



TELECOM REGULATORY AUTHORITY OF INDIA



Recommendations

on

Issues related to Community Radio Stations

29 August 2014

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Introduction

1. The power of community radio to be an instrument of change for disparate groups/ communities within a society is well recognized. A Community Radio Station (CRS) serves the interests of the community concerned through dissemination and exchange of: relevant information; ideas; and knowledge. The CRS gives voice to people from those sections of society who do not have adequate space in the mainstream media. This is how a CRS becomes a means of their empowerment. In the larger perspective, Community Radio Stations are also the repository of local culture, traditions, language and traditional knowledge.
2. Globally, the role of CRSs reflects the societal needs of different regions/ countries. In Africa CRSs offer a chance for active participation of people in the democratisation process. CRSs address human rights issues; deliver on the right to information and communication; offer some form of media based education; create an information culture; and enhance emancipation and self-worth. In Australia CRSs provide a diverse range of services meeting community needs in ways unmet by other sectors. CRSs serve an array of communities, including indigenous and ethnic groups, people with a print disability, young people, older people and the arts/fine music community. In the UK, many CRSs broadcast specifically to minority immigrant communities such as the Afro-Caribbean and Asian communities. Like in India, CRSs in Ireland encompass stations serving a geographic community or a community of interest such as campus stations and Irish-language stations. CRSs in Canada often target commercially underserved minority-language communities such as Franco-Ontarians, Acadians, Anglo-Quebecers or First Nations.
3. While the demand for community broadcasting as the third tier of broadcasting in India came up in the mid-1990s, formally the Government announced its policy for the grant of permission for setting up of CRS in

December 2002. Under those guidelines well established educational institutions, including IITs and IIMs, were permitted to setup CRSs. In December 2006, the Government revised the policy for CRSs, bringing non-profit community based organizations, apart from other educational institutes, within its ambit. Non-profit organizations like civil society and voluntary organizations, State Agriculture Universities (SAU), Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) institutions, Krishi Vigyan Kendras, registered societies and autonomous bodies and public trusts registered under Societies Act or any other such Act relevant for the purpose, were permitted to operate CRSs. The period of permission was increased three years to five years. All the operational CRS permission holders under the 2002 guidelines were permitted to migrate to the new policy regime without any financial implications.

4. As on 01 July 2014, 200 Grant of Permission Agreements (GOPA) have been signed. Of these 170 CRSs are operational¹. 101 CRSs are run by educational institutes & universities, 6 by Krishi Vigyan Kendras and the rest 63 by civil society organisations. Currently, CRSs in rural and remote areas are generally being run by NGOs and campus CRSs by educational institutions mostly in urban and semi-urban areas.
5. The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) received a reference on 08 January 2014 from the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB) (**Annex I**). It was explained that the validity of the GOPA for some of the CRSs, issued under the 2006 policy guidelines, had already expired after completion of five years; and, 55 more CRSs would complete five years by June 2014. According to the existing policy guidelines for CRSs, period of validity of GOPA is five years and the guidelines contain no provisions for the renewal/extension of permissions.

¹ http://www.mib.nic.in/WriteReadData/documents/Facts_and_Figures_.pdf

6. MIB requested the Authority to examine the issues arising out of the expiry of the period of GOPA and provide its recommendations, under section 11(i)(a)(ii) of the TRAI Act, 1997 on the following issues:
 - (i) Whether permission of CR stations be renewed after expiry of GOPA. If yes, for what period and what terms and conditions?
 - (ii) In the interim whether CR stations can be allowed to continue their operations. If yes, for what period and under what terms and conditions?
7. As validity of GOPA for some of the CRSs had already expired on completion of five years, TRAI responded to the MIB reference by suggesting some interim measures through its letter No. 9-1/2014 B&CS dated 23 January 2014 (**Annex II**). It was suggested that, in the interim, MIB may consider allowing the CRS permission holders, whose GOPAs had expired, to continue their operations on the existing terms and conditions subject to the following:
 - a) The bank guarantees furnished by CRS permission holders shall remain valid for the interim period.
 - b) CRS permission holders have paid due spectrum usage fee to WPC.
 - c) MIB shall take a suitable undertaking from CRS permission holders, whose validity of GOPA had expired, to ensure that once the final policy in this regard is laid down by the Government, these CRS permission holders will comply with that policy for the interim period also. Any financial obligations arising from the change in policy shall also be honoured.
8. An email was sent to CRS permission holders on 26 February 2014 (**Annex III**), seeking preliminary inputs on the issues relevant for the growth of CRSs in the country based on the experiences of the past decade. Some responses on procedural matters; technical issues; content; aid and assistance; etc. were received.

9. The Authority issued a Consultation Paper (CP) on 'Issues related to Community Radio Stations' on 21 May 2014. Written comments and counter-comments on the CP were invited from stakeholders by 11 June 2014 and 18 June 2014 respectively. All comments received were posted on the TRAI website. Subsequently, an Open House Discussion was held at New Delhi on 03 July 2014. Based on the Open House Discussion, all stakeholders were given time till 07 July 2014 to forward additional comments, if any.
10. After carefully examining and analysing various issues emanating from the written submissions of the stakeholders, the Open House Discussion and international practices, the Authority has finalised its recommendations. Chapter I discuss various issues related to CRS. A summary of the recommendations is provided in Chapter II.

Chapter I

Issues related to Community Radio Stations

A. Term of Permission

- 1.1 The policy guidelines of 2006 for setting up CRSs prescribe the period of permission as five years. In the CP, stakeholders were asked whether the present five year period was adequate.
- 1.2 In response, most stakeholders said that the period of permission of five years is adequate. Some of them were of the view that the period of five years would allow the government to review its policies and change them if required without creating a situation of frequent changes for the licensee. One stakeholder was of the opinion that the period of more than five years may stunt innovation in the working of community radios. Some stakeholders mentioned that the period of five years is in accordance with practices in many other countries.
- 1.3 One stakeholder suggested that the permission should be perpetual, till revoked by Government or voluntarily relinquished by the licensee. Another stakeholder suggested that there should be an option for a temporary one-year trial license for community broadcasting, at the end of which applicants can either migrate to a five-year license or decide against renewing temporary license.

Analysis

- 1.4 CRSs are not professionally run commercial enterprises, though many have become fairly professional in their operations over the years. After receiving permission to operate, how a CRS performs is an open question. Therefore, suggestions to allow a CRS to operate in a region in perpetuity are simply not practical. From an administrative perspective, the initial period has to be fixed

on some basis and, thereafter, extensions to the permission to operate should also be for pre-decided fixed durations.

- 1.5 The Authority agrees that the duration of the initial permission should, on the one hand, provide adequate time to the CRS permission holder to physically establish the station; build contacts and connections within the local community; assess their needs and develop programming capabilities. On the other hand, the time period should not be too long so as to inhibit innovation and creativity. It must also allow an opportunity to other persons/entities who so desire an opportunity to operate a CRS in the same area. The Authority notes that the five year period that the current CRS guidelines prescribe is also what the international practice is.
- 1.6 **The Authority recommends that the term of permission should continue to be five years.**

B. Period and the terms and conditions of extension/renewal

- 1.7 In the CP, stakeholders were asked to suggest a period of extension on expiry of the initial period of permission for a CRS. They were also asked to suggest additional terms and conditions for extension/ renewal of the permission for CRS.
- 1.8 In response, most stakeholders suggested an extension for a period of five years on the expiry of the initial period of permission. One stakeholder was of the opinion that the permission may be extended by five years, if there are no contentions for frequencies for community radio services in the geographical area. One stakeholder suggested that period of extension should be ten years while another stakeholder suggested that extension should be done yearly on the expiry of the initial period of permission.
- 1.9 Some stakeholders suggested that an independent third party audit/ assessment of operations of the CRS must be made before grant of extension. One stakeholder was of the view that a self-regulatory body or TRAI should

look at permission holder's performance in terms of compliance with community radio guidelines and financial sustainability before grant of permission. Another stakeholder suggested that audit should include technical performance and Quality of Service (QoS) delivery by independent auditors from panels of professional bodies like IETE, IE, BES, AIR and DD.

- 1.10 One stakeholder was of the view that a CRS should provide evidence of a community consultation/social audit within a four month period before the date of renewal, where the community should clearly endorse the need for the continued existence of the station. Another stakeholder suggested that peer review should be undertaken prior to extension. Some stakeholders suggested that before grant of extension complaints from the listening community and other local stakeholders should be looked into and transparent procedures, such as a public hearing in the area covered by the station, must be followed. Another stakeholder was of the view that the mid-term appraisal after 2.5 or 3 years should also be considered; else the licensee may have a tendency to focus on operations towards the end of the tenure only.

Analysis

- 1.11 At present, the CRS Guidelines do not include any provision for extension/renewal. It surely could not be the intent of policy to effectively disallow existing permission holders from continuing operations beyond the initial period of five years. There is a legitimate expectation that a CRS performing effectively and compliant with the policy objectives of the government would be entitled to an 'extension' of permission. However, considering that the number of slots for CRSs to operate in the same region is limited, the extension provision should not shut out others permanently from getting an opportunity to operate a CRS. The issues to be considered in allowing an extension are: what should be the period of extension; how many extensions should be granted; should there be any additional conditions/

requirements before grant of extension; and how to afford an opportunity to other prospective applicants to operate a CRS.

- 1.12 Regarding the tenure of extension, the view of a large number of stakeholders was that it should be five years. This has merit both from the perspective of stability of operations for the CRS as also of administrative convenience.
- 1.13 Regarding the number of extensions that may be granted, there is no rationale to limit the extensions to a specific number or for a specific period of time. As long as a CRS is operating in accordance with the policy guidelines and effectively performing its role, there can be little reason to close it down. The only matter for consideration is that given the paucity of slots for CRSs that are available in a specific region, how should demand from other applicants be dealt with? In this context, the Authority is of the view that the first extension, i.e., on completion of the initial permission period of five years, may be granted on the basis of an application and verification of adherence to the terms and conditions of the permission. The application for extension must be made in the fourth year of operations.
- 1.14 Extensions beyond ten years of operation may be considered following a performance evaluation of the CRS. The evaluation metrics must be developed by MIB in consultation with the stakeholders to make them relevant. Once developed, the performance evaluation format should be placed in the public domain for self-evaluation by the CRS. All extension applications beyond ten years of operation should be preceded by the performance evaluation. The CRS should apply for extension one year before end of the permission period along with the performance evaluation report in the prescribed format duly filled in. Further, applications for extension beyond ten years should be considered along with applications from any other fresh applicant desiring to operate a CRS in that location, on merits.

1.15 The Authority accordingly recommends that:

- (i) The period of permission should be extended for a period of five years, at a time.**
- (ii) The first extension, i.e., on completion of the initial permission period of five years, may be granted on the basis of an application and verification of adherence to the terms and conditions of the permission. The application is to be submitted in the fourth year of operation.**
- (iii) A performance evaluation format should be developed by MIB, in consultation with the stakeholders, and placed in the public domain. CRSs applying for extension beyond ten years should submit the performance evaluation report, duly filled in, along with their application one year before end of the permission period.**
- (iv) If it is found that the CRS has performed satisfactorily, the CRS should be considered for a further extension. The application for extension will be considered along with other fresh applications, if any.**
- (v) The procedure described in (iii) and (iv) above will be adopted for all applications for extension beyond ten years of operation.**

C. Broadcast of community based ‘News and Current Affairs’

1.16 Existing guidelines do not permit a CRS to broadcast any program that is related to news and current affairs or is otherwise political in nature. Most of the content broadcast by a CRS is expected to be self-generated and with active participation from the local community that it serves. In the CP, stakeholders were asked to comment whether a CRS can be permitted to carry news bulletins of All India Radio (AIR) in unaltered format and community based non-news and current affairs programs for the categories permitted to FM radio stations.

1.17 In response, most stakeholders agreed that a CRS should be permitted to carry news bulletins and community based non-news and current affairs programs. One stakeholder suggested that a CRS should be permitted to produce and broadcast their own news content, and should not be asked to rebroadcast any news feed from AIR, Prasar Bharti, or any news aggregation or wire service. Another stakeholder suggested that a CRS should be allowed to broadcast local news and events with reasonable restrictions under Article 19(2) of the Constitution. Another stakeholder² was of the view that news and current affairs should not be permitted, unless the matter is of direct relevance to the community that the CRS serves; CRSs should be distinguished from FM broadcasters as the latter pay market determined rates to obtain their licence. Yet another stakeholder suggested that the duration of news and current affairs programs should be limited and the bulk of the time should be used broadcast content specific to the community.

Analysis

- 1.18 Regarding self generated news content, it cannot be denied that local news and current affairs in the local language surely is legitimate content for a CRS. However, there is scope for misuse of this facility. It is possible that misleading information is broadcast in the guise of self generated news. In the absence of an effective monitoring mechanism, the Authority is not inclined to consider it for the present. The Authority understands that MIB is in the process of setting-up an internet based monitoring system to monitor the content broadcast by CRSs.
- 1.19 The issue of permitting news and current affairs on CRSs is also closely linked to the FM radio guidelines. Recommendations of the Authority on Phase-III of FM radio roll-out were sent to MIB on 20 February 2014. On implementation, FM broadcast will cover a wider swathe of the population providing access to a greater variety of local content. Considering that FM

² Association of Radio Operators of India - AROI

radio operators are not allowed to broadcast news and current affairs content, other than that sourced from AIR, even though they have obtained their licence through an auction process, it would not be fair to permit a different regime for CRSs.

- 1.20 Based on the effectiveness of the monitoring system being set-up by MIB and as and when the government's policy for FM radio changes, i.e., news and current affairs are allowed for broadcast on FM radio, these issues could be revisited
- 1.21 Nonetheless, the Authority is conscious of the significance of locally relevant content in the local language/ dialect of the micro communities that the CRSs serve, especially in remote and rural areas. Therefore, news and current affairs content, sourced exclusively from AIR, may be allowed for broadcast by CRS. In case, the language of AIR broadcast is the same as the local language, the CRS can use the original feed. In case the main language (or dialect) of broadcast by the CRS is different from that of the AIR broadcast, the CRS may be allowed to translate the news into the language/ dialect of the community it serves. It will be the responsibility of the CRS permission holder to ensure that the news is not distorted during translation.
- 1.22 **Accordingly, the Authority recommends that CRSs should be allowed to broadcast news and current affairs content, sourced exclusively from AIR, in its original form or translated into the local language/ dialect. It will be the responsibility of the CRS permission holder to ensure that the news is not distorted during translation.**

D. Duration of Advertisements

- 1.23 The current CRS policy guidelines permit five minutes of advertisement per hour on a CRS. During pre-consultation, some CRSs raised the issue of increasing the current limit on duration of advertisement per hour in context of their financial sustainability and improving the quality of their

programming. Accordingly, in the CP, stakeholders were asked to provide reasons to increase the duration of advertisement beyond the five minutes per hour.

- 1.24 In response, most stakeholders were not in favour of increasing the duration of advertisement beyond five minutes per hour. One stakeholder mentioned that CRSs are non-commercial in nature which differentiates them from commercial FM and increasing the time limit could also mean dilution of content specific to the community. Another stakeholder was of the view that any increase in ad duration for CRS operators will pose a threat to FM operators who survive only on advertising revenues.
- 1.25 One stakeholder suggested that duration of advertisements should be increased to 6 minutes per hour, while another stakeholder was of the view that increase in duration should not be more than 2-3 minutes an hour. They are of the view that CRSs have many day-to-day maintenance issues, including payment of rent, utility charges, minor logistic support to participants in program production, and staff salaries, etc., for which they need to raise other sources of funding.
- 1.26 One stakeholder suggested that there is a need to review advertisement rates fixed by DAVP. CRS in remote areas are often unable to generate advertisement from local merchants and small shopkeepers and businesses at rates approved by the DAVP, they should have the flexibility to offer lower rates to the local businesses. One stakeholder suggested that there is a need to conduct further research on the issue. He further mentioned that community radio's engagement with the advertisement driven market needs to be studied across rural, semi-urban and urban areas.

Analysis

- 1.27 The CRS policy guidelines stipulate a limit of five minutes of advertisements per hour of broadcast by a CRS. It addition it specifies that advertisements

and announcements relating to local events, local business and services and employment opportunities are allowed. However, most CRSs do not get adequate advertisements even to occupy the duration of five minutes per hour permitted by existing CRS policy guidelines. Arguably one of the major reasons for the inability of the CRS to get local advertisements is due to the stipulation in the DAVP ‘Guidelines for Empanelment of CRS’ that “*Communities Radio Stations will undertake in writing that DAVP approved rates accepted by them are their lowest rates and exclusive to DAVP and cannot be offered to any other agency. DAVP reserves the right to review empanelment rates if this condition is violated.*” Since these guidelines are applicable to the CRSs along with the comprehensive guidelines for sponsored programs, CRSs have no choice but to get empanelled with DAVP. The rate of advertisement prescribed at present, viz. Rs. 4/- per second, is rather high for the local advertisers in the remote and rural areas. There is a case for the above stipulation of DAVP to be relaxed specifically for CRS.

- 1.28 The Authority notes that the limit of five minutes of advertisements per hour of broadcast was imposed after considering the possible impact on private FM radio stations of permitting advertisements on CRSs. The situation has not changed warranting a relook at the five minute limit.
- 1.29 Adequate revenue generation is important for financial sustainability and improving the quality of the programming of a CRS. Given the non-commercial nature and the limited footprint of CRS, the Authority is of the view that options such as empanelling of more CRSs by DAVP; higher DAVP advertisement rates; allowing CRSs to offer local small businesses lower rates than DAVP fixed rates; channeling Corporate Social Responsibility funds of local companies to CRSs; etc. exist and will go a long way in augmenting their financial wherewithal. The Community Radio Facilitation Centre (CRFC) may consider and appropriately assist the CRSs in this regard, particularly those located in remote and rural areas.

- 1.30 **The Authority accordingly recommends that the duration of advertisement on a CRS should continue to be five minutes per hour.**
- 1.31 **To encourage self-sustainability and enhance the CRSs' relevance to the community, the Authority also recommends that the stipulation that DAVP approved rates are their lowest rates and exclusive to DAVP and cannot be offered to any other agency should be relaxed in the case of CRSs.**

E. Operation of CRSs during emergency situations

- 1.32 In the CP, it was proposed that the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) may, in consultation with MIB and Wireless Planning and Coordination Wing (WPC), formulate detailed guidelines for the use of CRSs in disaster management operations. The guidelines should also include the procedure to be followed in case relocation of a CRS is required. Issues like period of such relocation; the area of relocation; the frequencies to be used; and other conditions, if any, may be prescribed in the said guidelines.
- 1.33 In response, all the stakeholders agreed with the proposal of establishing detailed guidelines for use of CRSs in disaster management operations. Some stakeholders suggested that WPC and Standing Advisory Committee on Frequency Allocation (SACFA) should reserve frequencies across the country within the FM band, which can be allocated to CRS for providing services related to disaster management/emergency response.
- 1.34 Some stakeholders suggested that a CRS may be permitted to erect emergency antenna/ transmitters to provide disaster information and aid in relief and rehabilitation efforts, especially in regions where there are few or no CRSs. One stakeholder suggested that for erecting an emergency antenna for temporary use, only a formal communication to WPC within 24 hours with a copy to MIB should be required. One stakeholder suggested that emergency facilities could be set up collaboratively with disaster management

authorities, local administration, local NGOs, and sectoral organizations such as the Community Radio Federation (CRF) or Community Radio Association (CRA). He further suggested that actual duration for which emergency facilities would last can be kept flexible and determined in consultation with disaster management officials and the local community that is affected by the disaster.

- 1.35 One stakeholder suggested that the guidelines should have provisions for issue of rapid permissions for - or allow licensed CRSs to maintain – a mobile transmitter. Such mobile transmitters should be permitted transmission from multiple locations on single temporary/special licenses in disaster areas.
- 1.36 One stakeholder suggested that a list of disaster-prone areas be drawn up across the country in consultation with experts such as NDMA, other civil society agencies etc. He further suggested that MIB can conduct awareness workshops in these disaster areas in collaboration with NDMA and other civil society organizations in order to motivate eligible civil society institutions to apply for a CRS license from these areas. All these CRSs licensed to address emergency and natural calamity situations, can be collectively trained on basic principles of community participation, using communication to address emergency situations as well as subject specialized issues – rehabilitation, accurate information, linking service providers and relief providers to affected communities.

Analysis

- 1.37 Given the frequency of natural disasters in India, detailed policy guidelines for emergency situations are essential. CRSs have a critical role in disaster mitigation and have proven equal to the task in the recent past. Regarding the policy guidelines, two situations have to be considered. The first is the one in which CRSs are already operating in the disaster area; in such a case, the issues involved relate to co-opting the CRS into mitigation and relief work and addressing their requirements regarding possible relocation and temporary

on-site transmission facilities. The second situation could be one where no CRS is operating in the disaster affected region; in such a case the issues include identifying operators and allowing short-term and quick establishment of a CRS. The NDMA guidelines need to cover both these situations.

- 1.38 **The Authority recommends that the NDMA, in consultation with MIB and WPC, establish detailed guidelines for use of CRSs in disaster management operations. The guidelines should include the procedure to be followed in case relocation of an existing CRS is required or for the establishment of a new CRS in the disaster affected region.**

F. Sub-categorisation of CRS and other issues

- 1.39 In the CP stakeholders were asked to suggest measures required to ensure faster growth in the number and the spread of CRSs in rural India and suggest any other issue of importance.
- 1.40 In response, some stakeholders suggested that there should be a clear distinction between a Community Radio and a Campus Radio. One stakeholder suggested that Campus (educational) CRS may be considered as a sub-category of the CR license, with a more flexible content mandate. It was further suggested that the developmental content that is mandated for CRSs in general may be made optional in case of stations run primarily by young people in educational institutions to allow for more dynamism and creativity in programming.
- 1.41 One stakeholder suggested that there should be separate sub-policies for community, campus and farm radio, with separate content and technical guidelines that take into cognizance the operational realities of educational institutions and Krishi Vigyan Kendras that enable them to focus on the communities they serve. He further mentioned that most campus-based CR stations find it difficult to go beyond their own campus to engage with and

have participation from community members and therefore a coverage area of 10 kms radius may be unnecessary for an educational institution.

- 1.42 CRSs run by educational institutes and universities primarily cater to communities, who already have access to other media outlets. Many of these stations have been recruiting professionals to manage their stations and using tech-savvy students to produce content. These stations are also utilized for training students.
- 1.43 The second category is of those CRSs which are run by State Agricultural Universities (SAUs) and Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVKs). These stations broadcast the programs, where they invite experts, who provide professional advice on matters of agriculture to a farming community. These programs offer knowledge and information to the stakeholders, though they may not be directly involved in generating the content.
- 1.44 The third category is CRSs usually established by civil society organisations, to serve local communities, particularly those in rural and remote areas. These CRSs provide developmental, agricultural, health, educational, environmental, social welfare, community development and cultural programs for meeting the special interests and needs of the local communities. Their programs are produced with active participation of the community served.
- 1.45 As regards funding, it is observed that for CRSs run by educational institutions, universities, SAUs and KVKs, it is easier to get financial resources for managing their operations. On the other hand, financial sustainability remains a challenge for CRSs run by civil society organisations.
- 1.46 While such differences in focus, objectives, content, funding, and outlook of these categories of CRSs no doubt exist, the spread of community radio in India has not achieved the ‘critical mass’ that would make it worthwhile to attempt a comprehensive categorization that would impose differential rules for each CRS category. In the long term, this may perhaps be necessary but

for the present the Authority is not inclined to recommend such a categorisation.

- 1.47 Regarding measures required to promote the growth of CRSs in India, one persistent request is for an easier registration/ licencing process. It has been pointed out by a stakeholder that the present licensing process is tedious and discourages many small community-based organizations that do not have the financial resources to visit Delhi so many times. An e-Governance enabled single-window licensing process should be established where MIB can receive a one-time application and process all documents there onwards in a time-bound manner.
- 1.48 The Authority recognises the merit in the suggestion. It is noted that there are several cases where applicants have not received SACFA clearances from WPC for long periods of time. Delays in operationalising a CRS following receipt of the LOI issued by MIB is an unnecessary and avoidable burden on the applicants.
- 1.49 **The Authority recommends that MIB establish an online ‘single window’ system that will reengineer and integrate the entire process from the stage of filing application with MIB; grant of the Wireless Operating Licence (WOL) by WPC and signing of the GOPA. The online system must provide feedback on stage and status of the application in accordance with the time-lines already prescribed by MIB.**

Chapter II

Summary of Recommendations on Issues related to Community Radio Stations

2.1 The term of permission should continue to be five years.

2.2 Extension/ renewal of permission:

- (i) **The period of permission should be extended for a period of five years, at a time.**
- (ii) **The first extension, i.e., on completion of the initial permission period of five years, may be granted on the basis of an application and verification of adherence to the terms and conditions of the permission. The application is to be submitted in the fourth year of operation.**
- (iii) **A performance evaluation format should be developed by MIB, in consultation with the stakeholders, and placed in the public domain. CRSs applying for extension beyond ten years should submit the performance evaluation report, duly filled in, along with their application one year before end of the permission period.**
- (iv) **If it is found that the CRS has performed satisfactorily, the CRS should be considered for a further extension. The application for extension will be considered along with other fresh applications, if any.**
- (v) **The procedure described in (iii) and (iv) above will be adopted for all applications for extension beyond ten years of operation.**

2.3 CRSs should be allowed to broadcast news and current affairs content, sourced exclusively from AIR, in its original form or translated into the local language/ dialect. It will be the responsibility of the CRS permission holder to ensure that the news is not distorted during translation.

- 2.4 The duration of advertisement on a CRS should continue to be five minutes per hour.**
- 2.5 To encourage self-sustainability and enhance the CRSs' relevance to the community, the stipulation that DAVP approved rates are their lowest rates and exclusive to DAVP and cannot be offered to any other agency should be relaxed in the case of CRSs.**
- 2.6 The NDMA, in consultation with MIB and WPC, establish detailed guidelines for use of CRSs in disaster management operations. The guidelines should include the procedure to be followed in case relocation of an existing CRS is required or for the establishment of a new CRS in the disaster affected region.**
- 2.7 MIB should establish an online 'single window' system that will reengineer and integrate the entire process from the stage of filing application with MIB; grant of the Wireless Operating Licence (WOL) by WPC and signing of the GOPA. The online system must provide feedback on stage and status of the application in accordance with the time-lines already prescribed by MIB.**

List of Acronyms

Abbreviation	Description
AIR	All India Radio
CRA	Community Radio Association
CRFC	Community Radio Facilitation Centre
CRS	Community Radio Station
DAVP	Directorate of Advertising and Visual Publicity
ERP	Effective Radiated Power
FM	Frequency Modulation
GOPA	Grant of Permission Agreement
ICAR	Indian Council for Agricultural Research
IIM	Indian Institute of Management
IIT	Indian Institute of Technology
LoI	Letter of Intent
MIB	Ministry of Information and Broadcasting
NDMA	National Disaster Management Authority
SACFA	Standing Advisory Committee for Frequency Allocation
SAU	State Agriculture University
TRAI	Telecom Regulatory Authority of India
WOL	Wireless Operating Licence
WPC	Wireless Planning and Coordination

Reference from MIB

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GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF INFORMATION & BROADCASTIN
SHASTRI BHAWAN, NEW DELHI - 110001

D.O. No.104/103/2013-CRS

8th January, 2014

Dear Mr Khullar,

As you are aware, the "Guidelines for setting up Community/Radio Stations in India" were issued on 02.12.2006. The Ministry has so far issued 438 Letters of Intent (LOI) for setting up Community Radio Stations (CRS) in various parts of the country. Till date 194 LOI holders have signed Grant of Permission Agreement (GOPA) with the Ministry, in accordance with Clause 3(vii) of the Policy Guidelines for Setting up Community Radio Stations in India 2006.

2. Clause 4 of the Policy Guidelines deals with Grant of Permission Agreement conditions. Clause 4(i) mentions that "The Grant of Permission Agreement period shall be for five years". Since permissions were issued to some CR stations under 2006 Policy Guidelines for five years, their GOPA validity has expired. It is mentioned that 55 CR Stations would complete 5 years term by June 2014. The Policy Guidelines are silent on the course of action to be adopted after the expiry of five years of GOPA.

3. The issue has been extensively discussed in the Ministry for quite some time now. An informal discussion was also held with senior officials of TRAI on 4th October, 2013. Permissions to operate CR stations are given to educational institutions and Not-for-Profit organizations. The Policy Guidelines had not envisaged any levy of fees or sharing of any income from the Community Radio Stations. Therefore, Government does not earn any income from CR stations. A decision, however, needs to be taken about the renewal of GOPA of CR stations.

4. TRAI, vide its letter No.24-01/2013-B&CS, dated 11th September 2013, with regard to extension of DTH license period, had suggested that during the interim period, the DTH licensees may be allowed to continue their operations/services on the existing terms and conditions subject to renewal of existing bank guarantee and submission of an undertaking by the licensee. On the similar lines, can the Ministry allow CR stations to continue their operations? If so, then what should be the period of interim extension, and on what terms and conditions?

5. The Authority is requested to examine these issues arising out of the expiry of the period of GOPA and provide its recommendations to the ministry as per Section 11(1)(a)(ii) of the TRAI Act, 1997 on the following issues:

- i) Whether permission of CR stations be renewed after expiry of GOPA. If yes, for what period and what terms and conditions.
- ii) In the interim whether CR stations can be allowed to continue their operations. If yes, for what period and under what terms & conditions.

Warm regards

Yours sincerely,


(Bimal Julka)

Shri Rahul Khullar
Chairman
Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI)
Mahanagar Doorsanchar Bhawan
Jawaharlal Nehru Marg (Old Minto Road)
New Delhi-110 002

Interim Recommendation of TRAI dated 23 January 2014



सुधीर गुप्ता

SUDHIR GUPTA

सचिव/Secretary

No.: 9-1/2014-B&CS

भारतीय दूरसंचार विनियामक प्राधिकरण

महानगर दूरसंचार भवन, जवाहर लाल नेहरू मार्ग,

(पुराना मिन्टो रोड) नई दिल्ली-110002

TELECOM REGULATORY AUTHORITY OF INDIA

Mahanagar Doorsanchar Bhawan, Jawahar Lal Nehru Marg,

(Old Minto Road), New Delhi-110002

Tel. : 91-11-23237448, Fax: 91-11-23222816

E-mail : secretary@trai.gov.in

Dated: 23rd January, 2014

Dear Sh. Julka,

Please refer to your D.O. letter No.104/103/2013-CRS dated 8th January, 2014, wherein TRAI has been requested to give its recommendations regarding the extension of permission of Community Radio Stations (CRS), whose Grant of Permission Agreements (GOPAs) have expired.

2. As you are aware, as per the TRAI Act, the Authority has to follow a public consultative process before giving its recommendations. Considering the importance of CRS in serving the local communities by providing relevant educational, developmental, social and cultural content, the Authority is of the view that, during the interim period, MIB may consider allowing the CRS permission holders, whose GOPAs have expired, to continue their operations on the existing terms and conditions subject to the following:

- a) The bank guarantees furnished by the CRS permission holders shall remain valid for the interim period.
- b) The CRS permission holders have paid due spectrum usage fee to WPC.
- c) The MIB shall take a suitable undertaking from CRS permission holders, whose validity of GOPA had expired, to ensure that once the final policy in this regard is laid down by the Government, these CRS permission holders will comply with that policy for the interim period

also. Any financial obligations arising from the change in policy shall also be honoured.

3. As per the practice, a copy of this letter is being placed on the website of TRAI www.trai.gov.in.

With regards,

Yours sincerely,



(Sudhir Gupta)

Shri Bimal Julka,
Secretary,
Ministry of Information and Broadcasting,
Shastri Bhawan,
New Delhi - 110001

Annex III

Email dated 26 February 2014 sent to CRS permission holders

Ministry of Information & Broadcasting has requested TRAI to examine and give its recommendations regarding the extension of permission to Community Radio Stations (CRS).

International experience has shown that the CRSs play a very important role in serving local communities by providing programmes on agricultural, health, education, social and cultural issues; disaster management; flood information and relief; etc.

Given your experience in operating a CRS, your suggestions on how to make the CRSs more effective in India to meet the above objectives holistically, will be very useful. It is requested that your suggestions in response to this email is sent latest by **12th March, 2014**.

--
V K Agarwal
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