

THE VOICE OF WOMEN:

A Success Story of Community Audio Tower in Bhasi VDC, Sunsari District

Submitted to:

**UNICEF Field Office
Eastern Region, Biratnagar**

Submitted By:

Institute for Integrated Development Studies (IIDS)

P.O. Box 2254, Kathmandu, Nepal

Email: iids@wlink.com.np

May 2001

Executive Summary

A CASE STUDY ON COMMUNITY AUDIO TOWER In BHASI VDC, JHUMKA, SUNSARI DISTRICT The Voice of Women

or

Truly an Articulation of Voice for and by Women

Over the past couple of years, the Community Audio Tower (CAT) has emerged as one of the most effective and popular media for informing, educating and communicating with the poor and illiterate rural populace. In a developing and poor country like Nepal, the CAT system has many advantages.

Having realized the efficacy and impact of the CAT system in rural and community development programmes in Nepal, the Production Credit for Rural Women (PCRW) programme, implemented by the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare (MWCSW), has adopted this IEC medium in some of the programme districts as one of the tools to achieve its goal and objectives. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)-Nepal, one of the donors of the programme, has also taken a keen interest in promoting the CAT system by financially supporting the programme in several districts. One of these districts is Sunsari in the Eastern Development Region, where a CAT programme was inaugurated in Bhadgaon-Sinabari (Bhasi in short) Village Development Committee (VDC) area on 5th Falgun 2055 and is successfully being operated since then.

The community audio tower in Sunsari district was started with three main objectives: (1) to inform the local women, (2) to empower the local women and (3) to build the capacity of the local people.

In Bhasi, three committees were formed to smoothly operate and manage the CAT programme in the future. The Mahila Samudayeeek Sanchar Sahayog Samuha, formed at the VDC level, has representation of local administration, support services and professionals, Sunsari WDS and the PCRW group members, etc. It mainly plays an advisory and policymaking role and is also responsible for troubleshooting and co-ordinating between different activities. The Sanchalak Samiti, comprising six members--all women, is responsible for day-to-day operation of the system, including collection and editing of news and other materials for broadcast, broadcasting of programmes and collection of advertisements. The Sahayog Samiti, which is formed in each of the nine wards, consists of the ward chairperson, elected woman representative from the ward, a teacher and two schoolchildren. This committee makes available materials for broadcast from the ward level.

The community audio tower currently broadcasts programmes for one hour a week, from 3 p.m. to 4 p.m. every Saturday. This timing coincides with a *haat* that is held in the bazaar on that day. Initially, only recorded programmes were broadcast. However, programmes are being broadcast live for the past three or four months.