



**- Newsletter -**

*Year 1 No. 1*

**In this issue:**

1. Jordan: "Ma'an's Voice" the first community radio outside Amman -p.2
2. Jordan: AmmanNet begins Experimental Transmission in Amman -p.2
3. Nepal: Join the Solidarity Campaign with radio stations in Nepal -p.3
4. Nepal page in AMARC website- p.3
5. Thailand: The government is the source of problems faced by community radio stations-p.3
6. Thailand: Community Radio-Regulation urged over closures- p.4
7. Philippines To Transform State Broadcasting System into Independent Public Broadcasting Service -p.5
8. Workshop on Advocacy for community radio in Indonesia- p.5
9. Fiji now has a new team of women-community radio broadcaster- p.6
10. AMARC WIN Takes Part in Women's Worlds Congress and WSIS Thematic Meeting on Gender and ICT- p.7
11. WIN 16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence -p.8
12. WIN participation in WSIS Summit, Tunisia 16-18 November -p.8
13. Jordan to host AMARC 9 -p.9
14. Join AMARC: Become a member now -p.9
15. AMARC sets up WSIS page on-line -p.10

**Features:**

16. Indonesia: "Radio Waves for You" by Shita Lakshmi -p.11
17. Nepal: "You can't see it, if you don't know it" by Jacob Thorsen -p.15
18. Malaysia: "Radiq Radio: Voicing out in Malaysia" by Sonia Randhawa -p.16
19. Useful Links -p.19

## "Ma'an's Voice" the first community radio outside Amman

By Tamara Aqrabawe

*Jordan, August 3, 2005.*

"Ma'an's Voice" radio will be launched at the beginning of 2006. It is considered to be the first community radio outside of Amman, and it is the result of a partnership between the governmental university "Al Hussein bin Talal" and the "British council" with the Audio Visual Commission's encouragement.

The new radio station aims to improve the capacity of Ma'an community in general and its youth in particular. It expects to reach and interact positively with the community's social, economic and cultural challenges through a democratic and participatory utilization of the media.

"The station will broadcast human rights programs, health, cultural and local community's activities, through cooperation with the university's students "Widiad Adas", the project manager said.

The university is setting up a studio and encouraging students to do audio work by way of presenting ideas and participating in programs as well as participating in the radio conversations in order to make use of their technical skills.

***For more information please write to Tamara at [tamaranet1@hotmail.com](mailto:tamaranet1@hotmail.com)***

## Jordan: AmmanNet begins Experimental Transmission in Amman

July 1, 2005.

AmmanNet, the Arab world's first Internet radio, began experimental terrestrial transmission of its FM frequency in the greater Amman municipal boundaries on June 29th.

Transmitting on 92.4 FM, AmmanNet is broadcasting in Arabic under the subheading "Voice of the Community." Imad Salsa, AmmanNet's music director who is supervising the technical work expects the three kilowatt station to be heard in every car and home in the capital.

Award winning journalist Daoud Kuttab, the station's founder and director says that AmmanNet Radio will provide general radio programming to all the citizens of Amman with special emphasis on the populated areas, especially in East Amman. "We will broadcast community service programming, sports (including live broadcasts of local teams), cultural programming as well as human interest features reflecting the diverse nature of the Jordanian capital and call in programs.

To ensure that the station reflects all the voices in the capital the former speaker of the parliament MP Saed Hael Srouf has agreed to head an advisory board for the radio station that will include Ammanis from various walks. The position of an ombudsman has also been created in order to investigate listeners' complaints. Media critique Sawsan Zaidah, the producer of Eye on the Media has been asked to fill this position.

According to Kuttab, the station will be different from the many (mostly entertainment) FM radio stations that have filled the radio dial in the capital "We intend to be the station for the majority of the capital's citizens who have been largely ignored in the new private radio explosion of stations. We hope to broadcast the authentic sounds and voices of the every day Jordanians living in Amman."

A morning show "talet soboh" and an afternoon daily roundup program will be added to the many programs already available on line. All of AmmanNet's successful internet programs ([www.ammannet.net](http://www.ammannet.net)) will be available to FM listeners. Programs such as "Eye on the Media, IT in Arabic, Rua Baralmania (parliamentary views), book corner, Nashmiat (women's program) sports net, school radio, Haqi (legal awareness program) and the popular diary of a refugees will all be available on the new FM broadcast. AmmanNet will also attempt to broadcast live sessions of the Jordanian parliament and the monthly city council meeting.

With its studios in Wadi Saqra, the station is linked to a transmitter located in the elevated Rabia neighborhood. AmmanNet radio is the seventh private radio station to go on air in Jordan following the liberalization of the audiovisual laws. AmmanNet Radio is part of the AmmanNet establishment that was established in 2000 with initial support from UNESCO, and the Greater Amman municipality. AmmanNet is involved in a number of independent media programs that receive funding from the Open Society Institute, IMS (Denmark) the European Union, the US Consulate, the Netherlands Embassy, IREX, and the National Endowment for Democracy.

For more information, please contact: [info@ammannet.net](mailto:info@ammannet.net).

### **Join the Solidarity Campaign with radio stations in Nepal**

*August 3, 2005.*

The World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC) has launched a solidarity campaign in favour of freedom of expression and the right to communicate of the FM and community radios in Nepal. AMARC is encouraging community radio stations and their partners worldwide to write and send letters to the government of Nepal asking it to lift the ban orders that prohibit FM and community radios to broadcast news and current affairs.

The current situation of FM and Community radio stations in Nepal is an example of the fragility of freedom of expression and communication rights in many parts of the world. It is very important for the world community radio movement to join efforts in this type of situations and to raise awareness among governments, such as the Nepalese government, about the work and value of FM and Community Radio stations.

**To contribute to this campaign, please visit:**

[http://wiki.amarc.org/?topic=campaign\\_support\\_radios\\_in\\_nepal&lang=EN&style=asiapacific](http://wiki.amarc.org/?topic=campaign_support_radios_in_nepal&lang=EN&style=asiapacific)

### **Nepal page in AMARC website**

*As part of its support to the community radio movement in Nepal AMARC has started a page in its website dedicated entirely to Nepal. For the latest information from Nepal, please visit:*  
<http://nepal.asiapacific.amarc.org/site.php>

### **Government: Source of all problems faced by community radios in Thailand**

*Bangkok, May 31, 2005.*

The government is the source of problems faced by community radio stations, claims the Civil Media Development Institute (CMDI), an NGO.

In a statement handed to PM's Office Minister Suranand Vejjajiva yesterday, CMDI Chair, Dr. Uajit Virojtrairat said community radio stations were facing problems resulting from delays in the formation of relevant independent organisations, completion of a radio and

television broadcasting act, and lack of cooperation from state agencies concerned.

She urged Mr Suranand to organise forums to let community radio operators, academics and officials concerned help define community radio in line with the constitution. But Mr Suranand said CDML itself should help organise such forums.

**Source: Bangkok Post ([www.bangkokpost.com](http://www.bangkokpost.com))**

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Thailand: Regulation for community radio urged over closures</b> <i>-- Independent watchdog needed to end interference, say activists --</i></p>
--

*May 23, 2005.*

A media activist group yesterday called on the government to set up an independent committee to regulate community radio stations instead of shutting them down.

The Campaign for Media Reform, a leading activist group, said an independent committee should be set up pending the appointment of the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC).

The Public Relations Department (PRD) on Friday gave more than 2,000 community radio stations throughout the country until May 26 to lower their broadcast power or be shut down.

Ubonrat Siriyuwasa, chairwoman of the Campaign for Media Reform, said the government should adhere to the principles of the Constitution, which guaranteed media freedom, in handling the problem related to community radio.

She said the current national master plan on telecom and media development stated that 20 percent of broadcasting frequencies should be used for community radio services, so the government should take the plan into account when regulating the community stations.

Dussadi Sinjirmsiri, director-general of the PRD, said on Friday that the department would also use the Broadcast Act to close down stations, which aired programmes that contained libellous material, contained no substance, failed to play the national anthem, offered no news, or operated without a licence.

Critics believed the crackdown was intended to get rid of stations critical of government.

Supinya Klangnarong, secretary-general of the Campaign for Media Reform, said the problem of community radio stations interfering with frequencies used for air traffic communication could be solved by technical means.

“The problem should not be solved through shutting down the stations and the government has no power to shut down the stations, which are allowed to operate by the Constitution,” Supinya said.

She said that until the Senate appointed the NBC, the government should set up an independent committee to solve the technical problems of community radio stations.

*Source: Campaign for Popular Media Reform (CPMR) [www.popmedia.in.th](http://www.popmedia.in.th)*

## Philippines to transform state broadcasting system into independent public broadcasting service

*21-03-2005 (UNESCO)*

The quest for a Public Service Broadcasting (PSB) in the Philippines may soon be realized. A multisectoral group met 10 March 2005 at SEAMEO-INNOTECH in Quezon City to plan out strategies in the setting up of the PSB.

The group's interest was buoyed up by the commitment of the Secretary for Government Mass Media Group Cerge Remonde that the core of the envisioned PSB will come from government media networks, which include the National Broadcasting Network (NBN) and Philippine Broadcasting Service.

"For over four decades, we have been advocating for an alternative broadcast channel to complement the commercially-dominated Philippine broadcast media," said Florangel Rosario-Braid, convenor of the multisectoral forum and chairperson of the UNESCO National Commission of the Philippines Communication Committee.

According to Ms. Braid, past initiatives did not succeed because of the lack of political will by national government to give up government media, uncoordinated advocacy efforts, low priority given by the legislature, and absence of a feasibility study.

Preciosa S. Soliven, Secretary General of the UNESCO National Commission of the Philippines assured the 50 forum participants that UNACOM and the UNESCO Secretariat have committed to give modest funds to support preparatory activities including the conduct of a feasibility study, public information and legislative advocacy, and production of program prototypes.

UNESCO is in the forefront of promoting and strengthening PSB systems worldwide. UNICEF Philippines also supports the initiative.

**For detail, please visit:** <http://asiapacific.amarc.org/page.php?action=shownews&id=420>

## Advocacy for community radio in Indonesia

*Indonesia, July 3, 2005.*

An advocacy workshop for Community Radio in Indonesia was held in Yogyakarta, from July 1-2, 2005. It was participated by the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC) and members of Indonesian Community Radio Network (JRKI). Members of Indonesian Broadcasting Commission, national and region-based, also attended the workshop. Other supporting institutions, such as COMBINE, TIFA Foundation, MPPI, USC Satunama and NGO's activists also joined the workshop.

The main objective of the workshop was to look upon the role and the progress of community radio in Indonesia in disseminating and empowering people through information, as mandated in the article of 28F, basic law and in the law of broadcasting.

In Indonesia the number of community radios are estimated to be around 500 and they serve as alternative solution to fulfill the need and access of information for the people; specially those who are not covered by commercial radio.

Following are some of the key Recommendations given by the workshop:

1. It is necessary to strengthen the community radio sector, especially in improving the understanding of the managers, initiators, as well as of external parties such as KPI,

government, and the communities themselves regarding the principle and paradigm of community radio. This will increase their involvement in the community radio. Specifically, the improvement needs are précised below:

- Strengthening of the managers in understanding of the principles, management, and broadcasting production;
  - Strengthening of the community in socializing the understanding of the paradigm of community radio and the methods of their involvement in community broadcasting;
  - National and local JRK will facilitate this process, to the community radios, their communities, as well as stakeholders such as government (central and local);
  - Certain parties in civil society such as broadcasting activist, NGO, universities are expected to support this strengthening process. As an international community radio organization, AMARC is expected to contribute this process through providing links to any possible resources and networks.
2. There is a need to clarify who has authorization to manage broadcasting program in Indonesia, including the authorization in providing permission and the use of frequency. Therefore, JRKI and regional JRK together with other civil society elements will conduct an advocacy to clarify this authorization;
  3. The procedures and requirements to apply for broadcasting permission (including the use of frequency) for the community broadcasting need to be simplified. In this regard, JRKI will push KPI to postpone legalization schedule of the decree of KPI on this issue, and to ask for further discussion with other stakeholder (JRKI and civil society elements);
  4. It is necessary to have a flexible and fair frequency allocation. JRKI proposed a minimum of 20 percent of frequency allocations, which should be allocated under the agreement between Local Broadcasting Commission (Local KPI) and other local broadcasting stakeholder based on geographical and socio-cultural situation of each region.
  5. Because community radios are based in communities and are non-commercial radio, it is logical to allow them the use the frequency (BPHF) for free and to propose that the income gained from BPHF to be returned to the community radio institutions as social responsibility of the broadcasting toward empowerment of the people and nation.

**For further detail, please visit:**

<http://asiapacific.amarc.org/page.php?action=shownews&id=397>

<b>Fiji now has a new team of women-community radio broadcasters</b>
--

*Suva, Fiji Islands, June 27, 2005.*

Fiji now has a new team of community radio broadcasters following a joint training exercise conducted by femLINKpacific: Media Initiatives for Women, in conjunction with the two major women's networks in Fiji – the National Council of Women and the Soqosoqo Vakamarama I Taukei (the indigenous women's network). As Fiji Nursing Association representative, Litia Veitata said: "The workshop has brought together membership of the National Council of Women Fiji and the Soqosoqo Vakamarama for a practical community radio training initiative – in fact we started learning about our women's community radio initiative and how we can get involved from day 1 when we all got together and wrote and recorded our own stories. Participants have come from a range of backgrounds, professional and community based, we are young and older women and we had very little if any experience in radio," she added.

The participants represented the provinces of Macuata, Rewa, Namosi, Lau and Tailevu, and the women's groups such as the DORCAS Welfare Society, the Salvation Army, the Fiji YWCA, the Methodist Women's Fellowship, Virtues Project Fiji, the women's group of the Fiji Disabled People's Association, PPSEAWA Fiji Chapter and Catholic Women's League.

Twenty women, including young women under the age of 30, undertook the three day training which enabled them to not only understand the basic operations as well as the station philosophy of femTALK 89.2FM (the women's suitcase radio operated and managed by femLINKpacific) but also prepare for and participate in a local community broadcast on Saturday (25 June): "We have learnt about (a) what this community radio initiative is and how it can make a difference for us (b) explain why (c) explain some of the practical training that has helped," said Vilisi Veremalua.

The training was made possible with grants from the New Zealand High Commission and UNESCO.

***For more information, please contact: Sharon Bhagwan Rolls, Coordinator/Producer-Director fem'LINKpacific: Media Initiatives for Women; Email: [femlinkpac@connect.com.fj](mailto:femlinkpac@connect.com.fj)***

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>AMARC WIN Takes Part in Women's Worlds Congress and WSIS Thematic Meeting on Gender and ICT</b></p>
---

*June 25, 2005.*

Mavic Cabrera-Balleza, AMARC Vice President representing the Women's International Network joined some 2,000 women activists from around the world at the Women's Worlds Congress 2005 held in Seoul, Korea from June 19-24, 2005.

Cabrera-Balleza presented a critique of the Digital Solidarity Fund and spoke about the Community Media Fund that aims to support the upgrading of equipment and facilities of existing community radios and the establishment of new community radio services. The Community Media Fund was proposed by AMARC during the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) thematic meeting in November 2004 in Marrakech, Morocco. She also discussed the, E-Quality Fund for African Women and Innovation proposed by UNIFEM in collaboration with the WSIS Gender Caucus.

The Women's Worlds Congress 2005 addressed a broad range of issues including globalization, human rights, gender identity, sexuality, health, gender and religions, environment and agriculture, science and technology, media and information and communication technologies.

Cabrera-Balleza participated in various panel discussions and workshops on gender and the new information and communication technologies organized by the Asia-Pacific Women's Information Network Centre (APWINC).

The gender and ICT workshops and discussions covered several topics such as gender and ICT policies, Internet governance, the digital solidarity fund and other financing mechanisms in the Information Society, gender and ICT statistics and indicators, and e-governance.

On June 24 and 25, the gender and ICT advocates met separately at Sookmyung Women's University for the Gender and ICT Forum for the World Summit on the Information Society organized by APWINC. The meeting, which was designated as an official thematic meeting for the second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society produced the Seoul-Gyeonggi Declaration. The declaration outlines the gender issues and recommendations in relation to Internet governance and financing mechanisms—the two themes of WSIS phase 2. It will be presented at the Third Preparatory Committee Meeting of the WSIS, which will take place in Geneva from September 19-30, 2005.

Cabrera-Balleza coordinated the drafting of the Seoul-Gyeonggi Declaration. Apart from AMARC-WIN, some of the other organizations and networks represented in the Korea meeting were the Association for Progressive Communications-Women's Networking Support Programme, International Information Centre and Archives for the Women's Movement, Indigenous Women's Network of Nepal, Japan Women's Watch, and WSIS Gender Caucus.

For the Seoul-Gyeonggi Declaration on the Equal Participation of Women in the Information Society and other information from Women's International Network, please visit: <http://win.amarc.org>

**WIN 16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence  
25 November – 10 December 2005**

The 16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence is an international campaign originating from the first Women's Global Leadership Institute sponsored by the Center for Women's Global Leadership in 1991. Participants chose the dates, November 25, International Day against Violence against Women and December 10, International Human Rights Day, in order to symbolically link violence against women and human rights and to emphasize that such violence is a violation of human rights. This 16-day period also highlights other significant dates including December 1, which is World AIDS Day, and December 6, which marks the Anniversary of the Montreal Massacre.

AMARC WIN will take part in this activism with regional radio programmes campaign. The 16-days of activism will be preceded by a five day objective training on issues relating to gender based violence or whatever this year's theme is, for Win members and selected Simbani correspondents in preparation for coverage of the November campaign.

A total of 16 programs on an array of topics related to the November activities will then be produced by the trained journalists, post-produced at Simbani before the Compact Discs (CDs) are distributed to all WIN member and AMARC stations for daily broadcasts throughout the 16 days of activism.

**WIN participation in WSIS Summit, Tunisia 16-18 November**

WIN will participate in the events and panel discussions to be organized by the WSIS Gender Caucus from 16-18 November in Tunisia 2005. The panel discussions will feature women globally on the topic of ICTs and gender, best practices and research findings. The contribution and input of women's networks into the WSIS Tunisia Plan of Action will also be compiled and presented at the Summit. Through its meeting discussions with members of the WSIS Gender Caucus in New York in March this year, WIN contributed that it will be able to partner with the Caucus in the coordination of its media and outreach initiatives at the Summit. This is yet to be agreed by all stakeholders and concretized.

*Please contact AMARC WIN representatives for more information:*

*Sharon Bhagwan Rolls, Pacific Representative ([femlinkpac@connect.com.fj](mailto:femlinkpac@connect.com.fj))*

*Manisha Aryal, South Asia Representative ([Manisha@mos.com.np](mailto:Manisha@mos.com.np))*

*Dr. Uajit Virojtrairatt, Southeast Asia Representative ([uajit\\_v@hotmail.com](mailto:uajit_v@hotmail.com))*



## Jordan to host AMARC 9

Montreal, July 6, 2005. AMARC, the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters, is pleased to announce that Jordan will be the host country for the Ninth World Assembly of Community Radio Broadcasters. AMARC 9 will be a weeklong event in the second half of 2006. It is expected to bring together 300-400 community broadcasters from over 100 countries and all regions of the world.

Steve Buckley, President of AMARC, said: "We are delighted to be taking our next world conference to Jordan, a country which has made significant steps in opening up the airwaves to include community radio. Despite the continuing reluctance of some Arab world governments to respect human rights and to allow for real pluralism in the media, we see growing interest in and potential for community media in both North Africa and the Middle East."

AMARC 9 is to be hosted by pioneering Internet and FM broadcaster AmmanNet in partnership with media and journalism groups in Jordan and Palestine and with the support of the local authority in Aqaba and the Jordanian Audio-Visual Commission who recently commenced licensing local and community radio services in Jordan.

Daoud Kuttab, founder of AmmanNet, enthusiastically welcomed the decision: "Holding an AMARC global conference in an Arab country will act as a major catalyst to strengthen the creation of a legal, political and legislative environment that can encourage and support community radio in a region in which governments have monopolised the airwaves for tens of years."

The decision follows an open selection procedure in which proposals were also considered from Ghana and Argentina. The International Board of AMARC expressed appreciation to Ghana Community Radio Network and to AMARC's Latin American and Caribbean section for also submitting proposals to host AMARC 9.

Source: [www.amarc.org](http://www.amarc.org)

## Join AMARC

*Become a member NOW!*

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

- Community Radio Station
- Federations and Associations of Community Radio Stations
- Production Group
- Groups working towards the establishment of a community radio station. I
- Individual supporting community radio
- Community develop association
- Groups or organisations supporting community radios

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

## **AMARC sets up WSIS page on-line**

**Montreal, July 27, 2005.**

Starting today, all AMARC members and the general public will be able to access updated information on the processes leading to the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) by visiting <http://wsis.amarc.org/EN.php>.

The World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) is a two-phase United Nations intergovernmental conference that aims at the creation of a framework for an all-inclusive and equitable Information Society. In order to achieve this goal, WSIS incorporates a global vision and a global dialogue, bringing together a variety of world stakeholders.

The WSIS Summit in Geneva, December 2003, was the outcome of the first phase of WSIS, which started in 2000. The Summit established the foundations of the Information Society, leading to a Declaration of Principles and a Plan of Action. Participating governments, however, did not fulfill all the expectations from the civil society organisations present, those this organisations issued a separate statement calling for an Information Society clearly based on Human Rights. The second phase deals with the issues of Internet governance, of financing "to bridge the digital divide", as well as on defining the implementation and follow-up process. This phase will end with a Summit in Tunis from 16 to 18 November 2005. Furthermore, civil society organisations have expressed deep concerns regarding the situation of freedom of expression in Tunis. Please see the Tunis monitoring Group report in <http://ifex.org>.

Community media recognition is an important factor in the development of a truly inclusive Information Society. AMARC is closely following WSIS and taking an active part in advocating for recognition of community media as new tiers of communication. Furthermore, AMARC is working with civil society partners, as well as those organized in the CRIS Campaign – Communications Rights in the Information Society -- for inclusion of the civil society agenda in the WSIS process. This agenda calls for a human rights approach to the Information Society and urges recognition of the existence of communication rights as the founding base of a truly democratic Information Society. Through participation in this global process, AMARC has been representing the interests of more than 3,000 community radio stations in over 110 countries.

**For more information go to [www.amarc.org](http://www.amarc.org)**

**Find the news about the worldwide community radio movement in the ObsMedia Web site at <http://www.obsmedia.amarc.org>**

## INDONESIA: RADIO WAVES FOR YOU

*By Shita Lakshmi*

On the small island of Saponda in East Indonesia, where electricity is on only from 6 p.m. to midnight and where there is no newspaper and very limited access to TV and radio programs, people yearn for information. To address this need, a group of fishermen, representing the island's 1040 residents, unanimously decided that community radio would be the way to go. That is why a group of radio volunteers got together in January 2005 to discuss how they would build a better community radio station.

Saponda Island, no wider than a tenth of Changi International Airport in Singapore, already had some basic equipment. The station had been airing for more than six months using an mp3 player, a transmitter, a microphone and an antenna. They do not use a computer because electricity is on for only six hours or even less each day. But the volunteers who met in January did not discuss equipment. They were more interested in the principle of community radio and what concrete actions they needed to take to ensure that their station would survive and prosper.



**Caption:** *Saponda Island is located in the offshore of Kendari city; the capital of Southeast Sulawesi. The island covers an area of 7.8 hectares with 240 family units, the majority of whom are fishermen.*

*Photo by Shita Lakshmi*

Discussing the content of radio programs, Handoyo, group leader of fishermen and a member of the community radio board, said people in Saponda are keen on listening to traditional poetry on radio. Kasmadi, the head of the elementary school in Saponda, however, said they need more. They needed educational programs on the air. "We only have four teachers in the elementary school and we need an alternative means to educate Saponda's children," he said<sup>1</sup>.

Kasmadi was correct. A survey of the island shows that Saponda has only one elementary school, a modest building in the middle of the island. It does not have a junior high school. If children want to study beyond the elementary level, they must sail to another island, which is difficult and time-consuming. Because of this, most adults in Saponda only manage to finish their elementary education. "The highest level of education is a high school diploma," says Syamsul, also known as Aco, an activist from the Bahari Foundation who has been helping Saponda over the last two years.

Aco says that in April 2004, Saponda residents were beginning to realize that they needed an alternative medium to disseminate news. There were no newspapers on the island and they could pick up only two national channels for television and three nearby radio stations. In April 2004, led by a group of fishermen, the residents met and decided that a community radio station would solve this problem, says Aco.

Saponda is a good example of what is happening all over Indonesia.

Community radio has arrived with a bang in Indonesia.

Defined as low power broadcasting and channel by the people, from the people, to the people and about the people, community radio began to flourish in early 2000 two years

---

<sup>1</sup> Based on the writer's observation and discussion with Saponda people in Saponda Island on January 11 – 12, 2005.

after Soeharto stepped down. During that year, the Indonesian Parliament began to recognize the importance of community radio and passed a new broadcasting law to replace the more restrictive one before it.

Combine Resources Institution, a nongovernmental organization, estimates that there are about 500 community radio stations throughout Indonesia.<sup>2</sup>

In West Java, for example, there are 48 radio stations under the West Java Community Radio Network --locally known as JRC Jawa Barat.<sup>3</sup> Another network, the Farmer Community Radio Network, lists 200 stations. Yurinda Hidayat, the farmer network leader, says these are figures for 2003 that still need to be updated.<sup>4</sup>

Increasingly, community radio stations are helping to resolve community problems.

Majalaya Sejahtera (Prosperous Majalaya) FM, located in Majalaya regency, 30 kilometers southeast of the West Java capital of Bandung, is one example. The radio station was established by the the Majalaya Sejahtera Community Forum, a group formed on October 21, 2000, as a venue for discussions among community members including village leaders, youth organizations, the military, pesantren (Islamic traditional boarding school) and even street food vendors. This forum helped identify problems among the groups.

In establishing its radio station, the forum concluded that community radio could be used as a strategic tool for disseminating information, education, and entertainment.<sup>5</sup>

In one instance, Mase FM helped resolve a conflict between the Indonesian National Electricity Company (PLN) and the village of Majalaya, where residents were using illegal connections that caused service disruptions. The radio station initiated a series of discussions between PLN and the community and pinpointed the problem.

"The community could not afford to pay for the 900-watt capacity per household but PLN was no longer producing below 900 watts because this was not profitable," says Deden Sunega<sup>6</sup>, studio manager of Mase FM.

Using community radio as an advocacy tool, Mase FM succeeded in getting PLN to accommodate the villagers with a 450-watt capacity. "PLN at last distributed 2,000 new capacities especially for that village," Deden says.

Although the problem was successfully resolved, Deden adds that Mase FM initially found it difficult to obtain updated information about the village. "Due to lack of resources, especially staff, it was a long shot for us to make both parties clearly understand the terms involved." Fortunately, Mase FM gained the commitment from both sides to resolve the problem, he says.

In December 18, 2004, the radio station played host to a community celebration marking the mass circumcision of 72 boys, a coming of age ritual in Indonesia. The celebration, organized in cooperation with the Al Maqsoem Foundation, brought together the entire community. Some brought food or volunteered their services; some performed West Java songs – a staple on Mase FM that commercial stations do not play.

The ceremony itself was aimed at helping community members who could not afford the traditional celebration after circumcision, Deden says.

---

<sup>2</sup> Combine Resources Institutions presentation in West Sumatera, December 4, 2004.

<sup>3</sup> Based on an interview with Gani Rahman, the leader of West Java Network, November 29, 2004 at SKEPO office, Bandung.

<sup>4</sup> Based on the writer's knowledge and confirmation via telephone with Yurinda Hidayat, January 2005

<sup>5</sup> Majalaya Sejahtera profile, 2004.

<sup>6</sup> Interview with Deden Sunega, studio manager of Mase FM, December 18, 2004 at the Mase FM studio.

“The expensive part of circumcision is actually the celebration. It is our culture that every circumcision has to be followed by some sort of festivity. That is why we decided to assist in organizing this ceremony, of course with participation from community members.” Deden says. “This is the advantage of having community radio.”



*Caption: One of the performances in Mase FM “Mass Circumcision’s Celebration”, held on December 18 2004 at the Mase FM yard.*

*Photo by Shita Laksmi*

In neighbouring Timor Leste — formerly East Timor, community radio is an instrument of peace and dialogue, says Reinaldo Borges, a manager of the Community Radio Center, who spoke at the AMARC (The World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters) regional conference.

Community airwaves have been used by Commission for Truth and Reconciliation to disseminate information about the program for peace and dialogue. At the same time, community radio can be used as a tool to encourage many refugees in Timor Leste to go back to their homes after the outbreak of violence in 1999. Many people are afraid of retaliation and not willing to go back, says Borges. They need information of what is happening in Timor Leste. “Two community radios in the border areas, one established by UNESCO and the other established under my project, were able to reach out to those refugees, taking advantage of the broadcast range that reached well into Indonesian territory.”<sup>7</sup>

### **No clear rules**

Despite the benefits that community radio brings, there are few clear-cut rules governing their operation. In Indonesia almost all community radio stations do not have a license though some obtain an endorsement from the regional government.

According to the Broadcasting Law, all radio stations had until December 28, 2004 to abide by new regulations, but there is still a large degree of uncertainty over how licenses will be assigned.

Bimo Nugroho, a member of Indonesian Broadcasting Commission locally known as Komisi Penyiaran Indonesia (KPI) explains. “We had initiated a procedure and disseminated application forms for licenses in almost all regions in Indonesia but the version of the application form was more for private broadcasting,” Bimo says. “The big problem was, we have done it without Government Regulation<sup>8</sup>”

The earthquake and tsunami that devastated Aceh in December 2004, meanwhile, has diverted government attention from all other concerns, including community radio. KPI discussions on government regulations have been temporarily postponed.

Bimo explains why it is taking so long time to iron out the regulations.<sup>9</sup>

“The government and KPI still disagree over who should give out licenses,” he says. “The government wants the authority, which means the KPI would just be a rubber stamp. Of

---

<sup>7</sup> AMARC Asia Pacific Report, [http://www.asiapacific.amarc.org/files/AMARC\\_asia\\_pacific\\_report.pdf](http://www.asiapacific.amarc.org/files/AMARC_asia_pacific_report.pdf). Accessed on January 3, 2005.

<sup>8</sup> Government Regulation is a detail regulation under law. In Indonesia known as, Peraturan Pemerintah (PP).

<sup>9</sup> Interview with Bimo Nugroho on January 6, 2005 at the Indonesian Broadcasting Commission Office, Jakarta.

course we refuse this notion. According to the law, KPI is the legitimate institution to give out licenses.”

This conflict and uncertainty serve only to confuse people involved in community radio. In various meeting, KPI and the government kept saying, “28 December 2004 all stations should have licenses.”<sup>10</sup> But in reality, community radio stations are not provided with necessary information on what they should do or at least know where to ask.

In Central Java, for example, the regional KPI representative was not even aware about the regulations. The situation was similar in West Sumatra.

In the province of Yogyakarta, the Community Radio Network and the regional KPI came to an agreement and built their own mechanism. They modified the application form and came up with their own version. The result: many of the network’s members were registered before the December 28 deadline, says Widjanarko, a member of Yogyakarta network.<sup>11</sup>

### **Ahead in Asia**

Despite its difficulties, Suman Basnet, the coordinator of the Asia Pacific Region World Association of Community Broadcasters (AMARC) says Indonesia is one step ahead of other Asian countries. As an international organization that supports and serves community broadcasters around the world, AMARC notes that in Japan and Malaysia community radio is not even recognized.

In Japan, government has set up so called community radio stations but these are sponsored and serve as propaganda machines for local governments.

In Malaysia, the situation is even more restrictive. The government has barred community radio. As a result, people who want to build a community radio service do it from outside the country, beaming information back into Malaysia.

AMARC noted down that in Thailand, community broadcasting is written into the constitution, but the legal infrastructure is still missing. The National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) is supposed to formulate the Thailand Broadcasting Law, but a five-year effort has borne no fruit. “It has come to a bureaucratic trap,” Basnet says.

In Sri Lanka, the government has taken over 10 licensed community radio stations. “If you talk privately to government officials, they will tell you they are worried about rebel groups getting the licenses,” Basnet says.

In comparison to these countries, Indonesia fares much better because it already has many community radio stations working at the grassroots level. People are aware of the importance of community radio, and this is recognized in the law. “What is left is the need for clear procedures,” Basnet says.

Imam Prakoso, director of the Combine Resource Institution, shares the same optimism. “Community radio has gained support from all sides, from national policies to civil society,” he says. In fact, there is a growing interest in putting up community radio stations, he adds.<sup>12</sup>

Imam continues: “The supporters realize that community radio is a strategic medium for communication, entertainment or disseminating information.”

What Saponda has done confirms with Imam.

---

<sup>10</sup> Based on the writer’s observation in various meeting that attended by KPI or government members.

<sup>11</sup> Based on a short interview with Widjanarko on January 2005. Writer has done clarification on these statements with him.

<sup>12</sup> E-mail interview with Imam Prakoso on January 26, 2005.

Another good illustration of this was how the Angkringan community radio station in Timbulhardjo Yogyakarta helped voters choose their village leaders beyond mere charisma or religion.

With Indonesia's first direct election for regional government coming in June 2005, community radio is trying to assume a more significant role. Twelve community stations in West Java for example, have grouped themselves to track the performance of political candidates. The danger lies in the partisanship. "That is why we want to build a code of conduct," says Dadan Sanusi<sup>13</sup> from Kombas radio.

Throughout Indonesia, activism and democracy are spreading at the grassroots level. Under such conditions, community radio is likely to flourish, giving their constituents a voice that demands to be heard.



*Shita Laksmi is a fellow from Centre for Journalism at the Ateneo de Manila University. She wrote this article in her personal capacity and as part of her university paper. She is currently working as the Program Officer for Media in TIFA Foundation, Jakarta, Indonesia..*

*For more articles by Shita on Community radio in Indonesia, please visit: <http://asiapacific.amarc.org/>*

---

## NEPAL: YOU CAN'T SEE IT, IF YOU DON'T KNOW IT

*By Jacob Thorsen*

There is a Danish proverb saying: *you can't see it, if you don't know it*, which applies well to the current critical situation in Nepal. Although intensified clashes between the Maoists and the army in the country, the day to day situation many places appear quite normal and peaceful. But if you listen carefully you can hear there is a difference in the sound-scape.

Before the King's take over of power on February 1st, I used to wake up at six o'clock in the morning to the characteristic jingle of Communication Corner's news program; in a Nepali milieu, an innovative and very popular news service listened to by almost everyone. In my neighbourhood, most people had their first Nepali tea to this program while news from in- and outside the country was presented. Nowadays, my mornings are quieter; the Government's decision only to allow entertainment to be broadcasted, has set on pause this program as well as any independent radio news program for the time being. No one seems to like listening to entertainment, why almost no FM radios in my neighbourhood are playing these days. Compared to before Feb. 1st, it is believed that less than one quarter today listens to FM radio in this region, although this number not is verified.

### **New communication patterns**

The only FM radio news alternative left is the propaganda service from the government's mouthpiece: Radio Nepal. People with money and eager to listen to other suppliers of news have the option to buy shortwave radio, and BBC Nepali news service has become a very popular source of information for particularly educated people in urban areas. Purchase of shortwave radios has boomed in Nepal in recent weeks and this tendency seems to continue. However, the large majority of Nepalese: farmers, truck drives, shop keepers, housewives and so forth do not seem to utilize this option, and are, in terms of access to radio news, left with Radio Nepal. Television is likewise controlled by the government, and for many Nepalese are newspapers no alternative due to high levels of illiteracy.

---

<sup>13</sup> Based on a short interview with Dadan Sanusi via telephone on January 29, 2005.

The outcome two months after the royal move is that most people are paralysed and you can start to hear the first effects: rumours. Expressing truth can sometimes become very dangerous in times of censorship, that's why rumours can flourish. Some more fantastic and incredible than others prosper all over, and it is difficult for people to get a true and ample picture of their situation, seen in a larger perspective. People with interests to lit fire to an already fragile situation or with the intention to exaggerate stories with postulates, can easily do so as there is little or no possibility to verify, compare or deny stories.

### **Community radios affected**

In the communities, the role to monitor and reflect the flow of rumours and stories was set to be the community radios. After the introduction of democracy in Nepal in 1990, started numbers of free and innovative media, including community radios, which became a popular media to bring the mushrooming social initiatives at a grassroots level into a public discourse.

A small village close to India in the Terai region of Nepal, Manigram, also rode on the wave of free media, and in 1999 a group of innovative people in the village decided to form a cooperative in order to establish their own community radio – Radio Lumbini – named after Lord Buddha's birthplace nearby. To a large extent, has the radio succeeded to reflect the different social activities in the communities in its programmes and deeds, but the censorship imposed by the government has put constrains on the radio. A usual active news department converted into an almost deserted room sadly witnesses this fact, just as the sale of radio commercials has decreased noticeably due to fewer listeners. It is not unlikely Radio Lumbini has to reduce its staff in near future, as have many other radio stations all over Nepal.

It is difficult to predict for how long the current state of limbo will continue in Nepal and for how long Radio Lumbini can continue as a source only for entertainment. A new entertainment program is scheduled to be launched to adjust their programs to the current situation, radio drama, where entertainment creatively can be woven into social and political issues. Likewise, more interactions with the listeners will provide guidelines and inspiration as to how Radio Lumbini can keep providing services to its audience. But besides these proactive initiatives, Radio Lumbini's strategy in the current situation is to *wait and see*, safeguard within the organisation the values of democracy and freedom of speech, and slowly expand their boundary for expression. Time will tell how slowly and for how long.



*Jacob Thorsen is a volunteer from Denmark and is working with Radio Lumbini in west Nepal. To contact Jacob, wrote to: [jacob@mos.com.np](mailto:jacob@mos.com.np)*

---

## **RADIQ RADIO: VOICING OUT IN MALAYSIA**

*By Sonia Randhawa*

Malaysia's media regime is quietly one of the most restrictive in the world. Former Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir Mohamad was consistently near the top of the Reporters Without Borders international enemies of the media list. It makes trying to work as an independent journalist a daily challenge, with little institutional support.



Unlike countries such as Zimbabwe that are facing a violent onslaught on a once free media, Malaysia's media has been controlled since before Independence. One of the most notorious pieces of legislation, the Printing Presses and Publications Act has been around since 1948. It gives the Home Minister the prerogative to grant or revoke printing licenses, which are granted on an annual basis. The Minister's decision cannot be challenged in court.

In theory, the situation for broadcast is marginally better – the Minister's decision can be challenged in court. However, in practice, ownership is limited to those closely associated with government and there is little if any room for debate and discussion unless sanctioned. During the 2004 general elections, for example, the top news story on one radio station was that the Deputy Prime Minister was urging voters to vote for his party. Another one the Prime Minister was to visit an Opposition-controlled state. With news broadcasts lasting five minutes an hour, the latter was the only local news story that hour.

There is however one tear in this fabric of silence. There is a clause in the Communications and Multimedia Act which guarantees that, under that Act at least, the internet remains free from censorship. While there have been attempts to use other pieces of legislation to silence cyber-dissidents, they have, so far, been unsuccessful. Malaysia is talking online.

The major online publications are Malaysiakini.com and Agendadaily.com. With peak readership of over 300,000 for the former and possibly higher for Agendadaily, they have made an impact on the news landscape in Malaysia. However, their reach has been limited to those with Internet access. Financial constraints mean that both sites are now charging for content, causing a sharp fall in readership.

The problem with online media, however, is that it has limited reach. Rural Malaysia remains unconnected. Radiq Radio has come up with an innovative way to use the Internet to reach a wider audience.

Using a partnership with an Indonesian network that broadcast on an AM frequency, Radiq Radio provides radio content. Working with NGOs and community groups, it calls itself a 'community-based' radio station. The station is a Centre for Independent Journalism (CIJ) project, and hopes to be broadcasting by the end of 2005. Already it has commitments from a number of interested organisations and their staffs have trained around 150 people, teaching them how to produce radio programmes.

Activities under the CIJ began after the Reformasi movement in Malaysia, which saw the sacking of former Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim and massive popular protests in his favour. At the time, the debate was highly polarised, vehemently pro- or anti-government. The people behind CIJ wanted to colonise the middle ground and provide some context to the debates, so began a website called Saksi.com (Witness). Saksi was run on a purely voluntary basis, and came to a gradual close by the middle of 2000. To shore up the momentum of the group, however, CIJ organised World Press Freedom Day activities.

Radiq, however, was conceived towards the end of 2000, when eight young people went to Jakarta to learn radio skills at Radio 68h. They came back to Malaysia enthusiastic about the possibilities opened up by radio and wanting to put their newly developed skills into practice. With help from Radio 68h, they received funding for one year, and began setting up the station.

There has been a steep learning curve, both in terms of technical and managerial skills. Technically, there are very few radio journalists in Malaysia. I was a reporter with Radiq for over a year, and met only one other pair of trainee radio journalists in the field. Most radio news stories are re-written wire stories. The background of all the senior journalists was in print, so we had to pick up tricks as we went along, rather than being able to learn from the experience of others in the field.

We also learned, the hard way, the limitations of Internet technology. In 2003, our partners were broadcasting between two and a half and three hours of Radiq news daily, receiving it via the Internet. Unfortunately the connection was so slow that they couldn't even open their emails, so we found we had to use instant messaging, sending stories paragraph by paragraph to Indonesia!

Managerially, as well, we had no experience of dealing with funders and funding agencies. After a couple of false starts, however, we have raised money locally and internationally to help our partners build a more powerful AM transmitter, we have been donated office space and now have three full-time members of staff.

Radiq has two main types of programming: in-house news and partner programmes by NGOs and community groups. The latter has been a challenge. Due to the monopoly on information and the centralised production of radio programmes, people are intimidated by radio technology. During training sessions people tell us that they won't be able to produce their own programmes because they are not 'professionals'.

Another obstacle has been resistance to change. Groups are familiar with brochures and meetings for outreach, but radio remains a largely unknown medium. The few women's groups who have used radio for public service announcements have been pleased with the response, but most are unaware of radio's potential.

Nevertheless, several groups have been enthusiastic. Migrant workers communities have been among the first to see the benefits of radio communication, and we expect to have programmes by the Bangladeshi and Burmese communities when we begin broadcasting. Other interested groups include women's groups, human rights, labour, housing, student and youth organisations.

On the news side, there have also been trials. Apart from the difficulties in training staff, there have been and will continue to be external constraints. Radiq Radio journalists are not registered with the Home Ministry, which limits their access to Parliament and to government functions. Our journalists have been arrested and threatened with arrest, barred from Parliament and thrown out of functions. The Malaysian secret police, known as Special Branch, warned one of our reporters that if we try to extend coverage we may be in trouble.

In both sections we hope to cultivate volunteers to contribute, helping to inculcate people with respect for the independence of the media, an understanding of news values and to broaden the news content we provide.

Altogether, we are aiming to produce six hours of programmes seven days a week by the end of our first year of operations, split roughly equally between the two types of programme.

Externally, we face numerous threats. Legislation allows for detention without trial for more than two years. The Sedition Act and the Official Secrets Act apply to the Internet, and can be used to help stifle debate on issues ranging from air pollution to race. A recent slander case was successfully filed against a journalist who mentioned to another reporter that he thought a music production had 'failed'. Radiq Radio reporters and staff, as with other Internet journalists, are not immune from these legislative threats. At the same time, Internet journalists are not full members of the National Union of Journalists and their media organisations are smaller, with less financial or political clout, increasing their vulnerability.

The next year should be an exciting one for Radiq. The challenges – financial, external and internal – remain, but opportunities are opening up. The new Prime Minister has promised greater openness. So far, most moves since he assumed power have been negative, including threats against newspapers that cover race issues, snatch thieves or environmental problems and numerous incursions onto the Web, particularly targeting bloggers. Nevertheless, there has been a shift in political rhetoric. The ball is in our court.

With a mix of local and international pressure, there is the best opportunity in decades of real change in Malaysia's media environment.



*Sonia is a director for the Centre for Independent Journalism and former producer of RadiqRadio.com. She can be contacted at [sonia@cijmalaysia.org](mailto:sonia@cijmalaysia.org).*

### Useful Links

1. <http://nepal.asiapacific.amarc.org/site.php> - site for Nepali Community Radio Movement
2. <http://www.bnnrc.net/index.php> - Bangladesh NGOs Network for Radio and Communication (BNNRC)
3. <http://www.cbaa.org.au> – Community Broadcasting Association of Australia
4. <http://www.combine.or.id/index.html> - Community Based Information Network, Indonesia
5. <http://www.communityradionetwork.org/index.html> - Community Radio Network – India
6. <http://www.radiosagarmatha.org/> - Radio Sagarmatha, Kathmandu, Nepal - the first community radio station in South Asia
7. <http://www.saarc-sec.org/main.php> - South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)

***For sending news and articles, please contact:***

AMARC Asia Pacific Regional Office,  
Kathmandu, Nepal.  
Phone: +977 1 5554811  
Fax: +977 1 5521714

Email: [suman@wlink.com.np](mailto:suman@wlink.com.np)

Website: <http://www.asiapacific.amarc.org>

**[Note: All articles in this newsletter can be reprinted or distributed with acknowledgment to the writer and this newsletter]**