

Paper No. 7

BHUTAN BROADCASTING SERVICE CORPORATION

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Introduction:

Bhutan, or "Druk Yul" which means the land of the Thunder Dragon, lies between Tibet and India along the slopes of the Himalayas, completely land-locked and cut off by mighty mountains. Bhutan has an area of 47000 square kilometres. The population of Bhutan is 6,00,000 approximately. Dzongkha is the national language of Bhutan. Literally Dzongkha means the language spoken in the Dzongs or administrative centres in the country. Besides this, we have two major regional languages and they are Sharchops- means eastern Bhutanese language and Nepali- southern Bhutanese. The United Nations considers Bhutan as one of the least developed country in the world with adult literacy rate of 54% during 1994 estimation.

The Kingdom remained isolated for many centuries. It was only in the beginning of the year 1960s that Bhutan opened up to the outside world. The process started with the construction of the first major road linking the capital, Thimphu, with the border town of Phuentsholing.

Since then the process of change and progress has been rapid. One such change and progress amongst many others has been the establishment of the Radio Broadcasting in the country. It was during early seventies when a weekly 30 minutes radio broadcast in english was started by a group of amateur radio operators so called Radio NYAB (National Youth Association of Bhutan). Later in 1986, the Royal Government realising its importance, enhanced its activities and renamed it as the BHUTAN BROADCASTING SERVICE. Following this, the Bhutan Broadcasting Service became a full fledge Radio Station with a proper Studio and Transmitter facilities.

In 1992, the Bhutan Broadcasting Service was delinked from the civil service by granting an autonomous status responsible to a Board of Directors. Though delinked from the Government, the Government has not withdrawn any of the

financial support it has provided to the organisation. Until today, BBS continues to receive full annual budgetary subsidies from the Government and has been given high priorities in every respect of promotional and developmental process.

Current broadcasting situation.

The BBS today is governed by and responsible to a Board of Directors who meet on a quaterly basis. Day to day management is conducted by an Executive Director who is fully empowered to take administrative and planning decisions under the board guidelines set by the Boards. As a corporation, BBS is not a part of the civil service. Instead it has its own independent set of organisation and management regulations. For management purpose, the activities and the personnel of the station are divided along functional lines. Being a corporation, BBS in principle is expected to function on a commercial basis with its own income and revenue generating activities. However, given the low economic development level of the country and the limited potential for revenues for the station, BBS still depends fully on a budgetatry grant from the Government to fund its activities.

The following are the five main divisions of the BBS Corporation:

1. News & Current Affairs Div.
2. Programme Div.
3. Technical Div
4. Video Div.
5. Administration & Finance Div. (AFD)

a. News & Current Affairs Division: This division has 13 staff and it is comprised of two sections viz. English and Lhotsham (Nepali) Under these sections, we have the news editors, reporters, producers, translators and presenters. While 60% of the personnel of this division are trained in their field there are still 40% personnel need to be trained.

b. Programme Division: In the Programme division, there are 14 staff divided into two sub sections viz. Dzongkha and Sharchop. Although this division was given the maximum emphasis on short term in-house trainings conducted by consultants on various aspects of broadcast, there is an immense need for outside training providing the opportunity to learn in a real professional environment and gain valuable experience from such exposures. The reason being that BBS is a multi - lingual station and that english is not the mother tounge. There are many producers who are not adept at english - the common international language of training.

c. Technical Division: This division has 16 technical staff. Most of these staff were first placed as on-the-job training for 6 months and later recruited on the regular basis. Best efforts are also made to send them on further training in broadcasting engineering. The training offered by Deutsche Welle in the past have helped with our technical training. The major problem is encountered in the area of maintenance and repairs of equipments as proper servicing facilities are not available in the country.

d. Video Division: The Video is a new division of the BBS Corporation and was established in March 1996, when the DCC (Development Communication centre) was merged with the BBS. There are 10 staff members working in the division in different areas such as Camara, editing, scripting and sound.

e. Administration and Finance Division: Since BBS became an autonomous corporation in 1992, it has established its own distinct management division, with separate sections to look after administration, personnel and accounts and the professional activities organized along functional lines. Presently, BBS has 4-man administrative and accounting team under the guidance of the Executive Director who are familiar with administration and accounting procedures. No major difficulties are foreseen in the execution and management of the Administration and Finance Division.

Radio broadcasting continues to have an important promotional and mobilization role for meeting the developmental objectives and the spiritual and emotional well being of the people. Already the station is meeting some of these needs through the diverse radio programmes, in four languages, it produces and disseminates over the radio. Many people in rural Bhutan depend on the radio for their news, education, entertainment and information on better farming methods, health and hygiene care, environment etc. Radio is also the primary source of meeting most of the cultural and spiritual needs of the rural people such as religious and folk music, drama, poetry and the other oral traditions. This is why the listeners population in the country today has increased to almost 150,000 and receiver of radios to some 50,000 approximately as per the recent media survey.

Today BBS is broadcasting 30 hrs a week in four languages viz. Dzongkha- the national language, Sharchop and Nepali- two major regional languages, and in english. National transmission is done by means of a single 50 KW-SW transmitter. Besides that, a 100 W- FM -92-96 Mhz transmitter is available for the capital area, Thimphu. The frequency of national transmission is through SW-5030 KHZ-60 metre Band ie. Monday to saturday and SW-6030 KHZ-49 metre Band on sundays.

Expected changes:

The BBS will be expanding its FM service to all over the country via a relay network and will be increasing its air time from the present 30 hrs a week to at least 50 by the end of the year.

Problems foreseen and responses planned :

Problems foreseen are many. As regards the responses, the management is trying its best to sort out such problems through the implementation of comprehensive training programme, reviewing proper general personnel management and delineate clearer individual and team functions.