



AMARC Asia-Pacific Newsletter

"We are about people having a voice through radio."

Improved Women's Participation in Community Radios in Asia-Pacific

December, 2021

Early results show more women participating community radios in Asia Pacific

The Women's International Network of AMARC Asia-Pacific (AMARC-WIN AP) is conducting a survey on women in Community Radio in Asia Pacific region. This is the third survey of this kind, that AMARC-WIN AP has conducted. The study is a work-in-progress and we present some of the highlights available so far:

Twice as many responses

We received 70 questionnaires, which is more than double from what we received in 2006. The respondents come from 13 countries in Asia Pacific, including three from the Small Islands Developing States (SIDS). The return of questionnaires reflects the legal changes achieved during these seven years.

AMARC-WIN is being supported by national peak bodies of

community radios in the region including Timor Leste, Papua New Guinea (PNG) and the Fiji Islands. These organizations are actively involved in disseminating and collecting the questionnaires, which resulted in a stronger participation from these countries. The final results of the survey will be published in the first quarter of 2022.

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Early Survey Results

From the early results, it is clear that women's participation has slightly improved in all the positions. The most remarkable improvement can be observed in

leadership, which among other factors can be a result of the efforts of AMARC Asia-Pacific to strengthen women's participation in community radio during the last seven



Young girls learning radio production in Timor Leste. ©CR Maubisee Mau Loko

years, including the Gender Policy for Community Radio.

"Most radio station in Asia-Pacific have programs hosted by women and 65% of all the radio stations in the survey do have specific women's programs."

Assessing Community Radios in the Small Island Developing States (SIDS)

AMARC Asia-Pacific correspondent

Timor Leste:

In a country with only an estimated 60 % literacy rate and few able to afford access to television, newspapers, telephone and no access to internet outside Dili, community radio has been an essential means of communication between the capital and the districts, linking or even reuniting politically or geographically isolated communities, a vital source of local news and information, and a vehicle for free speech in a previously coercive state dominated media sector.

Community radio in Timor Leste is still a work in progress. Many of the problems it faces are faced by the country as a whole: lack of education, lack of experience in leadership or in funds management, and lack of an economic support base, raising questions of long-term

sustainability. Currently, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the country's community radio stations are playing a major role in the fight against the virus. Dozens of community radio personalities, many of whom are volunteer producers or presenters, have been taking to the airwaves in all 17 community radio stations since February 2020 to help raise awareness on COVID-19 and how to prevent its spread. Community radio producers and on-air personalities have been

instrumental in developing messages in five local languages – Baikeno, Fataluco, Makasae, Mambae and Tokodede – which are spoken by community members in the 13 municipalities of Timor-Leste. This is in addition to messaging in Tetun, the most widely spoken language in Timor-Leste. Since February 2020, community radio stations have developed or broadcast 11 radio spots more than 6,000 times.



Field reporting by CR Maubisee Mau Loko

Snapshot of CR in SIDS

Solomon Islands

The development of community media in the Solomon Islands can be traced back to 2004. There was growing appreciation of the potential role of radio stations in supporting local governance and facilitating greater community participation and accountability. The United Nations Development Program

(UNDP) and the Isabel Provincial Government (IPG) established eight low-power FM radio stations around the province as part of the Isabel Provincial Development Program (IPDP). The aim was to support the growing role of governance institutions in provincial development planning and to improve communication

between these institutions and the islanders. Ownership of the stations is shared between communities and the provincial government. Village-based committees provide guidance, oversight and support to each community station.

Network staff receive professional training from the Regional Media Centre and the Commonwealth of Learning, as well as from the Solomon Islands Development Trust.

The SIBC, the national public service radio broadcaster, is a statutory body owned by the Solomon Islands government. The Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation (SIBC) was established in 1976 by the Broadcasting Act. SIBC's statutory mandate is to broadcast news and current affairs.

Papua New Guinea

Radio is a dominant part of PNG's diverse media sector

and has been since well before independence in 1973. In today's media environment, radio-listening remains a big part of citizens' media diets, with half of adults in one recent survey reporting regular radio use, and more than two-thirds of households having a radio.

Papua New Guinea's public broadcaster, the National Broadcasting Corporation (NBC), plays a critical role in connecting and informing the nation, especially those citizens without access to other forms of communication.

The radio industry operates under a mixed model with commercial, public

“Community Radio is 90 percent community and ten percent radio” - Late Zane Ibrahim, Bush Radio, South Africa

(government), and community ownership of stations.

A 2019 survey of media access in PNG found that radio remained popular, but that audience are declining, driven by poor access to services. Radio listeners in larger centers have access to a number of stations mostly on FM, including the domestic commercial, public, and community stations, with international broadcasters such as Radio Australia and BBC World Service also carried on local frequencies in some centers.

Most agencies that support the development of community broadcasting are international organization, mainly NGOs and major companies based in the communities.

Snapshot of CR in SIDS

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AMARC Asia-Pacific is the regional autonomous chapter of the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC International). AMARC Asia-Pacific is constituted by the members of AMARC from countries in the Asia-Pacific region. AMARC Asia-Pacific has sub-regional governance structure that consists of South Asia, South East Asia, the Pacific and East Asia.

<https://amarc-ap.org>