

Radio and Climate Change

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Climate change refers to long-term shifts in temperature and weather patterns. Climate change as an issue does not affect the human species alone but every living species living in pristine earth. The most important and pressing issue of climate change is the habitat loss caused which ultimately results in biodiversity loss. Loss of biodiversity creates a ripple effect in the environment which ultimately harms the existence of human beings. Climate change is said to be the biggest threat to humanity today and poses substantial danger to all life forms on earth. The Former Secretary-General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-moon remarked that extreme meteorological conditions like dry spell and inundation are likely to be the more potent cause of conflicts and humanitarian disaster in the coming days, posing an impact much more severe than a war. Dynamic climate change events such as rise in the earth's average temperature, receding levels of polar ice cover, increase in the sea level, brackish water, heavy rainfall causing landslides and floods are threatening the lives of millions of living species. The impacts of climate change on different sectors are not equal but interrelated. As per the IPCC Assessment Report of 2021, "multiple climate hazards will occur simultaneously, and multiple climatic and non-climatic risks will interact, resulting in compounding overall risk and risks cascading across sectors and regions."

Radio as a medium of instruction has a rich history. Radio helps in on-time transmission of information that can aid public association and engagement percolating across borders. The use of local native language complements the efficacy of the medium for information diffusion which ensures a more active participation of the ordinary people. The importance of radio for raising awareness about the issues of climate change and its consequences are immense. Community radios are considered as an essential and far reaching tool to disseminate information and knowledge. It serves as a chief medium for conveying about climate change to the rural communities. Among the available types of empowerment, knowledge empowerment stands out to be of the highest form. It can bring in revolutionising changes among the masses and radio stands out to be the basic tool to impart knowledge empowerment among the masses of the society.

Despite ongoing research and large scale availability of information, the ways and means to adapt to climate change at the grass-root level are extremely crippled and scattered. Radio being a two-way communication ensures a more people centric paradigm of information and knowledge transfer. Seeking Modern Applications for Real Transformations (SMART) uses new and traditional communication technologies to create a just society. SMART in collaboration with UNICEF proposed to engage with the youth (18-25 years of age) through 10 Community Radios operating in climate-vulnerable zones of Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Gujarat, Odisha, Maharashtra and Pondicherry (6 states) as a pilot, to promote climate literacy and demystify complex concepts in a scientific yet simple and engaging manner. The project aimed to make the communities self-reliant by being responsible decision-makers regarding actions that may affect the environment. Various community engagement activities were conducted such as open-mic events, flash mobs of songs and dance, quiz, debate and poster making. 48 community activities and 51 game plays were conducted as part of the project.

Being a viable source of information, radio stations across the globe have taken up a number of programs that seeks to demystify complex climate concepts, the underlying

causes and its impacts on the various sectors. As per a recent report in The Hindu, radio reaches 99 percent of Indian population where rural people constitute the majority who rely on radio for availability of information. India being an agrarian society, radio is effective in improving the sharing of agricultural information to farming communities. It provides a platform where specialists and experts from various fields share valuable information to make people aware of climate change and the need for climate action. The idea of 'every step matters' or 'every action counts' has been successful to a great extent in building up a positive public participation in the sphere. A number of environmental protection initiatives and eco development projects have been organized to encourage listeners to adopt an environment- friendly lifestyle. Water conservation, reduced plastic wastes, investment in energy efficient appliances, switching to eco-friendly products and clean up drive activities of beaches, playgrounds and various other campaigns have made people conscious of the need to protect the environment.

The regions which are most exposed and susceptible to extreme weather events such as hurricanes, floods, rely on radio for information and assistance. Radio has played a significant role in curtailing dispel of myths and rumours. Information for the communities on updates of recent weather events, evacuation warnings and distress relief measures are provided by the radio. The degree of effectiveness of radio can be experienced at all levels including the grass-root levels ensuring an all inclusive rural-urban development. Community radio acts as a channel for information and knowledge transfer for communities, civil societies, NGOs and citizens to work in collaboration to promote community development and wellbeing.

