf] (included)
- UNESCO community radio technical manual [pdf] (included)