

Module 4: Critical Listening and Feedback Sessions

Outcomes from using this module

You will understand:

- why radio programs targeted to communication for development need Critical Listening and Feedback Sessions (CLFS) built into the organisation
- how CLFS can improve your radio programs
- the steps involved in undertaking CLFS
- how the process can be used with listeners in the community
- how the process can be used for pre and post tests of your radio programs
- how CLFS outcomes can be triangulated with other findings to get more rigorous results
- some of the challenges and limitations in using this method

Introduction

Critically listening to radio programs needs to be one of the major components of communication for development radio projects because this can help radio programs to better spread their messages among target audiences and to be more influential in terms of social and behavioural change. Listener's feedback through community research, surveys, letters, emails, phone calls, face to face meetings and SMS polls provide information which needs to be verified using different methods. That is why CLFS was developed. It can provide a process that helps to meet the objectives of a radio program.

Since July 2009, the M&E team at Equal Access Nepal (EAN) have been conducting such critical listening and feedback sessions on a bi-monthly basis for each radio program. The idea of each session is to randomly choose any one episode of a broadcasted radio program and ask all the staff at EAN to listen critically and participate in a feedback session. This has encouraged program team members to consider their radio programs more critically and to improve the programs accordingly. These sessions also enable content team members to share challenges and limitations while producing particular radio programs selected for the session. The M&E team facilitates the whole process from invitation to report sharing.

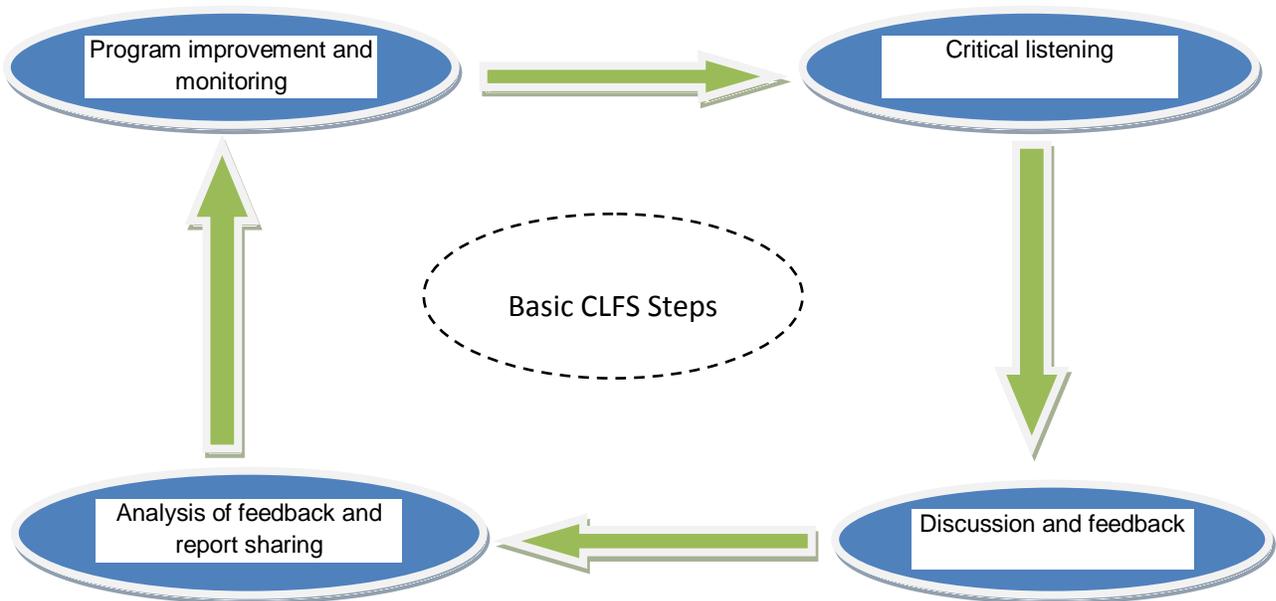
Why use CLFS?

CLFS is one of the major methods that can improve your radio programs. This method can provide instant feedback to you about how effective your program is. It is a kind of meta-monitoring of your program. The overall objective of these feedback sessions is to gather feedback to understand the strengths and identify any shortfalls of your radio programs and to reach an agreement about how to

improve the radio programs. Different program components such as content, presentation style and skills, format, innovation and technical aspects are taken in consideration during the session.

The CLFS process

The diagram below shows the basic CLFS process which begins by engaging in critical listening and results in the implementation and monitoring of changes suggested by staff and listeners, in an ongoing action learning and program improvement cycle.



Step 1: Invite staff to critically listen to a program episode

In EAN, an email is circulated to all staff which invites them to critically listen to a particular episode of a radio program either individually or in a group before they come to the CLFS session. The email provides details of the different components to listen critically to and to identify strengths and areas of improvement to discuss in the session. Time and availability for the session by all staff members is taken into consideration when planning the session. Different program teams work for different radio programs based on different themes with different format. Therefore, most program team members who work on a range of radio programs are highly encouraged to take part in the session. This helps to ensure that new ideas and suggestions are generated. An email invitation is sent out one week prior to the event and a reminder email is sent one day prior to the event. Sometimes, all staff are personally reminded about the event at staff meetings.

Step 2: Conduct the feedback session

The process begins by asking all participants to provide their feedback on each of the topics in the feedback form (see Appendix) which include:

- Content (depth and appropriateness of the program theme)
- Presentation style of the program host
- Innovation and creativity
- Which segment of the program is liked the most and least

A facilitated discussion on this feedback then takes place. Agreement is reached on the main areas in which the program could be improved and the key recommendations are noted down. At the end of the feedback session, each participant fills in an evaluation form (see sample form in the Appendix).

Step 3: Analyse feedback and prepare report

The M&E team collects the evaluation forms and then analyses them. The mostly quantitative data obtained through the evaluation form is then triangulated with the feedback obtained during the face to face discussions in order to identify the key findings and areas of agreement. A brief report on the feedback and suggested improvements is then prepared. An example of the headings in a brief report on a CLFS is provided later in this module, as well as an extract from a feedback report. This gives an example of the kind of immediate action that is often taken related to improving a radio program, following the end of the process.

Step 4: Share the feedback report

After the feedback session has been undertaken, the M&E team should share the findings of the report on the CLFS process to all program team members and community participants for further discussion and agreement on what changes will be made to the programs.

Step 5: Monitor improvements

Once the report has been shared, the M&E team regularly monitors the improvements that are made. This is done by improvements mentioned in email by content team members, checking content calendar, and follow up CLFS of same radio program in 2 months of time. It also includes feedback gathered through research data and letter database.

Holding CLFS in the community

As well as in EAN's head office in Kathmandu, critical listening and feedback sessions are held in the community. Sessions are organised by visiting EAN staffs or community researchers or youth reporters based in regional hubs that enable community members to listen to a selected episode in a group and later provide their feedback. One week prior to the session held in the community, community members

(most probably listeners) were informed about the session. Like at EAN same process used and they also asked to complete the feedback form. Analysis of the feedback provided at these sessions can enable you to assess how different or similar the feedback provided by listeners in the community is compared with the feedback provided by staff members.

Main headings for a brief report on a Critical Listening and Feedback Session

Radio Program:

Date:

Conducted on:

Selected episode no:

Main theme of the radio program:

Presenters of the radio program:

Session participants:

Objective:

Program Summary

Presentation of findings

1. Content analysis
2. Format of the radio program
3. Presentation (host's quality)
4. Drama
5. Interview
6. Song/message
7. Technical aspects
8. Innovation/creativity
9. Information/education value
10. Research work
11. Overall rating

The most liked and least liked components of the radio program:

Suggestions and recommendations:

Using CFLS to conduct a pre and post test

This process can also be used to conduct a pre and post test of a radio program's production values within a project cycle. EAN has recently used CLFS in this way in both the EAN head office and at the community level to monitor the quality of a radio program. If a radio project is conducted over one year and broadcasts radio program episodes for 26 weeks then one episode can be selected from the first five

episodes for CLFS for the pre test of the radio project and one episode can be selected from the last five episodes for the post test. EAN has found that this has helped to regularly maintain the quality of a radio program until the end of the project. To lessen biases and increase rigour, the same process is also used at the community level.

Extract from a report on a Critical Listening Feedback Session

Conducted on: Thursday, 28 October 2010, 3:00 - 4:30 pm

Session participants: 18 (15- Program/Content, 1- Admin, & M&E-2)

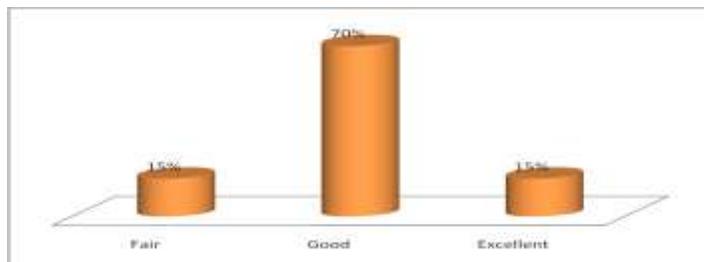
Radio Program: Sangsangai

Selected episode no: 35

Main theme of the radio program: Violence Against Women

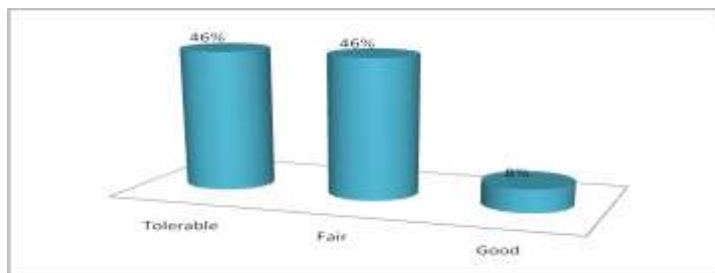
Format of the radio program

Format is the most liked component of the radio program which includes a local change maker as the presenter of the radio program. 15% of participants found it excellent, 70% found it good and 15% found it fair because the format was adapted for the first time. It gave an opportunity to have a voice to the people who are directly involved in changing social ills such as VAW in the community. However, the experience sharing sometimes became monotonous because of regular dialogue delivery.



Presentation (host's quality)

The host was not a professional artist. Although a few of participants (8%) found the presentation interesting and rated it as good because it included local people as the presenter of the program, most of the participants (92%) (combining half each of the fair and tolerable category) indicated that it needed some improvement because the program seemed like a local version rather than a centrally produced one.



Immediately after the session a content team member wrote the following email to the participants:

Dear All,

First of all I would like to thank you all for your valuable comments on the radio program Sangsangai. As per your comments and suggestions, we are trying to incorporate your valuable feedbacks and change the format of our radio program from episode no 47. You can get the program on <\\server2\Re-Writable\ReWritable>. Looking forward to hearing your constructive feedbacks and comments.

Regards,

Triangulation with other feedback

The results of CLFS can be triangulated with findings from your analysis of other feedback methods such as letters and emails and feedback data gathered directly from listeners via focus group discussions and interviews. This process of triangulation strengthens the feedback and more effectively helps program teams to understand the shortfalls and strengths of the radio programs so that they can develop better programming in the future. This can help to improve all aspects of program development and packaging.

Challenges and limitations

Although there are many ways in which radio programs can be improved after conducting regular CLFS, like any monitoring or evaluation method, there are also some of challenges and limitations which need to be considered, such as:

- It is sometimes not possible to change the format and content of a radio program because of limitations in the project, such as those which were defined by the donors.
- During the sessions at EAN some content team members felt humiliated and took the feedback personally. Therefore, good facilitation of the sessions is vital to ensure that all feedback is received in a constructive way.
- Although the content teams may want to improve the quality of a program this is sometimes difficult because of unprofessional artists or inexperienced guest presenters from the community that can decrease the quality of the program.
- Sometimes it is difficult to manage the time in the feedback sessions and to limit the amount of repetition of comments.

Some final words

There are many different methods and tools available to obtain feedback on radio programs such as focus group discussions, short questionnaire surveys, letters, emails, phone calls and SMS. However, CLFS is the only process which enables people to interact face to face in order to gather critical feedback about radio programs. This method provides instant feedback which can be used to make immediate improvements to your radio programs. We have found that regularly conducting CLFS in the way we have outlined in this module has greatly helped to maintain the quality of radio programs at EAN.

Appendix: Sample CLFS evaluation form

Equal Access Nepal
Critical Listening Feedback Form

Date:

A. Radio Program:

Name of the Program: Episode No:

B. Program Component Rating (please mark only one option):

1. Content (depth & appropriateness of theme):

Poor	<input type="radio"/>	Tolerable	<input type="radio"/>	Fair	<input type="radio"/>	Good	<input type="radio"/>	Excellent	<input type="radio"/>
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2. Presentation Style (host's quality):

Poor	<input type="radio"/>	Tolerable	<input type="radio"/>	Fair	<input type="radio"/>	Good	<input type="radio"/>	Excellent	<input type="radio"/>
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3. Drama:

Poor	<input type="radio"/>	Tolerable	<input type="radio"/>	Fair	<input type="radio"/>	Good	<input type="radio"/>	Excellent	<input type="radio"/>
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4. Interview:

Poor	<input type="radio"/>	Tolerable	<input type="radio"/>	Fair	<input type="radio"/>	Good	<input type="radio"/>	Excellent	<input type="radio"/>
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5. Report & Feature:

Poor	<input type="radio"/>	Tolerable	<input type="radio"/>	Fair	<input type="radio"/>	Good	<input type="radio"/>	Excellent	<input type="radio"/>
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6. Technical Aspects (noise, mic levelling, signing tune and music):

Poor	<input type="radio"/>	Tolerable	<input type="radio"/>	Fair	<input type="radio"/>	Good	<input type="radio"/>	Excellent	<input type="radio"/>
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7. Innovation & Creativity:

Poor	<input type="radio"/>	Tolerable	<input type="radio"/>	Fair	<input type="radio"/>	Good	<input type="radio"/>	Excellent	<input type="radio"/>
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8. Research Work (preparation efforts):

Poor	<input type="radio"/>	Tolerable	<input type="radio"/>	Fair	<input type="radio"/>	Good	<input type="radio"/>	Excellent	<input type="radio"/>
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C. Which segment of the radio program you like the most and least:

I like (the most):

I did not like (the least):

D. My overall rating of the program:

Poor	<input type="radio"/>	Tolerable	<input type="radio"/>	Fair	<input type="radio"/>	Good	<input type="radio"/>	Excellent	<input type="radio"/>
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Note: This should correspond with the above ratings you have given.