

Community Radios for Climate Change Communication

*From Information to Knowledge to Action
in Madhya Pradesh*

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Key messages

- Limited research currently exists on how to develop strong communication models for multi-stakeholder engagement and exchange of information on climate change adaptation. Community radio being an apt media for engagement and discussion on various issues can be an effective tool to address climate change issues.
- Provision of knowledge support and financial sustenance for communication models using community radios can effectively bridge the knowledge gap between local stakeholders. It can help in meeting the information needs of the marginalised communities and take their voices to the scientific community and the policymakers thus paving the way for climate resilient development.
- A more inclusive climate resilient policy requires permeation of the three communities comprising rural, scientific and policy. The issues and coping mechanisms at the grassroots need to be heard by the scientific and policy community; scientific learning and innovations need to be incubated and validated at grassroots and policy dialogue
- There is potential of community radio in integrating grassroots voices into climate change planning processes of Madhya Pradesh. Key climate change communication utilizing community radio in climate change advocacy links information users and providers most effectively.

Introduction

Government of India has formulated the National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC). Eight national level missions that focus on promoting understanding of climate change, adaptation and mitigation, energy efficiency and natural resource conservation have been established under its purview. The NAPCC is a guiding document for states to formulate State Action Plans on Climate Change (SAPCC) and till date 22 states have framed the SAPCC.

Madhya Pradesh being a very climate conscious state was one of the first states to have developed the SAPCC. The state SAPCC addresses the state strategies for climate change on a sectoral basis and is taking several steps to design climate change adaptation measures for urban and rural areas. Efforts under Madhya Pradesh State Action Plan on Climate Change (MP-SAPCC) and Bundelkhand Package are some attempts in this direction. However, the state is still carving out strategies to communicate information on climate change and its coping mechanisms to different stakeholders (from grassroots level communities to top level government officials and climate scientists). Environmental Planning and Coordination Organisation (EPCO) is the nodal agency for climate change in the state and has developed the MP-SAPCC. A State Knowledge Management Centre on Climate Change (SKMCCC) is proposed as a part of the State Action Plan. The State Climate Change Knowledge Management Centre which is yet to be rolled out is envisioned as '*state's repository of knowledge pertaining to climate change*' which can support strategic planning of government as well as non-government agencies. This centre also visualizes developing a network among organisations and institutions working on climate change and allied subjects.

There are many research initiatives studying impacts of climate change on communities and packaging adaptation models worldwide. However there is limited uptake at the local level, partly due to challenges of communicating scientific research appropriately for local stakeholders and failure to meaningfully engage existing local institutions and cultural practices. Another concern is that vulnerable communities in climate sensitive rural

areas are poorly linked to scientific research and policy matters. Limited research currently exists on how to develop strong communication models for multi-stakeholder engagement and exchange of information on climate change adaptation.

Bundelkhand region, situated in Central India is a semi-arid region highly prone to the impacts of climatic variability. It is also one of the most underdeveloped regions of the country with poor human development indices. The undulating topography of Bundelkhand is marked with recurrent droughts, crop failures and increasing uncertainties of life-giving monsoon. Agriculture forms the backbone of the rural economy in the region with almost 75% of the people dependent on agriculture and animal husbandry for their livelihoods.

The community radio has been found to have a potential in integrating grassroots voices into climate change planning processes of Madhya Pradesh.

Climate Change Action in Madhya Pradesh: A Policy Scan

The Madhya Pradesh State Action Plan on Climate Change (MP-SAPCC) prepared within the framework of NAPCC focuses on devising appropriate adaptation guidelines with the aim of strengthening the developmental planning process of the state to adequately address climate change concerns. The plan identifies ten sectors that it considered sensitive to climate change. The State Action Plan on climate change of the Madhya Pradesh government is committed to proactively integrate the concerns of climate change into development planning processes and capitalize on the opportunity of convergence wherever possible. SAPCC will help the state to develop climate compatible and resilient developmental policies and programmes. The SAPCC has highlighted the need for knowledge management and sharing to mainstream climate change concerns in the planning and development of state policies through the State Knowledge Management Centre for Climate Change (SKMCCC).

Ideally, to integrate climate variability concerns and enable adaptation, the objectives and strategies from the MP-SAPCC should be integrated in the state plans and get translated into programmes and schemes. Currently, this is not the case, although certain central and state



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sponsored schemes do address issues of climate variability and agriculture such as schemes on crop insurance, promotion of climate resilient seeds and irrigation facilities. In addition, regional climate variability and specific interventions based on agro-climatic zones are not addressed in these development plans and they remain top-down in their approach.

The eleven agro-climatic zones of the state of Madhya Pradesh with varied levels of vulnerability to climate change require specific adaptation strategies designed to address its needs and concerns of poor and marginalized communities. A more inclusive climate resilient policy requires an active participation and engagement of rural communities with scientists and policymakers. The issues and coping mechanisms at the grassroots need to be heard by the scientific and policy community; scientific learning and innovations need to be incubated and validated at grassroots and dialogue is required to develop an understanding of both science and community to evolve a sound policy.

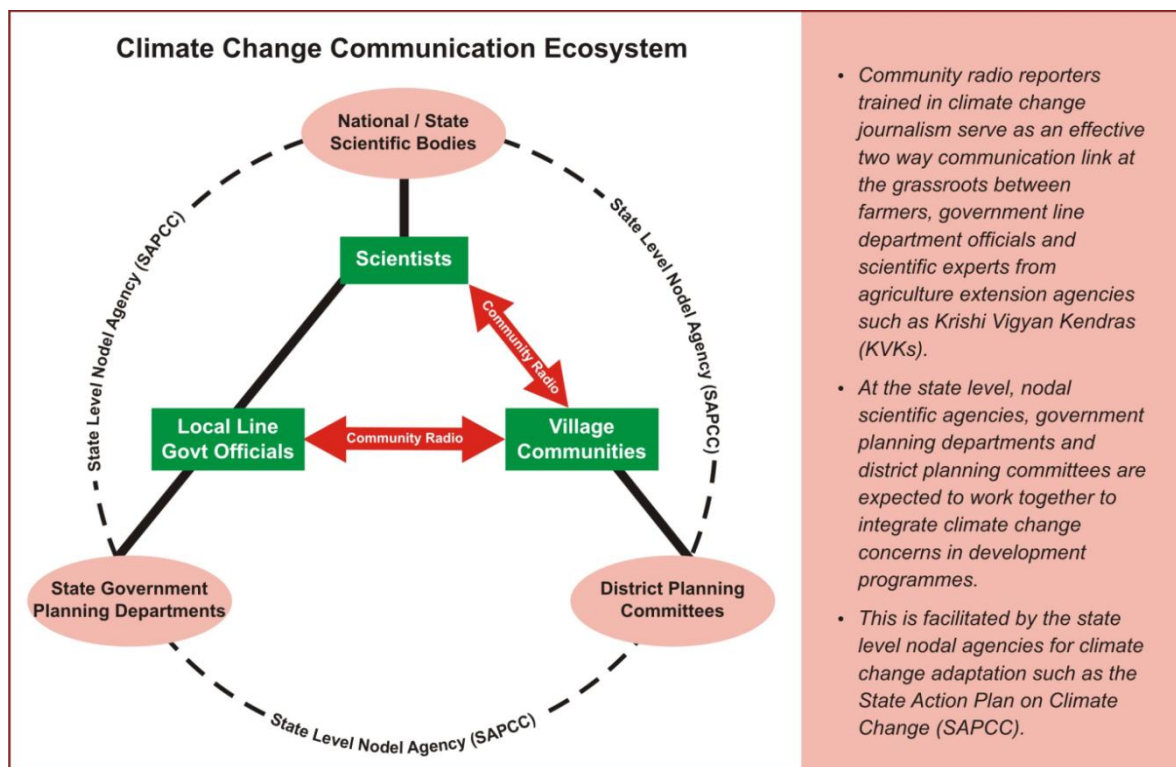
The SKMCCC, a perceived '*repository of knowledge pertaining to climate change*' is expected to contain information of spatial and temporal vulnerabilities, map changes and impacts on a continued basis and maintain a database of good

practices, adaptation models etc. SKMCCC will also support the strategic development planning by the government and develop a network among organisations and institutions working on climate change and allied subjects. The SKMCCC is seen as a facilitator for knowledge dissemination with a people centric approach as an effective mechanism for feeding into the science and policy communication process.

Community Radio: For Information Flow between Scientists, Planners and Implementers

Communication ecosystem for climate change adaptation action can be effectively utilized to link communities, scientists and decision makers. Community radio plays a unique role in providing information to the grassroots.

- **Localised approach:** Community radio journalists not only act as information providers but also play an important role in acting as investigators and information linkers. Community radio provides information at a micro level of 10-15 km radius reaching to approximately 80 to 100 villages thus connecting the last mile. Radio also acts as a



Communication model recommended for utilising community radios in two way climate change communications



two way medium and goes beyond broadcast to discussion formats. Community radio journalists belong to the community hence, farmers and other rural community members find it easy to communicate their concerns and queries to them. The radio reporters speak local dialects and are well aware of the community issues.

- **Awareness creation:** The role of grassroots information providers such as gram sewaks, technical supports groups and panchayat members is limited to specific news, schemes and short term information which is not sufficient. Communicating information and knowledge on climate change requires a participatory yet localized approach, thus creating awareness and leading to behavior change for longer period of time. Community radios can also play an important role in increasing awareness of government authorities on how climate change is impacting local development.
- **Reporters of traditional knowledge:** A wide variety of information on grassroots concerns and issues, community needs and indigenous adaptation interventions goes unreported. This is useful for scientists and policy makers to help focus through research and public programmes for maximising their impacts. Community radio plays an important role in investigating these issues from within the

communities.

- **Information linkers:** Scientists receive an improved understanding of the community's perceptions and information needs on climate change issues through radio reporters. Moreover, community radio reporters also help to communicate scientific knowledge in a localized and simplified manner.
- **Cross sectoral approach:** Climate change issues cuts across ministries, sectors, thematic areas and departments. Informing the communities about climate change risks and adaptation requires a cross sectoral approach which addresses the issue across different scales of developmental agenda. In accordance with the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting guidelines for community radio, these radio stations works across a span of different departments' viz. agriculture, irrigation, water resource, forest, energy, health, livestock, social welfare and planning interact across various departments to reflect the special interests and needs of the communities. This shows that radio stations have the potential to communicate climate change concerns in a rightful and justified manner becoming intermediaries between multi-stakeholders but also help address the cross-sectoral nature of climate change communications.

Community Radio: An Effective Tool for Community Engagement for Climate Change

Among various forms of community media like participatory videos, community radio is one form which has been very successful in increased grassroots level participation and horizontal circulation of ideas among rural communities (Patil 2010). Community radio is defined by three core aspects- **local ownership and control, participation of community and the non-profit approach which makes it a participatory medium of communication.**

Community radio stations provide space to people for:

- participating in the process of creating content
- increasing the diversity of voices participating in the process
- enabling the expression of divergent ideas and values
- bringing forth issues that are more localized in nature

Hence community radio is seen as the voice of the marginalized groups and an instrument for their empowerment. Climate change is increasingly becoming an alarming issue leading to deprivation of basic necessities of life of the people. Given its adverse impacts on agriculture, the already struggling small holding farming communities are further pushed to the extreme margins of poverty becoming imperative to address climate change issues in the local context. Community radio being an apt media for engagement and discussion on various issues can be an effective tool to address climate change issues. Its potential as a change agent can bring a change in the lives of people by providing those ways of adapting with the changing climate.



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The MP-SAPCC drafted by EPCO provides a climate change communication platform to community radio. Following common mandate of integrating grassroots concerns into developmental planning, both community radio and EPCO's MP-SAPCC through its State Knowledge Management Centre for Climate Change (SKMCCC) can combine efforts to facilitate connecting grassroots voices, scientists and policy makers for climate resilient development in the region.

If trained effectively, a skilled cadre of community radio can play multiple roles in meeting climate change information needs of grassroots communities. As community members the reporters are easily accepted by their society, thus a better picture of the ground realities can be presented to the scientific experts and the policy makers.

As journalists the community radio reporters interact with a wide range of officials and scientists, this helps them to mediate a two way information flow to the community.

Thus, community radio reporters not only act as information providers for climate change related knowledge but also act as intermediaries between stakeholders such as scientists, local government authorities, communities and planners.

Linking Grassroots Voices to Policy Processes in Madhya Pradesh- Key Recommendations

Strengthening and supporting alternative and independent community media such as community radio is required for resilient community development and enhanced practice to policy connect. Some recommendations for strengthening and facilitating collaboration for the state of Madhya Pradesh are as follows:

Integrating knowledge sharing in the State Knowledge Management Centre for Climate Change (SKMCCC): Knowledge flow and community concerns and adaptation methods from community radios should feed into the knowledge portal of the SKMCCC being developed at the State level for absorption into policy processes makes them more robust and rooted to community needs.

Similarly, the community radios should be able to take knowledge resources from the state knowledge portal for feeding into programming to take the policy measures to the community.

Agro-climatic/regional centres for climate data and knowledge sharing: Climate variability vary according to agro-climatic regions, hence, requirement of climatic information is most suited if provided accordingly to the community. This will increase uptake of appropriate adaptation measures building risk capacity of community. These knowledge centres will engage in two way information exchange with community radios and provide region specific knowledge to the communities. Agro-climatic/regional knowledge centres will also provide for sharing more localised climate related adaptation practices. The community radios would be able to engage better and develop more localised content and share localised issues for policy integration.

Increased Proliferation of CRs in the state: Currently there are ten community radio stations in the state of Madhya Pradesh¹. Keeping the 50 districts of state in mind, the number of community radio stations in the state is not sufficient. The state needs to look at ways and mechanisms of increasing community media for its marginalized communities. Community radio is an important means for reaching out to the information and media deficient communities of the state. Furthermore, the numbers should also be increased on the basis of different agro-climatic zones in the state to be able to discuss more localised information and concern.

¹ Community Radio: Celebrating a Decade of People's Voices - Compendium 2013, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India:
<http://edaa.in/crsammelan2013/compendium-2013>



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Capacity building of community radios on climate change: Mere establishment of community radios in the state is not sufficient; it also requires building capacities of community media like community radio for communicating climate change to the communities. Large capital and resources are utilized for building capacities of national level journalists on climate change reporting. Similarly, voice of the rural communities-community radio also needs training and guidance for climate change reporting. Keeping the challenges of climate change communications at grassroots level in mind, the state should facilitate capacity building of community radio reporters. Civil Society Organisations and experts from the community radio space can support the state in building the capacities of these information providers.

Capacity Building of Technical Support Groups (TSGs) and local planning bodies: To support the environment of climate change awareness at the grassroots it is important to integrate climate change thinking in the planning of bottom level planners. Technical Support Groups and local government

institutions viz. Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) are key information intermediaries. They also play an important role in decentralized planning for state bottom-up planning. With enhanced climate understanding, community radios will be able to meaningfully engage with these local planning institutions for up-scaling climate adaptation.

Community radio is an important community focused tool and its integration with state level knowledge sharing platforms will bridge the communication gap at all levels for enriching effective stakeholder engagement. A trained cadre of community radio reporters can therefore act as a link between scientists, communities and local government line departments. Enhanced capacities and reach of community radios will be effective bridges for supporting vulnerable communities build resilience against climate risks and increase the uptake of adaptation measures. ■



About the participant groups



Environment Planning and Coordination Organization (EPCO), Government of Madhya Pradesh is registered under the Housing and Environment Department of the Government of Madhya Pradesh. It connects government as well as non-government agencies in solving environmental problems. <http://www.epco.in/>



The Institute of Development Studies (IDS) at the University of Sussex, UK is a leading global organisation for research, teaching and communication on international development. It acts as a development research and knowledge hub, connecting and convening networks throughout the world. <http://www.ids.ac.uk/>



Kings College London, Humanitarian Futures Group - The Humanitarian Futures Programme (HFP), works to support organisations with humanitarian roles and responsibilities to effectively anticipate and prepare for long term future crises. www.humanitarianfutures.org/



Third Pole Project is a joint project of the Internews Earth Journalism Network and the bilingual environment news website chinadialogue.net that seeks to improve coverage of climate change issues in the Himalayan region and downstream. The Third Pole – based in New Delhi, Beijing, London and San Diego – designs curriculum and carries out media capacity building and training workshops for local and regional groups across Asia. www.thethirdpole.net/



Development Alternatives (DA) is India's leading civil society organization engaged in research and development. DA set up the first Community Radio in the Central Indian region of Bundelkhand. <http://www.devalit.org/>

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Climate and Development Knowledge Network (CDKN) supports decision-makers in designing and delivering climate compatible developments by combining research, advisory services and knowledge management in support of locally owned and managed policy processes. www.cdkn.org

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