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Community Radio in Promoting Sustainable Development in India

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Abstract:

Climate change, rising sea level, destruction of ecosystem, increase of natural calamities in the recent past have shaken up the world. Henceforth, in the last few decades, policymakers all around the globe have shifted their attention towards Sustainable Development. India is not an exception in this case. Like other countries,

India also wants to reach the target of achieving 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) by 2030. However, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) plays an important role in disseminating information about Sustainable Development to the development audience. One such important ICT in India is Community Radio. The target audience of Community Radio is the socio- economically marginalized sector of the society. This article focuses on the steps that Indian Government has taken to achieve Sustainable Development and the challenges of achieving those goals. In this article, the importance of Community Radio in promoting SDG among the socio- economically weaker section of the society is discussed in detail. This article also focuses on the different programmes of Community Radios about promoting and making people aware of different goals of Sustainable Development.

Key Words: Community Radio, Sustainable Development, SDG, India, Government

1. Introduction:

In the world, everyone has got the access to shared resources. But humans have got the tendency of overconsumption of those resources which ultimately results in exhaustion of the resources. In 1968, American ecologist Garret Hardin has regarded this tendency as 'Tragedy of Commons', a theory that was first coined by William Forster Lloyd in 1833.¹ (Robinson, 2021) The human greed and overconsumption of natural resources have got its deadly impact on the climate, ecosystem as well as natural resources. Hence, in last few decades, the concept of Sustainable Development has become extremely popular among world leaders and policymakers of different countries.

One of the most common definitions of Sustainable Development is given in 1987 by Burndtland Commission Report which defines Sustainable Development as that kind of development which "meets the needs of present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet

¹ Robinson, Deena (2021). 'What is the 'Tragedy of Commons'. *Earth.org*. Retrieved from <https://earth.org/what-is-tragedy-of-the-commons/>

their own need”². Sustainable Development involves environmental, social and economic developments and all these elements are interconnected with each other. In September 2015, 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) including eradicating hunger and poverty, achieving good health, good education, gender equality, providing clean water and sanitation, economic growth, building industry, innovation, climate actions etc. were adopted in UN Sustainable Development Summit in New York.³ According to the data given by World Bank in 2021, the top 5 countries with the highest poverty rates are located in the African continent which are generally referred to as underdeveloped nations.⁴ Although India’s name is not there in the list of poorest countries, in fact, Asian Development Bank’s data suggests that, in between F/Y 2011 and 2015, the poverty has decreased 21.6% to 13.4% (Approximately) in International Poverty Line.⁵ But a contradictory image is represented in the Global Hunger Index report in 2021. In the Global Hunger Index of 2021, India has slipped down from 94 to 101st rank out of 116 countries.⁶ (<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/global-hunger-index-ranks-india-at-101-out-of-116-countries/ar, 2021>)

Apart from that, there are other problems like pollution, proper sanitation, income inequality etc still prevailing in India. To communicate these problems with the underprivileged mass of the society, Community Radio acts as a bridge between the policymakers and people. In 1998, AMARC has defined that, the philosophy of Community Radio is to act as a mouthpiece of the oppressed and as a tool for development. They also have stated that, Community Radio should have three aspects i.e being a non- profit organization, community ownership and control as well as giving importance to community participation.⁷

2. Objectives:

The main aims and objectives of the study are-

² International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD). ‘Sustainable Development’. Retrieved from <https://www.iisd.org/mission-and-goals/sustainable-development>

³ UNDP. ‘The SDGs in Action. What are Sustainable Development Goals’. Retrieved from https://www.undp.org/sustainable-development-goals?utm_source=EN&utm_medium=GSR&utm_content=US_UNDP_PaidSearch_Brand_English&utm_campaign=CENTRAL&c_src=CENTRAL&c_src2=GSR&gclid=CjwKCAjwgr6TBhAGEiwA3aVuIV8OpOo8rKyAC_CxUnFcBFcGy_fEOC6N5IXYBgsZ0QGcjVLE43fovMBoCbsUQAyD_BwE

⁴ World Population Review. ‘Poverty Rate by Country 2022’. Retrieved from : <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/poverty-rate-by-country>

⁵ Asian Development Bank (2020). ‘Poverty & Equity Brief, South Asia, India’. Retrieved from https://databank.worldbank.org/data/download/poverty/33EF03BB-9722-4AE2-ABC7-AA2972D68AFE/Global_POVEQ_IND.pdf

⁶ Chandra, Jagriti (2021). ‘Global Hunger Index ranks India at 101 out of 116 countries.’ *The Hindu, New Delhi*. Updated on October 15, 2021. Retrieved from <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/global-hunger-index-ranks-india-at-101-out-of-116-countries/article36998777.ece>

⁷ AMARC International. ‘What is Community Radio.’ Retrieved from <https://amarc.radio/what-is-community-radio/#:~:text=Community%20and%20citizen%20radio%20is,consistent%20with%20those%20same%20interests>

- 1) After conducting a detailed study of the policies of Indian Government on Sustainable Development, attempts are made to analyze the challenges in the path of attaining those goals and the initiative of the authorities to find remedy for those problems.
- 2) After analyzing the contents of the Community Radios in different parts of India, this article shows, how effectively these Community Radio Stations are disseminating messages regarding Sustainable Development among underprivileged communities of the country.
- 3) This study tries to analyze, how the programmes regarding Sustainable Development of these radio stations are affecting the changes in the lives of their target audience.
- 4) Attempts are made to explore the challenges of Community Radio Stations and how they are coping up in this era of digitization.

3. Literature Review:

At first, it is important to understand why community radios are important for achieving SDG in India. A large section of our population of India lives below poverty line. World Bank's data suggests that, in 2021 nearly 812 million people or nearly 60% of India's population earn less than \$ 3.2 per day. It is important to note that, for lower middle-income countries, World Bank has determined that, those who earn less than \$3.2 live below poverty line.⁸ According to the Diffusion of Innovation theory of Everett Rogers, out of five categories of adopters of any innovation (Innovators, Early Adopters, Early Majority, Late Majority and Laggards) in the society, laggards are the last ones to adopt any social, economic or technical innovations as they are the socio- economically marginalized. In India, those who live below poverty line belongs to the laggard category. Because of their lack of socio- economic stability, they are resistant to change. Often such mindset creates hindrances in the path of development. In such situations,⁹ Community Radio plays a crucial role in bridging the gaps between policymakers and the public. Vinod Pavarala and Kanchan K. Malik, in their work, have pointed out the problems associated with media setup of the globalized world. With the economic liberalization and the advent of ICT, according to Pavarala and Malik, "Control over ICTs became more centralized...." And the gap between information-have and information- have nots have widened. They have further argued,

⁸ *Business Standard, New Delhi.* 'Coronavirus impact: Over 100 million Indians could fall below poverty line.' Last Updated 17th April 2020. Retrieved from https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/coronavirus-impact-over-100-million-indians-could-fall-below-poverty-line-120041700906_1.html#:~:text=At%20present%2C%2060%20per%20cent.live%20below%20that%20poverty%20line

⁹ Melkote, Srinivas R and Steeves, H.Leslie (2001). *Communication for Development in the Third World: Theory and Practice for Empowerment.* Sage Publications India Pvt Ltd. New Delhi. 125

as long as the ICTs do not change their approach of catering to the most powerful sectors of the society, the concept of information revolution will remain as a myth.¹⁰

Henceforth, it becomes important to focus on 'alternative media' or 'community media' to create democratization in the information- flow. Denis McQuil in his work, has mentioned that, alternative media model emphasizes on the 'rights of subculture with their pluralistic values' and promotes 'intersubjective understanding and a real sense of community'.¹¹

To understand why audience, relate to the programmes of community radio rather than the programmes aired on the national news outlets, Pavarala and Malik have given an example in their work. They have interviewed an 18-year-old boy from Harsangra village of Haryana and according to him, he understood the 'dehati' language better than the proper Hindi that was used in All India Radio's programmes.¹² Apart from focusing on the local issues, cultural affinity is also a major reason behind the popularity of Community Radio among the underprivileged section of the society.

Sustainable Development has gained its popularity in last few decades. To initiate the changes in socio-economic and environmental sphere, Indian central and state government authorities need the active support and cooperation from all section of the society. In this case, Community Radio can act as a medium to disseminate the information about the Government measures to initiate the changes as well as it has the power to become the mouthpiece of the oppressed and underprivileged section of the society to bring changes to their lives.

Next part of the literature review contains the study of government policies in implementing the SDG and various studies are being cited in order to understand the problems and remedies in the path of attaining those goals.

As it has been mentioned before, the poverty and wealth discrimination have been major problems for India. It has been further aggravated by the impact of COVID-19 and the lockdown in 2020 and 2021. Global Multidimensional Poverty Index of 2020 has suggested that, about 84.3% of substantially poor people live in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia among which 530 million people live in South Asia.¹³ However, despite the high rate of poverty, the report suggests that, three south Asian countries i.e., India, Bangladesh and Nepal were among 16

¹⁰ Pavarala, Vinod and Malik, Kanchan K. (2007). *Other Voices: The Struggle for Community Radio in India*, Sage Publications India Pvt Ltd. New Delhi. 185-186.

¹¹ McQuil, Denis (2010). *McQuil's Mass Communication Theory*. Sage, New Delhi, 185

¹² Pavarala, Vinod and Malik, Kanchan K. (2007). *Other Voices: The Struggle for Community Radio in India*. Sage Publications India Pvt Ltd. New Delhi. 192-193

¹³ OPHI and UNDP (2020). 'Catering Pathways Out of Multidimensional Poverty.' 3

fastest countries in reducing multidimensional poverty.¹⁴ In this connection, it is important to note, previously only economic prosperity used to get measured, but in multidimensional poverty index, there are 10 indicators in 3 dimensions (Health, Education and Standard of Living) are measured to get a proper idea about wealth discrimination and economic condition of that country.¹⁵

Income inequality is still a massive cause of concern. In 2017, Oxfam International's data indicates that, top 10% of India's population has got the possession of country's 77% wealth. On the other hand, in the same year, 67 million poorest Indians had only seen their wealth grow by only 1%.¹⁶ During the Covid-19 pandemic, Oxfam's annual reports suggests, 12.2 crore have lost their jobs in the informal sector alone. Apart from slipping down from 94 to 101 in the Global Hunger Index, the number of wasted children (underweight children of age 5 or below based on their height which reflects lack of nutritious food) has increased from 17.1% between 1998-2002 to 17.3% in 2016-2020.¹⁷

However, Indian Government has taken a few initiatives to achieve the top two goals of Sustainable Development i.e., to eradicate poverty and hunger. A few of them are Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (for financial inclusion), Pradhan Mantri Gramin Awas Awaas Yojana (to provide housing the poor people of rural area), Atal Pension Yojana (pension scheme for underprivileged). To provide jobs to rural sector, Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA) is extremely popular.¹⁸ To provide urban employment, in the 9th Five Year Plan, some schemes were announced like Nehru Razgar Yojana (NRY), Urban Basic Services for the Poor (UBSP), Prime Minister's Integrated Urban Poverty Eradication Programme, The Urnan Self Employment Programme etc.¹⁹

In fact, in 2021, India's consumer affairs minister Piyush Goyal has stated that, 77 crore people came under 'One Nation, One Ration Card' scheme which would ultimately address the problem of hunger by providing food to the needy people in subsidized rate.²⁰ A large section of Indian

¹⁴ Ibid. 12

¹⁵ Ibid. 4

¹⁶ India: Extreme Inequality in Numbers.' *Oxfam International*. Retrieved from <https://www.oxfam.org/en/india-extreme-inequality-numbers>

¹⁷ PTI (2021). 'India Slips to 101st Rank in Global Hunger Index 2021; behind Pakistan, Nepal.' *Mint*. Updated on 15th October 2021. Retrieved from <https://www.livemint.com/news/india/india-slips-to-101st-rank-in-global-hunger-index-2021-behind-pakistan-nepal-11634264665421.html>

¹⁸ *Geography and You (2018)*. 'Rural Poverty Alleviation Programmes In India.' Retrieved from <https://geographyandyou.com/rural-poverty-alleviation-programmes-in-india/#:~:text=Several%20poverty%20alleviation%20programmes%20in,for%20the%20rural%20poor%2C%20the>

¹⁹ Retrieved from <https://niti.gov.in/planningcommission.gov.in/docs/plans/planrel/fiveyr/9th/vol2/v2c2-2.htm>

²⁰ PTI (2022). '77 crore people covered under 'One Nation One Ration Card' scheme: Govt.' *Business Today*. In. Updated March 16 2022. Retrieved from <https://www.businesstoday.in/latest/policy/story/77-crore-people-covered-under-one-nation-one-ration-card-scheme-govt-326208-2022-03-16>

population depends on agriculture. However, agriculture is responsible for 17% Green House Gas emission in India. Also, 80-90% water used in India, is from agricultural sector, still more than 50% of the agricultural land is not irrigated.²¹ For the progress of Sustainable Agriculture, Refined Area Development (RAD) approach is adopted. In this approach focus is given on development and conservation of natural resources in a particular area. Sub- Mission on Agroforestry (SMAF) is another programme that is being adopted by the Government. In this programme, the farmers are asked to plant trees in agricultural land in order to save the environment as well as arresting the possibility of soil erosion. Apart from Soil Health Management programme is another important scheme in promoting Sustainable Agriculture in India.²²

Most of the countries around the world are concerned about climate changes and they are giving special importance to the 13th Sustainable Development Goal i.e., climate actions. A report published by World Bank titled, 'South Asia's Hotspots: The Impact of Temperature and Precipitation Changes on Living Standards' has predicted that, India's GDP will drop down by 2.8% due to the climate change. Rising temperature and sea level, lack of rainfall etc. will impact agricultural productivity. The report suggests that, 600 million people living in the northern and north western part of India (particularly in states like Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh) would turn into moderate or severe hotspots of climate change.²³

Climate change is directly related to food security. The World Food Summit of 1996 has defined food security as something that "exists when all people at all time, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food and food preferences are for active and healthy life." (Rome Declaration of World Food Security, Rome, November 13-7). From the reports of fourth assessment of IPCC, it can be seen that, based on the trend of climate change, by 2080, 200- 600 million people will suffer from hunger. The situation in India is not too promising either.

Food security issue due to climate change is not only a rural problem, but also in cities like Mumbai, Chennai and Kolkata are not out of danger, particularly the urban poor section. These lower income strata of the society live in places of the city which are prone to natural calamities like flood, landslides etc. In cases of natural disaster, there are possibilities of these people to lose everything they possess along with the roof over their heads. In these situations, as the food

²¹ Chand, Ramesh (2019). *Transforming Agriculture for Challenges of 21st Century*. 102 Annual Conference, Indian Economic Association (IEA), 27-29 December 2019, Hosted by AURO University, Surat, Gujarat. 15-16.

²² Website of National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture. Retrieved from <https://nmsa.dac.gov.in/frmComponents.aspx>

²³ *The Economic Times* (2018). 'Climate Change could accentuate poverty & inequality in India: World Bank.' Retrieved from <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/indicators/climate-change-could-accentuate-poverty-inequality-in-india-world-bank/articleshow/64789483.cms>

prices will go up, they would struggle to purchase their own food.²⁴ In fact, a study by Sushmita Dasgupta, Subhendu and Maria Sarraf show that, the climate change would increase the possibility of frequent flood in Hooghly River.

However, Indian Government came up with some plans to combat this battle of climate change. One important step is Mumbai Disaster Risk Management Master Plan. So far as climate disasters are concerned, as Mumbai is one of the most vulnerable places in India, it is important for the city to have a master plan to combat with any kind of climatic disaster. India has also initiated National Action Plan for Climate Change (NAPCC). The main objective of NAPCC is to protect poor and vulnerable section of the society through an 'inclusive and sustainable development strategy'.²⁵ As climate change is a global phenomenon, India has contributed to the Small Island Developing States (SIDS). India contributed US\$ 1 million to support the Government of Fiji in the India-Pacific Island Sustainable Development Conference in May 2017. Also, India announced to contribute US\$ 1 million under the India-UN Development Partnership Fund for a Climate Early Warning System project for six Pacific Island countries (Cook Islands, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru, Solomon Islands and Tonga) on the World Oceans Day on 8 June 2017.²⁶

In the public health sector in India, the outbreak of diseases like TB, Malaria and other tropical diseases are massive causes of concern. Non-communicable diseases (NCD) cause 60% of death in India. Chronic pulmonary diseases, diabetes, cancer, heart diseases and NCD together cause 80% of deaths in India.²⁷ Although the infant mortality rate is higher than the global average, but it has improved from 81 in per 1000 live births 1990 to 41 in per 1000 live births.²⁸

Census 2011 data suggests that, India's literacy rate is 74.04% which is 14% increase from that of 2001. Youth literacy is 9% higher than adult literacy. It is a significant improvement for a country which had 12% literacy rate in 1947. (Size, Growth and Distribution of Population.²⁹ In order to achieve the 4th goal of Sustainable Development (providing quality education to all), Government's initiative like Sarva Siksha Abhiyan (education for all), midday meal (providing nutritious food to school students) etc. helped in growth of literacy rate in country. But things have changed after Covid-19. Lockdown and economic crisis have increased the dropout rates.

²⁴ Chakraborty, Malancha (2016). 'Climate Change and Food Security in India.' *ORF Issue Brief No. 157. Observer Research Foundation (ORF).* 5-7. Retrieved from https://www.orfonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/ORF_IssueBrief_1571.pdf

²⁵ Retrieved from <https://moef.gov.in/en/division/environment-divisions/climate-changecc-2/national-action-plan-on-climate-change/>

²⁶ 'Voluntary National Review 2020.' Retrieved from <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/memberstates/india>

²⁷ Narain JP (2016). 'Public Health Challenges in India: Seizing the Opportunities.' *Indian J Community Med.* 2016;41(2):85-88. doi:10.4103/0970-0218.177507

²⁸ *World Health Organization.* 'World Health Statistics 2015.' Retrieved from http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/170250/1/9789240694439_eng.pdf?ua=1&ua=1. [Google Scholar]

²⁹ Retrieved from censusindia.gov.in

During lockdown period, the number of drop outs has increased to 17% in the secondary level. According to Education Minister of Indian Central Government, almost 15 crore children have dropped out because of lockdown.³⁰

According to Census 2011, India's population ratio was 943 females per 1000 male. India loses 5-7 lakh girls per year due to female feticide. Considering other crime, according to NCRB (National Crime Records Bureau 2016), 39% crimes against women were reported every hour in India.³¹

SDG 6 discusses about the importance of clean water and sanitation. Indian Government has launched programmes like National Rural Drinking Water Programme, Swachh Bharat Mission etc. to ensure people get access to clean water and sanitation. Still based on the World Bank data, around 520 million Indian still defecate in open spaces. Each year on average 102,813 children in India die due to severe diarrhea. But through Swachh Bharat Mission attempts are being made to build toilet in everyone's house. However, the population with access to clean water sources for household has increased from 68% in 1992-1993 to 89.9% in 2015-16.³²

4. Research Methodology:

This article is based on content analysis of different Community Radio projects and detailed literature review of Government policies, texts, articles regarding this issue. However, no survey is conducted for the research.

5. Findings from the Study:

In any kind of development process, it is important to have a medium that disseminates the development messages to its audience. Community Radio Stations (CRS) play this role efficiently in India. Based on the data of 29/11/2021, there are 338 community radio stations in India.³³ These radio stations are helping to create awareness among people about the Government schemes regarding Sustainable Development. As it has been mentioned before, gender discrimination is one of the major problems in India and to achieve the SDG, empowering women is extremely important. In fact, Sustainable Development's 5th Goal suggests, the importance of gender equality. There are several Community Radio Stations promoting women empowerment through their programmes. One such example is, Karshakavani Community Radio of Andhra Pradesh. This CRS, through its programme named 'Mahila Sadikarta' is promoting

³⁰ *India Today* (2021). 'How Covid-19 has forced the dropout rate to shoot up in India and what we can do.' New Delhi. Retrieved from <https://www.indiatoday.in/education-today/featurephilia/story/how-covid-19-has-forced-the-dropout-rate-to-shoot-up-in-india-1879271-2021-11-21>

³¹ Mallapur, Chaitanya (2017). 'Crime Against Women Up 83%, Conviction Rate Hits Decadal Low.' *IndiaSpend*. Retrieved from <https://www.indiaspend.com/crime-against-women-up-83-conviction-rate-hits-decadal-low-18239/>

³² Retrieved from <https://in.one.un.org/page/sustainable-development-goals/clean-water-sanitation-sdg-6/>

³³ Retrieved from <https://www.mib.gov.in/broadcasting/community-radio-stations-0>

woman empowerment. Radio Snehi of Siwan, Bihar, in their programme 'Swasth Mahila, Swasth Samaj' discusses about the women's health issues. Desh Bhagat Community Radio, a CRS in Chandigarh broadcasts a programme for empowering women i.e 'Shakti- the power of woman'.³⁴

Apart from that, Madhya Pradesh's Vanya Radio, Nalchha, in local dialect communicates with the farmers through their programme 'Kheti Kishani'. Radio MGIRI (Maharashtra) is a CRS under Mahatma Gandhi Institution of Rural Industrialisation, working under the Ministry of MSME. Their focus is also to broadcast various programmes on health, women empowerment, sustainable agriculture etc. which are also essential parts of the SDGs. Radio Kissan of Khordha, Odisha in their programmes also focuses on combating problems like natural disasters, overcoming the challenges of livelihood.

The goal number 1 and 2 of SDG are eradicating hunger and poverty. To achieve these goals, Radio Mattoli of Wayanad, an underdeveloped tribal region of Kerala has devoted 3.5 hours every day to impart knowledge about skill development, agriculture, animal husbandry etc. Apart from that, they broadcasted their programmes in local tribal dialects.³⁵ SDG 3 attempts to ensure healthy life and well-being for all. Almost all the CRS through their programmes discuss about the health issues. Some examples of such programmes are, 'Nirog Taan- Sugghar Man' by Radio Saawan (Chattisgarh), 'Aarogya Dhvani' of 'KLE Dhvani, BVB (Karnataka), 'Dr's Talk' of Ahalia Community Radio Station, Kerala and many others.³⁶ Apart from that, SDG 13 i.e climate action is one of the major focuses on various Government schemes. Radio Yeralavani 91.2 MHz of Sangli, Maharashtra through their programmes are promoting climate smart sustainable agricultural methods.³⁷

Radio Chanderi Ki Awaz 90.4 Mhz of Madhya Pradesh, began its journey with a multi CRS collaborative climate action based project in 2012- 2013. Through their programmes like 'Green Gold', 'Subh Kal', they are making people aware of the dangers of climate change and triggering the behavioural changes among people. It ultimately paves the way towards SDG 13. They also focus on programmes regarding bamboo cultivation which arrests the possibility of soil erosion.³⁸ Apart from that, Radio Hervalvani 90.4 MHz in Uttarakhand is also acting relentlessly to make locals aware of the climate changes.

³⁴ 'Community Radio Compendium, 2019 Released on the Occasion of Seventh Community Radio Sammelan; 27th-29th August, 2019.' *Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, Government of India.* 3, 15, 17

³⁵ Vemraju, D Rukmini (Compiler) (2021) *Best Practices of Community Radio and Sustainable Development Goals: A Handbook.* UNESCO, CEMCA. New Delhi, India. 53-54.

³⁶ 'Community Radio Compendium, 2019 Released on the Occasion of Seventh Community Radio Sammelan; 27th-29th August, 2019.' *Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, Government of India.* 22, 46, 59

³⁷ Vemraju, D Rukmini (Compiler) (2021) *Best Practices of Community Radio and Sustainable Development Goals: A Handbook.* UNESCO, CEMCA. New Delhi, India. 74-76

³⁸ *Ibid.* 367-369

According to the 'faucet theory' of learning, (Entwisle, Alexander and Olson, 2000) when the schools are open, students from different socio-economic backgrounds get access to equal education resources. But during a long vacation, for the socio- economically marginalized children, they do not get the equal access of educational guidance and resources unlike their affluent counterparts. As the 'faucet' of school resources are turned off, it creates inequality in the process of learning.³⁹ The 4th SDG talks about providing quality education. During the Covid-19 lockdown, the schools remained close for quite long period of time. The number of school dropouts has gone up. Also, the underprivileged students were not getting guidance and educational resources during this lockdown period which resulted in creating obstacle in achieving 4th SDG. However, in this crisis period, some community radio stations have stepped up. Nuh in Haryana is one of the most backward districts in India.⁴⁰ In Nuh, there is a community radio station named 'Alfaz- e- Mewat 107.8MHz' has started a programme called 'Radio School' to help the school children in their studies.⁴¹ Apart from that, West Bengal Commission for protection of Child Rights and Jadavpur University together have started a programme called 'Sahaj Path' in Radio JU, the community radio station of Jadavpur University to impart school lessons to the underprivileged urban children.⁴²

Gurgaon Ki Awaaz 107.8 FM, a CRS in Gurgaon, Haryana broadcasted some segments to create awareness about using clean water and sanitation. (Source: www.gurgaonkiaawaz.in) Apart from that, Radio KLE Venudhwani 90.4 FM of Belagvi, Karnataka has launched a project, 'Swaccha Meva Jayate' in collaboration with Rural Drinking Water and Sanitation Department of Government of Karnataka regarding safety of drinking water, importance of clean toilet and sanitation system, rainwater harvesting, waste disposal etc. Radio KLE Venudhwani 90.4 FM acted as information and communication partner in this project. These kind of programmes of different CRS play to achieve the 6th SDG i.e clean water and sanitation for all.⁴³

To achieve 8th Sustainable Development Goal (Decent work and economic growth) CRS all over the country are stepping forward. As for example, Gurgaon ki Awaz 107.8 FM's programme 'Career Express' gives employability training to the youth, Radio Popcorn of Madhya Pradesh are

³⁹ Kim, J.S. (2004). 'Summer reading and the ethnic achievement gap.' *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk*, 9(2), 169-188.

⁴⁰ Kumar, Ashok (2018). 'Nuh at bottom of Niti Aayog's 101 most backward districts.' *The Hindu. Gurugram*. Updated on April 2, 2018. Retrieved on <https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Delhi/nuh-at-bottom-of-niti-aayogs-101-most-backward-districts/article23409464.ece>

⁴¹ Ramachandran, Asha (2020). 'Rural schoolchildren in Nuh tune in to radio for education amid the pandemic.' *The Statesman, New Delhi*. Retrieved from <https://www.thestatesman.com/india/rural-schoolchildren-nuh-tune-radio-education-amid-pandemic-1502922089.html>

⁴² 'News Sense. 'Sahaj Path' Through Community Radio'. *News Sense*. Retrieved from <https://newssense.in/2020/09/03/sahaj-path-through-community-radio/>

⁴³ Vemraju, D Rukmini (Compiler) (2021) Best Practices of Community Radio and Sustainable Development Goals: A Handbook. UNESCO, CEMCA. New Delhi, India. 281-282

giving career guidance and English training to their audience, 90.8 Community Radio GNDEC of Punjab through their programmes such as 'Sada Campus', 'Career Awareness are also serving the purpose of achieving 8th SDG.⁴⁴ To achieve 11th Sustainable Development Goal (to build sustainable cities) Radio Active of Bangalore and Radio Benziger of Kerala are playing crucial roles.

6. Conclusion:

There are countless examples where Community Radio Stations are acting as bridges of communication in the process of Sustainable Development in the society. But despite playing such an important part in the society, they often face challenges to run these stations. Every Community Radio Station has got a parent institute (these are mainly educational institutes or NGO). For financial aspect, they often need to depend on parent institutes. If the parent institutes are not doing well financially, the radio stations also suffer a lot. R Sreedhar and Pooja O. Murada have stated that, there are a few functional Community Radio Stations that run on Rs. 20,000 per month. Although they receive funds from various departments of central and state government and international agencies like WHO, UN etc. still they face financial problems. Sreedhar and Murada further argue that, there is no concession of taxes for Community Radio, neither any reliable transmitter is built in India, hence, they have to buy imported materials in a higher price.⁴⁵ Sunil Palaskar, in-charge of the community radio station of Neotech Technical and Management College station in Ambikapur, Chattisgarh has mentioned, although Government increased the advertisement rate in other media but in case of Community Radio, advertisement rates are still the same.⁴⁶ Despite all these hurdles, with the support of local audience, Community Radios are still working relentlessly for the betterment of the life of the underprivileged section of the society. There is a long way to go for India in achieving all the Sustainable Development Goals but in future, Community Radios will play an important role to communicate Sustainable Development messages to the underprivileged section of the society.

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