

## **Radio and Storytelling**

**Sabita Digal**

### **The power of storytelling: from radio to communities**

Everyone has fond memories of their childhood summer vacations. Especially the days when we'd sit under the sun, getting our heads massaged by our grandparents, hearing about their adventures as children or days when our neighbourhood friends would share horror stories sitting in a park. These stories would take us to a different world altogether, a world we would create just by the words of the storyteller. This is the power of storytelling, which continues to have a significant influence even in modern times.

Stories have the ability to alter ideologies, educate the uninformed and even inspire an enthusiastic audience. They connect people to new ideas, perspectives, and beliefs. Stories can be found anywhere, in any sector or field, just waiting to be told by someone. But stories alone don't create the much needed impact of transferring the listener into an imaginative realm but it is the art of storytelling, the manner in which a story is told, that creates this realm. And the most effective way of communicating any story is through audio. The words, sounds or audio used by a storyteller, help in building the emotions for a listener and immediately transport the listener to the storyteller's world. This link between the storyteller and audio first began with the radio.

Nowadays, there are many different kinds of radio- from commercial radios to public and community radios. While public and commercial radios cater to a larger, more generic audience, community radio stations are mostly owned and run by the people of the community it serves, addressing local issues. Community radio stations are an important platform through which people of those communities share their stories, experiences, and problems faced by them. They also provide a sense of ownership of the content being broadcast and encourage community members to take greater participation in local community matters.

Community radio stations have started developing innovative programming styles in recent years. They are experimenting with more original approaches to how they might address important concerns on radio. Using names, places, and instances from the community, they create scripts in a story format that are then broadcast and even brought to the community through narrowcast activities. Making up names for fictional characters and places while incorporating real-world problems into a narrative style not only makes it simpler to remember topics but also engages a larger audience. The direction which the story will take and the possibility of seeing their favourite characters again in future episodes intrigue the listeners. They are easily able to recall characters and events that take place in every episode.

In 2022, SMART worked on a number of projects with varying topics including digital rights, nutrition, climate change, and many others. In each of these projects, storytelling was used to highlight the most important issues. From developing fictional towns where members struggle with the digital space, to conversations between a grandma and grandson on climate change, this narrative technique has indeed been effective. In addition to the episodes and scripts, community radio stations also use this method when they conduct narrowcast activities. They use these stories to perform skits, create games and other engagement activities. Community members are able to easily relate to these stories, and also after hearing them, they are inspired to offer examples from their own experiences. Community radio stations all over the country should try out this narrative-based

programming and also explore further ways in which they can incorporate it into their programming.

