

**FIELD REPORTING OF THE WORKING OF
COMMUNITY LISTENING SCHEME - 1969**

1. The Study

The Community Listening by Radio, introduced in 1939, was made a plan scheme in 1954 with a provision of Central subsidy equal to 50% of the initial cost of the radio set. The objectives of the scheme were to propagate the plan programmes, especially the community projects and to extend basic and social education. The grant of 'Central Subsidy' was subject to the conditions that the sets should conform to the ISI specifications, that the sets should be pretuned to AIR Stations in each region, that not less than 25% of the cost of the set should be recovered from the beneficiaries, that the sets should be maintained well by the States, etc. The scheme was in operation in all the States except West Bengal, Madras and Rajasthan. Prior to 1965-66, the procurement of the sets was centralised and this involved delay in the actual delivery of the sets to the States. Therefore, the State Governments started purchasing the sets directly, receiving the subsidy on the basis of the sanctions issued by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. Till the end of 1968, 1,35,369 sets were supplied and 23,806 sets were pending for procurement under the scheme.

However, the progress of the scheme got dampened soon and the purchase of the sets by the State Governments drastically declined. It was then felt that the Scheme would not have much future utility because of the increasing access to cheap transistorised sets for the villagers. However, the Scheme was still useful for border, hill, tribal and other backward areas. It was in this background that a short-term evaluation of the scheme was taken up under the programme of periodical field reporting of the Programme Evaluation Organisation. It was the first study taken up under this Programme at the instance of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.

2. Objectives

- i) To have an independent assessment of the working of the scheme and its impact on rural masses;

- ii) To bring out the areas of its success and failure and the factors responsible for either;
- iii) To study the difficulties faced in its working; and
- iv) To see how far the doubts expressed about its utility were justified.

3. **Sample Size/Criteria for Selection of Sample**

The study was conducted in all the States (except Nagaland) irrespective of whether the scheme was running as a 'Centrally Subsidised Plan Scheme' or the State Governments took it on their own. The study covered a sample of 560 villages in 61 districts. The field staff who carried out the evaluation study of the High Yielding Varieties Programme and the Family Planning Programme in 1968-69 were asked to observe the working of the Community Listening Scheme in the villages which had been provided with Community Listening sets. The report was based on the district notes prepared by the Project Evaluation Officers on the basis of the discussions with the block and district officials and own observations. The number of villages visited varied across districts depending on the samples of the two studies.

4. **Reference Period**

The study referred to the period between 1954 and 1968.

5. **Main Findings**

1. The Scheme was implemented by the Department of Public Relations in some States and by Directorates of Information and Broadcasting or Rural Broadcasting in other States. In Rajasthan, the Panchayat and Development Department controlled the implementation of the Scheme.

2. Radio sets were generally supplied to the village institutions like Panchayats, Co-operative societies, schools, libraries, Mahila Samitis, etc. The preference was given to Panchayats.

3. An agreement bond had to be signed for holding the beneficiaries responsible for regular operations, repair and maintenance arrangements. These arrangements were reported to be satisfactory in 38% of the selected districts only.

4. In addition to agricultural and rural issues, dramas, films, folk songs, news bulletins, etc. were covered by the programmes.

5. The tuning hours were reported to be followed in 21% of the selected districts only.

6. The normal attendance in slack season was above 40 in more than 50% of the districts. The corresponding number was about half in busy seasons. Farmers showed greater interests in the programmes than the other sections of the village community.

7. The success of the scheme was acknowledged by the knowledgeable section of the village community only in 22 of the 61 selected districts. The scheme helped in disseminating the latest know-how in the field of agriculture. Even where the scheme was considered to have failed, its utility was not repudiated. The failure was attributed to its faulty working.

8. The main reasons for the unpopularity of the scheme included inadequate arrangements for maintenance and repairs, non-availability and high cost of dry battery, tendency of village leaders to treat the sets as their personal property, pre-tuning of sets and declining interest due to the increase in the number of transistors and private sets.

9. In most of the selected districts the knowledgeable people were in favour of the continuance of the scheme.

6. Major Suggestions

The major suggestions made by the knowledgeable persons included, inter-alia, the supply of transistorised or electric sets, proper arrangements for their maintenance, timely service and facilities for tuning more stations for longer duration.