



PARTICIPATORY RADIO: COMMUNICATING ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE WITH REMOTE COMMUNITIES

Case Study Final Report
India

This research was conducted by



This research was made possible with funding from



Participatory Radio: Communicating about Climate Change with Remote Communities | India Case Study¹

Executive Summary

Climate communication and education (CCE) for the communities in the climate-sensitive regions of Bundelkhand, India is extremely challenging. Communities face several vulnerabilities and lack strategic and scientific information about climate change adaptation options. Communicating climate change information in a simplified manner that is appropriate and easy to understand for the communities remains critical for the adoption of sustainable adaptation solutions. Failure to engage existing local institutions that allow for dialogue and exchange between scientists, local government officials, policymakers, and community members further compounds the problem. These huge gaps in climate change knowledge sharing have resulted in failing adaptation information to reach the most vulnerable communities and a lack of grassroots perspectives and voices in policy development. To combat these challenges, Development Alternatives launched in 2008 the CCE initiative “Community Radio- Radio Bundelkhand- FM 90.4” or “Apna Radio Apni Baatein”. This initiative aims to address climate change sensitivities in the most vulnerable sections of society and provide them with information regarding risks and adaptation measures in locally relevant and easily understood messages. It also brought grassroots voices and priorities on climate change and development to the attention of scientists and policymakers.

The case study aimed to understand climate change awareness, communication, and solutions for rural marginalized farming communities in Bundelkhand, delivered through climate communication programmes in community radio stations in Bundelkhand. In-depth interviews and focus group discussions with the community radio station listeners and experts explored the effectiveness of these radio programmes for climate change awareness and address related informational gaps in the local community (with particular emphasis on the farming community) in the region of Bundelkhand where the radio programmes were broadcasted and narrowcasted; and questionnaire for radio reporters to identify the scope for better outreach and effectiveness of climate change communication through community radio in Bundelkhand.

The case study highlights that Radio Bundelkhand sensitized the farming communities of Bundelkhand regarding the need to adapt to the changing climate. Community members have become familiar with new options and government schemes related to climate change adaptation, or ‘no cost adaptation options’, such as line sowing, drip irrigation techniques, water harvesting measures, soil testing, organic composting methods, drought-resistant seed varieties, subsidies on constructing farm ponds, subsidies on biogas plants, etc. By listening to climate change radio shows such as Shubh Kal and Khetkhaliyan, a few farmers have not only learned about but also adopted these ‘no cost adaptation options’. Our findings highlight that the capacities of community radio reporters to understand climate change adaptation in the local context should be further enhanced by training modules and knowledge support. This would go a long way in reducing the existing knowledge gap between communities and local-level government authorities on climate change issues.

In this report, we highlight the impact of the CCE initiative - Community Radio, Radio Bundelkhand- FM 90.4 implemented in India, Bundelkhand Region by the Development Alternatives. This CCE initiative is an innovative model of climate communication that has proved to be an effective tool for grassroots representation and covering voices from the ground to scientists, local government authorities and policymakers.

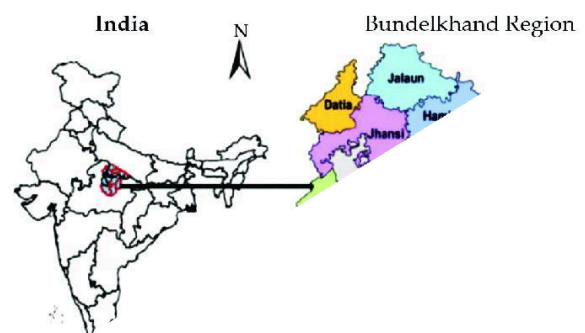
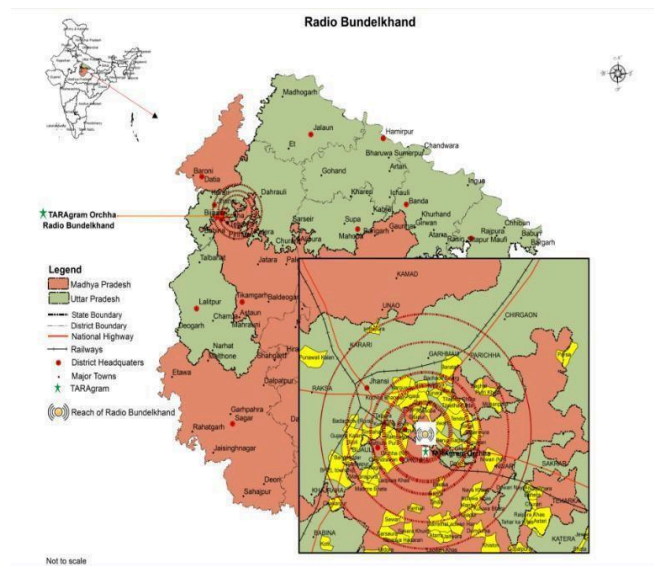
¹ The views in the report are not necessarily endorsed by the MECCE Project, which funded the research. This report was republished in 2025 following additional copy editing to increase the report’s clarity.

CCE Initiative

The Bundelkhand region of Central India consists of six districts of the Madhya Pradesh state (Chhatarpur, Tikamgarh, Damoh, Sagar, Datia and Panna) and seven districts of the Uttar Pradesh state (Chitrakoot, Banda, Jhansi, Jalaun, Hamirpur, Mahoba, and Lalitpur) (Bundelkhand Development Society, 2021). It is prone to recurring droughts; erratic rainfall distribution and dry spells are common. It is one of the most underdeveloped regions of the country with poor human development indices. Large areas of barren and uncultivable land, water shortages, poor quality of the soil, and soil erosion due to high runoff rates adversely affect farming in the region (Development Alternatives, 2012). Since illiteracy is rampant, people here have a shallow perception of climate change risk and resist change. Development Alternatives (DA) have taken several initiatives to conserve and sustainably manage water resources for human consumption and livestock, economic development, and ecosystem health, as well as to strengthen governance institutions, manage water resources, diversify livelihoods, and build resilience in rural areas to deal with climate change. In addition, behaviours need to change regarding perceptions of climate change risks and resistance to change.

To combat the behaviour-related issues, one of Development Alternatives's innovative solutions is Bundelkhand community radio 90.4 "Apna radio apni baatein," a community-owned and produced radio station dedicated to the concerns of rural communities in the Bundelkhand region of Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh. The initiative aims to provide a voice to the people in the Bundelkhand region. The radio station was established on 23 October 2008 in the Development Alternatives Appropriate Technology Centre at TARA gram Orchha in Madhya Pradesh. Radio Bundelkhand is the first Community Radio Station in Madhya Pradesh and the second one in India. Since then, it has been airing shows for women, youth, farmers, and vulnerable groups, and it reaches out to more than 120 villages within a radius of 15 kilometres. The media's presence in rural Bundelkhand is either government-driven or its ownership is in the hands of private individuals, with no scope for the local communities' involvement. Before 2008, there was virtually no communication platform for rural people to voice their concerns about drought, migration, and farmers' suicides to obtain information and find solutions.

Development Alternatives and the communities jointly manage Radio Bundelkhand. The programs are produced with the participation of the local people. Its participatory programming and broadcast model is a mix of awareness, information, and entertainment to promote local self-governance. All the programs are designed based on feedback from communities and expert's advice. The content is gathered with the help of experts and other stakeholders in various fields and converted into *edutainment*² programs. In



² Edutainment is a portmanteau combining the words 'Education' and 'Entertainment.' It delivers information and

this context, Radio Bundelkhand has emerged as a people's radio station that provides a platform to air their aspirations and concerns and showcase their talent. Its participatory and collaborative approach empowers and builds consensus for change.

Radio Bundelkhand broadcasts transmissions 11 hours daily between 07:00 am and 6:00 pm. The timings are fixed in consultation with the communities based on their daily routine; women prefer morning sessions, while men prefer evening slots. The content of its programs is prepared by the organization, based on secondary and primary research through audience polls. These curated programs are then broadcast on the radio station. The information about the programs is shared daily, biweekly, and weekly, depending on the themes and project deliverables. Besides the community radio, there are other modes of intervention (explicitly prepared to provide extension and advisory services) such as Radio Bundelkhand Mobile applications, YouTube Channel Radio Bundelkhand, a WhatsApp group for the community, and community radios.

Case Study Methods

Objectives

- To understand climate change awareness, communication and solutions delivered to rural marginalized farming communities in Bundelkhand through climate change communication programs of a community radio station.
- To document this CCE initiative of community radio programs (broadcasting and narrowcasting) by narrating the aim, activities carried out, target groups for community outreach, and the achieved outputs of the initiative.
- To understand the degree of outreach of the CCE initiative and related training activities of community radio in Bundelkhand.
- To assess the effectiveness of these radio programs for climate change awareness and address related informational gaps of the local communities (with special emphasis on the farming community) in the region in Bundelkhand where the radio programs were broadcasted and narrowcasted.
- To assess people's awareness of the communicators.
- To understand whether voices of the marginalized (economic and social) communities and women are represented and addressed in these community radio programs on climate change communication.
- To identify the scope for better outreach and effectiveness of climate change communications through community radio in Bundelkhand.

The research is divided into three phases.

Phase One: review secondary literature and existing reports on the initiative. The first draft of the questionnaire will be built in this phase. The target villages will be selected based on the coverage of the community radio programs on climate change communication, and stakeholders such as community radio reporters, civil society organizations and scientific experts, members of the farming community, and so on. Participants will be selected in such a way as that ensures adequate representation of socio-economic and gender identities.

Phase Two: field-visit to the Bundelkhand region to conduct individual interviews and focus

knowledge by means of entertainment to make it enjoyable.

group discussions (FGDs) with community radio reporters of selected radio stations and some of the village communities to understand their experience, extent of engagement and how the community radio program has impacted their knowledge and practices around climate change. FGDs with different composition criteria for the group will be done - a mixed group, an all-women group, a group of those from economically disadvantaged classes or castes, and other social realities that may need particular representation. Based on the findings of these FGDs, the questionnaire will be revised. Also, these FGDs will be video recorded with due permission. Next, one-on-one interviews will be conducted with the farming community and all those involved in the CCE initiative. The selection of interviewees will be made based on the findings of FGDs. These interviews will be videotaped, with due permission.

Phase Three: transcribe the interviews to prepare a narrative report and produce a video to support the case study findings.

Research Tools

Goals of the In-depth Interviews and Focus Group Discussions:

- To understand whether voices of the marginalized (economic and social) communities and women are represented and addressed in the CCE initiative. .
- To assess the effectiveness of the CCE initiatives for climate change awareness and address related informational gaps of the local community (with particular emphasis on the farming community) in the regions in Bundelkhand where the radio programs were broadcasted.

Goals of the Questionnaire for Reporters:

- To identify the scope for better outreach and effectiveness of climate change communications through community radio in Bundelkhand.
- To assess the awareness of the communicators, i.e., community radio reporters of the community radio stations selected for the project in Bundelkhand, about climate change issues.

Sampling Technique

Purposive sampling was used to select the geography and target group.

Geography

The Bundelkhand region (six districts of Madhya Pradesh and seven districts of Uttar Pradesh) was chosen because it is highly prone to recurring droughts; erratic rainfall distribution and dry spells are common. Radio Bundelkhand (90.4 FM) is also situated in the Bundelkhand region.

Target Group

The selection of the villages was made based on the outreach of the radio station.

- Three community radio reporters were interviewed to assess their awareness of climate change and to understand the CCE initiative mechanism.
- Three experts were interviewed to understand how they helped in the development of the CCE initiative.
- Five male farmers and five female farmers were interviewed to study the impact of the

CCE initiative of the community radio in Bundelkhand.

- Focus group discussions included women, men, youth, scheduled caste (SC)/ scheduled tribe (ST) and mixed groups.

Case Study Findings

Radio Bundelkhand has played an important role in bringing about social and long-term changes in the region. It is popular, cost-effective, and non-literate-friendly, and follows the participatory and collaborative approach to empower and build consensus for change.

Through community radio, vital dialogues are facilitated among communities, scientists, and policymakers on climate change issues, strengthening community knowledge and voices on the impacts. The information communicated to the community is through simple messages, appropriate delivery mechanisms, local language, and region-specific cultural norms. The radio successfully facilitated the process of community-based climate change adaptation.

Radio Bundelkhand now has a team of four people who completely and dedicatedly work for the community to address their climate change and agriculture-related issues. They provide them with information about agroforestry, climate change, sustainable agriculture (natural and organic farming, vermicompost, irrigation techniques, seed selection techniques, water conservation techniques, etc.) and other development issues such as women and child development, adult education, etc.

Radio Bundelkhand not only focused on community awareness and information dissemination, but it also provided capacity-building training to the radio reporters to build their skills and knowledge and to engage them with scientists and policymakers on local climate change-related issues of their respective communities.

In 2012, Radio Bundelkhand launched a pilot project Shubh-kal (a better future) - From Information to Knowledge and Action - which was implemented in 2012-2013. Funded by the London-based Climate and Development Knowledge Network (CDKN), this initiative aimed to test a communication model on the ground to see if community radio reporters can be an effective link to bridge the knowledge gap on climate change adaptation between the farming community, scientists, and policymakers.

The initiative was formally launched with three more community radio stations: Lalit Lokwani, Radio Dadhkan, and Chanderi Ki Awaaz in and around the Bundelkhand region. The pilot project envisioned linking key stakeholders, bringing local experiences and priorities on climate change and development to the forefront of the community-science-policy dialogue, and testing an innovative communication model using community radios. This was done with the aim of building capacities of local community radio journalists in climate change reporting, training community radio reporters to bridge the climate change knowledge gap between communities, scientists, local government officials, and policy-makers, strengthening community knowledge and voice on climate change impacts and adaptation by enabling communities to share their experiences in coping with and adapting to climate change, and increasing awareness of the scientific community, local government authorities and policy-makers on how climate change is impacting local development.

Capacity-building training was conducted to familiarize reporters with the fundamentals of climate change causes and impacts at the global, national, and local levels, improve their journalistic skills through creative tasks, and teach reporters how to make interesting and informative climate change radio programs.

Radio Bundelkhand worked on climate change issues since 2008 but back then, it did not use the ‘community scientist-government officials’ to connect in their show formats. Keeping the climate change understanding of the reporters in mind, simplified terminologies and local examples based on real-life experiences were used to explain tricky climate change-related terms. It was reasoned that the effects of climate change are directly linked with the daily lives of the communities, thereby making it vital for community reporters to cover such stories. It was also emphasized that the role of the reporters was to inform their communities regarding adaptation measures and help build their resilience to cope with the impacts of climate change.

Besides providing the reporters with an understanding of climate change issues, the training also focused on improving their journalistic skills and teaching them how to make effective climate change stories and programs. Skill enhancement of the participants was done through creative tasks such as conducting mock interviews and producing radio plays and short radio stories. The strategy employed at the workshops included providing both theoretical and practical experience to the attending participants. They were guided in researching story ideas, conducting interviews with the different stakeholders, the kind of questions to ask, and so on. The training participants directly interacted with villagers, local scientific experts and government officials to collect information on climate change issues. They had to produce short radio stories based on these interviews. These workshops also provided a platform for reporters from different radio stations to share knowledge and exchange experiences.

Selection of the Themes for the Radio Programs

The selection of the themes for the programs does not happen in closed rooms. To select themes for each program, radio reporters visit communities to understand their perceptions and issues/challenges related to climate change and agriculture and then decide on strategies and themes for programs. The following are some of the themes used in the programs:

- The perception of community, policymakers and scientists on climate change and the effects of climate change globally and locally.
- Climate-resilient farming practices.
- Agroforestry as a climate adaptation strategy.
- Effects of climate change on water resources.
- Rainwater harvesting and water-efficient irrigation practices.
- Organic composting for improving soil health.
- Renewable energy use in villages, such as the use of biogas plants.
- Prevention of soil erosion and conservation of soil quality.
- Impacts of climate change on livestock rearing.
- Use of Argo-meteorological information such as weather, seasonal, and monsoon forecasts.

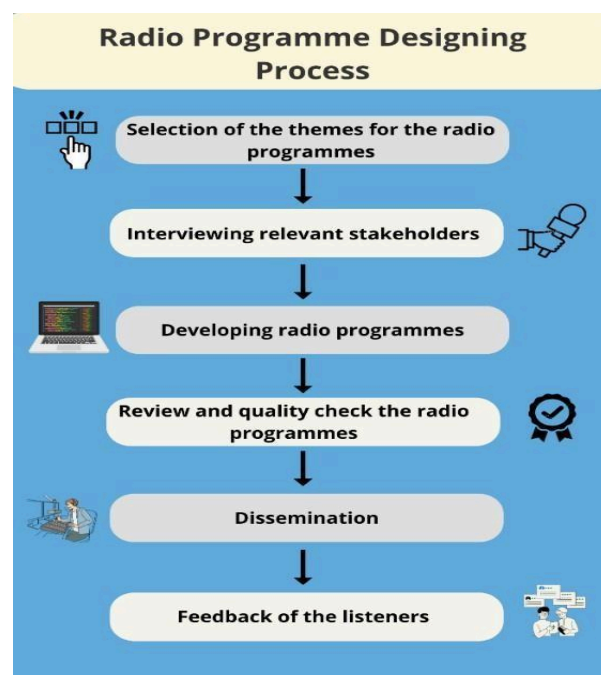


Figure 3: Program Designing Process

- Effects of climate change on human health.
- Crop insurance and crop loans.
- Climate variability - a cause of migration.

Interviewing Relevant Stakeholders

The radio reporters first interviewed the farming communities to capture their perceptions and collected their doubts regarding the related subjects. Then they contacted scientific agencies such as the Agricultural Professor of the Bundelkhand University, Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs – government agriculture extension centers) and the local government departments such as the Agriculture Department, the Forest Department, the Irrigation Department and the Health Department to collect climate change-related information and related government schemes.

Developing Radio Programs

An *edutainment* approach was used by the reporters to develop each program. The information was subsequently converted into simple and easily comprehensible messages in local dialects. The duration of one radio show is between 15 to 20 minutes. The programs included interviews, radio dramas, jingles, folk songs, and talk shows. The following are some of the programs designed for the radio shows:

- **Amma Ki Chowkhe Se:** Introduced by Radio Bundelkhand to create awareness and inculcate the practice of climate-smart, smoke-free cooking in rural India for a cleaner environment. The initiative also promotes good health among rural women.
- **Khetkhaliyan:** Radio Bundelkhand's 'Khetkhaliyan' is an agriculture-based program that recognizes the potential of women as farmers. Community radio reporters approach women and make programs in which they share their experiences as farmers, talking about cropping patterns and techniques they use in farming. The program seeks to highlight women's role in the field and the crucial role they play in deciding the market price of produce.

Review and Quality-Check of the Radio Programs

Prior to broadcasting, the programs were checked for errors and improved. The lead reporter reviewed the quality and content of the programs during their development.

Popular Climate Change Adaptation Radio Shows

Kaun Banega Shubh Kal Leader: This was India's first rural reality show on climate change. It promotes climate change adaptation practices such as organic farming, agroforestry, and rainwater harvesting.

Khetkhaliyan: Radio Bundelkhand's 'Khetkhaliyan' is an agriculture-based programme that recognizes the potential of farmers. Community radio reporters approach communities and make programmes in which they share their experiences as farmers, talking about cropping patterns and techniques they use in farming. The programme seeks to highlight women's role in the field, and the crucial role they play in deciding the market price of produce.

Shubh Kal (Climate Change Adaptation): The programme creates awareness about climate change adaptation and natural resource management. The programme highlights the climate change issues the community has been facing for a long and provides them with information about their benefit. The information shared under the Shubh Kal is about kitchen gardening, vermicomposting, amrut-mitti, agro-forestry, rainwater harvesting, organic farming, solar lantern, fuel-efficient cook stoves, wastewater recycling, food processing, efficient irrigation methods, poultry farming, seed treatment, line sowing, organic fertilisers and pesticides, and biogas.

Dissemination of the Programs

After the production of the radio shows, the programs were broadcasted or narrowcasted³ to the local communities in the outreach areas. The broadcasting of the programs happened during time slots convenient for the farming communities, either early morning, lunchtime, or in the evening after sunset.

Feedback from the Listeners

The listeners shared their feedback with radio reporters through phone calls and letters. Feedback was then analyzed and communicated to the relevant scientists and government authorities, and finally, the queries were answered by the radio reporters in the next round of radio programmes.

The narrowcasting sessions were also followed by feedback and discussions from the community members. Feedback forms were circulated among the listener groups to capture their response on the radio programmes. With the aim of communicating voices from the ground to the scientists and local government authorities, radio reporters communicated feedback from the narrowcasting sessions to the experts.

"Shubh Kal is the brand program of Radio Bundelkhand which is very much liked and appreciated by our listeners because in Shubh Kal program, we talk totally about climate change, we explain to them that change in weather cycle means climate change. Shubh Kal program is popular in our Bundelkhand and one of the reasons for its popularity is "Bhairon- Bhauji". This would be a five-minute segment in the program but whatever information they shared about climate change was appreciated by the listeners because it was all said in the local language, Bundeli. Listening to this people used to get incredibly happy saying that on the one hand we are getting information and on the other hand we are also getting entertained. After listening to this, the other 5 radio stations who are also our partners broadcasted the same program on their respective radio stations as well and the response they received as also very well."

- Varsha Raikwar, Radio Reporter, Bundelkhand Community Radio

Climate Change Communicators' Views on the CCE Initiative

The three radio reporters (Varsha Raikwar, Manish Samdhiya and Matadeen Kushwaha) of radio Bundelkhand were interviewed. They highlighted that when they started talking about climate change (*Jal- vayu Parivartan*) with the community, they learned that the community was unaware of it. Therefore, there needs to be more knowledge about climate change. Locals know that rainfall patterns are unpredictable, summertime has increased, the weather is fluctuating, and water retention is very low in the area. Still, they must have factual knowledge about climate change. With these community issues/challenges collected, the team contacted the experts of KVK, the agricultural department, etc., to address those issues. They then designed a programme according to the community's needs and awareness.

Radio Bundelkhand is an open source of information for communication. Radio reporters provide information about climate change adaptation, motivate people to suggest topics, and help create content/programmes. The working environment and mechanism depend entirely on community interactions and responses. The radio shows are designed in the Bundeli dialect to engage with their audience.

³ Narrowcasting is the dissemination of information to a limited or narrow set of audiences. To promote the outreach of the programs and to cater to the needs of those community members who missed listening to the programs during broadcast times.

“Whatever content we run on Radio Bundelkhand, it is only in Bundeli because if we speak in Bundeli, then more listeners join us. they like it when their language is spoken. Along with this, there are traditional genres, there are stories in the Bundeli language, there are poems, and people in our community like to listen to them. We run a program called Khetkhaliyan on the radio Bundelkhand. For this program, we research the content. For research, we go to the villages and identify the problems of the farmers. This is how we get the content. Once we identify the problem, we take that problem to the expert who then provides us with a solution. Radio Bundelkhand acts as a mediator in this process. After we come up with a solution to their problems, then here we edit, package, and broadcast the programs”.

- *Manish Samadhiya, Radio Reporter, Bundelkhand Community Radio (Working at Radio Bundelkhand for the past 14 years)*

The team received climate change adaptation capacity-building training under the Shubh Kal programme, which enhanced their skills and capacity to work on climate, water, and agriculture topics.

Experts' Views on the CCE Initiative

Bundelkhand University Agricultural Professors have been interviewed to give their expert opinion. They highlighted that radio reporters frequently contact them to collect information related to climate change and sustainable agriculture. The process of interviewing experts is not limited to phone calls, online, and in-person meetings. They have been invited to the radio station for talk shows and live calls such as *“humari tumhari baatein, humara ganv humari pehchaan and ass apss”* where the experts are allowed to talk directly about the issues/ challenges related to climate change and agriculture. In live shows, experts directly connect to the community members and farmers to answer their queries. Through the radio, Bundelkhand bridged the information gap between the information- scientists (experts) and community members. This helped the community get hands-on information about the challenges they faced during farming and climate change.

“Radio Bundelkhand is a medium where farmers meet experts like me where they discuss their issues and exporters as I and other fellows provide them with solutions. Radio Bundelkhand calls us experts from time to time and we have one on one interactions with the farmers, this helps in spreading awareness. The situation today is such that a lot of organic production happens in Bundelkhand and in the coming time Bundelkhand region will emerge as a good hub of organic produce for the Uttar Pradesh Government. Radio Bundelkhand is like a blessing for farmers and the public because it brings the problems from the grassroots level and there is knowledge enhancement of these people via experts and scientists i.e. the one who has doubt and the one who has a solution, Radio Bundelkhand is doing the job of connecting these two very well and for this any amount of appreciation will be less.”

- *Prof. Dr. Satyavir Singh Solanki, Assistant Professor Institute of Agricultural Sciences, Bundelkhand University, Jhansi, Uttar Pradesh*

Listeners' Views on the CCE Initiative

Three villages- Ladpura, Pajanpura and Ujyan Patha were selected for the community interviews and focus group discussions. A total of ten farmers (five male and five female) were interviewed, and a total of six focus group discussions (a group of women, a group of men, the SC/ ST community, youth, and two mixed groups) were facilitated within the community. During the focus group discussions, farmers highlighted that the radio programme enhanced their knowledge and provided solutions to issues and challenges they have faced for a long time.

"I have been listening to RB since the past 13 yrs. That one year I did not know about RB because I was a student and had no idea what channel radio Bundelkhand is. Once I got to know about it since then it is like a song recorded on a chip. We have the information about farming through Radio Bundelkhand only. Now the times are such that radio Bundelkhand has shares information for the poor that there should be small work and big profit. We have learned a lot from Radio Bundelkhand, about organic fertilizers. Put organic fertilizers in the field. Whatever the crop, use that fertilizer, there is a good flower and a good crop. We apply this practice in our fields too. In our field, every work of farming is done after listening to Radio Bundelkhand. Whatever information we get, if there is any issue with our farming, we call Manish ji and varsha didi, they call the doctors and experts, we can learn through it, but all those who listen to Radio Bundelkhand also benefit from this thing."

- A Farmer Dheeraj Vanshkar, Pajanpura Village, Radio Listener:

Case Study Impacts

Radio Bundelkhand has started the process of sensitizing the farming communities of Bundelkhand regarding the need to adapt to the changing climate. Community members have become familiar with new options and government schemes related to climate change adaptation, or 'no cost adaptation options', such as line sowing, drip irrigation techniques, water harvesting measures, soil testing, organic composting methods, drought-resistant seed varieties, subsidies on constructing farm ponds, subsidies on biogas plants, etc. By listening to the climate change radio shows such as Shubh Kal and Khetkhaliyan, a few farmers have not only learned about but also adopted these 'no cost adaptation options'.

Narrowcasting sessions have proved to be successful in popularising climate change adaptation options and increasing the visibility of radio stations, especially amongst those farmers who missed hearing the shows at the time of the broadcast. During the narrowcasting sessions, the listener groups (farmers) were inquisitive about climate change issues and asked several questions from the radio reporters. They wanted these queries to be answered by the scientific community and government officials. Interpersonal communication and face-to-face interaction facilitated by radio reporters have motivated behaviour change in the community by fostering dialogue exchange, sharing knowledge and finding solutions for community development. A few farmers in the village of Ladpura Khas, Niwari district, listen to the radio through the radio Bundelkhand app because the radio network does not reach their villages. Through listening to radio broadcasts by the Bundelkhand radio app, they shifted to 100 percent organic farming from chemical farming. This indicates that more similar shows are required to be produced and broadcasted over a longer time period to enable significant behaviour change in the communities and pave the way for the implementation of localized adaptation interventions.

The activities of Radio Bundelkhand have given further meaning to decentralization. An appropriate communication medium has been created to facilitate an interface between scientists and the community, especially for the people in the operational districts of Bundelkhand Radio. The interactive sessions provided by the station for local authorities to explain climate change adaptation and sustainable agriculture programmes are a clear case of promoting accountability and transparency. The people can ask about their climate, health and agricultural-related issues. The KVKs and local government could connect directly to the community without interference. Radio plays a vital role in women's empowerment as well. Women-oriented programming has its own space on the radio Bundelkhand. Radio Bundelkhand is committed to documenting more essential issues and disseminating information within the community.

Bundelkhand community radio reporters trained in climate change journalism have proved to be

a strong medium between communities, scientists and government officials. Since the radio reporters belong to the community only, farmers find it easy to communicate their concerns and queries to them. The scientists and government officials also find interacting with the radio reporters useful as they receive an improved understanding of the communities' perceptions, information needs on climate change issues and how climate change is impacting local development. Besides being community members, community radio reporters also play the role of local campaigners, information providers, mass communicators, investigators and information intermediaries. Capacity building is essential for radio reporters as they also need to be made aware of new ways of information dissemination. Varsha Raikwar, one of the community radio reporters, has been selected as a climate change warrior by the United Nations. The findings highlight that the capacities of community radio reporters to understand climate change adaptation in the local context should be further enhanced by training modules and knowledge support. This would go a long way in reducing the existing knowledge gap between communities and local-level government authorities on climate change issues.

The radio team needs support to sustain radio shows in the long term. There are fewer radio station representatives in the community, which increases the workload of radio reporters and lowers the productivity of the program. Community members need to mobilize to participate in making radio programmes. People working in the radio station are paid through funding received by the local bodies, Civil Society Organizations, Corporate Social Responsibility activities, etc. To strengthen the system, more funding is needed. This case study helps others understand the community radio system and promote these kinds of initiatives.

Applicability and Scaling of the CCE Initiative

Development Alternatives believes that this CCE initiative has enabled them to address and enhance the 6 A's of technology significantly:

Availability – Apart from the radio station's fixed schedule when it goes on air, listeners can also reach out via WhatsApp groups and phone calls at any time.

Affordability – Radio is a very cheap and affordable source of information since listeners are not charged for programmes.

Awareness – Our awareness programmes on varied and current issues are invariably based on matters raised by the communities.

Accessibility – Our edutainment community radio programmes reach approximately 15-20 km and 120 villages with a population of over 20,000. So far, Radio Bundelkhand has penetrated rural communities settled in and around TARAgram Orchha, like the villages of Gundrai, Chandravan, Bagan, Orchha, Sitapur, Azadpura, and Lachmanpura.

Ability – The organization builds the capacity of community radio reporters, village-level volunteer journalists, and print journalists (from local newspapers) to enable them to better capture local concerns, knowledge and practices from the community. In turn, this is communicated back to local experts and policymakers, to feed into robust policies related to agriculture and climate change.

Adaptability – Community radio has integrated grassroots voices into local scientific research and policy dialogues on agriculture, climate change impacts, and adaptation measures.

Radio Bundelkhand serves as a tool to empower the community and to serve as a mass communication medium in the hands of rural, non-iterate and marginalized communities, who use

it for their own empowerment and entertainment, with programmes designed to ensure sustainability. Its long-term vision is new product development/customization, increasing listenership, corporate tie-ups and development of a revenue model. Radio Bundelkhand has developed a CCE initiative for semi-arid regions. This initiative could be adopted by the other community radio stations based in the semi-arid regions with slight modifications in the region's language and dialect. Capacity building of radio reporters could help the decentralization of the climate change adaptation model.

This innovative CCE initiative has proved to be an effective tool for grassroots representation and communicating voices from the ground to scientists, local government authorities, and policymakers. Thus, sustaining radio shows beyond the limited number of episodes funding should be encouraged for such efforts on climate change communication. The way forward is to utilize other community radios nationally and globally to bridge the knowledge gap between communities, scientific organizations, and decision-makers to achieve climate-resilient development.

Authors:

Vaishali Kanojia, Deputy Manager, Agriculture and Climate Change

Kirandeep Kaur, Project Executive, Community Radio & Communications, Radio Bundelkhand

Contributors:

Satabdi Datta, Senior Manager, Development Alternatives (Former) Manish Samadhiya, Senior Radio Reporter, Radio Bundelkhand Varsha Raikwar, Junio Radio Reporter, Radio Bundelkhand Matadeen Khushwaha, Junio Radio Reporter, Radio Bundelkhand

Developed under Guidance from:

Zeenat Niazi, Senior Vice President, Chief Knowledge Officer, Development Alternatives

Gitika Goswami, Associate Vice President - Policy Research & Planning, Development Alternatives (Former)

Cover Photo by:

Pinecone Studios, Shimla, Himachal Pradesh

Disclaimer:

This case study on Radio Bundelkhand and its impact on climate change communication in Bundelkhand is based on specific experiences and perspectives. The findings reflect the observed outcomes in the studied context and may not be universally applicable.

Interpretations should consider the localized nature of the intervention and its potential variations in different regions.

Acknowledgement(s):

The development of this case study has been greatly enriched by the unwavering support of numerous individuals. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the dedicated community radio listeners, insightful radio reporters, and the invaluable expertise of agriculture and climate change professionals from Bundelkhand University, Jhansi. Their contributions have played a pivotal role in enhancing the depth and quality of this study. We sincerely appreciate their unwavering commitment and collaborative spirit.



This research was conducted by



This research was made possible with funding from



Recommended Citation: Kanojia, V. & Kaur, K. (2025). Participatory Radio: Communicating about Climate Change with Remote Communities. MECCE Project Funded Case Study. Retrieved from <https://mecce.ca/publications/participatory-radio-remote-communities>.