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COMMUNITY RADIO IN THE DIGITAL ERA: STRENGTHENING INTERNET RESILIENCE AND TRUSTED COMMUNICATION IN SOUTH ASIA
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Community Radio in the Digital Era.

>> Just letting the panel know you can start at any time. Everything is ready, so over to the panel.

>> SUMAN BASNET: Am I working?
Okay. I'm delighted to see a full house here. My name is Suman, and welcome to this session which is about strengthening Internet resilience and trusted communication in South Asia in the context of community radio in digital era.

I work as regional director of AMARC and this is a global organization.

I'd like to thank APrIGF for letting us have this session over here to introduce the community data aspect into Internet governance which is a privilege we consider.

I would especially like to extend a very warm welcome to my colleagues from community radios, colleagues traveled across the length and breadth of the country to be here with us today. May I request everyone to give them a round of applause, please.

(Applause)

And a very warm welcome to our panelists here who I'll introduce in a moment.

Starting point today is quite simple. During a crisis, connectivity matters but connectivity alone is not enough, as we know.

People also need information that is reliable, understandable, locally relevant, and accessible. I'm sorry for the distraction, but we seem to have quite a good number of participants online, and before I go further, I would also like to extend a very warm welcome to all our friends joining us online.

I can see several familiar names and moment I was also looking at some faces, but really glad that everyone is here.

Community radio has a special role to play in this context. It works closely with local communities, meaning local languages, and combines traditional FM broadcasting with traditional technologies including social media, online streaming, and mobile messaging.

So our discussion is not about radio versus the Internet. It is rather about what we -- the question that we want to ask is how can community broadcasting and Internet-based communication work together to strengthen access to reliable information, access of local communities, particularly for rural and underserved and digitally excluded communities.

So before we begin the discussion with our distinguished panelists here, I would like to first all of welcome you all once again and present a brief introduction of the panelists.

Dr. Ramnath Bhat there in the middle, from India, is the President of AMARC Asia-Pacific. He's in [?] development. He works in communication and community resilience. Welcome.

Mr. Bazlur Rahman is very experienced hand in broadcasting, single handedly developed community broadcasting in Bangladesh and an established name in Internet Governance in the AI sector. He has digital inclusion and communication for sustainable development in Bangladesh and different parts of the world.

And we also have Ananda Gautam from Nepal who is a familiar face. He's in open Internet Nepal and his work focuses on open, secure, and inclusion Internet in Nepal.

Two panelists have joined us online. One is Arti Jaiman. Are you there? She's there, no?

>> ARTI JAIMAN: Yeah, I'm here.

>> SUMAN BASNET: She just said yeah. Station director of community radio [?] which is based very close to Delhi, and member of our women national network, which is a network of women working in community radio.

Her work focuses on community media, gender equality, and amplifying the voice of marginalized communities. Welcome, Arti. There she is.

And finally, Shita Laksmi, very well name in the world of [?] and Internet Governance consultant with experience in digital policy, Internet Governance processes and multi-stakeholder engagement across the Asia-Pacific region.

Both of them are joining us remotely. Hello, Shita, if you can hear us.

>> SHITA LAKSMI: Hello.

>> SUMAN BASNET: Great to see you. Yes, hi. Okay.

So the format is like this. We will spend about 25 minutes in conversation with our speakers, three over here, two online, followed by 25 minutes of questions and answers with all of you and also with the participants online.

I will direct each question initially to specific speakers in the panel. Responses should be limited to two minutes. Please bear this in mind. Other speakers may add a brief comment wherever time permits. There's a condition to that.

And I encourage all of you to be very conversational, please. We are particularly interested in experiences, examples, and possible solutions. Let's look for ideas that we can work on further after this conference.

So let me begin with an issue that also forms the main rationale of this discussion, it really is at the foundation of why this session has been organized.

During times of crisis, what unique role can community radio play in ensuring that communities continue to receive trusted and reliable information, particularly when digital information is disrupted or is inaccessible?

Ram, may I start with you? Yeah.

>> RAMNATH BHAT: Thanks for inviting me and I'll disregard someone's advice and start with a line of [?] because it will actually put in context what I want to say.

I've been checking out some of the sessions in the morning, and a lot of the disaster framing is looking at restoring network connectivity.

And to me that invokes a mathematical idea of communication, transmission model. Message has to reach from Point A to Point B, but coming from the community radio world, communication is much more than mathematical transactions, right?

It's a cultural way of communication or a ritual idea of communication where together we make meaning of what is happening.

And I think that is something that a merely technical exercise fails to grasp fully. So I think one of the things that community radio is particularly well equipped to do is to address this kind of bond between communities, especially in times of disaster.

Those bonds come under stress, and I think community radio is well placed as a local medium. As you step up the value chain, the concentration of ownership keeps increasing, right? Those are community-owned medium not just in the sense that anybody can come and participate, but also that the infrastructure itself is owned by the community.

That's very important, and I think allows for a more genuine sense of participation.

And I think one of the things that community radio can do to receive -- I mean, community can do to impact or facilitate trusted and reliable information is to make sure that the center part of it is community based. And it could be radio, it could be mobile, it could be Internet, whatever. The other thing is provisional.

And we never know in advance what disasters bring. So what we bring to the table is really a method more than a technology.

And if you see our experiences 11 years ago in the earthquake struck Nepal, you'll see what community radios did, a lot of counseling for people who had, you know, affected by grief. Loss of family members.

I don't think any kind of mathematical model of communication can address that.

We also kind of looked at how the politics plays pre and post disaster. After disaster, relief is selected on the basis of caste.

So community leaders can play a difference in this, and one of the things I think about trust, I heard this word spoken frequently today, community radios in a disaster situation can be expected to mobilize trust post disaster.

So every country should have radio stations that build trust continuously so if and when, God for forbid a disaster strikes, they have trust. I'll stop there.

>> SUMAN BASNET: Let me take this question to Arti, someone who interacts with communities on a daily basis. What does it look like from your point of view?

>> ARTI JAIMAN: Hi. Going to -- and I completely agree with Ram, that trust is not built in a day and in the middle of a crisis.

Since [?] is a low part FM plus Internet radio station, that means we broadcast simultaneously on both, our first time experience of people being cut off from digital communication was in March of 2020 when a [?] was announced by the government of India in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

So it is important to remember that unlike, say, an earthquake or a flood where mobile towers may come down, in this

case digital services did not stop. Overnight colleges, schools, everyone had to find ways to get online.

But not everyone had access to these digital services. Some did not have them before the pandemic. And others lost access because they did not have the month to recharge the mobile data plans, so they had to turn back to a basic mobile with no Internet.

What these basic have slim phones we call them, what they were able to reach with an expired mobile connection, that means technically a brick, was FM radio. And the only radio station that had hyper local, relevant, and useable information 24/7 was Gurgaon ki Awaaz. People who had never heard of our station, that means they were not our regular listeners, started calling in on air, off air, because they suddenly realized that there was this information source that they could call into with their queries.

It was just not a one-way dissemination, you know, from up to down.

Be that as it may, so much of the information from the local government, from the health ministry, from [?] was coming in only online. Through memos, advisories, Whatsapp messages, and it became our task to do a daily search for information and parse it for reliability, scientific veracity, and common sense and broadcast it.

And if you think Whatsapp and Facebook were the only source of misinformation and frankly harmful health information, think again.

Some of the government advisories in the early days when people were still trying to wrap their heads around what is COVID-19, those advisories were borderline unsafe. Everything from vague, advisories to useless safety protocols had to be built because we had to take the call that this could not go on air. And to make these calls, because please remember we are not medical experts.

We turned to the doctors with whom we had built a trusted relationship over a decade of broadcasting. Immunologists, surgeons in the government hospital, pulmonologists, a community radio did the parsing.

Which our technical committee at the government end should have done. And that is where the trust that has been built over ten years comes in handy when we're reaching out to experts to help us.

And as well as building trust within the community.

So community radio can and does play a crucial role in bridging the gap between those who are connected to digital information and those who are not. We've connected people through reliable, useable information, connected them to food

rations, to transport back to their villages, and to jobs when they wanted to return to the city.

And all of this --

>> SUMAN BASNET: I'm going to have to stop you there for a moment. We'll come back to you again for a short one. But let me take this question to Bangladesh. I request you to give answers that was meant to be for two minutes and 30 seconds. Bangladesh where the crisis communication is everyday work for radios in Bangladesh. What does this look like from your perspective?

>> BAZLUR RAHMAN: Yes, very good afternoon to all of you in here. All our Internet fighters.

>> SUMAN BASNET: Right.

>> BAZLUR RAHMAN: Yes. Let me begin with the simple question. When the Internet goes down, disrupted, who is the last family in the last villages?

There's a huge, important question. During the [?] landslide epidemics like COVID-19 or other [?] mobile network, electricity, Internet access, and social media can be disrupted.

But community radio can still reach people in local language and with the local dialect. This is unique strength of the community broadcasting all over the world, especially in specific region.

The problem is not only connectivity, the problem is also [?] trusted, verified, and understandable information.

>> SUMAN BASNET: Correct.

>> BAZLUR RAHMAN: During a crisis, misinformation and rumors spread quickly, all of you know. Fear spread even faster. People need to know where to go, when to evacuate, which shelter is open, and how to access relief.

Because trust is now in transition. Before trust, during trust, post trust. So lots of misinformation, disinformation, and malinformation in the era we're living.

It is also giving voices to the voiceless through the community radio. Listeners club, [?] and community groups, community radio brings people and fears, gap, back to the decision-maker. It's very important.

So in line with safeguarding resilience Internet in times of crisis, this is our -- is our motto.

Community radio must be recognized as part of the national resilience.

>> SUMAN BASNET: Right. Let me stop you there.

>> BAZLUR RAHMAN: One more. National resilience and trusted communication in [?]. It directly support to the U.N. Sendai, and Japan network.

>> SUMAN BASNET: That brings me to the next question about the community radios and digital platforms. Because community

radios are increasingly working alongside digital platforms, how can this complement one another to improve access to reliable communication, the kind of communication that all of you have spoken about without undermining trust or excluding underserved communities?

From an Internet Governance perspective, what needs to happen for this culmination of traditional and digital communication to be genuinely inclusive?

That's my question. Shita, I would like to bring this question to you, Shita. Would you like to take on this question from Internet Governance position but also from a community radio position, because you wear both hats, as I remember.

>> SHITA LAKSMI: Thank you very much, Suman, and thank you very much for the invitation to speak here. As you know that most of my professional work currently with Internet Governance but my first development work was in community radio. I was with Suman way back 25 years ago.

So I would like to put two main issues in the discussions. I think I would like to highlight what Dr. Ram has mentioned earlier, we must remember what the community means.

When Indonesia started the revision of our broadcasting law back in 2000, which is 26 years ago, we discussed about what the definition of community and we talk about it a lot. But sort of the main notion is that community is a group of people who are connected in some way by their life, shared interest, identity, experience, or a common goal.

Well, since it is broadcasting way back then in 2000, when there was no Internet being mentioned, we need to limit the way it broadcasts by locations.

So there is a sense of locations in the community radio way back then.

But I think one of the key issues as mentioned is the strong essence of sharing connections between each other and trust between each other. I think that's the main definitions of community.

The second one I would like to say is about the adoptions. The adoption of the media. We have learned that the younger generation has a different way of using media currently than 20 years ago.

My daughter's no longer listen to the radio, for example. But we do have a strong characters. I mean, community radio has a strong character, the sense of community, the sense of togetherness, therefore, we can add broadcasting to -- through -- I mean, we can add. So I think the main character is the community radio and digital platforms is an added pathway.

This is what I'm speaking in terms of the Internet Governance in terms of the media community radio.

What I have learned is that since the trust is there, and the community radio is the main channel, then we can use the other, maybe Arti was mentioning before, she is using in parallel community broadcasting and then in digital, but also in Indonesia we heard a lot of community radio that also have this live Tiktok or live Instagram that had interactions, but the trust is still there.

So I think we need to know that -- I think the third one is also re-defining community radio as well. Because as we see that we know that adoption is moving towards more digital now. I think currently in Indonesia the main funds of community radio is mainly for crisis or in particular natural disasters or, for example, COVID-19 at that time.

But I think we need to redefine again what is the meaning of community and I think the sense of togetherness, the sense of community, sharing is something that's very important.

Thank you, I'm going to stop there.

>> SUMAN BASNET: That's very interesting take, Shita. Thank you so much. Let me take this to you now. What do you think they can do to work closely with digital platforms?

>> ANANDA GAUTAM: Thank you, Suman and my previous speakers.

We have come from radio broadcast to the [?] so this is a world shift that we see.

We didn't -- within this 15 years of time, we have become Internet users from thousands to millions. We have nearly more than 15 million Internet users in their [?]

So the thing is, it was mentioned about trust and community, in the earlier days, Nepal was one of the [?] but what I see one is sustainability factors. How do we sustain.

From the Internet society, we advocate about community networks and recently we are thinking on the perspective of community centers connectivity.

I see a perspective where existing community networks can be a digital excellence centers, which can provide, which can be a point of trust, which is already there.

But they need to evolve. Because I already told how we have evolved, the digital nation, digital natives are there. And how do we make people in the radio to listen to podcast?

All the Indigenous knowledge that are preserved in our local communities. I think this could be a very interesting way. But in the time of crisis or the disaster, we still need a fallback.

When there is no kind of digital medium, it is a fallback solution, I guess. We can still turn on the radio, tune in the frequency, and then talk with each other.

That is still required.

>> SUMAN BASNET: The station is not swept away.

>> ANANDA GAUTAM: Right. That has its limitations, but still.

>> SUMAN BASNET: That's a valid point.

>> ANANDA GAUTAM: That's a resilience we can put there. It's a redundancy that I see.

Another thing is, as we grow into the digital stream, many people still cannot use digital services. Like in our countries.

So this can be a center where we can have people come and some volunteers, locally students, plus two people who are trained with basic literacy can help them to get these digital services if I need to buy a ticket or if I need to file an application, something, with a nominal cost. That is what we do in community networks.

So -- no sound.

>> SUMAN BASNET: Maybe we can stop there. I think you made a very strong point. But thank you so much. That was a strong signal.

Maybe we've basically run out of time for this particular question, but nevertheless, if you would like to take -- if you promise it's only 30 seconds.

>> BAZLUR RAHMAN: Yes.

>> SUMAN BASNET: Okay.

>> BAZLUR RAHMAN: Yes, in response with you, my answer to --

>> SUMAN BASNET: How can Internet use --

>> BAZLUR RAHMAN: With the hook problem and call for action.

So according to you, time frame.

>> SUMAN BASNET: Okay.

>> BAZLUR RAHMAN: My call to action is clear. Community radio build formal coordination between digital platforms.

Mobile financial services, community radio broadcasting systems as well is strengthening. Internet service provider. [?] operators. Internet banking. Telecom operators, government, and Civil Society before the next crisis.

And use artificial intelligence and digital tools with transparency, accountability, human oversight, and respect for human rights. Human rights as in nonnegotiable meta.

In the [?] of the U.N. center framework, we must ensure that the level of permission, resource both connected and disconnected communities, leaving no one behind, voices to be heard, voices for the voiceless.

Thank you, sir.

>> SUMAN BASNET: Thank you. That's very interesting. Thank you so much. Thanks all the panelists.

Let me move to -- time is quickly flowing away, so let me move to my third question.

The next question is a policy question. And if community radio broadcasters and Internet based platforms are to work together during crisis, what should we be doing before a crisis happens in terms of policy framing?

In other words, what practical access should government -- Internet Governance organizations, community broadcasters also and Civil Society need to take to strengthen trusted communication and digital resilience before the next crisis occurs?

And we don't know when that's going to happen. So may I turn to you, Ram.

>> RAMNATH BHAT: Just very quickly, I think government means moving slowly, because it's a complicated machine, right?

I think one part of the government should be separate for disaster, but things can move quickly. And the example of Japan has been very instructive in this, because they learned after Fukushima that you get a community radio license overnight, low powered, whatever.

So I think for South Asian countries, especially many of the developing countries in this region, I think there needs to be a kind of preparedness to jump into action very fast when a disaster happens.

One of the most crucial things which we don't do is a communications audit. I think we need a specialized team which can go in there as soon as disaster strikes, map, give an assessment of the technological breakdown, what could be feasible.

>> SUMAN BASNET: And who should do that? The government?

>> RAMNATH BHAT: I think it should be a multi-stakeholder group as folks use this. I think that kind of a setup would be good.

>> SUMAN BASNET: Very interesting. Let me bring this question to you, you're a policy expert and you've done a lot in Bangladesh and regionally. What's your take on this?

>> BAZLUR RAHMAN: I'm a very ordinary person.

>> SUMAN BASNET: Okay.

>> BAZLUR RAHMAN: In response to your question, governments should treat trusted communication as [?] DRR in [?] with clear protocols. Now we have no crystal clear protocol from the government side.

We have a [?] telecom system, formal [?] community broadcasting with [?] easy part of the digital public infrastructure, DPI. It's very important.

And second is Internet Governance should promote many connectivity, community network, cybersecurity awareness, and

[?] trust, AI local language content, and human rights-based digital governance.

And next one is very clear, my call to action is clear. Very clear. We must [?] rethink, re-imagine, and revision the Universal Service Fund. Because fund is very important during the disaster. During the disaster time.

We must urgently rethink the Universal Service Fund for the crisis era. Universal service should not mean connectivity alone. It should mean digital inclusion, trusted information, and last mile resilience.

And finally governments and regulators should dedicate Universal Service Fund window to strengthen the community radio broadcasting by supporting backup power, emergency equipment, resilient transmission system, Internet connectivity, [?] local language, and community listening network.

And finally, resilience is not only about technology. Very careful. [?] at our level, but very, very carefully.

Again, I say resilience is not only technology. It is about trust. It is about inclusion. It is about preparedness and timely action.

Thank you.

>> SUMAN BASNET: Thank you. Let me take this question to Shita. We, as you said, Ram, we all have been hearing this word trust a lot from this morning. But this term sounds very aspirational. What does it mean in terms of framing?

Shita, what kind of framing is required for traditional community broadcasters to work closely with digital platforms?

>> SHITA LAKSMI: That's very important question, Suman, and a bit difficult there.

But I think one of the key working modes within the Internet Governance is multi-stakeholder. I think you can check it in the APrIGF, IGF, ICANN that we work together multi-stakeholder because it's very complex because we need to work in a cross-sectoral way.

And I do think that the trust, trust is earned. Trust is not something that you get directly. You have to build that trust through network, through resilience network together.

So you have to work together with the government, with the Civil Society, with the technical community, and with the government -- with the academicians for the good policy framework.

And I do think that we need to invest more time on that, Suman. It may not be only online, but we have to do it offline as well.

In my -- in my -- in my own experience, for example, if we build trust between stakeholder, it will take me, for example,

around ten meetings. Then we can be able to talk to each other and trust each other and build policy framework.

So I think it's good that, for example, AMARC is taking part of APrIGF. I think you have stepped out to more digital world rather than just the offline world.

So I do think it's better to build network and then maintain the trust and then maintain the conversation between stakeholder to be able to build a good policy framework.

Thank you.

>> SUMAN BASNET: Communication is vital to trust building.

I'd just like to ask if Arti and Ananda would like to have an answer to this. Do you have anything to add, Arti?

>> ARTI JAIMAN: I just want to say I completely agree, Shita. You have to work across sectors and build those relationships. And your community sees that happening.

So when a crisis hits, they turn to you. They're turning to you to connect them to Internet resources.

So all that work has to happen as part of your daily life so that when crisis occurs your listeners are -- even if they get something on the Internet, they're going to the radio to ask is this correct.

>> SUMAN BASNET: All right. Thank you, Arti. Ananda, would you like to add anything?

>> ANANDA GAUTAM: We need a mechanism that tells us what we need to do when we are in crisis. If disaster happens, COVID, if there's no connectivity, how do we respond?

What are the rules of every sector? What does the government do? What does the regulatory does?

Is it a center where people gather? So we need those Code of Conduct, I guess.

>> SUMAN BASNET: That's once again it underlines the value of multi-stakeholder consultation to be together talking to each other to plan for a crisis situation.

With that, we've come to the end of this formal part of the discussion. Thank you very much to the panelists over here at the table and to Shita and Arti joining us online.

I now would like to welcome questions from the audience here and also from the audience that have joined from us -- in the virtual world.

So we open the questions now. Please raise your hands and ask your questions. Please be brief with your question.

>> First of all thank you all for explaining everything. My question is in this digital era we don't usually have radios in our home.

And even the floods and earthquake can take all the radios with them. So how we going to maintain the radio communication

in that? Because I don't have a radio in my home. So how do we take that?

>> SUMAN BASNET: Is that question for anyone?

>> Anyone can answer this question, yeah.

>> SUMAN BASNET: (Away from mic). Any other questions, please? Yes, you have a question.

>> So my question is that he talk about the universal service obligation fund. So normally this is -- this fund is being funded by the telecom operators, the licensees, right? When we talk about digital connectivity.

But in case of radio connectivity, radio connectivity, do you think the mobile licensees or the telecom licenses would contribute or do you think the broadcasting TV channels or the radio channels broadcasting would contribute in this fund in order to get the new radio equipment installed in the far flung areas for AM or FM transmission?

>> SUMAN BASNET: We'll bring that question a little later. But let's see if there's one more question in the area.

>> Hello, everyone. I'm from Nepal. Talking about Nepal, for countries like Nepal highly exposed to landslide and natural disaster, Nepali people are in rural part or during the disaster crisis we are mostly use radio system.

Especially in rural and disaster prone areas, how do we use the community radio to make it more resilient during crisis, like was said, digital literacy and how we went from broad cost to podcast.

So we talk mostly about digital literacy as knowing how we use the Internet, but so digital resilience also mean knowing what to do when the Internet is unavailable. Including our local radio frequencies and other community networks.

And also adding on that, like he mentioned like about the backup -- having backup connections and emergency equipment, resilient transmission systems.

For countries like Nepal, as I mentioned before, we are -- we face a lot of natural disasters. So does truly resilient Internet infrastructure look like -- what does it actually look like beyond connections?

So yeah.

>> SUMAN BASNET: We'll stop there. We will come to you in a moment, but I think it's a very interesting question.

I think three very interesting questions. One is what happens when everything's swept away then how do we communicate, there's no radio to listen to.

Second one is who pays for the universal obligation fund.

And the third question is how do you connect the traditional broadcasting with Internet, where Internet service itself is very poor?

I'm just paraphrasing and simplifying the questions. Ram, let's come to you and then Bazlur, and then the rest of you can decide if you want to take any of those questions.

>> RAMNATH BHAT: I'll give kind of a combined response. The lady in the front, the question was very important. Phones. People don't have radio, but it's not as gradual and natural as you think.

Smartphones have deliberately deleted the FM chip in phones so that you can Zoom content on the play store or digital Apple music or with whatever. They don't want you to listen to radio, because there's no revenue. It's analog, right?

So I think there has to be a policy push that smartphones should have FM chip. So that in the time of crisis, consumers have a choice. They're not locked into a digital device.

So if you see we used to have FM chips, now they don't. I think all of us should push in our respective countries, bring back the FM chip.

The other thing is I think so far it's traditional for telecom companies to give part of the revenue, 5% or something like this. But I think in India it's 5. Maybe -- whatever. So long story. But I want to say we can have a combined fund where it's not just telecom operators, but it's also commercial broadcasters and more importantly, commercial platforms like Facebook, who every time you use they're getting the surplus value.

So they can contribute a little bit in charge of getting a market, right?

So I would urge Nepal, India, Bangladesh, all of us, we should ask the social media companies to contribute to assess. And then that consolidated fund can be used for a variety of things, enlisting local journalism, preparedness for disaster, so on and so forth.

>> SUMAN BASNET: Bazlur, would you like to --

>> BAZLUR RAHMAN: Yeah, it's a multimillion dollar question you ask us. Basically ability to do work testing through [?] and also 4 OA. One is using [?] so this is one. The strong side.

Second side is there are broadcasting or distributing all [?] available and also traditional system called ORFs using antenna like this.

So that way basically [?] Dr. Ramnath included another one called apps. So there are 4 OA now community doing work test their program to the community people.

And the next question regarding the gentleman -- what is your name sir? Pakistan, yeah, strong regulatory of the telecom sector, yeah.

Basically, in Bangladesh, universal service fund, and every licensee, not telecom licensee, ISP, digital holder, ISP holder, IAZ holder, all have to pay one person annual income to the fund.

And now fund is [?] with multibillion dollar fund. If you accumulated the South Asian fund or if you accumulated the Asia-Pacific Fund. Now Universal Service Fund is multibillion dollar. But what is the problem?

Problem is, wrong people, right [?] right decision with wrong sector, wrong sector, right decision with the wrong sector.

Lots of [?] model who blend. Going through the universal service fund. So we are to talk about [?] please, please and also [?] is here, sir, we need universal to mobilize the government.

>> SUMAN BASNET: Let's try to get some more questions.

>> BAZLUR RAHMAN: Thank you, sir.

>> SUMAN BASNET: Thank you very much. The third question is what happens if the Internet is poor?

>> ANANDA GAUTAM: Internet is poor?

>> SUMAN BASNET: Yeah. Especially in places where --

>> BAZLUR RAHMAN: And I have one point. [?]

>> ANANDA GAUTAM: So yeah. So the thing is, in case of Nepal as well, the Star Link is the only opportunity to get connected, the bridge, so we need to relook how we regulate things in the time of crisis.

There might be different regulation for a regular day and for the time of crisis. That is one question.

And there are things like cellular broadcast that are not regulated on the policy paper. That might be a good [?] when this kind of disaster happens. You can just get --

>> SUMAN BASNET: But Star Link was not [?]

>> ANANDA GAUTAM: It was not [?] but we need to think how do we use those AUs and GUs in the time of crisis that needs to be a backup plan.

>> SUMAN BASNET: Thank you so much. Thank you.

>> ANANDA GAUTAM: Thank you.

>> SUMAN BASNET: I'm sure Arti and Shita would like to say something on this, but let's see if some other questions connect to these questions. We have a gentleman over there that raised his hand.

>> I'm and I [?] western part of Nepal. (Non-English language).

>> SUMAN BASNET: Let me translate it. This is from a gentleman from western Nepal, he's from the tidal community and he's taken the example of the traditional mode of communication still being applied by the community, especially whether I it

comes to community forestry resources, that there is a [?] who basically is the platform for communication with the communities.

In that community, 50 person -- less than 50 people have access to Android mobile phone and even lesser people have access to Internet.

In such a situation, he's making a demand to the government that Internet should be provided for free of cost to such communities.

Yes, please.

>> (Non-English language).

>> SUMAN BASNET: Thank you so much. Yeah. You, please.

>> So my question is like recently our country like first crisis. During such situations, how community radios play role to protect spreading misinformation and disinformation?

Because we cannot trust any community radio blindly, because yeah, because they are supposed to [?] information as well. So what is the -- how can we trust the information they're providing to the end user?

>> SUMAN BASNET: That's a good question. Before we move on to the other questions, I think Arti would be in an appropriate position to answer this. How do you make sure you were in a trusted position during the COVID time?

To take an example from the community sector might be too early because we haven't figured out what worked, what didn't work. We're still working with it.

So let's go to -- take concluded case.

>> ARTI JAIMAN: Yeah. So one of the things is that, you know, one does try to figure it out through the crisis. Recently we had a flooding, happens every year, and suddenly we decided that nobody's coming to the studio, everybody will broadcast wherever they are.

So it requires you to test out those systems before your, you know, the entire community gets washed away.

>> SUMAN BASNET: The question is, how do you let people know that as a community that you're a trust medium of information? Just like we say that social media cannot be trusted fully, there are voices that say that community radios cannot be trusted.

What is your answer to that?

>> ARTI JAIMAN: But having very long and difficult conversations with our listeners. We've had that happen. We've had listeners share things that they've got on the Internet. They've shared things which are everywhere around us very divisive information, very divisive events.

And when we have fact checked them or tried to correct them, it's not been a comfortable conversation. These are not

conversations. These conversations then have to move off air. We have to spend one hour with each listener and it really makes a difference.

Because we find that the questions we are asking them that why do you believe this, what do you think is happening with this, those questions go back to their homes, go back to their friends and next time when they're getting one more piece of Whatsapp video, those questions do strike them.

So those long conversations do need to happen.

>> SUMAN BASNET: The questions do need to be asked and they're being asked from our own neighborhood in your own language in the two-way communication. That makes the difference.

>> RAMNATH BHAT: So I just want to add that one of our, like, very dear friends, the late great Ibrahim is a community broadcaster. He used to say it's 90% community and 10% radio, right?

So it's actually quite technology agnostic. The point is that the people who are talking are not outsiders. They are insiders. So the trust is already prebuilt in, so to speak, in the model, in conceptualization of the whole community radio.

>> (Inaudible).

>> SUMAN BASNET: Is that a question? Just a comment. Thank you so much. There was one question over there from [?] I saw him raising his hand. Is there an extra mic to be passed on to him, please?

>> (Non-English language).

>> SUMAN BASNET: Thank you. That was a very important comment you made a statement but not a question really. Thank you. Is there a question? Yeah, please.

>> (Non-English language).

>> SHITA LAKSMI: I think the yet connection is off, Arti.

(No audio).

>> Other regulators might have a more strict approach on what should be able to enter and not enter. And I think we need a fresh regulatory approach which can depend on these, you know, sect models. You have to look at where the conflict -- conflict's not going to happen today. Conflict's already essentially old.

So regulators have to understand the social subtext of the conflict. It's a resourced conflict on mining?

Is it a [?] conflict.

There can be topology of conflicts and regulators need to mediate and give ow license to encourage and localize production or local media [?] in a way that prevents this from becoming inflammable and more peace building efforts can be facilitated.

So regulatory [?] is how I see the question.

>> SUMAN BASNET: You want to respond to that?

>> Regarding community -- sit down please, sir. Because [?]

(Lost audio).

>> That's the problem. Not the technological problem. This can make things inaccessible. Number two, quickly on informing. So [?] we have big problem on licensing and regulating any type of radio.

In Malaysia you cannot imagine to have a [?]. There was online and offline broadcasting from UK to [?] it was regulated and prosecuted.

So we also live in that era. Even though the technology cannot help us because of what they're going through. Not Singapore, Malaysia, Myanmar, operating in [?] like the regulations, no one is really pushing to deregulate. You want to allow the community [?] this part of the world, no.

>> (Away from mic).

>> SUMAN BASNET: Thank you so much. Thanks to all the panelists. I'm so sorry that Arti and Shita and all the cloud participants had to have disruption. This being a discussion in community radio there are would still be going on. I would just like to mention that community radio is the only platform that can operate through a loudspeaker. So I think from today's conversation has shown that discussions about Internet resilience also need to consider how reliable information reaches people at community level, including those with limited and disrupted digital access.

Community broadcasters therefore have a contribution to make to this conversation, alongside government, Civil Society, technical community, commercial operators and Internet Governance and stakeholders.

Would those words, I'd like to thank our speakers here on the table and there in the virtual world there. Shita and Arti, thank you so much for joining us today and for your valuable interventions.

Thank you to the audience. Very patient audience. Thank you very much.

And yes, we would like to give a few special words to our participants from Nepal. I wish to apologize that we could not have a translation service available here. Although we did make an arrangement to have that in the room, but local host did not permit us to bring in the facility. I'm really sorry about it.

In a way we are [?] very essence of community (broken audio) sincerely apologize for it. Thank you.

(Session end at 15:09 p.m. NPT).

>> Thank you everyone for joining. This just a quick announcement. In this room the next session will be up next at 3:50 --

>> 3:10.

>> Sorry, 3:10. It's going to be backdoors, blackouts, and big tech mapping encryption rules. Plus Asia-Pacific in filling the Southeast Asian gap.

In the room next door it's going to be the cost of a click, unboxing AI and Internet infrastructures to shape the greener Internet and the AIPAC. And due to the improvement that [?] to put your comments into the synthesis document and join us at the town hall at 5:30 in the room next door.

Thank you.

(Session ended at 15:11 p.m. NPT)

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