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Shalini Raghaviah

Bangalore

April 30, 2007

## Foreword

### Why this report?

Community Radio (CR) has received a new impetus in India after the recent liberalization and simplification of the licensing process by the Government of India. CR enthusiasts predict a huge surge in the number of CR stations, some even putting the number at 4000 stations by 2008! Notwithstanding the need and relevance of this people's media, the ground reality is that, today not many communities and NGOs have the capacity to run, operate and sustain CR stations on their own. A humongous task lay ahead of the optimistic proponents. While classical definitions of alternate local radio clearly differentiate between community, campus and institutional radios by their purpose, ownership and programming, agencies around the developing world are experimenting with their own hybrid and collaborative models of community radio.

Committed to the use of appropriate and low cost technology to promote 'learning for development', the Commonwealth Educational Media Center for Asia has been supporting capacity building for content generation, station management, community needs assessment and participation techniques, as a forerunner to setting up CR stations in a variety of formats, in the region. For instance, our partners, Foundation for Research in Community Health (FRCH) use their two way communication systems creatively to reach their own small dispersed groups with critical health information; DNet of Bangladesh are bringing together a network of grassroots NGOs, to feed content to the CR station that they aspire to set up. CEMCA is facilitating CR stations located at educational and agricultural institutions, across the country to cater to marginalized communities, engaging them in programme planning and production.

Another such activity that CEMCA has been supporting for the past two years is an initiative of IT for Change, called Mahiti Manthana undertaken in partnership with Mahila Samakhya, Karnataka (MSK), a grassroots organisation working for women's empowerment, essentially through micro-credit. In December 2005, CEMCA facilitated capacity building of MSK women, mostly illiterate and socially disadvantaged, followed by support for content generation with the objective of giving the women a hands-on opportunity to test and hone their newly acquired skills. After concerted efforts, a weekly half hour slot was procured on the Karnataka State Open University campus FM station GyanVani provided and managed by IGNOU. The programme titled "Kelu Sakhi" (*listen, friend*) was launched in November 2006 and has been on air since. Enthused by the overall progress, CEMCA further supported a second round of capacity building and content generation for the MSK women, this time including young girls (*kishoris*) in the team. At this juncture, it was felt that it would be a good idea to have an independent assessment of the processes and the progress and thus this report was commissioned. Documenting work in progress is like trying to capture a moving target. The objective is not to seek conclusions or final pronouncements, rather to step back awhile, to take a look at what seems to be working well and where the fault lines are appearing, in order to strategise better, to take the community a step closer to their goal of having their own radio, if that is indeed what they ultimately want. This assessment is undertaken with a spirit of a mid-course stock taking and that is the spirit with which it needs to be understood and interpreted.

Rukmini Vemraju  
Programme Officer, CEMCA

## Glossary

- CEMCA/CoL : Commonwealth Educational Media Center for Asia/Commonwealth of Learning
- FGD : Focus Group Discussion
- FM : Frequency Modulation
- IGNOU : Indira Gandhi National Open University
- ICT : Information and communication technology
- ITfC : IT for Change, a non-profit organisation working in the domain of technology for social change. ITfC has been engaged by MSK to help use ICT in a contextual and inexpensive way for MSK's work on women's empowerment.
- Kelu sakhi : 'Listen, my friend'.
- Kishoris : Adolescent girls, for whom the MSK runs development programmes.
- KSOU : Karnataka State Open University.
- MM : Mahiti Manthana ('Information churning'), an ICT-based project of the MSK, which comprises radio, video and telecentre components.
- MSK : Mahila Samakhya (Karnataka), a grassroots initiative of the Government of India, working towards empowerment of rural women through self-help group activity.
- Sangha : Self-help groups organised by the MSK.
- Sangha-kaksha : Listening group, where the sangha members assemble to listen to episodes of the radio programme *Kelu sakhi*.

## Executive Summary

Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia/ Commonwealth of Learning (CEMCA/CoL) is supporting a project on developing community radio skills among the disadvantaged rural women in the talukas of Mysore district, Karnataka, in South India. This included supporting content creation through hands-on training for these women, which eventually led to the production and broadcast of a radio programme *Kelu sakhi* ('Listen, my friend!'), targeted at these women. While the programme is instituted by the Mahila Samakhya (Karnataka) (MSK), an established grassroots initiative of the Government of India which works for the empowerment of these women through self-help group (sangha) activity, it is produced by IT for Change (ITfC), Bangalore (a non-profit organisation working in the domain of technology for social change) on MSK's behalf. Further, it is broadcast through Gyan vani, the FM radio station of the Karnataka State Open University (KSOU), thus creating an arrangement of multiple players in coordinated roles. Following positive response to *Kelu sakhi*, which has been on air since November 2006, CEMCA is supporting a second phase of skill training in April 2007. An independent assessment at this stage, it was felt, would help understand the process of engaging disadvantaged women in using simple technologies for empowerment.

*Kelu sakhi* is broadcast at 9 pm on Mondays, followed by a repeat on Tuesdays at 9 am. ITfC also facilitates group listening around the broadcasts. The programme has greatly aided MSK's development work among the sangha women through (i) the medium of radio - which can reach its entire target audience simultaneously and (ii) its innovative format of skits, stories and discussions - opening up a new line of thinking among the sangha women. This is a great advantage in comparison with having to travel long distances to address a few groups of women, and a sharp deviation from the prevalent 'lecture mode' of one-way information transfer. It also comes at a time when MSK has successfully developed a cadre of women leaders from among its target groups. This programme is envisaged as a forum for them to address issues that concern them and their community.

*Kelu sakhi's* content falls within MSK's broad thematic framework of education, health, savings, literacy, panchayati raj institutions and capacity building/self-sufficiency. Specific ideas are drawn from the sangha women themselves, who convey it to MSK or the production team. Even while giving the medium of community radio an impetus, *Kelu sakhi* is being received extremely well by all stakeholders, produced as it is by ITfC's dedicated team. Ultimately, *Kelu sakhi* is aimed at enabling MSK to use Information Communication Technology independently in its work on women's empowerment, making it a true community medium. This would require a dedicated in-house team who can draw the best out of both people and technology. For, no matter how much technology is de-scaled, it still calls for sensitivity to community needs to use the medium to advantage.

For this, MSK will have to find a way around its limitations, sooner or later. While the process of skill transfer has included both training and hands-on experience, the MSK, being an under-staffed organisation, is still unable to afford the focused attention that hands-on production demands. A sense of helplessness prevails, as it is the State office, and not the District office, that allocates additional staff and resources. MSK will have to convincingly propose for these, with strong recommendation from ITfC, as *Kelu sakhi's* benefits have been recognized at the State level too. *Kelu sakhi* could also be made more accessible for the community as a whole. Still, it must maintain the clear cut agenda of women's empowerment and retain the sangha women as its primary target audience. The success indicator would be the ownership that individual sangha members feel, about their ability to affect a change in the programme, rather than numbers. KSOU, on the other hand, is yet to fully appreciate *Kelu sakhi* as contributing to its own agenda of distance education. At present, it is perceived as not much more than an advertising medium.

The estimated time before *Kelu sakhi's* take over by MSK/sangha women is approximately two years from now. Its long term sustainability should be gauged not by the pace of skill transfer or the speed of take over, but in how far the community is able to internalise it as its own space. The transfer should happen only when the new team is fully prepared, ideally preceded by at least six months of hands-on production along with ITfC. In the long term, a consultant director/coordinator may be required as a 'nodal advisor' to guide the team through critical decisions. The MSK will also have to build independent rapport with KSOU. Since the target audience comprises predominantly agricultural wage laborers, some flexibility needs to be built into the listening sessions, particularly during the busy months of sowing and harvest. A financial sustainability plan needs to be worked out; as interactions with sangha women suggested their inability to pay monthly subscriptions, however meager. Delegating duties of content development, ideation and coordinating recordings will be sufficient contribution to expect from them.

Finally, what kind of empowerment has *Kelu sakhi* brought to the rural women? Some of the significant responses (from various stakeholders) that emerged were: (i) recognising rural women's voices on a public medium (ii) an alternative social support network - the MSK is an alternative social support network for the sangha women; but they meet only once in two months - radio enhances this support network (iii) providing precise information on issues that affect their every day lives - property rights, domestic violence, nutrition and health, government schemes, etc. and (iv) identity building for women with similar experiences and instilling in them a sense of independence and self worth.

Coming back to the original question of whether it is practical to use community radio as a development catalyst - the answer is 'yes' - provided one can account for the human capabilities that go into using the medium to advantage. It is this basic factor that is often overlooked through the deluge of hype over technology.

\* \* \*

**Context****Radio and Development**

Radio broadcasting still remains the cheapest mode of information dissemination, catering equally to the needs of the rich and the poor, the rural and urban masses. Within this spectrum falls community radio, defined as a type of radio service that caters to the interests of a certain area and broadcasts material that is popular among a local audience, but which is overlooked by more powerful broadcast groups. Community radio provides content focusing on a local area or a particular community. It is a significant departure from the primarily centralized broadcasting paradigm that India has been following for decades. Campus radio is also a type of community radio run by an educational institution where programming may be exclusively for the students, or may include programmes from the wider community in which the station is based.

In 2003, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, decided to grant licenses to educational institutions at the school and college level for setting up non-profit, non-commercial radio stations. Though the Ministry refers to this as 'campus radio', it also fits the definition of community radio, giving rise to an interesting concept of campus-community radio. Following this policy decision by Gol, Anna University set up Anna FM, India's first campus radio station, in Chennai in February 2004. Subsequently, the campus radio station of Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) and its State Open Universities, Gyan Vani, was granted license.

**Background**

Since 2005, Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA)/ Commonwealth of Learning has been engaged with IT for Change (ITfC), Bangalore, in supporting a programme on developing radio skills among disadvantaged rural women in the villages of Mysore district in south Karnataka. ITfC has been partnering with Mahila Samakhya (Karnataka)<sup>1</sup> (MSK) in implementing the Mahiti Manthana project. Mahiti Manthana, literally meaning 'information churning', aims at developing a comprehensive ICT-based resource support strategy for various activities of women's SHGs/sanghas and their federations.

The programme's thrust is to educate disadvantaged women through information and knowledge that can make a difference to their lives. The need for such a strategy was felt when the MSK programme reached a stage of having successfully developed a cadre of women leaders from among its target groups. These women are articulate and socially oriented to address women's rights and general community issues but required various inputs in addressing the issues that concern them and their communities. There was a need to bridge the gap between their ability to learn and the lack of appropriate resources/technology to facilitate this process. This led to MSK engaging ITfC to use ICT in a contextual and inexpensive way to strengthen the Information and Communication processes with regard to its activities. The Mahiti Manthana project has a video component, a tele-centre component and a radio component. This is a mid term evaluation and feedback research of the radio component.

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<sup>1</sup>Mahila Samakhya (Karnataka) is a programme of the Department of Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India. The programme was born out of the emphasis given in the New Education Policy of 1986 to the need for education programmes to play a 'positive, interventionist role' in bringing about women's equality. The programme is implemented through Mahila Samakhya (Karnataka), a registered society started in 1989.

It was to strengthen this radio initiative that CEMCA supported a content development workshop for the MSK women in December 2005. The workshop introduced these women to the concept of community radio and its potential in developing locally owned community information and communication processes. The women were trained hands-on at developing radio content and were taken to visit radio studios to demystify content production process. CEMCA also helped broker a partnership between MSK and Karnataka State Open University (KSOU), where the latter allotted MSK a half hour slot on their campus FM Station, Gyan Vani. Thus, this radio programme uses a design that combines elements of both community and campus radio formats. While women are able to tell their own stories and assert their perspective as a community (through MSK), the campus radio format provides a pedagogic tool as well as a space for organisation building. This arrangement consists of multiple players in complementing roles. However, as the terrain was untested and the context challenging in many ways, it was felt that an ICT-enabled strategy needs to be piloted in some areas. For this, the talukas of H.D.Kote, Hunsur and Nanjangud of Mysore district were selected. The radio programme, called *Kelu sakhi*, was inaugurated on November 27, 2006. Since December 25, 2006, it has become a weekly programme aired for half an hour every Monday at 9 pm, with by a repeat broadcast every Tuesday at 9 am.

ITfC has also been facilitating listening and discussion groups around the broadcasts. It is reported that increasingly, sangha women are showing higher participation levels in content development and programme production. Encouraged by the positive response, CEMCA is supporting a second phase where a skill-training workshop for another group of women and support for content creation for the broadcast is being provided. At this juncture, it was felt that an independent assessment of the effort would help CEMCA understand the process of engaging disadvantaged rural women in using simple technologies for empowerment.

### **Aim of the present study**

The overall aim is to assess the effectiveness and practicality of community radio as a development catalyst and understand the process by which community radio can be employed in development.

### **Objective and Scope**

The objective and scope of the present study is to

1. Understand and document the process of engaging the target group with the radio initiative.
2. Understand the perceptions of disadvantaged rural women in using radio as an empowerment tool.
3. Investigate if and how the women contribute to the programme - right from ideation through programme development - including the issues and challenges faced by them and
4. Elicit perceptions about the radio programme from the community, its usefulness to them and whether they would like it to continue; and the factors they think are required for its sustenance.



## **Locale of the Study and its Socio-cultural Characteristics**

The radio programme *Kelu sakhi* is being broadcast in three talukas of Mysore district - H.D.Kote, Hunsur and Nanjangud. Mysore district, located in southern Karnataka, falls in Deccan plateau. With an altitude of 770m above MSL, it has a pleasant weather all year round. However, it has not been immune to rising temperatures - a global phenomenon.

The primary occupation of the people in these villages is agricultural wage labour. During the lean months, they migrate to the neighbouring district of Coorg or to the State of Kerala as migrant labour in coffee plantations. Farmers having pump sets grow vegetables during the lean months. Other occupations include cultivation of cash crops like tobacco and groundnut, dairy, sericulture and small businesses. Different castes populate these villages and caste divisions are still apparent. Houses of the Scheduled Castes are even now almost always on the periphery of the villages. The major festivals celebrated include all the Hindu festivals, and the festival in honour of the village deity. The crop cycle generally begins in June, with the onset of the monsoons and ends in January, culminating with the harvest and celebration of the festival of Makar Sankranti.

## **Information, Communication and Entertainment**

Television made an entry into these villages nearly 20 years ago. The coming of television was synchronous with radio gradually fading out as a medium of information and entertainment. It also signified the gradual decline and disappearance of traditional entertainment like folk theatre and the story telling practice known as Harikatha. One member from Chamanahalli hundi village recalls that after a gap of several years, a folk theatre troupe performed in their village two years ago. The villagers no longer actively engage in their own home-grown music. Although they still recall their folk songs, there are usually no musical instruments accompanying them. During festivals, musicians and folk artistes are called from outside the village for performances. These artistes invariably belong to the Scheduled Castes. Other than this, the villagers hire a VCD player and screen films. Many families own televisions sets. While they generally watch serials and movies on the TV, one of the villagers confessed that they no longer relate to the content on television but watch it for lack of an alternative. One could say that there is a void created on one hand by the exit of traditional forms of entertainment that generally tend to have local context in mind; and the irrelevance of present-day television content on the other.

References:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/campus\\_radio](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/campus_radio)

<http://itforchange.net>

### Research Design

Being exploratory in nature and of a work in progress, the study utilised a qualitative approach in order to capture the different nuances and the complementary roles performed by the different players.

### Methodology

#### Sampling

Data were collected from all stakeholders. The major issues that were addressed with respect to each stakeholder are mentioned below.

#### 1. Karnataka State Open University (KSOU): The agency that grants permission for the programme and allocates the time slot

##### Issues

- *Experience in terms of the relevance of the programme content to their audience.*
- *If the broadcasting of Kelu sakhi has in any way helped KSOU in its activities.*
- *Whether Gyan vani has sought or has received any feedback about Kelu sakhi.*
- *The feedback about Kelu sakhi, if any, and Gyan Vani's reaction to it.*

#### 2. IT for Change: The facilitating agency

##### Questions

- *The specific roles and responsibilities of the chief/key producers in content development and programme production.*
- *The role of ITfC in implementing the programme: whether a prime mover or facilitator.*
- *The process by which ITfC engages the women in content development and programme production; hurdles faced and lessons learnt.*
- *The extent to which women are comfortable with handling technology and suggestions for future, if any.*
- *Whether there is a skill transfer from ITfC to the Sangha women and its modalities.*
- *Feasibility of MSK taking over running the radio programme after a point and the practical issues to be addressed.*
- *Whether ITfC has a handing-over plan and the strategies in place for that.*
- *Whether MSK can financially sustain running Kelu sakhi.*
- *For sustainability and continuity of such a programme, what factors do they think are prerequisites?*

#### 3. MSK: The prime content developers

##### Issues

- *Initial reactions, perceptions and inhibitions, if any, about radio as an empowerment tool.*
- *Limitations of radio programmes, if any, in terms of technology or otherwise, in community development and women's empowerment.*

- The process by which women engage in content development and programme production and if MSK can extend this expertise in the long run on its own.
- Level of comfort that women have with the technology with regard to programme production.
- Process by which the women negotiate leadership roles and delegate duties among themselves in the process of content development and programme production.
- Relevance of programme content and convenience of programme slots.
- Whether MSK feels confident to take over the radio programme after some point.
- If yes, how long would it take; if No, what support should be continued?
- For long term sustainability of the programme, what factors do they think are prerequisites?
- How they plan to address financial sustainability in the long run.

#### **4. Members of the Sangha kaksha/listening groups: The target audience**

##### **Issues**

- Relevance of programme content and convenience of the programme slot.
- The process by which women arrive at issues and further, its ideation.
- Women's participation in content creation and programme production.
- Whether they find the programme useful/helpful. If so, in what way? If not, why?
- Whether there is anything they would like to change about the programme.
- Whether the programme changed their perspective about issues. Yes/No. If yes, in what way. If No, why not?
- Whether they would like the programme to continue. Why/Why not.
- What are the factors that can ensure sustainability? Whether the women are willing to contribute the time/services it demands.
- Whether they discuss the programme with family and the reaction from family members.
- How do the discussions (after the listening sessions) help?
- Is there any objection/resistance from family members or other women to their participating in the project/programme?
- What are the limitations of the programme/of radio as an empowerment tool?
- What are their long-term expectations from the programme?
- For the non-participants: What are the reasons for their not participating, and whether they have tuned in to any of the episodes. Their reaction to the programme and feedback.

#### **5. The Larger Community: The wider audience and potential (future) listeners**

##### **Issues**

- What are their perceptions about using radio as a tool for empowerment and its future possibilities.
- The general awareness about Kulu Sakhi, whether they have tuned into any episode.
- Whether they relate to the topics covered in the programme either directly or indirectly.
- Do the women in their families (who are members of the listening groups) discuss the programme with them?
- Do they have any reservations about women in their families participating in the programme? If so, what are they and how can they be addressed?

##### **Instruments of Data Collection**

The following instruments of data collection were employed:

1.Semi-structured interview guidelines: These were administered through face-to-face interviews with officials/participants from KSOU, ITfC, MSK and listening group members.

2.Observation technique: This technique was used to supplement data collection, particularly the listening sessions of the sangha kaksha, Monday, 9 pm - to gauge their reaction to the programme, and at recording and editing the MSK announcements at ITfC field office.

3. Focus Group Discussion (FGD): FGD was conducted among community members (one each for men and women) to understand their awareness about and perception of *Kelu sakhi* and whether it could benefit the larger community, who are outside the listening groups.

However, in the case of sangha listening group members, the face-to-face interviews soon assumed the form of a discussion rather than individual interviews. Though the women were informed well in advance that the interviews would be conducted one after another, some of the sangha members who were waiting their turn could not resist offering their points of view. Under the circumstances, the researcher felt that it was best not to interrupt their flow of thought. After a few questions, the researcher decided to accommodate this prevalent method and modified note taking to record each woman's response or lack of it to a particular issue. The interviews with the ITfC field staff had revealed to the researcher that the sangha women's responses often depended on a trigger mechanism rather than the ability to come up with answers to direct questions. The important factor here was to elicit their perceptions about *Kelu sakhi*, and this purpose was more or less served, despite the slight change in order.

Further, in case of the stakeholder interviews/FGD, questions had to be modified to fit the circumstances. This was because the project still appeared to be in its first phase and had not reached the stage of sharing of responsibilities to the level envisaged, an impression created by secondary research prior to fieldwork.

The study instruments were prepared in English and the services of an interpreter were used to ensure precise translation from Kannada to English in the case of:

1. Interviews of MSK staff
2. Interaction with members of the sangha listening group and
3. FGD with community members.

In situations where time was too short for note taking, the interviews were recorded and transcribed subsequently.

### **Duration of Data Collection**

Data were collected between March 13, 2007 and April 03, 2007. At the start of data collection, *Kelu sakhi* had completed 11 weeks of broadcast. At the end of data collection, it had relayed 14 episodes in all. Data were collected from all respondents, namely KSOU, Producer, ITfC, MSK, sangha women, non-participants and community members. Details are provided in Appendix VII.

Other printed materials collected to supplement the analysis:

1. Need Assessment documents from ITfC
2. *Kelu sakhi* status update, March 2007
3. Pamphlet-publicity material of Mahila Samakhya, Karnataka
4. Gender in the Information Society- Editors Anita Gurumurthy et al.

### **Analysis and Report Writing**

Qualitative analysis of the data was carried out. The report writing was carried out in Bangalore.

# Mahiti Manthana

# Radio



Women being trained at a radio studio to demystify radio programming



Women comfortable with making radio program without written script

Non-verbal methods to learn about radio formats



Non-literate women interact with a computer for the first time on audio editing – something that they can understand more than the text



Women listening to a radio programme that they have made themselves



**Kelu sakhi: The Beginning**

In 2005, an international conference brought together different players working in the area of ICT and development in India. In December that year, CEMCA/CoL supported a radio workshop which ITfC conducted to train sangha women in radio skills. It was here that both ITfC and MSK were able to reasonably gauge what could be achieved through radio. This led to ITfC partnering with MSK in producing digital content and supporting the development of ICT-based knowledge management processes for MSK. Much brainstorming followed before a basic structure of the programme was worked out. It was felt both by ITfC and MSK that an effective strategy must employ the fullest range of opportunities provided by the new ICTs. From this stage began the partnership with the sangha women in identifying relevant and appropriate content. Despite teething troubles, there was great satisfaction over the progression of a homegrown process in both content development and programme production.

**The Medium**

Numerous factors and perspectives contributed to the decision of using radio as one of the components of Mahiti Manthana. "In the final analysis, the choice of medium should be based on issues of reach and access, purpose of the initiative, nature of the community to be reached, cultural acceptability and usability, and local relevance. In short, the chosen medium should have 'fitness of purpose'".<sup>2</sup> (Gurumurthy et al, eds, 2006:66). While ITfC was considering a 'basket of technologies' for this project, the turning point over using radio came after the possibility of transmission through KSOU's FM station Gyan vani opened up. Formalising the partnership between MSK and KSOU was a protracted process. This was despite Gyan vani's guidelines allocating air time for programmes relevant to the community in which the station is based. In the initial stages after the proposal for *Kelu sakhi* was submitted, KSOU appeared to be in an ideological dilemma over allowing programmes for the community to be broadcast from Gyan vani. It took considerable dialogue before KSOU could eventually understand *Kelu sakhi* as actually serving Gyan vani's agenda. The timely intervention of CoL at this juncture in negotiating the programme slot finally clinched the deal. However, Gyan vani still takes an approach that their major benefit is in airing the KSOU advertisement during the programme, as the interactions with Gyan vani's representative revealed. In fact, airing of KSOU advertisement for a full 5 minutes and positioning it right in the middle of the programme was an essential condition for sanction.

The MSK too were aware of the concept of community radio, as it had demonstrated its potential through initiatives elsewhere. The radio initiative of the Kutch Mahila Vikas Sangathan in Gujarat, for example, had shown "radio's affinity with oral, non-literate cultures; how it can generate debate on local concerns, needs, priorities and issues; why this highly localized programming brings pluralism into our broadcast culture; its power to enhance a sense of self respect and how a radio programme in the local language affirms local cultural identities".<sup>3</sup> MSK saw the advantage of being able to (theoretically) address its entire target audience all at once. In reality, the practice of listening to the medium of radio both by the sangha women as well as the villagers in general had faded a long time ago. This was because radio was by and large replaced by television. Broadcast of *Kelu sakhi* was practical only if the medium of radio could stage a comeback. This issue was taken up by MSK; and gradually each sangha began acquiring a radio set of its own with ITfC providing 50 per cent subsidy. At present more than fifty per cent of the sanghas have their own radio sets and the rest are in the process of acquiring it. The sangha women were quick to warm up to the advantages of the medium of radio - one could listen while working and also take it along to the fields. More importantly, ever since *Kelu sakhi* has been on air, they are pleased to listen to their own voices on radio, rather than watch "Rajkumar or Bharati on T.V."

## Format

On November 27, 2006, the first episode of *Kelu sakhi* went on air in the three talukas of Mysore district. The slot timing of 9 pm on Mondays was finalised in consultation with the sangha women; as their weekly meetings at 8 pm could be followed by group listening at 9 pm. The format, which has slowly evolved to its present form, is illustrated in Table 3.1. Most of all, *Kelu sakhi* is conceived as a space for

1. Sangha women to share their stories and express opinions
2. A message board for MSK and sangha women
3. A space for peer learning and expert guidance
4. A showcase for talent and
5. A container of information capsules.

**Table 3.1: Format of *Kelu sakhi***

### **Slot 1:** Sangha dhvani-5 minutes

This is a space for women to share their stories, achievements and experiences. The idea is to create a feeling in every sangha woman's mind that she will definitely feature on this slot one day.

### **Slot 2:** Tan Tara Tan - 5-6 minutes.

This is a discussion slot shared by sangha women and kishoris (adolescent girls). The discussions are around burning problems like alcohol, domestic violence, property rights and caste system in schools. At present, the women no longer need a facilitator for the discussions; they only need to be briefed ahead of it. This was meant to be an open and flexible slot, but one which had progressed well and reached its present form.

### **Slot 3:** Filler or song

### **Slot 4:** KSOU advertisement- 5 minutes

### **Slot 5:** MSK slot: 3-6 minutes

A story/ feature/ discussion/play presented by MSK, followed by announcements

### **Slot 6: Humour Series: 6-7 minute**

This slot uses a scripted format and fixed characters. Initially, ITfC held scriptwriting workshops with well known script writers in the state. Unfortunately, the outcome was rendered unusable due to reinforcement of the very stereotypes that MSK were trying to change. At this point, ITfC field coordinator Aparna took over the scripting. The main characters are- Fathima, Neelakka and Maniakka (empowered sangha women), Jayakka (anti-sangha woman), Puttathayakka (a wise old woman who could both be extremely traditional or at times agree with the sangha women-based on her own logic), Motu Beedi Siddanna (a sensitive man, plays the male stereotype, raising questions from the male perspective), Kendagannapa (wise old man who is proud of his daughter-in-law who is in the sangha) and Maadevanna (husband of a sangha woman; he was apprehensive of her joining the sangha, but is now convinced of its benefits).

While the topics covered ranges from education and literacy to legal issues and nutrition, this is developing into a slot that women follow and like to listen to. Although production of this slot is the most time consuming and laborious, it serves well as a thinking point.

### Compering 4-41/2 minutes

To begin with, compering was done by a professional theatre person, who had ease with delivery of dialogues, generating the interest that a new programme needed. However, with time, the style appeared monotonous, and she began sounding 'cleverer' than the sangha women, the target audience she had never interacted with. Finally, one of the sakhis,<sup>4</sup> Sheela took over, posing as "Neelakka", a sangha woman. Although shy in the beginning, she manages to sound quite warm without being dramatic. Field coordinator Aparna was initially writing the script for the compere but Sheela now does it on her own under the supervision of the ITfC field staff.

### Target Audience

No communication medium can remain isolated from the society it is based in; therefore the socio-economic and cultural characteristics of the target audience merit mention.

The primary target audience for *Kelu sakhi* are the sangha members. It is hoped that with time, the benefits of the programme would percolate down to the other women and the community in general. Most of the (sangha women) respondents in this study have been sangha members for about 1 - 3 years. It is understandable why the sangha forms an important part of their identity. In the villages, becoming a sangha member is often perceived as an attempt to bridge the gap between dependence and empowerment. While *Kelu sakhi* serves this purpose for the most part, in another sense it's content is limited by MSK's agenda. The sangha women mentioned some of the differences between a sangha woman and a non sangha woman,<sup>5</sup> as described in Table 3.2.



**Table 3.2 Differences between sangha woman and non-sangha woman**

<b>Sangha woman</b>	<b>Non-sangha woman</b>
Access to various kinds of information	No means of getting information
Knowledge about money transactions and loans as well as health, education and legalities	Limited to household chores, inability to communicate well with others
Possibility of sharing problems with other sangha women	No one to share problems with
Capacity to speak up and general awareness	Afraid to speak up
	Desires to become sangha woman



However, there is still a wide gap to be bridged between the sangha women's present situation and what they perceive as empowerment. The needs assessment conducted by ITfC highlighted two of these issues.

One was that in the sangha women's perspective, empowerment meant the ability for women to negotiate their responsibilities, while in reality, this was not so. While the women have to run the house, look after the children, work in the fields, milk and feed the cattle, all that men had to do is work on the farm. To spare time for the various sangha activities, the women would like to be free from at least a few of their household chores, but it appears that the existing social structure is just too rigid for such adjustments in the foreseeable future.

Another area with sharp differences in perception between men and women is women's mobility. While women see mobility as empowering, men still think that it is the women with no alternative who have to work outside the home. In that cultural context, a man whose wife enjoys mobility is made fun of - a typical response being, "We are not like that woman's husband, who lets her do whatever she wants." Having crossed this gap and being able to attend the sangha meetings and listen to *Kelu sakhi* is a significant achievement, especially considering the long hard day of an average sangha woman<sup>6</sup>. It is evident that for any ICT intervention to be a success under the circumstances, it must have an entertaining format even if the content is educative. At the end of a day's work, the women seek some relaxation and entertainment.

### **Literacy**

Low level of literacy is widespread among the sangha women, although most of the younger sangha women and *kishoris* are literate. While illiteracy has not curbed their curiosity or enthusiasm in learning new things, the women now understand the benefits of functional literacy. It helps read bus boards, newspaper headlines or the printed matter on packaging material, which has often saved them from being cheated. *Kelu sakhi's* great advantage lies in that it transcends the literacy barrier.

### **Electronic-Media exposure**

Prior to the inauguration of *Kelu sakhi*, an average sangha woman probably owned a television set, but not a radio. Only a handful owned radios and listened to news, agriculture related programmes and songs. Those who did not own television sets would watch programmes in their neighbour's homes.

### **Listenership**

At the time of this study, the approximate listenership of *Kelu sakhi* is estimated to be 55-65 per cent of the total sangha women and is growing as every sangha without a radio is in the process of acquiring it. The listenership for *Kelu sakhi* falls into a definite pattern, as shown in Table 3.3.

**Table 3.3 Audience Profile of *Kelu sakhi***

Group I : 20%-25%	Active listeners, includes the 20 sangha women who underwent training in content development and programme production
Group II: 55%-65%	Passive listeners
Group III: 15%-20%	Non-listeners due to pressing domestic problems for whom primary needs come first

Group I: In every sangha, about 3-4 women are very active and are forthcoming with inputs for content. They have attended the training workshops and have correctly picked up the nuances of programme production.

Group II: The vast majority falls in the category of passive listeners, or is still warming up to the programme. They attend the listening sessions, but do not speak up on their own, for which they require a lot of coaxing.

Group III: About 4-5 members of each sangha are unable to attend the listening session due to the heavy workload. They put in longer hours in agricultural labour and mentioned that their wages are paid at 9 pm, the time of telecast of *Kelu sakhi*. They also encounter resistance from their husbands who directly relate time spent to money earned. A third reason is that they see no direct or tangible benefits from *Kelu sakhi*.

The next chapter deals with content development and programme production for *Kelu sakhi*.

<sup>2</sup>Using ICTs to Bridge the Digital Divide, Usha Vyasulu Reddi and Rukmini Vemraju. In *Gender in the Information Society-Emerging Issues*. Eds Anita Gurumurthy, Parminder Jeet Singh, Anu Mundkur and Mridula Swamy. New Delhi: Elsevier, 2006, UNDP-APDIP ICT4D series.

<sup>3</sup>Preeti Soni, Project Coordinator, Kutch Mahila Vikas Sangathan, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/campus\\_radio](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/campus_radio)

<sup>4</sup>Sakhi is a trainee-employee of ITfC, mostly post graduates in sociology, who are trained in identifying radio content and programme production.

<sup>5</sup>Need Assessment documents, ITfC, 2006.

<sup>6</sup>A typical day of an average sangha woman:

Time	Activity
5am-9am	Cleaning the house, fetching water, getting ready for the day, preparing breakfast, washing vessels, feeding cattle, milking cows, delivering milk to the dairy
9-9.30 am	Having breakfast, going out to work in the fields
9.30 am- 1pm	Working in the fields, planting/ weeding/manuring / harvesting.
1-2 pm	Lunch
2-5 pm	Working in the fields
5-9 pm	Household chores-washing vessels, fetching fodder, milking cows, delivering milk to the dairy, cooking and having dinner.
9-10 pm	Watching TV

## Content Development

### Identifying Content

Mahila Samakhya's development work for rural women centres around six themes: education, health, savings, legal literacy, panchayati raj institutions and capacity building/ self sufficiency. These form the broad framework for the content of *Kelu sakhi*. However, it is the sangha women, the target audience, who primarily decide the topics of the programmes. Before *Kelu sakhi* went on air, the sangha federations came up with an exhaustive list of such topics. Apart from this, there are two ways in which these ideas reach the ITfC either directly from the sangha women during their visits to the villages or through the Mahila Samakhya. Often, the sangha women also specify the format they would like a programme in- whether as a discussion or a play, for example.

### Developing Content

The patterns of developing content have evolved over time and the process for each slot of *Kelu sakhi* is described below:

For slot 1: Sangha dhvani (showcasing achievers- a positive story), slot 2: Tun Tara Tun (Discussion) and slot 3: Filler or song and slot 5: MSK slot, content development and recording has fallen into a definite pattern. (Refer chapter 3 for details on the different slots in one episode of *Kelu sakhi*)

The ITfC staff attends the monthly planning meetings of MSK, where all MSK's events for the month are charted out with their precise venue, date and time. ITfC plans all recording for the above slots around these events. An arrangement has been worked out whereby 20 per cent of the time at these events is set aside for recording. Depending on the group of sangha women who will be present at each event, ITfC and MSK together pick a topic (from the list of topics provided by the sangha women) and plan a discussion around it for slot 2. The MSK Junior Resource Persons help in identifying the women who could feature on the slot 1 as well. Apart from this, songs and riddles are also recorded for the filler slot. The MSK slot could either feature the events itself, or it could be a story or a song. This system of using time and resources optimally for recording evolved through trial and error. The earlier system of going to villages for recording individual slots consumed far too much time and resources. The humour series, which falls in the final slot 7, however, is more time consuming, both in terms of scripting and production. This series presents themes that the sangha women want to hear about, through a very sensitive portrayal of problems, interpretations and solutions through its characters (Refer Chapter 3 for details). This skit could often come across as "tongue-in-cheek, but it does not alienate the men, because the entire community may listen".<sup>7</sup> At present, this series is scripted by ITfC's Mysore Field Coordinator, Ms.Aparna Kalley.

When the humour series slot was conceived, ITfC held a scriptwriting workshop with well-known script writers from all over the State. Despite thorough briefings about the purpose of the slot and audience profile of *Kelu sakhi*, none of the scripts from the workshop could be used. In their stereotypical portrayal of characters, the women characters would invariably end up being victimised. These portrayals were in contrast with the very stereotypes that MSK was working hard at changing. For, despite their professionalism, these script writers were not conversant with the ground realities of the community they attempted to address. The ITfC team found that the kishoris<sup>8</sup> enacting role plays brought out responses that were far more spontaneous and life-like. This was in spite of the nuances of radio being unknown to them. Eventually, it was a learning experience for ITfC - that it is easier for the community members to adapt to the medium of radio than for theatre professionals to understand the realities of the target community.

With the deadline for launching *Kelu sakhi* close at hand and the scripts from the workshop rendered unusable, Ms Aparna Kalley, pressed by circumstances, discovered that she could write scripts that suited the purpose. A sociologist with experience in the development sector, a keen learner of dialects and having close interaction with the sangha women, she could address the task on hand successfully. These skits are rehearsed and performed by volunteers for a fee of Rs.500 per head for six episodes. This way, the slot could remain on the programme as it provided the added element of entertainment.

### **Ideation**

Ideation refers to the treatment of a theme, and the process of giving it a definite format, carried out jointly by ITfC and MSK. This is a process in which both MSK and ITfC are involved. The MSK brainstorms over the best possible format for a particular theme, but ITfC gives it that final shape. Once the topic and format are decided, lead questions are worked out, which are kept as open ended as possible. All possible aspects of a particular subject are chalked out and put into a logical sequence, based on which more questions are thought of. However, there are no hard and fast rules to this process as one cannot predict the direction the discussion will take. Often, it is presence of mind that carries the situation through. The MSK staff, having been accustomed to a report-writing and case study style, confess that ideation is a difficult task for them. Providing information on a subject in an interesting way and that too in a short span of 5 minutes (the average duration of a programme slot) is a task they find daunting.

The entire process of content development has evolved and fallen into a definite pattern. Despite that there are problems that both the ITfC and MSK encounter from time to time.

### **Problems in Content Development**

1. Inability of sangha women and MSK to think beyond the six themes as laid out in the MSK agenda.
2. Inability to predict the direction a discussion could take and therefore reorienting discussions to bring it back to the original theme.
3. The illiteracy factor making it difficult to teach script writing to the sangha women.
4. Ideation is still a daunting task for the MSK staff who are used to a model of information heavy top-down style of communication.
5. Giving the MSK a sense of ownership over *Kelu sakhi* and to think in terms of radio.

### **Lessons Learnt in Content Development**

1. Conducting an initial need assessment helps understand the target audience- their socio-economic situation, requirements as a receiver, thoughts on ownership and partnership; and also observe how the programme is being received.
2. The higher the level of interaction between producer and target audience, the richer and more diverse the content.
3. Top-down system of communication needs to be avoided if the women must identify with the programme as their own space.
4. Script writing requires great care; and this includes the compere's script, which must be engaging enough to hold the programme together.
5. Illiteracy need not be considered a barrier, as the women are otherwise enthusiastic and eager to learn.
6. While asking questions in an interview, the dialect and vocabulary of the target group needs to be used, to enable the women to answer comfortably.
7. Developing capacity with close relationship is always helpful; and the best capacities are built for working together, as it is difficult to transfer skills through conducting workshops alone.
8. Taking decisions on behalf of the target group could be avoided and one must not underestimate the capacity of these women.
9. One must begin by being completely open. Experience has shown that it is easier for communities to learn media than for professionals to understand the realities of the target community.

Once the content of a slot(s) or episode(s) is finalised, it moves into the stage of programme production.

## **Programme Production**

The essential tasks with regard to programme production include coordinating recordings, rehearsing, recording, editing and packaging. At present, although MSK supports ITfC in coordinating recordings, they have not been directly involved in production yet. Editing and packaging are done entirely by the ITfC staff. Recording follows a pattern of systematic mapping and random recording, scheduled around MSK meetings and events.

In order to ensure recording of broadcast quality, the quality of equipment is paramount. The December 2005 workshop supported by CoL helped in the creation of a content bank, in order to give the trainees valuable hands-on experience. It is a different matter that these programmes could not be used due to poor quality of equipment, which produced a constant hiss and picked up ambient noise. It provided valuable practice sessions, and in due course, ITfC acquired better equipment—both mikes and editing software (Shure mikes and Ediol). Technically, after editing and packaging, the programme is converted into the format that is used for the final broadcast. At this point, volume levels are adjusted and equalised for all slots. The entire ITfC staff gives it one final listening, when last minute corrections are carried out before handing over the episode CD to *Gyan Vani*. The members of the production team also listen to the broadcast; and they immediately call up their colleagues to exchange feedback. One could conclude that ITfC's involvement in programme production is total.

## **Sangha Women and Programme Production**

About 20 sangha women have been trained in the dos and don'ts of recording and they appear to have picked up its nuances, as evident in the recording sessions. For example, they remember to speak into the microphone, and speak only when the mike is passed to them. They also remembered that since faces are not visible on radio, they need to address the person they are talking to. So a typical discussion takes the form of -

*"Well Maadevamma, what do you think of this...?"*

*"Actually, Putdevamma, it may work better this way."*

*"Maadevamma, please repeat it so I may remember" .....*

and so on, as they were taught that repeating a point helps reinforce it in the listeners' minds. Recording a programme also produces a group dynamics of its own. The group may comprise some members who are dominant speakers, and others who require much coaxing but may have better inputs. Even if the talkative women throw up a lot of 'fluff' which will need to be edited, it serves the purpose of provoking the quieter women into offering their points of view.

Although recordings are planned in advance, rehearsing is avoided in case of interviews and discussions. Rather, the participants are briefed and prepared. The interviewing technique is in a manner of talking less but prodding and provoking responses, a method which works well with the illiterate, common folk. Though some sangha women have been trained in basic equipment connections and use of mikes, it will be some time before they will be able to record programmes on their own.

## **MSK and Programme Production**

The MSK staff attended a three day workshop in programme production in January 2007. Their major role in the production as of now is designing the MSK slot. One of the resource persons of MSK mentioned that in the previous district review meeting of MSK she did carry the equipment along (where they recorded some talks and songs), but it was for practice and not really with the intention of using it. Another resource person mentioned that she has learnt to open a file on the computer in which the radio programme is stored. When asked about the level of comfort with technology and equipment, the MSK staff respond that they are not yet quite at ease. "It is alright to hold a mike and talk, but when it comes to recording, it is very difficult to do it with full concentration keeping everything in mind - the background noise, sound level, rerecording in case of mistakes, etc.", says MSK's District Programme Coordinator C.P. Parimala.

MSK's response should be viewed in the context of their heavy workload, wherein their time spent on *Kelu sakhi* is not accounted for. Yet, to a great degree, they have been able to understand radio as a medium, its recording techniques and what it demands. Lack of time stands in the way of carrying out hands-on recording. The training workshop coming up in April<sup>9</sup> is an opportunity to relearn these skills. Programme production too turned up its share of problems and lessons learnt as listed below.

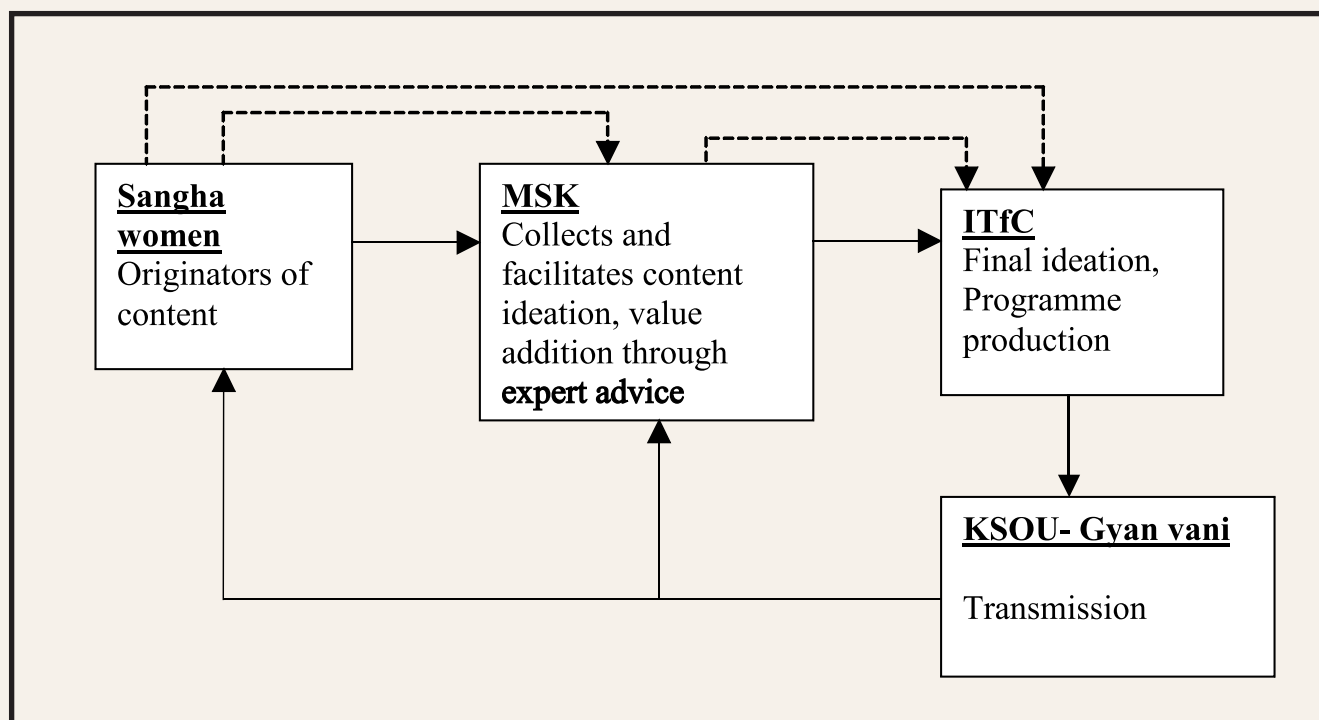
## **Problems in Programme Production**

1. Capturing the character of the community means that the programme is spread over three talukas. Covering all the talukas for programmes is elaborate and time consuming.
2. Deprofessionalisation of the radio medium holds the key, but the MSK will have to be trained to a level where they are comfortable managing people and equipment, including directorial skills.
3. Since recordings are planned around MSK's events, recording schedules are upset during the period when MSK has no events.
4. MSK is unable to spare sufficient time for programme production.
5. There is no content bank; a month's recording gets telecast in a month.
6. There is not enough of music that could be used to signify emotions or time of day and to support the various situations portrayed.

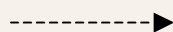
## **Lessons Learnt in Programme Production**

1. It is not necessary to make huge investments in equipment.
2. Define objectives and plan, chart and work on all the details. It would reduce the possibility of errors creeping in.
3. Excessive reliance on packaging and techno-professionals should be avoided.
4. A graded approach should be followed- professional services could be used in the initial stages - but community-specific flexibility needs to be built in.
5. The dynamics of programme production is a trial and error process and should be allowed to run its course.
6. The audience base should be well defined. While audience base can be expanded it should not result in content getting generalised.
7. MSK and sangha women need orientation towards people management and equipment maintenance.
8. Programme production should account for the required time and people.
9. Social capital varies among communities. Having a community radio strengthens this social capital.

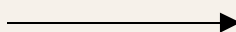
Figure 4.1 depicts the role played by ITfC, MSK and sangha women in Content Development and Programme Production of *Kelu sakhi*.



*Feedback*



*Direct connection*



*The next chapter deals with Impact, skill transfer and sustainability of *Kelu sakhi*.*

<sup>7</sup>Anita Gurumurthy, Executive Director, IT for Change, Bangalore.

<sup>8</sup>Adolescent girls, for whom also MSK runs development programmes.

<sup>9</sup>This workshop was finally conducted between April 17-20, 2007.

**Impact  
Relevance**

Both the MSK staff and sangha women affirmed that *Kelu sakhi* is very relevant to its audience. This opinion is strongly supported by the audience with both *Gyan Vani* representative and the community members (both men and women who have listened to *Kelu sakhi*) voicing it.

When it comes to participation in a discussion or an interview or even in recording songs or narrating riddles, there seems to be a sharp division between the few active sangha women (who are at the helm in all sangha activities and therefore also have higher participation in *Kelu sakhi*) and the majority of the passive listeners. Some of the active sangha women at Chamanahalli Hundi village, H.D.Kote taluka, shared with this researcher that most of the other sangha women often take the approach of “You people are going to listen to your own voices - go and listen. What do we get out of it?” It shows that striking the delicate balance of giving women satisfaction of listening to their own voices on one hand and using *Kelu sakhi* as a medium to educate and entertain a larger audience through external input and expert guidance requires great tact. Not paying attention to such dynamics may amount to some of the slots providing ego gratification/prominence for a few sangha women while alienating others. This in itself can put a question mark on the sustenance and usefulness of the programme in the long run unless handled tactfully.

The active sangha women say that they would like everybody to participate, but it will require some persuasion on the part of ITfC and MSK to help the rest of the sangha women get over their inhibitions. It will mean assuring them that they will all get a chance to feature on the programme, irrespective of whether or not they are great performers. While the medium of radio promotes powerful voices (both literally and figuratively), it must also be able to capture the background voices, even if they aren't in the forefront demanding attention. It is also this group that will have to learn to appreciate that the issues are as much their own, regardless of who features on the programme.

It is likely that a majority of the sangha women will take a while longer to fully appreciate the value of *Kelu sakhi*, especially when viewed from the perspective of the effort that goes into its production. It could be concluded that even while *Kelu sakhi* provides external inputs and education, many of the sangha women are yet to understand it as a means of empowerment. For this reason, it is advisable to maintain its present format for some time to come. The present format should not remain for too long either, in order to retain the interest of the enthusiastic listeners. Overall, the sangha women are highly satisfied with the programme and request that variety be maintained through future episodes.

During the focus group discussion with non-sangha women at Mullur village, Hunsur taluka, one factor that came to light was that *Kelu sakhi* was perceived as a programme meant solely for the sangha women and 'not for us'. It appeared that there were sharp divisions between sangha and non-sangha women and that the sangha members do not share the information from *Kelu sakhi* with other women in the community. Whether this is due to the lack of opportunities to interact or simply because it does not cross the sangha women's mind, is hard to tell. Under the situation, MSK could encourage the sangha women to share the information from *Kelu sakhi* with other women in the community, to maximise its benefits.



## Feedback

The sangha women meet at 8 pm on Mondays for their SHG meetings after which they listen to *Kelu sakhi* in a group. After the broadcast, they contact members of the ITfC team to offer feedback and get clarifications. For this, they have started using mobile phones (which mostly belong to the men in the family or community) to make missed calls. The idea is to curtail expenses at the caller's end; and in a few minutes, a member of the ITfC team returns the call. Otherwise, feedback is obtained either directly from sangha women during field visits or through the MSK at the monthly planning meetings/ cluster level meetings/other events. An appropriate mechanism of measuring feedback is yet to be established, and at present, feedback is more qualitative than quantitative.

For the sangha women, the feedback acts as a trigger point on the topics discussed leading to requests for additional information. Regarding KSOU advertisement that is positioned right at the middle of the programme, the sangha women say that they feel 'bored' listening to it. Initially, they used to think that it was the end of the programme but later this was corrected, with the announcer saying that she'd return 'after the break'.

The feedback from Mahila Samakhya is not much, as they are unable to listen in regularly, either because they come in late from the field or they don't have radio sets at home. ITfC then started dropping the CDs of the programme at their office, but this has not helped either. Although the MSK agree that their feedback is crucial for future broadcasts, not much has been forthcoming, except the general 'it was good'. A system of extracting critical feedback from MSK is yet to evolve.

While the KSOU-Gyan vani representative finds the content relevant to the rural women, KSOU has neither sought nor received any feedback about *Kelu sakhi*. She presumes the general public and students who tune in to the late evening 'general' programmes will find it interesting, and the programme would at least satisfy a 'curiosity element' among its listeners.

## Benefits

Sangha members: When the sangha women were asked what benefits they obtained from *Kelu sakhi*, and what they would have missed, had the programme not been aired, some of the responses were:

*"There would be a feeling of being cut off from the outside world. I now understand the outside world better. We come to know of the events in the village and district. The story about the carrot and child marriage was done in such a way that we understood the issues very well."*<sup>10</sup>

*"Now we are confident and speak a lot better. We are not scared. We find the programme educative. None of us can read or write. Even though we are illiterate, our oral skills are strong. With some more training, we will get a sense of ownership that it is our sangha and our welfare programmes that are coming on radio. Earlier, we never used to step out of our villages, but now we do. We hear about our own joys and sorrows on *Kelu sakhi*."*<sup>11</sup>

During the interviews of sangha members at Chamanahalli hundi village, they were asked if they could recollect the topics of the previous night's episode. The four women, all illiterate, who had gathered recalled all the topics quite correctly and the conversation settled on the issue of child marriage, on which a song had been featured. This triggers a discussion. They discuss the pros and cons of getting a girl married off at an early age. The conversation goes like this:

**Thayamma:** *"The practice of child marriage should be done away with."*

**Madevamma:** *"That is not so easy. I have four daughters; I must finish off my responsibilities as soon as possible."*

**N.Thayamma:** *"The girls are too young at that age-they feel insecure and overwhelmed by the situations they have to face, if married off at an early age."*

**Putsidhamma:** *"If the girl is over 18 at the time of marriage, you can seek legal help if she is deserted by her husband, or if any other problem arises. If she is under 18, nothing can be done, as she was married off against the law."*

It was evident that while the *Kelu sakhi* cannot be expected to change the ground realities that bind rural communities, the programme has definitely triggered a thinking point and brought about a questioning attitude, an achievement in itself. Although it was the more active women who responded to the interview, the impact would sooner or later percolate to other sangha women as well.

### **Mahila Samakhya**

The Mahila Samakhya sees an obvious advantage in being able to (theoretically) address its entire target audience at once, than physically travel to the villages. With the villages spread across three talukas, transmitting information would be expensive and time consuming.

MSK sees *Kelu sakhi* as a space for sangha women for peer learning and expert guidance. Ms. Gowri, Resource Person, MSK, mentioned that *Kelu sakhi* was meant for the women in the community in general and not for the sangha members alone. Perhaps this could be followed up by encouraging the sangha women to share the information with the women in the community; or even, at a later date, make the programme accessible to all women.

However, MSK admits that the change in the women's perception as a result of listening to *Kelu sakhi* is difficult to measure, since it is difficult to separate the impact of the sangha development programmes from that of *Kelu sakhi*. No doubt, *Kelu sakhi* has greatly demystified technology and given confidence to the sangha women that radio production is something that they too can venture into. Moreover, it has given the medium of radio, which was fading into oblivion, a new lease of life. The general opinion within MSK is that *Kelu sakhi* is definitely worth the time and effort spent on it. The major challenge will be to vary content so that it is able to sustain audience interest in the long term. There has been demand from the northern district of Bellary to share the *Kelu sakhi* C.D. so that it could be played to the sangha members there. In the Mysore talukas, much needs to be done to strengthen the audience end, as nearly half the sanghas are yet to acquire radio sets.

“Sangha women can now hear their own voices and their own issues are being dealt with on radio”, said a staff member of MSK. With great variance in participation levels among the sangha women, perhaps the not-so-active sangha women could be helped to see that even if they have not (yet) been featured on the programme, it is about common issues that affect them all.

### **Community**

During the focus group discussion with men at Attiguppe village, Hunsur, the men reported that they found the programme very helpful to the women. At least half of the men in the group had either their wives or mothers in the sangha but only two of these women had shared information from *Kelu sakhi* with their husbands/sons. Even then, most of it was about savings. One of the men mentioned that a direct benefit that has made their life a lot easier is that his wife takes care of savings, bank visits, etc! The men also suggested that a loud speaker could be hoisted on the temple spire so that they too, along with others in the community, could listen to *Kelu sakhi*, along with others in the community.

It could be worked out whether a means exists to make the programme accessible to the men. Yet, it should be made clear that the target audience will be women and the ownership will continue to remain with the sangha women. The focus group discussion with women at Mullur village revealed that most of them had not listened to any episode of *Kelu sakhi* and were therefore unaware of its potential benefits. Further, the sangha in their part of the village did not own a radio set and so the sangha members themselves had no access to the programme. While another sangha in the same village had its own radio set, the sangha meeting place was too far off for them to reach at night.

## **KSOU-Gyan Vani**

The transmitting station, *Gyan vani*, is as yet unable to see *Kelu sakhi* as a programme which is actually supporting and fulfilling *Gyan vani's* agenda of distance education. Discussions with the KSOU representative gave the impression that the only advantage KSOU got from *Kelu sakhi* was airing of the KSOU advertisement during the programme. The guidelines of the *Gyan vani* stations mention that at least forty per cent of the content they produce should be relevant to the community in which the station is located. The station manager, although appreciative of *Kelu sakhi's* content, seemed unaware of these guidelines.

## **Skill Transfer Training Workshops**

Skill transfer from ITfC to MSK and sangha members has so far taken place through training workshops followed by hands-on content development, which is critical.

CEMCA's objective and methodology is aimed at orientation followed by content development. An attempt was made at creation of a content bank on which both MSK members and sangha women worked. This has not translated into hands-on live production as both the sangha women and MSK members go back to their daily routine schedule once the workshops are over. Only when MSK is able to spare sufficient time, can they be actually involved in hands-on production in a real time situation alongside ITfC. Therefore, they are as yet unable to rely on their own skills for programme production. The sangha women have learnt how to speak and respond during the recordings, but have not carried out any recording on their own. So far, the following training workshops have been held:

December 2005: 5-day workshop for all MSK staff and 20 sangha women (supported by CEMCA)

April 2006: One day workshop for MSK

January 2007: 3-day workshop for MSK

April 2007: 3-day workshop for MSK and sangha women (supported by CEMCA)

The workshops include training in both field and studio recording. As of now, it is more at the recording level - how to hold the mike, how to rerecord if something goes wrong, etc. They are taught about the connections, voice modulation - like moving closer to the microphone if the voice comes on too soft, to move away if the voice comes on too loud, etc. They are also trained in how to engage the audience to sustain interest and to repeat a point to reinforce it.

## **Hands-on Experience MSK**

At present, MSK spares one day in a month for ITfC during their monthly planning meetings. When asked if MSK would be able to spare a person for one day every week towards *Kelu sakhi*, they conceded that it may not be possible, as they are already short staffed and overworked. When recordings happen, various resource persons coordinate recordings in different venues simultaneously. This requires a couple of hours at a time, rather than a full day. As of now, there is no formal plan in delegating time towards *Kelu sakhi*. The situation is set to improve from April 07 onwards, when at least a part of the time and resources to be spent on *Kelu sakhi* will be worked into their annual plan. Yet, it is likely to take at least another six months to a year before they are ready to work in parallel and hands on with ITfC on *Kelu sakhi*. The situation is also compounded by the policy of staff transfers within MSK where a staff member could be transferred to any district in the State of Karnataka. If it is one of the trained hands who is transferred, then it will be a while before the new person can perform radio-related duties.

In the process of acquiring radio skills, the communication approach cannot be ignored. “The MSK has picked up a great deal and are listening to issues a lot. But without realising, they have got into the top-down communication model - it is always 'madams' talking to illiterate women. They are seeing for themselves how difficult it is for the sangha women to open up to them and how easily they open up to us”, said one ITfC staff member.<sup>12</sup> The immediate plan is to train MSK in taking over field recordings. They are not ready for training in editing and packaging yet. Even with regard to hands on experience, one major hurdle is that the MSK staff is not available long enough for focused attention.

The MSK also admits that part of the skill of radio is the ability to relate to the sangha women at their level. The shift from the top down communication pattern is possible only through conscious effort; and the younger staff will be able to take to the format much more easily. Another ITfC staff member felt that once the MSK is able to take up at least part of the production, “We will be one step removed from *Kelu sakhi*; we wouldn't be at the heart of things. More importantly, with skill transfer, one of the issues is that they [MSK] have never looked at content the way content can be looked at. Content is not just telling things to people, it is also provoking other people's responses and discussions that are effective. It will help if all of them discuss the pros and cons of each episode. They need to know that it is not about getting it right all the time, its knowing how something that went wrong could be fixed. That level is not yet happening.”<sup>13</sup>

### **Sangha Women: The Challenge of Illiteracy on Skill Transfer**

Most of the sangha women, even those who have taken on leadership roles, are illiterate. During the discussion with sangha women about their potential in acquiring radio skills, they argued that their oral skills were strong and radio being an oral medium, literacy should not be a barrier. One of the Executive Directors of ITfC had this to say about skill transfer to illiterate sangha women - “With illiterate women, it is difficult to have a script. But their acumen is very high. By virtue of being an oral and non-literate medium, radio should provide ample opportunity to cash in on their acumen and other skills. They learn much faster and their power of retention is much higher. If the women take to the programme, a process may evolve wherein we can do without written scripts.”<sup>14</sup> The Field coordinator supports this argument - “We think of formats which are less structured in terms of scripts. We think of features and plays that can be worked down to a discussion. It is likely that the humour series may take on another form.”

The producer too narrates his experience in working around illiteracy - “My approach was to first colloquialise written language but the *kishoris* disagreed. So we let them speak their own language. There should be no pretensions here, no need for any image that may alienate them. We also didn't want MSK to use development jargon. The whole idea was to demystify radio.”<sup>15</sup>

The process of skill transfer needs to be strengthened. Under the present circumstances, it is likely to take MSK nearly six months to a year of working on *Kelu sakhi*, along with ITfC, before they are ready for take over.

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<sup>10</sup>Mangala, 19, sangha member, Chamanahalli hundi village, H.D.Kote taluk.

<sup>11</sup>Thayamma, Madevamma, Putsidhamma and N.Thayamma, sangha members of Chamanahalli hundi village, H.D.Kote taluk

<sup>12</sup>Aparna Kalley, Field Coordinator, ITfC Mysore Field Office.

<sup>13</sup>Kripa Thimmiah, Project Associate, ITfC Mysore Field Office

<sup>14</sup>Parminder Jeet Singh, Executive Director, ITfC, Bangalore

<sup>15</sup>Abdul Rehman Pasha, Producer, *Kelu sakhi*

Community radio needs to adapt itself to the needs of the community it is based in. Even as different communities shape the medium differently, long term continuity requires a sustainability plan.

When asked the basic question of whether it is realistic to expect the MSK to take over *Kelu sakhi* after a point, two of the three MSK staff interviewed answered, "It is possible", and one of them answered, "I hope so." ITfC's response was - "Yes - if they have staff - a team of dedicated people." When asked how long it would take before MSK is ready for the take over, the general response from both ITfC and MSK was "Two years from now." While the success or sustainability of community radio cannot be judged by the pace of skill transfer or how quickly the take over happens, a plan needs to be chalked out by all parties involved, including the precise delegation of duties over specified time periods.

With regard to *Kelu sakhi*, such a formal plan is yet to be worked out. As of now, there is only a general understanding that "MSK will take over after some point", which is too early to define. MSK's satisfaction over ITfC producing *Kelu sakhi* is obvious but two major hurdles stand in the way of MSK's take over.

The first is that as an organisation, the MSK is already under-staffed, with many vacancies yet to be filled in. With an already heavy work load, *Kelu sakhi*, despite the benefits, is an additional responsibility for MSK. A chain is only as strong as its weakest link; and in this perspective, no group of people can be overworked beyond a point or for a long period, for a sustainable plan.

The second is that the MSK staff at the Mysore office is itself in no position to decide if they can employ additional staff for *Kelu sakhi*, as these decisions are made at the State level. "At best, we can only propose it and ITfC can recommend it", said the District Programme Coordinator.

At present, it takes the equivalent of three full time staff at ITfC to produce each episode of *Kelu sakhi*. It is now ITfC's responsibility to see every episode through and to finally hand over the episode CD to KSOU. Editing and packaging is also handled entirely by ITfC. There are critical decisions and sound judgements being applied at every point. This pressure leaves very little time for hands-on skill transfer to the MSK, who are in turn unable to afford time.

Producing a radio programme requires time, effort and the ability to draw the best out of both people and technology. While technology is a tool, no matter how much it is de-scaled, it requires people with commitment and the capacity to understand the target audience's needs to use it well. Producing weekly episodes throws up its own demands and must be satisfied, if the benefits from *Kelu sakhi* are to be continued and maximised.

Therefore, to begin with, MSK will need to put in a team of 2-3 people, for whom *Kelu sakhi* will be the primary responsibility. There needs to be a nodal person or a group of people responsible for critical decisions which are based as much on understanding of society and human nature as technology and equipment. This team will need to work with ITfC for a minimum of six months on programme production before the take-over.

After drawing information from all stakeholders, and especially from ITfC, MSK and sangha women, one possible sustainability plan is proposed here.

Stage 1: Six months- One year	MSK staff undergo training in programme production, with practice sessions
Stage 2: Six months- One year	Out of the trained staff, 2-3 dedicated people be selected, who will work hands-on with ITfC. This group also delegates content development and coordination duties to sangha women who are capable of taking on these tasks.
Stage 3: After 2 years	MSK takes over, but one consultant director/coordinator from ITfC be available to ensure objectivity and fair decision making.

However, it is important to keep on hold the take over until MSK is fully prepared. The immediate challenge is for MSK to feel the sense of ownership towards *Kelu sakhi* and develop a more direct rapport with KSOU. In the long run, it will also need to work out an alternative plan for financial sustainability. Suggestions like collecting a subscription from sangha women, however meagre, appear far fetched. It is not something for which they will be able to pay for a long time to come. If the sangha women, post training, are able to take on the responsibility of identifying and developing content and help coordinate recordings, that will be sufficient contribution to expect from them.

On the frequency of future programmes, the following question was put to the MSK staff and sangha women.

"If MSK wants to run the programme independently after a point

Now that MSK is aware of the time, resources, talent, skill and money that producing each half hour episode of *Kelu sakhi* demands, which of the following (Hypothetical) plans would work best, in your opinion? Why? Please explain."

- a. Have half an hour episode every week as per the existing pattern
- b. Have only two episodes a month
- c. Have just one episode a month
- d. Have the half hour programme every week as usual, but give a break for a month/(s)
- e. Have the half hour programme every week as usual, but make it simpler (if possible), so that production consumes less time and resources.

MSK: All three MSK staff interviewed were of the opinion that a weekly programme would be better, even if it is difficult. "A weekly programme gets the women into the habit of listening, without losing its continuity. Only under the most difficult circumstance should it be made fortnightly", they replied.

Sangha women: While the sangha women were unable to offer a clear-cut answer, they mentioned that the peak earning season (planting and harvesting) is a busy time for them, when they get very little rest (4-5 hours of sleep). During this season, it becomes difficult for them to spare time for sangha meetings and also for *Kelu sakhi*.

When asked about what they would be expected to contribute if the programme continues, all they could give were blank stares...they had obviously not thought that far. As of now, it makes little difference to them whether MSK or ITfC is producing it as long as they get to listen to topics of their choice. The only request they had was that the topics should vary to prevent monotony from setting in.

After in-depth interaction with all stakeholders, some prerequisites for successful running and pitfalls to avoid (of a community radio programme) have been identified.

### **Prerequisites for successful running**

1. Level of interaction between target community, producer and institution (if applicable) should be continuous.
2. Have sufficient human resource - in other words, a dedicated team and a target audience that is interested and supportive.
3. In case of MSK sanghas, a fair amount of social capital has already been built and this can be cashed on.
4. Skill transfer should include adequate formal training and should be followed up with hands on experience without much time lapse.

5. Identification of skills that are vested with the community or institution: these skills should be tapped, but technicians could be hired for other tasks, including editing, for example. However, prepare the in-house team to manage the technicians.
6. In the process of using external consultancy services, the basic agenda, i.e., women's empowerment in this case, should not be hijacked.

### **Where do the fault lines lie?**

1. The pace of skill transfer or quickness in take-over should not be the deciding factor for sustainability.
2. The take over must not be attempted until the new team is fully trained and prepared for their new role.
3. In keeping with the lifestyles and needs of the target audience, it would do well not to make listening too binding on the sangha women during the harvest and sowing period.
4. The quality and output of the equipment must be checked. Or else, the entire content bank produced might be wasted.
5. Content should not become monotonous or too predictable over a period of time.
6. It is important to maintain good relationships with all stakeholders and liaise with associated agencies.
7. Listenership should not be increased at the cost of generalizing content. A target group feels a sense of ownership when individual members feel they can affect a change in it.
8. Understand that new responsibilities mean more time, personnel and resources. Account for it.

### **A final word on empowerment**

*Kelu sakhi*, the radio programme, is primarily an empowerment tool for the sangha members. When asked, "What kind of empowerment has *Kelu sakhi* brought to the rural women", some of the significant responses (from various stakeholders) that emerged were as follows:

1. Recognition of rural women's voices on a public medium.
2. An alternative social support network - the MSK is an alternative social support network for the sangha women; but they meet only once in two months. Radio enhances this support network.
3. Provision of precise information on issues that affect their every day lives- property rights, domestic violence, nutrition and health, government schemes, etc.
4. Identity building for women with similar experiences; instilling a sense of independence and self worth.

\* \* \*

*Kelu sakhi*, a radio programme for disadvantaged rural women in the talukas of Mysore, was inaugurated on November 27, 2006 and became a regular feature from December 25, 2006, with half an hour broadcasts every Monday at 9 pm. This radio programme uses a design that combines elements of both community and campus radio formats. While on the one hand women are able to tell their own stories and assert their perspective as a community (through the institution of MSK), the campus radio format provides a pedagogic tool as well as a space for organisation building. The need for such an ICT intervention was felt when the MSK programme had reached a stage of having successfully developed a cadre of women leaders among its target groups, who are articulate socially and oriented to address women's rights and general community issues.

The primary target audience comprises the women of the Mahila Samakhya sanghas. The three talukas of H.D.Kote, Hunsur and Nanjangud, where the programme is being broadcast, has a total of 150 sanghas. An average of 20 members per sangha puts the total potential listenership at 3000 disadvantaged women. At present, only about half the sanghas have acquired radio sets, so the listenership is estimated to be about 50 per cent and growing.

In taking the form of community radio, for *Kelu sakhi*, it is the sangha women themselves from whom the primary content ideas originate. These ideas are collected either directly by the ITfC, the producer, or MSK (the institution on behalf of whom *Kelu sakhi* is produced). At present, a considerable part of the process of 'ideation' (treatment- giving an idea a definite format), and the bulk of production is handled by ITfC. At the end of data collection for this study in the first week of April, *Kelu sakhi* was in its 14<sup>th</sup> episode. Overall, the programme is being received extremely well, owing to ITfC's dedicated staff, their social commitment, understanding of the medium of radio and close interaction with MSK and the sangha women. But it is expected that in the course of time, the MSK will be able to take over *Kelu sakhi*, and a realistic estimate of the time required for take over is two years from now.

While the success and sustainability of a radio programme does not lie in the pace of skill transfer or even in how quickly the take over happens, having a sustainability plan is paramount.

A major hurdle that stands in the way of skill transfer and subsequent take over by MSK is that they are unable to afford focused attention - the time and personnel required to take on this role. They are already understaffed as an organisation and radio has come in as an additional responsibility. Matters are compounded because the decision to introduce additional staff for this programme lies with the State office of Mahila Samakhya, and not the District Programme Coordinator.

At the listener's end, the situation is different. Since radio had been almost completely replaced by television, *Kelu sakhi* required the medium of radio itself to make a comeback. This process began with the sanghas acquiring radio sets in a phased manner with 50 per cent subsidy from ITfC. Despite the overall usefulness of *Kelu sakhi*, it could also be concluded that a majority of the sangha women would take a while longer to fully appreciate the value of the programme, especially when viewed in the context of the effort that goes into producing it. Engaging with a radio programme accentuates the prevailing dynamics in a group. On an average, 4-5 women in every sangha are very active and are at the helm of sangha activities. But radio, through the MSK, needs to work towards encompassing each sangha woman, even the non-performers, to identify *Kelu sakhi* as 'her space'. At present, there seems to be a divide between the few active ones and the majority of passive listeners. Bridging this gap will mean allowing each sangha woman to be featured on the programme, so that it does not amount to ego gratification for some and alienation for the rest. It is precisely this silent majority who must be helped to appreciate that the issues that feature on the programme are as much their own, even if the voice is of a peer.



One of the most striking changes that *Kelu sakhi* has brought about is in instilling a questioning attitude and the capacity to use features on the programme as trigger points for discussion. The sangha women also need to be encouraged to share the learning from the programme with their family members and non-sangha women in the community, whose support is vital in the long run. At present, at least in some villages, it is perceived as something meant exclusively for sangha women. KSOU, the transmitting station, has also not learnt to fully understand that in broadcasting *Kelu sakhi*, its own agenda of distance education is being fulfilled. The only benefit they see as of now is of the KSOU advert being aired on *Kelu sakhi*, suggesting that the stakes are uneven.

However, the onus of taking *Kelu sakhi* forward and into the future clearly lies with the MSK. A radio programme does not run on its own, but requires a team of dedicated people who can draw out the best from both people and technology. The MSK will need to make the proposal for additional staff for *Kelu sakhi* to the State office, backed by strong recommendation from ITfC, for even the state office is reported to have recognised the benefits from the programme. The MSK also require more training and hands on work experience along with ITfC for at least six months before they will be ready for a take over. The training workshops conducted so far seems to serve the purpose of orienting MSK to the medium and equipping them to take up programme production will take a while longer. In the present state, they are unable to provide critical feedback on the programme or the focused attention that skill transfer demands.

In view of the current situation, it could be concluded that MSK will require at least two years for take over, following which they will still require a consultant director/coordinator, a 'nodal advisor' who will guide them through critical decisions. Taking over the programme also means growing out of the 'top-down communication model' from MSK to sangha women, prevalent until now.

Since the target audience consists of sangha women, mostly agricultural labourers, their lifestyle needs to be kept in mind in deciding the future of the programme. *Kelu sakhi* is a tool for empowerment; it is education and entertainment rolled into one. In the interest of continuity, listening sessions could be made less binding during the peak earning period, which sangha women say is a busy time for them with very little rest.

Different communities shape the medium differently and in this regard, MSK and sangha women would add their own characteristics to it. However, such flexibility should be allowed; the experience will be all the more invaluable when it is home grown. A financial sustainability plan needs to be worked out, as suggestions like collecting subscriptions from sangha women remain farfetched. With time, the sangha women should be trained to handle duties in content development and coordinating recordings which will be a sufficient contribution to expect from them.

The following recommendations are therefore being made in the interest of long term sustainability:

- *MSK, in consultation with ITfC should work out a detailed time line for skill transfer and take over.*
- *Alternate sources of revenue generation for financial sustainability should be explored.*
- *Allow sangha women and MSK some hands - on experience in programme production.*
- *MSK to build independent rapport with KSOU.*

In the final analysis, it is commendable what CEMCA has helped achieve. It is facilitating the use of the medium of radio as a development tool - in bringing useful information through imaginative formats to disadvantaged rural women, and eventually instilling in them a questioning attitude. For the benefits to sustain, however, the target group and the producer needs to work closely over a longer period of time, until the former are comfortable enough to 'appropriate' the medium on their own.

## Appendix I: Interview Guidelines for KSOU-Gyan vani

1. Personal Information
  - a)Name.....
  - b)Designation.....
  - c)Qualification.....
  - d)Years of work experience.....
- 2.What was your initial reaction when CEMCA, in partnership with ITfC and MSK, approached you with the proposal of airing the programme Kelu sakhi on Gyan vani? How willing or prepared were you for such a proposition?
- 3.Have you come across other such instances of community programmes being aired on campus radio format? If yes, how would you rate the success of this concept (of using campus radio for community programmes)?
- 4.In your opinion, is it a workable arrangement in the long run to use campus radio format forcommunity programmes?
- 5.Now that the Government has announced in November 2006, that NGOs and other "reputed"voluntary organisations can set up and run FM broadcasting stations, What changes do you think are likely in radio broadcasting?
- 6.Programme slot: Monday, (Time) 9 pm-9.30 pm, Tuesday repeat .....
- 7.What criteria were kept in mind while deciding the slot of the programme Kelu sakhi?
- 8.How far do you think the content of the programme Kelu sakhi is relevant to its target audience- primarily the disadvantaged rural women?
- 9.How far do you think the content of the programme is relevant to your audiences- primarily the students?
- 10.How would you rate the quality of the programme Kelu sakhi-both technical and content/presentation?
- 11.Do you have any suggestions for its improvement both technically and content-wise?
12. Has the broadcasting of Kelu sakhi helped KSOU in its activities in any way?
- 13.What channels of feedback exists about Kelu sakhi?
- 14.Has Gyan vani sought or received any feedback regarding Kelu sakhi? Yes / No
- 15.If Yes.
  - a)From whom
  - b)What was the feedback?
  - c)What was Gyan vani's reaction to it

## Appendix II : Interview Guidelines for ITfC /Chief Producer

### I. Personal Information

- 1.Name .....
- 2.Age .....
- 3.Designation .....
- 4.Qualification .....
- 5.Years of work experience .....

## II. General

1. How did the partnership between ITfC and Mahila Samakhya (Karnataka) and the decision to use community radio as one of the components of the Mahiti Manthana project come about?
2. For how long has ITfC been preparing for the production of Kelu sakhi, before its actual launch in November 2006? What was the nature of this preparation? (Research/content bank, etc)
3. Please give an overview of how such a radio programme is produced.
4. What is your specific role/duties as chief/key producer?

## III. Content Development

5. Please explain the process of content development as it takes place for each episode of Kelu sakhi.
6. How are the issues for each episode of Kelu sakhi arrived at?
7. During the process of content development, what is the level of interaction between ItfC and
  - a) MSK and in what capacity?
  - b) Members of the listening group and in what capacity?
  - c) Community members outside the listening group and in what capacity?
8. As far as content development is concerned, would you consider ITfC as the prime mover or the facilitator?
9. What are the major problems or obstacles that you face in the process of content development?
10. What would you say about the level of enthusiasm among the women? Are they forthcoming with new ideas each time, or is there a dearth of topics?
11. Would you say that the process of developing content has 'evolved' over time, and that the women are more involved now than when you first started out? Explain.
12. What is the process of 'ideation'- once the content or issues have been decided?
13. What has been your experience in working with illiterate women? Does it pose a challenge, particularly because they cannot write down or record any of the matter? If so, how do you overcome it?
14. What are the major lessons learnt, with regard to content development, in the course of these continued sessions between ITfC and MSK? Do you think there are pitfalls to be avoided?

## IV. Programme Production

15. Please explain the process of programme production, once the issues are finalised.
16. How are the various production duties divided/ delegated between ITfC staff and MSK?
17. Has the process of partnership in programme production evolved in the course of time, possibly with the MSK women taking on more responsibility?
18. To what extent do you think the women are comfortable in handling technology and equipment? Has their level of comfort increased?
19. What has been the major difficulties with regard to programme production?
20. What do you think are the pitfalls to be avoided in programme production?

## V. Sustainability

21. Is there any skill transfer from ITfC to the Sangha women? What are its modalities?
22. Is it realistic or feasible to expect MSK to take over running the radio programme after a point?
23. What are the practical issues involved in such a take over?
24. Does ITfC have a handing-over plan? What are the strategies in place for that?
25. For sustainability and successful running of such a programme, what factors do you think are prerequisites?

26. Were there any particular conditions or circumstances that made this production difficult at times? Are there any aspects to be avoided?
27. What is the cost involved in producing one episode of *Kelu sakhi*?
28. If the programme is handed over to MSK after a point, will MSK be in a position to sustain it financially?
29. Have you received any feedback about *Kelu sakhi*? Yes/No  
If Yes,
  - a. From whom
  - b. What was the feedback
  - c. What is your reaction to it?
30. In your understanding, what is the kind of 'empowerment' that *Kelu sakhi* has brought to the rural women?

## **Appendix III: Interview Guidelines for Mahila Samakhya (Karnataka) Sangha Officials**

### **I. Personal Information**

1. Name .....
2. Age.....
3. Education.....
4. No of children: Boy ....(Age)..... Girl.....(Age).....
5. Average monthly household income .....
6. Duration of membership in MSK.....(years)
7. Designation at MSK .....
8. Occupation.....
9. Husband's education .....
10. Husband's occupation.....

### **II. General**

1. How did the partnership between Mahila Samakhya and ITfC and the decision to use radio in the Mahiti Manthana project happen?
2. Describe your initial reaction towards the programme *Kelu sakhi*, and the idea of using radio to address the concerns of women and the community? (Inhibitions, excitement). *What is the meaning of Kelu sakhi?*
3. How many episodes of *Kelu sakhi* have you listened to so far? ....
4. Total no of episodes aired so far .....
5. Generally, what kind of topics are covered in *Kelu sakhi*?
6. In all, how many SHG members participate in the sangha kaksha in this taluka?...
7. How many are non-participants?.....

### **III. Content Development**

8. Please explain how you arrive at the issues/topics for each episode of *Kelu sakhi*.
9. Do you find them relevant to the life and needs of the women? If yes, in what way?
10. If not, why not?
11. What is ITfC's role in content creation?
12. Once the topics of an episode are finalised, how do you take it through 'ideation'? How far does ITfC help you in ideation?
13. How much of this process of 'ideation' have you been able to grasp-do you think your skills have improved with time?
14. Do you face any difficulties at the stage of ideation? If so, what kind of difficulties?
15. Personally, what has been your contribution towards content creation? Have you suggested any of the topics? Give details.

#### IV. Programme Production

16. Please explain the elements used in *Kelu sakhi* - voice over, music, vox-populi, etc.
17. How do you identify the women who will deliver these?
18. Please explain the process by which you delegate duties among yourselves in relation to programme production.
19. How comfortable do you feel handling the radio technology and equipment? Do you face any problems?
20. How comfortable do you think the women are, in handling radio technology and equipment?
21. In case of programme production, how was the work shared between ITfC and MSK in the initial stages?
22. At present, what are the tasks in programme production that MSK can handle independently?
23. Are any of the tasks in programme production seen as particularly difficult? If yes, give details.
24. What do you think can be done to overcome them?
25. Do you often face problems with regard to interpersonal conflicts/clash of interests-either in content development or programme production?
26. What do you feel are the limitations of using radio as an empowerment tool?

#### V. About *Kelu Sakhi*

27. Do you find the programme helpful/useful to you? Yes/No  
Yes (In what way)..... No (Why not).....
28. Do you think the programme is helpful to the sangha kaksha women? Yes/No  
If yes, (In what way)..... If No, why not .....
29. What were your initial expectations from the programme?
30. Are you satisfied with the programme, and the way it is running? Yes/No  
If No, what could change to make it more effective?
31. Is the programme slot convenient for the *sangha* women?
32. Do you think that once the novelty of the programme wears off, participation and interest among the women would wane?
33. Has *Kelu sakhi* changed your perceptions about issues in any way? Please explain.
34. What would you consider the most important benefit from the programme  
i) for MSK  
ii) for the *sangha kaksha* women
35. What other benefits(if any) has the programme provided  
i) for MSK  
ii) for the *sangha kaksha* women
36. In your opinion, what are the prerequisites for successful running of *Kelu sakhi* in terms of I) Technology ii) Content iii) Human resource
37. What are the major pitfalls to be avoided if the programme should run successfully?
38. In your opinion, is *Kelu sakhi* worth the time and effort spent on it?

#### VI. Future

39. Would you like the programme *Kelu sakhi* to continue? Why/Why not? Explain.
40. Does MSK want to take over the programme independently after a point? or would you prefer ITfC to continue running it?
41. If MSK wants to run it,
  - a. How much time will be required for the take over?
  - b. Is there a plan in place, in consultation with ITfC, for such a take over?
  - c. If not, will you be working out this plan some time in future? (Go to Q47)

42. If MSK does not want a take-over, (Skip Q47)
  - a. Why not?
  - b. What are the obstacles?
  - c. Will continued support from ITfC over a longer period help? In what way?
43. If the programme should continue, what will it demand in terms of
 

Time: From MSK ..... From *Sangha kaksha* women.....

Money: From MSK .....From *Sangha kaksha* women.....

Services: From MSK .....From *Sangha kaksha* women.....
44. Do you think MSK is in a position to deliver the following required if the programme should continue: Give details.
  - a. time.....
  - b. money.....
  - c. services.....
45. Do you think the *sangha kaksha* women will be able to deliver the following if the programme should continue?: Give details.
  - a. time.....
  - b. money.....
  - c. services .....
46. How would you address the long term financial sustainability of *Kelu sakhi*?
47. If MSK wants to run the programme independently after a point:  
 Now that MSK is aware of the time, resources, talent, skill and money that producing each half hour episode of *Kelu sakhi* demands, which of the following (hypothetical) plans would work best, in your opinion? Why? Please explain.
  - a. Have half an hour episode every week as per the existing pattern
  - b. Have only two episodes a month
  - c. Have just one episode a month
  - d. Have the half hour programme every week as usual, but give a break for a month/(s)
  - e. Have the half hour programme every week as usual, but make it simpler (if possible), so that production consumes less time and resources.

## **Appendix IV: Interview Guidelines for members of Sangha-kaksha (listening group)**

### **I. Personal Information**

- 1.Name .....
- 2.Age.....
- 3.Address.....
- 4.Taluka .....
- 5.Education.....
- 6.No of children.....Boy ....Age.....Girl.....Age....
- 7.Occupation.....
- 8.Duration of SHG membership .....(years)
- 9.Husband's occupation.....
- 10.Husband's education.....
11. Present Media exposure: Newspapers/ TV/ Radio/ Traditional media/ Others (Give details) .....

### **II. About *Kelu sakhi***

1. When you first heard that a programme called *Kelu sakhi* was going to be launched, what was your reaction to it? (Enthusiasm, apprehension, etc)
2. How many episodes of *Kelu sakhi* have you listened to so far?.....
3. Is the programme slot convenient?
4. Do you normally listen to the Monday 9 pm telecast or the repeat?
5. Generally, what kind of topics are covered in the programme?
6. Do you find the programme useful or helpful to you in anyway? If yes, in what way?
7. If no, why not? What changes should be made to make it useful and relevant?
8. What were your expectations from the programme? How far would you say these expectations have been fulfilled?

9. Do you find *Kelu sakhi* as an educative and informative programme? Does it interest you? Could you share with us some of the things you have learnt from the programme?
10. Do you like the format of the programme? Is it entertaining enough to hold your attention for half an hour, or is it boring that you have to strain to keep your attention?
11. What would you consider the most important benefit you have obtained from this programme? What is the greatest value you see in the programme?

### III. Content Development

12. Have you contributed in the content creation in any of the episodes? If yes, give details.
13. If yes, did you find ITfC staff and Sangha officials receptive to your ideas and suggestions?
14. Please describe the process by which the issues for each episode are decided upon. How much role does the listening group have in this process?
15. Do you find any difficulties at this stage- personal conflicts/clash of interests? If yes, please explain the nature of such difficulties, and how you think it can be overcome.
16. Once the issues for an episode are finalised, how does the process of 'ideation' and putting it into a format take place?

### IV. Programme Production

17. Have you contributed or played any role in programme production in any of the episodes? If yes, give details.
18. If yes, how comfortable do you feel in handling equipment and technology? What are the difficulties, if any, that you have faced in this process?

### V. Impact

19. Has this programme changed your perceptions/attitude to issues in any way? If yes, in what way; If no, why not?
20. Had this programme not been aired, what do you think you would have missed?
21. Would you agree that this programme has 'opened up your world'? What has it brought you from the outside that you did not have earlier?
22. Would you agree that this programme has given women like you a common platform? Please explain.
23. Do you face any objection from your family members regarding participation in the *Kelu sakhi* listening group?
24. If yes, from whom, and why do they object? How do you handle it?
25. Do you talk about *Kelu sakhi* and what you learnt from it with your family members? If yes, who do you share it with, and what is their reaction to it?
26. How do the discussions post-episode help?
27. How has *Kelu sakhi* made a difference to the interpersonal relations and bonding among the SHG members (if at all)? Has it improved relations, or added to tensions? Please explain.
28. Now that you are part of the *Kelu sakhi* listening group, do you notice any difference in the interpersonal relationships within your family, and the way in which family members relate to you? Please explain.
29. What would you consider as the limitations of the programme *Kelu Sakhi*?
30. What would you consider as limitations of using the radio format as a tool in addressing common concerns?
31. Would you like the programme *Kelu sakhi* to continue? If yes, what are your long term expectations from the programme? If no, why not?
32. Do you think that once the novelty of *Kelu sakhi* wears off, members would become disinterested?
33. Should the programme continue, what will you have to regularly contribute in terms of
  - i) Time ..... Are you in a position to do so Yes/No If no, why not...
  - ii) Money.....Are you in a position to do so Yes/No If no, why not...
  - iii) Services.....Are you in a position to do so Yes/No If no, why not...
34. For the long term sustainability of the programme, what would you consider as prerequisites?

35. What do you think are the pitfalls one must avoid, if the programme should run successfully?
36. If you would like the programme to continue and be run by the community, Now that MSK is aware of the time, resources, talent, skill and money that producing each half hour episode of *Kelu sakhi* demands, which of the following (hypothetical) plans would work best, in your opinion? Why? Please explain.
- Have half an hour episode every week as per the existing pattern
  - Have only two episodes a month
  - Have just one episode a month
  - Have the half hour programme every week as usual, but give a break for a month/(s)
- Have the half hour programme every week as usual, but make it simpler (if possible), so that production consumes less time and resources.

## Appendix V: Interview Guidelines for non-participants of SHGs

### I. Personal Information

- Name .....
- Age.....
- Address.....
- Taluka .....
- Education.....
- No of children..... Boy .... Age..... Girl..... Age....
- Occupation.....
- Duration of SHG membership .....(years)
- Husband's occupation.....
- Husband's education.....

### II. About *Kelu sakhi* and non-participation

- Have you heard about the programme *kelu sakhi*? Yes/ No
- If yes, from whom have you heard?
- Generally, what do you think the programme is about?
- Have you listened to any episode of *Kelu sakhi*?
- What are the reasons for your non-participation in the *sangha-kaksha*?
  - No time .....
  - Resistance from family.....
  - The programme is not useful/relevant.....
  - Others.....
- What are the factors that could make you participate in the *sangha kaksha*?

## Appendix VI: Guidelines for Focus Group Discussion: Community (Men)

- Have you heard about the programme *Kelu sakhi*? Yes/No
- If yes, through whom have you heard about it?
- What do you think are the issues covered in the programme?
- In your opinion, are these issues relevant to the women?
- In your opinion, are these issues relevant to the larger community?
- Does any woman in your family participate in the *sangha kaksha*?
- If yes, who, and do you encourage or resist? Why?
  - Does she share the information from the programme with your family?
  - If yes, how do family members react?
- Has this made any difference to the interpersonal relationships within the family in any way?
- How much impact has *Kelu sakhi* had on the overall development in the village, in your opinion?
- Is the programme relevant to the development issues facing the village?
- Do you, as husbands/fathers-in-law/brothers/fathers/sons/ perceive it as a threat when women from your family participate in the *sangha kaksha*?
- If yes, in what way is it a threat?
- If no, how far will you be willing to support her?
- Do you think that for the continuity of *Kelu sakhi*, it requires support from the men in the community as well?
- If yes, will you be able to provide support, at least in principle?
- In your opinion, will it be good for the community if the programme *Kelu sakhi* continues?



17. a) If yes, what are the intrinsic benefits you see for the community from the programme?  
b) If no, why not?

Guidelines for Focus Group Discussion: Community (Women)

1. Have you heard about the programme Kelu sakhi? Yes/No
2. If yes, through whom have you heard about it?
3. What do you think are the issues covered in the programme?
4. Do you think these issues are relevant to the women in your village?  
If yes, in what way? If No, why not?
5. Do you think these issues are relevant to the larger community? If yes, in what way?  
If No, why not?
6. Does any woman in your family participate in the sangha kaksha?
7. If yes, who, and do you encourage or resist? Why?
8. Does she share the information from the programme with your family?
9. If yes, how do family members react?
10. Do you think this has changed the interpersonal relationships within the family in any way?  
Please explain.
11. Is the programme relevant to the development issues facing the village?
12. According to you, in what way has Kelu sakhi addressed the development concerns  
in your village?
13. In your opinion, will it be good for the community if the programme  
Kelu sakhi continues?
14. If yes, will you be able to provide support, at least in principle?  
a. Will you be able to make any other contribution? Give details.
15. What are the intrinsic benefits, if any, that you see for the community from the  
programme? If no, why not?

## Appendix VII: List of Participants

### I. Karnataka State Open University (Gyan Vani)

Ms. Jahanara Begum, Station Manager

### II. ITforChange, Bangalore

Anita Gurusurthy, Executive Director

Parminder Jeet Singh, Executive Director

M. Abdul Rehman Pasha, (Consultant)

Aparna Kalley, Field Coordinator, Mysore Field Office

Kripa Thimmiah, Project Associate, Mysore Field Office

### III. Mahila Samakhya (Karnataka)

C.P. Parimala, District Programme Coordinator

Gowri R., Resource Person

Savita Kumari T.S., Resource Person

### IV. Listening Group (Sangha Kaksha)

N. Thayamma, 32

Thayamma, 40

Madevamma, 45

Mangala, 19

Putdevamma, 40 (Chamanahalli hundi, H.D. Kote taluk)

### V. Non-participants

Gowamma, 33

Savitamma, 35 (Chamanahalli hundi, H.D. Kote taluk)

### VI. Community (Men/Women-Focus Group Discussion)

Men (Attippe Village, Hunsur Taluk)	Women (Mullur Village, Hunsur Taluk)
Kanakaraj, 24	Gowramma, 30
Ramaswamy, 35	Gowramma, 26
Venkatesh, 27	Shivamma, 30
Shivakumar, 27	Chikalamma, 40
Mahesh, 23	Shivanajamma, 30
Puttaniah, 47	Saroja, 30
Lokesh, 47	Sundaramma, 30

## Observation

During the data collection for this study, the researcher and Programme Officer, CoL had an opportunity to witness one listening session of Kelu sakhi at the village of Hosavaranchi, Hunsur taluk.

Nearly 40 sangha women were gathered in a low lit hall. We arrived at 15 minutes to nine. Usually, two out of the three sanghas listened here, but today, the ITfC Field Coordinator had requested all of them to listen to the programme here in this hall, in anticipation of our visit.

There was a bit of a hush when we entered, as we found the women collecting their monthly dues of Rs 10, a regular contribution towards their savings of the self-help groups. The group was restless, they chatted and argued over issues that we could not understand. We figured it could be the money bit, or because some of them came in late. They asked for our introduction and why we had come.

We asked if they faced a problem staying away from home at this hour, and they asked us the same in return. When it was nearly 9, there was a hush and everyone waited for the programme to come on. Initially, the young woman who was trying to tune in to the station could not get it precisely, and at one of two points, the programme was interrupted by transmission disturbances. Everyone sooner or later adjusted their positions to face the radio set. Kelu sakhi was on air, as the slots begin, one after another.

Slot 1: success story of a woman panchayat member and what she has done while in the post.

Slot 2: song on child marriage this is almost cacophonous, but the women enjoy it and seem to be listening intently. By this time, a few men gather outside the hall to listen, but they do not enter. Some of the women come in late and there are still more distractions at this point.

KSOU advert comes on.

Slot 3: Filler Song.

Slot 4: MSK announcements.

Slot 5: Skit- This was about a young girl who attained maturity; and she was worried because her family would stop her from going to school, as the school was outside their village. However, in the end, one of the sangha women assures her parents that she would escort the girl to and from the bus stop until the girl was more comfortable with her new situation.

At the end of the programme, we have a little chat with the women. We found one of the women making a missed call to the ItfC Field Coordinator on her mobile. The call was returned in a few minutes, and the sangha woman poured out her comments.

We ask the women if they usually stay after the programme and discuss what they heard. No, they usually rush home as it is already late. They have been here for an hour and a half. We thank them for their time and patience, and say goodbye.

## Name Of Respondents, Location, Date And Time Of Data Collection

<b>Stakeholder</b>	<b>Name and designation of person interviewed</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Study instrument used</b>
KSOU – Gyan Vani	Jahanara Begum Station Manager	26.03.2007	11 am	KSOU Gyan vani station, Mysore	Semi-structured interview guidelines
Consultant (Producer)	M.Abdul Rehman Pasha	14.03.2007	11 am	ITforChange Office, Jayanagar, Bangalore	
IT for Change	Anita Gurumurthy Executive Director	13.03.2007	11.20 am	ITforChange Office, Jayanagar, Bangalore	Semi-structured interview guidelines
	Parminder Jeet Singh Executive Director	13.03.2007 15.03.2007	12.45 pm and 11 am	ITforChange Office, Jayanagar, Bangalore	
	Aparna Kalley Field Coordinator	26.03.2007	2 pm	ITforChange Field Office Ramakrishna Nagar, Mysore	
	Kripa Thimmiah Project Associate	26.03.2007	4 pm	ITforChange Field Office Ramakrishna Nagar, Mysore	
Mahila Samakhya Karnataka	C.P.Parimala District Programme Coordinator	02.04.2005	11.am	MSK office Kuvempur Nagar, Mysore	Semi-structured interview guidelines
	Gowri R. Resource Person	02.04.2005	1 pm	MSK office Kuvempur Nagar, Mysore	
	Savita Kumari T.S. Resource Person	02.04.2005	2.30 pm	MSK office Kuvempur Nagar, Mysore	

<i>Sangha listening group</i>	<i>N.Thayamma,32 Thayamma, 40 Madevamma, 45 Mangala, 19 Putdevamma, 40</i>	<i>27.03.2007</i>	<i>12.30-3.30 pm</i>	<i>Chamanahalli Hundi village, H.D.Kote taluk, Mysore district</i>	<i>Semi-structured interview guidelines</i>
<i>Non participants</i>	<i>Gowramma, 33 Savitramma, 35</i>	<i>27.03.2007</i>	<i>3.30-4.15 pm</i>	<i>Chamanahalli Hundi village, H.D.Kote taluk Mysore district</i>	<i>Semi-structured interview guidelines</i>
<i>Community members (FGD)</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>03.04.2007</i>	<i>10.30 am</i>	<i>Attiguppe village, Hunsur taluk, Mysore district.</i>	<i>FGD guidelines</i>
	<i>Women</i>	<i>03.04.2007</i>	<i>1 pm</i>	<i>Mullur village, Hunsur taluk Mysore district</i>	
<i>Observation</i>	<i>Listening group</i>	<i>26.03.2007</i>	<i>9 pm</i>	<i>Sangha mane Hosavaranchi village, Hunsur taluk, Mysore district.</i>	<i>Note taking on general observation</i>
<i>Observation</i>	<i>Recording of MSK announcements by MSK resource person Mandakini</i>	<i>26.03.2007</i>	<i>4.15 pm</i>	<i>ITforChange Field Office Ramakrishna Nagar, Mysore</i>	<i>Note taking on general observation</i>