Bangladesh on the way to open up Community Radio

Draft Concept Paper,
Policy and Application Form

BNNRC

Bangladesh NGOs Network for
Radio and Communication

Promoting
communication
technology
for a
FAIRER WORLD

Community Radio Advocacy in Bangladesh so far

Advocacy for Community Radio with the government has started in 1998 in Bangladesh. Mass Line Media Centre applies for permission to establish community radio to the Ministry of Information.

In 1998, AHM Bazlur Rahman drew an advocacy plan regarding community radio in Bangladesh entitled 'Policy Advocacy of Community Radio in Bangladesh'.

Community Radio was discussed as a national issue for the first time in 1999 in the first National Mass Media Conference. The conference was arranged by Centre for Development Communication (CDC).

Community Radio came to the centre point of Bangladesh NGOs Network for Radio and Communication (BNNRC) after it was established in 2000. BNNRC organises continuous advocacy activities regarding Community Radio with the other concerned organisations.

In 2006, BNNRC, MMC, Focus, YPSA and Voice jointly organised a Three-Day long Round Table on Community Radio as the National Advocacy Meeting. UNESCO, UNICEF and UNDP joined in the advocacy activities for the first time.

After Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed, the Honourable Chief Adviser of the Non-Party Caretaker Government of People's Republic of Bangladesh, have taken the charge BNNRC organised a Letter Campaign regarding community radio. The objective of the campaign was to open up the community radio as a pilot basis. As the outcome of the campaign Office of the Chief Adviser sent an advice to the Ministry of Information in order to release permission for the pilot basis community radio.

For the first time in the history a high authority meeting is held at the conference room of the Information Ministry regarding community radio on the 23rd July in 2007 chaired by the Information Secretary and organised by the Ministry of Information. The Director General of Bangladesh Betar and the Principal Information Officer were present in the meeting along with other high officials.

As the invited discussants former secretary Mr. Abdul Muyeed Chowdhury, Kamrul Hassan Manju, the Executive Director of MMC and AHM Bazlur Rahman- S21BR, the CEO of BNNRC were also present in the meeting in favour of the community radio advocacy group.

After a comprehensive discussion regarding community radio as a pilot basis the meeting takes decision to form a ministerial committee of 8 members convened by the Director General of Bangladesh Betar who would make concept paper, regulatory framework and application form in relation to community radio and would submit to the Ministry by one month. According to the discussion the Ministry issues the circular regarding the 8 members-committee on 22nd May in 2007, Memo No- 382/8.

After a several meeting the Director General of Bangladesh Betar finalise the draft of the concept paper, policy and application regarding community radio. BNNRC and MMC assist the committee in this regard.

The Ministerial Committee officially presents the concept paper, policy and application regarding community radio in a meeting organised by the Ministry on 29th October in 2007. The Information Secretary chaired the meeting. Former secretary Mr. Abdul Muyeed Chowdhury joined in the meeting along with all of the committee members and other high officials.

After a comprehensive discussion on the issue the meeting decides the submitted concept paper, policy and application forms to be sent to the different ministries i.e. Ministry of Home, Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperative, Ministry of Science and ICT and Bangladesh Telecommuniction Regulatory Commission (BTRC) for comments and perusal.

It is also decided in the meeting that another meeting would be held after the comments are received. According to the decision all the papers are already sent to the listed ministries for comments on 25th November in 2007.

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Concept Paper
Draft Framework for Community Radio in Bangladesh

Introduction
Even in the 21st century with its ICT revolution and global communication and advanced technologies, radio has not only survived but also is expanding and widening its reach. In Bangladesh the scenario is no different in this regard as is evidenced by the licensing of private radio operation. This is because of radio's unique and distinctive capacity as the cheapest and most versatile medium to reach the remote parts of the country. Its reception is dependent neither on electricity nor on other costly energy sources. It does not require costly receiving equipment either. A radio is mobile and physically more robust then other equipment of communication. Over time, Bangladesh has experienced radio's success in the country's development initiatives, socio-cultural, political and economic growth as well as raising awareness regarding risk reduction of disaster. The Bangladesh War of Liberation is a living proof of the strength and effectiveness of radio as a mass medium in its truest sense. The radio is the poor persons least cost medium for accessing dependable information from outside the community and as such can be more potent for changing values and attitudes and for opening up livelihood opportunities at the grass roots level. National and regional radio stations can deal with the general problems faced by the citizens in any region or in any country. But when it comes to local problems only limited number of specific problems of any particular community/locality can be covered by them because of time and costs constraints. A Community Radio station can play that role more effectively and efficiently as is evident from the experiences of Nepal, India and Sri Lanka in the SAARC region and other countries of the world. Allowing Community Radio in Bangladesh shall be a step forward to achieve the Millennium Development Goals through successful implementation of the PRS (Poverty Reduction Strategy) and annual development plans of the Government. It will take us ahead to bridge the information gap existing between the rural and urban Bangladesh and towards developing a knowledge-based information society.

Before opening up the sector it is necessary to allow pilot projects in the country to firm up the policy matrix on the basis of ground realities and sound knowledge so that the government may not have to face any backlash or untoward situation. Such piloting is also necessary to closely watch the functioning of Community Radio in the socio-political environment of Bangladesh and to fully understand all relevant issues and aspects of operation of this powerful medium. A few pilot projects for about a year will thus help the government and the license holders to work together to generate the knowledge on which to build a strong foundation for subsequent expansion in future.

Justification of Establishing Community Radio
Radio frequencies have been internationally recognized as the common heritage of humanity by the Torremolinos Treaty of the International Telecommunication Union and by Article 33 of the International Telecommunication Convention. The administration of this limited resource is the responsibility of states, which have a duty to treat the various sections of the society equitably.

Freedom of Expression
The article 39 of the constitution of People's Republic of Bangladesh has granted the freedom of expression and

speech with reasonable restrictions. The basic rationale for Community Radio is the need and the right to information of the communities living in far-flung areas. Other forms of media are either not available to the people living in those areas mostly because of non-availability of electricity. The question of affordability is also very important even where electricity is available. In Bangladesh poor and problem ridden power generation is responsible for areas covered by the power network being under load shedding for better part of a 24 hour day. This makes the case for Community Radio all the more strong in the context of Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This Article guarantees freedom of opinion and expression and the freedom to receive and impart information and ideas through any media regardless of frontiers. Radio broadcasting, as a means of public expression, is an exercise of freedom of expression. Freedom of airwaves is a natural corollary of the freedom of expression.

Milan Declaration on Communication and Human Rights of 24th August 1998 calls for international **recognition of the community-broadcasting sector as an essential public service and an important contributor to media pluralism** and freedom of expression and information.

Exchange of Information
A Community Radio Station is a private radio service close to the people and for the people. It is managed or overseen by the people of the locality and the programme contents are mostly local. The Community Radio serves the interests of the community by dissemination and exchange of the most relevant information- including educational and developmental whenever necessary in local dialects.

Additionally the members of the community get an opportunity to express themselves socially and culturally leading to the development of culture and strengthening the social bonds in a community. For disaster preparedness and for relief and rehabilitation in case of any disaster Community Radio can be the most useful and effective tool for disseminating pertinent and life saving information to the local people.

Participation: Community Radio gives voice to people from marginalized sections of society to express their views on Community Development. It promotes participatory decision making through healthy discussion on local issues.

Community Development
Community Radio encourages participatory community development, harnessing locally available resources and encouraging innovations in Community Development. In most cases CR encourages the experience sharing on lessoned learned and promote issue based life centered development messages like health, education, family planning, agriculture, disaster management, indigenous knowledge sharing etc.

Local Issues
Community Radio takes up local issues affecting the community members. It improves people's access to information in local languages/dialects. Public Service Broadcasters cater to the needs of majority of the audience. It is not possible for them to take up issues affecting small communities. Centralized program production of the mainstream Radio has its inherent limitations in catering to the specific requirements of small communities in its command area in terms of language, program content and

concerns. Concept of Community Radio has evolved on the premise that it can very well fill this vacuum by ensuring community participation. Globally and regionally these expectations have been reasonably satisfied and proved by Community Radio over the past few years.

Culture

Community Radio provides a forum for local culture expression. It enhances artistic and intellectual culture and showcases local talent in various fields including sports. It gives opportunity to local artists to get wider exposure, training & experience.

Catalyst of Change

Community Radio speeds up the process of informing the community and therefore acts as a catalyst of change by establishing backward and forward linkages. It serves as a watchdog on civic authorities/ power holders, providing a forum for active relationship between leaders and citizens. Community Radio can change the behavior of its communities for their betterment. Research has shown that effective educational radio programs can change listeners' behavior and lead to the growth of knowledge in the community especially in public health area such as in the fight against HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and other contagious diseases as well as in cases of epidemics.

Education

Community Radio can have very high educational success rate. The educational programs based on characters with which members of the community can easily identify are the most effective. The audience is willing to trust the presenters they know. The station is accessible and people can either phone or just walk in if they need more information about any program. Community Radio stations adapt programs to local needs and language requirements.

Low Cost

Lack of access to information in remote and inaccessible regions can be tackled with Community Radio. Print media cannot be used due to prevalence of large scale illiteracy and remoteness of such regions. Television and video are ruled out due to absence/unstable supply of electricity coupled with high cost of receiver sets. Radio receiver sets are inexpensive and rugged and can operate on batteries.

Concept

Bangladesh has gone a long way towards creating an enabling environment for launching Community Radio. The Government has opened frequency for FM stations and satellite channels. It has also drafted the Bangladesh Broadcasting Act in 2003 with the aim of addressing social and economic issues.

Based on its target audience and content, a radio network can be expanded in the following three ways:

(i) Commercial broadcast model- The objective of a commercial radio is to gain the most market share, expand business and compete in the public service domain.

(ii) Public service broadcast model- The focus of the public service broadcasting remains on contents such as education, information, entertainment, motivation and mobilization. The objective is to address the concerns of a large but diverse group of listeners. The public service broadcasting usually looks beyond the commercial aspects.

(iii) Community Radio model - The Community Radio is distinct from public service broadcasting. The contents in a Community Radio are developed by the community people

and thus give highest priority to the community concerns and demands. Local finance and flair is identified and utilized through the community radio. It is totally public oriented. The community radio is such a tool that can ensure people right to information and meaningful participation in the development process at the grassroots level and ensure the promotion of cultural diversity. The information flow would also strengthen the practice of democratic culture and values.

Policy on Community Radio Broadcasting
In the context of South Asian experience in community radio broadcasting, the Bangladesh government can develop a policy for licensing the Community Radio in the country.

Under the terms of this policy, Community Radio Broadcasting Licenses can be granted to well-established **Research organizations** recognized by the Government, **non-government organizations** that have strong experience of working with the people in the rural areas for poverty alleviation and livelihood improvement or in facilitating communication and information flows to the communities or   have the expertise and a proven track record on community media movement.

i.   The government research and development organizations.

The intending non-government organizations should be registered under the NGO Affairs Bureau. These organizations will include:

i.   Development organizations fulfilling the above mentioned conditions for NGOs
ii. Media and ICT sector.

Content Regulation
The content of the community radio will include education, health, environment, agriculture, rural & community development, SME development and livelihood diversifications for creating employment and income generation opportunities in the rural areas.

i.   The contents should be confined within social, cultural and local issues. The local issues may cover the economic perspective of the locality excluding any sort of political activities in any form except voter education approved by Election Commission.

ii. It is mandatory for the format, subject, presentation and language to uphold and convey the local flavor and fragrance.

iii. Any kind of political affairs will not be addressed through the community radio.

iv. Locally relevant news and programs that are broadcasted by the Bangladesh Betar (Radio) will be permitted to be re-broadcast from the Community Radio Stations. The Community Radio stations shall mandatorily carry news transmissions of the Bangladesh Betar if it is within their respective operation timing.

Period of Licence
For the pilot phase, the license will be granted for 2 years. After monitoring the progress of the pilot phase, license will be granted if it is found to be satisfactory.

Fees
License fee of an amount of **Tk. 5,000 per annum** will be charged for spectrum usage. For the purpose of license agreement, a bank guarantee or bank draft of the amount of

to open up Community Radio

Tk. 20,000 only will be required as security. The licensee will, however, be required to pay spectrum usage fee, as determined by the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) as per the national frequency allocation plan and Bangladesh Telecom Act 2001.

Benefits

a. Inclusion and meaningful participation of people in development activities.

b. Capacity building of rural communities with opportunities for distance education.

c. Creating opportunities for community peoples' skills & leadership development and creative performances.

d. Preserving and promoting traditional and indigenous knowledge, skills, wisdom, arts, craft, traditions and culture including local dialect/language.

e. Providing contemporary information on agriculture, education, health, environment, social welfare, current market prices and demands of local products nationally and possible export opportunities.

f. Developing help line for providing community people with necessary information on disaster management and risk reduction.

g. Promote additional income generation activities and ensure livelihood security.

h. Creating rural networks for promoting and supporting SMEs.

i. Helping the development of education, social, economic, cultural and environmental spheres, income generation and livelihood security.

Selection Procedure

The Ministry of Information would invite interested organizations through newspaper to apply for piloting Community Radio in Bangladesh as per the approved policy guidelines. A committee set up for the purpose in the Ministry of Information where representatives of other concerned ministries, the MOPT and the NGO Affairs Bureau may be included to scrutinize and select applicants for issuing temporary license. On successful completion of the pilot phase the ministry of information may grant regular license to the successful implementers. But for the new applicants a two years probationary period is applicable.

Power & Cost of Community Radio

Maximum 100 watt transmitter power with an antenna gain 6-8db and height of 50 meters above ground covering an area of about 20-30 km radius may be permitted. Licensee will have to arrange funds to cover all costs of setting up of the station and also for running it initially for 2 years and thereafter till it becomes sustainable economically. The Government shall not be responsible for any cost in this regard.

Execution of Project

Research institutions and or non-government organizations / media & ICT sector (according to the criteria mentioned above in "Policy On Community Radio Broadcasting") can set up pilot Community Radio Station on their own and the Bangladesh Betar (Radio) can also run pilot projects.

Safeguards

a. All kinds of political affairs will be prohibited

b. In case of violation of the terms and conditions of license

as per the guidelines, the Government can revoke/terminate/suspend the license and also take penal measures against the licensee for violations by imposing fines which can be spelt out in the license.

c. Bank security of **Tk. 20,000** to ensure timely broadcasting

d. It shall be binding on the licensee to preserve the full records of its daily broadcast for one year from the date of broadcast in the form of a CD so that the government may call for any such broadcast record within a year for its examination and review.

Frequency
License will be issued in the shared frequency band from 88.00 to 108 MHz.

Implementation of the Decision on Community Radio on Pilot Basis
a. Eligible piloting parties will be invited for grant of licenses for setting up Community Radio Stations as per the policy guidelines. The piloting parties will have first priority to have license from the Ministry of Information to set up their own Community Radio Station.

b. The Ministry of Information will consider the applications from eligible piloting parties as per the policy guidelines.

c. The Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) will allot frequency to the selected piloting parties approved and cleared by the Ministry of Information.

Draft Policy
Piloting Community Radio in Bangladesh

Background
In Bangladesh, the Radio functions to support nation-building efforts of the government. Over the period, Bangladesh Betar (Radio) has been the lone transmitter of news and development information besides providing education and entertainment. Since its foundation, the Bangladesh Betar (Radio) has been disseminating development messages in various socio-economic issues. Bangladesh Betar (Radio) also played an enormous role to aware mass people during the country's Liberation War. It is valued for its role in disseminating messages in favor of developing peoples' living standard related to education, health, family planning, mother and child care, environment, poverty alleviation and other developmental factors. As Bangladesh Betar (Radio) maintains a common standard for disseminating its messages which make it difficult for Bangladesh Betar (Radio) to disseminate information at micro level in every case. It is here where the potentiality of the Community Radio lies.

Globally the radio is operated through three modes i.e. public service broadcasting, private entertainment channels and community radio. As a public broadcasting sector, the Bangladesh Betar (Radio) has been playing a significant role in creating public awareness as has been mentioned above. The private radio channels mainly emphasize the entertainment and the commercial value of the medium. Whereas the Community Radio has immense potential to unleash the resource base of the communities as well as to open up livelihoods opportunities for them. It can disseminate micro issues at the community level. The Community Radio can identify and bring out the indigenous knowledge base of the people and cause a fusion with the modern knowledge and technological advancements in various relevant fields. This fusion is a pre-requisite for sustainable development. Community Radio also promotes culture and diversity. Such radio broadcasts through locally developed contents will be directed to the needs and interests of the communities where the transmission center will be located.

Bangladesh Betar (Radio): *A Glimpse*
Bangladesh Betar is the largest electronic medium in the country. It started broadcasting on 16th December 1939. Presently Betar is broadcasting 220 hours 25 minutes programme and news through its eleven regional stations and six units. Fifteen medium wave, 10 F.M and 2 short wave transmitters are being used to broadcast programmes in six different languages. The basic goals for broadcasting are to inform, educate, entertain, sensitize, aware and mobilize people towards development. Recently six new F.M channels have started broadcasting entertainment programmes through-out the country. The Commercial Service of Bangladesh Betar is assigned to earn money, Transcription Service is the only sound archive in the country, and External Service is broadcasting programmes for the Sub-continent, Europe and Middle-East listeners in six languages. Traffic Broadcasting is a specialized unit for traffic management for the capital city. Presently BBC-World Service is broadcasting their Bengali language programme through Bangladesh Betar's FM facilities by an agreement. Bangladesh Betar is an active member of Commonwealth Broadcasting Association (CBA), Asia-Pacific Institute of Broadcast Development (AIBD) and Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union (ABU).

Context
The Government of Bangladesh has been mulling the issue opening up the broadcasting media for the last few years. Piecemeal actions have been taken by licensing a good

number of private TV stations and a few FM radio stations. In keeping with this transformation a Bangladesh Broadcasting Act has been drafted in 2003. The right to information act is also very much on the agenda of the Government. The country's civil society, NGOs and national law institutes are cooperating to develop a liberalized broadcasting policy in Bangladesh. Through this recommendation, priority has been given to commence Community Radio in rural Bangladesh in the light of South Asian and global experience.

The present paper is a draft policy for granting license for community radio and setting up Community radio Stations in Bangladesh. It depicts the definition and objective of community radio in Bangladesh. Among its other salient features are the eligibility criteria for license for community radio, obligations, terms and conditions, procedures for setting up and operating Community Radio Stations, etc.

1. Definition

1.1 Community

(a) Israel Rubin (Rubin, 1983) defines the community by five structural characteristics - (1) a community must be both small enough to give people a sense of equality, and large enough to help them feel they are part of a social structure; (2) a community must have a focus on an area of central importance to their culture; (3) a community must have relative stability. It must have been in existence for a long time, and possess a sense of continuity of traditional values; (4) a community must have some concrete social structure to interact on various aspects of social and economic needs. Along with the interactions, there must also be feelings of congeniality and opportunity for community members to participate in social processes and, (5) there must be significant

primary and secondary interactions occurring in the community, and the two must be intertwined. *(VOICES in collaboration with UNDP, India; April 2004)*

(b) 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 Handbook: UNESCO 2001)*

1.2 Community Radio:

(a) Community Radio is a broadcasting system established by the efforts of a specific community, operated by the community for the purpose of the community's welfare. *(UNESCO 2005)*

(b) Community radio is a medium that gives a voice to the voiceless, serves as mouthpiece of the marginalized and is central to communication and democratic processes within societies. *(UNESCO 2003)*

(c) This is radio owned and operated by a community or members of a community. it can be supported by the State, individuals or corporates or even international bodies. The central purpose for this radio is to offer the people a voice and help develop the community. A radio station is recognized as "community radio" when the station is owned by a non-profit group or by a co-operative whose members are the listeners themselves. *(VOICES in collaboration with UNDP, India; April 2004)*

(d) Community Radio broadcasting is a non-profit service that is owned and managed by a particular community, usually through a trust, foundation, or association. Its aim is to serve and benefit that community. It is, in effect, a form of

public-service broadcasting, but it serves a community rather than the whole nation, as is the usual form of public broadcasting described above. Moreover, it relies and must rely mainly on the resources of the community. *(Community Radio Handbook: UNESCO 2001)*

2. Basic Principles
An institution / organization intending to operate a Community Radio Station (CRS) Must be able to satisfy and adhere to the following principles:

a. It should be explicitly constituted as a 'non-profit' organization

b. The institution / organization should have a proven record of providing service to local community for at least five years.

c. The community to be served by the Community Radio Station should be well specified and defined.

d. It should have an ownership and management structure that is reflective of the community that the CRS seeks to serve.

e. The programme contents should cover educational, social, gender, economic, environmental and cultural fields be relevant to the needs of that particular community. It should not go beyond the community's cultural and historical heritage. Any kind of political, sectarian or doctrinal progamme shall be prohibited.

f. The institution/ organization must be a Legal Entity.

g. 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.

3. Eligibility Criteria for Community Radio Licence
(i) The following types of organizations shall be eligible to apply for Community Radio licenses:

a. Research institutions, which satisfy the basic principles, listed at "Para 2" above. These institutions will include:

- Government research and development organizations.

b. Non-government development organizations, 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" above. The organization should be a legal entity as per law of Bangladesh.

(ii) The following shall not be eligible to run a CRS:

a. Individuals and partnership firms;

b. Political Parties and their affiliate organizations including students' wings, trade unions, etc.;

c. Organizations and companies both local and foreign where profits are distributed to the owners/shareholders;

d. International NGOs and foreign broadcasters.

e. Organizations banned by the Government.

4. Licencing Process
4.1 The community radio aims to ensure community peoples' meaningful participation in the development process. In this context, every Community Radio Station should as far as possible cover a particular homogenous population living in a geographical area. A rule of thumb policy in this respect may be to limit it to an Upazila or a

part of an Upazila. However, any Community Radio Station can be unavoidably heard by the people living in the neighboring areas up to a certain distance. In that respect there will be an overlap between stations to a certain extent.

4.2 Eligible applicants after due scrutiny would be selected by the National Regulatory Committee and Technical Sub-Committee of Ministry of Information and issued with license for setting up Community Radio stations at specified locations on such terms and conditions as the government may prescribe.

4.3 After granting license, the Ministry of Information will forward the NOC to the Bangladesh Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (BTRC) for frequency allocation for broadcasting purpose. The licensees will be required to sign a license agreement specifying the terms and conditions as well as the code of conduct under which the license is to be operated.

4.4 Only one license will be granted to any institution/ organization during the pilot phase.

4.5 The applicant should complete all necessary formalities to set up a Community Radio Station within six months from signing the license agreement. The licensee will have the opportunity to commissioning a pilot project for one and a half years. The institution/organization should obtain frequency from the Bangladesh Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (BTRC) and then import necessary equipments as per existing legal process and set up the station under the supervision of such authorities as may be specified in the license by the government. Transmission shall not be started without obtaining a final clearance from the

government.

4.6 Applicants for license must fulfill the following criteria:

i. 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;

ii. A broad outline of the type of programme to be broadcast should be prepared and submitted to the licensing authority.

iii. 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.

iv. 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.

v. Priority will be given to the applicants managed by and/or looking to serve the disadvantaged and backward sections of the population (with special consideration to women).

4.7 Licence Fee: Reasonable license and spectrum fees will be fixed by the government considering the fact that Community Radio is a development initiative and profit is neither the motive nor the near future possibility. Suggested fees are Tk**. 20,000** and Tk. **5,000 per annum** the license and the spectrum respectively.

5. Technical Structure

5.1 The CRS will cover a range of 30 km. For this, the station should operate on FM frequency. Maximum limit

for transmitter power could be 100 watts or an Effective Radiated Power (ERP) with a radius of up to 30 kilometers. 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 Committee constituted under the Ministry of Information.

5.2 The antenna tower's height from ground level will not exceed 50 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.

5.3 Licenses will be issued in the shared band from 88 to 108 Mhz.

6. Content Regulation

6.1 The Permission Holder shall ensure that nothing is included in the programme broadcasts which:

6.1.1 Offends decency, criticizes other countries or endangers the friendly relations of Bangladesh with other countries.

6.1.2 Openly or in veiled manner attacks any religion, community or ethnic group or in any way created animosity between communities or groups of people or tries to promote sectarian views which may lead to communal discontent or disharmony.

6.1.3 Contains anything obscene, defamatory or false information against person (s), groups or institutions or is partisan in nature.

6.1.4 Is likely to encourage or incite violence or contains anything against maintenance of law and order or which promotes anti-national feelings/attitudes.

6.1.5 Contains anything amounting to contempt of court or anything affecting the integrity of the Nation;

6.1.6 Contains aspersions against the dignity of the State and, Government.

6.1.7 Criticizes, maligns or slanders any individual in person or any group or segment of society in the country;

6.1.8 Encourages superstition or blind belief;

6.1.9 Degrades women;

6.1.10 Degrades children.

6.1.11 Degrades human in disabilities.

6.1.12 Encourages or supports the use of drugs including alcohol, narcotics and tobacco;

6.1.13 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.

6.1.14 Tries to exploit religious sentiments or susceptibilities;

6.1.15 Undermines religious views and beliefs of those belonging to any particular religion or religious denomination.

7. Terms & Conditions

7.1 The basic objective of operating the community radio is to serve the target community and the people to meet their causes by involving them in the programs broadcast from the station.

7.2 The CRS shall be owned and managed only by non-profit institutions/organizations.

- Each licensed station will have a Management Committee. Active and inclusive participation of the target community members is to be ensured in the operation and management of the station. It would be taken as a key indicator of success particularly in case of their involvement in content creation.

- An advisory committee will be formed for each station with the participation of local level government representatives such as Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO), Additional Deputy Commissioner (where the station is located at a district headaquarter), Police officers of the level of Assistant Superintendent and appropriate level representatives of nation building departments such as Agriculture, Fisheries, Livestocks, Forests and Environment, Health, concerned Regional Director of local public radio station and NGOs working in the relevant field etc.

- Regarding station management and programming, the licensee will promote equity and social justice with special priority to the marginalized communities in terms of their race, caste, religion, physical disability and gender.

- The licensee will ensure capacity building for and within the community through formal and / or

informal training as required.

7.3 The license will be granted for an initial period of 2 years. Based on performance of the licensee and provided that no violation of the terms and conditions has occurred during the period, the license can be renewed for such periods as the government may decide. The pilot projects has to be evaluated on mid term basis as well as at the final stage of its operation.

7.4 The license shall not be transferable. There should have provision to conduct midterm and final evaluation of performance.

7.5 Permission may be provided on pilot basis to share programs among different CRS if the programs consist of locally relevant content. Programs of Bangladesh Betar (Radio) would be relayed or re-broadcast in the CRSs 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, special program of national days celebrations and weather bulletin. Community based broadcasting program has to be broadcasted through community radio stations.

7.6 The licensee shall provide its services on free-to-air basis.

7.7 The program contents of the community radio broadcast service will focus on agriculture, both adult and children education, gender, primary health, environment, social welfare, current market prices, demand for agro products, rural and community development, baby care, maternity health care, family planning (radio bulletin), income generation etc. The

programming should reflect the special interests of the community to be served.

7.8 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 upazila level on development issues and policies would be broadcast by the CRS.

- Through participatory process a specific programme 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.

7.9 As the community radio serves the purpose as local medium, thus, local development news will be permitted. Nonetheless, any kind of political broadcasts will be strictly prohibited.

7.10 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 CRS and its code of conduct.

7.11 Applicants will be eligible to seek funding from GOB, development partner organizations such as, bi-lateral donors, Bangladesh NGO Foundation, PKSF etc.

7.12 Though the licensee will be operating the CRS services under the Ministry of Information and the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC), yet it should be noted that the piloting of licensing will be subject to be regulated and monitored by any regulatory authority when constituted. The licensee shall hold fast to the rules and regulations of such authority.

7.13 The licensee should provide quarterly report to the ministry of information. The licensee will preserve records of broadcasted programs during the piloting phase. In case of failure, the Government will have the liberty to revoke the license.

7.14 The Government or its authorized representative shall have the right to inspect the broadcast including other CRS set up facilities of the licensees and collect information in connection to public and community interests.

7.15 The Government will have the right to take over the entire CRS service and network possessed by the licensee or revoke/ terminate/ suspend/ punish the license in the interest of national security or in the event of national emergency/ war or low intensity conflict or in any similar type of situations.

7.16 The Government reserves the right to modify the terms and conditions as necessary for the interest of general public or for the purpose of proper conduct of broadcasting or for security purpose.

7.17 The Government reserves the right to revoke the license at any time in public interest or in case of violation of the terms and conditions provided.

7.18 Notwithstanding anything contained anywhere else in the license, the Government's decision shall be final and conclusive. The Government shall have the power to direct the licensee to broadcast any special message as may be considered desirable to meet any contingency arising out of natural emergency, or public interest or natural disaster and the like, and the licensee shall be obliged to comply with such directions.

7.19 The permission holder shall be required to submit their audited annual accounts and annual report to the Government in respect of the organization/division running the CRS. The accounts and annual report shall clearly show the progress, income and expenditure incurred and the Assets and Liabilities in respect of the CRS.

7.20 The Government may revoke permission of license if the licensee fails to commission services within the instructed period.

7.21 A licensee will be subject to such other conditions as will be determined by the Government.

7.22 The Govt. may take initiatives to create a Community Radio Development Fund as supplement for the community broadcaster's own resources, capacity building, improvement in quality of technology, research & evaluation purpose, etc.

7.23 The Government shall make special arrangements for monitoring and enforcement of the ceiling on advertisements, particularly in those areas where private FM radio stations have been granted licenses.

8. CRS Monitoring & Enforcement

8.1 Every month a copy of CD containing the recordings of broadcasted programs of CRS will be provided to the local authority prescribed by the Government.

8.2 A local advisory committee will be formed under the UNO, Officer-In-Charge of local police stations, Regional director of local Radio station Principal of locally situated education institution. The committee will monitor the CRS activities in regular basis and submit a **confidential** report to the Ministry of Information per month.

8.3 The advisory committee will provide suggestions based on the strengths and weaknesses of the CRS broadcasting.

8.4 The advisory committee will encourage the participation of upazila level government officials in the community radio programs.

8.5 The advisory committee will encourage producing development advertisements / government advertisements through community radio.7.6 The advisory committee will provide necessary counseling service to **develop schedule**.

to open up Community Radio

APPLICATION FORM

FOR LICENSE TO OPERATE COMMUNITY RADIO STATION (FM) ON PILOT BASIS

To:
The Secretary
Ministry of Information
Government of Bangladesh
Dhaka

Dear Sir,

I hereby submit the following particulars in support of our application seeking a license to set up and operate a Community Radio Station as per the prescribed guidelines of the Government of Bangladesh.

1. Name of the Institution / Organization:

2. Location:

3. Contact Address:

   Tel No:

   Fax:

   Email:

4. Permanent Address:

5. Name of the Head of the Institution / Organization:

6. Name, designation and address of the authorized signatory responsible for complying with the terms and conditions of the License for community radio (Details to be filled up as per Annex. II), if the same is granted

7. Details of the organization and members of the Governing Body:

(Please furnish details of members along with bio-data of each member as per Annexure-II)

8. Please fill up the following details as applicable to:

A. RESEARCH INSTITUTION

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Give a profile of the Institution.

Please provide details of the community / area proposed to be served? (Enclose an area map showing the location of the station and geographical area which would be covered by the proposed Community Radio Station)

Please specify the objective(s) sought to be achieved through the Community Radio

**(B) NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS**
Please provide detailed information on registration of the organization. Is the organization registered under the NGO Affairs Bureau?

(Enclose attested photocopy of the registration certificate)

Please state the number of years, at the time of application, the organization has actually been working after its registration.

Enclose audited and certified copies of the balance sheet of the institution / Non-government organization for the preceding three years.

Has the organization received grant/aid from the Government / Multilateral agencies? (If yes, please give details with supporting documents)

Give a profile of the Organization. Please give a year wise description of community based projects and major activities undertaken including past achievements of such project(s).

Please provide details of the community / area proposed to be served? (Enclose an area map indicating the entire area of service to be covered by the Community Radio also showing the physical location of the station.

Please specify the objective(s) sought to be achieved through the Community Radio

**GENERAL INFORMATION FOR ALL APPLICANTS:**

9. Please specify full details of the following:

   (i) Power of the FM radio transmitter: Up to 100 watt ERP is generally permitted

   (ii) Height of the tower (Max. 50 meter above the ground level permitted):

10. Location of the FM Transmitter & Antenna:

    (Please note that, the FM transmitter and antenna should be located within the geographical area of the community to be served. Please specify the name of the village / union / upazila / town area etc. where the transmitter & antenna is to be located for the purpose of setting up Community Radio Station. Please indicate the community area coverage with a map).

    Portable FM transmitter and antenna will not be permitted.

11. Specify the nature & types of programs to be broadcasted:

12. Indicate the language(s) and dialects in which programs will be produced & broadcasted:

13. Indicate whether the source of the content is own or acquired:

14. Please mention the sources of funding for the following in details:
    a. Infrastructure Facilities
    b. Maintenance
    c. Program production
    d. Human Resource

15. Did your organization receive any foreign aid? Please mention the grounds also.

16. Details of the processing fee:

Attached Demand Draft No ....................................................

Dated for Tk. (Suggested Tk 10,000 only) towards processing fee drawn on (name of the bank, branch) in favor of Ministry of Information, Government of People's Republic Bangladesh)

**DECLARATION**

i. I/ We are duly authorized to sign this application for and on behalf of ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ...

ii. I/ We hereby certify that the above statements are true and correct to the best of My/ our knowledge and belief.

iii. I/ We hereby agree to immediately inform the Ministry of Information if any of the facts provided change in future for any reason.

iv. I/We undertakes steps to preserve tapes/ CDs or recordings of the broadcasts in any form and submit all or such as may be required by the designated authority of the Ministry of Information.

v. I/We agrees to comply with all the terms and conditions, the guidelines and instructions of the Government included in the license or given later from time to time.

vi. Affidavit as in Annexure-I and bio-data of members as in Annexure-II are enclosed.

**[Signature of Applicant (s)]**

**Date:**

**Designation of  Signatory**

**Annexure -I**

**CERTIFICATE/ AFFIDAVIT**

1. I understand that this application, if found incomplete in any respect and / or if found with conditional agreement or not accompanied with the requisite processing fee, shall be instantly rejected.

2. I recognize that if at any time any averments made or information provided for obtaining the permission for license is found incorrect or false, my application shall be legally responsible to be rejected and any permission granted on the basis of this application shall be accountable for termination.

3. I certify that the institution / organization shall agree to advertising and announcements relating to local events, local development services and employment opportunities.

4. I officially state that the institution / organization is a 'Non-Profit' entity.

5. I certify that the revenue generated from such advertisements and announcements will be utilized only for the purpose of operational expenses and capital expenditure of the Community Radio Station (CRS). I certify that the surplus amount after meeting the mentioned financial needs of the CRS, will be drawn on promoting the primary activity of the organization for furthering to develop its own infrastructure.

6. I hereby certify that after issue of No Objection Certificate (NOC) by the Ministry of Information and

having obtained the frequency permission from Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC), I shall sign the grant of permission for Community Radio Broadcasting with Ministry of Information. I intently agree to meet the terms fully with all the conditions therein; in failure of which the granter may terminate/revoke/cancel the agreement.

I certify that to the best of my knowledge and belief, the statements made in this application are correct. I understand that the Bangladesh Government reserves the right to withdraw the permission if at any time any statement made is found to be false / incorrect / incomplete and to have been made by me or any member or any officer knowing it to be false / incorrect / incomplete.

**Name and signature of authorized signatory**

**(Office Seal)**

**Annexure-II**

**Details of Members / Authorized Signatory**

1.      Name
2.      Date of birth
3.      Name of Parents
4.      Nationality
5.      Religion
6.      Permanent Address
7.      Present Address
8.      Official Address
9.      Passport Number (if any)
10.     TIN Number (if any)
11.     Qualification
12.     Experience

**Name and signature of**

**authorized signatory**

**(Office Seal)**

**Annexure-III**

**Ministerial Committee on Community Radio**
Ministry of Information,
People's Republic of Bangladesh
Memo: 382/8, Dated: 06/09/2007

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Mr. Md. Mahbubul Alam, the Director General of Bangladesh Betar (Bangladesh Radio). | Convener |
| 2. | Mr. Iftekher Hossain, Principal Information Officer (Current Charge), | Member |
| 3. | Mr. Nasimul Kader Chowdhury, Deputy Director General (News), Bangladesh Betar, | Member |
| 4. | Mr. Md. Abdur Rouf, Director (News) Bangladesh Betar, | Member |
| 5. | Mr. Mohesh Chardra Roy, Senior Engineer, (Research and Receive Cell) Bangladesh Betar , | Member |
| 6. | Mr. Faroha Suhrowardi, Deputy Director (Liaison) Bangladesh Betar, | Member |
| 7. | Mr. Kamrul Hasan Monju, Executive Director, Mass-Line Media Centre and | Member |
| 8. | Mr. AHM Bazlur Rahman-S21BR, Chief Executive Officer, Bangladesh NGOs Network for Radio and Communication(BNNRC). | Member |

**Bangladesh NGOs Network for Radio and Communication (BNNRC)** is a national networking body working for building a democratic society based on the principles of free flow of information, equitable and affordable access to Information, Communication Technology (ICT) for remote and marginalized population.

BNNRC is registered with the Ministry of Law, Parliamentary and Justice Affairs, as a trust and NGO Affairs Bureau, Office of the Prime Minister, Government of Bangladesh according to the foreign donation (Voluntary Activities) regulation ordinance 1978 as an organization on Information, Communication and Technology for Development (ICT4D) established in 2000 as per Article 19 charter of UN bill of rights.

Currently, with congenial support from Cordaid (a Netherlands based funding partner) BNNRC is implementing a project **Promoting Appropriate Technologies and Policies to Uphold the value "ICT as Basic Human Right".**

BNNRC now strive for following core interventions to achieve PRSP, WSIS action plan and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

1. Awareness on correlations of ICT, poverty alleviation and Institutionalization of Democracy and Right to Information (RTI)

2. Establishment of ICT Resource Center and Promotion of Radio Listeners Club as primary ICT catalyst in remote rural areas;

3. Advocacy and Campaign for Bridging the Digital Divide/Information Divide/Knowledge Divide and open up air waves for Community Radio - voices for the voice-less;

4. Piloting ICT4D projects at rural areas to create show case examples for greater multiplication through Rural Knowledge Center (RKC).

5. Establishment of Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Services (RACES) for Disaster Preparedness and Risk Reduction through Amateur Radio (HAM Radio)promotion .

6. Establishment of People's Right in Telecommunication/ Global Commons/Country Commons.

7. To Promote the adoption of Free/Open Source Software(FOSS), open standards, and open content for development

BNNRC has been undertaking pioneer approaches to integrate ICT for Development (ICT4D), related policy advocacy for good governance, people's rights, global/ country commons and poverty alleviation with community development work at the grassroots through its networking members in Bangladesh. BNNRC's outreach extends to local national and international forums.

BNNRC is affiliated with

- Global Knowledge Partnership (GKP),
- World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC),
- World Association for Christian Communication (WACC),
- Developing Countries Farm Radio Network (DCFRN),
- Freedom of Information Advocate Network (FOIA),
- Commonwealth Human Right Network (CHRN),
- One World (TV, Radio, Net),
- One World South Asia (OWSA),
- Asian South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education (ASPBAE).

We update our web site regularly with details of our recent activities. best practices, publication and other materials related to promoting ICT as basic human right. We appreciate your visit to our web site and strengthening the movement we are striving for.

**Contact us at:**

AHM Bazlur Rahman- S21BR
Chief Executive Officer, BNNRC, and
Member, Strategy Council,
UN-Global Alliance for ICT and
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