



## INDONESIA SPECIAL NEWSLETTER

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AMARC Asia Pacific Regional Office, Kathmandu, Nepal  
Phone: +977 1 5554811  
Email: [suman\\_basnet@asiapacific.amarc.org](mailto:suman_basnet@asiapacific.amarc.org); Website: <http://www.asiapacific.amarc.org>

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Announcement:

## AMARC Asia Pacific Community Radio Training Forum 2011

July 12, 2011, Kathmandu. The 1<sup>st</sup> AMARC Asia Pacific Community Radio Training Forum for “Enhancing Impact of Community Broadcasting” will be held in Bangkok, Thailand from 17 to 19 November 2011. The capacity building mega event will provide opportunity to community radio broadcasters of Asia Pacific to network with and learn from international trainers and experts about setting up community radio stations, promoting community participation, program production, production technology, and advocacy strategies for improving conditions for the development of community broadcasting.

The Training Forum will resemble a people's university where the participants can take different subjects. Outcomes of the Training Forum will have concrete productions that the participants will take home, and broadcast in their radio stations, such as radio jingles, dramas, features, interviews etc.

Announcing the Training Forum, President of AMARC Asia Pacific Ashish Sen has said that the Forum is a direct response to the capacity building needs of AMARC members in the Asia Pacific region as outlined in the AMARC Asia Pacific Regional Conference in Bangalore, India and the AMARC10 Global Conference in La Plata, Argentina. It directly addresses the key objectives of the development priorities and activity plans of community broadcasters and their partners in the region.

The AMARC Asia Pacific Community Radio Training Forum will promote gender sensitivity, strengthen community broadcasting for poverty reduction, and enhance the capacity of community broadcasters to address climate change and disaster preparedness. Sharing of ideas and learning of skills will be based on specific thematic streams so that broadcasters can directly apply their learning to address the concerns of the communities in the Asia Pacific region such as food security, right to information, good governance, empowering women, improving literacy, generating employment opportunities, improving local governance, and promoting the rights of the marginalised. In addition to explaining concepts and principles, the Training Forum will include practical subjects such as research techniques, script writing, interviewing, editing, and using digital recording and computer based editing.

The 1<sup>st</sup> AMARC Asia Pacific Community Radio Training Forum for Enhancing Impact of Community Broadcasting will be participated by community radio leaders who will be given the opportunity to enhance their skills and be able to go back to their community and pass on the knowledge and skills acquired to their colleagues. Approximately 150 participants including members, associates, partners, donors, scholars and representatives of the civil society will participate.

Further information about participating in the Training Forum and other details will be released at: [http://www.amarc.org/index.php?p=thailand\\_forum\\_EN](http://www.amarc.org/index.php?p=thailand_forum_EN)

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*AMARC is an international non-governmental organization serving the community radio movement in over 110 countries, and advocating for the right to communicate at the international, national, local and neighborhood levels. AMARC has an International Secretariat in Montreal. It has regional sections in Africa, Latin America and Asia Pacific and offices in Johannesburg, Buenos Aires, Brussels, and Kathmandu. For more information, please contact Suman Basnet, Regional Coordinator for Asia-Pacific, email: [suman\\_basnet@asiapacific.amarc.org](mailto:suman_basnet@asiapacific.amarc.org) or visit [www.asiapacific.amarc.org](http://www.asiapacific.amarc.org).*

Those following the news about India, would find it hard pressed to avoid news on spectrum related scams, wherein top politicians and corporate honchos have been implicated in high level corruption related to spectrum allocation and licensing. While, one hopes that the unearthing of the scam will bring money back to the ex-chequer, another inadvertent benefit might just have been the grand, if a bit hasty, entry of the word spectrum, into public consciousness.

An abstract concept, spectrum was doomed to being discussed only in technical contexts, presumably only by technical people. Today, the common man has realised that spectrum is something which is important to him on two levels – it is worth a lot of money to the government, businessmen etc, so it must be valuable; it is related to mobile telephony, or satellite TV and other things which we use in our everyday lives, so spectrum is not totally divorced from our daily life, but in fact a very integral part of it.

### So what exactly is spectrum then?

Very simply put, it is a range of frequencies emitted by electromagnetic radiation. So, very often, people refer to it as the electromagnetic spectrum. The international body which makes recommendations on spectrum is called the International Telecommunications Union. Just like the UN system, various countries have become members of the ITU as well. Over the years, with the help of ITU recommendations, some broad guidelines have emerged. For example, in most parts of the world, the FM Radio band is almost always between 88-108 MHz, wherein MHz stands for Mega Hertz. Hertz is a unit for measuring frequencies, named after German physicist Heinrich Hertz who did pioneering work in the field of electromagnetism. Mega denotes 6 zeroes. So a radio station broadcasting at 90.4 MHz merely means that the radio waves emitted by their transmitter has a frequency of 90.4 multiplied by 10 to the power of 6.

Similarly, the EM Spectrum has various other bands, which are strategically deployed for various reasons. Some parts are reserved for satellite communications, some for mobile telephony, some for microwaves, some of X-ray and so on. Most countries have dedicated agencies which study the needs of their countries and decide on spectrum allocation.

### Moving on to the usage of spectrum

This is where things have really been getting politicised in the last two decades in this part of the world. Post economic liberalisation, media markets have become increasingly financialised. Advertising within media has become a huge source of revenue. As a society becomes more capitalist, consumerism increases, and there is more demand for an ever increasing line of products, based on wants and needs. Media steps in to mediate that complex system of negotiating the consumer's desire with their needs and desires.

Today, there is a complex media environment with some very peculiar features. They are – digitisation, financialisation, convergence. Each of these has implications for the public in terms of access, for community, private and public broadcasters in terms of listeners/viewers as well as in terms of their markets.

### What does spectrum mean for community broadcasting?



Today the 'community' of community radio broadcasters cannot afford to think of radio alone. The reason for that are the three features mentioned above, particularly digitisation and convergence.

India, for example, constituted a sub-group under the Planning Commission, which has recommended as much Indian Rupees 5000 crores (approximately equal to 1.1179 billion US dollars) for digitisation of public radio. Further, they recommend a sunset clause of 2015 for all broadcasting to go digital, and terrestrial broadcasting to be phased out. This not only means an engagement with governments from scratch not to mention the fact that economically marginalised communities will not afford to receive our signals. Secondly, we need to take cognisance of the fact that the media sector has grown remarkably only because of urban markets, which today, stand saturated. Most of the rural communities don't have access. The kind of explosive growth hoped for, even in terms of community radio, has just not happened. The only economically feasible way of reaching rural communities is through wireless means. By that logic, it is reasonable to expect that most rural communities will have all media services bundled wirelessly – TV, Radio, text, internet as well as mobile telephony. And all of this will happen on the cheapest single device available – the mobile phone. If community radio stations are absent from mobile phones (either as stand-alone applications or through the internet) then we are missing the bus.

*Ramnath Bhat is a founding Member of Maraa, a community media collective in Bangalore, India. He can be contacted at [ramnathbhat.13@gmail.com](mailto:ramnathbhat.13@gmail.com).*

### **Community Radio Movement in Indonesia:**

#### **2<sup>nd</sup> Congress of Indonesia Community Radio Network (JRKI): Affirm the Independence of Community Radio in Indonesia**

- Iman Abda

It has been nine years since community radio was recognized in the Broadcasting Act of the Republic of Indonesia following its ratification in 2002. Till now, the community radio sector in Indonesia is still struggling under a situation where the rules and government policies do not allow it to survive.

This is one reason why the Indonesia Community Radio Network (JRKI) adopted the theme “Affirming Independence of Community Radio in Indonesia” for its 2<sup>nd</sup> Congress held from 6 to 10 June, 2011.

JRKI considered this Congress as a strategic move to further improve its organizational structure. The major recommendations of this Congress to Indonesian Broadcasting Commission and Ministry of Communication and Informatics Republic of Indonesia are for additional allocation of frequencies and simplifying the licensing process for community radio.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Congress of JRKI was held in Lembang, Bandung, West Java from 6-10 June, 2011 and attended by about 100 community radio activists with representative from 22 provinces in Indonesia. It included 17 members of JRKI and the remaining provinces that came as observers to someday be able to develop community radio networks in their own regions.



A new executive committee of JRKI was elected by consensus on 5 June, 2011 with Sinam M. Sutarno as Chairman, Siti Faridah Al Infirohah as Secretary, and Gani Rachman as Treasurer.

Another outcome of the congress was the ratification of the organisation's statutes such as the AD/ART, MKO (Mechanism of the Organization) and GBHP (Program Policy Guidelines). Statute of the organization has been amended to include an explicit mention of gender mainstreaming. The role of women in community radio Indonesia is endorsed as being crucial to affirm the independence of community radio.

In the Outline Work Program (GBPK) there are six main mandates to be implemented by the elected officials:

1. Advocating policies related to community radio licensing process and the additional frequency allocation;
2. Increased capacity of community radio managers;
3. Mainstreaming gender in all programmes of JRKI, JRK Regional and community radios;
4. Strengthening national and international network;
5. Fundraising and
6. Maximizing the role and functioning of the JRKI secretariat for database management and service to members and community radios.



Other side events of the congress included seminar, workshops and exhibitions of art and expression. A seminar entitled "affirming independence of community radio" moderated by Bowo Usodo was held where the speakers included Bianca Miglioretto (WIN representative of AMARC Asia Pacific), Dr. Henry Subiyakto (expert staff of the Ministry of Communication and Informatics of Republic of Indonesia), Paulus Widiyanto

(former Indonesia House of Representatives Special Committee of the Commission) and Dadan Saputra M.Si (community radio activist).

Workshops were also organized on role of women in community radio, radio production, radio streaming, gender mainstreaming and media convergence. These workshops were followed by technical assistance workshops. Exhibition booths were set up by JRKI members, NGOs, and Regional Indonesian Broadcasting Commission (KPID) of West Java.

*Iman Abda, of Indonesia Community Radio Network, Indonesia can be reached at [imanabda@yahoo.com](mailto:imanabda@yahoo.com)*

## Gender Mainstreaming Workshop at JRKI Congress

- By Ranggoaini Jahja



The second day of Congress of Indonesian Community Radio Network (JRKI) held in Bandung from 6 to 10 June, 2011 saw the discussion of gender equality in community radio in terms of both organization and program contents followed by a three-hour workshop on gender mainstreaming in community radio on the third day. Participants representing the various regions of Indonesia attended the workshop. Bianca Miglioretto from AMARC-WIN along with Ade Tanesia and myself representing COMBINE Resource Institution, and Siti Infirohah Al Faridah from the Indonesia Community Radio

Network (ICRN) hosted the workshop. This workshop put to test a module of 'Integration of Gender Mainstreaming at the Organizational Level' from the gender mainstreaming manual that COMBINE Resource Institution has been developing.

The workshop was opened by Siti Infirohah Al Faridah who explained the background and goals of gender mainstreaming in community radio. Faridah informed that discussions held with the management of several community radio stations concluded that women community radio activists have played important roles for their stations, but they still needed guidance and training to optimize their roles in expressing and addressing their problems. In addition, all stakeholders of community radio and the Regional Community Radio Network must understand the concept of gender equality.

Following the introduction, participants were asked to identify elements of gender mainstreaming that may already be there regulations, structures and culture of community radio stations. To evaluate the status of women in community radio, participants were asked to assess the level of influence women broadcasters had over organizational decision making process and what their participation in community broadcasting meant to the communities, especially to women.

Most participants felt that women were involved in decision-making in community radio stations. For example, as an editor-in-chief she had control influence over the nature of information broadcasted by the radio. Participants agreed that women were active on both on-air and off-air programs and were played an effective role as group leaders in mobilizing communities in various activities.

As to the question about the impact of women's participation in community radio, most participants saw women in community radios as role models for other community members. They agreed that women inspired their groups and capably supervised all decisions made including those related to finances.

The next exercise was to identify ways of mainstreaming gender in community radio which were primarily identified as support from the community and government and enabling policies and regulations for community radio.

Participants identified family support as an important factor for advancing women's role in the community broadcasting. Support of public figures was identified as another key factor. For example, families could feel encouraged to give more freedom to its female members if public figures supported as well. Support from female listeners would have an important bearing as well.

Support from the village apparatus can help in changing people's perspective about women getting involved in activities in public domain. Support from government is also important. Local government can support with funds for the radio programs, especially those concerning women empowerment. In fact, women's participation in other fronts like discussion forums at village and provincial levels can set encouraging examples for women of other communities. Community radio needs to network with government to implement pro-women governmental programs and collaborate with other stakeholders like women-empowering NGO, women organizations in the community, etc.



Ice-breaking in one of the Gender workshops

The workshop gathered opinions on pro-gender equality policies & regulations applied in community radio stations. Commitment and dedication from all radio personnel would guarantee that women's aspirations are always accommodated. In addition, locations in safer neighborhood with suitable studio equipment would

ensure community radio is accessible to women. There should not be discrimination towards anyone be it women, differently able persons, persons with different sexual orientations, marginalized people, etc.

It is noteworthy that this workshop addressed the codes of conduct in communicating with listeners. For example, how issues associated with sex should be addressed more carefully so that discussions do not judge people. A need for sanctions against announcers who "harass" while broadcasting was felt with sanctions ranging from an apology request to ban on broadcasting. While producing programs, the ethics of not disclosing name and identity of the doers/victims must be adhered to. Interactive programs through telephone must be filtered so that they do not violate the ethics. Programs on women sharing their experiences should be delivered with previously prepared manuscripts in order to avoid discussing impacts that could be harmful to the woman. For example, a woman relating her experience of domestic violence should not feel threatened by her husband's family.

The workshop concluded with a call to the Indonesian Community Radio Network, non-governmental institutions, and the government to understand the importance of gender equality and the need for its implementation. Gender equality in community radio would ensure positive impact for the development of the entire community.

Ranggoaini Jahja is the Director of COMBINE Resource Institution, Indonesia and can be contacted at [nieke@combine.or.id](mailto:nieke@combine.or.id)

### **Indonesian Community Radio Network: Developing Awareness of Gender Equality in Community Radio**

- By Ade Tanesia

A prerequisite imposed by the steering committee required that one out of every three representatives from Regional Community Radio Networks had to be a woman and that made all the difference in the recently concluded Indonesia Community Radio Network national conference. "If we did not give such prerequisite from the beginning, all those attending would be men only," said Siti Infirohah Al Faridah, member of the steering committee. In addition, Faridah succeeded in highlighting women's issue by organizing a national workshop on the theme. This meant that every

RCRN had a representative, woman or man attending the workshop. Previously the agenda of raising women issue in community radio was addressed through a small scale workshop. Ida knew from experience that if the issue was discussed in a small workshop, the participants would be women only. Both men and women personnel of a community radio should understand gender equality for it be mainstreamed. A workshop was held on June 7, 2011, on the theme “Assuring the Positions and Roles of Women in Strengthening the Independence of Community Radio in Indonesia.”

### **Why Community Radio Needs to Address Women Issues?**

The workshop invited speakers like Dian Kartika Sari SH from the Indonesian Women’s Coalition, Gini Gusnayanti from Citra Melati Community Radio (West Java), representative of the Ministry of Women Empowerment, Bianca Miglioretto from AMARC-WIN, Prof. Dr. Ati Rachmiati from the Indonesian Broadcasting Commission of West Java, and Dr. Eni from Padjajaran University.



Dian Kartika Sari explained the general condition of women in Indonesia. She began with problems of poverty that is still prevalent and though the government reports say there is a decrease in poverty, facts point that people’s power of affording basic needs was weakening further. As a result, women, who traditionally are responsible for providing family’s food and managing domestic finance, bear heavier burden. Women must work harder, for example to prepare food and provide clean water as well as do various additional jobs for extra money. The direct impact of poverty is the low level of women’s education. For example, poor parents decide to send their boys rather than daughters to school. Data issued by Statistics Department of Indonesia show that the average length of Indonesian women going to school is 6.5 years only. This means many women get married at a young age. The 2009 health profile issued by the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia showed that the number of women getting married at the ages of 10 to 15 years old is 13.4% while that in the age group of 16 to 18 years old is 33.40%. Traditions in some communities also often place women in positions prone to violence. The power of authority is dominated by men which often results in decisions that are detrimental to women. Dian Kartika Sari pointed out various dimensions of life where women often have to face unjust practices resulting from religion, customs and traditions. She also explained how media has an important role for developing awareness, building public opinions concerning the idea and practices of gender equality. Community media, like community radio, also can be used to change people’s way of thinking.

The importance of community media was confirmed by the presentation of Gini Gusnayanti from Melati Citra Community Radio. Issues directly related to women, such as HIV/AIDS campaign are raised through radio programs. In addition, there are also off-air programs for women like women’s community cooperative. The Ministry of Women Empowerment can be an important partner for community radio’s women programs. In this ministry, there is a division of communication, information and education and with whom community radio stations can collaborate.

The results of a research on women’s participation in community radio conducted by Combine Resources Institution saw a need for community radios to collaborate with various stakeholders. In order to have appropriate program contents, it often needs support from governments and women-empowering NGOs. Dr. Eni in her presentation emphasized that woman participation in community radio does not ensure gender mainstreaming. Men and women should have the same understanding about gender equality to making it a reality.



The research showed that women faced many obstacles to participate in public domain. For example in the case of Darsa FM Radio located in Aceh, the implementation of Islamic Law in the region has further limited women's space. They cannot get out of their homes in the evening which is the most effective time for a community radio to broadcast its programs. A woman is not allowed to be with a male colleague in a room at the same time. This limits a woman's participation because she cannot work with fellow male announcer in a studio, which is usually quite small in size. Consequently, she has to find other female announcer. Meanwhile, in operating radio, women still rely much on men in terms of technical assistance. This situation reflects what Dian Kartika Sari said earlier that religion, customs and traditions are obstructing factors for women to participate in community development.

### Gender Equality Policy in the Indonesia Community Radio Network



Women Power! Workshop session in Progress

Through this gender equality workshop, Indonesia Community Radio Network (ICRN) wanted to identify the extent of women's participation in community radio in Indonesia and the obstacles and challenges that women face. It could then recommend the Indonesian Community Radio Network to put these findings into its policies.

According to Siti Infirohah Al Faridah, ICRN has successfully put gender equality into its statute. The working mechanism of the organization has a gender mainstreaming division. In future it will need to develop programs that promote awareness about gender equality amongst its members across Indonesia. In fact, in the clause for

dismissal of personnel, a statement has been included that any personnel engaged in domestic violence and sexual harassments will find his contract terminated. An idea of forming a Women's Network within ICRN was discussed in this workshop though in the end the participants agreed that it did not require a separate body yet as this may lead to compartmentalization of women issues. All agreed that the first step needed to be taken was to develop awareness of gender equality amongst women and men stakeholders of community radio. Implementing gender equality at all levels of Regional Community Radio Networks and community radio was the more challenging task. The long journey has to begin with the first step!

*Ade Tanesia, Senior Coordinator for Media Communication Department at COMBINE Resource Institution, Indonesia can be contacted at [adetanesia@combine.or.id](mailto:adetanesia@combine.or.id)*

### Book Launch: Citizens' Media Against Armed Conflict: Disrupting Violence In Colombia

By Clemencia Rodríguez, University of Minnesota Press, 2011

[http://www.amazon.com/Citizens-Media-against-Armed-Conflict/dp/0816665842/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1307111804&sr=8-1](http://www.amazon.com/Citizens-Media-against-Armed-Conflict/dp/0816665842/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1307111804&sr=8-1)

For two years, Clemencia Rodríguez did fieldwork in regions of Colombia where leftist guerillas, right-wing paramilitary groups, the army, and drug traffickers made their presence felt in the lives of unarmed civilians. Here, Rodríguez tells the story of the ways in which people living in the shadow of these armed intruders use community radio, television, video, digital photography, and the Internet to shield their communities from armed violence's negative impacts. Citizens' media are most effective, Rodríguez posits, when they understand communication as performance rather than simply as persuasion or the transmission of information. Grassroots media that are deeply embedded in the communities they serve and responsive to local needs strengthen the ability of community members

to productively react to violent incursions. Rodríguez demonstrates how citizens' media privilege aspects of community life not hijacked by violence, providing people with the tools and the platform to forge lives for themselves and their families that are not entirely colonized by armed conflict and its effects. Ultimately, Rodríguez shows that unarmed civilian communities that have been cornered by armed conflict can use community media to repair torn social fabrics, reconstruct eroded bonds, reclaim public spaces, resolve conflict, and sow the seeds of peace and stability.

About the Author: Clemencia Rodríguez is professor of communication at the University of Oklahoma can be contacted at [clemencia@ou.edu](mailto:clemencia@ou.edu)

### **Radio Sunia Nawangi - Indigenous People's Community Radio in West Kalimantan**

- Heriyanto Sagiya

This community radio is very simple, with no sophisticated equipment such as computers or laptops. A VCD player is used to broadcast songs, drama, and other programmes. But despite its simple operation Radio Sunia Nawangi has got a lot of listeners.

Radio Sunia Nawangi was founded eight years ago and is located in Tunang village in Bengkayang district in West Kalimantan, Indonesia. People in this region have limited access to information be it television or radio. The existence of Radio Sunia Nawangi has helped people gain access to information.

"It is very difficult to receive radio broadcasts in our village, so we often lack important information. Therefore, residents took the initiative to establish a radio that can be enjoyed by everyone through funds collected from villagers," said Yohanes, 41-years-old, an announcer at Radio Sunia Nawangi. "All the programmes are presented in Dayak language."



Sunia Nawangi Studio. Yohanes (right) reads letter from listeners.

Dayak is the native tribe of Kalimantan Island living in its various regions. The listeners of radio Sunia Nawangi are from the indigenous community of Dayak. Some of them live in very remote areas in the interior of Borneo. Kalimantan or commonly called Borneo is the largest island in Indonesia and because of its large territory; there are many areas still with limited access to information. Many people are unable to watch news on television or read newspapers. Television does not reach the interiors because of lack of relay stations and newspapers cannot be afforded by all people living in the interiors.

Radio is the only medium that is cheap and easily accessible to the residents. Many rural residents have a radio receivers. But, the problem is there are only a few radio stations that broadcasts in the region and hence the existence of this community radio is very meaningful for the people living there.

The source of funding comes from sale of listener cards. "One-card is sold for three thousand rupiah (0.30 US\$). Cards give listeners a sense of ownership of radio," explained Abbas, the Manager of Radio Sunia Nawangi.

Despite limited funds, Radio Sunia Nawangi is able to survive. Of course, managers have to be very creative to make ends meet with the limited resources. "For example we have not been able to afford computers till now but it does not matter because we still use tape recorder and VCD to

play music. The former church building is used as our studio and have assembled all the equipment by ourselves" added Abbas. Meanwhile, the staffs work on a voluntary basis. "I don't have a monthly salary but it's not a problem for me," explained Yohanes, one of the staff.

According to Yohanes, the listenership is continuously increasing - not only from the Tunang village but also from other districts. "We receive listener's cards from residents of other places such as Pontianak and Landak. Sometimes we wonder how they are able to listen to our radio in places so far away," Yohanes added.

Usually people gather in one place to listen to the radio together. Sometimes people bring radio receivers to the field and listen to it while working. The programmes offer a variety of local contents, including traditions and culture. "It makes sharing information easy for us", Yohannes said.

Those who claim that radio needs big investment and sophisticated equipment, Radio Sunia Nawangi proves that it is able to survive with very limited resources. What keeps Radio Sunia Nawangi on air is their unity and spirit of voluntarism.

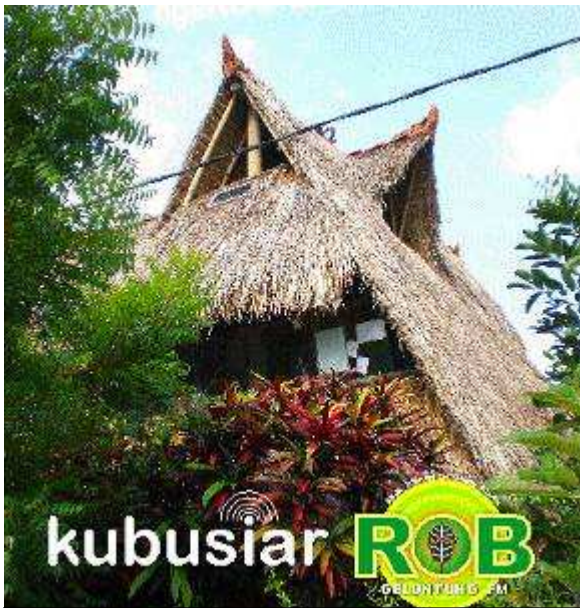
*Heriyanto Sagiya of Radio Sunia Nawangi, Pontianak, West Kalimantan can be reached at [heriyantosg4@gmail.com](mailto:heriyantosg4@gmail.com)*

### Radio Komunitas Orang Biasa - the Ordinary Peoples Community Radio

- Agung Putradhyana

Way back in 1976 a young electronic enthusiast in our village of Banjar Geluntung Kaja made an AM radio transmitter using scraps. Mounting the stick antenna onto a bamboo and tying it to a tree next to his house he started to broadcast local folk dramas. I was amazed at his skills and wanted to learn how it worked and pestered him with questions. Radio was new technology and given the political environment then he was made to stop his broadcast. I was deeply saddened by the closing of this radio station and hoped someday to establish a radio station of our own in the village.

Time flies but my fascination with radio never ceased. In 1994, along with my friends we made a simple 1 watt FM transmitter to broadcast during university programs and it turned out to be an effective mode of communication. Enthused by our initial success, we built another radio in 1997 for our field work and this not only aided our field work but helped build closeness between the students and the local people also.



Kubusiar or the broadcasting hut is how this bamboo structure-grass roofed studio is called. It's an important meeting point for the youths and kids.

So it was in 2008 during the *Galungan* and *Kuningan* festival - a celebration of prosperity in Bali – that the *Kubusiar* or hut broadcast was started by our group named KAYON (*piKiran, katA dan karYa untuk harmOni lingkungan*). It was primarily to entertain our community and infuse some activism that the Radio Komunitas Orang Biasa was started. The radio was used to spread awareness about environmental issues, humanism, pluralism, etc. We hoped that the group name of KAYON which stands for thought, speech and deed for environmental harmony and respect for nature and culture for a better future would be made possible through the radio.

We use solar cells/photovoltaic panel to power the station and spread that knowledge among children and friends who come, discuss and share things with us.

We have a dream to entertain farmers, artisans, children; the peoples of our community while airing news and new information while keeping alive our traditional knowledge and culture. We hope to make the radio a part of everyone's life in the village whether he is a farmer working in his field or a housewife at home.

Today, the person who started the radio station in the 70s is our local *adat* (traditional village system leader). We are happy to keep his initiative alive and share the optimism that together we can do things even better.

Agung Putradhyana, Initiator of Radio Komunitas Orang Biasa can be contacted at [agungia@yahoo.com](mailto:agungia@yahoo.com)

### International Day Against Homophobia (IDAHO) 2011:

#### Stop Discrimination Against LGBT Community

- Noor Chasanah

**As part of its awareness raising efforts, Radio Suara Warga in Jombang, Indonesia observed the International Day Against Homophobia on 17 May, 2011 by conducting a radio talk show. The radio show was conducted by Noor with activists from four different local NGOs in Jombang. The following article is based on that talk show.**

Homosexual is a person sexually attracted to persons of the same sex. Homosexuals include males (gays) and females (lesbians). Fear of or contempt for lesbians and gay men and the resulting behavior based on such a feeling is homophobia.



Talk show on Commemoration of IDAHO

Aan Anshori, from Islamic Network of Anti-Discrimination (JIAD) in Surabaya said that the International Day Against Homophobia (IDAHO), which is commemorated annually on May 17, still invited mixed reactions amongst people of Indonesia. The IDAHO commemoration was expected to stop all forms of violence, hatred and discrimination against homosexual community. "The issue of sexual orientation is a human right, so we should not discriminate against homosexual community" added Aan.

Aan said that in Indonesia, recognition and protection of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community is still very minimal. "Their existence is never recognized; even the right to organize is not permitted as demonstrated by the dissolution of LGBT meeting in Kaliurang, Jogjakarta. When the National Commission of Human Rights conducted a human rights training for transvestites in Depok, Jakarta it was also disbanded by a group of people led on behalf of a particular community organizations." Aan added. Until now, none of these cases have been brought to court. Members from the homosexual community still experience problems to apply for a civil/government positions, he said.

Alfiah Ashmad, a woman activist from Narishakti organisation in Jombang also agreed with Aan. She said the state or government still intervened in the realm of private life of citizens. The real picture was the state still discriminated against homosexual groups as evident from the Family Card which states male as the head of the family and female as his wife or partner. The Marriage Laws in Indonesia also did not cover the legalization of homosexual couples (gays or lesbians). "Homosexual groups still experience discrimination ranging from personal, family and community to all aspects of religious, social, education and employment opportunities" added Alfi.

Alfi pointed that the social pressure from the community is so much that homosexual community dare not declare their sexual orientation for fear of being ostracized. "People still think that the community of homosexuals does not exist because their sexual orientation is different from the society in general, so that their existence is not recognized" she added.

Palupi Pusporini, Director of the Women's Crisis Center in Jombang said that a person with homosexual orientation is in part influenced by biological factors at birth and some are also influenced by environmental factors of surrounding communities.

Fifi Ekawati Rohmah, Chairman of the Indonesian Women's Coalition in Jombang added, "Actually, there is a homosexual community in Jombang, but they dare not show their status to the public because fear of a negative stigma and worry on being discriminated against."

Fifi called upon every individual as a fellow human being to mutually respect and appreciate all the differences that exist in the society including the existence of homosexuals around us.

*Noor Chasanah works with CR Suara Warga and can be contacted at [ana@suarawarga.info](mailto:ana@suarawarga.info)*