

COMMUNITY RADIO AND RURAL INFORMATION ACCESS

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Abstract

Community radio is a locally rooted, non-profit and participatory broadcasting medium that can strengthen rural communities' access to timely, understandable and actionable information. In locations where digital connectivity, formal literacy, transport and access to conventional news media remain uneven, radio can communicate in familiar languages and dialects, accommodate oral knowledge traditions and reach listeners in their everyday settings. Its value is not limited to the distribution of messages. When programming is created with local residents, farmers, women, youth, community organisations and public-service actors, radio can become a shared forum for dialogue, problem-solving and public participation.

This study examines the relationship between community radio and rural information access through a qualitative, document-based review of research literature, community media handbooks, communication-for-development guidance, public-policy documents and practice-oriented studies. The analysis focuses on information related to agriculture and livelihoods, health, education, social protection, climate resilience, disaster preparedness, local governance and cultural life. It also considers the conditions under which broadcast information becomes useful: local-language presentation, relevance to seasonal and social contexts, listener feedback, trust, inclusion of marginalised groups, institutional linkages and sustainable station governance.

The findings indicate that community radio can reduce information distance when it translates technical or official material into locally meaningful formats and creates repeated opportunities for listeners to ask questions, share experience and correct misinformation. Agricultural advisories are more useful when combined with farmers' observations, extension support and opportunities for follow-up. Public-health, welfare and emergency messages are more trusted when they are delivered by credible local voices and presented in clear, non-stigmatising language. However, the developmental contribution of community radio is weakened when stations lack stable funding, editorial independence, technical capacity, audience research or a genuine mechanism for participation.

The paper proposes an information-access framework based on relevance, language accessibility, participation, credibility, inclusion, feedback, institutional coordination and sustainability. The framework positions community radio not as a substitute for rural services, but as a communication infrastructure that can connect local knowledge with public information and support more informed collective action.

Keywords: Community Radio, Rural Information Access, Participatory Communication, Agricultural Extension, Local Languages, Rural Development, Media Inclusion, Community Participation, Public Service Information, Digital Convergence

1. INTRODUCTION

Access to reliable information is a basic condition for rural well-being, livelihood security and participation in public life.

Farmers need timely guidance on cultivation practices, weather-related risks, prices, input use and market opportunities. Families need understandable information

about health services, nutrition, education, identity documents, welfare programmes and local administrative procedures. Communities facing floods, droughts, disease outbreaks or other disruptions require trusted channels that can communicate warnings, explain protective action and connect residents with relevant institutions. Yet access to information is not equally distributed. Distance, language barriers, low literacy, limited broadband coverage, social exclusion and weak links with public agencies can prevent rural residents from receiving information in a form that is usable at the moment it is needed.

Community radio is relevant to this challenge because it operates close to its intended audience. Unlike a national or commercial broadcaster that may address a broad and heterogeneous market, a community radio station can focus on a clearly defined local area, its languages, occupations, concerns and cultural practices. It can broadcast at times that fit local routines, invite local contributors into programme production and revisit issues through interviews, call-ins, field recordings, listener groups and public meetings. UNESCO's community-media approach emphasises public participation, local relevance and the representation of groups whose voices are often underserved by mainstream media (Fraser & Restrepo Estrada, 2001).

The importance of community radio should not be understood only in terms of signal reach. Information becomes meaningful when listeners can recognise its relevance, assess its credibility, discuss it with others and translate it into action. A programme on crop disease management, for example, may have limited value if it uses technical terms that farmers do not understand, is broadcast after a decision window has passed or provides no route to clarify local conditions. Conversely, a short local-language programme that

combines a practical advisory, a farmer's experience, an extension worker's response and a follow-up question from listeners can support learning and reduce uncertainty.

Rural information access also has a democratic dimension. Community radio can provide a local public space in which residents discuss village infrastructure, service delivery, school conditions, water availability, public-health concerns and other matters that affect daily life. Such discussion is most constructive when stations maintain clear editorial principles, distinguish verified information from opinion, protect vulnerable participants and enable different viewpoints to be heard. In this sense, community radio can support accountability by making local concerns visible while also giving public agencies and civil-society organisations a channel to explain services and respond to questions.

In India, the policy framework for Community Radio Stations is built around non-profit operation, service to a well-defined local community and programmes relevant to that community's educational, developmental, social and cultural needs. The revised policy materials issued in 2024 also reflect the importance of compliance, local responsibility and appropriate operational permissions (Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 2024). These conditions underline that community radio is not simply a small commercial FM outlet; its legitimacy depends on community orientation and public-interest programming.

This paper investigates how community radio can improve rural information access and what organisational, editorial and social conditions are necessary for that contribution to be sustained. It reviews the development of participatory communication ideas, identifies key information-access functions of

community radio and proposes a practical framework for programming, governance and evaluation. The purpose is to show that effective rural communication requires more than broadcasting information: it requires listening, localisation, feedback and accountable relationships with the communities being served.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature on participatory communication challenges the idea that development information should move only in one direction from experts to recipients. Freire's dialogical approach emphasised that people should be active subjects in communication rather than passive containers of messages. Later communication-for-development scholarship similarly treated dialogue, local knowledge and collective reflection as central to social change (Freire, 1970; Servaes, 2008). In rural settings, this perspective is especially important because residents possess contextual knowledge about seasons, farming systems, household constraints, language use and local institutions that cannot be captured fully through top-down messaging.

Community media scholarship distinguishes community radio from both state-controlled broadcasting and commercially driven radio. Its defining characteristics include community participation, local accountability, editorial relevance, access for under-represented voices and an orientation toward social rather than purely commercial value. Fraser and Restrepo Estrada (2001) describe community radio as a medium that enables people to express their views on decisions that affect them. Tabing (2002) likewise stresses that community radio is organised in, for, about and by the community. These principles make participation a core operational requirement, not a decorative feature.

Research on rural radio has shown how local-language broadcasting can support

agricultural extension and livelihood communication. Chapman, Blench, Kranjac-Berisavljevic and Zakariah (2003) examined vernacular radio programmes on soil and water conservation in northern Ghana and highlighted the importance of local relevance, participatory content and linkages with wider knowledge networks. The FAO communication-for-rural-development approach also frames communication as a process that combines dialogue, local knowledge and multiple tools, including community media and information and communication technologies (Acunzo, Pafumi, Torres, & Tirol, 2014).

Indian scholarship has documented the political and institutional struggle that led to the growth of community radio and has examined its potential as an alternative public sphere. Pavarala and Malik (2007) show that community-based organisations can use radio to create local communication spaces, while also facing constraints related to policy, resources, production capacity and sustainability. The Indian context demonstrates that access to radio frequencies is necessary but insufficient; a station's public value depends on whether it is trusted, inclusive, locally governed and capable of producing meaningful content over time.

Recent work also considers the relationship between radio and digital platforms. Social media, messaging applications, mobile phones and online archives can extend the reach of a community station and make listener feedback easier to collect. Bosch (2014) notes that digital networking can help community radio journalism connect with audiences beyond live broadcasting. However, digital integration should not assume universal connectivity. Hybrid strategies remain important: radio can carry essential information to listeners with limited data access, while phones and social platforms can support questions,

recordings, reminders and distribution for those who are connected. The literature therefore points toward an integrated

model of rural information access rather than a replacement of radio by digital media.

Table 1: Summary of Key Literature on Community Radio and Rural Information Access

S. No.	Author(s)	Year	Methodology	Key Focus	Major Findings
1	Freire	1970	Critical pedagogy	Dialogue and participation	Communication is stronger when people are treated as active subjects in learning and social change.
2	Fraser & Restrepo Estrada	2001	Handbook and case studies	Community radio principles	Participation, local accountability and access for marginalised voices are central features of community radio.
3	Tabing	2002	Practice guide	Station organisation and programming	Community radio must be rooted in the local community and supported by ethical, participatory management.
4	Chapman et al.	2003	Case study	Vernacular agricultural radio	Local-language programmes can connect farmers with usable soil and water conservation knowledge.
5	Pavarala & Malik	2007	Indian case studies	Community radio in India	Alternative media can expand local voice but requires enabling policy, ownership and sustainable practice.
6	Myers	2009	Concept paper	Radio and development	Radio can support development communication when programming addresses local needs and reaches underserved audiences.
7	Buckley et al.	2008	Policy analysis	Broadcasting and accountability	Public-interest broadcasting policy should protect voice, pluralism and accountability.
8	Milan	2009	Conceptual analysis	Community media and development	Supportive legal, financial and organisational conditions are necessary for community media to function as development tools.
9	Manyozo	2012	Theoretical synthesis	Communication and development	Participation and community ownership are essential to meaningful development communication.
10	Acunzo et al. / FAO	2014	Sourcebook	Communication for rural development	Dialogue and communication planning can link local knowledge with agricultural and rural-development action.

11	Bosch	2014	Qualitative study	Radio and social media	Digital platforms can extend audience interaction and community-radio journalism when used alongside broadcast practices.
12	MIB, Government of India	2024	Policy guidelines	Community Radio Stations	Community orientation, non-profit status and relevant local programming remain central policy principles.

3. OBJECT OF STUDY

The object of this study is community radio as a mechanism for improving rural information access. The study examines how locally based radio stations identify information needs, produce programmes, select languages and formats, invite participation, distribute public-interest content and connect listeners with sources of support. The focus is not on audience numbers alone. It is on whether radio makes information available in a timely, understandable, relevant and actionable form for different groups within rural communities.

The research considers several information domains: agriculture and animal husbandry, weather and climate adaptation, public health, nutrition, education, social protection, local employment, disaster preparedness, civic rights, local governance and cultural preservation. These domains overlap in rural life. A farmer may need agricultural advice that is linked to rainfall information, credit access, transport conditions and health concerns. A women's group may need information on welfare schemes, maternal health, legal support and local market opportunities. Community radio can address such intersections when programme planning begins with community questions rather than with pre-packaged messages.

The study also considers the organisational processes that shape the quality of information access. A station requires transparent governance, skilled presenters, verification standards, community

contributors, partnerships with credible institutions, feedback systems and realistic resource planning. The aim is to identify a framework that helps stations remain responsive to their communities while protecting accuracy, dignity, inclusion and editorial responsibility.

KEY POINTS OF OBJECT OF STUDY

- To examine how community radio identifies and prioritises rural information needs.
- To assess the role of local languages, dialects, oral storytelling and familiar formats in improving comprehension.
- To analyse agricultural, livelihood, health, welfare, education and emergency information carried through community radio.
- To evaluate listener participation through call-ins, listener clubs, field recordings, interviews, village meetings and feedback channels.
- To assess the credibility of information sources and the role of verification in local public-interest broadcasting.
- To study the inclusion of women, youth, older persons, minority-language groups and socially marginalised communities.
- To examine how community radio creates linkages between residents, public agencies, extension workers, civil-society organisations and local experts.
- To consider the use of mobile phones, messaging services and social media as complementary channels for listener engagement.

- To identify risks related to funding pressure, limited skills, misinformation, partisan influence and weak feedback mechanisms.
- To develop a practical framework for inclusive, reliable and sustainable rural information access.

Table 2: Object of Study Framework

S. No.	Study Component	Description	Purpose
1	Information relevance	Selection of topics based on seasonal, social and service-related needs of rural residents.	Ensure that broadcasts address problems listeners actually face.
2	Language and cultural accessibility	Use of local languages, dialects, idioms, folk forms and simple explanations.	Improve understanding and reduce linguistic exclusion.
3	Agricultural and livelihood access	Broadcasts on crops, livestock, markets, skills, employment and local enterprise.	Support informed livelihood decisions and local resilience.
4	Health and public-service information	Messages on health services, nutrition, sanitation, education, rights and welfare programmes.	Connect households with reliable public-interest information.
5	Community participation	Listener clubs, call-ins, interviews, village recordings and community editorial inputs.	Make residents contributors rather than only audiences.
6	Trust and verification	Use of credible sources, clear correction practices and separation of facts from opinion.	Reduce misinformation and strengthen informed decision-making.
7	Inclusion and equity	Representation of women, youth, persons with disabilities, minority groups and remote hamlets.	Avoid reproducing existing information inequalities.
8	Feedback and accountability	Question collection, response programmes, grievance routes and follow-up with service providers.	Create two-way communication and local accountability.
9	Sustainability and convergence	Skills, governance, funding diversity and integration with mobile/digital tools.	Maintain the station's long-term public-service capacity.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopts a qualitative, document-based research design. It combines a normative review of participatory communication principles with a comparative analysis of scholarly literature, community-media handbooks, communication-for-development guidance, policy documents and practice-oriented studies. This approach is appropriate because the research question concerns the conditions that make community radio useful for rural information access across varied local contexts. The paper does not claim statistical generalisation from a single station survey. Instead, it synthesises evidence and operational principles that can guide community radio stations, public agencies, non-profit organisations and researchers in planning and evaluating information-access initiatives.

4.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

- Study Type: Qualitative and document-based analysis
- Approach: Participatory communication and public-interest media evaluation
- Unit of Analysis: Community radio programming, listener engagement, information pathways and governance controls
- Source Categories: Peer-reviewed literature, policy documents, community-media manuals, communication-for-development guidance and case studies
- Core Analytical Dimensions: Relevance, accessibility, participation, credibility, inclusion, feedback, institutional linkage and sustainability
- Analytical Goal: Develop a practical framework for inclusive rural information access

4.2 METHODOLOGICAL STEPS

- Step 1: Define rural information access as the availability, comprehension,

trust, relevance and usability of information.

- Step 2: Review literature on participatory communication, community media, agricultural extension, public-service broadcasting and rural development.
- Step 3: Identify common rural information domains, including agriculture, health, welfare, education, disaster preparedness and local governance.
- Step 4: Examine how local languages, storytelling formats, broadcast timing and local presenters shape comprehension and relevance.
- Step 5: Develop an analysis matrix covering content, participation, verification, inclusion, feedback, partnerships and sustainability.
- Step 6: Compare broadcast-only approaches with interactive approaches using listener questions, field reporting, village meetings and mobile communication.
- Step 7: Identify recurring risks such as generic content, elite capture, weak representation, misinformation, financial dependence and lack of follow-up.
- Step 8: Formulate governance and programming principles for responsible community-radio practice.

5. DATA ANALYSIS

The data analysis applies thematic comparison to the literature and guidance reviewed for this study. It examines how community radio can lower barriers to rural information access and how gaps in programming, participation or governance can weaken that role. The themes are connected. Local language improves comprehension, but content still needs to be relevant and trustworthy. Participation can generate useful local knowledge, but it requires editorial safeguards and feedback. Digital tools can extend radio's reach, but they should not displace listeners who

remain offline. The analysis therefore treats rural information access as an ecosystem of content, relationships, formats and institutional support.

5.1 LOCAL RELEVANCE, LANGUAGE AND COMPREHENSION

Rural information is most useful when it is expressed in words, examples and formats that listeners recognise. Community radio can use local languages and dialects, familiar place names, seasonal references, local proverbs, songs, dramas and interviews with residents. These features are not merely stylistic. They help audiences connect general advice with their own circumstances. A programme about water conservation can become easier to understand when it refers to the local water source, typical rainfall patterns, farming calendars and the practices already used by nearby households.

Comprehension also depends on format and repetition. One-way expert lectures may be difficult to follow, especially when an issue is technical or new. Short explainers, question-and-answer segments, listener voice notes, farmer-to-farmer discussions and follow-up broadcasts can make information more usable. Stations should test whether listeners understand a message before assuming that it has been communicated successfully. Local relevance therefore requires ongoing audience research, village visits, listener groups and structured opportunities for clarification.

KEY OBSERVATION:

- Information should be adapted to local languages, lived realities and seasonal decision-making cycles.
- Simple explanations, repeat broadcasts and interactive formats can improve recall and practical use.
- Audience research is necessary to distinguish between information that is broadcast and information that is actually understood.

5.2 AGRICULTURAL AND LIVELIHOOD INFORMATION ANALYSIS

Agriculture remains a central information domain for many rural communities. Community radio can support farmers by sharing crop calendars, soil and water-management practices, pest and disease alerts, livestock-care guidance, market information, available training and details of public schemes. Its particular advantage lies in localising technical content. Extension specialists may provide scientifically grounded advice, while farmers can describe how a practice worked in local soil, climate and resource conditions. This combination can make agricultural information more credible and practical.

The timing of agricultural broadcasting is critical. Advice should be available before planting, irrigation, harvesting or marketing decisions are made, not only after the relevant window has passed. Stations can organise recurring seasonal programmes and maintain direct links with agricultural universities, Krishi Vigyan Kendras, extension workers, cooperatives and farmer groups. At the same time, broadcasters must avoid presenting uncertain recommendations as universal facts. Agricultural content should identify the source of advice, acknowledge local variation and encourage listeners to seek professional support for conditions that require individual diagnosis.

KEY OBSERVATION:

- Localised agricultural programmes are stronger when expert guidance is combined with farmer experience and local context.
- Seasonal scheduling and repeat broadcasts improve the usefulness of farm-related information.
- Clear source identification and careful language help prevent misinformation or overgeneralised advice.

5.3 HEALTH, WELFARE AND EMERGENCY INFORMATION ANALYSIS

Community radio can help rural households navigate public-health and welfare information that may otherwise be communicated through distant offices, complex websites or written notices. Programmes can explain service availability, eligibility requirements, preventive-health practices, nutrition, sanitation, maternal and child health, school-related information and support resources. Because health and welfare issues can involve fear, stigma or confusion, the language of broadcasting should be clear, respectful and non-judgmental. It should avoid sensational claims and distinguish verified medical or official guidance from informal opinion.

During emergencies, radio can provide rapid local updates, safety instructions, helpline information and coordination messages. Its usefulness depends on preparation. Stations should establish relationships with district authorities, health departments, disaster-management personnel, local volunteers and community leaders before an emergency occurs. They should also maintain protocols for checking information, correcting errors and protecting people from rumours. Emergency broadcasting should prioritise life-saving clarity over dramatic presentation, and should be accessible to listeners who may have limited mobility, literacy or digital access.

KEY OBSERVATION:

- Health and welfare information must be accurate, practical, respectful and easy to verify.
- Prepared partnerships with public agencies improve the speed and reliability of emergency communication.
- Correction procedures are essential because unverified local rumours can create serious harm.

5.4 PARTICIPATION, FEEDBACK AND LOCAL ACCOUNTABILITY ANALYSIS

The distinctive contribution of community radio is its capacity to organise two-way communication. Listener clubs, open-phone segments, letters, voice messages, community meetings, field recordings and local interviews can bring questions from residents into the programme agenda. Participation should be designed with attention to power differences. If only local elites, officials or confident speakers are invited to contribute, the station may reproduce exclusion rather than reduce it. Broadcasters should actively seek contributions from women, young people, persons with disabilities, minority-language speakers, wage workers, small farmers and residents of remote settlements.

Feedback also creates an accountability pathway. A station can collect recurring questions about service delivery, invite officials or knowledgeable actors to respond and return to the issue in later programming. This does not mean that radio should make accusations without evidence. It means that it can document concerns, explain procedures, verify claims and promote transparent dialogue. Clear editorial rules are needed to protect participants, prevent defamation, distinguish allegations from facts and provide a right of response. When practised responsibly, this role can improve the visibility of rural concerns and the responsiveness of local institutions.

KEY OBSERVATION:

- Participation should be structured to include groups that are less likely to speak in public settings.
- Feedback systems are valuable when they lead to documented follow-up, not only symbolic interaction.
- Editorial safeguards protect both community members and the credibility of the station.

5.5 GENDER, YOUTH AND SOCIAL INCLUSION ANALYSIS

Information access is shaped by gender, age, caste, disability, language, income, mobility and social position. A programme schedule that suits one group may exclude another. Women may have limited time to listen because of care work, young people may prefer interactive formats, and older listeners may value slower explanations and repeat broadcasts. Community radio should therefore develop schedules, formats and participation routes that respond to different daily routines and capacities. It should also avoid portraying rural women, minorities or young people only as beneficiaries; they should be presented as knowledge holders, producers, interviewees and decision-makers.

Inclusion requires more than representation in a single programme. It should be reflected in editorial planning, staff training, language choice, accessibility and governance. Stations can create women-led listener groups, youth reporting initiatives, disability-accessible announcements and programmes in minority languages. They should also consider safety: individuals who share experiences about discrimination, violence, debt, health or public services may require privacy and informed consent. Ethical inclusion is therefore linked to both visibility and protection.

KEY OBSERVATION:

- Different groups require different broadcast times, formats, languages and participation routes.
- Inclusive programming treats local residents as contributors and knowledge holders, not only as target audiences.
- Consent, privacy and safety should be considered when discussing sensitive experiences or local disputes.

5.6 DIGITAL CONVERGENCE AND SUSTAINABILITY ANALYSIS

Digital tools can strengthen community radio when they complement, rather than replace, local broadcasting. Mobile phones can be used to collect questions, receive community reports, share programme reminders and connect broadcasters with field experts. Messaging applications can circulate short audio clips and service updates, while social platforms can help stations archive content and reach migrants or younger audiences. Yet digital strategies must be designed around local access conditions. Exclusive dependence on smartphones, data plans or written messages can exclude households that are precisely the most dependent on radio.

Sustainability is an equally important condition. A station needs trained staff and volunteers, basic equipment maintenance, safe facilities, transparent governance, realistic budgets and diversified support. Funding arrangements should not compromise community orientation or editorial independence. Stations should also develop simple indicators that assess whether information is reaching and helping listeners: questions received, attendance at local meetings, referrals completed, changes in understanding, service follow-up and feedback from different social groups. Long-term value emerges when a station becomes a trusted local institution rather than a short-term project.

KEY OBSERVATION:

- Hybrid radio-mobile strategies can expand participation without excluding listeners who remain offline.
- Sustainability requires skills, transparent governance, equipment support and funding that protects public-interest programming.
- Impact assessment should examine comprehension, use and follow-up,

not only broadcast hours or social-media metrics.

Table 3: Rural Information Access Evaluation Matrix

Information Dimension	Primary Risk	Responsible Practice	Evidence / Control
Relevance	Generic content that does not match local needs or timing	Plan programmes through audience research, local calendars and listener questions.	Programme plan; audience notes; seasonal schedule.
Language access	Technical terms or dominant-language broadcasting excludes listeners	Use local languages, simple explanations and familiar examples.	Language review; listener comprehension checks.
Accuracy	Rumours, inaccurate advice or unverified claims	Verify sources, identify experts and correct errors promptly.	Source log; correction policy; editorial checklist.
Participation	Elite capture or token listener involvement	Create multiple, safe routes for community contributions and local reporting.	Listener-club records; call logs; field-reporting plan.
Inclusion	Women, youth, minority groups and remote hamlets remain unheard	Set inclusion targets and adapt formats, schedules and languages.	Participation data; representative programme roster.
Institutional linkage	Listeners receive information but cannot obtain support	Build relationships with verified service providers and follow up on questions.	Partner directory; referral tracking; response broadcasts.
Sustainability	Funding pressure, weak skills or equipment failures interrupt service	Use transparent governance, training, maintenance plans and diverse support.	Budget; governance record; training and maintenance log.

6. DISCUSSION

The analysis shows that community radio can make a distinctive contribution to rural information access because it combines local reach with the possibility of dialogue. The medium is valuable not simply because it broadcasts to rural areas, but because it can place rural residents at the centre of communication. This distinction matters. A programme developed without audience involvement may distribute information, yet still fail to address language, timing, credibility or practical

relevance. A community-oriented programme asks what information people need, how they understand the issue, what constraints they face and what form of follow-up is possible.

Information access should therefore be evaluated as a sequence rather than a single act of transmission. First, listeners must be able to receive the programme. Second, they must understand it in a familiar language and format. Third, they must consider the source credible and relevant. Fourth, they need an opportunity

to seek clarification or discuss the advice. Finally, they may require a connection to a service provider, local group or technical expert before action is possible. Community radio can support each stage when it combines broadcasting with field engagement, listener feedback and institutional partnerships.

The agricultural examples discussed in the literature demonstrate why local knowledge and technical knowledge should not be treated as opposites. Farmers and rural residents can contribute observations about conditions, barriers and adaptations, while extension workers and specialists can clarify evidence-based practices. Radio can make this exchange visible and repeatable. The same principle applies to health, welfare and disaster communication. Officials may possess formal information, but community members know which questions are confusing, which documents are inaccessible, where service gaps occur and which messages are likely to be trusted.

At the same time, the participatory character of community radio creates responsibilities. Stations must verify information, protect privacy, prevent harmful speech, avoid partisan capture and ensure that participation is not limited to already powerful voices. Editorial independence and transparent governance are therefore as important as equipment and frequency allocation. Community radio should be accountable to its audience, but it must also apply standards that protect the audience from misinformation, discrimination and unsafe exposure.

Digital convergence offers practical opportunities, but it should be approached through the principle of complementarity. Mobile and online tools can increase feedback, archive programmes and extend reach, while radio remains a low-barrier platform for many listeners. The strongest model is a hybrid system in which radio

carries locally relevant public-interest content, phones and messaging tools enable questions and reminders, and trusted institutions provide follow-up. Such a system can make rural information environments more connected without assuming that all residents have the same devices, literacy levels or digital confidence.

7. CONCLUSION

Community radio can strengthen rural information access when it is locally rooted, participatory, trustworthy and connected to the practical concerns of everyday life. The study identifies eight core requirements: relevance, language accessibility, participation, credibility, inclusion, feedback, institutional coordination and sustainability. These requirements apply across agricultural extension, health communication, welfare information, education, climate resilience, disaster preparedness and local governance.

The research confirms that broadcasting alone is not enough. Information can be technically available yet remain inaccessible if it is delivered in an unfamiliar language, at the wrong time, without local context or without a route for questions and support. Community radio becomes more effective when it treats rural residents as contributors to knowledge and programme design. Listener groups, local reporters, interviews, phone-based questions and partnerships with verified service providers can transform a message into a process of shared learning and action.

Community radio should be understood as part of rural communication infrastructure. It does not replace extension workers, health systems, schools, local government or digital services. Rather, it can connect these institutions with people in a form that is understandable, inclusive and locally accountable. Sustained investment in skills, governance, verification,

inclusive participation and hybrid credible platforms for rural information communication tools can enable access and democratic local dialogue. community radio stations to remain

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