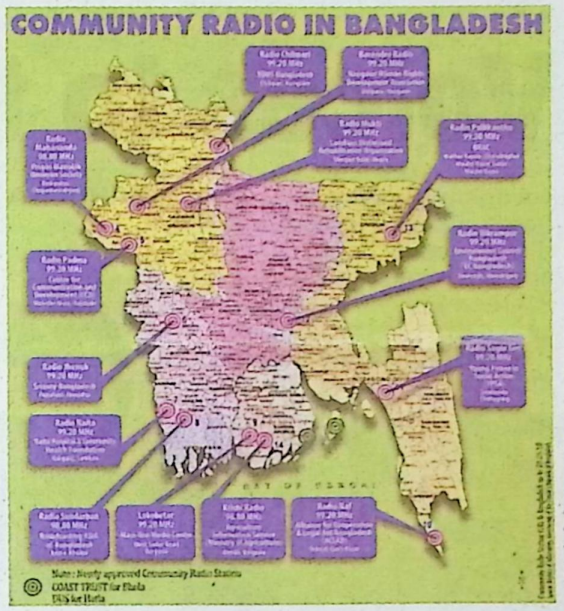
benefit of community radio programmes and alerts during the cyclone, says Shah Sultan Shamim of Radio Sagar Giri at Sitakunda in Chittagong. "From the very south-east, we aired public service announcements and bulletins provided by the disaster management committee and the local weather department every 15 minutes, for 84 hours continuously. We reach out to around 10 unions including the indigenous Tripura people and as far as Swandip Island," says Shamim.

Community radios broadcast all forms of programmes including entertainment and talk shows. Shamim also informs that apart from supporting the disaster-prone people, most of the usual programmes aired by the stations are dedicated to the local people, especially farmers. "We invite the government officers from the local agriculture office and host talk shows with successful farmers so that others find this useful." Teknaf-based Radio Naf mainly hosts programmes on the fishermen's lives. Station manager Aminul Islam says that his station invites fishermen in the studio for live casting, "Our main challenge is load shedding, we run mostly on our own electricity generator," he adds.



Funding is a major issue for the radios as they are essentially not-for-profit ventures, powered by foreign agencies, non-government and development organisations. Commercial advertisement is currently prohibited for community radios by the community radio policy of the government. But there are operational costs and expenditure towards training up the volunteers and staff. In this regard, Tarikul Islam, an assistant director at Broadcasting Asia Bangladesh (Bab) that funds Radio Sundarban in Khulna, thinks the radios could run more functionally if the government had allowed commercial advertisements.



Invited agro-experts in talk shows on community radios advise farmers.

Amin Al Rasheed, a senior reporter and news presenter at ABC Radio FM 89.2, works for community radios as a trainer of basic journalism, radio reporting and presentation. He observes a setback, "The 14 radios can only transmit non-political news and development news. Except one radio, the rest operate under NGOs, more precisely by using foreign money. These radios may stop operating with the completion of the projects." He proposes an alternative that people from the community should take charge of the radios, "Keeping these alive doesn't require major funding. With community ownerships, the radios can circulate development advertisement and survive even if the NGOs stop funding them," he suggests.

The procedure to initiate a community radio has to go through a ministerial process, informs