

## **Radio and Refugee**

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### **Leaving No One Behind: Sensitizing Communities on Refugee Rights and Protection through Radio**

Globally, there are 82.4 million people who have been forcibly displaced, including refugees, internally displaced people, and asylum seekers, who have fled their homes to escape violence, conflict, and persecution (UNHCR, Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2020).

The world is experiencing the highest level of refugee population since the end of the Second World War as conflict, violence, and human rights violations have become increasingly entwined with ethnic and religious animosities, acute poverty and deprivation, and environmental factors related to climate change.

Many countries are facing complex challenges as they try to manage the flows of the incoming people. Yet these challenges are made even harder by a lack of accurate, accessible information in the media, where myth and misinformation are prevalent. At best, coverage concentrates on refugees as victims and the wider humanitarian implications, and at worst focuses on the challenges involved or the imagined threat of a sudden influx of outsiders.

Finding durable solutions for refugees, including through local integration in host communities, is essential. The stories of their contributions to societies are under told, while misinformation is easily spread. This is where community radios help in building the much needed bridges to allow for partnerships between the host and refugee communities.

Given that there is a strong link between community communication and human development, community radios play an important role in democratization, social struggles and awareness raising in order to break down prejudices and develop positive narratives on migrants and refugees, helping to support migrant and refugee integration, combat hate crimes, and build coalitions to address racism and xenophobia.

Building on this, SMART (Seeking Modern Applications for Real Transformation) undertook a campaign with UNHCR for sensitizing community radios spanning across four states on refugee rights from November to December, 2021. It was a rights based project aimed at training and capacity building of the community towards refugee rights awareness, roles and responsibilities of the host as well as that of the displaced community.

Over the years, community radio has become an essential tool for community development. It is a platform that talks about local issues to local people in a local language. Since community radios use a ground-up approach and help to build awareness in sections and among communities the internet cannot penetrate thus five radio stations across four states were trained and sensitized on refugee rights and protection in a one of its kind three day workshop held from October 19 - 21,

2021, conducted by UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) and UNESCO (United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural organization) in collaboration with SMART.

Community radio stations play a significant role in the development of a sustainable, peaceful and tolerant society as they not only understand their communities but are deeply engaged with them. Generally, we find radio to be a very powerful tool in many different contexts due to its pervasiveness, ease of operation and how it inherently overcomes literacy barriers. You don't need to know how to read and write to listen to the news on a radio set.

Community operated radio stations prove very useful when it comes to communicating with the affected communities. This medium of communication for social change can build a camaraderie between the host and the refugee community in order to move towards peaceful coexistence and harmony.

Since the community radio stations are operated by the members of the local community, therefore they have a deeper understanding of the everyday circumstances in and around their locality. Thus, they are in constant touch with the individuals of the community and through their programmes these stations can assess and even challenge the community's existing practices towards the refugees living amongst them and better facilitate the two-way interaction between refugees and the local population. On the part of refugees, these possibilities of participation and self-representation can facilitate coping with the challenges of the new environment.

CRs can help in challenging what seems to be the conventional wisdom regarding refugees and create the possibility for migrants and refugees to access spaces of wider communication in order to exercise their right to freedom of expression, including the right to information. Community radios as facilitators of public communication and discourse are widely viewed as key tools for managing the increasing diversity in society and promoting inclusion. They target individual experiences and the values of newly arrived refugees and migrants, offering comprehensive insight and thereby facilitating an understanding of how the refugees make sense of their everyday experiences.

Furthermore, the boundaries of the category of 'refugee' are rather unclear and not always specific. There are questions of legitimacy, of identification and of durability (does one ever stop being a 'refugee'?). Thus host communities deal with a highly diverse group – considering the many different life trajectories that may lead to someone being attributed the label of 'refugee' or 'migrant'. For that reason, community radio stations provide a safe space which allows addressing these problems in their complexity.



