

## **Gender and its understanding in Community Radio stations**

### **A survey Analysis**

In our country, community radio is seen as a blessing for grassroots-level communities because it allows the underserved to speak up and get involved with decision-making processes that can result in positive transformation in the community. Many communities widely use this dynamic medium across the country's remotest locations to educate, influence, and engage with communities to shape a better tomorrow. Certainly, community radio has a huge impact on breaking stereotypes and representations based on gender inequalities and discrimination among the communities. Nevertheless, stations need to pay proper attention to gender-inclusive language in content creation and workforce ratio.

At SMART, we consider that community radio supports diversity and gender inclusivity in decision-making at the grassroots level which led to real transformation. SMART is committed to working towards women's empowerment and creating an enabling environment for women to raise their voices and stand up for their rights and entitlements. However, as the growth of community radio stations keeps rising, there is a need for some training and workshops that will support strengthening gender-sensitive programming and practices. Those tools and indicators will impact community radio stations based on various parameters, such as behaviour change, nurturing gender-sensitive attitudes, and developing perceptions and practices that eliminate discrimination and gender gaps.

Through this survey, we strive to understand gender sensitization and inclusion from the perspective of community radio stations. How do community radio stations incorporate gender equality through management and operation systems?

**Title:** An observation of Gender and its understanding in Community Radio stations

### **Background**

While applying for an open grant for promoting Gender Equality through Community Radios, we at SMART, decided to do a quick survey on gender-inclusive practices at the managerial and programmatic level within CR stations. Undoubtedly community radios can play a significant role in promoting a participative, inclusive decision-making process, provided that they themselves are sensitised to the concepts of gender sensitisation, gender inclusion and gender equality. They are best placed to strengthen gender-responsive practices and challenge the existing stereotypes and patriarchal institutions and societal structures. Through their deep understanding of the community, they can question the perpetuation of discriminatory practices in all fields -education, health-seeking behaviour, nutrition, skill building and decision-making. That is why we felt the need to understand gender relations and gender-sensitive practices in the operation of a station. This we felt would be the beginning of gender justice in community-owned media.

Through this effort, SMART seeks to promote and advocate for a more gender-sensitive Policy framework within CR stations and to build a more equitable gender relationship in its management and operations. This we hope will open up spaces at the stations and within the

communities for enhanced women's participation, gender consciousness and gender-equal practices in routine decisions and programming.

**Aim:** Through this study, SMART intends to explore Gender Inclusion and Gender Equality in Community Radio with the intent to provide insights into policy changes in the guidelines for Community Radio.

### Objectives

- To get a perspective on women's participation in the community radio functioning.
- To understand the theme and kind of radio programmes broadcasted through community radio on gender and related issues.
- To identify the gaps and plan long-term gender sensitisation training for community radios.

### Method

For the research study, the SMART team developed a questionnaire consisting of both open-ended and closed-ended questions. The total number of questions was thirteen (13) and used to gather quantitative data from the community radio stations.

### Findings

#### ***Women in community radio***

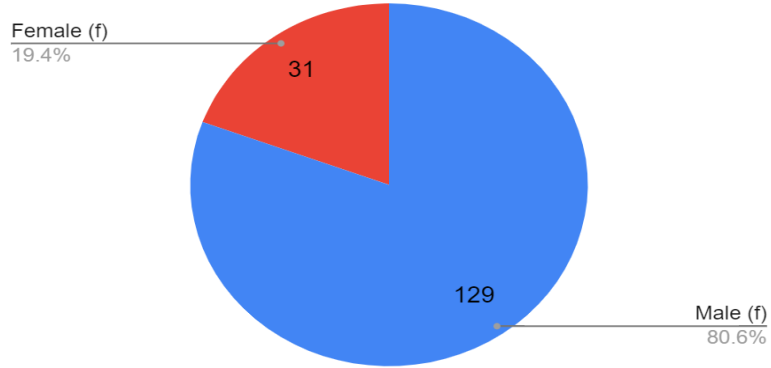
Through the survey analysis, we found that only 19.37% of Grant of Permission Agreement (GOPA) signatories or licence owners of community radio are women and 80.6% are men. This is a clear indication of men in leadership positions at Universities and KVKs, as well as many NGOs. Despite the fact that enrollment of girls in universities and colleges has increased, those who make it to the top are less than 7% of those enrolled. Again only 40% of stations have women as station managers in comparison to 60% of male station managers. This again interprets the patriarchal power dynamics in society and how reluctant are we to give women positions of authority.

Though it has been found that the ratio of women in junior positions or as volunteers is quite high as compared to men. It is good to get women as mobilisers or for engaging at the field level but not in decision-making roles.

**Table 1: Women in community radio**

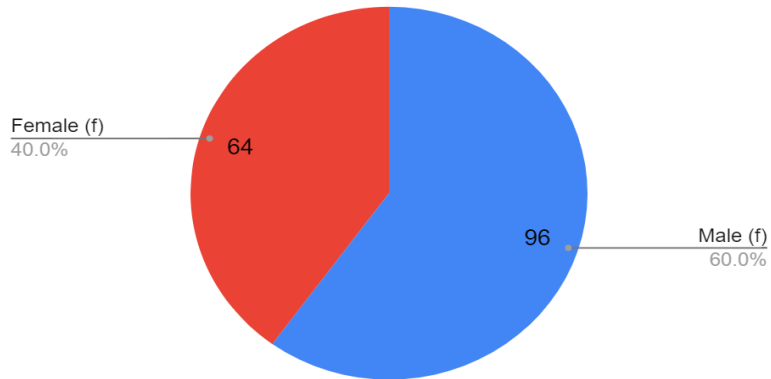
<b>Leadership Roles</b>	<b>Male (f)</b>	<b>Female (f)</b>	<b>Total</b>
CRS License Organisation Head	129	31	160
Station Manager	96	64	160
Staff members	458	479	937

### CRS License Organisation Head



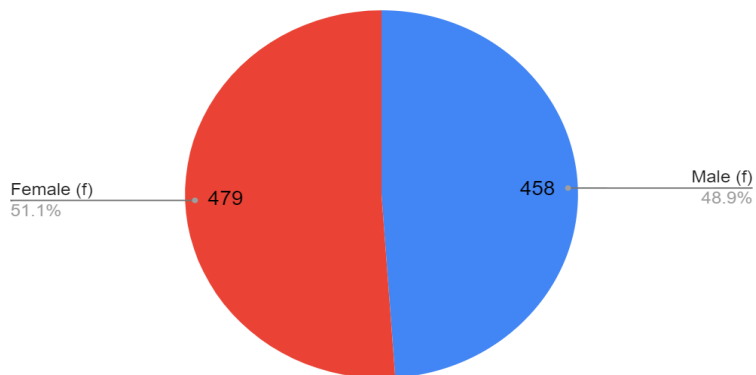
**Graph 1: CRS License Organisation Head**

### Station Manager



**Graph 2: CRS Station Managers**

### Staff members

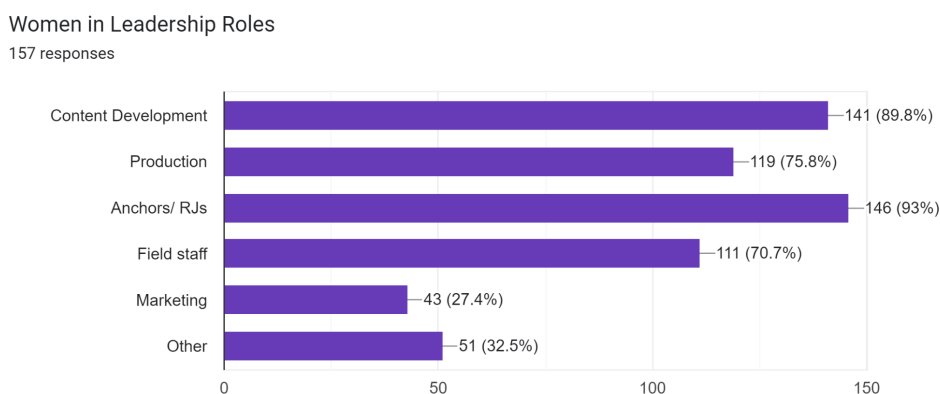


**Graph 3: CRS Staff Members**

### **Work & Women in Community Radio**

As per the collated data, at the operational stage, we have seen that the majority of the women are involved in community radio in different positions and are multitasking too. They are handling content creation, anchors/RJs, production, field staff, marketing and other aspects. For instance, around 146 (90 per cent) women are working as an anchor/RJs, and 141 (89.8 per cent) support the content development section of community radio which show a huge impact on the programmes broadcasted by the community radio, production and marketing are other major things covered by women only.

However, we are seeing that increasingly women are given the tasks of hosting women's shows or morning shows. As we go deeper into roles in marketing, or decision making their participation decreases. The given graph below helps us to understand the dynamics at the workplace.



**Graph 4: Women in Leadership roles**

### **Gender-focused programmes**

More than 90 (per cent) of community radio claimed that they have been broadcasting programmes related to social issues, specifically gender-related programmes. This percentage indicates that traditional media is now promoting gender equality and believes in the inclusion of women in the decision-making process that led to women's empowerment which directly impacts the development of society holistically. However, a deeper dive clearly illustrates that all programmes on health, nutrition, ODF, menstrual health, water and sanitation, are clubbed as gender-sensitive- gender focussed programming.

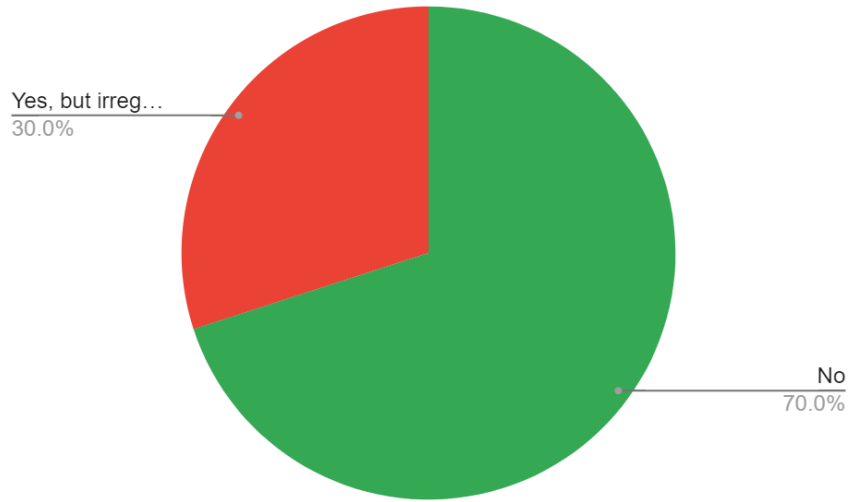
The majority of the community radios are broadcasting programmes on child marriage, sexual harassment, gender-based violence, and women and health education. However, members of community radio stations assumed that broadcasting programmes related to women, and adolescent girls or about them and their health are programmes that reflect gender inclusion and gender sensitization. This is not true. Just having women in some capacity at the station is also not being gender sensitive. Gender sensitivity would imply giving equal opportunity irrespective of gender, fostering respect and understanding and avoiding perpetuating gender stereotypes in language and programming.

Furthermore, for a better understanding of the relationship between the programmes and the purpose behind them, let's go through some of the programmes shared by stations under gender-inclusive programmes:

- Amchi Urmila a programme broadcasted by Vasundhara Krishi Vahini which aims to create awareness on child marriage, gender equality, gender-based violence, patriarchy and sexual harassment.
- Alfaz-e-Mewat, FM107.8, disseminate information related to girl child education, digital learning and life skills for girls, mental health well-being, and health and nutrition through various programmes
- MGM community radio, 90.8 FM, a programme on PCOD
- Radio Kisan, Janadhwani CRS, VJMS Awaaz Vanapathy 90.4 FM, Radio Swaraj and Radio FEEDS are some community radios that broadcast programmes on SHGs and financial inclusion.
- Many stations invite women to talk about real-life based experiences which are life-changing and motivate other women in society. One such show is Ladies First, which has been broadcast by many community radios as per our findings.
- Radio Bundelkhand runs a program called Sakhi Saheli and "Stri Ek Kahani Meri bhi" which talks about women's empowerment. Sakhi Saheli- Radio Bundelkhand has also produced other women-related programmes, which provide them with a space to share their experiences. These programmes have been able to connect women from different fields of work

### ***Gender sensitisation training and workshops***

Another important finding is that only around 30% of community radio stations claimed that they have been part of gender sensitisation training and workshops. This implies that they do not have exposure or training in building content on gender, nor do they have exposure to understanding the significance of gender parity and inclusion and how it affects the development of the programmes. Out of the 70 % who have indicated that they have had no training on Gender Equality/ gender inclusion/ or gender sensitization around 40 % have said that they are keen to attend a workshop - but have never had an opportunity, 20 % have said that at the very initial stages of setting up the station a few of their former colleagues may have undergone some training, and 10 % have just said NO. Thus a total of 70% have clearly stated that they have never been part of any conversation on gender equality except in developing programmes on women's health, nutrition and RCH.



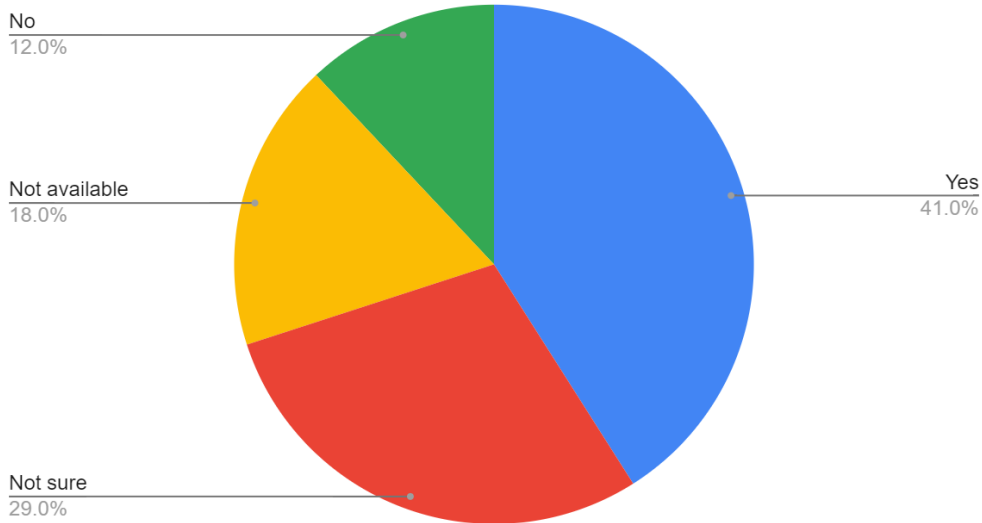
**Graph 5: Gender Sensitive Programming**

***Executed policies at community radio stations***

As part of being a Prevention of Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (PSEA). The main objective of this policy is to build a set of procedures to identify, prevent and combat sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse; devise a complaint resolution policy and open, safe and accessible incident reporting system; and lay out the process for resolving complaints in a safe, confidential, fair, and timely manner.

Around 79.1 (per cent) of community radio stations agreed that they have implemented Prevention of Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (PSEA) and follow the rules suggested by it. This indicates that they are well aware of the safe workplace.

**Responses of CRS on PSEA**



## **Graph 6: Executed Policies at community radio stations**

However, the follow-up questions indicated that there was little understanding of POSH and of PSEA, they did not have any orientation at the time of joining, there is no ICC except, in University campuses, most of the staff is in the capacity of volunteers, they feel that it does not apply to them/ their station and do not have a person deputed for receiving complaints.

There is a need for enforcing a safe and secure environment at all CR stations as part of the guidelines.

### **Conclusion**

The findings clearly indicate many gaps in the functioning of the radio stations. When we talk about Gender equality and safe spaces, the stations need to bring about drastic changes in their attitudes and processes. The gender disparity, lack of understanding of gender and the need for gendered programming are very obvious. The programming reflects these gaps and it is difficult to talk about community radios as the 'voice of the voiceless' platforms for the most underserved and marginalised communities until and unless gender sensitivity is adopted in their own managerial and operational systems.

### **Recommendations**

The research analysis of the survey **Gender and its understanding in Community Radio stations** is very insightful and helpful to understand why it is important to focus on gender parity and inclusion in community radio before we expect them to share the same values within their communities.

There is a need to ensure that 50 % of the staff at the CR is women, out of the 50 % content developed by the community 25% is by and for women, all content adopts a gendered lens, bringing equality at every level.

SMART would be happy to work with 50 stations, create a model and then include it in the policy- that would ensure that no licence will be given without a guarantee of gender inclusion at all levels.

This effort will extend the horizons of understanding the functioning of community radio stations in rural communities through a gendered lens. Though this survey throws up important data, an improved survey visits the stations, access to the content produced and broadcast, incorporation of tools for qualitative data and interactions with the community would be very helpful in designing policy-level interventions.