



AMARC Asia Pacific Newsletter:

AMARC10 Special



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Interview:

About AMARC10 Preparations

The following are excerpts from an interview with Marcelo Solervicens, Secretary General of AMARC International about the ongoing preparations for AMARC10 to be held from 8-13 November 2010 in La Plata, Buenos Aires, Argentina

Question: Now that we are only about 2 weeks from the conference, how are the arrangements moving along – programmatically and logistically? Are you facing any major difficulty?

Marcelo: In order to follow-up on the structure of the conference, we have established the AMARC 10 Committee. This is a participatory acting committee set up by the international board of AMARC and composed by members from all regions of AMARC. Its role is to define and review all matters related to content of the conference. The AMARC10 committee has defined the motto of the conference as ‘Comunicacion comunitaria,’ a generic name embracing the large variety of actions of community radio worldwide. The AMARC 10 committee has reviewed the structure of the conference, consisting in plenary sessions, seminars, and interactive workshops. This committee reviews also the keynote speakers.



The hosts of the conference, AMARC Argentina, that brings together 30 community radio stations, production centres and communicators is working enthusiastically with the international secretariat in order to ensure everything will be ready for the conference regarding the venue, transfers from the airport, accommodation and on site facilities. They are also preparing a series of side events to make sure that the AMARC 10 participants will have an unforgettable experience on their visit to Argentina. As always our main difficulties will be to respond to the enormous interest to participate in the conference and our limited resources. We have encouraged those who can to raise their own funds with our support, to cover the costs of their participation.

Community radios should bring their productions and documents as well as objects from their countries to AMARC10 so that the conference will reinforce contacts beyond regions and cultures.

Is there a possibility for members to comment and provide input to the draft agenda given in the AMARC10 website? Who should they contact for doing that?

Marcelo: the AMARC 10 Conference is one of the activities of the World Social Forum 2010 and we are following the interactive and participatory approach used by the WSF. We have all along encouraged suggestions, comments and involvement of AMARC members and stakeholders in building AMARC 10 Conference content. We have received suggestions from many participants and their offer of support as facilitators, speakers, note-taking, etc.

Can you briefly describe the venue of the conference and outline the logistic arrangement that will be provided to the conference participants for networking?

Marcelo: The venue, Centro Cultural, Pasaje Dardo Rocha, is scene of the most important events of the City of la Plata (Capital of the Province of Buenos Aires). The place is like a French palace and has appropriate accommodations for the plenary, seminars and workshops as well as for setting up stands, exhibits and networking. AMARC Argentina is suggesting that community radios should bring their productions and documents as well as objects from their countries to encourage that the conference will reinforce contacts beyond regions and cultures.

What kind of support has AMARC provided to interested participants in terms of travel grants, waiver of registration fees, and support for local hospitality?

Marcelo: The International Board has set a committee that established priorities for travel grants, depending in criteria such as gender, geographic and country representation and involvement as well as potential contributions to the conference. We received many requests for funding and unfortunately only a limited could be accepted. We also encouraged regional offices, country associations and community radios to ask donors already supporting them to finance their participation.

Finally, how will you describe the main significance of AMARC10, as compared to the previous world conferences of AMARC?

Marcelo: AMARC 10 conference finds the worldwide community radio movement at a crossroads. On the one hand, it has become a world movement and there is increased recognition of the role of community radio in development, good governance and as a specific broadcast sector besides, commercial or public broadcast. In this perspective it is very important that this world conference is taking place in South America, the cradle of the community radio movement.

On the other hand the challenges are enormous, in terms of establishing enabling environments for CR in many countries, where legislation do not yet recognize CR as such; challenges from the transition to digital radio; challenges in terms of technical, financial or social sustainability, directly related to legislation, but also to lack of cross regions experience sharing; or training to ameliorate quality of contents and pertinence of programming; problems of gender equity within CR in some regions.

The conference will be tackling some of these and other challenges so that there will be a La Plata Declaration fixing the orientations of the movement and a strategic plan for the next four years that will result in further reinforcement of the contribution of CR in fulfilling its mission to combat poverty, exclusion and voicelessness and to promote social justice and sustainable, democratic and participatory human development.

Log on to www.amarc10.amarc.org for updates of AMARC10 conference

Community Radio Persist Amid the Dominance of Commercial Broadcasting

By Mary Carling, Station Manager- Radyo Sagada, Philippines

Community Radio in the Philippines persists amid the ever expanding dominance of commercial broadcasting. Though small in its scope of operation, CR in the various islands continue to trail the airwaves of the country.

Spread throughout the Philippines is the more than forty five CRs. From the north to the south of the country, CRs streams as an alternative broadcast. It roars for community empowerment and development amid the barrage of information, entertainment and development direction that comes from the top echelons of the broadcast industry.

And while there are state-owned and operated radio, Radio ng Bayan (Peoples Radio) that are stationed in the various cities and towns, much is still to be desired by the communities it purports to serve. Being the mouthpiece of the government, Radio ng Bayan hardly lives to its name as the people's voice.

From a bird's eye view, streams that flow in the Philippine radio broadcasting can be classified according to its magnitude of operation and purpose. First, is the mainstream which is piloted by those who own the powerful commercial radio. Second, is the complementary stream of broadcast that is controlled by the government. Third is the alternative stream, the CR that takes off from the ground to trumpet the cause of poor communities.

The dominant radio in the Philippines, like any other dominant radio elsewhere, is highly driven by profit. Commerce in the broadcast industry has been guided by a rating system where the quality of entertainment and information is equated to popularity. As this continues to be the rule of the elite who own and control the major channels of communication in the country, CR has evolved and has been moulded as a tool for transformation. It reflects the conditions obtaining in the community and it addresses the needs and desires of the community.

These CRs are tiny sprouts in the airstreams that also came about in reaction to the dominance of the Manila (or the National Capitol Region) centred broadcasting.

Community Radio: a Beacon of Peace and Justice

In Mindanao, radio DXUP was developed to highlight the community's search for peace in a war-torn island. Where peace seems to be an elusive dream in the decade's old armed conflict between the government and the Muslims, radio DXUP is a beacon of peace. The radio unifies a community of varied religious beliefs and cultures. There, everyone lends their ear to each sector's cultural program, a listening habit that generates mutual understanding along the cross section of the community.

But while in the south, radio echoes the voice of peace and hope in a raging war, in northern Philippines, echoing peace and justice has meant an outright shutting down of a community radio. A case in point is Radyo Cagayano. After the short period since it took-off from the ground, the station was bombed allegedly by the military. Here, destroying the means of communication of and by the community was not even enough. Killing a peasant leader who

participates in the radio reveals a scenario where the staunch defence of human rights has led to the death of a community radio.

Indigenous Peoples Radio: Assertion Identity and Self-Determination

As we count and view the spread of community radio across the country, it can be observed that CRs are shaped by various factors that are at play within and in the immediate surroundings of its operation. Geographical and cultural factors influence the identity and particular orientation of radio.

In the mountain region of the Cordillera where Radyo Sagada- a community radio will soon be launched, the sound of indigenous identity of an ethno-linguistic group signals a new dimension in radio programming. This comes at a time where in a nearby town centre, about forty kilometres away, there is the broadcast of a government radio – Radyo ng Bayan and the commercial radio –Radyo Natin (Our Radio). With this radio catch phrase, how can the community identify itself with a radio where every radio station in this province says “this is our radio”?

Radio Sagada broadcast program is determined by the various sectors, institutions and groups in the community of Sagada. It would project the wisdom of the elders-the indigenous leaders who keeps the traditional knowledge that the community imbibes and one that unites them as an indigenous community. The radio at the same time recognizes modernity and the influence from outside, thus information and entertainment flows as radio program participants have the right to free expression. As a popular tourist destination, and with the mobility of its people, Sagada has been opened up to the world. And thus, while the community celebrates its own culture and traditions, it appreciates other cultures. Radio Sagada is into this cultural context.

The radio, the first in this town that stands at more than six thousand feet above sea level, promises to connect far-flung villages to the town centre. This channel is central to the articulation of the development agenda of the villagers, one that is conveyed to the government and to the people in the town centre. Likewise, the radio serves as a forum for indigenous peoples (IP) issues and as serves as a catalyst for change along the crusade for the recognition of the right to self-determination of indigenous people.

The radio was formed organizationally by a community assembly where men and women and every sector actively participate and where radio volunteers take certain responsibilities in preparing their respective programs. At the onset, the social preparation of the radio was planned by a multi-sectoral body of the community, a body that outlined the key community activities in setting up the radio.

The Manila Centred Broadcasting- Conquering the countryside

It is important to cite some commercial broadcasting developments in the recent years that have implications to the development of community radio. A tricky debate on low-powered and community radio arises with the station decentralization scheme of the Manila Broadcasting Company. With this, communities in remote areas have “access” to MBCs broadcasting via the “Radio Natin” (Our Radio) stations in different towns of the country. But the decentralization did not mean a real access of the community in terms of radio programs-content and format. It rather expanded the reach of the Manila based DZRH, the

flagship commercial radio of MBC. Through a hooked-up program of their Radio Natin Stations, Manila's broadcast has reached an ever broader scale.

In the mornings, the local stations are hooked-up to the mother station, and still in the afternoon programs, it features the biggest hits of the country. Without the active participation of the community, the local is drowned into the Manila brand of broadcast. The "music hits" for example are determined from above and not from the heart of those on the ground. This top to bottom scheme will eventually drive the folk music and traditional knowledge to fade out. In Mt. Province of the Cordillera Region, two of these stations exist. This signalled the expansion of Manila's commercial broadcast power. Now, the Philippine countryside is catered with the urban brand of entertainment and information. The one way traffic in the flow of information has all been strengthened specially in areas where no CRs exist. In the absence of alternative broadcast in the locality, radio is the Manila radio for the community.

Government: No -Political Will to Reform the Broadcast Industry

The commercial radios with the name - Philippine Broadcast Media (PBS), will remain to dominate the radio broadcast in the absence of a political will on the part of the government to reform the industry. On one hand, some advocates of broadcast reform within and outside of the government have called for the transformation of the state broadcast into independent public broadcasting. But there is the absence of a political will on the part of the government to address this issue.

On the other hand, for more than two decades communities have been putting up their own radio. But in setting their own, the community would go through the rigors of legal requirements. This situation calls on the movement of CR in the country to push a legislative agenda in order to ease the hardships in putting up CRs and to develop a meaningful broadcasting for the poor and marginalized communities of the Philippines. As this legislative action remains to be a challenge, the beacon for meaningful transformation glitters along the streams of broadcast.

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AMARC10: What's In It for Me?

AMARC Asia Pacific regional office carried out brief interviews with some of the participants of AMARC10 from Asia and Pacific region to understand their perspective on the conference. We asked why the conference was important and what were they looking forward to. The following is what they said:

Maica Lagman, Rainbow Rights, the Philippines: AMARC10 is about inspiration, mutual knowledge exchange and skills transfer. It is an opportunity for community broadcasters, community leaders and of human rights groups to come together and discuss pressing issues.



Ade Tanesia, COMBINE, Indonesia: I am going to AMARC10 because I want to share experiences with community radios from around the world and to discuss strategies in resolving the common problems that we face.



Bianca Miglioretto, WIN Representative for AMARC Asia Pacific: AMARC10 is an opportunity to get more insight into community radio broadcasting in Latin America. I am looking forward to meeting other women community radio broadcasters; to celebrate 20 years of AMARC-WIN; and the adoption of the Gender Policy for Community Radio by the 10th General Assembly of AMARC (hopefully).



Sharon Bhagwan Rolls, Coordinator, femLINKPACIFIC, Fiji Islands: AMARC 10 is an opportunity to celebrate and be reminded of what is possible when information and communication technology is truly a channel for communities to be empowered - to give voice to the unheard - to give opportunity to the young, and to demonstrate that women can also produce and broadcast information which will contribute to balancing the scales and unite a global membership on issues of local importance.



Katsuya Soda, Nanmin Now! ("Nanmin" means "Refugee" in Japanese), Kyoto, Japan: I am interested in developing networks and introducing community radio in Japan, especially the activities of Nanmin Now! I am looking forward to learning about the power of community radio for promoting the voice of the minority from many experiences around the world.



Shane Elson, Alternative Radio, Australia: AMARC 10 takes place in a time of continuing media restructure. Digital radio, increased concentration and centralisation of news and reporting, an increasing gap between the material world and the world of 'high' politics sees the marginalised and the poor further excluded from the 'conversations in the commons'. A key question therefore, that must be addressed is 'how to we mainstream our communities' voices?' AMARC 10 will provide a space to community radio practitioners to discuss ways and means to realise the aspiration. To miss out on it is to miss out on one the most important media conversations taking place at the moment.



Rahel Bernad Lewi, Radio Swara Tamborolangi, Indonesia: AMARC 10 is a very good chance for me to introduce my radio station to others, to share knowledge, experience, and information in managing community radio and to expand our networking as well. Solidarity and commitment among the community radio broadcaster to bring a better future for AMARC as our umbrella organization and for all community radio in the world.



Deborah Welch, President, Radio Adelaide, Australia: Community broadcasting has been part of my life for more than 20 years, I've been President of the peak body for community broadcasters in Australia for the past three years and I'm keen to see how it is developed in other countries. The one thing that I am looking forward to at AMARC10 is meeting people from different places and cultures.



Iman Abda, Secretary General of JRKI (Indonesian Community Radio Networks): AMARC 10 is an international forum to voice local concerns. The most important thing for me is to build networks and create a common agenda to strengthen the presence of community radio stations everywhere. When all are united



community radio will be stronger to face future challenges. The diversity in AMARC10 will create great strength to aid that aspiration.

Nimmi Chauhan, India: I look forward to learning and contributing to two major themes in AMARC 10 Conference – Memories and Gender. I believe in creating opportunities for women to participate in public life as a step towards empowerment. I also believe that history lives in the personal and collective memories of people. Personal narratives and oral testimonies tell us of the past and give it a new meaning for their future – thus consolidating, validating their life experiences. Community Radio can be a very important tool for the people to document their memories and their histories otherwise it will die with them and will be lost forever.



Elizabeth Roxas, Treasurer and Head of the Secretariat, International Association Of Women In Radio And Television (IAWRT): Nothing beats the face to face encounters and rubbing each other's elbows to showcase our passion and commitment to our respective global communities. I am looking forward to learning how community radio broadcasters all over the world can make a difference in terms of making known unique and peculiar global community initiatives in making this world still a better place to live in by giving the communities a space..... A place..... A voice.....

Dr. Kanchan K. Malik, University of Hyderabad, India: My interaction with the community radio broadcasters in India, especially the women reporters, as part of my research on community radio in India has reinforced my faith in the potential of this medium to make a difference in the lives of the people and enhance media democracy. In addition to learning and sharing, the most important thing that I am looking forward to is the Gender Policy for Community Radio and all related sessions dealing with empowering women voices for Gender Equality.



Shizuyo Yoshitomi, Multicultural Pro3 Group, Japan: It is important to extend our network at the grassroots level, to exchange information, and to introduce our activities. Through staying together for one week in AMARC10, I hope to strengthen my network with fellow community broadcasters. I am also looking forward to discuss ideas in the area of disaster management through community radio. Discussions and exchanges of useful information and ideas to establish democratic society is a matter that I am very eagerly looking forward to.



Dr. Rajni Chand, femLINKPACIFIC, Fiji Islands: Countries like mine, where media freedom is limited, community broadcasting is seen as an avenue through which views of the unknown, least regarded and the most victimised can be heard. Being a person who looks at the activities of the NGO with an outsider's view, participation in AMARC10 will be informational for me. Sharing my views with others who face challenges similar to ours-limited freedom of speech, limited revenues, and many stories to tell and living in restricted environments.



Min Bahadur Shahi, President, Association of Community Radio Broadcasters, Nepal: As an AMARC member, it is a great honour for ACORAB to be at the AMARC10 not only to share achievements, experience and knowledge of community radio movement in Nepal, but also to interact, network and learn



from the experiences of the global community radio sector so that community radio movement. ACORAB expects the conference to resolve for a greater recognition of the sector by governments worldwide, and effective implementation of commitments of previous AMARC Conferences.

Ratna Maya Awal, Head of Women’s Division, ECR FM, Nepal: My community radio focuses on environment, health, education, especially from the point of view of women. AMARC 10 is an opportunity to learn and network with community radios from around the world. With more than 400 community radio station from over 110 countries participating in AMARC 10 it will be an exposure and learning experience for me.



Raghu Mainali, Coordinator, Community Radio Resource Centre, Nepal: I am looking forward to attending my third AMARC global assembly. I am looking forward to meeting my comrades from all over the world at the conference. The challenges facing the community broadcasting sector in the sub region is as varied as the sub region itself and I will be taking that diversity to the conference together with other participants from the sub continent. I am particularly excited as AMARC10 is taking place in Latin America, the seat of community broadcasting activism and a source of inspiration for many of us.

“Community Media in China”

By Jack Linchuan Qiu, Ph.D.,
Associate Professor School of Journalism and Communication,
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Prof Jack Linchuan Qiu during his presentation on the “Context/Case for Citizen’s Media in Hong Kong/China” during the Citizen’s Media Seminar organized by AMARC Asia Pacific in Hong Kong on 28 May, 2010 gave an historical overview of the development of community media in China. Here are excerpts from his presentation.



The community media in China has a long tradition and dates back to over 2500 years when Confucius compiled the “Classics of Poetry”. Chinese history is 5000 years old but before Confucius most communication was oral. In the “Classics of Poetry” Confucius transformed songs and poetry into regional languages and compiled poems by bureaucrats (powerful state players) and ordinary citizens (the communities). Poems were a way for oppressed people to express their dissatisfaction and the most famous of them is ‘The Fat Mice’ which reads “*Fat mice, fat mice; don’t eat my rice*” is criticizing the bureaucracy and the exploitive class.

During Han Dynasty, 2000 years ago Confucianism became official orthodoxy and it became a way to worship the written language which led to marginalization of all oral dictions including poetry and music. Music was central to the original Confucianism but by the time

of Han Dynasty they were marginalized. The problem deteriorated by the time of the Ming Dynasty.

During the reign of the communist party the first pirate broadcasting was started in a 1931 from a mountainside village in Southern Jiangxi Province. This was the beginning of the Chinese government's propaganda system and of course it became larger as the communist party grew stronger and it reached a point of moral apex in 1941 at the time of Yan'an. It was an illegal underground radio and only the most audacious people would listen to them.

In 1941 when the communist party overran the country they established a 5 level broadcasting management system. The top level is the national level, followed by the provincial level, the city level, the county level and finally the community level. However what really mattered to Mao was the first level and the fifth level. The first level was the Central People's Radio at the national level. All the provincial radios at the village level were re-broadcasting what the people at national level had already broadcasted and served as a mouthpiece for Mao to share his ideology.

The next important level was the fifth level at the community level. Mao started his campaign by bypassing all the bureaucracy at the provincial level, at city and at the county levels. Essentially the kind of technology that was used was through radio broadcasting by putting it on a pole and then re-broadcasting, the same kind of technology which is still in use in South East Asia even today.

The community level of broadcasting rights was enshrined in 1975 in the Constitution of the People's Republic of China and included in Article 13. So the movement in China started back in 1931 and it was a counter current in Chinese history to re-emphasize and put more emphasis on oral expressions, on audio expression rather than on written text. This was an explicit way for the Maoist movement to mobilize the illiterate people for their own ideological goals and propaganda.

However in 1982 the Article 13 was deleted from the Constitution of People's Republic of China. In 1983, real bureaucratization resulted in the 4 levels of management system in the People's Republic of China. By this time Chairman Mao was already dead and the bureaucrats and technocrats really enforced the 4 levels of management at the expense of the fifth level because they were deleted. Even in the early 1990s there were remnants of the Maoist village broadcasting system in the countryside and in the urban areas these remnants can still be found on university campuses. But overall the community media rapidly declined in China.

The worst for Community media was not over. In 2002 the 4 level broadcasting management system was changed into 3 levels by cutting out the county level as they were seen as too small scaled and a waste of financial resources. As the Chinese media is much monopolized not only in terms of written text but also television, so both of these further added to the decline of community media especially in the 1990s.

With the internet age, especially internet radio which started in 2003 and 2004 when MP3 became popular among the poor people. China became the world's largest MP3 producer and also the world's largest MP3 market. 2005 saw the rise of some influential podcasters in

China. Though this was another medium it could not be considered as community media as it is a very individual method indicating the rise of individualism against any kind of community.

But there are new beginnings of community media in China like the practice of One plus One NGO for the disabled people. There is another NGO based in Hong Kong which started in 2001 and talked about labour issues, the act in Tiananmen in 1989. They use telephone to interview people and then put the content online. So there are all these opportunities out there including transnational issues which AMARC can help strengthen and allow the voice of the Chinese society to be heard.

To conclude, the broadly defined community radio practice in China started roughly 2500 years ago for the Chinese civilization and also for the Chinese Communist party since 1931. However that origin was covered by other incidents that became undercurrents. Community media in China is facing formidable challenges like bureaucracy and these bureaucratic constraints have led to constraints of all kinds like money, technology and organizational resources. The other formidable challenge is individualism brought about this rising level of consumption especially among the new media pioneers, who do not see themselves belonging to any community.

However the new technology provides all kinds of opportunities that could be utilized by the grassroots. I am fundamentally very optimistic about the opportunities brought by technology that can be used for giving voice to the grassroots by using poetry - the most ancient form of audio expressions- and through all kinds of means that a lot can be done to add to this development from the bottom up.

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