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India Special: Airwaves Open for Community Radios in India

On November 16, 2006, the Government of India (GOI), by way of a cabinet decision has legitimized community radio in the country, allowing civil society organizations, NGOs, and other non profit organizations, to apply for community radio licenses. India is the first country in South Asia to have a separate policy for community radio.



This cabinet notification came 11 and half years after the Supreme Court of India's landmark judgment which declared that airwaves are public property. Since then initiatives, especially from rural India, demonstrated the need for voices of the excluded to move to the centre.

*In the following interview **Sajan Venniyoor**, community radio activist from India explains the nuts and bolts of the decision by the Government of India and provides glimpses of what we should be looking forward to:*

- 1. We all have been euphoric to hear about the opening of airwaves for community Radio (CR) in India. The statement that came from India has been distributed worldwide. Now we need to know the details of what we have got and what more do we expect? Can you please brief us on that?**

Sajan: The government has been somewhat coy about disclosing the details of the new community radio policy. The Union Cabinet approved the policy on 16 November, but perhaps they have asked for some changes to be incorporated into the draft policy. From what we have read in the official press release, and from informal discussions with the Broadcasting Ministry officials, the policy seems to be a radical departure from what's been permitted so far and more in sync with the Supreme Court of India's judgment of 1995, which declared that airwaves are public property, to be used for the public good.

For instance, the new policy actually opens up community radio ownership to communities. Four years ago, when the government released its so-called 'Community Radio Guidelines,' they had restricted the ownership of 'community radio' to educational institutions. Under the present policy, civil society and voluntary organizations, registered societies and similar 'legal entities' can apply for a community radio license. There is no license fee for community radio, and CR stations will be permitted to broadcast a limited amount of advertisements (5 minutes per hour of programming).

Unfortunately, news & current affairs programming is banned on private radio in India, although community radio will be allowed to 'disseminate information' about a variety of local issues.

A community radio station can cover about 10 kilometers radius with a transmitter output of 100 watts, though more transmitting power is permitted in special cases.

Other than the unjustified ban on news, the new policy is a fairly liberal one, and something we can live with.

2. Please tell us how the process will move from here onwards. What are the administrative/governmental/parliamentary processes that need to be followed before the first license will be issued? When do you expect the licenses will be issued?

Sajan: The community radio policy is not a law – it is an executive decision within the framework of existing broadcast laws. Administratively, the government now has to finalize the licensing process - the terms & conditions, and procedures. Since a number of clearances have to be obtained from various ministries in a time-bound manner, a fair number of administrative mechanisms will have to be put in place quickly across several government departments.

It is hard to say exactly how long this would take, but even if applications for CR stations are invited tomorrow, a six-month timeframe has been given for various clearances and permits. So, by an optimistic estimate, it will be mid-2007 before we see the first, real community radio stations going on air.

3. Who will issue the license? Who will regulate the CR? Is there an arrangement in place already?

Sajan: The question of who will issue the license is an interesting one. Technically, there is no such thing as a broadcast license in India. The nearest thing to that is the Wireless Operating License (WOL) issued by the Ministry of Communication, without which it is illegal to own or operate a radio transmitter. But to get a wireless license, you need to sign a Grant of Permission Agreement with the Information & Broadcasting Ministry, and that – in the popular imagination – is the broadcast license.

As to who will regulate the CR, there is a certain degree of ambiguity in this, too. Theoretically, the Broadcast Regulator is the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI), which is a pretty substantial agency as far as spectrum issues are concerned. But they are quite clueless about issues of content, which is traditionally the Information & Broadcasting Ministry's turf. Now, broadcasting is a federal subject in India, and these regulators don't have any regional presence to speak of, so it is my guess that they will depend quite heavily on the local civil administration for day-to-day monitoring of community radio stations.

4. Has the government given everything that you and other activists had demanded for? Are there any restrictions imposed in terms of frequency allocation, programming, etc., and if yes, how are going to respond?

Sajan: The government has, to its credit, given us most of the things we have asked for. They have opened up radio to community groups and civil society organizations, waived the license fee, reduced the bank guarantee, allowed advertisements on CR and – reportedly – increased the number of FM frequencies set aside for community radio. On the other hand, news is still banned on community radio, and that's a major blow.

Along with permission to broadcast news, we have several other things on our wish-list. For instance, transmitter power has generally been restricted to 100 watts for community radio. We could make a strong case for higher power for CR stations, especially when commercial FM players are allowed up to 50 kilowatts output. Under the new policy, an applicant organization gets only a single CR license, regardless of how wide-spread its

operations are. The issue of multiple licenses is something we could look at again, though it has its pros and cons.

The important thing to remember is that media reform is an ongoing process, and I'm sure that the ban on news will be lifted fairly soon, and the other issues will be addressed over a period of time.

5. How many applications do you expect for licenses in the first year? What are the criteria for being eligible for applying for a CR broadcast license?

Sajan: Oddly enough, the community radio movement is rather more conservative in its estimates than the government, which seems to be boundlessly optimistic about the potential of community radio. For instance, the government says there is room for 4000 or more community radio stations in India, and that they would like to see a couple of thousand CR stations coming up in the next two years.

To put things in perspective, it took All India Radio about 70 years to set up 222 radio stations, and the commercial FM operators – who have been on the job since the year 2000 – won't hit the 200 station mark before mid-2007. So, I think it is somewhat unrealistic to expect community radio stations to multiply like bunny rabbits. Given that there are hardly a dozen established community audio projects in India at present, we'd be lucky to have 200 applications in the first year, and perfectly content to have at least a hundred viable CR applications to start with. But this is a country of a billion people, with over 600,000 villages, and I think we could all be pleasantly surprised to discover how great a demand there is for community radio.

6. What lies ahead for you and other champions of CR in India? What do you want accomplish next?

Sajan: The fight for community radio was just one battle in the long struggle for freedom of expression. Media reform, as I said, is an ongoing process. The right to broadcast news is obviously the next thing on our agenda. Then we need to look at community television. Terrestrial television continues to be a monopoly of the State, and that's something we need to challenge. There are moves afoot to regulate – if not censor – internet broadcasting, and we'll certainly keep a wary eye on that. There is a Broadcast Bill being debated right now that raises a number of issues of concern to us, and of course the whole issue of digital broadcasting and convergence will - sooner rather than later - be a matter of lively interest for all broadcasters.

But the important thing right now is to spread awareness about community radio across the country, encourage community groups to apply for CR licenses, and train them in the basic skills needed to operate radio stations. That, in itself, is a stupendous task.

7. Finally, how can the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC) be of help?

Sajan: India is a latecomer to community broadcasting, while the collective experience of AMARC members would go back many decades. This is an invaluable pool of knowledge and skills that we can draw from. For instance, we are presently engaged in drawing up guidelines – or a Code of Conduct – for community radio stations, and we will naturally look to AMARC for appropriate models. AMARC members could also help our

soon-to-be-launched CR stations in areas like production skills, station management, fund raising and equipment maintenance.

But I think AMARC also has to play a larger role at the policy level, in the development of community radio in South Asia. India has had a long - but perhaps informal - engagement with community radio movements across Asia, and we have fruitfully leveraged on each other's successes. For instance, Nepal's impressive decade-long achievements in community radio - despite real concerns about national security - proved an unassailable argument for opening up the airwaves in India, which has similar security concerns. Now India's community radio policy could serve as an exemplar for CR movements in other South Asian countries, where governments could be induced to better the Indian model. National pride is always a useful lever!

We are fortunate that Ashish Sen, a long time community broadcaster and activist from India, now heads AMARC Asia Pacific, and we expect a greater and more formal engagement with other community radio movements in the SAARC countries under his leadership.

(Sajan Venniyoor is the Resource Person for the ICT for Development Community, Solution Exchange (UN initiative in India). For among the community radio enthusiasts he is a broadcaster and a fellow community radio activist. He can be reached at: venniyoor@gmail.com)

Statement: AMARC Welcomes the GOI decision:

AMARC welcomes the decision by the government of India legitimizing community radio in the country. Today, 16th November 2006, a cabinet decision was released, allowing civil society organizations, NGOs, and other non profit organizations, to apply for community radio licenses. It will also allow them to become self supporting through limited advertising revenue. India is the first country in South Asia to have a separate policy for community radio.

This cabinet notification comes 11 and half years after the Supreme Court of India's landmark judgment which declared that airwaves are public property. Since then initiatives, especially from rural India, demonstrated the need for voices of the excluded to move to the centre.

November 16th 2006, is not only a historic day for these communities but for all of the country who are committed to media democratization and the realization of a three tiered media structure- public, private and community; based on principles of equity and inclusiveness. During the 11 and half years of struggle the community radio movement witnessed several ups and downs before the November 16th endorsement by the government. In 2004, the ministry of Information and Broadcasting initiated a consultative process to determine an enabling environment for community radio in the country. Through this process, a consensus document was ratified and taken up by the Information and Broadcast (I & B) ministry. But many more hurdles remained to be crossed before the reality of community radio was to find tangible expression. A consultative parliamentary committee was set up to confront the issue. Subsequently a group of ministers was set up to take the issue forward. More than a year passed since their appointment leading many to believe that community radio would always be a case of so near and yet so far. But ultimately there was light at the end of the tunnel.

The light was amplified by community groups of the poor like Kutch Mahila Vikas Sanghatan, Namma Dhvani (KMVS), VOICES, Deccan Development Society, and others who used narrowcasting, cable radio and buying time from All India Radio to ensure that voices of the poor were not overwhelmed by the sound of silence. It is their voices that are the true inheritors of community radio in the country today.

Underlying their efforts were networking, lobbying and advocacy initiatives that emerged - albeit late in the day. Collaborations with academia and other social movements strengthened and reinforced the relevance of community radio. Voice was acknowledged as a critical ingredient in poverty eradication. The question is "Who's voice?"

Ultimately Gandhiji's wisdom that radio is 'shakthi' seems to have prevailed. India needs to now strengthen the Mahatma's vision that the excluded take their due place in the country's guidance through the power and force of community radio wave.

(This statement is issued by Ashish Sen, President of Asia Pacific, AMARC at the Amarc 9 World Conference of Community Radio Broadcasters General Assembly, 11-17 November 2006. For more information contact voices@vsnl.com)

Join AMARC

Become a member NOW!

You can become a member of AMARC if you are one of the following:

- 1. Community Radio Station**
- 2. Federations and Associations of Community Radio Stations**
- 3. Production Group**
- 4. Groups working towards the establishment of a community radio station.**
- 5. Individual supporting community radio**
- 6. Community develop association**
- 7. Groups or organizations supporting community radios**

For application form, please visit: <http://amdb.amarc.org/membershipform.php>

AMARC9 Special: 9th World Congress Helps AMARC Plan for the Future



By Nick Fillmore

AMARC 9 – the Congress of the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters held in Amman, Jordan earlier this month – made a very important contribution to the development of community radio around the globe, as well as advance the organization’s goals and objectives. Participants returned to their home countries with new knowledge and insight into how to make community radio more effective.

“The conference has provided a very rich forum for knowledge sharing in the plenary and workshop sessions,” said Steve Buckley, who was re-elected as AMARC president. “We concluded the first phase of an extensive review of the state of community radio, its impact and AMARC’s effectiveness, and have achieved a broad consensus on AMARC’s priorities for the period ahead. It will be important to complete the documentation of this as comprehensively as possible in order to contribute to the body of knowledge about community radio and the current state of play.”

More than 300 broadcasters and radio advocates from a record-number 94 countries took part in the week-long conference and training program, “Voices of the World – Free the Airwaves”, held in Amman from 11-17 November, 2006. Thirty-one donors and sponsors provided funding for the conference.

The organization agreed on a strategic plan and budget for 2007-2010. Five main development areas were identified. The goals are:

- **Advocacy and policy research:** to achieve improvement in the policy, legal and regulatory environment for community media, and for the right to communicate;
- **Knowledge sharing and capacity building:** to strengthen the sustainability, effectiveness and relevance of community media, and to increase the appropriation of community media by excluded and marginalized communities to better identify, discuss, articulate and voice their development concerns;
- **Content exchange and social action campaigns:** to amplify the voices of the excluded and marginalized on key issues in sustainable democratic development, and to strengthen south- centered perspectives;
- **Gender equality and women’s rights:** To promote women’s voices and rights, to combat gender-based discrimination, and to strengthen women’s participation in community media at all levels; and
- **Network development and communication:** To strengthen AMARC’s structure and functioning, to strengthen country, regional and international networking and communication within the community media sector, and to strengthen alliances between community media and other networks and social movements.

Chapter Established in Middle East-North Africa:

The decision of AMARC to hold its Congress in the Middle East – North Africa region proved to be an excellent opportunity for community broadcasters in the region as they

launched their own independent chapter in AMARC. An AMARC MENA working group was created, and AmmanNet – Jordan’s Internet radio station – agreed to serve as a temporary headquarters for the new regional initiative. More than 60 media and civil society activists from 10 countries in the region took part in the conference. For many of them, it was their first-ever opportunity to learn about how community radio is used to promote poverty reduction and to empower citizens.

“AMARC 9 was a real shot in the arm for our community radio activists,” said Daoud Kuttab, conference chairman and head of AmmanNet. “It provided those of us in this community based media efforts a unique opportunity to meet people from all over the world who are dedicated community radio practitioners. Jordan and the Arab region have received a huge exposure to this important media sector. This introduction was done at all levels, government, media as well as media and development activists.”

Jordan is the first country in the MENA region to embrace community radio. Development groups, including the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and UNESCO, have helped establish the first small, community-oriented radio stations in rural areas in the country. The day after the conference ended, another organization announced it would establish an all-women’s radio station in the Jordan Valley.

Africa Section Plans a Restructuring:

The African regional meetings endorsed a strategy for restructuring AMARC’s network in Africa with a focal point in Nairobi. Plans were also discussed for an African regional assembly to be held in the near term.

The European region has elected a new regional board and confirmed the establishment of a secretariat in Rome. AMARC’s Latin American regions, the first established in the history of AMARC, also held meetings at AMARC 9, and heard about ongoing advocacy and campaigning work to legalize community radio in some countries in the region.

The year-old Asia-Pacific region of AMARC held four organizing meetings in Amman. Concerns were expressed about the lack of free expression in the region and the unwillingness of several countries to recognize the importance of community radio. The region decide there was a need for a fact-finding mission to visit the region to investigate the restrictions on community radio and, in particular, look into the role of the military in repressing free expression/radio in the Philippines and Thailand.

A loud cheer and clapping reverberated through the conference hall when it was learned on the final day of meetings that, after 11 years of struggle, the government of India would finally legalize community radio. Civil society groups, NGOs and other non-profits will be able to apply for community radio licenses.

Research Shows Women Hold Fewer Posts

One full day at the Amman conference, as well as workshops, were devoted to advancing the cause and skills of women in community broadcasting. A survey carried out among several community radio stations in the Asia-Pacific region revealed that, while women represented about one-half of the people taking part in all aspects of community radio, only about 30 per cent of women were in leadership positions. “AMARC 9 was a reality check for media activists -- women and men,” said Mavic Cabrera-Balleza, head of WIN, AMARC’s women’s network. “It made us realize that some of the discrimination and stereotyping which women are subjected to in the

mainstream and corporate media also happen in community radio.” She said women broadcasters need to work harder to organize themselves so they can overcome all forms of discrimination.

The congress elected an International Board of Directors that includes:

1. Steve Buckley, President,
2. Aleida Calleja as deputy president
3. Elizabeth Robinson, treasurer
4. Marcelo Solervicens, Secretary General
5. Maria Victoria Cabrera Balleza, Vice President of the Women International Network,
6. Maria Pia Matta, Vice President for Latin America & the Caribbean
7. Ashish Sen, Vice President of AMARC Asia Pacific
8. Grace Githaiga, Vice President for Africa
9. Mariano Sanchez, Vice President for Europe
10. Daoud Kuttab, Vice President for Middle East-North Africa
11. Oumar Seck Ndiaye, Vice President
12. Sony Steuss, Vice President
13. Jim Ellinger, Vice President

The congress approved some 25 resolutions, one of them calling for the establishment of a task force of skilled technicians who could travel to assist partner radio stations when they were having serious technical problems. Others called for international solidarity with colleagues trying to work in extremely difficult situations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Chad, and the Philippines.

In the margins of AMARC 9 were important fringe events and self-organized workshops on topics including media freedom in Iraq, community radio and disaster relief and reconstruction, and the impact of digitalization. *November 24, 2006*

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Asia-Pacific Participants in AMARC9: Key Activities Outlined

Around 40 community radio practitioners and activists from more than 15 countries participated in AMARC9 from the Asia Pacific region. Altogether there were 9 women and 21 men participants. In a series of regional meetings participants from Asia Pacific discussed some of the major issues regarding the development of community radio in the region. The following were outlined as the priority issues and activities:

1. To commemorate 100 years of broadcast:
 - Celebrating and pushing for greater space for community radio
 - Campaign for “Free the Airwaves”
2. To organize public hearings (to be understood as a government- citizenry interface) on community radio in various countries of Asia Pacific as part of a free media campaign by:
 - Organising country specific events
 - Opening up dialogue with regulatory bodies as part of lobbying exercise and making public officials accountable
3. Identify cross cutting issues to outline program activities in the following areas:
 - Developing community radios for Disaster Management
 - Addressing legislation related issues. The recent development in India to be used to push legislative reform in other parts of Asia-Pacific as well.
 - Publish a ‘Best Practices Manual’
4. To commemorate the 16 Days of Action against all Forms of Violence against Women (starting from November 25th onwards) by putting up programs related to gender inequality on the internet as an act of solidarity
5. To produce a community radio directory in collaboration
6. Represent community radio in ASEAN meeting in December in Cebu, Philippines. There will be parallel people’s activities where AMARC can make representation. ISIS will be doing a Podcast from ASEAN and AMARC activities to be coordinated with ISIS.

**How useful was AMARC9?
What do participants from Asia Pacific say?**

Sonia Randhawa, Centre for Independent Journalism, Malaysia:

AMARC 9 was the first time Malaysia sent a representative to an AMARC General Assembly. It was an opportunity to learn more about the developments in community radio internationally, the strategies and campaigns happening elsewhere in the world and also to network more closely with friends from the Asia-Pacific region. Given the situation in Southeast Asia, with an increasingly active, and repressive, military in the two democracies that have been leading the way in terms of freedom of expression, it has also been a vital opportunity to try and work out ways to help safeguard basic fundamental freedoms in this region.



Ade Tanesia, COMBINE, Indonesia: AMARC9 allowed me to get a better picture of women's in the Community Radio sector. Until this day, participation of women in Community Radio in Indonesia is very low. As a staff of an institution that provides training for the running of community radios, I would like to design training programs to encourage women's participation in community radio broadcasting, especially at the decision making level. In AMARC9, I was particularly interested in the workshop "Gender Evaluation Method." In my institution I work as a media manager and editor for my institution's magazine whose target audiences are the practitioners of community radio stations in Indonesia. AMARC9 has inspired me to highlight the role of women in community-based media, including radio broadcasting. I can present in my writings the cases of women radio stations from Afghanistan, Africa, and elsewhere so that these may, in turn, inspire community radio stations in Indonesia.

Ashish Sen, VOICES, India: Personally, the most striking aspect was the 'unity in diversity' that AMARC 9 displayed. Underlying the diversity, which manifested itself in different forms - legal, technological etc. was the common commitment to freedom of expression through community media. This had significant dividends. It enabled us to strengthen our solidarity through political commitment and strategic collaborations. It provided a common platform for cross country /cross regional learning and sharing. The Asia-Pacific region manifests a gallery of stark contrasts. While many countries in the region struggle to achieve Community Radio legitimacy, others grapple with consolidation, scale and media repression. At the same time, issues like disaster preparedness and management cut across the region. AMARC 9 demonstrated that by pooling our resources, we have the strength and the power to bridge these conflicts.



The government of India's approval of Community Radio, announced on November 16th, was the icing on the cake. By coinciding with AMARC 9, it reinforced Gandhiji's wisdom that he saw in radio, the power of "Shakti."



Shane Elson, Alternative Radio, Australia: There were two things that I found interesting and useful regarding AMARC 9. The first was learning about the diversity of Community Radio throughout the world and the incredibly diverse ways in which individuals and groups are dealing with the challenges of providing a voice for their communities, often in very difficult and sometimes dangerous conditions. The second

thing was the incredible passion people have to see their sector grow and develop in spite of the challenges they face. Combined, these two things are inspirational and incredibly humbling to someone from a nation that enjoys a stable and mature regulatory environment.

Gwendolyn Longid, Sagada Community Radio, Philippines:

AMARC9 provided us opportunity to reach out to other Community Radio and human rights advocates at a global scale. We were able to generate support for our struggle, especially since the conference adopted a resolution condemning and demanding immediate investigation and justice for the staff of Radyo Cagayano and the brutal slaying of Joey Javier.



AMARC9 provided us inspiration to continue our work for free media amidst a climate of political killings. We look forward to working with AMARC member organizations at an international level for recognition of community radio and advocacies in terms of grass root development and justice and peace issues.



Ramnath Bhat, Nammadhwani, India: The most interesting and useful experience in AMARC 9 was to get an opportunity to interact personally with a variety of Community Radio practitioners from all over the world, from Haiti to Papa New Guinea to Texas. At one level, they gave me so many new insights in to community radio, but on the other hand, I felt encouraged to carry on the work of community radio as I saw that most of the underlying problems affecting community radio are similar, even today. These are concerned mainly with freedom of speech and expression. It's a great feeling to belong to a community who shares the same struggles across the world.

AMARC 9 has helped my work with Community Radio in my country in terms of advocacy and networking. Through interacting closely with AMARC members, I have been able to gain some valuable lessons in very practical aspects of community radio. I will definitely implement these lessons in my work and share these lessons with other community radio practitioners.

Niranjan Udumalagala, Community Radio Organization of Sri Lanka:

AMARC 9 was very useful because it helped me to better understand the world of community radio. I am very interested in the activities of South and West African regions as a lot is happening in that region regarding the development of Community Radio. I was delighted learn that the Government of India made way for Community Radio. I hope that this will encourage the Sri Lankan government to do the same too. AMARC9 provide a platform to share ideas and experiences.



Humaira Habib, Sadio Sahar, Afghanistan: As a female journalist from Afghanistan, I think the most important and interesting thing from AMARC9 for me were the series of regional meetings that we had. These meetings gave us the opportunity to learn from several countries of the Asia Pacific. We had very little information about their Community Radios until AMARC9. I was particularly inspired by the women's meeting held during AMARC9. It gave me the opportunity to network with other women

Community Radio activities from the region.

I think it's really important and useful for me and for women of my country that, for first time that we'll have communication with other women community radio workers from other parts of the world. It was inspiring to see the good work that women have been doing in this sector.

Tamara Agrabawe, Ammanet, Jordan: AMARC 9 gave us the chance to introduce the meaning of Community Radio to the MENA people. The people of this region are new in this movement but they are keen to create community radio stations in their countries and to continue their struggle to gain media freedom and freedom of expression. Amarc 9 gave a major push to those people and attracted them to join this movement and learn from other experienced people. In Jordan, the host country of AMARC9, we are excited by the decision to establish the MENA region and to station it, albeit temporarily, in Ammanet Radio. The next step is to expand AMARC's membership in the region, establish electronic groups, and lobby for greater space for Community Radio. AMARC9 has inspired dialogues between the officials, experienced journalists and youth about the importance of Community Radio and media reforms.



Syed Abid Rizvi, Taraqee Foundation, Pakistan: AMARC 9 gave me a forum to meet some 350 community radio professionals from almost 100 countries of the world. The conference discussed national as well as global community radio issues, especially those that concern regulatory and legislative issues. The most important aspect of the conference for me was setting up of the MENA region.

Now the echo of community radio is being heard in Middle East and North Africa. Jordan earned the pioneer-ship by opening the first ever community radio Amannet in whole of the Arab world and it is, surely, going to be a source of inspiration for my country Pakistan as well.

Geeta Malhotra, One World South Asia, India: AMARC9 was a unique experience. It was a very good platform for networking, sharing, learning and anchoring one voice globally. I wish to take this opportunity to congratulate the organizers on the successful event and also everyone who was present for their contributions.



Ahmed Swapan Mahmud, VOICE, Bangladesh: It was wonderful to meet many faces - old and new - in Amman during the AMARC9 conference. It was an excellent opportunity to articulate future actions and strategies. One of the most interesting aspects of the conference was the fact that organizers had been very successful in the total event management. The workshops, seminars, and parallel sessions were very effective. There were a number of distinguished speakers and listening to them was a learning experience.

AMARC9 helped me greatly in extending collaboration with partners to work together in the community radio sector. It helped to better understand the struggles and challenges faced by the activists of community radios around the world and specially the Asia Pacific region. I was inspired and humbled to see how fellow activists meet challenges and continue to work for the humanity and for creating a just world.

Dr. Uajit Virojtrairatt, CDMI, Thailand: AMARC9 presented to me an opportunity to meet and listen to people of similar ideology. To be able to connect with AMARC network and to strengthen the network for the benefit of the Community Radio movement in our respective countries was important for me. AMARC9 will be truly beneficial to Thailand only when we are able to translate the visions and ideas from the conference into actions at country levels.



We have discussed since AMARC8 that we need to have a greater flow of information among the member countries. There is the language barrier that we need to cross so that there is a free flow of information. In AMARC9, I was an organizational representative from Thailand. My organization, CDMI is interested in outputs & outcomes of work. We need people who are genuinely committed in the sector. I am interested to engage with AMARC at the regional level and to cooperate in organizing fact finding and advocacy missions, which are so much needed given our present conditions.



Raghu Mainali, Community Radio Support Center, Nepal: AMARC9 was a culmination of all that AMARC as a movement stands for. To me it was a pilgrimage. As a community radio activist AMARC9 reaffirmed, reenergized and reiterated my zeal and quest for community radio. It helped me to gain momentum for my work in Nepal as well as in the South Asia region. The source of my energy as well as inspiration is the exemplary works of fellow activists from the region. In AMARC9 I reconnected and reorganized to move in an even bigger way to gain even bigger results for the development of community radio in the region.

AHM Bazlur Rahman, BNNRC, Bangladesh: I personally have benefited in manifold from the event. I got a diversified exposure to Community Radio and ICT centered development approaches. It was sort of a get together of all the AMARC members. So, it helped me to eye the various practices from a different angle. Now I understand more clearly the technique and importance of integrating ICT in Community Radio with every development initiative.



My organization BNNRC is a specialized networking organization to deal with promotion of Community Radio and ICT enabled framework all over the country. Our vision and mission is to create an easy, low cost and widely available Community radio and ICT structure. My experience in participating the AMARC9, will also help my organization to reach its objectives easily. This event extended opportunities of new collaborations. Through sharing experiences, we enriched our knowledge base geometrically.

We will share the newly gathered viewpoints, knowledge and experiences among networking members and our office colleagues. Besides, being a network, we can also disseminate this newly acquired know how among our member organizations.

Mohan Bista, Radio Sagarmatha, Nepal: I was particularly interested in the various workshops in AMARC9, which I found to very relevant to us in Nepal. I also feel greatly inspired by meeting so many who have done exemplary work in different parts of the world in the Community Radio sector. AMARC9 provided the chance to understand the critical issues of the MENA region pertaining to the media rights and right of expression.



Finally, I wish to thank once again for awarding the Solidarity Award to Radio Sagarmatha.



Abdul Mujeeb Khalvatgar, Supporting Afghanistan Open Media, NAI, Afghanistan: In AMARC9, I was so impressed by presentations on community radio that they have changed my view about the concept of community. I was fascinated to learn about the power of community radio and the power it lends to the people. The issues that I learnt and the concepts that I got from AMARC9 are affecting and will continue to affect my work in radio.

After AMARC9, I am encouraged to say that the cutting of funds for independent media in Afghanistan can be solved by involving people and community in the media sector. I am confident to say that the people and the communities are the real owner of the media. Finally it was fantastic to be introduced to more than 300 Community Radio activists in Amman. Frankly speaking, participating in AMARC9 was like a term of University in the Masters level.

In the next issue of AMARC Asia Pacific newsletter:

- Updates from the region – Bangladesh, Nepal, Thailand, Philippines, etc.
- Publication reviews
- Community Radio links – useful links
- Community Radio calendar and more

For the latest from the community radio sector of Asia Pacific, please join the AMARC email list by following the link <http://lists.amarc.org/mailman/listinfo/asiapacific-general> OR just email to amarcap@wlink.com.np to have you subscribed to the list

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