

Radio and Gender based Violence

Astha Singh

My Experience with Radio and Community Radio

For me, radio is nostalgic, and takes me back to the time when my mother used to listen to the radio while working in the kitchen, and with her, my sister and I also grew fond of it.

In today's world, radio has not only undergone changes in its appearance and machinery, but also in its reach, audience and content. However much the change, it still remains a tool for many to voice their opinion.

Community Radio

The concept of a community radio comes from the collective that it is reaching out to and is established for. To ensure a democratic access to information, community radios have been at the forefront to make sure that it reaches beyond social and physical barriers. Not only does it disseminate, it also collects voices from those who remain underrepresented. Over the years, with its localised content, it has gained trust and earned popularity within the masses and is also used as a tool for development by many.

Hinsa Ko No and Community Radio

Hinsa ko no is an ongoing project on "Gender Based Violence" which is currently running in 10 states of India via Community Radio Stations. The vision of the project is to build a safe space and agency for community women with the help of stakeholders' involvement. Gender-based violence is one of the most prevalent forms of human rights violation in the world. It is primarily rooted in social evils like gender inequality, abuse of power and patriarchal nature of the society. It transcends all social, cultural and national boundaries. The National Crime Records Bureau Report of 2020 indicates a decrease in the absolute number of crimes against women reported from 2019 to 2020. However, this data may be skewed based on the large number of cases that go unreported, especially owing to factors such as difficulty faced by women in reaching out for help due to constraints imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The stations are using different approaches to work within the community to debilitate violence against women and work with the existing government infrastructures. The radio stations follow 3 strategic interventions- broadcasting, narrowcasting and outreach with women's groups, men and boys. Narrowcasting is the most effective activity as it gives women and students a safe space where they can directly communicate their experience and understanding of violence. It not only helps in initiating a dialogue but also helps in building a vocabulary of rights, and enable women to question violence rather than accepting it as a norm and learn about the pathways.

From the last 3 years through the project more than 400 cases of gender-based violence have been registered with stations which have been forwarded to the concerned authorities for further action. The radio stations also interact with the local and state authorities to help them understand the community's perspective and realities around GBV. Through trainings with lawyers, police force, FLWs, the intervention reaches out to not only the community but also those who play a role in addressing these issues.

As a part of this project, I have been to 13 states and met women coming from different cultural backgrounds. Our main field implementers are the women, who might have to face violence in some or the other ways within their house, public or professional space but still they are dedicated and

passionate about the work they do. Whenever we meet at the time of training, interactive sessions or workshops with our radio stations partners, they have different stories to share from their personal experience or from the field. One of the radio stations told me how after the project they helped a woman and also rescued her and shifted her to a shelter home. A mother to four, she was abused by her husband and father in law. During one of the narrowcast, one of her well-wishers gave her the helpline number 181 and also informed our radio station field staff. Her husband locked her in a room but the woman had access to a mobile phone. She registered her complaint with the district One-Stop Centre, and in no time the local police reached her house to rescue her, but she refused to go. She spoke to the staff at the radio station and told them that she cannot go back to her maternal house. The staff understood and with the help of the district Protection officer and Superintendent of Police they rescued the woman with her 4 children and shifted her to a shelter home.

With such instances, community radio stations have become a beam of light and source of hope for many of these women, by bridging the gap of information as well as the structural gap.



