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AMARC Women's International Network

by Maria Eugenia Chávez



The Women's International Network of AMARC enters into its third decade after a long and intense journey. We continue creating a network that unites forces to defend women's rights and strengthens women's leadership through the use of community radio.

For the women who initiated the Women's International Network (WIN), it was a huge challenge and it continues to be challenging up to today. On one hand politically it is mostly accepted that women's leadership in general is important and feminist arguments are put forward. But when we look at the realities at local and national level we realize that many women community broadcasters are facing huge obstacles.

Our task is to support women in their daily broadcast routine, giving them a voice within their radio stations or production group as well as at the national, regional and international level and in collaboration with other organisations and feminist movements. Even more challenging is to achieve giving women a strong voice through collective actions and democratic processes.

In other words, our task is not small and it required the strength and the energy of the many women who have created WIN and achieved to bring "women's issues" to a level of political discussions that require new forms of arguments, analysis and debates engaging women and men.

We build on the contributions of the many women who have given life to this network and should not forget to mention them: Margarita Herrera, Claudia Villamayor, Margarita Argott, María Suárez, Katerina Anfossi, Yarman Jimenez, Pía Mata, Aleida Calleja, Perla Wilson, Maria Victoria Polanco, Claudia Korol, Suyapa Vanegas, Wendy Quintero, Amalia Jiménez, Sole, Daniela García, Emilce Farías, Paula Castello, Natacha, Inés Farina, Mariela Jara, Alicia Stumpfs, Carolina Vasquez, Tachi Arriola, Teresa Juárez and many women more in Latin America; Lucía Ruiz, Bianca Miglioretto, Mavic Cabrera, Elizabeth Robinson, Frieda Werden, Sophie Toupin, Sangita Basudev, Adiriane Borger, Mary Rudi, Eva Thun, Anna, Fiona Steiner, Prativa Chhetri, Nimmi Chauhan, Sonia Randawa, Sharon Bhagwan Rolls, Preeti Soni, Fatou Binetou Mbaye, Grace Githaiga, Lettie Longwe, Habi Dialo, Benilde, Zara Yacoub, Miriam Menkiti, Tamara Agrabawe and many many women who merit to be named but whom I do not know.

All these efforts continue to be of importance to the women community radio broadcasters who make up WIN today. We insist that new forms of debates are needed at all levels coming from the grassroots upwards and vice versa. It is not enough to position women at national, regional and international level if the women in the individual radio station and production group are not empowered.

In November 2010, during the World Assembly of AMARC I was elected as vice president for the Women's International Network. In this position I would like to contribute to the collective development of strategies to improve the working conditions of women broadcasters, taking into account the cultural diversities.

For this purpose we need to systematize the accumulated experiences of women during the last two decades. Each one of us is part of her story, as everyone has contributed her experiences and capacities and enriched the global network and to the struggle for our right to freedom of expression.

The activities of AMARC International need to be feminist and gender mainstreamed to ensure empowerment of women and the other sexual identities within the radio stations and the network. We

need to be creative in weaving our movement into a more equitable and democratic network that respects and guarantees the rights of each and every women community broadcaster.

At the same time we need to participate actively within the overall movement's struggle for the right to communication; access to spectrum and for favourable national telecommunication laws and regulations that protect diversity and pluralism; extend our solidarity to comrades in emergency situations or conflicts; participate actively in debates and collaboration with other social movements. Because every women of this network has something to say on each and every one of these topics as we are an integral part of this movement called the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters.

Definitely the solutions need to come from our own ranks. To network means to start from the individual experience and identify synergies that enables us to develop a global perspective which is crucial to find sound and effective solutions. In other words the characteristics of Asia Pacific, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Europe and North America serve as starting point to create bridges among women who share similar problems, experiences and knowledge that allows us to build common visions.

The new information and communication technologies imply new challenges for women. On one hand there is the need for capacity building and training. On the other hand they provide with new possibilities of communication that did not exist before. By promoting and using new ICTs we can strengthen the voices of women within the network and promote interactive ways of communication that allow every women in the individual radio station to participate in the entire network and share activities with her colleagues in other countries and regions.

For the promotion of women's leadership affirmative actions are needed. These have been much debated and identified necessary in places where women are disadvantaged without access to decision making. I am referring to the need to take measures that allow women community radio broadcasters to participate actively in decision making within the radios and the communities; at national, regional and international level.

To realize our projects the question of funding is crucial. It is impossible to implement strategies to strengthen women's rights without the adequate financial resources. We need to support the fund-raising efforts of WIN as much as we can. Collaboration among the regions and the secretariat, based on the regional work plans is essential as we did with the Gender Program in AMARC LAC. While voluntarism, militancy and commitment to the struggle for the rights of those who have less are at the core of our movement and the lack of financial means will not stop us but financial means is also the fuel that runs the engine.

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11th World Social Forum - African People Speak Out!

By Bianca Miglioretto

“Solidarité avec les femmes du monde entier“ - “Solidarity with the women of the entire world“ - was one of the many slogans that was heard during the opening march and during the entire World Social Forum (WSF) in Dakar, Senegal, Africa held from February 6 to 11, 2011.



Women at the huge opening rally of the WSF on February 6 in Dakar. Photo by Norman Stockwell

More than 60,000 people from West-Africa joined the march on February 6 in Dakar. Caravans came all the way from the neighbouring countries Mauritania, Mali, Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Guinea to participate in one of the biggest marches Dakar has ever seen.

Despite initial huge logistical problems, such as no programme available, rooms where the different events should take place were occupied by students in the middle of lectures, the forum is seen as a success by most of its participants. The WSF took place in the huge compound of the Cheik Anta Diop University in Dakar. The logistical problems were partially solved in the first two days by putting up many tents that served as venues for workshops, assemblies, forums, panels, film showing etc. Soon the atmosphere of partial frustration gave way to an overwhelmingly militant feeling of solidarity and unity in the struggle for another – a better – world. Especially the struggles in different Arab countries and news about the victory of the Egyptian people over the dictatorship of Muhammad Hosni Mubarak made the 7500 participants burst into joy and powerful slogans. “The Egyptian people showed us that popular revolt can be peaceful and can bring down a dictator” said one of the speakers at the closing of the WSF. And the crowd chanted “If it is possible in Egypt it is possible anywhere – another world is possible!”



WSF opening rally. Photo by Norman Stockwell

Migration, Land Grabbing, Peace

Those were the most important issues at the WSF in Dakar. From the island of Gore, for over 400 years slaves were deported to the Americas and Europe. The World Charter on Migration was signed on February 11, 2011. It demands free movement and the right to settle down where ever one desires; the closure of all refugee camps and the abolition of agreements that violate human rights at borders.

Another very important issue discussed in Dakar was land grabbing in Africa by multinational companies for economic development projects. In order to exploit natural resources and create plantations, thousands of families are displaced and deprived of their land and livelihood. It is called the new form of re-colonisation of Africa.

The third very important topic that was high-lightened primarily by African women were the many armed conflicts and post conflict situations that affect many societies in Africa. The demand for the implementation of the UN-Security Council-Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security and the participation of women in peace and re-construction processes was very present.

Women's Participation

But where were the women in the WSF. They were very much present but not on the big stages at the opening and closing ceremony. They were not given much space at the big events as it was a predominantly male show. Even the facilitators (all men) only talked about 'brothers' when addressing the crowd. 'Sisters' do not seem to exist for them, when it comes to politics and social movements. And when women were given a chance to speak, they hardly ever discussed women's visions of 'another world'.



WSF participants from Indimedia Nigeria in front of a banner for the right to communication. Photo by Norman Stockwell

But this WSF could not have taken place without the women. Women's cooperatives treated the participants with delicious meals made from local products. At small stands, income generating women's projects from Senegal and neighbouring countries offered delicious food and drinks, such as the juice of the baobab tree and displayed beautiful fabrics and handicrafts for sale. The opening rally would not have been half as militant and colourful without the slogans of the women's organisation and their beautiful dresses. Some delegations were all dressed with the same fabric. The women's village – a beautifully decorated red tent – was always full of life and ideas with a huge variety of issues shared, discussed, debated and disputed.

After having experienced the WSF in Mumbai, India and in Puerto Alegre, Brazil I was curious if after so many years the forum still carries the power of the masses and represents strength from the grassroots and I join the conclusion that was made by many at the end of the WSF in Dakar:

"Contrary to what some would like to believe, the World Social Forum process is alive and kicking and as strong as never before".

For more information on the WSF in Dakar listen to the 7 10 – 15 min. long radio features on the AMARC website www.amarc.org, three of them with a special focus on women's issues. You are also more than welcome to re-broadcast the reports in your radio station.

Bianca Miglioretto is the AMARC WIN Representative from Asia Pacific and can be contacted at bianca@tinig.ch

Hope for Community Radio in Sri Lanka

By R. M. Samanmalee

Harshani Weerasinghe, a technical person and a producer at Saru Community Radio spoke to R. M. Samanmalee Swarnalatha on her experience and expectation from community radio in Sri Lanka

About myself:

I am Harshani Weerasinghe and my hometown is Polonnaruwa, Sri Lanka. My mother is a teacher and father is a businessman. I have an elder brother and a sister. Right from my childhood my parents created an environment in which I could lead a free and virtuous life with the freedom to pursue my interest. I received my primary education from Polonnaruwa Bendiwewa Maha Vidyalaya and later attended Polonnaruwa Royal College. I studied till G.C.E. (Ordinary Level) but was more interested in extracurricular activities. I have participated in many competitions in school sports club, literary association and music sections and have won a number of certificates. Similarly, I have held positions in the associations of the Dhamma Schools and in the village as well. I love to work with people for their wellbeing and learn from their valuable experiences.



I got married when I was 22 years old to a man of my choice. He is a heavy vehicle operator. Even after the marriage I learnt extra skills like tailoring, cooking and did a beautician's course. During my free time I wrote articles to women's newspapers and when those articles were published I felt a great satisfaction. I also taught in Dhamma School and have received teacher's training. I am lucky to get my husband's support and freedom to involve in all the activities even after marriage.

In 2005 I joined the Village Self Help Learning Initiative (VSHLI) implemented in our village. I got the opportunity to hold several positions in the organization and even became a Directress in the Board of Directors. Currently this project is being implemented island wide as Gemidiriya in more than 1000 villages through World Bank funds. In 2005 arrangements were made to commence a Community Radio under the project. Two persons from our organization (including myself) were given opportunity to participate in the training conducted with regard to the establishment of Community Radio.

Training programmes on Community Radio commenced in the month of August in 2005 for thirty two persons including myself. I had no prior exposure to community radio until that programme. Our trainer was Mr. Thilak Jayarathne who has led many efforts to establish community radios in Sri Lanka and played a distinctive role in the Sri Lanka Broadcasting Cooperation and in the field of media. The knowledge and experience we gained and shared as a trainee group through the sessions conducted by him during nearly two years were extensive. We learnt the difference between mainstream and alternative media, the existing community radio stations in the world, use of media for community development, programme types and formats, principles of adult education, reviewing case studies, the ways of identification of community needs, programming and script writing. I consider this training opportunity as an important one where I gained vast knowledge and experience and became a more competent person.

In addition to the above training I participated in field studies. The Technical Officer of Uva Community Radio Mr. Ruwan Presanna conducted a training programme on the technical aspect of community radio. I learnt to work in the technical section of community radio because of my interest and for the very reason that technical area has always been off limits to women. With a burning desire

to understand media and communications better I took up a diploma course in the Environmental Journalist Cluster, training of Youth Media Institution of the National Youth Services Council and did a computer course in the Technical College. In addition I actively participated in communication workshops and special training programmes of the Gemidiriya project. Presently, I am working as a programme producer, technician and an announcer of the 'Saru' Community Radio which is in the process of being established permanently in the near future. I have been able to put my knowledge and skills gained so far into practice and I'm learning more with each new day.

Community Radio in Sri Lanka



Only a handful of my countrymen are aware of the potential of community radio. Therefore, the numbers of persons who come forward to speak or work on it are few. Further, the lack of existence of real community radio in our country is another limiting factor. Although there are several community radio stations they do not operate on the principles of community radio with some stations being owned only partly by the community. The main cause of this is the absence of legal provisions in our country to obtain a frequency owned by the community itself. Therefore, our team of communicators is patiently waiting since year 2005 till date to establish a community radio in Sri Lanka.

Our group consists of persons who devote their time and labour voluntarily to establish a community radio in our country because we feel the necessity for it. We believe that community radio will be able to address the cultural and information needs of our community and help in its development. While we await for effective legislation many government and private radio channels have been established in our country during this period. The public of our country have no right to express views on the quality of those channels and with no alternative everyone has to listen to them. As a result, the young generations who are at a very impressionable age are unconsciously adopting the FM culture.

What should be done?

I feel that there should be more awareness of community radio in Sri Lanka. Advocacy for legal provisions for ownership of frequency by the community must be conducted. An international summit of community radios would help to convince the value and necessity of a community radio in the country. Information about community radio should be provided in school and colleges. The community committees should be made aware and necessary capacity building training provided for establishing their own community radios. Further, those community groups who have wished to establish a community radio should be given necessary support by government and INGOs/NGOs. We are happy that the Gemidiriya Foundation supports and represents Saru community Radio.



If the above suggestions are implemented the communities as an empowered group could gain a voice through their community radios leading to their development. Such a group of community has emerged from Polonnaruwa and we are pleased to declare that we walk hand in hand with the Gemidiriya Foundation towards establishment of a true Community Radio in Sri Lanka.

R. M. Samanmalee Swarnalatha is a Programme Officer – (ICT Intervention) at the Gemidiriya Foundation, Sri Lanka. She can be contacted at sapumallk@yahoo.com

Report on AMARC Asia Pacific - International Women's Day Broadcast Campaign

-Prativa Chhetri

The Women's International Network of the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC-WIN) organized the 7th annual International Women's Day Broadcast Campaign from 8 to 31 March, 2011 with the theme **“Voices for Women and Participation in Political Processes.”** The campaign was broadcasted at <http://march8.amarc.org>.

With the firm belief that women can be active agents of change when they can gain access to voice themselves, AMARC WIN advocated that women should take on leadership roles in leading their countries and communities towards long-term development and democratization. Women organizations present in the recent World Social Forum 2011 in Dakar confirmed that there is no possible development and democratization without women, in Africa and elsewhere in the world.

Community radios from Asia-Pacific, Middle East, Africa, Europe, North America and Latin America and the Caribbean participated in this campaign. Over 45 programmes in English, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Arabic, Nepali, Japanese, among other languages were prepared and uploaded at the AMARC website at <http://march8.amarc.org/index.php?l=EN>

From the Asia Pacific region, the following community radio stations/federation sent programmes for the campaign:

1. PARD Vanoli, India
2. Radio Bundelkhand, India
3. Steering Committee of Open forum in Japan
4. Association of Community Radio Broadcasters of Nepal (ACORAB), Nepal
5. Radio Sagarmatha, Nepal
6. Environment Cycle Radio (ECR FM), Nepal
7. Kodaio Productions, the Philippines
8. Uva Community Radio, Sri Lanka

Through the international broadcast campaign, AMARC WIN hoped to stimulate discussions about women's role in democratization processes leading to better living conditions and in shaping long-term sustainable community development and good governance.

Though not all member community radios from Asia Pacific region sent their programmes to be uploaded in the campaign website most of them were able to create awareness about Women's Day in their own community through their programmes.

Amongst them femLINKPACIFIC broadcasted Women's Radio Drama Pilot for International Women's Day Week. "The Market Report" the pilot series, produced in English, Fijian and Hindi, was broadcast on the breakfast shows of 3 of the stations of Fiji Broadcasting Corporation as well as femLINKPACIFIC's Community Radio Station, FemTalk 89.2FM. Also on the occasion of International Women's day, femLINKPACIFIC reiterated some of the key recommendations of UNSC1325 calling for full participation of women in all areas of peace and security – including political and financial support for women's participation.

Radio Rakambia from East Timor, downloaded the programmes from March 8 campaign website and re-broadcasted them in their stations.

Community radio Vijay FM, Nepal had a special programme for Women's Day.

Radio ECR FM, dedicated the day to women's programme through on air programmes on women's participation in the political process of Nepal and through off air programme on the issue of violence against women.

Saru Community Radio in Sri Lanka celebrated by airing different women based programmes on Women's Day.

New Dawn FM in Bougainville, Papua New Guinea also commemorated the day by having two separate conferences organised by the local UNDP team. One was on human rights especially on raising awareness on reducing violence against women and children.



Photo by Eka Rimawati, Com. Radio Swara Warga, Indonesia

Swara Warga FM in Jombang, Indonesia distributed flowers as part of their peace initiative and as a symbol of solidarity with all the women of the world. Various programmes related to women issues in the country were aired on Women's Day.

Radio stations in the region celebrated Women's Day by creating awareness through on air discussions, interviews and programmes. This multilingual broadcast campaign has substantively contributed to the discussion on the issues and we hope that it will help in identifying practical as well as long-term solutions.

Though we would have preferred more programmes from the region to the campaign, factors like limited access to internet and poor power supply have greatly limited participation. But the celebration of Women's Day was observed by most community radios and hope that it goes a long way in ensuring women's right to communicate through and within the community radio movement.

For further information, please contact Prativa Chhetri, Program Officer, AMARC Asia Pacific at chhetri_prativa@yahoo.com

Converging Communications: Empowering Women, Transforming Communities

by Anna M. Dinglasan

Isis International announces the release of the latest issue of its Women in Action Magazine (WiA) on "*Converging Communications: Empowering Women, Transforming Communities*".



New information and communications technologies (ICTs) have led to tremendous changes in the ways women's movements have organised and mobilised. New ICTs have catalysed and strengthened online based civil journalism and independent and community media. Moreover, the use of new tools such as social media like Facebook and Twitter and share sites such as Flickr and YouTube, alongside the continued recognition of the potentials of traditional communication tools such as community radio and television have increased spaces for transparency and democracy.

However, with these positive developments are also glaring realities of the continued abuse of women's human rights and the perpetuation of gender based discrimination especially through the use of the very same media and communication tools. As well, the rapid pace at which new ICTs develop continue to divide societies, creating a digital and information divide that cuts across class, nations, age, race and gender.

In this WiA, Isis explores how issues of gender based violence, migration, climate change and environmental disasters, and LGBT advocacy, among others, interplay with issues of access to and availability of information and communication technologies. It further explores how the convergence

of the multitude of communication tools and strategies-- the use of both new ICTs and traditional media, have allowed women to take an active part in finding solutions to these longstanding problems. Through this issue, with inspiring stories from remarkable women from Indonesia, Philippines, Nepal, China, Haiti, India, Thailand, Kenya, Fiji, Germany, Malaysia and Mexico, Isis International brings to light how the convergence of new ICTs with traditional communication tools has allowed women to transcend being mere recipients of information to being recognised as valuable sources of information, empowering themselves and transforming their communities.

To request a copy, please write to elvive@isiswomen.org For more information about Isis International, please visit www.isismanila.org

Hope amid despair; struggle amid impunity - Community Radio in the Philippines

By Raymund B Villanueva



For four days, a group of young community media workers from Tudla Productions (all in their 20s) were broadcasting inside Corazon de Jesus Village in San Juan, a town located within Metropolitan Manila, the capital of the Philippines. Since January 21, 2011 when they set up their “speaker” community radio, they have been informing the residents of the urban poor community of

their rights against illegal demolition by the municipal government on strategically-placed speakers around the community while their broadcast “station” is located inside a cramped kitchen. Their radio programming consisted of news, talks shows for and by women, and talks show for and by the youth. These were enhanced with live music, interviews with residents and guests from different progressive organizations. They also aired regular updates on the ongoing negotiations between community leaders and the office of the mayor as well as public service announcements advising residents on what to do in case the demolition turns violent. Their efforts were in cooperation with Sandigan ng Maralitang Nagkakaisa (Organization of United Poor).

On January 25 the police came with helmets, batons, shields, tear gas, and water cannons. Behind them were hundreds of demolition team members who work under the Office of the Philippine President. Soon, stones and bottles flew, tear gas canisters were fired and water cannons blasted their way against hovels made of flimsy materials. Many residents were hurt, including infants who choked and vomited because of the acrid smoke. Tudla Productions videographer Godson Escopete was arrested and was violently dragged into a waiting police van. Executive producer Lady Ann Salem was rudely taunted by San Juan Police Superintendent Arcallana and her picture was taken without explanation. Tudla Productions’ broadcast equipment was hauled into police vehicles.

Tudla Productions' short-lived community radio is instructive in a couple of ways.

One, community radio is facing steep challenges in the Philippines in the light of the culture of impunity in the past decade. Two, the marginalized people's will to fight, using democratic tools like community radio, is alive and is ready to take it to the next level.

If anything, the Philippines could be considered as one of the pioneers of community radio broadcasting in Asia.

In fact, the pioneering

work by the likes of the United Nations-supported Tambuli Network of Community Radio Stations since the late 1980s has laid the groundwork for similar such programs throughout Southeast Asia and beyond. Sadly, this effort was not sustained for one reason or the other and majority of the community radio stations in this network are moribund. If it is any consolation though, the Tambuli model is still being copied in various ways and in as many modifications—good or bad—in the Philippines and elsewhere.

Since the start of the current millennium there have been various efforts to establish and operate more community radio stations in the Philippines. The Masinag Farmers' Network has established several community radio stations in Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao. To this day, they are still in operation, albeit in varying degrees of consistency and sustainability.

Kodao Productions, since its creation in 2000, initially planned to assist marginalized communities and sectoral organizations in the establishment of four community radio stations in four regions of the Philippines in addition to producing its own radio program and podcasts. These stations should have been in Cagayan Valley (Baggao, Cagayan), Cordillera (Sagada, Mountain Province), Southern Tagalog (Nasugbu, Batangas) and Western Visayas (Iloilo Province). If these plans materialized Kodao was not beyond helping build and operate more community radio stations elsewhere in the country. There are also independent efforts to establish community radio stations in various localities, specifically in Mindanao. Several of them are now vibrant and important parts of their respective communities.

Isis International, a non-government organization also plays a vital part to the development of community radio in the Philippines. It has been conducting series of trainings for women community radio workers for several years..

Because of a vibrant women's rights movement in the Philippines women broadcasters are making airwaves in the broadcast sector. While still marginalized and the respect of their rights still leave much to be desired the women's movement and struggles in the Philippines are always at the forefront. This reflects in the roles women play in the small community radio broadcasting sector in the Philippines. Of the community radio stations that are being put up in the Philippines women



Setting up rooftop speaker for community broadcasting

occupy managerial and editorial positions. Should, in the future, community radio in the Philippines grow, the women's movement would ensure that they would be at the forefront.



A local kitchen doubled as a makeshift studio

But while these developments look hopeful they actually reveal more challenges and problems.

Why did the Tambuli Network fail? Why did the Masinag Network fail to grow? What happened to Kodao's four planned community radio stations? Finally, how are the Filipino people responding to the current challenges?

There are two main answers to these questions.

The first reason (culprit) would be the lack of government support and even obstinate refusal to recognize the people's communication rights. There is no legislation supporting easier establishment of community radio stations and unhampered practice of community broadcasting, much less protection of its practitioners. Philippine Congress refuses to pass numerous Freedom of Information Bills aimed to guarantee free press. Powerful political forces, such as those represented by well-entrenched senators and congresspersons, are even pushing for a "Right of Reply" Bill that would empower them to be given precisely the same column space on newspapers and airtime on radio and television where "criticisms" against them appeared or were broadcast. The horrifying effect of this bill should it become law would be the surrender of editorial prerogatives of media organizations and outfits to politicians, who are not beyond reproach in the first place. In such a scenario community radio, being a marginalized segment of mass media in the Philippines to begin with, could hardly be expected to take root and thrive. One congressman is even proposing that the beneficial Freedom of Information bills be merged with the undemocratic and immoral "Right of Reply" bill that would not only mask but legitimize insidious designs of reactionary political forces.

The second and far graver answer is the culture of impunity that has benighted the Philippines for so long—most recently and viciously under the immediate past administration. Of the nearly 1,108 victims of extra-judicial killings in the Philippines since 2001, 107 of them were media practitioners—more than half of them were radio broadcasters. Radio Cagayano in Baggao, Cagayan was burned by suspected state security forces in July 2, 2006, barely two months since its launching. Kodao's own award-winning radio program was forcibly closed on account of the declaration of a State of National Emergency by the Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo regime. And in November 23, 2009, 33 journalists were massacred in one fell swoop in Maguindanao, Mindanao, along with 25 other civilians.

Women journalists share the brunt of these attacks. Killers and enemies of free speech are not gender sensitive. Women journalists are also regularly made subjects of harassment suits such as libel. If anything, women journalists are subject to more attacks through sexual harassments and physical violence. The harassment and intimidation suffered by Tudla Production's executive director Lady Ann Salem during the demolition in San Juan is but the latest case.

In July 2010 the bloody Macapagal-Arroyo regime has thankfully ended. Succeeding to the Philippine presidency is a scion of a land-owning political family whose promise for the respect of human rights was an oft-repeated campaign pitch. But barely a week into his administration one anti-logging broadcaster was killed. Yet another broadcaster, Dr Gerardo Ortega, an anti-corruption advocate and environmentalist, was gunned down in Puerto Princes City, Palawan Province a few minutes after his radio program last January. To date there are already 17 victims of extra-judicial killings under the new government and it has not been seven months yet.

All these earn for the Philippines the ignoble reputation as the most unsafe country for journalists.

AMARC's sought-for role in the Philippines has not changed since it was first posited by Kodao Productions and Isis International a few years back. AMARC is an important platform in which the travails and struggles, victories and setbacks, hopes and fears of community radio practitioners and advocates in the Philippines could be presented, heard and acted upon. AMARC is also a prayed-for partner for the development of community radio in the Philippines through multifarious ways—moral, logistical, and others. More specifically, Kodao wishes to engage AMARC in the establishment of an international desk for the defense of the rights of community radio broadcasters and advocates worldwide. This, like AMARC's Women's International Network, should be a formal office within AMARC International and its regional and national formations as well as an integral campaign in all its programs and projects. Admittedly, as practitioners and advocates in the most dangerous country for journalists, we will benefit immensely from this. But we do not see it benefiting our colleagues from other countries any less.

Community radio broadcasters in the Philippines would also benefit with more trainings to be provided with the help of AMARC. Specifically, if facilities and opportunities would be provided in the form of assistance, marginalized sectors would be more interested in utilizing community radio as an education and campaign platform. The more practical end to this would be to raise the technical competencies of these groups on the various disciplines needed to be effective community broadcasters.

Hope amid despair; struggle amid impunity. The opposite and opposing sides of good and evil have always been the refrain of mass media practice, particularly community radio broadcasting, in the Philippines. Simply put, community radio must play its role in the defeat of evil reaction and all things they represent. Only when this is achieved shall there be a genuinely free practice of community broadcasting and all the hope it represents.

We invite our colleagues and friends at AMARC to join us in our fight against impunity and, in the end, sure victory for a vibrant community broadcasting sector in the Philippines. We have taken the first steps. We long to see your footprints beside ours in the long journey ahead.

All photos by Raymund.

Raymund B Villanueva based in Manila, the Philippines is the Director for Radio, Kodao Productions and main host of Sali Na, Bayan!, at DZUP-AM 1602 kHz. Ray can be reached at gwapong_manunulat@yahoo.com