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Bangladesh NGOs Network for Radio and Communication
In Special Consultative Status with the UN ECOSOC

Bangladesh NGOs Network for Radio and Communication represents the community media sector to Government, Industry, Regulatory Bodies, Media and Development Partners.

BNNRC is in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.

BNNRC is supported by contributions from different development organizations worldwide who share a commitment in building a free, independent and pluralistic community media of voices for the voiceless.

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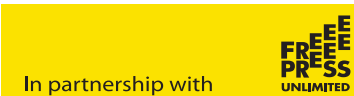
OUR VOICE OUR POWER



Empowering Women through Community Media in Bangladesh



BNNRC is proud member of



OUR
VOICE
OUR POWER





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Preface

Once a colleague and friend of mine from the community radio movement in Nepal told me that we as Free Press Unlimited should include much more women in our training programs than we are currently doing. “Because when we train men usually they go and find a better job. When we train women, we can change a society”. It may sound just like another cliché, but like many clichés it bears a lot of truth. And I have seen it time and again confirmed in different programs, countries and contexts.

I am both proud and privileged to present to you “Our Voice, Our Power” - a publication that presents highlights in the professional and personal achievements of 12 young Bangladeshi women that recently completed a media fellowship at community radio stations. Their stories and journeys are not just their own – these are the stories and voices of millions of women they represent from towns and villages, educated and illiterate, young and old, poor and disadvantaged. They tell the story of struggle with stigma and prejudice, of family support and respect, of the power of will and curiosity, of the strength to overcome and the urge to develop and move forward. As a person, as professional and as a member of society.

The book contains profiles of 12 women between the ages of 18 and 26 that were selected to follow a 3-month journalism fellowship and work at community radio stations. The program was designed and implemented by Bangladesh NGOs Network for Radio and Communication (BNNRC) in cooperation with 11 community radio stations across Bangladesh and supported by Free Press Unlimited. During the fellowship the women received training and mentoring and afterward started reporting and producing programs and articles reflecting the problems and everyday life of women, children, disadvantaged groups and poor from rural and remote areas. The programs and articles are broadcast and published by community radios and national and local newspapers. They capture the joys and struggles of women and bring them to the attention of authorities and communities – stories that often remain sidelined and unheard.

Though this program the fellows have not only developed their personal and professional skills. 10 out of the 12 fellows are already employed in media, and some have even become station managers. On a broader level, their reporting brings many important issues and problems to light, acts as inspiration and empowerment and finally helps change and challenge social taboos and patterns that prevent women from flourishing and actively contributing to the overall development of their community, their village or their country. “Change will only happen when women come forward, speak up and acquire and disseminate knowledge”, says the 26-year old Nusrat from Radio Lokobetar. “For the women in my village, I am the voice of their sorrow and their happiness, I have forever changed my life perspective and hope to change theirs as well”, adds the 24-year old Sanjita from Radio Bikrampur.

I cannot agree more with both. I have the deepest respect and the highest hopes for these fellows and the women they represent, and am convinced that their work will be an inspiration for change.

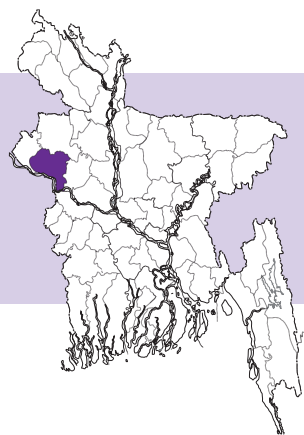
Dessi Damianova
Program Manager South Asia
Free Press Unlimited

They capture the joys and struggles of women and bring them to the attention of authorities and communities – stories that often remain sidelined and unheard.



Radio Padma 99.2

Audience
500 Thousand



Sultana Razia Briste

Nickname: Briste

Age: 24

Definition of success: Small or big,
doing anything properly is the essence
of success

Position: Assistant News Producer and
News Presenter

Photo: Afroj Sadia Jahan



“
The same people I once thought
were aggressive, dirty and mean, I
now know after working with
cleaners and char-dwellers that
you should never judge anyone
from a distance

”

‘When I was selected for the fellowship, I was very worried of what I would report on women’s and children’s issues in three months? When I asked a senior colleague at Radio Padma for suggestions, he said – you’re a student of journalism and you can’t find issues! Although I felt bad about that, I soon found out that while there are many issues of negligence and oppression, success stories are also a plenty. In the last three months, I have done 18 reports on women and children; 12 of them have been broadcast on Radio Padma, four features have been published in Rajshahi’s local newspaper Sun Shine, and the other two I have prepared for BNNRC News Bulletin. And with the ideas I have now on women’s and children’s issues, I can work for another three months on them.’

Sultana Razia Bristy, student of mass communication and journalism at Rajshahi University, was passing merry days with studies and some writing for local newspapers. She wasn’t an avid listener of the Community Radio Padma. Bristy is surprised now that friends at her class and seniors at the radio station say ‘Although she is new, Bristy’s voice is better than her more experienced counterparts at Radio Padma.’ However, her start was not smooth at all.

Bristy says, ‘When I decided to do a report on the education system of char-resident children, many people told me it was not safe for me to go there, as people of the char do not think highly of outsiders. But I did not change my decision. When I reached there after half an hour on a boat, then a walk for five kilometers and then crossing another river on a boat, it was noon, and by the time I got back, night had fallen.’

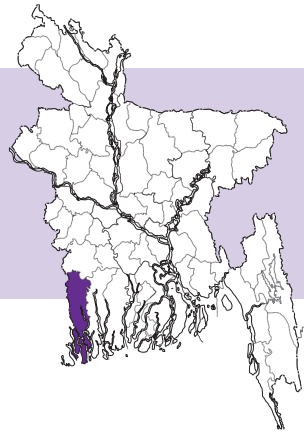
Bristy belongs to a religiously conservative family. She joined journalism inspired by her mother, and did some writing in the papers as part of her studies. Her plan was to join a government job after finishing studies, but that has changed into dreams of journalism now. Her target is now to become a good journalist. She has already cemented a place as an assistant news producer and news presenter, but she believes it’s just the beginning of a long journey.

‘The same people I once thought were aggressive, dirty and mean, I now know after working with cleaners and char-dwellers that you should never judge anyone from a distance. I am grateful to BNNRC for changing my mentality through working in this fellowship.’



Radio Nalta 99.2

Audience
600 Thousand



Jannatul Mouwa

Nickname: Jannat
Age: 23
Definition of success: The highest level of wish-fulfillment
Position: Station Manager, Radio Progoti (Newly approved Community Radio in Satkhira)

Photo: Shahin Alam



“

My values and ideology has been changed completely while working on field under the fellowship for deprived and neglected populace, the condition of women and children and their rights, problems and prospects

”

‘Look up once, and the whole world will see you’ – these are not lines from a poem, but the voice of a village girl’s experiences of harsh reality. Her motto is to take criticism as inspiration, and developing herself through perseverance. Then only will there be success, and becoming of a true human being.

Momrezpur is a remote village in Satkhira’s Kaliganj upazila. Abdul Jabbar is a resident of this Momrezpur, full of superstitions and religious bigotry. He is an imam of a local mosque; of his eight children, Jannat is the youngest. Her full name is Jannatul Mowa.

It was 2011. Community Radio Nalta was established in Satkhira’s Kaliganj. The smart and sharp Jannat applied at Radio Nalta, encouraged by her friends and elder brother, and mother’s support. She was selected, and her new journey began as program producer and host.

‘Working in a cramped small room at the radio station after classes, father’s reprimands when I came home late, walking eight kilometers when transportation was unavailable, and harsh comments by local people could not stop me. But a high official

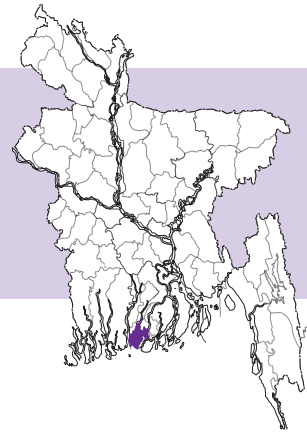
of the radio once said ‘Your voice is harsh, how can you be a radio presenter?’ and it crushed my confidence. But I did not give up. I practiced every day to prepare my voice. And I have got the results for that. The person whose criticism hurt me, praises me now. But still my biggest achievement as a radio presenter is listeners’ love. There have been incidents where people have come to the radio station from far away just to meet me.’

To develop herself, Jannat has done several trainings under national mass media institute, AMARC and Radio Nalta on program production and script writing. But she says, ‘I got the complete journalism scope after being selected as a fellow at BNNRC’s fellowship program.’

She adds, ‘My values and ideology has been changed completely while working on field under the fellowship for deprived and neglected populace, the condition of women and children and their rights, problems and prospects. While working with sex workers and transsexuals, I realized how much our society has advanced.’ Currently, Jannat has joined the newly-approved Community Radio Progoti in Satkhira, as station manager.

লোকবেতার
FM 99.2
একটি এমএমসি প্রকল্প

Audience
350 Thousand



Lokobetar 99.2

Nusrat Jahan Sony

Nickname: Sony
Age: 26
Definition of success: Love your work,
and apply your vision
Position: Reporter and Presenter

Photo: Jahangir Alam



“

As a media fellow, I think my work and responsibilities will have an impact on all women, including women of my community and other women will be motivated to take this as a profession

”

Nusrat Jahan is a Reporter and program presenter of Community Radio Lokobetar. But she is known better as Sony. Because she loves to sing and is involved with local cultural group, she has been a part of Lokobetar from the beginning. Borguna-born Sony is working as a media fellow at Lokobetar inspired by her father. She is currently studying law in her final year at the Barisal BM College.

Recitation, Singing, creative writing, acting and organizing cultural programs – Sony is at the fore at everything. The eldest of three sisters, her home is in Borguna's West Dhupti. Encouraged by her parents, she was involved in cultural activities from school days, and her creative faculties developed in a nurturing environment. Sony thinks there are both advantages and disadvantages of being a river-surrounded region. She says our women are working more than before. Self-centered women are coming out of their comfort zones and working for the communities. Plus, because of technological advancements like TV, radio and internet, there is more field of work for women.

Working as a journalist, she goes to depths of different matters and brings out the true picture -- something she thinks will help her in her profession of law.

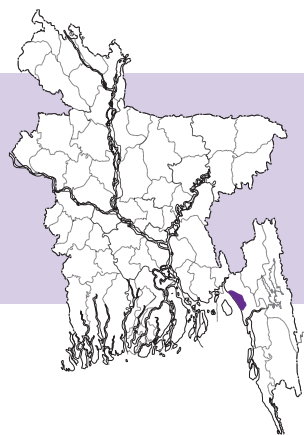
Through journalism, she has attained the extraordinary ability to mingle with people. She informs people of matters of public importance like adverse weather, social problems, women and children's news, national sports and festivals on the radio. She has expressed herself as the first community journalist of Borguna, and has encouraged many young women.

Sony thanks BNNRC for giving her the scope to work as a journalist as well as give her financial independence and skill development. She says, 'As a media fellow, I think my work and responsibilities will have an impact on all women, including women of my community, and other women will be motivated to take this as a profession.' Although there are problems, Sony has the ability to overcome them. She thinks change will only come if the new generation comes forward, speaks, acquires and disseminates knowledge.



FM 99.2

Audience
262 Thousand



Radio Sagar Giri 99.2

Farzana Kaiser

Nick name: Farzana

Age: 25

Definition of success: Strong will-power and financial awareness

Photo: Mohsena Aktar Mina



“

Society's view of women is changing and will change further. If one can work with their credibility and creativity, it will be easier to take journalism as a profession

”

Farzana Kaiser born and brought up amid poverty, She has joined Radio Sagar Giri through this fellowship, Despite being close to the second biggest city of the country Chittagong, the community of Sitakunda is conservative.

It's difficult for many to accept that a girl will work as a journalist in a radio. From collecting information to broadcasting, Farzana does all the work as a journalist herself. There was a time when using the recorder and casting the news in front of the microphone was new to her. Farzana thinks her own perseverance, hard work, and support from colleagues has given her the success. She thinks it's very difficult for

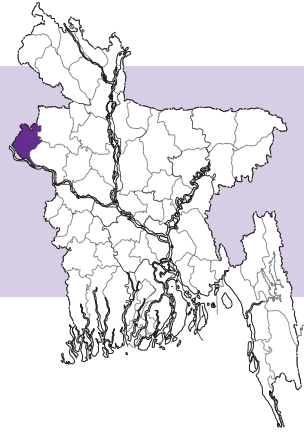
a woman to make a career in this field without support from family and coworkers. Farzana thinks there's challenge in every job, but it's a little steep for collecting news for a community radio.

One can only reach their target if they have the will to overcome that challenge. She considers meeting a lot of new people and bringing many unknown matters to the fore during her fellowship work as an accomplishment. On society's view of women, Farzana said 'The view is changing, and will change further. If one can work with their credibility and creativity, it will be easier to take journalism as a profession.' Farzana Kaiser dreams of becoming a good reporter.



Radio Mahananda 98.8

Audience
450 Thousand



Samia Aktar

Nickname: Keya
Age: 23
Definition of success: One can achieve anything if they have confidence
Position: Assistant Producer (Program and News)

Photo: Abul Kalam Azad



“

I think there's proper environment for women to work in the media. All they need is courage and the right mentality. I think every woman should be aware and self-dependent

”

Women are finding their place in challenging professions with skill and confidence, and even getting ahead of men on occasion. Samia Akhter is studying honors in Bengali at Chapainawabganj Government College. She started working as a volunteer in Radio Mahananda at the end of 2013, after taking long-term training. And then she was selected as a community media fellow.

Samia thinks family's support is crucial in any girl's success. As a media worker, she receives support of her husband and in-laws. She says working women are aware and sincere, and that is why they are handling both their home and work. She also thinks women have the power and

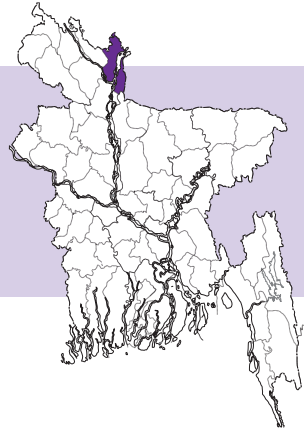
capability; they just need to discover them. Samia says, 'I never thought I will work as a journalist in community. Through the course of work, I have felt that it's very challenging to bring up women and children's issues. It's different, so while there is challenge, there is also scope to express your opinion. I think there's proper environment for women to work in the media. All they need is courage and the right mentality. I think every woman should be aware and self-dependent.'

Samia, who recently joined Radio Mahananda as assistant producer (program and news), says she always receives support from coworkers, which encourages her to work more.



Radio Chilmari 99.2

Audience
480 Thousand



Jakia Akter Jany

Nickname: Jany

Age: 20

Definition of success: Success will only come if you're educated and aware

Photo: Boshir Ahmed



“

Speaking on her first day's experience Jany says, It felt very different. I was scared, but everyone at the radio was encouraging me. But from my first day till today, I have had no bad experience

”

Jakia Akhtar Jany is from Chilmari. She has studied up to higher secondary level at Chilmari sadar. She now studies in her first year in chemistry at Gaibanda Government College. She is a popular face on college campus, because she is working as a community media fellow at Radio Chilmari. She enjoys the attention from classmates and teachers. She has received full support from her family to work as a journalist. Jany says, 'Everyone in my family, including my father, encouraged my decision to work as a community media journalist.

I am grateful to them. They believed that I can go to distant places with my recorder to collect information, like any other journalist can. One cannot do anything without family's support, and it's particularly true for girls. I think families should believe that girls can do things. Jany has made a number of

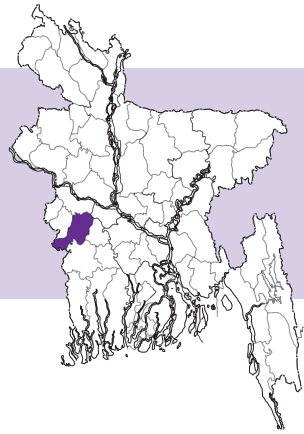
documentaries on women and children's issues. Her joining at the community radio was basically through the fellowship. Speaking on her first day's experience, Jany says, 'It felt very different. I was scared, but everyone at the radio was encouraging me. But from my first day till today, I have had no bad experience.'

Although she keeps listeners engaged on the radio from behind the microphone, Jany is soft-spoken in her personal life. But she has a natural tendency to energize people through her positivity. Besides studies and working at the radio. Jany likes to dance. The second of three sisters, Jany is currently the only woman journalist at Radio Chilmari. In her community, Jany has become an exemplary person. She wants to work full-time in this profession, and go forward with it.



Radio Jhenuk 99.2

Audience
390 Thousand



Boishakhy Khatun

Nickname: Boishakhy

Age: 18

Definition of success: There's no alternative to perseverance for success

Position: Assistant Producer and Reporter

Photo: Amir Hamja



“
Our community is small, everyone knows everyone, so if a girl is assaulted, I cannot bring it up even concealing her identity, in fear of her social position being marred. It really bothers me
”

Boishakhy, the girl from Kushtia, is a familiar face in Jhenaidah, and a more familiar voice. She joined Radio Jhenuk in January 2013 as a volunteer. She later became the host of Hello Jhenaidah, and now a full-time assistant producer and reporter for Radio Jhenuk. However, she prefers introducing herself as the first and only woman journalist of Jhenaidah.

Boishakhy says 'Radio Jhenuk's 'Hello Jhenaidah' is basically a women's and children's program. Besides hosting it, I had to go to the field level to collect information. So when I was involved with the fellowship to work with women and children's issues, I felt like it would be easy for me. But when I started, I saw it was not that easy. I would go and collect lots of information and voxpops, but when I tried to make a report or feature, I would lose track – of what to keep, what to discard and how to link the information. People at the station used to help me. And then in the middle of the fellowship when I got a two-day orientation on journalism, I thought to myself what darkness I was in!

Through her perseverance and hard work, Boishakhy has been able to get out of that

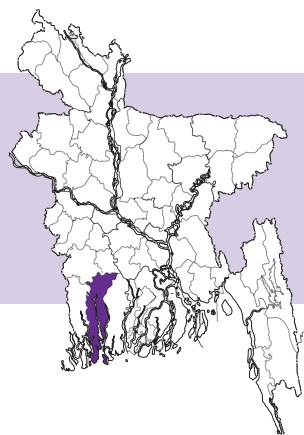
darkness of ignorance. Radio Jhenuk did not have any news-based programs. A program called 'Jhenuker Darpan' was started Boishakhy's reports and features, where she highlighted education for specially-abled children, suicidal tendencies among women, change of fate of women through handicrafts, education system of children in the Asrayan project, women workers in jute mills, struggling women of the potter community, early marriage, violence against women and such issues. For some, she was praised by the local administration, while others got her text messages from listeners. For example, after the handicrafts report, many people visited the station to know how they can learn it. As a result, 'Jhenuker Darpan' is now a popular regular program.

Despite all this, Boishakhy still feels very bad when she can't project correct information, even if she wants. In her words – 'Our community is small, everyone knows everyone, so if a girl is assaulted, I cannot bring it up even concealing her identity, in fear of her social position being marred. It really bothers me. But I will try my hardest to change it, like what happened in my case. Those who looked down on me just because I am a woman journalist, the same people respect and appreciate me now'.



Radio Sundarban 98.8

Audience
275 Thousand



Anamika Dhanuki

Nickname: Tutu

Age: 23

Definition of success: Moving ahead despite obstacles

Position: Program Producer

Photo: Rabiul Islam



“

For one, I did not even know very well what journalism was, and it was very difficult to make reports and features on women and children. The radio station helped me greatly. Then when I got an orientation from BNNRC about journalism, I felt like I could do this

”

Shrimp farms on three sides and the Sunderbans on the other, and a small bazaar in between; the small Koyra community has developed around it. Community Radio Sunderban is situated here.

Hailing from Satkhira, Anamika Dhanuki has grown up at her maternal uncle's house in Koyra due to her family's financial instability. Although she received good support from her uncle and grandparents, Anamika always felt the urge to do something on her own, and applied as a host for Radio Sunderban. But she was kept on the waiting list. And then she heard about a fellowship on the radio and applied for it. But she was not expecting to be selected; when she was informed that she has been selected as a fellow, it was hard to believe for her.

Anamika says – ‘For one, I did not even know very well what journalism was, and it was very difficult to make reports and features on women and children. The radio station helped me greatly. Then when I got an orientation from BNNRC about journalism, I felt like I could do this. I then made reports on women and children being affected by drinking water and sanitation

problems, wage discrimination of women workers, education system of the Munda (an ethnic community) community, the poor condition of the river Kopotakkho, and forest children. The reports, when broadcast on radio, created a stir among listeners. People from remote areas came to the radio station just to meet me.’

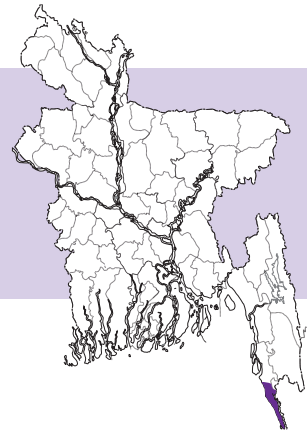
To the residents of Koyra, Anamika is not an unknown face anymore. She is the first and only woman program producer of Radio Sunderban.

Sharing her experience – Anamika says ‘Koyra's communication system was so bad that I often had to travel by foot to collect information. Sometimes I had to sit in unhealthy surroundings for hours to take voxpops. But the most demoralizing factor was the eve-teasing that I faced when I was out working. But then I thought if we who would work for backwards women go into our shells, then how can we take them forward?’ Anamika is thinking of studying law besides journalism, in order to work for helpless women. She said ‘There are many women in our society who don't get justice because they're poor. I want to provide them with free legal services.’



Radio Naf 99.2

Audience
55 Thousand



Hla Hla Yee Rakhaien

Nickname: Hla Hla Yee

Age: 27

Definition of success: Success comes from
hard work and will-power

Position: Program Producer and Reporter

Photo: Faruk Hossain Arman



“

She thinks there's no shortcut to success, everyone has to face challenges and win them over. She hopes that women are treated as human beings rather than women and given scope through evaluation and support to develop them

”

A vision, the will to do something meaningful, and the mental strength to overcome crises are qualities that make a winner. Hla Hla Yee Rakhine works with these principles. From an early age, she holds the vastness of the sea in her that began with working at community Radio Naf. She was introduced to Radio Naf officials while getting training for village court in 2012. New doors opened for her, as various radio-related trainings made her a skilled worker. She kept on overcoming hurdles through sheer hard work and perseverance, and eventually participated in the community media fellowship of BNNRC.

Today, she presents herself as the first community media journalist of Teknaf. Besides producing regular programs of Radio Naf, she has ventured into print media, working as the Teknaf correspondent of The Daily Cox's Bazar Barta. She is also working as the Cox's Bazar

district correspondent of Drik. She highlights various problems and prospects of the community, reflecting the stories of the people in her writing. She prefers identifying herself as a media worker. Since she lives in a remote area, the obstacles are also many, including women's education, social and financial position. She feels proud to be encouraging for the backwards women of the Rakhine community and upholding their culture and heritage.

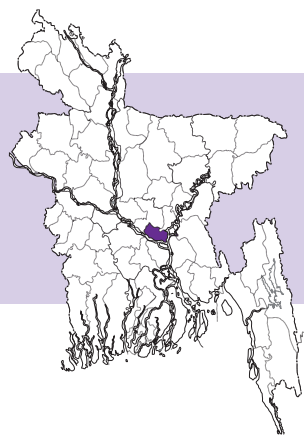
Her parents' support has made her more confident in doing so. Hla Hla Yee is currently studying honors in accounting at the local college, but her future plans include working in national media as a journalist, and to go far in the field.

She thinks there's no shortcut to success, everyone has to face challenges and win them over. She hopes that women are treated as human beings rather than women, and given scope through evaluation and support to develop them.



Radio Bikrampur 99.2

Audience
452 Thousand



Sanjita Kauchar Sopnil

Nickname: Sopnil
Age: 24
Definition of success: To be able to do what gives the mental peace
Position: Program Producer and Presenter

Photo: Mamunur Rashid



“

The biggest problem I faced was with people; whether they were educated or illiterate, when I asked a question they would avoid it...

”

‘Before, I was just an adored daughter of my parents, and a favorite of my friends. Now I am a known name and face of every person in the community, a part of their happiness and sorrows. Through journalism, I want to become the voice of voiceless women. I want to work for the truth, for every person in this country.’

These words are by Sopnil, known formally as Sanjita Kauchar Sopnil. The girl from Bikrampur loves to dream. She wanted to be a doctor, but fate had other plans for her. Her father is no more; mother and younger brother make up the family. She joined Radio Bikrampur in 2012 as presenter and producer, from the urge to do something.

Sopnil says, ‘Although I was involved with radio, I never thought I’d work as a journalist, because unveiling the truth always seemed like a difficult job to me. But the three-month fellowship by BNNRC has cleared that fear. In the beginning, I faced various problems, and got to see a number of things in society from up close, that sometimes encouraged me, and frustrated at others. But my viewpoint of life has changed; this much I can tell.’

She further says, ‘The biggest problem I faced was with people; whether they were

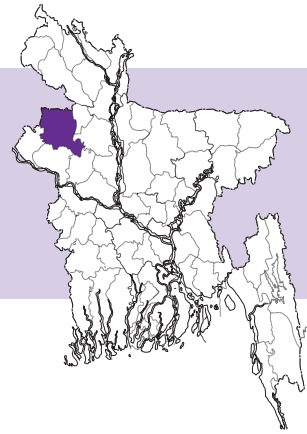
educated or illiterate, when I asked a question they would avoid it. Local government high officials would dilly-dally if I asked for their time. I had to come back empty-handed six days when I went to talk to the Bikrampur municipality mayor for a report on the Harijan community; I had to talk to his secretary and the vice chairman. But both of them indirectly threatened me not to bring up anything negative about the government.’

But like these bad experiences, she has had pleasant ones too. To do a report on women in the cluster village, she spent a lot of time with them. The women of the villages told her about their lives, because she is a woman too. Sopnil was thrilled to have gotten more information than expected. She was overwhelmed with emotion when they embraced her during her return and said that no one had listened to their story like this before.

Although she is a final year student of accounting, Sanjita has immense interest in journalism. Currently, she is working as a producer and presenter at Radio Bikrampur. But life’s harsh reality has shrouded where she will end up working in what profession. However, she is determined to work for children and the elderly. And she wants to do it through her writing.



Audience
500 Thousand



Radio Borendro 99.2

Hoymanti Roy

Nickname: Hoymanti
Age: 26
Definition of success: Overcoming hardships to reach target
Position: News Room Editor and Reporter

Photo: Md. Harun-or Rashid Chowdhury



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When I'd come home late after joining the radio, my neighbors passed comments. It saddened me. But now after working at field levels, I have seen how neglected, oppressed and repressed women are. And I have also learned that women have to be educated and aware of their rights

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Hoymanti comes from a very ordinary family. Her father is ill, and mother earns for the family. She wanted to learn dance but could not. But her culture-loving mind found a world where music, drama and information entertain and inform people: Barendro Radio. Hoymanti was a part of community Borendro Radio from its inception.

Hoymanti says, 'Aside from doing programs and drama on radio, I had interest in news too, but was hesitant because I didn't think someone as simple and introvert as me could be a journalist. But after joining the fellowship, I rediscovered myself. Nothing is impossible to people's will power. These three months are not just moments lost in time, but a new beginning to my understanding of life's motto, ideals and people.'

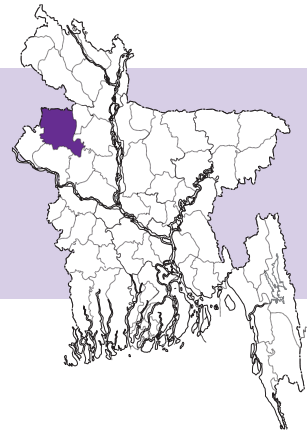
Hoymanti Roy is a fellow of Bangladesh NGOs Network for Radio and Communication's (BNNRC) community media fellowship program, to empower women by bringing up stories prospects and problems of underprivileged rural communities, especially neglected women and children, through the journalism of women journalists. During her fellowship, Hoymanti received acclaim by broadcasting reports on Borendro Radio on important issues like pre-primary education system,

healthcare facilities at the Naogaon Matri Sadan. But to her, a bigger achievement is that she could change people's perception of women. Hoymanti says, 'When I'd come home late after joining the radio, my neighbors passed comments. It saddened me. But now after working at field levels, I have seen how neglected, oppressed and repressed women are. And I have also learned that women have to be educated, and aware of their rights. When people ask me about coming home late, I explain that times are changing; if women don't move forward with men, the country will fall behind. It's very rewarding to see that people are honoring my work.'

Hoymanti is currently working as a newsroom editor and reporter at Borendro Radio. Although there are risks, she wants to pursue it as a career. Hoymanti says 'When I go to collect news, I have to the lower class of people. Sometimes the environment is unhealthy, but I still have to be there. I sometimes have to travel far, to bring up their stories. They often do not want to give us their opinions, and confuse us with wrong information. I think they do this because they are not aware of their rights. So I have to explain to them, and bring out their stories on their terms. But after all this, when I broadcast a report and people praise me, it inspires me greatly.'



Audience
500 Thousand



Radio Borendro 99.2

Shahrina Sultana Jui

Nickname: Jui
Age: 20
Definition of success: To fulfill parents' wishes and make them proud
Position: News Room Editor and Reporter

Photo: Md. Harun-or Rashid Chowdhury



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Anyone can go the distance based on their ability; being a woman is no obstacle

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When her first report 'Current condition of the district shishu sadan' was on air in the evening news bulletin, Naogaon's District Commissioner is on a visit to Borendro Radio. Aside from asking questions on various matters, he was closely listening to the bulletin. While everyone was nervous because it was a novice reporter's report, that too about a negative aspect of the government. But to everyone's surprise, the commissioner thanked the reporter and asked her to meet him one day.

When this amazing incident happened at Borendro Radio, the reporter, Shahrina Sultana Jui was senseless at home with a 104-degree fever.

Jui says, 'I was born and brought up in a family plagued with religious bigotry and superstitions. No women before me here had stepped out of the house, let alone have a job. Coming back from that family, I am a journalist today; it's like a dream. I learned dancing, singing and recitation, inspired by mother. College friends said I was a good speaker. With their encouragement, I applied as an RJ for Borendro Radio. I was given entertainment-based programs at first, and then asked to present news bulletins. My interest in journalism grew from there. Report-making really intrigued me. So the circular for the fellowship was like a dream. I am grateful to Borendro Radio and BNNRC for making this dream come true.

Sharing experience of her first work, Jui says 'I had always wanted to work with challenging issues. And so when I got the chance of working with women and children's issues, I thought of reporting about the mismanagement about the district shishu sadan. I fell sick, but was undeterred. When I

went to the spot on a shivering, foggy morning near the end of December, I had high fever. Moreover, those at the management of the place did not want to give me any information. Even when I wanted to talk to the children, they locked them up in a room. I had to talk to them after much persuasion. I barely completed the report after coming to the station from compiling the information. I lost my senses just as I entered my house. I was later informed of the district commissioner's reaction; the feeling of that moment cannot be described.

Through doing reports and features on issues like children being victims of pornography, employment of indigenous women in the forest department, child marriage, violence against women, old homes, adolescence of girls, Jui's perspectives have changed. 'My mentality has broadened a lot. I used to think just about myself before, now I think of everyone. Through this fellowship, I have had a great opportunity to work with the backwards, neglected people. I have made a place in their hearts. It's a big achievement for me.'

She has also developed a rapport with local administration and law enforcers like police, RAB and BGB. In case of any problem, she tries to resolve it through direct contact with them. Radio Barendra has appointed Jui as a full-time newsroom editor and reporter.

Naogaon has almost next to no women journalists. Due to social and religious limitations, women cannot come to the profession, despite their interest. But Jui wants to overcome all these obstacles and establish herself as a complete journalist. She wants to prove that anyone can go the distance based on their ability; being a woman is no obstacle.



OUR
VOICE
OUR **POWER**