

Impact Assessment Study
***Ek Sansar Ek Awaz*, Radio and**
Advocacy Centre Program
(Nepal)

One World South Asia (OWSA)
Delhi & Forum for Information
Technology (FIT) Nepal

Objectives

- The content and nature of radio programming.
- Community reach and participation of this ICT initiative
- Assess the structural composition and the day to day functioning of the 10 telecenters/Advocacy Centers in order to examine the existing gaps and linkages that their internal constitution and external collaborations allow
- Assess the involvement/motivation/capacities of the grassroots communicators so that the program could be shaped according to specific, context based needs and requirements,
- What is the nature of training being imparted to the grassroots communicators?
- How can the skill enhancement workshops and trainings be expanded to reach out to more and more members of the village communities?
- Central to the study was the question of social and economic sustainability of these exiting telecenters/Advocacy Centers.
- What are the community based, income generation models that they could adopt in order to strengthen/ensure their presence in the villages?

Methodology

- Field visits to as many telecenters as time, local coordination and the political situation permitted in Nepal, were undertaken, accompanied by the staff members of FIT Nepal.
- Interviews with social mobilizers/managers and user group members of the village communities was also conducted.
- In order to evaluate the nature and quality of training, an ongoing training program of the grassroots communicators was also attended by the researcher
- Content evaluation- radio/ newsletter/ computer training was also carried out
- Case studies and in-depth interviews were also conducted in order to excavate issues of sustainability, context specific challenges and needs of the telecenters

Participatory approach

- Januka is a young woman, an active part of Subash Memorial Rural Information Centre. She has been a part of the telecenter even before the Advocacy Centres took shape a year ago. Her village is about an hour's walk from the telecenter. She is currently pursuing her second year of Bachelor degree in Commerce. Her usual day starts at 4.30 in the morning. After finishing household chores, she walks to her college, where she attends classes till 10 a.m. She then walks to the telecenter, where she is proud to hold the appointment of a 'Social Mobilizer'. She works at the telecenter till 6 in the evening, and then again walks back to her home. Undeterred by the daily hardships of her life, she looks at the telecenter as a place "where I come to learn and share my knowledge with others". She is happy with the way her creativity and talent has found a vent through her participation in radio programming. "Initially I was very nervous to speak with the recorder on. But gradually this hesitation left me. The trainings we got were particularly useful in fighting things like stage fright, public speaking etc.

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- Januka wants to be a 'nurse' after she finishes her degree. But the fact that she comes from a weak economic background, is reality she is conscious of working within. "I really want to be a nurse, but I am not sure how. My parents cannot support me after college, financially and I also have to think of ways of supplementing the family income." Whether her dreams come true or not, one thing this bright young woman is sure of is that, " I am going to be associated with the telecenter as long as I can. I want to encourage my village people to come out of their insulation and get connected with the whole wide world!" Her dreams are inspiring....

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- Santosh is a teenager and a member of the user community group in Subash Memorial Rural Information Centre. He comes to learn computers here for which he is paying Rs. 1500 (for a three month training program). “You know,” he says shyly, “Earlier, my parents used to think that I waste my time. After finishing school, I had nothing to do. But now they feel that I am occupied in a productive manner. Also, I am able to meet all kinds of new friends here. In fact I even have a friend in America now through online chatting! I have no clue where America is, but it is nice to have a friend in an unknown land” he gushes as the room is filled

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- Jhanu, a class nine student who has recently joined the Bungamati Rural Information Centre, “I use to hear a lot about this telecenter from my *didis*. I was curious to know more about it- what happens here, what is it like to work on computers, how does one speak for the radio and so on.” In order to discover more, Jhanu decided to come for the ‘Ek Sansar Ek Awaz’ training that was recently held at Bhagtapur by Bhagwati Rural Information Centre. “Even though I do not understand all the intricacies and details of things being discussed here, I know now that this is not as formidable a work as I thought it would be. It sounds exciting...and new”, she adds as an afterthought. So will she now be a more active member of her centre? “I will try. Even though I have my studies to do....but I really want to. Let’s see”. Jhanu is encouraged by the other veterans present in the training to consider her decision to join soon and join the ‘movement’.

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- Arjun, a member of Devighat Rural Information center, emphatically shares his observations and views on some local practices that he think need to be highlighted in the public domain through radio and *Grameen Awaz*, “Child marriage is a big curse in my village community. In the last *Saraswati pooja*, many such marriages were held and no one had the guts to say anything because of the societal pressures and inhibitions. Women’s reproductive health is another issue people shy away from because of cultural practices and age old beliefs of ‘shame’ and ‘propriety’.

Media Training and Skill Enhancement

- It is also strongly recommended that the grassroots communicators have more hands-on, field based training in production of content- print and radio.
- The computer training courses given to the community must be formalised, in collaboration with some accredited technological institutes. A 'certified and recognized' diploma/degree must be given on completion of the course by the student

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- It was also felt that the way the ICT initiative has shaped up in the past one year, a lot of emphasis has been laid on 'Information Dissemination' and not so much on 'Information Exchange'. While the first stage of orientation might call for a certain awareness building and personality development, the initiative is now mature enough to start debating about fundamental issues

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- Each trained Trainer per telecenter should in turn carry out a Peer to Peer learning model in individual telecenters. There should be participatory monitoring devices, created in consultation with the working committee/ partner organizations and the peer group trainers, to see that the structure is in place and is able to deliver results.