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# UNIT 6 MODELS OF COMMUNITY RADIO

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## 6.0 INTRODUCTION

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Community radio exists in different parts of the world and there are various models of it. However, community radio, as popularly understood across the world, remains outside the legal periphery of the Indian landscape. The Government of India's recent decision to allow educational institutions recognised by the Centre and the State Governments the right to broadcast conforms more closely to the Campus Radio practices in other parts of the world. All India Radio started in the 80's a local radio with the lofty objective of its serving as community radio. However, local broadcasting has not taken a firm root.

You may ask how community radio differs from local radio. While both outline the use of the medium by the community for its enrichment and development, local radio attempts to cover a large physical area which could be as large as a district itself. Whereas, the community radio concept envisages a very low power radio capable of information sharing within a village or two or a big campus or a cluster of housing colonies. In India, some community initiatives have been taken to use community participation in audio/radio as a central part of their work.

In this unit, we shall examine the existing models of community radio, their relative strengths, limitations and effects on the target audience in areas such as gender empowerment, education and cultural identity.

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## 6.1 OBJECTIVES

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After a study of this unit, you will be able to:

- describe the key factors for sustainability of community radio;
- discuss the various existing models of community radio; and
- analyse the issues related to developing a sustainable model of community radio.

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## 6.2 SUSTAINABILITY FOR COMMUNITY RADIO: KEY FACTORS

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One of the important aspects of community radio is sustainability. While the components of sustainability for community radio in general are distinct from other broadcast media, they are specific to the country scenario.

In India, the airwaves are not accessible to communities unlike Community Radio in Nepal or Sri Lanka where a critical requisite for sustainability is legitimacy. The criterion for licence application and broadcasting articulates restrictions.

In 2002, Community Radio practitioners and advocates met at Kathmandu to discuss ways on how to develop Community Radio in the region. The group determined that the sustainability of Community Radio was built on the following four capitals:

- Human Capital
- Social Capital
- Physical Capital
- Financial Capital

### **6.2.1 Human Capital**

Human capital relates to the collective wisdom, knowledge and skills of a community. The human capital for community radio is different from private or Government radio, for e.g. Radio Sagarmatha in Nepal is different from Radio City or Radio Mirchi or Akashvani. The difference lies in that Community Radio is radio of, for and by the community. In simple terms, the community drives the radio in every sense, be it production, management or ownership. There are no divisions as in the case of a commercial enterprise between editorial and management. The producer of a community radio programme could well be a part of the management committee. This becomes evident on studying the models of community radio in the countries where it is practised.

### **6.2.2 Social Capital**

Social capital pertains to the trust and commitment and one of the most important needs for community radio is to prove itself as a social entity. It has been found that most of the people involved in running a community radio station are volunteers. Attrition can become an issue of concern. How do community radio stations manage to sustain their personnel? The answer lies in motivation and ownership. A Community Radio station reflects the issues and concerns of the community and thereby it provides a great deal of local relevance and impact on the community. Local women provide the more reliable human resource as they do not usually look for jobs outside the community.

According to UNESCO's Community Radio Handbook, "sustainability should be seen as the ultimate responsibility of the community itself, and the challenge to the managers of the station and to his/her team of producers, reporters and technicians is to make the service so enjoyable, useful and valuable to its listeners that they will be willing to support it through subscription fees, voluntary donations in cash or kind, and the like."

### **6.2.3 Physical Capital**

The physical capital comprises the medium or the channel. While the community drives the technology, the latter constitutes a critical component in the running of community radio. Technology assumes additional significance in the Indian context. The Cable Act, however, enables cable audio to be a viable model. This has been taken up by some NGOs, otherwise community interventions in audio are limited to narrow-casting or collaborations with All India Radio.

In all the models of community radio stations, the technical infrastructure is characterised by their ruggedness, adaptability and user friendliness. As far as possible, the accent is on durability and equipment that can be easily handled by the community.

### **6.2.4 Financial Capital**

As its name suggests, this is all about the running costs. Many community radio stations are run by paid volunteers. Although their remuneration is not much, it needs to be built in to the day-to-day costs. The issues related to expenses for maintenance also need to be considered.

The Kathmandu Consultation for Community Radio was held recently which drew up various sources for revenue generation. These included:

1. **Diverse Funding:** Many community radio stations in Nepal receive funds from the Government as well as donors.
2. **Sponsorship:** Community programmes produced by groups for inclusion in the broadcasts of AIR like the Kutch Mahila Vikas Sanghathan have been sponsored by UNDP. Sponsorship can also come from the members of the community.
3. **Social Marketing:** community radio stations have marketed audio cassettes of programmes they have produced.
4. **Donations:** Radio Lumbini and Radio Madan Pokhara in Nepal accepted donations.
5. **Charge Membership fees:** Radio Lumbini, Radio Madan Pokhara in Nepal charged membership fee from the members enrolled.
6. **Listeners' contributions** were also accepted by some community radio stations.
7. **Volunteers' contribution** by way of service was also one of the ways of revenue generation.
8. **Advertising:** Many community radio stations do not allow advertising. However, while community radio is symbiotic with community needs and community development, social /relevant advertising can play a useful role both in terms of revenue generation and awareness building. In order to prevent misuse or misrepresentation the decision to allow advertising rests with the management committee who in turn comprise members from the community. They determine whether advertising can play a legitimate role in community radio and the type of advertising that is compatible with the aims of the community radio station. Subsequently, regulatory mechanisms should be developed to ensure that appropriate advertising code of ethics is observed.

Apart from generation of revenues, there are also ways of minimising expenditure.

- a) **Co- Production:** Namma Dhwani, a community media partnership between NGOs VOICES, MYRADA and the community of Boodikote village, has jointly been involved in producing programmes with AIR Bangalore.
- b) **Sharing programmes with other stations:** This is practiced by community radio stations in Nepal.
- c) **Linkages with educational institutions:** community radio practitioners can partner with other radio stations

### Check Your Progress: 1

- Note:** 1) Use the space below for your answers.  
2) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this unit.

- 1) What is the difference in human capital of community radio and private radio?  
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- 2) What is the main problem associated with the social capital of community radio?  
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- 3) What are the requirements of technical infrastructure of community radio?  
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## 6.3 SUSTAINABLE MODELS

Sustainable models of community radio exist in various parts of the developing and developed world. Nepal has a series of diverse and representative community radio models which have existed for the past decade. Based on these initiatives, an appropriate benchmark for analysis can be discussed. First, it has a vibrant tradition of community radio. Secondly, it is part of the South Asian canvas and shares similar socio-economic and political similarities with India. These factors could provide a framework for both discussion and analysis.

### 6.3.1 Co-operative Model

Radio Lumbini, which began in 1998, operates on a co-operative model. The co-operative system seemed the most suitable as it did not let the station be dependent either on donors or on business houses. The co-operative began with 69 members and has since expanded to 96 in mid 2002. The station charged a joining fee of Rs 20,000 from members to the station fund. Another source of revenue came from the Friends of Radio Lumbini group. The group which numbered about 600 people paid Rs 100 annually to the radio station. The station also received between Rs 4,000 and Rs 8,000 annually from 71 Village Development Committees (VDC) in the area.

There is an executive body which is elected for three years and meets monthly. There are also technical sub-committees. Day-to-day activities are carried out by the co-operative which is also vested with the management and ownership components. In 2002, Radio Lumbini had a staff of 18 who were paid between Rs 2,000 and Rs 4,500 per month. Five people were paid @ Rs 200 each to produce a weekly programme. 10 weekly programmes were produced by the volunteers. Radio Lumbini broke even after its first year of operations.

The schedule includes four local news bulletins a day and a range of programmes on health, agriculture, gender equality, children's education and good governance. Programmes about the VDCs and their activities are a part of the station's programming.

The Co-operative model enables easy and quick decision making as there is a strong sense of ownership and identity. The station is self-reliant as far as running costs are concerned, it accepts help from donors and sponsors for improving programmes and upgrading equipment. In the event of a crisis the co-operative could float shares.

### 6.3.2 Local Administration Model

The station Radio Madan Pokhara is owned by the Village Development Committee (VDC). It has set up a trust fund with 65 members who have paid Rs 1,000 each for membership. Running costs are met through the VDC and from the nearby District Development Council and through advertisements and sponsorships. The station also charges an entry fee at the rate of Rs 200 per group. Restricted and selective advertising is permitted. For example, there is no advertising of consumer products. Instead, advertising is more geared to announcements of births, deaths, marriages etc.

There are 17 members on the managing board and 5 of these form a working committee for day to day management of the station. There is also an advisory board of 7 members headed by the local MP.

The studio is situated in a small ground floor room. The 100 watt transmitter can be heard in Palpa and 7 surrounding districts and the potential audience is some 400,000 people. Because of its growing popularity and wider than anticipated reach, the community planned to construct a purpose-built station in 2002, to erect a more powerful transmitter and to increase the daily broadcasts from the present 6 hours per day.

The station runs largely on volunteers from Madan pokhara and neighbourhood. Some are responsible for particular programmes; others work regularly as presenters. The station pays small amounts to its full-timers but much of the work is done voluntarily. The station is trying to build up a trust fund to cover capital expenses and to provide a regular income. It mostly relies on donations from local VDCs and the Palpa DDC, funding from donors, and charges for social messages and some local advertising. It also charges for visits to the station. The station is managing without a telephone. Installing one would be very costly because of the distance from the power-lines but they hope to get one installed soon.

A VDC cannot float shares. Consequently, in the event of liquidation, the assets would go to the government. Decision making, in comparison to the Co-operative model was slow.

### 6.3.3 Trust Model

Radio Sagarmatha in Kathmandu, is the first Community Radio station in Nepal. The licence holder is the Nepal Forum of Environmental Journalists (NFEJ). It has a paid staff of 30 members and many volunteers. Sixty per cent of its funds came from donors, thirty percent from advertising and ten per cent from other sources. In a bid to strengthen ownership and its fund base, Radio Sagarmatha had formed a trust and encouraged the public to become members at Rs 1,000.

These case studies were discussed at the South Asian Consultation on Community Radio in Kathmandu in 2002. During the discussions, the Co-operative Model emerged as one of the most efficient models as it facilitated more ownership and speedy decision making.

#### Check Your Progress: 2

- Note:** 1) Use the space below for your answers.  
2) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this unit.

Fill in the blanks:

- 1) The three models of community radio in Nepal are .....
- 2) The ..... enables easy and quick decision making as there is a strong sense of ownership and identity.
- 3) Advertising in local administrative model is more geared to .....
- 4) In the event of liquidation of a radio station based on local administration, the assets would go to the.....
- 5) One major advantage of co-operative model over local administration model is that in the event of a crisis the co-operative could .....
- 6) ..... is the first Community Radio station in Nepal.
- 7) In addition to the paid staff, Radio Sagarmatha has many.....
- 8) Among all the three models ..... emerged as one of the most efficient models because.....

## 6.4 INITIATIVES IN INDIA

India does not have any of the models of community radio discussed above. However, some rural marginalised groups have developed viable models of community participation in audio/radio. Broadly, the examples throw up two distinct models, these are: Community participation and ownership model and use of existing channels of AIR.

### 6.4.1 Community Participation and Ownership Model

In this model, the communities work towards owning their media processes. While both initiatives are supported by donor agencies, the concerned communities strive to work towards ownership by participation and subsidised funding.

#### Namma Dhwani (Our Voices)

Namma Dhwani is a partnership between the Boodikote community in Kolar district, MYRADA, an NGO committed to integrated development and VOICES, a development communications NGO, based in Bangalore with technical support from AIR, Bangalore.

The place of operation is Kolar District of Karnataka. The target group is communities living in and around Boodikote sector in Kolar. In the Boodikote-village which has a population of about 4,000, about 1930 families live below the poverty line. Their literacy levels are abysmally low, particularly among women.

Namma Dhwani has been operational for two years and has a community audio production centre which started in September 2001. Computers were introduced in April 2002 with a view to developing the project into a community information centre with web broadcasting playing a critical role. The objective of the radio centre was to develop community audio production and broadcasting skills using audio and the Internet with a view to ultimately developing Namma Dhwani into a full fledged community media information and broadcasting centre. The focus was on generating awareness about the concept of audio as a means of communication and empowerment. Cable audio, narrowcasting and loudspeakers were used as the modes of transmission.

**Cable Audio:** Cable connectivity is currently being operationalised across Boodikote village. This will enable cable audio programmes on health, education and income generation produced by the Namma Dhwani audio production centre to be cable cast to each and every house in Boodikote village. The first phase of cable audio to about 250 homes has already started. Cable audio educational programmes are cable-cast twice a week to the local school at Boodikote village.

**Narrowcasting:** In addition, narrow-casting using audio cassette technology is regularly carried out through self help groups across the Boodikote area which covers a cluster of 35 villages.

**Loudspeaker Narrowcast:** Between January and December 2002, the Namma Dhwani audio production centre had weekly programmes which were narrowcast using loudspeakers. This was organised to coincide with the local mandi/market which meets every Tuesday.

Awareness and capacity building for making radio programmes marked the first stage of the project. This was done through a series of workshops. By the end of six months the community was producing programmes with support from AIR, many of which were broadcast over AIR FM. The Community Audio Production Centre, 'Namma Dhwani Samudayik Doorsampark Matu Mahiti Kendra' is managed and supported by community volunteers. A management committee comprising representatives from the Self Help Groups meets twice a month to take stock of the Production Centre's activities.

#### **Pastapur Community Media Centre**

This is a partnership between the Deccan Development Society (DDS) Pastapur, and "Women Speak to Women" project of UNESCO. The place of operation is Zaheerabad in Medak District of Andhra Pradesh. The owners as well as the audience groups are 100 Dalit women's groups (Sangams) consisting of nearly 4000 members in 75 villages of Medak district. The focus is on participatory development and empowerment of women. The media used is FM radio station designed to work on audio-cassette technology. It has a 100 watts transmitter, which can reach a radius of 30 kms.

DDS received part funding from UNESCO for the building, acoustics treatment, equipments including recorders, mixers, microphones, cables, installation etc. The building has three octagonal shaped blocks consisting of the studio, transmitting/control room, the dubbing section, the director's cabin and the reception area. The studio facilities are being used to produce audio cassettes. They already have over 200 hours of recorded programmes, some of which are being edited into one-hour magazine modules. In October 2001, a community media centre was inaugurated at Pastapur.

#### **6.4.2 Using Existing Channels of AIR**

In this model, community participation is facilitated through the production of its own audio programmes. Airtime is obtained from AIR for broadcasting programmes produced by the communities. By buying time from Akashvani, the programmes are broadcast on a regular basis. The programmes need to conform to AIR codes and packaging.

### Chalo Ho Gaon Mein

A Partnership between three NGOs, the National Foundation of India (NFI), New Delhi; Alternative for India Development (AID) Lesliegunj Section; and Manthan Media Collective, Ranchi. The target group is 45 villages from Lesliegunj and Panki divisions. The focus is on empowerment of communities with special emphasis on women. The local AIR FM station at Daltongunj (the district headquarters) is used as channel. AID selected one project coordinator and each community volunteer was asked to identify three villages. The place, Palamau district of Jharkhand was selected keeping in mind geographic proximity to their native villages.

A series of workshops were organised to acquaint the volunteers with the techniques of audio production and presentation. A 30 minutes slot on Sundays at 7.20 pm on AIR Daltongunj was allotted on commercial terms for the community participatory programme 'Chalo Ho Gaon Mein'. The first community radio programme of Daltongunj went on air on 9 August 2001.

### Kunjali Pachae Kutch Ji

Kunjali Pachae Kutch Ji is the project, which strengthens community participation through radio. It is a partnership between Kutch Mahila Vikas Sanghathan (KMVS) Bhuj, and Dhristi Media Collective, Ahmedabad. The place of operation of the project is Kutch district of Gujarat. The target group is women in Kutch villages and the focal area is empowerment of women for Panchayat functions. AIR station at Bhuj was used for broadcast of the programmes. In the first year, a number of specific gender related issues including women's leadership and governance, girl child education, female foeticide, dowry/unnatural deaths/suicides of women, pressure on women to produce boys, maternal mortality, reproductive health etc. were covered in the serial.

### Strengths and Limitations of the Models

Both KMVS and AID provide facilitative mechanism which use existing channels, i.e., the local AIR radio to broadcast their programmes. Studies have revealed that audience reception and community participation is high. However, community ownership over the process is limited while it relieves the producers of the responsibilities of transmission and the problems associated with it. The models of community radio that we have talked about have been supported substantially by agencies like UNESCO, UNDP and National Foundation of India. However, underlying this support have been initiatives from the communities themselves as well as other partnership efforts which are easily replicable. The Namma Dhvani management committee has, for instance, a community base fund where the community contributes a small amount towards the programming costs. It is also in some ways similar to the efforts of community radio stations like Lumbini and Madan Pokhara in Nepal which have community contributions and friends of the community radio support. Funds are required constantly to sponsor the production of the programmes.

Linkages are established with other institutions to address sustainability. In the case of Namma Dhvani training was provided by All India Radio, the studio is built in a building which has been leased from the local Panchayat, techno-managerial support has come from another body. In many ways this has enhanced the process of learning and sharing.

### Check Your Progress: 3

- Note:**
- 1) Use the space below for your answers.
  - 2) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this unit.

Match the following projects with their partners:

Project	Partnership
a) Kunjal Pachae Kutch Ji	1) Boodikote community in Kolar district, MYRADA, an NGO and VOICES, with technical support from AIR, Bangalore.
b) Chalo Ho Gaon Mein	2) Deccan Development Society (DDS) and Women Speak to Women project, UNESCO.



- c) Pastapur Community Media Centre
- 3) National Foundation of India, New Delhi; Alternative for India Development (AID) and Manthan Media Collective, Ranchi.
- d) Namma Dhwani
- 4) Kutch Mahila Vikas Sanghathan Bhuj, and Dhrishti Media Collective, Ahmedabad.

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## 6.5 THE PROGRAMME FARE AND IMPACT

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The sustainability of community radio needs to be measured in terms of impact. In this section we shall examine some of the effects that these initiatives have had on their communities.

### 6.5.1 Gender Empowerment

All the four initiatives in community broadcasting in India have promoted the voices of women. The Namma Dhwani initiative's management committee which meets twice a month to take stock of the programming and management has representatives from eleven Self Help Groups in the area. Almost all of them, including the studio manager are women. Similarly, the Pastapur Media Centre is managed by a team of seven dalit non-literate women, and one man.

In the case of KMVS, the women leaders of the *sanghathans*, who have been a part of the initiative, have asserted that they have acquired legitimacy among their counterparts working on other development issues, such as watershed sanitation.

In all the initiatives, the women involved in the projects have asserted that they would be ready to run a community radio station on their own. Many of the programmes have focused on women's participation in the political process, women's right to education, dowry deaths, violence against women, female foeticide, etc. Despite the fact that women play a strong role in these initiatives, a study however, has revealed that "socio-cultural barriers at the community and household levels affect women's listenership negatively."

### 6.5.2 Education

The school audio programme of the Namma Dhwani was born out of a concern regarding the Samudaya Dattashalay, a government initiative. The initiative aimed at providing a platform for parents to meet teachers and children to discuss the progress in education. Despite its laudable intentions and the presence of about 100 teachers and children, only a few parents used to attend. School Audio has brought about a significant change. Not only have parents begun to take a more active interest, but they want to know exactly what programmes are being made. School Audio has also triggered off the demand for cable audio across the village.

Poor children from the Government High School in Boodikote are a part of the School Audio programme which started in mid 2002 to make educational programmes on various subjects. Apart from expressing their own creativity and producing their own programmes, there is also an increased exposure to general knowledge and current affairs. Teachers have also begun to participate and make model lesson programmes which are then cable-cast by a cable which connects the audio production centre to the school. Today, the Namma Dhwani cable audio is cable-cast for two hours and reaches about 250 TV homes in the village.

### 6.5.3 Culture and Identity

The KMVS has a magazine format programme known as *Musafari* which resurrects Kutch history, art and culture and also attempts to reinterpret them in a contemporary context. Spaces have also been created to feature dying art forms such as *Vai* singing. KMVS believes that through these programmes, a bridge is built between tradition and modernity. During the programme, questions on traditional legends are constantly asked.

KMVS's initiative was not only successful in using radio as a vehicle by which to reinforce ethnic identity but also to promote community cohesion and harmony. During the Gujarat riots, KMVS called upon the people of Kutch to practise the values of tolerance and plurality which are a part of their way of life and faith.



Namma Dhwani, is situated on the border of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. The people may be conversant with Kannada and Telugu, but they prefer to speak a mix of both. The nearest radio station is AIR Bangalore which broadcasts in Kannada. The Namma Dhwani audio production centre and cable initiative enabled them to overcome the language barriers.

#### 6.5.4 Social Change

At DDS, programmes on a wide range of subjects from education and literacy, public health, environment to food security, gender justice and local /indigenous knowledge systems have been produced, narrow-cast and documented. Many community clubs have started functioning, such as Children's Club, Disabilities Club and Women's Groups. They meet about once a week, discuss relevant issues and examine how some of these can be developed into audio programmes. There have been interesting insights as a result of these programmes. For instance, a programme on disability helped the community to realise that bus passes were available free of cost for people with disabilities. Till then, middlemen were charging Rs 50 to fill up forms which should have been made available free of cost.

According to the station manager of Radio Lumbini, it has become "a trustworthy friend of the community" and has helped, 'to reduce domestic violence against women, to make local government and administration more responsible and transparent and to strengthen grass root democracy.'

The station Madan Pokhra has been playing an active role in development, with programmes to improve farming and forestry and use of the environment, as well as working "to eliminate social illusions, discriminations, injustice, superstitions and evil deeds." The station has added to the self-respect and identity of rural people and can be replicated in other parts of the country.

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### 6.6 LET US SUM UP

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Community radio concept has an irresistible appeal for communicators because of its inherent advantages. However, there are several implications in implementing and sustaining it. Capital is one of the key factors in sustainability and capital includes human, social, physical and financial. We studied as to how the four factors of sustainability find application in the different models of community radio, including the cooperative, local administration and trust models. You would have noted that each one has inherent advantages as well as limitations.

There is no example of sustainable community radio model in India. There are, however, examples of community initiatives which use community participation in audio/radio as a central part of their work. Details of these projects were examined. With this framework, enterprising communities have provided for programme generation which is transmitted through cable or through AIR's radio station. You would have noted that in all the Indian initiatives, the underlying emphasis has been on community participation while funding has come from different agencies including international bodies. The programme generated and transmitted left their effect on the local people particularly in relation to gender equality, education, culture and identity and social change.

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### 6.7 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: POSSIBLE ANSWERS

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#### Check Your Progress: 1

- 1) Community Radio is radio of, for and by the community. The role of community in establishing programming needs and preferences in programme production, management, ownership and evaluation is crucial. There are no divisions between editorial group and the management group, as in the case of a commercial enterprise. The producer of a community radio programme can be part of the management committee.
- 2) Community radio stations need to manage to sustain their personnel. Most of the people involved in running a community radio station are volunteers as such attrition rate can be high and can become an issue of concern.
- 3) The technical infrastructure of community radio stations is characterised by their ruggedness, adaptability and user friendliness. The accent is on durability and equipment that can be easily handled by the community.

**Check Your Progress: 2**

- 1) Co-operative model, Local administrative model and Trust model
- 2) Co-operative model
- 3) announcements of births, deaths, marriages etc.
- 4) Government
- 5) float shares
- 6) Radio Sagarmatha in Kathmandu
- 7) volunteers
- 8) Co-operative model, it facilitated more ownership and speedy decision making.

**Check Your Progress: 3**

a) - 4; b) - 3; c) - 2; d) -1.