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Interactive radio drama

POWER TOOLS



Purpose:

Interactive radio drama can be used to gain public participation in policy planning, for example towards biodiversity conservation. Its huge advantage is that radio breaks the barrier of literacy, and is heard even in remote areas where there is little electricity. This format was developed for a 14-episode series of weekly radio programmes to encourage public participation in preparing a biodiversity action plan for the state of Karnataka, India. The Centre for Ecological Sciences and All India Radio jointly developed the tool. The objectives were to:

- Obtain information from the general public to use in planning.
- Raise awareness of biodiversity and the importance of documenting and saving it.

Activities:

• Identify field interview locations

Focus on places that have some interesting ongoing activity, and places in remote areas. Each location should be relevant to a particular theme (e.g. crop diversity, sacred rivers, medicinal plants).

• Conduct the interviews

Radio producers visit locations to interview grassroots communities on a chosen theme relating to biodiversity in their daily lives and surroundings.

• Dramatisation

Back in the studio, two actors record a scripted drama. Grassroots interviews are woven into the fictional narrative. Use the format of two fictional characters travelling through the state. On their travels they meet different people, interact with them and ask them questions about local biodiversity. Use the pre-recorded voices of local people for the replies. Thus the dramatised narrative and real-life interviews are integrated. Focus each weekly episode on a different theme. End each episode with a recap of important points.

• 'Expert' episodes

Follow each dramatised episode with an 'expert' episode, with a panel of experts talking about the theme of the previous week.

• Letters

End each episode with a request for listeners to send in information about that theme (e.g. for a medicinal plants episode, the presenter can ask listeners to write in about the use of local curative plants). Distribute prizes for the best letters. Use relevant information in the letters to prepare the biodiversity action plan.

• Final phone-in

The final episode could be a live phone-in, with a panel of experts answering questions from callers.

Keep in Mind

- ★ Be flexible. Use interesting information from letters received during the series to choose some of the field locations.
- ★ Broadcast the series in the evening, when people are usually home, and are free.
- ★ Keep it simple and attractive: record local folk songs (especially relating to local biodiversity) during field interviews, and include them in dramatisations. Create humour and emotion within dramatic situations. Avoid scientific jargon.
- ★ Read letters as they arrive, instead of creating a concentrated workload at the end.
- ★ Include women on the team of field interviewers. It will be easier for them to approach and interview women in the field locations.
- ★ Publicise the series on radio before it goes on air.

Further information

Find full tool and other related tools and resources at: www.policy-powertools.org or contact:

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