

# EXPLORING SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY OF RURAL COMMUNITY RADIO: CASE OF MANN DESHI TARANG VAHINI, MHASWAD

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## Abstract

Social Sustainability of community radio incorporates the nature of content and community participation in content production and dissemination. This research is an attempt to analyze the latter phenomenon in order to study the social sustainability of rural community radio. Mann Deshi Tarang Vahini, a rural CR operating within the state of Maharashtra was selected for the study. This Paper explored the degree of participation and format of content produced by the community and sought to study the unrecognized relationship between the demographics and the participation of community in CR broadcast. This present study does not evaluate the social sustainability of selected CR. The study was based on qualitative and quantitative data. In-depth interviews and focus group discussions allowed the researcher to draw insights on the perception of community towards the participation in programmes, also, the obstacles faced by CR staff to increase the involvement of rural people. The survey and field visits captured the techniques and methods to increase participation based on quantitative data. The survey questionnaire recognized the degree and frequency of participation of the community. The findings established a secure connection between the education and monthly income of participants and participation in CR. In addition to that, it is suggested that the participation of the community in ownership, decision making, and management could help the CR station in various ways. However, to work as a socially sustainable station, CR staff should reach out to people by planning field visits and outdoor broadcasting. With the achieved results, the framework for social sustainability is further designed. With the achieved results, framework for social sustainability is further designed.

## Keywords

Community Radio Station, Content Production, Broadcasting, Programs, Transmission, Participatory Approaches, Mann Deshi Tarang Vahini.

## Introduction

According to UNESCO, Community Radio is a 'medium that gives voice to the voiceless, that serves as the mouthpiece of the marginalised and is at the heart of communication and democratic processes within societies'. Community Radio is a people's venture which reflects hopes, aspirations, and concerns of the community. Louie Tabing (2005) in his book "How to do Community Radio" defines Community Radio as "one that is operated in the community, for the community, about the community, and by the community".

Programmes broadcast through CR caters to a specific area and serves local audience. A team of selected people, preferably members of the serving community, produce and broadcast content and participate in operating the station. According to the rules of Government of India, CR (Community Radio) should operate on low power transmission and its range should not exceed more than 15 km. radius. Unlike FM radio channels, CR does not focus entirely on entertainment. With progressive content and community participation, CR is a tool for development and progress. India is a country with enormous ethnic and linguistic diversity, where CR plays an essential role in maintaining solidarity in the community.

## Sustainability of Community Radio

Lisa Canon in her book 'Life beyond Aid' defines sustainability as "the ability of an organisation to secure and manage sufficient resources to enable it to fulfil its mission effectively and consistently over time without excessive dependence on any single funding source". Although Sustainability is often discussed in largely financial terms - the ability to generate revenues that will maintain a project - it has been found out that sustainability involves several interconnected dimensions (2004, Slater).

To achieve self-dependency in every dimension, CR is expected to generate models or paradigms of sustainability, which would be beneficial for operating the station. Community Radio, unlike mainstream media, practices narrowcasting, focuses on small geographical area and depends upon the community for funding, content creation, and human resource. Unlike the CR owned by KVK (Krishi Vigyan Kendra) and Educational Institutes (Campus CR) which are funded and maintains satisfactory financial condition, whereas CR owned by NGOs often struggles on financial grounds. However, multi-national NGOs find it easy to run CR without generating income out of it. To work independently, without relying on NGO for funding, CR needs an ideology to achieve a state of sustainability.

Assessing the impact of community radio, AMARC (2007) establishes the social sustainability of community radio on its capacity to have relevant participatory and creative programming in local language which offers a chance to audience to access media in their own language unlike commercial broadcasting. A report published by Ideosync Media Combine on Community Radio and Sustainability (2015), discuss that CR can be sustained through the patron ship of large non-profit development organization that have over the years evolved good social work practices. Also, a great amount of capacity building is required to boost social sustainability. Social Sustainability improves financial state of CR which allows to create greater independence and transparency to community. Fraser & Estrada (2001) views sustainability of CR as a responsibility of people and challenge to the manager of the station and his team to make the programming enjoyable and useful to their listeners that they will be willing to support it through subscription fees and voluntary donations. According to Lush & Uργοiti (2012) community radio stations should focus on selling advertising and air time, rather than exploring other income streams that might actually enhance and diversify programming.

### Social Sustainability of Community Radio

Alphonso Gumucio Dagron, in his book, 'Making Waves: Story of Participatory Communication for Social Change' (2001) divided sustainability of community radio in three dimensions –

- **Social Sustainability**
- **Institutional Sustainability**
- **Financial Sustainability**

According to Dagron, Financial sustainability is built upon the social and institutional sustainability. Social Sustainability of any community radio is based on the following parameters:

- i. Nature of Content
- ii. Types of Programmes
- iii. Participation of Community in Content Production
- iv. Role of Participants in Broadcasting
- v. Involvement of community in Decision Making, Ownership, and Management.
- vi. Access to Community to Handle Equipment
- vii. Collaborative Programming
- viii. Nature of Audience
- ix. Characteristics and Requirements of Audience
- x. Feedback
- xi. Community Events and Meetings
- xii. Use of Social Media

This research paper has stressed upon only participation of community in content production.

## Literature Review

Faisal & Alhassan (2018) while drawing on the participatory development theory of communication discussed the nature and philosophy of community participation in development process. This research attempted to calculate the frequency of community member's participation and ascertained the level of their satisfaction. The results revealed that community participation is limited to program listening and majority of listeners participate through mobile phones instead of visiting studio for recording. However, this technology has proved to be efficient for people living in rural areas as they participate in live studio discussions through mobile phones which ultimately increased the listenership and frequency of participation.

Patil (2019) explored two community radio stations in rural India to investigate the participatory communication approach. This study presented insights about the inclusion of local voice in CRS. According to the researcher, appointing community representatives as staff members in CRS should work towards the participatory content making process. Also, this investigation introduced the concept of agriculture sustainability, which is related to the extensive reporting on the farming issue faced frequently by farmers. In conclusion, it is mentioned that while interplaying with state, funding agencies and NGOs, the core values of CR should not be negotiated.

As reported by Shahzalal & Hassan (2019), while enquiring the rural people's intention to adopt sustainable behavior and building a theoretically and statistically sound model to communicate sustainability effectively in rural areas, rural people do not like CR as a tool for entertainment, but as a medium participatory communication that works as the voice of the locals and is owned and managed by local people. Although this study is concentrated on CRS of Bangladesh, the hypothetical model developed for the CR is relevant to every CR.

In their cross-country comparison of CR, Hussain & Tongia (2018), examined the sustainability of CR as a tool in achieving development. In-depth analysis, financial data, and practices of Nepalese CR stations with anecdotal references from India and Bangladesh pointed out the potential of advertising in achieving financial sustainability. As with social sustainability, researchers proposed a set of policies and operational guidelines. Researchers observed that controlled spending over CR establishment, optimal ratio of skilled labor, and friendly environment helps to build a sustainable environment.

## Research Objectives

The goal of this study is to assess community participation in the four structures of Community Radio – Content Production and Broadcasting, Management, Decision Making, and Ownership. In addition to this, this investigation attempts to draw innovative approach to increase the participation of rural people in the above mentioned areas. Following are the specific objectives of the study:

- To develop the discourse of social sustainability.
- To study the participation of community in content production and broadcasting, ownership, and Management.
- To discuss the perception of participants towards their contribution in content production.

## Research Hypothesis

H1 – There is no significant relationship between the Gender of community members and participation in the content production.

H2 – There is no significant relationship between the Age of community members and participation in the content production.

H3 – There is no Significant relationship between the Education of community members and participation in the content production.

H4 – There is no significant relationship between the Monthly Income of community members and participation in the content production.

H5 – There is no significant relationship between the Occupation of community members and participation in the content production.

## Research Methodology

Case Study method was selected for this research to collect data from various sources. This study is comprised of both qualitative and quantitative data. Data was collected using in-depth interviews, focus group discussion, field exploration, and survey. To ease the data interpretation, data is presented in two sections – Qualitative and Quantitative.

## Selection of Community Radio

In the selected research period, the state of Maharashtra was holding 17 operational community radio stations. Following chart explains the ownership pattern and region variances of these stations which is further emphasized to take the decision for selecting CRS for the present study.

Sr. No.	Community Radio	Location	Owner	Region
1	Radio FTII	Pune	FTII (Education Institute)	Urban
2	Mann Deshi Tarang Vahini	Mhaswad, Satara	NGO	Rural
3	Yeralavani	Jebapur, Jat, Sangli	NGO	Rural
4	Vidyavani	Pune	SPPU (Educational Institute)	Urban
5	Puneri Avaaz	Pune	NGO	Urban
6	KVK Pravara	A'Nagar	KVK	Rural
7	Radio Nagar	A'Nagar	NGO	Urban
8	Vasundhara Vahini	Baramati	NGO	Semi-Urban
9	Sharada Krishi Vahini	Baramati	KVK	Semi-Urban
10	Radio Mast	Malegaon	Educational Institute	Semi-Urban
11	Radio MGIRI	Wardha	NGO	Urban
12	Radio Vatsagulma	Washim	NGO	Semi-Urban
13	Radio Vishwas	Nashik	NGO	Urban
14	Green CR	Sangli	NGO	Urban
15	Swaranant CR	Karda, Washim	KVK	Rural
16	Panzaravani	Pimpalner, Dhule	NGO	Rural
17	Radio Bhoomi	Wadala, Solapur	NGO	Semi-Urban

The researcher is supposed to investigate only rural community radio stations operated by non-governmental organization. In the above chart, only three rural CRS are run by NGOs. Based on the number of listeners, CRS organizational structure, town size, and NGO activities- Mann Deshi Tarang Vahini, Mhaswad is selected for the examination. The research period for this study is January 2017 to January 2019. The activities within this period are considered for investigation.

### **Sampling Method and Data Collection**

Mann Deshi Tarang Vahini is operational within the 15 kilometers radius of Mhaswad, a town in the Satara district of Maharashtra. Since its inception, there was no wide survey conducted to measure the total listenership. Hence, it was impossible for researcher to select the exact number of respondents from the unmeasured population. Thereby, Snowball Sampling method was applied. A questionnaire was developed with ten closed ended questions. Personal-interview method was selected to collect data for questionnaire. Based on the broadcasting area of CRS, researcher appointed ten representatives and provided them with questionnaires. They were appointed in the selected villages around the town of Mhaswad. A total number of 400 samples were taken and categorized between participants and non-participants.

### **Data Analysis**

The data was inserted in SPSS for analysis and hypothesis testing. Two tailed Chi-Square test is used to test the hypothesis. Pie-charts and Graphs are used whenever necessary. The qualitative data gathered from in-depth interviews and focus group discussions is presented in the next section.

### **Qualitative Data Analysis**

Following points were noted down during the in-depth interviews with CR station in-charge, three radio jockey, and one technical assistant. Also, focus-group discussion with regular participants was organized. With fifteen participant's discussion took place at the Mann Deshi NGO conference room. All the interviews and discussions were recorded as per the consent of participants and staff.

- Advertising, Content, and Listenership are interconnected terms. The useful content can improve listenership, which confirms sponsorship. Sponsorship or advertisements for a specific program improves the financial condition of CR. In other words, to improve financial sustainability, CRS needs to work on social sustainability. Ultimately, the nature of content and content production decides the existence of the CR station. Hence, CRS staff should always try to involve the community broadcasting and production. This has two reasons: first, it lessens the workload of CRS staff, and second, it saves money. Most of the volunteers are not supposed to be paid. Their contribution is considered as useful to human welfare. The less salaried staff can help CRS to invest money in other essential activities.
- The focus group discussion was attended by retiree, housewives, school children, disabled, and senior citizens as they were the most frequent contributors to the CRS. Based on this, it was noted that youth and adults are busy with the education and job. They find it hard to manage time for contributing in CR programs. However, if CRS target the class of people who attended the FGD, then there would never be deficiency of content and participation.
- Talking about participation, it was noted that staff should plan field visits and recordings regularly. They should cover most of the towns where CR broadcast. People residing in rural areas cannot always visit CR studio. This implicated that people will not visit studio frequently but CR should reach to people. Outdoor Broadcasting is one of the most important asset of CR.

Following methods and techniques were registered during the qualitative data collection process which is utmost important to achieve social sustainability.

Sr. No.	Method and Technique
1	Use of Local Language
2	More Live Phone-in Programmes
3	Production of Competition Based Programmes
4	Location of Studio Should be Accessible for Community
5	Formation of Radio Listener Clubs in Villages
6	Placement of Radio in Public Places
7	Stress on Agriculture Programming
8	Feedback
9	Appoint Representatives of CRS in Every Village
10	Valuable and Useful Programming
11	Collaborative Programming
12	Smart Use of Social Media – WhatsApp Groups, Facebook Live, Android Applications
13	Conserve Folk Songs and Art
14	Capacity Building of Community
15	Create a good harmony and atmosphere in people about CRS

### Quantitative Data Analysis

The questionnaire was comprised of ten questions but only prominent questions elucidating the nature of participation of community members are presented with graphs and tables. Out of 400 people, data was categorized between participants and non-participants in the content production process. As a result, only 106 respondents were found to be involved in the content production.

**Table No. 1 – Type of Content Production**

Type of Content Production	Frequency	Percent
Local News/Information	10	09.43
Folk Songs/Singing	32	30.19
Discussion	11	10.38
Comment or Opinion	30	28.30
Request	12	11.32
Interview	11	10.38
Total	106	100.00

(Sources: Primary Data)

According to above table and pie-chart diagram, it is concluded that participation of rural people is high in folk singing and comments/opinions. Certainly, Mann Deshi Tarang CR contains the wide collection of folk songs which are rare and difficult to find elsewhere. The percentage of people participating through comments is 28.30, request and interview measured 11.32 and 10.38 percent sequentially. Production of local news or information is 9.43 percent which shows the restrictions of government on broadcasting news independently by CR.

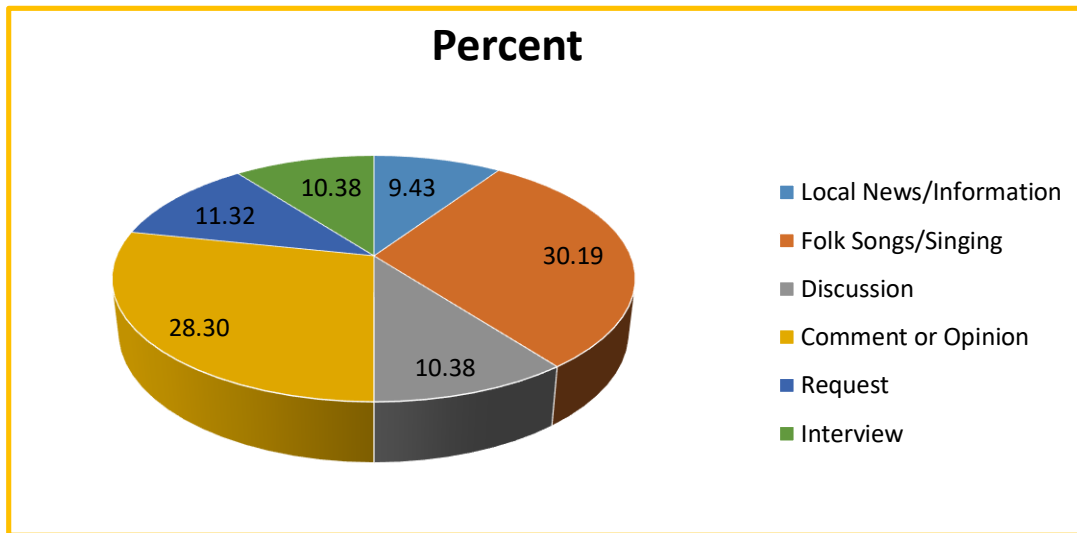


Figure No. 1 – Type of Content Production

Table No. 2 – Role in the Participation Process

Role in the Participation Process	Frequency	Percent
Reporter	05	04.72
Musician	32	30.19
Host/Presenter	01	00.94
Interviewee	09	08.49
Interviewer	02	01.89
Participant in the Vox-pop	30	28.30
Participant in phone-in programmes	27	25.47
Total	106	100.00

(Sources: Primary Data)

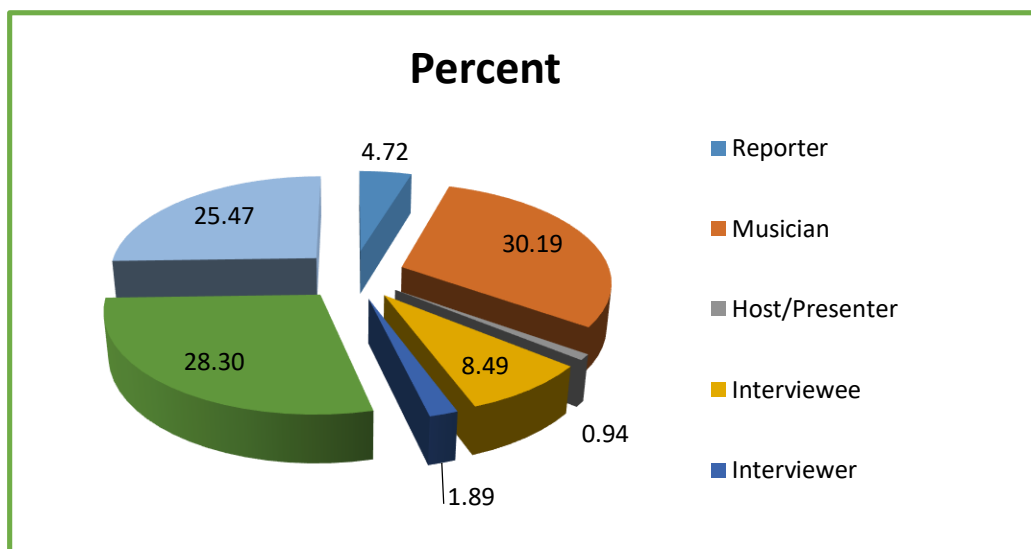


Figure No. 2 – Role in the participation process

From the above table which defines the nature of participation of community, it is suggested that people tend to participate in programs remotely. It means the percentage of people visiting CR studio for content production is less. Percentage of participants as interviewee is 8.49 whereas as an interviewer is 1.89 percent. Percentage of reporter is 4.72. This shows that proper use of communication technology can open the door of more participation.

Table No. 3 – Involvement in Decision Making Process

Involvement in the Decision Making Process	Frequency	Percent
Yes	02	01.80
No	109	98.20
Total	111	100.00

(Sources: Primary Data)

The above table clearly indicates the low percentage of community people in decision making process. Out of 111 people only 2 members are considered for decision making.

Table No. 4 – Involvement in the Advisory/Management Board

Involvement in the Advisory/Management Board	Frequency	Percent
Yes	03	2.83
No	103	97.17
Total	106	100.00

(Sources: Primary Data)

According to above data, the percentage of presence of community on the advisory/management board of CR is 2.83 percent.

Table No. 5 – Frequency of Participation

Frequency of Participation	Frequency	Percent
Only once	55	51.89
2-4 times	28	26.42
5-10 times	17	16.04
More than 10 times	06	05.66
Total	106	100.00

(Sources: Primary Data)

From the above table and graph, it can be said that 51.89 percent members have participated only once in content production. Then 26.42 percent have participated 2-4 times, 16.04 percent 5-10 times and only 5.66 percent claims to registered participation more than 10 times. This indicates that frequency and degree of participation is low. Few of the community members are frequent contributors. The nature and quality of their participation needs to be evaluated. Majority of participants contributed only once which raised a question of definition and concept of participation in CR.

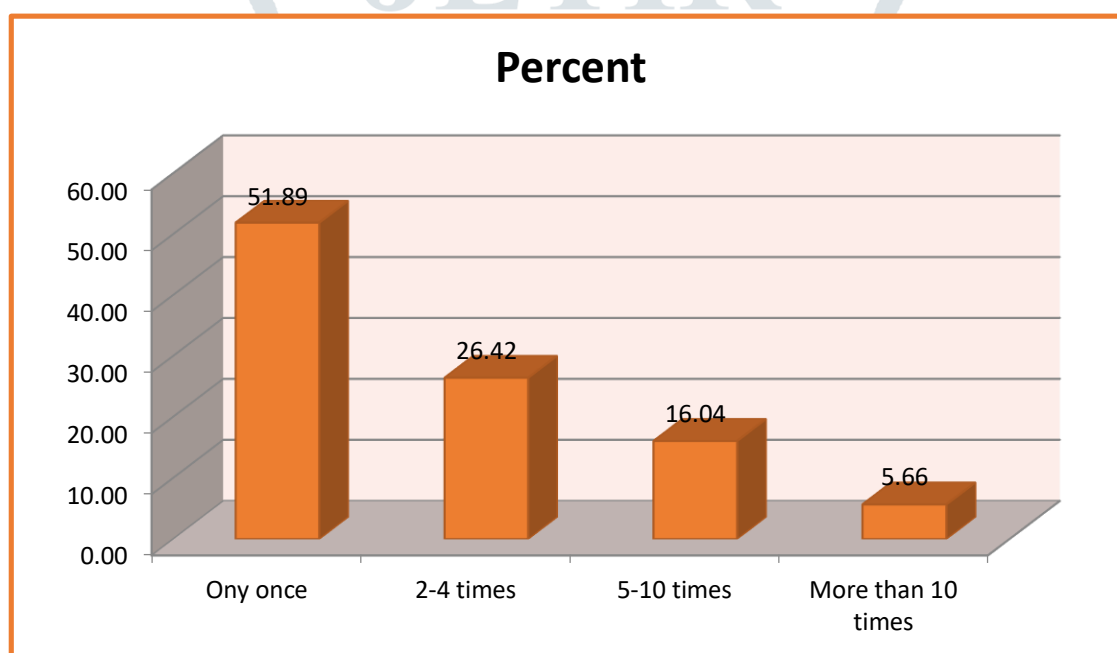


Figure No. 3 – Frequency of Participation

### Hypothesis Testing

H1a - There is a significant relationship between the Gender of the community members and their participation in the content production.

H1o - There is no significant relationship between the Gender of the community members and their participation in the content production.

Table No. 6 – Chi-Square Test for Age and Participation

Gender and Participation	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.957 <sup>a</sup>	1	.328	.446	.218
Continuity Correction <sup>b</sup>	.621	1	.431		
Likelihood Ratio	.997	1	.318		
Linear-by-Linear Association	.953	1	.329		
N of Valid Cases	241				
a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 11.57.					
b. Computed only for a 2x2 table					

(Sources: SPSS)

The above table indicates the Pearson Chi-Square value is .957<sup>a</sup> and Asymp is .328 whereas Exact sig (2-sided) is .446 and (1-sided) .218 which rejects the null hypothesis and accepts alternative hypothesis. It means there is no significant relationship between the gender of community members and their participation in content production.

H2a - There is a significant relationship between the Age of the community members and their participation in the content production.

H2o - There is no significant relationship between the Age of the community members and their participation in the content production.

Table No. 7 – Chi-Square Test for Age and Participation

Age and Participation	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	9.133 <sup>a</sup>	1	.058
Likelihood Ratio	9.650	1	.047
Linear-by-Linear Association	6.209	1	.013
N of Valid Cases	241		
a. 1 cells (10.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 3.57.			

(Sources: SPSS)

The above table indicates the Pearson Chi-Square Value is 9.133<sup>a</sup> and Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) is .058 showing there is no significant relationship between Age and community member participation in CR. Hence, null hypothesis is rejected and alternative is accepted.

H3a - There is a significant relationship between the Education of the community members and their participation in the content production.

H3o- There is no significant relationship between the Education of the community members and their participation in the content production.

**Table No. 8 – Chi-Square Test for Education and Participation**

<b>Education and Participation</b>	<b>Value</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)</b>
Pearson Chi-Square	16.668 <sup>a</sup>	1	.005
Likelihood Ratio	19.665	1	.001
Linear-by-Linear Association	.438	1	.508
N of Valid Cases	241		
a. 3 cells (25.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.55.			

(Sources: SPSS)

The above table reveals that Pearson Chi-Square value 16.668<sup>a</sup> and Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) .005 showing there is a significant relationship between the Education of the community members and their participation in the content production. Hence null hypothesis is accepted and alternative is rejected.

H4a - There is a significant relationship between the Occupation of the community members and their participation in the content production.

H4o - There is no significant relationship between the Occupation of the community members and their participation in the content production.

**Table No. 9 – Chi-Square Test for Occupation and Participation**

<b>Occupation and Participation</b>	<b>Value</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)</b>
Pearson Chi-Square	12.967 <sup>a</sup>	1	.073
Likelihood Ratio	12.697	1	.080
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.729	1	.188
N of Valid Cases	241		
a. 6 cells (37.5%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .68.			

(Sources: SPSS)

The above table explore relationship between occupation and participation which shows Pearson Chi-Square Value is 12.967<sup>a</sup> and Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) is .073. It means there is no significant relationship between the Occupation of the community members and their participation in the content production. Hence, null hypothesis rejected and alternative is accepted.

H5a - There is a significant relationship between the Monthly Income of the community members and their participation in the content production.

H5o - There is no significant relationship between the Monthly Income of the community members and their participation in the content production.

**Table No. 10 – Chi-Square Test for Monthly Income and Participation**

<b>Monthly Income and Participation</b>	<b>Value</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)</b>
Pearson Chi-Square	20.477 <sup>a</sup>	1	.000
Likelihood Ratio	21.095	1	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	11.109	1	.001

N of Valid Cases	241		
a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 5.61.			

(Sources: SPSS)

The above table indicates chi-square value is 20.477<sup>a</sup> and Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) is .000 which further builds a strong relationship between the monthly income of participants and their contribution in content production. Hence, null hypothesis is accepted and alternative is rejected.

## Conclusion

Sustaining through the patronage of NGO is acceptable but not recommended. Community Radio must find ways to generate income on their own. Financial and Institutional sustainability are built upon social sustainability. To generate flawless income, participatory content production should be encouraged. Content should be valuable to the community. In that case, programmes on agriculture and technology always receive great listenership. CR should take efforts on sponsored programmes, also, look for getting government advertisements. To increase community engagement, remote participation methods must bring into the play. Outdoor broadcasting and use of smart phones for recording content could play vital role. In this process, CR staff should not worry about the quality of content. Content produced by community should not supervised in terms of language, pronunciation, and voice patterns. The more programmes produced using local language the more community gets engage. Another concern about participation is level and frequency of participation. During survey, it was observed that only few community members frequently contribute to the station. Others have participated only once or three-four times. The amount of frequent contributors needs to increase. The team of lecturers, teachers, and journalist in town should come together about the innovative and engaging programmes creation.

The participation in ownership, decision making and management fulfills the core principles of community radio. Demographics of community could be assessed to examine social sustainability. As per the hypothesis testing, education and monthly income showed a strong relationship to participation in content production. The focus group discussion also revealed the fact of utilizing specific portion of people in society. Discovering these members in society and train them for programming can help CRS a great deal.

The innovative ideas, ways and methods to engage community in CR operations should be pointed out by every CR before its foundation. With a proper pilot study and pre-planned framework, the sustainability of CR can be ensured before its establishment.

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