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AMARC Asia Pacific Regional Office, Kathmandu, Nepal
Phone: +977 1 5554811
Email: suman_basnet@asiapacific.amarc.org; Website: http://www.asiapacific.amarc.org

[Note: All articles in this newsletter can be freely reprinted with acknowledgement to the writer and this newsletter]
"Many women are not aware that they can learn a lot from other women. This forum is an excellent opportunity to learn from women in similar situations, to improve their own working and living conditions, some of them even living close to our own country." Yam Kumari. K.C. Radio Myadi, Nepal

Yam Kumari was one of the participants of the workshop on Empowering Women through the Gender Policy for Community Radio at the 1st AMARC Asia Pacific Community Radio Training Forum from December 11 – 13, 2011 held in Bangkok, Thailand: A Biennial Event Enhancing Capacities of Community Broadcasters for Tackling Climate Change, Fighting Poverty, Promoting Human Rights, and Supporting Sustainable Development, organised by AMARC Asia Pacific with local partners.

The 1st AMARC Asia Pacific Community Radio Training Forum provided a collective and creative platform to 150 community radio broadcasters from 18 countries of Asia and Pacific for learning practical skills needed to promote conditions for establishing and running community radio stations in a sustainable manner.

Utilising seminars, workshops, discussions and hands on demonstrations, the Community Radio Training Forum promoted gender sensitivity, strengthened community broadcasting for poverty reduction, and enhanced the capacity of community radio stations to address climate change and disaster mitigation. Sharing of ideas and learning of skills was based on specific thematic streams so that broadcasters could directly apply their learning to address the concerns of the communities in the Asia Pacific region. These concerns include food security, good governance, empowering women, improving literacy, generating employment opportunities, improving local governance, and promoting the rights of the marginalised.

In six parallel workshops the participants, who were selected on the basis of their proven ability to lead and train others, exchanged knowledge on best practices and received hands-on training in order to increase the social impact of their community radio.

The themes of the workshops were:

- Natural Disaster Risk Reduction through Community Radio
- Empowering Women through the Gender Policy for Community Radio
- Identity and Inclusion: Giving Voice to Indigenous Peoples, Ensuring LGBTI Rights through CR
- Performance Assessment, Sustainability; Self Regulation and Volunteer Management
- Participatory learning formats: Develop capacities among community radios and their networks
- Production Technology and Techniques; interview techniques, researching for Community Radio
The outcomes of the Training Forum were concrete productions that the participants took home to broadcast in their radio stations, such as radio jingles, dramas, features and interviews.

**The Workshop on Empowering Women through the Gender Policy for Community Radio**

“Networking among women in community radio in the region carries a lot of potential. I have noticed that we are facing similar problems and thus need to take common actions.” *Cristiana Ximenes Belo, Radio Rakambia, Timor Leste*

The Gender Policy for Community Radio (GP4CR) was developed by AMARC-WIN Asia Pacific to respond to the demand of women community radio broadcasters for equal access to the airwaves all over the world. During the workshop, the GP4CR was presented by Bianca Miglioretto, the WIN-Representative for the region. The participants discussed the gender policy and developed action plans on how to implement the policy in their radio station. The GP4CR contains six sections which provide ways and means to achieve the goal of equal participation of women and men in community radio. The sections are: Women’s Access to Airwaves; Women’s Representation on Air; Special Needs of Minority Women; Women’s Representation at all Levels of Station Management; Use of Appropriate Technology and Funding and Capacity Building for Women.

In the practical part of the workshop the women learned how to improve their interview and radio format techniques and on a field trip participants produced radio reports with interviews on the contributions of the women in disaster mitigation in a muslim community during the recent floods in Bangkok.
The international WIN-Representative, Maru Chavez from Mexico, was present and took the opportunity of the presence of women from India, Cambodia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Nepal, South Korea, Burma, Bangladesh, Switzerland, Mexico, Timor Leste, and Indonesia to discuss the theme of the upcoming AMARC-WIN March 8 international radio campaign 2012. The proposed topics were: sexual rights, climate change or women and decision making.

Juthamanee Areeya from a community radio station in Thailand stressed at the end of the workshop: "This was one of the most important meetings I attended since I started working in media. We gathered to find out how to best work towards the constant development, success and peace in the region.”

The participants decided to stay in touch and participate actively in the activities of AMARC-WIN. At the same time they stressed that there is a need for more such workshops at national level to create more awareness on Gender Policy for Community Radio so that it can be implemented by the different community radio stations.

This article was earlier published in we! of Isis International on Feb. 4, 2012. Bianca is the Women International Network Representative for AMARC Asia Pacific and can be reached at bianca@isiswomen.org; Photos: Bianca Miglioretto, Isis International Philippines.

For information on AMARC WIN: http://win.amarc.org/index.php?p=home&l=EN
Witnessing Change in Myanmar
By Kara Wong and Naw Say Phaw Waa

All eyes have been on Myanmar since last year when the long-entrenched military government stepped down.

The new, nominally civilian government has initiated a number of political reforms. In addition to releasing hundreds of political prisoners and allowing public demonstrations and political parties to gather openly, the restrictions on the country’s media have been relaxed. Journals can now publish images of pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi and her father; some formerly restricted topics are allowed; and entertainment and sports journals are no longer subject to censorship. Exiled journalists have been permitted to return along with formally blacklisted foreign news agencies; and the public no longer has to resort to buying foreign publications from hawkers on the street only to find sensitive pieces cut out. The Democratic Voice of Burma, the BBC and other previously banned media websites can now be accessed and a new press law that includes reforms to current restrictions on radio and other broadcast media is under review.

The recent changes to Myanmar’s media landscape have been positive, however the country still has a long way to go says Naw Say Phaw Waa, a translator and freelance photo and print journalist based in Yangon. News and current events are still strictly censored, journalists remain in jail and there are no institutions or legal frameworks in place to prevent these changes from being overturned.

Naw Say believes the public is still skeptical. “There is no way to know if the government is just trying to get a good public face.”

Whether the reforms are sincere or a play at gaining favor with the international community, optimists are hopeful that the new openness that the media reforms have created will empower the public and lead to a momentum of change that will be impossible to stop.

“There is no guarantee,” says Naw Say. “We will just have to wait and see.”

Kara Wong is an Indepenet Consultant and can be contacted at saibee01@gmail.com. Naw Say Phaw Waa works with Myanmar Post and can be contacted at milkyway.say@gmail.com. Community media activists from Myanmar participated in the 1st AMARC Asia Pacific Training Forum held in Bangkok from December 11 – 13, 2011.
Municipal elections are about as “local” as democracy gets. At stake are not macro issues like removal of poverty or creating a new state, or even giving a fillip to industry or agriculture. Instead, at the core of municipal elections are everyday nightmares that often cut across economic classes – be it broken roads, missing sewage lines, rising crime, dried up taps, piled up garbage, and crumbling public school infrastructure. And yet, despite the constant reminder in their lives of these issues, citizens are often apathetic when it comes to voting in municipal corporators, the very people entrusted with the task of getting all these everyday local problems taken care of.

In May 2011, when the first ever elections for the Municipal Corporation of Gurgaon (MCG) were announced, the Gurgaon Ki Awaaz Community Radio team was immediately aware that this was a singular opportunity for us to make a massive push to use community radio to highlight issues closest to people’s hearts – ward by ward, village by village. The formation of the Municipal Corporation of Gurgaon (MCG) as a response to the sonic speed urbanisation that has taken place in this suburb of Delhi, brought nearly 50 additional villages into the fold of the “municipality”, ending the system of electing panchayat members. So now we have a municipality that needs to accommodate high speed cars as well as buffaloes.

The overwhelming numbers of migrant workers living and working in Gurgaon means that a large majority of the beneficiaries of municipal services are actually not stakeholders in local governance because of the simple fact that most of them are not registered as voters in Gurgaon. Despite a desire, and a need, to have a voter ID card (which in itself is the first step towards accessing other services like subsidised
rations and LPG connections) most migrant voters returned disheartened from any effort they made to get registered.

The MCG elections proved to be the ideal opportunity to launch a campaign on radio to not only exhort listeners to register as voters, but to bring on air NGOs, activists and government functionaries who were working to re-vamp the voter lists.

The daily, through-the-day campaign led to a flurry of phone calls from listeners asking about their ward, the address of their Booth Level Officer, and also talking about the harassment they were facing despite having appropriate documents (which they had collated after hearing the program on Gurgaon Ki Awaaz). The station immediately passed on all complaints to the appropriate authorities in the Secretariat, and, as one of listeners called to tell us, the harassment completely disappeared and his application went through. Six months later, he called the studio and said, “Today, after living in Gurgaon for 10 years, I have finally got my voter ID card, and for this I would like to thank Gurgaon Ki Awaaz.”

We’re often asked, can community radio affect local governance? Our answer is, yes, of course it can. If a community can access information on how to become voters, how to get a ration card, or a driver’s license, or knowingly demand services that are rightfully theirs when they enter a Primary Health Centre or the local Civil Hospital, then an informed community acts as multiple pressure points that force the system to perform. The role of the station then is that of a catalyst.

Arti Jaiman is the station manager of community radio Gurgaon Ki Awaaz, near New Delhi, India. Arti can be contacted at arti@trfindia.org
DILI, EAST TIMOR—Community radio broadcasters comprised the majority of participants in the first ever Timor Leste Workshop for Editors and Journalists in this capital city last February 20 to 22.

More than half of about one hundred participants were broadcasters from 21 community radio stations scattered all over the Southeast Asian country. The participants included 50 percent of all working journalists in the country.

Organized by the Secretariat to the Council of Ministers of the Democratic Republic of Timor Leste, the workshop discussed professionalism and ethics among journalists.

The country’s Community Radio Center (CRC), an AMARC member, was a co-organizer of the event.

In his opening remarks, Timor Leste’s President of the National Parliament Fernando Lasama de Araujo encouraged the participants to practice accuracy, balance and fairness in their reportage and commentary as their contribution to nation-building.

State Secretariat on Politics and Energy Minister Avelino Coelho, Justice Vice Minister Ivo Valenti, and Election officials Fr Martinho Gusmao and Thomas Cabral echoed the same call to the participants.

Timor Leste was to hold its third Presidential elections that month and Parliamentary elections in June. There are 13 contending political parties in the June elections, giving rise to concerns by some government officials about partisanship among many journalists.

International speakers from Indonesia and the Philippines were invited to deliver lectures on ethics, election coverage, among others.

Senior Indonesian journalists Atmakusuma Astraatmadja, Bambang Harimurty, Wina Armada Sukardi, and Priyambodo R.H. as well as Raymund Villanueva of the Philippines were invited as international resource persons.
Community broadcaster-participants expressed hope for future and continuing journalism and broadcasting workshops and trainings.

Moreover, they wish to have more technicians for ready deployment to community radio stations whose equipment has broken down, also citing difficulty in accessing ready supplies to replace broken-down equipment, especially for stations situated in far-away districts.

CRC director Luis Evaristo dos Santos Soares said he is asking for more international support for the development of community radio broadcasting in Timor Leste.

“Our young country depends the most on community radio stations among all mass media,” he explained.

“It is vital that Timor Leste community broadcasters improve in all aspects to maximize their contribution to our nation-building. To this end, we ask for greater support from our international colleagues and friends,” Soares said.

Raymund B Villanueva is the Director for Radio, Kodao Productions, The Philippines. He hosts Sali Na, Bayan! at DZUP-AM 1602 kHz and can be reached at gwapong_manunulat@yahoo.com

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Fouzul Hassan, a community radio activist, former director of Kothmale community radio and director of Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation passed away in an accident on April 19, 2012 in Rambawe, while he was travelling to Jaffna for an official visit. Six other broadcasters from SLBC were injured. Hassan was an AMARC member and coordinator of Sri Lanka Development Journalist Forum. He actively participated in the 2nd AMARC Asia Pacific Regional Conference cum Assembly held in Bangalore in December 2010. On behalf of all fellow broadcasters and members of AMARC, the AMARC Asia Pacific Regional Board offers heartfelt condolences to Late Fouzul Hassan’s family and prays for peace for the departed soul. Hassan will be fondly remembered by his friends and colleagues around the world.

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