



February 2015

NEWSLETTER

Year 11 No. 1

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[Note: All materials in this newsletter can be freely reprinted with due acknowledgement]

Announcement:

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Pacific Community Radio Table

AMARC Asia-Pacific in collaboration with FemLINKPACIFIC and with the financial support of the Pacific Media Assistance Scheme (PACMAS) is organizing the 2nd Pacific Community Radio Roundtable from 13-15 April 2015 in Nadi, Fiji Islands.



Participants of the 1<sup>st</sup> Community Radio Roundtable and Workshop Suva, 2013

The roundtable will bring together representatives of governments, donor organizations, and strategic partners, individuals and institutional advocates of community radio, local broadcasters, community facilitators and stakeholders to discuss development of community broadcasting in Pacific Island countries (PICs).

For the Pacific region stakeholders and radio broadcasters, the roundtable will help to strengthen their network and advocacy strategies. It will also aid in linking them with AMARC

members from around the world thereby gaining exposure, learning and support.

Experienced broadcasters and sector leaders will share regional and global examples of good policy practices during the roundtable. By reviewing existing practices and policies from the viewpoint of internationally accepted standards, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Pacific Community Radio Roundtable will strengthen advocacy for enabling policies for community broadcasting in the Pacific Island countries. The roundtable will review and build upon the achievements of the first Pacific Islands Community Radio Roundtable held in February 2013 in Suva.

As one of its key deliverables, the roundtable will recommend advocacy strategies and guidelines for the growth of community broadcasting in the Pacific Island countries.

Enhancing media pluralism, community radios for disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation and community radios, women's access to community radios, gender sensitive programming, giving voice to the voiceless, and supporting civil society movements through community radios will be some of the other key issues to be discussed in the upcoming roundtable.

***Information for registration to participate will be released shortly. []***

## AMARC is Celebrating World Radio Day 2015

February 13 is [World Radio Day](#), a day to celebrate radio as a medium; to improve international cooperation between broadcasters; and to encourage major networks and **community radios** alike to promote **access to information**, and **free, independent** and **pluralistic media**.

[UNESCO](#), the [World Association of Community Broadcasters](#) (AMARC) and all the stakeholders: public services, mainstream and community media are getting ready to celebrate the fourth edition of **World Radio Day** on **February 13, 2015**. This year, the theme is “**Youth and Radio**”. It represents an important opportunity to evaluate the contribution of young people in the radio sector with the goal of increasing their participation along three levels:

Youth-targeted programming  
Programs including young people at the production level  
Programming devised and produced by young people

This is a special day to remember **why we love radio**, celebrate its **unique power to bring people together** all over the globe and **share** it with the world. With this in mind, AMARC **invites you to send:**

information regarding the **events you are organizing in your community**  
examples of **engaging radio contents produced by youth or produced for youth**

You can send the information and programs via [We Transfer](#) to [secretariat@si.amarc.org](mailto:secretariat@si.amarc.org). AMARC will give [international visibility](#) to all the information and programs received.

**On February 13, let's celebrate radio together! Thank you for your participation!**

## Community Radios for Protecting Human Rights

AMARC Asia-Pacific with the financial support from Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development (DFATD), Government of Canada, and in collaboration with Association of Community Radio Broadcasters of Nepal is organizing a Human Rights training program from February 13-17, 2015 in Kathmandu. The 'Community Radio training on Women's Rights and Human Rights' will be participated by 25 trainees representing community radio stations from the mid-West and far-West regions of Nepal. Fifty percent seats in the training have been reserved for women and five for broadcasters from the *dalit* community.



Participants Selection Committee at work

Participants will be introduced to various aspects of violations of women's rights and human rights, with specific focus on issues relevant to the mid-West and far-West regions of Nepal. Recent human rights reports in Nepal have indicated a greater level of violations of human rights in those regions.

In addition to interacting with subject specialists the trainees will also learn about creative ways of transforming information into effective radio programs. Technical aspects of program production such as studio and field based program production techniques that are gender sensitive will be a key focus of the training. The training will stimulate discussions about community radio's role in promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms on

democratization processes leading to better living conditions in Nepal and in shaping longer-term sustainable community development and good governance.

The training program will be followed up by a mentoring program that will guide the participants through a process of producing and broadcasting programs on Women's Rights and Human Rights after they return to their stations. []

### **Radio Drama Production for Pacific Island Countries Concluded in Fiji Islands**

AMARC Asia Pacific, in collaboration with FemLINKPACIFIC – Media Initiative for Women conducted radio drama production training for broadcasters from Pacific Island Countries. The training was held in Suva, Fiji Islands in September 2014. The training was linked to FemLINKPACIFIC's ongoing development and production of community media content and the Women's Human Security First campaign, which was developed to ensure that the needs and capacities of people and communities are taken into account – development processes and priorities must be defined from the community level up, particularly to prevent conflict over resources.

Through the production of media reports and radio dramas participants received an opportunity to produce content to inform a range of stakeholders including public media about Why it is Important to Put Human Security First and to do so in a gender inclusive manner. As part of the training, participants learnt about script writing by reflecting on the many global commitments to gender equality, sustainable development and peace and security. []

Feature:

### **Turning the Dial: Absorbing Waves of Community Radio Around the World**

By Sylvia Thomas

Last March I was absolutely ecstatic when I received full funding from the Thomas J. Watson Fellowship, in order to visit and experience community radio stations in South America, Asia, and Africa for one year. I had dedicated almost six years to community radio through production, podcasting, policy, youth radio program implementation, license applications, community radio in the academic field, and working at stations. I was ready to learn from radios outside the United States too. I started my year on July 31<sup>st</sup>, 2014, and now I am six months through my world-wide journey.



Radio San Gabriel in El Alto, the oldest indigenous radio station in Bolivia holds regular meetings for community members so that they can discuss issues in their community.

I started in Bolivia. I visited and worked with six different stations. I did interviews with people from las radios mineras (the mining radios), indigenous community radios, pirate radios, youth radios, and women's radios. Participation and volunteerism in community radio in Bolivia is very impressive. Most stations consistently lead radio workshops to educate the local community on radio vocalization, editing, producing, radio dramas, interviewing, and making notes for news broadcasting.

In every Bolivian station that I visited, there was almost always a group of community people sitting and chatting in the station's waiting room or common area. Every Saturday, I showed up at the Radio Eco Jovenes office and participated in a two and a half hour free youth radio workshop. There were almost always close to 25 people ages 9 to 21 in the room. There were rarely enough seats for everyone so I often found myself cross-legged on the floor with a 9 year old participant- Helen- sitting on my lap. Not only do the youth show up on Saturday mornings, they also come during the week to record and make their own news stories and interviews. When I asked how long people had been coming to Eco Jovenes, the responses varied from one week to ten years. I said to Rodrigo, a 13 year old participant in the station, "You don't receive any payment for all of your work here, why do stay participating in the station?". He said to me, "It is fun. I learn a lot. As I improve, Eco gives me more privileges and responsibilities, and that feels good". Older participants help teach newer participants, while still learning from the experts who run the program, Don Carlos and Don David. Eco holds a barbeque every few months where participants and their families come and enjoy music, food, and soccer together. Each family tries to bring something to share. It was clear that the community even claims the Eco office as their own.

For other stations, volunteerism and participation is more of a challenge but listenership is vast. One time, I went to watch a handball match in Dhaka, Bangladesh, about an 8 hour drive from Radio Mahananda. I saw a young man with "Chapai Nawabganj" (the name of the place where Radio Mahananda is located) embroidered into the back of his jacket. I went up to him and said "Radio Mahananda?" A split second later, the entire group around him loudly burst into singing the Radio Mahananda theme song together. It was clear that this three-year-old community radio station had a fan base probably larger than the population of my home state in the U.S. When I visited the station and talked with listeners they said things like, "I listen to Radio Mahananda because it produces local news about what is happening right here in our community"... "They produce agriculture news that pertains to our land, and educational information that pertains to our problems. The frequency is very strong and it is easy to catch on my mobile while I am in the fields or moving about my day"... "The only change I wish to see in Radio Mahananda is that they broadcast for more hours a day."



Radio La Salle in Urubamba, Peru had an incredible listenership base too. The doors to the station are propped open. There is a messaging hour every day when people come to the radio to say things like, "Mom, I'm coming back to the village tomorrow. Please wait for me at the creek with a donkey to help carry my stuff". People come and fill the messaging hour because they know that their friends and family are listening. I distinctly remember traveling in a rural area of Peru and seeing a man herding his cows with a long wooden stick in one hand and his radio tucked under his

other arm. For many villages in the Andes, radio is the most reliable and depended on communication source.

I also learned the most free, effective, and profound tip about community radio from Radio La Salle. The station makes a point to spend more airtime to inform the people about positive stories in the community, instead of focusing on negative ones. For example, the day I visited them there were two young boys who had made it to the national math competition. Radio La Salle kept the community updated on the boys progress. The station manager, Demaris, said, "This is another way of empowering our community. We give space to the stories that make us proud and show our true potential". This tactic gives a new level



Mobile fruit vender on wheels in Lima, Peru.  
He listens to the radio all day long.

of empowerment to the community because it reminds members that their potential success is unlimited, and best of all, the tactic is free.

I don't think I can get away with writing a community radio article without mentioning funding. Almost every community radio I've ever heard of is concerned about funding. Most community radios I have visited function under a NGO or social

organization that funds and supports them. Some do advertisements to help keep costs low. The mining radios in Bolivia are supported by the

workers. Each worker pays a very small fee or small percent of their salary, and together they pay for their radio. The community recognizes the importance of its radio, so they are willing to pay for it. Other radios, such as Radio Atipiris, receive funds from several national and international donors. Many stations debate if they should allow advertisements, and how to monitor the advertisements so that they are socially beneficial to the community. From my perspective, the best way to be financially sustainable is to use a combination of the methods mentioned above.

Apart from funding, many stations are curious about technology. I recently went down into a village in Nepal and talked to a women's group about their perspective of the radio. They expressed that they don't listen to radio much anymore, and they now watch TV instead...the exact words that many community radio stations fear. My assessment of this issue is that there needs to be an increase in participation and community ownership of the station, so that people create the type of radio that they want to hear. It also might mean that radio programs need to change their schedule and broadcast as "the working man's media" during the day, so that the broadcast hours aren't competing with leisure television hours. Another technological change is that all over the world most listeners hear the radio on their mobile phone rather than a dial radio. Some Nepali village women said that if the radio dials get broken, the family doesn't buy a new one because their husbands and kids can use the radio on their mobile. The women say that they don't know how to use their mobile phone in that way. In order to increase access in these situations, Radio Mahananda distributed 80 radios to community members. I also think that the stations capability to transmit a strong and clear frequency encourages community members to be more engaged in the programs.



Author with a women's listeners club in village near Dhulikel, Nepal

I am looking forward to continuing my journey in Asia, Africa, and potentially, Brazil in the next six months. Each station has provided me with inspiration and ideas about the strength of community media through participation, listenership and more. I'm excited to keep discovering.

*Sylvia thomas has spent the past 6 years working at community radio stations, creating her own podcasts and productions, organizing non-profits to apply for low power FM community radio licences, and implementing a youth radio summer program in the Phillips neighbourhood in Minneapolis, Minnesota. []*

## Community Radios as People's Movement in South Asia

On the occasion of the People's SAARC held in Kathmandu from December 22-24, 2014 Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (ACORAB) Nepal organized a panel discussion on "Community Broadcasting for Positive Societal Transformation in South Asia." The workshop explored the way forward for community broadcasting to accelerate positive societal transformation across the South Asian region.



Photo source: <http://www.peoplesaarc.org>

People's SAARC is a South Asian level mega-event of civil society organizations and activists held in conjunction with the 'official' SAARC summit, which was held in Kathmandu in December 2014. The three day event bearing the slogan 'People's movement uniting South Asia for deepening democracy, social justice and peace', endorsed a people's declaration as South Asian civil society's common voice.

Deliberations focused on weaknesses as well as achievements of the community radio sector in South Asia. It was generally agreed that access and participation in community radios by the ordinary and the marginalized was far from satisfactory. The fact that community radio policy – by its absence or through limitations imposed – posed the greatest challenge to the growth of the sector in the region was also highlighted. At the same time panelists highlighted success stories about community radios giving voice to the voiceless and inducing positive societal changes in different parts of the region.

Representatives of community radios spoke about various sustainability approaches including expanding local ownership through enhanced participation of local community members. Representatives of ACORAB spoke about human resource development and institutional capacity development of community radios for quality and effective communication. Given the low level of access to Internet in Nepal (it is in the range of 10-15% and centered around cities) rural masses are solely dependent on local community radios for fulfilling their information needs.

While highlighting exemplary works of community radios in creating positive societal impacts, Gobinda Prasad Devkota, General Secretary of ACORAB underlined the need for improvements in specific areas of community broadcasting and expressed ACORAB's commitment for continuously engaging in the capacity building of community radio stations. Suman Basnet, Regional Coordinator of AMARC Asia-Pacific moderated the panel discussion. []

## International Year of Soils 2015

Soils are a “nearly forgotten resource,” FAO Director-General José Graziano da Silva declared on the eve of World Soil Day. He said healthy soils are the foundation for food, fuel, fibre and medicine and play critical roles in the carbon cycle, ecosystem functioning, water storage and filtration and drought and flood resilience.

On 24 April 2013, FAO member countries endorsed the request from the Kingdom of Thailand for the proclamation of the International Year of Soils 2015. The IYS will serve as a platform for raising awareness on the importance of sustainable soil management as the basis for food systems, fuel and fibre production, essential ecosystem functions and better adaptation to climate change for present and future generations. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations has been nominated to implement the IYS 2015, within the framework of the Global Soil Partnership and in collaboration with Governments and the Secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. The IYS 2015 aims to increase awareness and understanding of the importance of soil for food security and essential ecosystem functions.

According to FAO estimates a third of all soils are degraded, due to erosion, compaction, soil sealing, salinization, soil organic matter and nutrient depletion, acidification, pollution and other processes caused by unsustainable land management practices. Unless new approaches are adopted, the global amount of arable and productive land per person will in 2050 be only one-fourth of the level in 1960.

Hence it is important to focus on sustainable soil management to ensure food security, nutrition, climate change adaptation, and water management, and attain sustainable development. The Asia Pacific region is facing soil degradation at alarming levels due to human induced factor and natural causes affecting land productivity thereby impacting food security.

The International Year of Soils 2015 is an opportunity to raise awareness, highlight opportunities and challenges, share information and update data ensuring better soil management. *Communication for Development* (ComDev, <http://www.comdevasia.org>) is a people-centered communication approach integrating participatory processes and media ranging from *community radio* to ICTS, to actively involve local stakeholders in development efforts. ComDev Asia is a regional platform designed to document experiences and promotes knowledge sharing and joint initiatives in communication applied to agriculture and rural development. ComDev Asia is collaboration between FAO, AMARC and the College of Development Communication of UPLB and has also been supported by the CSDI project. []

### **Call for contributions**

Contributions for this newsletter can be sent in the form of news, announcements, features, publication reviews, etc. Please include photos when possible. Stories from the field are especially welcome.

Contributions can be mailed to [suman\\_basnet@asiapacific.amarc.org](mailto:suman_basnet@asiapacific.amarc.org)