



CELEBRATING 25 YEARS OF COMMUNITY RADIO MOVEMENT

WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL NETWORK

-Newsletter-

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[Note: All articles in this newsletter can be freely reprinted or distributed with
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Feature report:

Bridging the Gender Gap - AMARC's gender policy launched on March 8, 2008

Women have a larger role in community radio than any other form of media. Easy to use, easy to access and low in cost, community radio helps women's voices be heard in countries as diverse as Afghanistan and Australia. However, even the community radio sector is far from achieving equality for men and women.

For the last two years, ISIS Manila, a feminist NGO that promotes the voices of women, and the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC)'s Women International Network, have been conducting a survey of stations in the Asia-Pacific to measure the strength of women in community radio.

Unsurprisingly, women are far stronger in community media than in either commercial or state media. But there is still a significant gender gap.

Among the 27 stations surveyed, 45% of the staff was women. Two stations were specifically women's stations, one in Fiji and one in Afghanistan. Only one station, in Indonesia, had no women staff, but in contrast to the all-women's stations it did not see itself as a 'men's radio station'.



Women in Budhikote (Namma Dhwani CR initiative), India; photo credit: Dr. Kanchan Kumar

In leadership, however, women make up only 28% of the leadership. This is in contrast to 3-5% in mainstream media, but it still shows a huge lag. Thirteen stations had male-only leadership, in contrast to only 3 with women-only leadership. Women make up only 30% of the technical positions, 45% of production and 46% of administrative positions – including some volunteers.

This is changing. As community radio spreads, particularly across the Asia-Pacific, it is helping to empower women. In Laos, a newly established, government-sanctioned community-type radio station sought AMARC WIN's help in writing a gender policy.



The aim of writing the policy has been to help community radio stations understand and strive to meet their obligations towards women in their diversity. It covers the needs of women in conflict situations, differently abled women, women from minority groups, including lesbian and transgender women.

Personally, as a Malaysian woman, growing up in a country where Government control of the media is almost complete, I've found it frustrating that despite its vocal commitment to gender parity, the Government has used its control of the media to silence progressive women's voices, while allowing sexist comment and advertising to saturate the airwaves. Unless women are represented in the leadership of media organisations, gains that they make are frequently lost when priorities change.

In most parts of the Asia-Pacific, women have traditionally faced much higher obstacles to listening and producing radio. One woman surveyed in East Timor noted the

difference between the Constitutional rights of women and the lived realities that women face.

Of the women surveyed, 22 listed positive experiences with community radio. My favourite has to be one of the stories from Nepal where widows stopped wearing white saris and started wearing red saris after a community radio campaign.

However, women still face harassment and problems. In Afghanistan, the legislation provides for radio stations to be owned by a single person. This has resulted in the majority of 'community' radio stations being owned by men, making it difficult for women to access the airwaves. In Indonesia, community radio is threatened by an increasingly commercial media. The commercialisation of the media in the post-Reformasi era has entailed an increasing commercialisation of women and women's bodies. And in India, despite a strong women's movement, there have been concerns about the lack of women's involvement in the newly opened community radio sector.

As noted before, however, changes are happening, and women can be at the forefront of these changes, as has been seen in the Philippines. ISIS Manila worked with MIN-WOW, to conduct radio training for women from the conflict zone of Mindanao. They learned studio skills, digital editing, interview techniques and the methods of peace journalism. Bianca Miglioretto from ISIS Manila, and WIN representative on the Asia Pacific board of AMARC, spoke to two of the participants about the training and the importance of community radio to them as women, and as members of a troubled community. They emphasised how radio has helped them raise issues of concern to the entire community, and to gain confidence in themselves.



Women in the Philippines learn to produce their own radio content; Photo credit: ISIS Manila

AMARC's gender policy was launched on March 8. With it, we hope that community radio stations can help women fulfil their potential as full members of the diverse societies in which they live.

[Sonia Randhawa can be contacted by email: soniarandhawa1@yahoo.com. [The full text of the AMARC Gender Policy can be downloaded from www.win.amarc.org]

March 8 Global Broadcast: AMARC-WIN Called for Women Empowerment!

March 11, 2008, Montreal

On March 8th, the Women's International Network of the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC-WIN) celebrated Women's International Day with a 24-hour Worldwide Webcast dedicated to women and gender issues. The Webcast began at 1:00 AM GMT on Saturday March 8, 2008. For a list of programs and to download from the archives, please visit our website www.march8.amarc.org. All programs can be freely rebroadcasted!

This year's campaign focused on "Financing for gender equality and women's empowerment", a critical issue that The Commission on the Status of Women of the United Nations has recognized as a priority and as the central theme during its fifty-second session in 2008. Contributions were received from across the globe including approximately eight hours of content from the Asia Pacific region.



More and more women are broadcasting; Photo credit: ISIS Manila

The Forth Annual Women's International Day broadcast campaign featured programming in English, French, Spanish, Arabic, Dari, Nepali, Japanese, Gujarati, Kannada, Mongolian and Krio, among other languages.

You are invited to join AMARC next year in the Fifth International Women's Day broadcast Campaign in 2009!

[AMARC is an association of community radios with members in over 110 countries. AMARC advocates for the right to communicate at the international, national, local and neighbourhood levels and defends and promotes the interests of the community radio movement through solidarity, networking and cooperation. For further information visit www.amarc.org. The AMARC Women's International Network is a large assembly of women communicators working to ensure women's right to communicate through and within the community radio movement. To find out about other WIN programs and actions visit www.win.amarc.org.]

Philippines: Isis launches People's Communication for Development (PC4D)

Radio still one of the most effective communication tools for women at grassroots

Manila. On March 10, 2008, Isis International held the Philippine launching of the publication as well as a campaign on 'information and communication technologies appropriate and effective for grassroots women.' Peoples Communications for Development (PC4D) is a culmination of a three-year long research involving non-government organisations and grassroots women in five countries - Fiji, India, Papua New Guinea (PNG), Thailand, and the Philippines. The research attempted to determine the communication tools which are most accessible, effective, and empowering for women at the grassroots.

In all of the five countries, radio, television and video, print media, theatre as well as those medium that are usually classified as traditional tools were found to be the used by grassroots women in varying extent. However, radio was found to be the number one choice of communication in all countries except India.



The book explains that "in the Philippines, radio is seen as effective because information broadcasted over the radio has a very high probability of immediately reaching its target communities and it does not interfere with the women's daily activities. In Thailand, community radio is popular because in addition to disseminating news it also supports the local

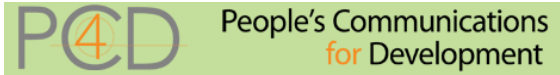
culture by promoting local songs and story-telling. In Fiji, radio is the most effective tool in the intermediary groups' interactions with grassroots women. In PNG, it was reported that radio is accessible and can cover large areas."

With the exception of mobile phones, which have been identified as very accessible in the Philippines, new information and communication technologies like the computer and the internet are still alien and inappropriate to many.

The computer was cited by intermediary groups in the Philippines and Thailand as useful in producing presentation materials. Internet was also considered efficient by intermediary groups but not empowering for grassroots women.

"New ICTs were seen as potentially empowering for grassroots women in Fiji and PNG but not necessarily so in India and the Philippines. New ICTs were not considered suitable for grassroots women in Thailand. Access to ICTs must only come after basic needs, according to intermediary groups in Fiji, India and the Philippines. New ICTs are largely inaccessible in Fiji and PNG given the lack of electricity and infrastructure," the book mentions.

During the research it was found that the respondents reacted best to stimulating, interactive, fast, far-reaching, and culturally appropriate tools of survey. Respondents also interpreted empowerment in various ways, taking into account their own socio-cultural contexts. Broadly speaking, empowerment for grassroots women allows economic independence, political participation, community organising and solidarity-building, individual agency or self-transformation, family transformation, and social transformation.

 Oral, two-way, face-to-face communication was considered the best way to empower women by respondents in all the five countries. "Tools that create interaction, participation, reflection, and dialogue were considered most empowering. Oral communications [which take place in meetings and trainings] is still most empowering because of [its] immediacy, dialogue and direct interaction," according to the over 600-pages book.

Isis board member, Leticia Ramos-Shahani considers PC4D as a material which can inform policy-making and project initiatives around ICTs. "What the book shows is very humbling. Grassroots women still come from the *bukid* (rural community)."

"The introduction of ICT is based on the notion that it will lead to empowerment and development for all. By determining the most effective communication tools used by intermediary groups to reach grassroots women, we are interrogating this ICT-centred development framework."

The book also provides recommendations on four areas: Gender and development paradigms and communication policy directions; the politics of traditional communication tools, state interventions, and donor programmes for grassroots women; social movements, feminist networks, intermediate groups, and communication strategies; and traditional communication tools and new ICTs as shaping and reflecting everyday life.

"Current communication policy directions in the developing South are clearly based on the neo-liberal model of development where "modernisation" is perceived as the key to poverty alleviation and the uplifting of poor peoples' quality of life. It is imperative therefore to look at new ICT policies in particular and communication policies in general within alternative modes of development," the publication asserts. By focusing mainly on

new ICTs and neglecting traditional communication tools such as radio, development programs might actually widen the digital and information divide instead of closing it.

On March 11, the book and campaign was launched in Fiji also and the function attended by women from the communities, non-government organisations, and international organisations. Similar events will be organised in Bangalore, India and Bangkok, Thailand.

[PC4D is available at Isis International for US\$35 inclusive of mailing fees. To order, please contact Elvira Colobong at elvie@isiswomen.org]

From the Pacific:

**Generation Next - A New Vision for a Peaceful Tomorrow:
Young Women in Fiji producing their own content**

With Community News and Interviews, Community People and Profiles femLINKPACIFIC's Generation Next Team is back on air with our weekend broadcasts "Sharing a New Vision for a Peaceful Tomorrow" in partnership with the Lami Town Council.

That's right listeners in Suva switch on to the 'suitcase radio' femTALK 89.2FM in the greater Suva area from 8am to 6pm on Saturday and Sunday. Young women in Fiji continue to have an opportunity to define and produce community radio programmes that reflect their issues, and the issues of their communities through our Generation Next project, that is helping create a cadre of community radio broadcasters in Fiji.



The Generation Next project builds on femLINKPACIFIC's ongoing commitment to the development of young women as producers of their own media content.



Above: Alesi Siga (Sulueti's mum) and Mere Ilisoni of Ba HART community participate in the October Community Media Exchange in partnership with FSPI community participate in the October Community Media Exchange in partnership with FSPI

It is also about investing in the next generation of women and peace advocates: "In May 2004 when femLINKPACIFIC first launched our suitcase radio station, femTALK 89.2FM a group of St Joseph's Secondary School students were the first hosts of our the monthly radio broadcasts and one of the young women, Narisha Karan continued to participate in the project. Several of the young women who attended our training programmes since then are now core members of the broadcast team. They continue to lead and direct this project as well as use the radio station as a platform for their own advocacy. Veena Singh, who has been a long time child rights advocate is our link to Save the Children Fiji; Ana Rakacikaci who joined the training on behalf of the Catholic Women's League is now stepping up to take on the role of our rural correspondent for the Central and Eastern Division while the representatives of the women's committee of the Fiji Disabled People's Association are developing and producing their own programmes about their issues. Our team leader for the past year, Eta Rabuatoka will be closely working to understudy the national community radio operations and also assist in our regional expansion plans. So this project is certainly about investment in the next generation," said femLINKPACIFIC Coordinator Sharon Bhagwan Rolls.

For new volunteer, Sulueti Waqa, a 2nd year university student who hails from Ba, the Generation Next project will be an opportunity to talk about the issues her family and others like her face in

Ba, especially her priorities – the high cost of living and education, “this is what people like my family are facing in Ba HART,” she said.

The Generation Next project has received support from the International Women’s Development Agency in 2006.

[Source of image, photo and text: femTALK ENews: Bulletin 1/2008; www.femlinkpacific.org.fj. Sharon can be contacted at sharon@femlinkpacific.org.fj]

About AMARC WIN

The Women’s International Network is a large assembly of women’s communicators working to ensure women’s Right to communicate through and within the community radio movement.

WIN’s main principles

- ❖ WIN works for women’s Right to communicate as a basic human right expressed through community radio.
- ❖ WIN supports women’s empowerment, gender equity, and a general improvement in the condition and position of women worldwide.
- ❖ WIN promotes women’s access to all levels of community radio, including decision making.
- ❖ WIN supports women’s efforts to express themselves within and beyond their communities, by providing training programs and production exchanges at the international and local level.
- ❖ WIN aims to change negative images of both women and men in the media and to challenge stereotypes being reproduced by media all around the world.
- ❖ WIN subscribe to the principles of the Beijing Platform for Action.

How does WIN work?

WIN chooses a Vice President for Women to sit on AMARC’s International Board, and WIN members are prominent in decision-making throughout AMARC.

For the latest activities of AMARC WIN, please visit <http://win.amarc.org/> or contact Ms. Bianca Miglioretto, WIN Vice President for Asia Pacific, email: bianca@isiswomen.org

You can also join the email list of WIN Asia Pacific by sending a request to suman@wlink.com.np. Please write ‘request to join AMARC WIN Asia Pacific elist’ in the subject.