



**Community Radio in Asia:  
putting people in charge**

edited by Carlos A. Arnaldo  
principal author Louie N. Tabing

Tambuli Community Radio and  
CRDL Enterprises  
Laguna, Philippines  
2008

Cover design by Anna Claire Pot







# Community Radio in Asia: putting people in charge

**Carlos A. Arnaldo**

Editor

**Louie N. Tabinog**

Principal Author

Prepared and published with the financial support of the  
UNESCO International Programme for the Development of Communication

Tambuli Foundation  
Metro Manila  
2008





## Foreward by UNESCO

Poverty is not always about the absence of money. Of much greater negative impact upon people's lives and their development of livelihoods is their lack of Voice.

An effective Voice nurtures and supports the collaborative energies of communities, feeds entrepreneurial spirits, resolves conflicts, supports sharing of ideas and insights, entertains and educates and leads towards achievement of that primary goal of all free and independent people – Sustainable Development!

People need to have the means of their own development constantly available to them – this is the essence of empowerment!

These means are perfectly expressed by four principles that are high on UNESCO's agenda: freedom of expression; high quality educational opportunities; access to information and knowledge; and respect for people's cultural and linguistic diversities.

This concept of Voice and its central, critical, essential importance to people's development is encapsulated and subsumed by the marvelous tool of development known as Community Radio.

The time has come for a body of work on "Community Radio" that is a reflection of the actual experiences of the users of this dynamic tool. This would be a welcome departure from what is usually described as "the potential of Community Radio" and a "possible" contributor to people's ability to direct their own development.

This long overdue publication is a compilation of stories, articles, essays, anecdotes, participatory and eyewitness accounts, including tips for producers and would-be practitioners, all based on many years of hard-earned experiences. Readers will be introduced to the process of transformation of this ‘potential’ to real achievements as people’s perspectives and horizons are changed by the unique opportunities, circumstances and situations that only community radio can create.

It tells stories of simple, grassroots people and their success in learning new technologies and making unique and notable contributions to broadcasting. It also demonstrates the spread of responsible citizenship and the multiple benefits that can flow from an effective, community managed and controlled mass medium. It gives examples of the achievement of media literacy and ways to spread ideas about decision making, accountability, responsible behavior, causes and effects and the means by which collective security might be advanced.

UNESCO has been publishing, over the past three decades or so a number of studies and other works on community media and community radio (See website at [www.unesco.org/webworld](http://www.unesco.org/webworld)).

This publication however, is informed by a thorough understanding of community radio stations, shares insights into their operations, successes and failures in Asia. From the pioneering efforts in Sri Lanka, supported by UNESCO and IPDC and later other UN and development agencies, to really unique and special achievements of community radio stations in countries like the Philippines and Nepal, and to a lesser extent, East Timor, Mongolia, Indonesia and Thailand, readers can make their own assessments and form their own conclusions particularly in light of more recent community empowerment efforts in countries such as India and Bangladesh.



It is to be noted that India's November 2006 opening of Community Radio to wider civil society has blazed a trail for community radio in South Asia. Neighbouring countries such as Bangladesh have now followed suit and the Maldives and Bhutan are also considering this medium as an important tool for social development. Nepal, also is considering moving towards a separate policy for community radio as part of its new media legislation.

The stories of Community Radio and development are incredibly similar from country to country, around the world—from struggles for policy formulation and adoption to actual operationalisation and functioning.

While some of the greatest benefits have come from the new opportunities created for development and distribution of local content, a critical factor remains the question of ownership. Indeed, on reflection many reasons for lack of success may be traced back to this vital component.

The information in this book should be of good use to policy makers, development workers and activists as well as the would-be and current community radio practitioner worldwide. It is not exhaustive to say the least, but paves the way for many such works emanating from different regions around the world.



**Jocelyne Josiah**

Adviser in Communication and Information  
UNESCO, New Delhi, April 2008

## PREFACE

“Putting people in-charge” is not only a powerful statement about collective action, but also the philosophy behind people empowerment through radio at the community level. The phrase “putting people in charge” might as well be the title of this volume and the phrase “Community Radio in Asia” the subtitle. For this book is an exciting narrative of what it has taken committed professionals to bring the otherwise mundane concept of community radio into life in the remote areas of Asia. Reading through the chapters of this book, one realises that one is subjected to action and drama with a sprinkling of light comedy in one show.

Indeed, making community radio work is not as easy as it sounds. What we all hear from reports in conferences, seminars, training courses, and meetings of experts are the calculated excitement brought about by a mixture of studied assumptions and guarded expectations. What you read from the pages of this volume, buried beneath the elegance of language, are the hard work, sacrifices that have stretched human patience to the fullest, and intolerable lack of appreciation from people who otherwise should be the first to realise the potentials of community radio as a means of linking ordinary folks in far away places.



My own grounding as a professional and academic is in the area of rural educational broadcasting with orientation towards community broadcasting. This is where most of my field experience and work has evolved as a practitioner-cum-researcher. This is the reason why I can claim that I know a good book on community radio when I see one. This is such book.

Choy Arnaldo and Louie Tabing showed great teamwork in getting together hard core practitioners to write about their experiences and share their wisdom to practitioners and students of community radio. One cannot get a better view of the realities of community radio than through the pages of this book. Indeed, I learned much more from this book than I have from dozens of other books and publications on the same subject matter written by experts who speak more from a theoretical perspective than from real world experience.

From the candid accounts of Sri Lanka's Mahaweli Community Radio project, to Nepal's backpack radio, to India's patience-stretching maneuvers to get its community radio projects off the ground, to the Philippines' Tambuli community radio projects, one easily benefits from a wide range of rich, ground zero experiences that cannot even be unearthed from the current scientific literature on community broadcasting.

The inevitable question that one asks after reading this book is: where is community radio heading? The various country experiences expounded in this book have a clear and definite direction laid out for community radio. This is clearly enunciated by Arnaldo and Tabing in their epilog where they said:

*. . . while the thrust of community radio has so far been mainly on hertzian waves, the future challenge is to expand to the World Wide Web. And there it will be enriched by photos, video, live radio and live TV. But it may no longer be community radio as we know it today.*



Indeed, the inter-marriages among community radio, computerisation, telecommunications, digital audio and video, and the World Wide Web has ushered in a new dawn in people empowerment through localised application of the new technologies of communication.

Welcome to community broadcasting – the next dimension!

Dr. Felix Librero  
Chancellor,  
University of the Philippines System

## Acknowledgments

Our deep gratitude goes to several specialists who contributed in various ways to the preparation of these insights into community radio in Asia. First is a humble professor of development communication at the University of the Philippines Institute of Mass Communication, Alex T. Quarmyne, assigned as UNESCO expert to the Philippines, whose quiet intelligence and deep reflections have inspired many a communicator around the world. He is retired now in Ghana and with his wife Wilna Wijangco, formerly production manager of DZJO, Infanta Quezon, they co-manage Radio Ada, a community radio station. I must also cite our common UNESCO chief, the late Frank Goodship, former Royal Canadian Air Force Pilot and TV producer at the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. Frank was the controversial chief who listened to his field men on long telephone calls from Kingston, Manila, Delhi, Nairobi, Freetown, Lagos, and gave encouragement, advice and always innovative ideas. The financial source was the International Programme for the Development of Communication, under the chairmanship of the late Torben Krogh, Danish journalist, and UNESCO consultant, who was above all, a fount of friendship and professional fraternity

In the projects, future looking inspiration was always given by the late DTL Guruge, former director general of Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation who encouraged his broadcasters to go to the villages and wear the sarong; the late EST Fernando, former deputy director general for Regional Programmes of SLBC who led the Mahaweli Community Radio to experiment in new forms; Knud Ebbesen who adapted many of the practical techniques of the Danish Tape Workshop to the rural realities of Sri Lanka; Wijayananda Jayaweera, MJR David, Sunil Wijesinghe, Harishchandra Perera, the early pioneers of community radio in Sri Lanka; Bharat Koirala, laureate of the

Ramon Magsaysay Award 2004, journalist and writer, former director of the Nepal Press Institute — the concept and inspiration behind many of the community radio initiatives in Nepal; Madhu Acharya, for his advice and onsite assistance at Radio Sagarmatha in Kathmandu and the community stations in Lumbini, Tansen and Madanpokhara; Ashish Sen, Ramnath Bhat, Amena and the staff of Voices for their care and assistance in understanding the Indian situation and coaxing along the villagers of Budikote to become community broadcasters; the late Martin Allard, inventor of the electronic mailbox and the low-power FM transmitters used on UNESCO projects, who was an inspiration to us and many of our community radio makers; the late Jake Mills, former Chief Engineer of Ghana Broadcasting Corporation who designed a low cost mixer and helped UNESCO bring low-cost community radio to Africa; Dr Lourdes Quisumbing, secretary general of the UNESCO National Commission of the Philippines, who lent her stature and management expertise to the Tambuli Project; Lex Librero, then chairman of the Institute of Development Communication, who aside from serving as member of the Tambuli management team is regarded collectively with Choy Arnaldo and Louie Tabing as the ‘fathers’ of Tambuli community radio; Deboy Barcelona, Rex Navarro, Maricel Habito, Louie Teodoro, Georgina Encanto, Cris Maslog and Isagani Yambot who all served in the Project management team; Rina Ordonez, impeccably conscientious with records and care for detail and order; Romy Carballo, former ABS-CBN network radio engineer who felt more comfortable with ‘little radio’; Edgar Mendoza who accompanied us on several of the field trips and explained to us in simple language the workings of the radio transmitter he designed for our many projects; Quiddie Labindao, radio technician, formerly Radio Veritas, who set up the technical operations; Malou Angolluan, community broadcaster from Cabagan, Isabelita who smoothed out our field trips and always added her poignant, ‘eye-experienced’ views to our discussions.

For the preparation of this book, we thank Anna Claire Pot, young Filipina designer studying in France, who made the imaginative cover integrating Asian symbols with the process of community radio; Niña Balagot and Dunstan Decena, who in addition to authoring chapters, assisted in editing and preparing the book layout. My long time contemporary at Radio Veritas and mentor in rural broadcasting, Louie Tabing did an excellent selection of community radio stations in Asia and has given us his long years of grassroots experience in authoring several chapters. This book would not have been possible without the unfailing support and patience of our dear colleague, Jocelyne Josiah, UNESCO Communication Adviser to the Caribbean and to Asia, who brings to this work her precise reflections and field experience of media projects and community radio in the Caribbean and Asia.

Sincere gratitude is also due to those who provided photos for this work: Madhu Acharya (MA), Carlos Arnaldo (CAA), Knud Ebbesen (KEE), Rajiu from Budikote (Rajiu), Louie Tabing (LNT) and UNESCO (UNESCO).

Much of our inspiration is derived from the many men, women and children in rural communities who demonstrated eagerness and optimism for the betterment of their life from the time that community radio brought forth their voices. We also cite the dedicated radio volunteers who selflessly put in time, resources, talent and stature in the name of service. Every time these volunteers and community people enthusiastically speak of radio, their eyes light up. And this evokes a kindling of hope in their hearts and in ours.

And there are many others, from many parts of the world, who each in his/her way have given an idea, an inspiration, a method to try. For community radio is far larger than its own community. With the internet and radio streaming community radio is global, and so are its pioneers.

This treasure of experiences is dedicated to Martin E. Allard, who set up community radios in more than 40 countries, starting with Homa Bay, Kenya in 1982, the Philippines, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Mongolia, Trinidad and Tobago, Surinam, Jamaica (Roots FM in Kingston), Haiti, Barbados and Guyana, Cape Verde, Tanzania and Uganda. Bright as he was, Martin was never threatening, he always insisted on the human interface. He once wrote: “Given trust and goodwill, these close working relationships are the very essence of what the founding fathers of UNESCO intended”. He died of cerebral malaria in Malindi, Kenya, his home in 2003.



# Community Radio in Asia : putting people in charge

## Table of Contents

UNESCO Foreward	vii
Preface by Dr. Felix Librero	x
Acknowledgments	xiii
<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<i>by Carlos Arnaldo</i>	
<b>2. Sri Lanka</b>	<b>13</b>
The Sound of Barefoot Radio <i>by MJR David</i>	13
Field Based Community Radio Production: microphones with pots and pans <i>by MJR David</i>	16
Guirandurokotte: localised community radio <i>by MJR David</i>	20
Kothmale: radio browsing the Internet <i>by MJR David</i>	30

### 3. Nepal 39

Nepal's Mass Media: the long road  
to community radio and Madanpokhara 39  
*by Vinaya Kasajoo*

Madanpokhara: a handful of rice 45  
*by Vinaya Kasajoo*

Backpack Radio 71  
*by Madhu Acharya*

Doko Radio: bringing information to people's doorsteps 73  
*by Ninamma Rai*

### 4. Philippines 87

Tambuli Community Radio: a strategy for upscaling 87  
*by Louie Tabing*

Echo from a Highland Valley 107  
*by Louie Tabing*

Child-friendly Action is Total Development 120  
*by Louie Tabing*

DWEE 107.1 FM: Changing Paradigms in Public Service 128  
*by Dunstan Lamberto T. Decena II*

Children Broadcasters: small hands on radio 136  
*by Gerniña C. Balagot*

The Voice of Manduyog 144  
*by Porferio G. Bullo*

Balinsasayaw: the faint crier in the Sulu Sea 162  
*by Louie Tabing*

Olutanga, the World's Most Beautiful Island <i>by Louie Tabing</i>	174
Partido: a stolen hope <i>by Louie Tabing</i>	189
<b>5. India</b>	<b>205</b>
India: sculpting the identity of community radio <i>by Ashish Sen and Ramnath Bhat</i>	205
Namma Dhwani: building a community to build radio, Abridged and adapted from the research report prepared <i>by Seema B. Nair, Megan Jennaway and Andrew Skuse,</i> <i>Local Information Networks: the Namma Dhwani Media Centre</i>	210
Namma Dhwani : Challenges to community radio in India <i>by Ashish Sen and Ramnath Bhat</i>	236
<b>6. Project Manager's Notes</b> <i>by Louie Tabing</i>	<b>241</b>
<b>7. Epilog</b> <i>by Carlos Arnaldo and Louie Tabing</i>	<b>281</b>
<b>Selected Annotated Bibliography</b>	<b>301</b>
<b>Contributors</b>	<b>305</b>

# 1

## Introduction: putting people in charge

by Carlos A. Arnaldo

In Asia, community radio is actually a rarity among the various forms of broadcasting: public service, commercial, and different kinds of educational or community radio or television. It exists in some countries as an experiment, in others as a 'preparatory stage' or a multimedia centre waiting for a license to broadcast. Where community radio has flourished, it remains fragile, with the exception of a few stations in the Philippines, Nepal and Sri Lanka. Public Service Broadcasting, a monopoly of the state in many countries, with the opening of the air waves and the demands of commercialisation in the late 1980s, has had



*Communication is development. Speaking on radio (in Bocaue, Timor Leste) creates the dialogue with the community and with the leaders, for informed decision-making. (CAA)*

to give way to the abrupt arrival of commercial radio and television by hertzian waves, by cable and satellite, and today by telephone and Internet. In that whole movement of the last thirty years, community radio has played a very small part, but important part.

Nonetheless where it has been introduced, community radio has usually left its imprint, in terms of a greater enlightenment, a sense of self-will and self-propelled development, enhanced politicisation and civic consciousness, and a greater appreciation of women's rights. Through community radio, people have begun to 'take charge' of their own lives, of their communities. Through radio, they find themselves participating at the local level in the macro politics of the national level. Hence the inspiration for the sub-title of this book, 'putting people in charge.'

For this review and analysis of community radio, we focus on four countries, where significant efforts have been made by UNESCO and other international agencies in cooperation with national partners, sometimes individuals, sometimes educational or media training institutions. The purpose is not to find the most sustained and 'established' community radio in the region, nor to review all community radio projects. We take a closer look at: Sri Lanka where UNESCO started its experiment in Asia; Nepal, where there was a chance to set up an independent station; Philippines, where community work has made significant strides; and India, which now has all the legal support and procedures, but is still slow in implementing. We also study many failures and the reasons for failure.

After this analysis we hope to arrive at a number of insights concerning the creation and long term sustainability of community radio in this 'quantum leaping' Asian region. For here, with a third of the world's land mass, half the world's population and more than a fourth of the world's poor, community radio would seem to represent one viable solution.

Sri Lanka:  
from government broadcaster  
to semi-autonomous stations



*Kothmale combines community radio with free surfing on the Internet, giving a world source for information, and enabling multimedia production and interaction. (CAA)*

In Sri Lanka in 1979, there was a dynamic mix of partners: the Danish Tape Workshop (its director, Knud Ebbesen became the manager of the Mahaweli Community Radio project); Danida, which provided financing; and the Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation, whose senior officers, notably DTL

Guruge, then director general, and EST Fernando, deputy director general of Regional Programmes were pioneers in this new form of broadcasting. In that paradise country of ancient temples and rice paddies, community radio started with the rudiments of field based production and transmission over the existing regional stations in the country. Production was based at an old set of buildings near the University in the city of Kandy.

This model, highly successful as an introduction of community radio, was later analysed as expensive and taxing on manpower and facilities. It naturally evolved into station-based broadcasting in Guirandurokotte, which had the advantages of being situated in an all agency development centre in a rural town. Here the station became quickly identified with its grassroots audience and flourished through its involvement with the many development projects initiated by scores of agencies. The project then moved further along to dovetail its broadcast work with multimedia functions and access to the Internet. Kothmale pioneered the first broadcasts of 'radio browsing' the web and integrating multimedia work with radio production. This project also laboured through the most difficult period of Sri Lanka's ethnic strife and political chaos, forcing at least three of its senior personnel to vacate their positions.

Guirandurokotte and Kothmale radio stations have nonetheless survived, and today remain dynamic model community radio stations. MJR David, pioneer rural broadcaster of the Mawaheli Community Radio from its start recounts the evolution of radio in Sri Lanka, from field based production to high technology integration on the Internet.



## Nepal: radio from a basket of flowers?



*Malou Angolluan of Tambuli shows various research files to Bharat Koirala, Ramon Magsaysay Lauréate 2004, during his evaluation study of Tambuli Community Radio. (CAA)*

In Nepal, UNESCO worked for many years with individual communication specialists, like Bharat Koirala, former editor-in-chief of the *Rising Nepal*, and soon after director of the Nepal Press Institute and the Worldview International Foundation Video Workshop. In this Himalayan country, one is faced with a parliamentary government which at that time, 1985 to 1990 was shadowed by a ‘royal’ cabinet whose decisions were overriding and irrevocable. Effectively, Nepal was ruled by the monarchy. While the idea of community radio was openly received and politely discussed, there was no question of the national broadcaster, Radio Nepal, releasing hold of its monopoly on



broadcasting. UNESCO sought to provide equipment and training in 1993 but the proponents were to wait another four years before Radio Sagarmatha obtained its license to broadcast from the government, after a fairly progressive Communication Policy paper and eventually, the new Broadcasting Act which finally led to the guidelines for applying for a license. Since 29 May 2008, a 601-seat Constituent Assembly voted almost unanimously to dissolve the monarchy and return the country to democratic government, thus declaring Nepal “an independent, indivisible, sovereign, secular and an inclusive democratic republic nation.” It is believed that the rise of new media in the early 1990s including desk-top newspapers, and later, community radio, has given freer reign to self-expression and more critical thinking about monarchical and democratic practices.



*One is faced with a parliamentary government which at that time, 1985 to 1990 was shadowed by a ‘royal’ cabinet whose decisions were overriding and irrevocable. (CAA)*

But during the reign of the monarchy, Radio Sagarmatha had its ups and downs, its personnel arrested, its services interrupted, but there has always been strong public support from the people who even marched in the streets. Radio Sagarmatha is still broadcasting, but its mission today has grown far beyond the mandate of a simple community station. Nonetheless, it was the establishment of Sagarmatha in 1997 that led to the establishment of over 100 private commercial stations, and some 27 community radios in the country.

In the study at hand, we zoom in on two significant experiments. Ninamma Rai tells us about *doko* or backpack radio, an experiment to demystify radio broadcasting and prepare rural communities to eventually set up and operate their own community radio. *Doko* is a native woven basket attached with thongs and carried on one's back. It holds everything from flowers, to food items, bio-gas paddy cakes, firewood, and goods purchased in towns. Vinaya Kasajoo provides an in-depth perspective of Nepal media in general and then focuses on Community Radio Madanpokhara, a rural station perched atop a small hill and reaching several districts.

In sharp contrast to its success region-wide, Madanpokhara's financial base, claims its manager, is simply, a handful of paddy rice!

## Philippines: a foundation continues community radio development



The Philippines has perhaps the longest running community radio project in the world. Started in 1990, the Tambuli Community Radio Foundation in 2008, eight years after the donors have departed, is still consulting and training and setting up radio stations with various types of partners.

Following the experiences of the Mahaweli Community Radio, the project sought to set up a project base in Manila with a training facility and radio equipment. Professionals were recruited from the broadcasting industry and research institutes to run the operations. The early stations were set up with IPDC assistance on the University of the Philippines Diliman campus as a token of goodwill and also as a learning facility for the

Institute of Mass Communication; in the rural town of Laurel, an hour's ride from Manila; and in the northernmost island of Batanes. The University radio continues today. Laurel was closed down a year after operations, because of political differences. In Batanes, the government broadcaster, appreciating the strategic reasons for the establishment of the Tambuli station, the only voice of the Philippines in that northern sector with stations from Hong Kong, Taiwan and China easily heard, set up their own 5 kilowatt medium wave station and eventually recruited all the Tambuli personnel.

But the Tambuli Community Radio project continued and set up 24 other community stations in almost every major region of the country. Tambuli is at present assisting a university in Indang, Cavite, a local privately run high school in General Trias, Cavite, and a local government unit in Batanes to set up small local stations. Together with some 36 other community stations run by religious organisations and private universities, this represents almost 15% of the broadcast industry, a formidable portion. The latest endeavour, as of this writing, is a new community station in Jagna, a coastal town on the island of Bohol.

Louie Tabing, project manager of Tambuli Community Radio, and a rural broadcaster by profession, tells us the story of a selection of Tambuli stations. Together with broadcasters and researchers from the Philippine Federation of Rural Broadcasters and the Institute of Development Communication at the University of the Philippines, Los Baños, Louie began discussing community radio with the townsfolk, organising media councils and training personnel for these 24 and more stations. Other station stories are told by Porferio G. Bullo, broadcaster and director of the extension services of the University of the Philippines College of Agriculture, in Banga, Aklan; and by Dunstan Lamberto T. Decena II and Gerniña C. Balagot, researchers.

## India: from cable to broadcast

In juxtaposition to Nepal, India may feel somewhat left behind by that little Himalayan kingdom's progressive attitude to community radio, having the legislation and the technical ability to set up community radio despite its status as one of the poorest countries of Asia. Nonetheless, in view of the frequent clashes the Nepal monarchy has been having with community media as the alternate voice and opinion maker of the country, and a direct challenge to the national media system, the perceived slowness of official India to make community radio a reality, may seem justified. These considerations, and a fair



*Rajiu, editing for the news report. A Minister was recorded on radio and television as saying that India could use some 5,000 such community radio stations. (CAA)*



amount of uncertainty, could indeed have contributed to the caution being exhibited, as guidelines are set in motion to enable the creation nationwide of community radio and as the machinery takes its time in implementing the new Broadcasting Law.

On the other hand, the citizenry, and specifically those individuals and associations involved in the struggle to set up independent media systems, multimedia centres and community radio are puzzling out the reasons for tardy action in this sphere which in terms of social development, education, women's rights, freedom of expression and all civil rights, seems to make so much sense. An experiment to set up several score campus radios under the tutelage of the Indira Gandhi Open University system has somewhat mollified the demand for breaking the monopoly of All India Radio, but these stations are rooted on university campuses and mainly in large cities. Even though some of these stations have made use of farm broadcasting to reach rural areas, they have not generally engaged the commitment of communities to contribute programming aimed at their specific problems. One Minister was recorded on radio and television as saying that India could use some 5,000 such community radio stations. The first truly community station has yet to get on air.

While the struggle is administratively slow, the interim has not been sterile. A Supreme Court decision in February 1995 declared the airwaves as public domain and this has been the basis of hope and the foundation of most policy formulation to date. UNESCO, UNDP together with national NGOs such as VOICES in Bangalore have been organising regular seminars, meetings and colloquia inviting representatives of government and the private sector to dialogue mutually. These meetings have contributed to putting the agenda forward and advancing in slow steps. Towards the end of 2005 a cabinet paper was prepared and sent to line ministries for comment on two

questions, the power of transmitters and the limits on advertising time in order to assure a more socially and community oriented radio rather than just another commercial enterprise.

The new Broadcasting Law is now enacted and the procedural guidelines are in place. Significant progress is thus being made in India at the level of government policy and procedure. The next five years will show the results of today's legislative advances.

Meanwhile, our study visits the small rural town of Budikote to examine one community cable radio well on its way to broadcast. This is Namma Dhwani, our voices, a small community radio run by mainly young people in a town wedged in by three states, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, and speaking three languages. The story of Namma Dhwani is told by Seema B. Nair, a UNESCO consultant; Megan Jennaway, University of Queensland, and Andrew Skuse, University of Adelaide. Ashish Sen, director of VOICES, and Ramnath Bhat, project coordinator of VOICES, give an analytic perspective.

# 2

## The Sound of Barefoot Radio

by MJR David

In Sri Lanka, as in many Asian countries, radio started in colonial times as an urban oriented media industry. The Sri Lanka Broadcasting Act of 1966 gave the monopoly of broadcasting to the Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation. The daily attire was a starched shirt and tie, neatly pressed trousers, and shined black shoes, though often dusty by mid-day. In the early days, radio people spoke English and it was prestigious to be a member of the English News section. But this kind of radio rarely had any impact on the rural village. Could radio go barefoot? Wear a sari? And talk the local languages? Could it sing our songs and chant our hardships? Could it understand farming with hand-made implements, and fishing with hand woven nets?



*The village 'troubadour' calls the people to participate in the radio cultural show. (CAA)*



In 1980, caravans of trucks were passing by, loaded with furniture, kitchenware, stone pots, and home goods. Fathers rode up front with the driver; mothers and children balanced themselves on top of their belongings pitched high on the trucks. They were part of the one million settlers taken from the verdant Mahaweli Valley to be resettled up stream in new territory. This was part of the Government's plan, to support one major project, the construction of a network of dams, which would revitalise the economy nationwide. We wondered if radio could help those people move and resettle, and improve their own economic lot in life.

In the same year, the Mahaweli Community Radio project began with the lightning visit of UNESCO project officer, Carlos Arnaldo; Knud Ebbesen a Danida consultant; and a British Engineer, Rod Snell from a related project. After talks in Colombo, they went around the island, stopping at Anuradhapura, a key city in the north. The Head of News, Wijayananda Jayaweera joined them on a visit to some of the nearby villages. But the UNESCO fellow kept separating from the pack and going into little nooks and corners of the village, stopping by houses to say hello. Jaya, as he is called for short, followed him with his Uher tape recorder and microphone. "Good day to you," said UNESCO. "Ayobuwan," echoed Jaya. And he stuck out his microphone capturing this bilingual exchange, "And your husband is in the fields planting?"



*Meeting of the MCR team in Kandy with Ole Aabenhus and Martin Allard, 1982 (KEE)*

“No, he went to town to buy supplies, we cannot plant, the land is too dry, no rain, no rivers, no water . . . .”

Afterwards, UNESCO said to Jaya, “Say, that’s very handy work with your recorder, just what we need for community radio, would you like to join the project?”

“Me, no, I’m a professional broadcaster, none of this little radio for me! But I now have some good interviews for the news tonight.”

Jaya later became the Mahaweli Community Radio Project Organiser and managed the project site at Mahailupalama near Anuradapura. He is now Director of Communication and IPDC at UNESCO in Paris.

Briefly, the concept was to set up a base for management, training, research, production work and technical maintenance in a central part of the Mahaweli Valley region. Kandy was the first site and served for regular monthly trips to the villages where the team of producers and technicians recorded programmes and edited them with the villagers. The teams returned to base and prepared their materials for broadcast on the regional stations of Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation. They also stocked music and interviews for their library.

Over some twenty-five years, the Mahaweli Community Radio Project has pioneered three major experiments in community radio in Asia:

- Field-based community radio production (visiting Mahaweli settlements and producing programmes with the settlers for broadcast over regional network stations);
- Localised community radio stations (semi-autonomous small community radio stations with social and geographical proximity to the listeners);
- Digitally-enabled community radio stations (convergence of localised community radio with new communication technologies, also known as multi-media centres).

“There is nothing darker in the world than a Sri Lankan village after sundown.”

—*Knud Ebbesen, Project Manager Mahaweli Community Radio, formerly Radio Denmark*

## Field-based Community Radio Production: microphones with pots and pans

by MJR David

“We are being paid to go on a picnic.” That was how a colleague of mine described our first field trip. We were two senior producers, a technician, one or two trainees, grips, driver and cook in two jeeps on a maiden voyage to a far flung village in the dry zone where settlers were being located.

Arriving at the village site, we quickly discovered that the trip was hardly a picnic. The place was poverty-stricken. Some people were occupied with digging for gems, making rich landowners richer and turning many farmers into wage labourers. A week before, a labourer was suspected of hiding a gem; he was killed and buried in a gem pit. Nonetheless, we were met with smiles.

In order to work more efficiently and intimately with the villagers, we quickly adopted a programme approach culled from debates with the villagers themselves. These discussions sometimes lasted late into the night under the star-studded sky. Some were quite heated. These became our constant list of do’s and don’ts.

### **Programme cycle**

We visited the village on two separate occasions, staying four days each time. On the first visit, we introduced ourselves and explained the production procedure. We also held discussions to try to understand their problems and what issues might be good content for the programmes. Only after this first feeling out, did we actually start recording interviews and edit

programmes with the villagers. On the second trip we continued the interviews and recordings. We then edited all this into a two-hour programme with the villagers, encouraging them to comment, edit, remove or redo portions as they wished. It was tedious and time consuming but a valuable learning experience on both sides. On the last day we usually held a cultural show, letting the people sing songs or recite poems or tell stories. Some of these shows went on to the wee hours of the morning, so eager were the villagers to show their talents. Of course, we carefully collected these cultural clips and documented them for later research.

Before leaving, we gave villagers a chance to listen to the programme and make the necessary changes. Programmes were broadcast over regional radio stations under the Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation (SLBC) in a special two-hour slot. Despite the many successes, we were very conscious to identify areas where we had limited success, as well as villages where we were not effective at all.

### **How the Programme impacts on village life**

In the course of our community radio work, we often came across many issues beyond our scope. On a visit to a Mahaweli settlement in the North Central region, Sunil Wijesinghe discovered that many children did not have birth certificates. This meant that they were not going to be able to claim their land from their parents when the time came. Upon further inquiry, Sunil also discovered that many of the couples were not legally married. After discussion with the authorities and village elders, Sunil organised a mass wedding ceremony. And surprisingly, even grandfathers and grandmothers came forth to solemnise their marriages. And long after this programme, the Mahaweli Authority continued to receive requests from villages to solemnise weddings!

### **Do's and Don'ts**

When selecting a village to visit, be sure that the community really wants you to visit them.

Always take enough food with you so as not to be a burden to the villagers.

Visit the village with an open mind, beware of preconceived programme ideas.

Always try to relate yourself to the villagers on equal terms, avoid acting like an elite broadcaster visiting the village.

Be simple and wear a sarong in the village.

Sleep at a communal place.

Listen with patience. Villagers are not trained to speak on the microphone like officials or politicians.

Think how local problems may relate to a broader picture.

Do not hold stereotypes of officials and politicians. Whenever possible, take them to the village and interview them in front of the villagers.

Let the language of experience resonate louder than the voice of knowledge.

In many of the regions, banking and loans are critical to the life of the village. But often, many farmers default on their loans and stop all contact with the bank. This is non-productive for it also pre-empts all future loans and banking relations. Harishchandra Perera was able to convince farmers in Mahaweli system B to revisit banks after having been unable to pay back loans due to low crop production. With the support of the Mahaweli programmes, a new dialogue was fostered between farmers and bank officials.

On another occasion, Mahaweli officials wanted to popularise 'ramie,' a fibre producing plant, used in weaving

textiles. Together, the Mahaweli officials and the team organised an exhibition at the Mahaweli base in Mahailupalama, System H. According to Sunil, one villager, very keen to know more about ramie, said that he travelled 52 miles to visit the exhibition site.

Overall, the Mahaweli programmes resulted in the promotion of new innovations and specifically, the creation of many new and innovative ways to ensure livelihood, dispute settlement, and better use of public utilities. It was also a venue to expose corrupt officials.

Nonetheless, from hindsight, I can point to two shortcomings. First, with all our mobility and endeavours to reach so many villages, we did not pay sufficient attention to maintaining some kind of regular contact with our listeners in villages already visited. This might have been done with something as simple and even as banal as mail, as Sri Lanka does have an efficient mail service even to the far villages! There was a plan to revisit some villages, but that was frequently sidetracked to favour visits to new villages. Even occasional evaluation research did not manage to stimulate re-contacting these pioneer village producers. I can imagine with their own improved experience, these villagers could make excellent programmes.

Second, we were all aware of the high costs of this mobile production system, two jeeps, and eight people on mission for two times, four days a month. Output: one programme of two hours. Hence, without renouncing this method, some of the producers proposed a variation of the programme operations, doing Mahaweli type programmes from a fixed community base, in other words, a semi-autonomous community station under the SLBC network.

## Guirandurokotte: localised community radio

by MJR David

After two years of field based programming, many of us felt it was time to move forward. It was an auspicious Monday morning in 1986 when Cyril Rajapaksha, at that time the Organiser of the Project, walked in and asked, “Who is willing to go to Guirandurukotte?” That was the name of the new town in the lower Mahaweli basin. It was going to be home to 25,000 settlers. When we passed there two years ago for a survey, Guirandurokotte was a dirt road with wooden huts selling vegetables or serving tea. Rising clouds of dust, weary looking men determined to till new land and breastfeeding women are the images that still remain in my mind.

I was therefore prompted to ask myself, would radio be of any use to these men, women and children?



*Nihal preparing for broadcast at Radio Guirandurokotte. (CAA)*



### Where is Kolyani?

In the early days, when MCR had its base in Kandy, a UNESCO visitor wanted to inspect the library and see the recorded music as well as how the programmes were stocked and documented. But the library was closed and the librarian, Kolyani, was no where to be found. This went on for several days, until one team came back from village duty. And there was Kolyani slouching in the back seat hugging her Uher tape recorder, or rather an extra one consigned to the library for auditioning.

“Where were you?” asked Knud Ebbesen, the Project Manager, stern but having great difficulty hiding a smile.

“Sir, I wanted to learn field recording too because I heard it is so exciting to meet with the villagers, and here in the library, I don’t meet anybody.”

“So you took an Uher and jumped into the jeep?”

“Uhh, yes, I did.”

Actually, Kolyani also wanted to be with her boy friend, Sunil, she feared leaving him in the village alone! Later the two married and have managed the flagship Kothmale station from its start.

Together with Wijedasa Hewage, senior producer (who later became Deputy Director General of the SLBC), Sunil Abeysiri, Director of the Sinhala service and Werasingha Karunanayaka, controller of a community radio bordering the conflict zone in Eastern Sri Lanka, the challenge was faced. I followed this work assiduously, and was later assigned as Station Manager.

In a few months, the Guirandurokotte team realised that radio dealing directly with the social and economic issues of the community was highly successful. People were buying batteries to listen to their transistor radios. The entire settlement was tuned-in on Friday nights particularly to hear the Residential



Project Manager respond to issues and problems in the community. These were often related to bureaucratic inefficiencies in the lower level administrative offices.

For instance, prime resources of land and water were always controlled by the officials who seemed to have absolute authority over the lives of the settlers and with no other recourse. In Guirandurokotte, community radio opened a channel to address this issue.

This was also one of our early opportunities to get involved in serious field research, as the team had a stable base and focused on only one community, though a large one. As our colleagues were getting on with the test transmission, Wijayananda Jayaweera, the programme organiser and Ole Aabehus, a Danish broadcaster, emphasised the need for a research-based scientific approach. Anthropologist, Aruna Dayaratna, was commissioned to study how community radio could better serve the needs of settlers.

After several months' work, the study revealed that settlers could not be classified into simple categories. Each group had varying motivations in moving to the settlement, hence differing needs. For instance, settlers who came to the settlement mainly to own a residential plot of land, were interested in educating their children in the same area. Others were engaged in growing cash crops and were inclined to the use of Kavi facilities for agriculture. Aruna concluded that these were important pieces of information to be analysed if the community radio were to be of any use to settlers (Aruna: 1986).

## **Joining Guirandurukotte**

The Guirandurukotte community radio experience was not to be missed so I too joined the team. On a cool Monday



*Sign-on announcer at Radio Guirandurokotte, a farmer's daughter (CAA)*

morning, I was hunched in a small sardine-packed bus. We were clambering down the famous eleven winding bends from the central hills of Kandy to the slopes of the Mahaweli River where the Guirandurukotte settlement was situated. This was a large complex of buildings for international agencies, government offices, auditorium, workshops and various other utility rooms. The Guirandurokotte station was given two stories of one building in a corner of the complex.

Upon our arrival, I was met by a loud buzz of activity. Villagers were making programmes around the clock. An extension worker from a livestock farm walked in with the dates and venues for cattle vaccinations. Announcing cattle vaccinations on radio was a convenient way of servicing cattle owners, allowing them to converge in one location.

There was once an official who was in charge of buying paddy from farmers at a government certified price. Unknown to the people, he had private dealings with a businessman, and

allowed the latter to buy paddy at an unreasonably low market price. Before the community radio was set up, helpless farmers had no recourse but to sell their crops to this businessman because the official was nowhere to be found. With radio, the official's whereabouts are regularly announced, making him available to account for his actions.

As a result of the low turnout of women and children in immunisation clinics, the public health nurse suggested that the station should make programmes to encourage women to bring their children for immunisation.

From song requests to farmers announcing their lost cattle, community radio became a major part of people's lives. A farmer's daughter signed the station on every morning. Broadcasts began with updates on health, agriculture and enterprise development. We met with extension workers to find out how we could mutually help each other. This informal meeting provided us a more focused and coordinated approach in programming. Monitoring and evaluation were basic. We even occasionally dropped in on households at night to find out who was listening.

Looking back at the Guirandurukotte experience, we derived great satisfaction from the fact that we, simple, dedicated broadcasters had actually become the communication nucleus among the villagers. But this intimacy also made us more aware of the harsh reality which the settlers experienced on a day to day basis. Issues such as low crop production, harassment cases from officials, malnutrition and even an exceptionally high incidence of suicide made us realise that there was more to be done.

The stark reality prompted us to concentrate on two areas: first, we decided to systematically link programmes to ongoing activities; and second, to vigorously use radio to defend the rights of the settlers and give them a voice to make their frustrations known to authorities.

For the first objective, we developed the format of project broadcasting. All radio programmes were to be backed up by field activities. As subsidy crops were promoted in addition to paddy, discussions focused on subsidy crop cultivation—from crop selection to post harvest activities. An estimated 80 farmers enrolled in a club and actively participated in the programming. The area of Divulapalassa was selected for field-based health programming. On a weekly basis, health extension workers, volunteers and mothers met with the programme producer at the health clinic to improve the conditions in the settlement. When the project ended in a year's time, every house in Divulapalassa had sanitation and waste disposal facilities, lowering the incidence of illness among children.

### **School-on-the-Air**

Extension workers were overstretched and we realised that if we were to go beyond the traditional territories of radio, we needed a systematic approach. The School-on-the-Air was the outcome of our brainstorming session.

The European Commission that funded the Mahaweli Development Centre in Guirandurokotte, also supported the School-on-the-Air, launched in August 1988. It had five components, namely: Agriculture, English, Health, Applied Science and a quiz that is given on the air. In addition to making use of radio, video and billboards, field visits and extension activities were conducted to make a more comprehensive multimedia intervention.

The School-on-the-Air used a modular system of radio programming with the listeners enrolling in short coursers. All programmes had field-related activities. The agricultural programme developed a calendar which identified the agriculture-related activities. These were circulated among farmers who enrolled in the course. The calendar included a

summary of the day's programme in which farmers were requested to answer a question related to the discussion. The winners were awarded prizes during field days when farmers and extension workers met with the producer. Moreover, the health programme organised an oral health examination week for children, while the applied science programme discussed wild fires with trained volunteers.

### ***kavi kolaya: empowering listeners***

Empowering settlers was a tricky business. On the one hand, Guirandurokotte Community Radio was part of the state broadcasting system, and on the other, we were compelled to maintain cordial relations with the Mahaweli Authority, which was a gigantic agency compared to our little radio outfit. We then opted to address problems in a localised manner using folk media.



*Recording Kandyan drums (KEE)*

We used the *kavi kolaya*, a presentation of events or examples of social deviance in Sinhala verse. The *kavi kolaya* was written and presented by settlers themselves. Fictitious names were used and writers were provided the option of anonymity.

A content analysis of 500 *kavi kolaya* (1986-1988) revealed that the presentations covered themes ranging from deviant behaviour of government officials to sexual misbehaviour, and even general family problems. We always had to keep watch on the editorial side. Oftentimes, our mornings began with a counter complaint on the previous night's *kavi kolaya*. We acknowledged the right to respond in a constructive manner. But slowly, the use of *kavi kolaya* became a powerful tool of social change.

The most convincing evidence of the power of the *kavi kolaya* came while I was visiting a colleague who was hospitalised in the town of Kandy, about 60 miles from Guirandurokotte. A patient on the adjoining bed was asked to give way to another patient. He was furious but helpless, thinking that this was a result of not bribing the hospital staff hence, he was displaced. As he was getting off his bed, he said in jest, "If I were in Guirandurukotte, I would know what to do. I would write a *kavi kolaya* and expose them." This incident reinforced in us the significant influence of radio and innovative use of folk media such as *kavi kolaya*.

In search of a new format, we experimented with the folk drama *Sokari*. The story line of *Sokari* evolves around a young couple and their servant who migrated to Sri Lanka from India. The plot was ideal for adaptation because some of our listeners were also venturing to new lands. Themes such as malaria prevention, land mortgage and irrigation management were discussed. The script writer worked very closely with the



subject matter. The programme was well received and listeners themselves started writing scripts with some advice from extension workers.

## **Barefoot Research**

We often referred to the research undertaken at Guirandurukotte as barefoot research because we had to walk long distances to gather data and often had to improvise our methodologies. Although standard pre-tested questionnaires were handed out, we relied more on personal insights to interpret data. Listeners were encouraged to make use of diaries which became an additional source of feedback.

If a programme was not receiving adequate feedback, we wanted to know the reasons. When we advertised products and services, we asked traders if they brought additional sales. Spot checks were regularly carried out to measure the effectiveness of selected health and agriculture messages.

The School-on-the-Air quiz was an integral part of the educational programmes but also proved to be a useful research technique. The quiz was held in the vicinity of the schools and covered topics discussed in the programme. The score obtained by the participants provided us with an indicator to measure the effectiveness of the discussion as received by the participants. For instance, when it came to answering questions based on the science programme, participant performance was poor. Taking the cue, the matter of simplifying the content was discussed by the producer with the presenter.

Competitions were also great sources of feedback. The walls of the community radio were brightened up by collage-style mural paintings depicting how settlers viewed their community radio. Drawings evoked a million words.

Our volunteers were excellent sources of information when it came to deciding programme formats and themes.

## Civil Crisis

In 1988, we found a note at our doorstep: “Close the station and pack up - Patriotic Peoples Movement.” It was during this time that a rebellion was mounted against the government by militant youth from southern Sri Lanka. They were displeased about the way the government was handling the economy, and they disliked particularly the presence of Indian Peacekeeping forces deployed in the north to resolve ongoing ethnic conflict. The militant youth were out to cripple the government, with the latter having no hesitation in using an iron hand.

Needless to say, we the community broadcasters were caught in between. The government wanted us to operate to show that “it was business as usual,” while the militants wanted us to shut down to show that they succeeded in closing a radio station under government authority. Helplessly, we played it by ear. When the militants had the upper hand, we were silent. When the government security forces had the upper hand, we were compelled to broadcast. We played a few songs and spent sleepless nights wondering when we ourselves were going to be hit by bullets.



## Kothmale: radio browsing the Internet

by MJR David

As things turned from bad to worse, I was transferred to the regional radio station in the central hills of Kandy. But this escape route was short lived, for the Deputy Director-General of SLBC for Regional Programmes and the National Coordinator of the UNESCO Danida project, called me and hurriedly said: “Treat this as urgent. You have to set up a community radio within the next three days.” In my excitement, I could only say, “Yes.”



*Kothmale producer browsing the Internet (CAA)*

I caught the gravity of what I said only when I began to discuss with my colleagues that we were to set up a community radio in the upper hills of Kothmale. At the start of the MCR project we had visited this area while the villages, temples and century old rice paddies were still lining the verdant valleys.

Early morning, one could hear cows mooing and birds singing for their first bites. In 1990, however, the valley was flooded with the waters of the Mahaweli and along the roads of upper Kothmale, charred bodies of young men and women wearing ‘necklaces’ of burnt tires were a common site. These were the result not of racial strife directly, but of political vengeance ‘riding’ on the wrath of hatred. I asked myself if it would be worth risking our lives to set up a community radio station on an isolated hill top just to satisfy a government minister who had promised radio to the villagers.

Despite our fears and apprehension, we believed that we had a unique opportunity to set up community radio. We wasted no time in getting to the mountain top of Kothmale. We were greeted there by an equally anxious community. As we had no inkling of what lay ahead, we even turned down police protection, politely, as we did not wish to draw any unnecessary attention.

We found out that the watcher’s hut in an abandoned tea factory was the only place to set up the studio. The watcher happily moved out and in two days time, I had the privilege of making the first commentary of Kothmale Community Radio. But we were soon met with violence. This prompted us to retreat. But Sunil Wijesinghe, the Station Manager, wanted us to take up the challenge. Sunil set up a base at the abandoned tea factory.

Kothmale was thus the second semi-autonomous community radio station to be set up under the Mahaweli Community Radio project. UNESCO Danida provided basic logistics support and management, SLBC covered personnel as with all other Mahaweli Radio sites, the Republic of Korea donated production equipment and a transmitter. Sunil Wijesinghe was appointed Station Manager. Twenty years later, Sunil and Kolyani are still with the Kothmale Community Radio.

As the new millennium approached, this station rapidly became the base of new experiments in communication technology. While we all heard about something called ‘Internet,’ few of us knew the difference between Internet and a mosquito net.

At the same time, still reeling from the blood baths and social discrimination based on class and nationality of the 70s and 80s, our key concern was to explore alternative ways to deal with these polarising societal issues. Integral to this problematique was the concept that the new communication technologies should be tools for the isolated and underprivileged to bootstrap their own development. They should not be manipulative weapons in the hands of the privileged few. The Kothmale Internet Project thus embodies the principles of social inclusion aimed at bridging the digital divide and expanding the local knowledge base.



*Tanya Notley, an Australian volunteer, teaches computer and Internet to the Kothmale community. (CAA)*

To achieve this, Minister of Media, Mangala Samaraweera, wasted no time in advising Secretary K. C Logesweran to provide telephone connectivity. Eric Fernando, then Director General of SLBC, put in place the needed infrastructure, so that Kothmale was connected by microwave to the national telephone system. To prepare us with the technical know-how of multimedia operations, Wijayananda Jayaweera, the UNESCO project officer in charge of Mahaweli and I were invited to go to Copenhagen by Knud Ebbesen, the first UNESCO Danida community radio consultant. At the Danish Radio Multimedia Division, we found ourselves brainstorming on the best designs to implement in Sri Lanka:

- A) Internet connectivity can be availed at the station free-of-charge, with database development and web-page production activities.
- B) Radio browsing programmes will be produced with content acquired thru new communication technologies.
- C) Local connectivity points will be set up at the town centres to be serviced from the radio station.

In a few months time, we had achieved our first component. A lease line was feeding data in to the computers and a little radio station serving isolated villages. A website (<http://www.kothmale.org/>) served as a local gateway, filled with useful information based on a benchmark study. The youth were quick to grasp the new technology from an enthusiastic Australian volunteer Tanya Notley.

As the project continued, it started making headlines as a highly replicable model. Practitioners, scholars and donor agencies gathered from all over the world to discuss the convergence of radio with the Internet. We envisaged that Kothmale would become semi-autonomous within SLBC,

however, a decentralised management was not acceptable to the Media Ministry and there were issues of sustainability which needed to be addressed.

Station controller Sunil Wijesinghe was able to gather funding support for the Kothmale, with SLBC agreeing to pay for connection. Kothmale has now become part of a countrywide rural informatics initiative and the connectivity problem has been solved for the time being.



*In Kothmale, children help push the tuktuk out of the mud, they then gather around to surf on the Internet via mobile phone and laptop in the e-tuktuk. (UNESCO)*

## **E-tuk-tuk**

Ben Grub, a young doctoral candidate from Australia who was interested in exploring how complementary technologies could be extended to the community became a key figure in introducing the *e-tuk-tuk* project to Kothmale. The tuk-tuk is a

three-wheeled motorcycle. We converted it into a self-contained mobile telecentre, hence e-tuk-tuk. It contains a laptop computer, a battery-operated printer, camera, telephone and scanner. The Internet access is via wireless phone connection. Other broadcast equipment is stacked on the roof rack. Radio programmes are broadcast over megaphones as the e-tuk-tuk travels to the villages, encouraging the community to actively engage in programming.

The e-tuk-tuk has been very popular among the Tamils working on tea estates. Since the inception of Kothmale Radio, it has been a challenge to actively involve the members of this deprived community.

### **Achievements and challenges of Kothmale**

The greatest achievement for the Kothmale internet project is its development as a local hybrid radio. While the influence on the community is something to be studied through scientific inquiry, initial findings suggest that the outcome has indeed exceeded modest targets. There is substantial evidence which shows that the content provided and discussed through the radio programmes have significantly influenced local knowledge base. (Jayaweera: 2000) The youth have been provided the opportunity to have hands-on experience with computers and ICTs. This has enabled some of them to secure employment in urban centres. Despite the relative success of the Kothmale model, the attempt to replicate it has failed. Lack of commitment and motivation have perhaps constrained the expansion within Sri Lanka.

### **Community Radio Landscape of Sri Lanka**

Sri Lanka has been credited as the first country in South Asia to have experimented with the operational concepts in community radio. However, within a heavily commercialised

radio environment vis-à-vis state broadcasting, community radio operations are now diminishing in number in number and influence. Many of the SLBC stations are now off-the-air or are operating within limited capacity. There is very little interest among private broadcasters for any community broadcast initiative.

If we are to credit ourselves with pioneering the initiatives of community radio, we also need to take responsibility for actions we failed to take. As community radio broadcasters, we have not done enough to emphasise that airwaves are not the property of the Prince (the state) or the merchants (private sector) or activists (NGO sector), but the sacred property of men, women and children whom we meet in our day to day work. The future of community radio will largely depend on how the wider community perceive radio as an instrument that facilitates the right to communicate.

Community radio in Sri Lanka has reached a point where it needs to radically break away from the old and outdated tradition of community broadcasting which many in my generation have lived, worked and passionately embraced. We need to seek new ways and integrate with the new communication technologies.



## Towards a new model: Tel Radio

The Tel Radio model is at present still only a theory based on a number of existing models. In brief, it is a network of citizen-operated low-powered radio stations that could link to a network as deemed appropriate by the operators. Socially, it would be a movement of operators who believe that networking would be the way forward to create a cohesive movement, committed to progressive communication, to freedom of expression, to the right to information and expansion of new knowledge frontiers.

From the technical aspect, it will draw on the strengths of digital audio production and dissemination facilities while still making use of existing, conventional technologies. From a management point of view, the network comprises several layers. The core of the network would be made up of independent community radios that would manage their own affairs locally. At the network level, management leads and coordinates through a collective consensus of operators.

Programme-wise, Tel Radio will be able to collectively produce and share information. A few farmers could get together and set up a Tel Radio in one of their houses and operate it when convenient for them. The farmers' Tel Radio could link up with the fisherman's radio in an adjoining village in the afternoons and occasionally link up with a television station in the city. Students could also operate Tel Radio on the internet and occasionally link up with a radio station set up in a school. Buying time slot on a commercial radio station may be another way of getting in to Tel Radio. At the very core of Tel radio is the commitment to open up new media space that enables every individual to use electronic and non-electronic means of communication.

In a word, the new model of community radio while still using hertzian waves though less and less, will also make use of digital media technology and dissemination over planetary networks via the internet. It will be a multimedia community space networked across a country or a region, to give fullest expression to the peoples of these communities and to gain for them the full benefits of an evolving society.





# 3

## Nepal's Mass media: the long road to community radio and Madanpokhara

by Vinaya Kasajoo



*The Himalayas seen from the heights of Tansen, near Madanpokhara (CAA)*

Nepal is a small roughly shaped rectangle, 850 kilometres in length (east-west) and 200 kilometres (north-south). It is wedged between China and India, and right at the doorstep to the Himalayas. Nepal is known for trekking to Mt Everest and nearby heights.

Today's population is over 25 million. The country is divided into three physical regions, namely: Mountain, Hill and Terai, which run east-west. These ecological belts are bisected by hundreds of rivers which flow from north to south, thus, creating island-like isolated settlements. The Himalayan region,

which covers 35 percent of the total landscape, is almost barren and cold. Only 7 percent of the total population lives here. The Hill region occupies 42 percent of the country's total area. About 44 percent of the population lives in this region. In spite of its physical isolation and limited economic resources, this region, against all expectations, has dominated the country's politics. The Terai belt bordering India, is a flat, productive area. It covers 23 percent of the total land area. The rivers flowing from the mountains and hills feed the land with water and fertile soil. The region has a hot and humid climate, and thus yields sufficient grain to feed the country. It is home to about 49 percent of the population. Along with the construction of roads and communication infrastructure, new urban centers are sprouting in Terai.

Before the reinstatement of Democracy in 1990, the state owned all the powerful media: two daily papers (one in Nepali, *Gorkhapatra* and one in English, *the Rising Nepal*), radios and television. There were a few weekly and fortnightly papers owned by individuals, almost all of them inclined to one or the other political ideology. However, following the constitutionalisation of the monarchy, and the coming of computerised desktop publishing from a computer, the media scenario changed unrecognisably. About five thousand newspapers, magazines and periodicals are now registered in the country and among them about 300 newspapers (dailies and weeklies) are published regularly.

Radio broadcasting in Nepal dates back to 1946, when Padma Shumsher, the Rana prime minister delivered his speech to his countrymen. It worked for a short time. When Mohan Shumsher, the last Rana prime minister, came to power in 1948, radio broadcasting was started again. Two years later, the anti-Rana revolutionaries started broadcasting from a hill district in Bhojpur using the equipment of the district telecommunication office captured by the revolutionaries. The revolutionaries started Prajatantra Radio Nepal from Biratnagar, the eastern city in Terai, in early 1951.

After the success of the revolution and the establishment of democracy, the equipment of Biratnagar station was taken to Kathmandu and government radio broadcasting was restarted. The station was named Nepal Radio, later changed to Radio Nepal. It has been serving as a mouthpiece of the government and the public service broadcaster since 1951. From 1961 to 1990, when the king ruled directly in the name of the Panchayat system, Radio Nepal was used extensively to justify and strengthen his rule over the country as well as glorify his dynasty. During the 30 years of autocratic rule, Radio Nepal's transmission technology, capacity and number of relay stations and studios increased and improved considerably. Various steps were taken to

upgrade its organisational set up and the quality of its programmes. In an effort to generate more income, it started a commercial/entertainment channel. Thus, one could listen to two radio channels simultaneously. However, the increase in cost, did not result in an increase in income.

Because of the adverse geographical condition, low literacy, poverty, the tradition of verbal communication through radio remains the most effective and widely accessed medium in Nepal. Radio Nepal secured a license to broadcast FM in the Kathmandu valley in 1995. It also obtained licenses in bulk to relay its programmes through FM frequency from different parts of the country. This has promoted access all over the country except in some Himalayan areas.



*Near the temple on the outskirts of Kathmandu (CAA)*

From this brief history, one can now more readily understand the hesitation of Radio Nepal to cede its monopoly of broadcasting to the private sector, and especially to NGOs and similar institutions.

The first National Communication Policy was formulated in 1971 with the main objective of *Communication for Development*. It provided the basis for formulating laws and establishing corporations dealing with the various sectors of media such as the Film Development Board, National News Agency, and Government Printing Press.

After the restoration of the multiparty democracy in 1990, a new constitution was promulgated. This guaranteed the people's right to be informed, right to privacy, freedom of expression and press freedom. The constitution prohibited the government from canceling the registration of newspapers, from seizing printing presses and from imposing prior censorship. It is the main guiding document for the formulation of the policy on information and communication.



*Mohan Bista, station manager with his production manager at Radio Sagarmatha. (CAA)*

Following the constitution, the government formed a team to formulate the National Communication Policy, which recommended liberal press policies according to the spirit of the new constitution. One of its significant recommendations was freeing radio waves from state monopoly. Private parties could operate radio and television broadcasting using frequency modulation (FM) technology. Effectively, it made possible the ownership and operation of FM broadcasting in the non-governmental sector. The policy was followed by the National Broadcasting Act 1992 and National Broadcasting Regulations, which provided the necessary procedures for implementing the law.

It nonetheless took seven long years before the first license to broadcast was issued to Radio Sagarmatha in May 1997, in the name of the non-governmental organisation, the Nepal Forum of Environmental Journalists, to formulate the laws and regulation on broadcasting. The law was in place, but not the procedure. Community Radio Madanpokhara obtained a license on January 3, 1999 and it started broadcasting on April 5, 2000 on 106.9 MHz, using a 100-watt transmitter. Since then, more than 200 licenses have been issued up until June 2007. To date, about half of them are on-air and the rest will soon follow. But there is no clear-cut act nor regulations classifying commercial and community radio. Some 75 stations out of over 200 licensees, nonetheless, have declared themselves 'community radio'. Though they serve the community, they rely on donor support for operating as a community radio. There is generally a genuine public service motive behind the donors' support for operating as such.

While commercial radios are usually owned by a group of persons or a company, community radios are owned by three types of organisations: the local elected body (municipality and village development committee), non-governmental organisations and cooperatives usually based in the community.

The government Expert Panel on Electronic Media clearly signaled the absence of an autonomous and independent regulatory body as the root problem related to licensing, the management of radio frequencies and FM radio, and recommended that FM radio should serve the communities. A High Level Media Advisory Commission has recommended guidelines in all sectors of communication including print, electronic broadcasting and digital/online

Community radio stations generally follow one of these models:

- a) The NGO model owned and managed by the board of directors and members of the NGO;
- b) The cooperative model whereby a group of individuals form a community organisation with a legal personality and carry out all management and operational decisions through that organisation;
- c) The local government model, in which the radio is owned and operated by the Village Development Committee or the municipality; and
- d) Research centers, clubs or training institutes.

*-Madhu Acharya, Antenna Nepal Foundation*

media, but the government has yet to enact policies and acts in accordance with the recommendations. The Interim House has passed the Right to Information Bill, which is a milestone in the democratisation of the Nepali society.

Within a short period of about ten years, community FM radio, where it has been established, has made the people from all sectors feel its power and political impact, and gradually it will show its potential to change the society.

Such is context within which Radio Madanpokhara emerged, a humble hilltop station, a diminutive gem among the hillside rocks.



*Flat to hilly terrain on the way to Madanpokhara. (CAA)*



## Madanpokhara: a handful of paddy rice

by Vinaya Kasajoo

An old man, who had nothing financial to give to his local community radio, contributed an idea, which proved to be a milestone for the sustainability of the radio and at the same time enhanced community ownership and involvement in the station. Community Radio Madanpokhara (CRM) honoured 75-year-old Tuk Lal Khati in 2003 for his long lasting and valuable contribution. He was awarded with a letter of appreciation and a radio set. Tuk Lal's *million-dollar idea* is now generating a substantial amount of money for CRM.



*Ghanta Prasad Aryal, an elder of the village radio council and one of the organisers of the community radio. (CAA)*



Community Radio Madanpokhara, one of Nepal's first community radio stations, uses different methods to mobilise the involvement of community members in the programming and policies of the station. One way is to organise meetings to motivate villagers to speak about the radio programmes and to give them the opportunity to criticise, evaluate and advise the station. At one such meeting in the Bandipokhara Village Development Committee (VDC), a local government unit, Som Nath Aryal, the coordinator and facilitator of the radio station, requested a meeting with the participants to suggest how the people could contribute to the station. At one corner, an old man was leaning over his staff and listening quietly. When Som Nath requested the old man, Tuk Lal Khati, to give his suggestion, Tuk Lal declined, saying that many suggestions have already been advanced by educated people. How could an old and uneducated man like him give a useful suggestion?

At that point Som Nath started to tell Tuk Lal a story about an old lady whose one sentence had changed the destiny of a businessman. Before he could finish his story, the old man stood up suddenly and spoke in a commanding voice: "Since the radio station has become our mind, heart and mouth we must help it with all means – mind, money and labor – till it speaks our voice. However, I do not have money to give to the station. But I have an idea, which can be useful for generating income for the station. Let every household set aside a handful of rice from their daily consumption and give it to the station."

Som Nath put Tuk Lal's suggestion to the CRM Board of Directors who called a meeting composed of representatives of 23 villages in the CRM focus area. The representatives appreciated the idea and decided to apply it immediately in their respective villages through the network of local listeners' clubs, better known as Radio Sangi Samuha, literally meaning Friends of Radio Groups (FORG).

In the next two months, FORGs collected the rice or the equivalent money from households in villages across the station's coverage area. They kept a portion of the funds raised for their own local activities and sent 25 to 80 percent of the collected amount to the station. The contribution of the people in cash and kind has benefited the station and the radio listeners clubs in various ways. It has improved the sustainability of the station in the long run. It has also increased the listeners' sense of ownership and responsibility over the radio station. They feel more authority and power in the decision-making process regarding programming and policies. At the same time, the clubs have also been able to expand and strengthen their social, cultural and advocacy activities.

CRM has been closely working with the Community Forest Users' Groups (CFUG) since the establishment of the station. All the CFUGs conduct regular cutting and cleaning of forests every six months. Previously, the firewood derived from these activities was divided among themselves. At present, they have started putting aside one part for CRM. These portions are then auctioned off to the highest bidder. "If done properly," says Mr. Ramesh Aryal, the administrator and accountant of the station, "it will easily generate more than US\$ 1000 annually." CRM has been applying various methods to mobilise the community for its economic sustainability.

Community Radio Madanpokhara went on-air in April 2000. The station is located in a village called Madanpokhara in the Palpa district, about 300 kilometers west of Kathmandu. Since then, the radio has been serving its target community in various ways. Within this short period, it has increased its capacity to serve the greater portion of the community, and at the same time it is working as a model village station and promoting similar radio stations in neighboring villages/districts.

"At the time when the national broadcaster is working against the people's interest, Community Radio Madanpokhara is representing the people by broadcasting all the political protests, rallies and other activities against the regressive government. Community Radio Madanpokhara has been recognised as the forum of exploited and suppressed people." – *Mukti Ram Basyal, chairperson of Ward, Chappani VDC, Palpa.*

## Community Radio Madanpokhara

Like town criers in European cities in the old days, in rural Nepal there are village criers, who make public announcements. They are known as *Katwal*. They are the backbone of a village



*Community Radio Madanpokhara perched atop a small hill (CAA)*

information system. Therefore every household gives food grains to the *Katwal* during each harvest. Now the local radio has replaced *Katwal* in many villages in Palpa. Not only public announcements but also personal information is circulated through radio.

The first radio receiver in Madanpokhara village was brought in 1961 by Hari Prasad Upadhyaya, the headmaster of the local high school. A senior citizen and well known person by the name of Ghanta Prasad, listened to the headmaster's radio from his own house, using a speaker connected by flexible wire.

The second radio receiver, was donated by the government, when Prasad became chief of Panchayat. It could only receive one radio station, Radio Nepal. It was connected to a loudspeaker mounted on the branch of a Pipal tree near his house. This worked as a community audio centre as well as a propaganda tool of the government.

Buddha Ratna Shakya, owner of a radio repair workshop who later started local TV through cable in 1992 was the first

person to experiment with radio broadcasting in Palpa. He developed a low power AM transmitter from old radio parts and showcased them in a local exhibition/fair in 1960. This, however, was short-lived as the district administrator seized his equipment. Despite this unfortunate incident, Shakya went on to develop another AM transmitter after the reinstallation of democracy. He continued broadcasting for three days from June 17 to 20, 1993 from the venue of the District Industrial Exhibition, which was organised by the Palpa Chamber of Commerce at the premises of Tansen Durbar.

The democratic environment of 1990 brought new opportunities to the districts. In 1991, with the support of the Asia Foundation, Rural Development Palpa (RDP) started publishing *Gaunle Deurali*, a rural weekly newspaper which targets villagers with low literacy. RDP conducted massive training to post barefoot journalists (rural reporters) in the villages of Palpa and other districts. Since the literacy rate of the villages was around 30 percent and newspaper distribution was poor among the rural areas, RDP planned to establish a community radio. In June 1995, RDP applied for the license to operate. Pending conclusion of the cumbersome licensing process, RDP partnered with MS Nepal, a Danish organisation, in a project for the training of core community groups on basic reporting, speaking and handling equipment. The project involved women of seven VDCs, including Madanpokhara VDC, situated in and around the Madi Valley.

Other activities included video production training by World View International for a group of women of Madanpokhara VDC, with the objective of enabling rural women to shoot news stories and features based on the information published in the *Gaunle Deurali* newspaper. Some of the programmes produced by these women were broadcast on Young Asia TV programme. RDP also conducted special training in Madanpokhara and Tansen.

These prior activities inspired the local people and helped prepare them to establish their own communication systems, including radio.



*Juna on the air, for news and discussion in Madanpokhara. (CAA)*

### **The journey to on-air community broadcasting**

In Kathmandu, communication specialists, like Bharat Dutta Koirala and Hem Bahadur Bista were struggling on behalf of the Nepal Forum for Environmental Journalists (NEFEJ) to obtain a license for Radio Sagarmatha, the first community radio of South Asia. As the Executive Secretary of RDP at the time, I was in close contact with them, since RDP was the second applicant for a license. However, after a series of discussions, it was decided that ownership of community radio by the Village Development Committee might be better than ownership by a non-governmental organisation.



A meeting was organised with the Chairperson, Vice-chairperson and some of the members of the Madanpokhara VDC. Their response was enthusiastic. Bista, who was then working as a community communication promoter for World View Nepal joined us in Madanpokhara 3 April 1996. After an interesting and day-long discussion on rural radio with the Village Development Committee, the members and local leaders decided to call a general assembly to present the concept and benefits of rural radio.

On 6 April, a general assembly was held at Sharada Higher Secondary School, just below the hill where the radio was to be built. I presented the concept, operation, sustainability, benefits, ownership and various aspects of community radio on the basis of the community radio experience with the Tambuli project in the Philippines. The meeting passed six resolutions: 1) to establish an FM station under the ownership of the Madanpokhara Village Development Committee; 2) to request World View Nepal for training and equipment; 3) to request a license to broadcast from the government; 4) to request the District Development Committee for a recommendation and support; 5) to form a five-member FM Radio Management Sub-committee chaired by the VDC chief; and 6) to form a nine-member advisory committee, myself included. Jhapendra GC who was selected secretary of the Sub-committee was later elected Chairperson of the District Development Committee Palpa. This helped the radio in getting political and financial support.

On 21 April 1996, I met with Jhapendra GC and filled the application form for the license to be submitted to the Ministry of Information and Communication. Another meeting of the Radio Sub-committee was held on 29 April to prepare a tentative budget for the equipment, training and office, and to assign duties to the members. On 5 June 1996, I went with Hem Bahadur Bista to Madanpokhara and conducted training for the

members of the Radio Management Sub-committee: concept of community radio, management, equipment, and cost to run a community radio. A management and operations manual was prepared for the radio station. A constitution under the Madanpokhara VDC's by-laws was also adopted. Similarly, the detailed guidelines of the programmes were also drafted.

In August, Jhapendra G.C. and Som Nath Aryal went to Kathmandu to inquire about the radio license at the Ministry. The government was undecided and reluctant. The Minister was suspicious about the consequences of granting a radio license to a non-government sector.

By 3 January 1999, after almost three years, we obtained the license to broadcast. During this period many people had given up hope. The hard working people and local leaders reorganised themselves within the new mandate. With the support of UNESCO and coordination with Radio Sagarmatha/NEJEF, the preparation, training and construction agenda were completed within a year. Finally, the radio went on air on 5 April 2000.

The District Development Committee (DDC) has helped CRM from the beginning in various ways. It paid its license fee and renewal fees. The 65 VDCs and the Tansen municipality also have contributed to the radio from time to time. Last year, the 36 VDCs and municipality jointly contributed Rs. 10,000 each to meet the expenses of shifting the transmission tower and remunerations for the village based radio reporters.

Recently, the radio increased its transmitter power from 100 watts to 500 watts. At the same time, it moved the transmission tower from Madanpokhara village to another village at the Shrinagar hill range, across Madi valley. Gunakar Aryal pointed out that the new location of the tower was more appropriate for the coverage of the Palpa district, as well as the villages of

neighboring districts. The signal will be stronger and clearer. “Now it will be the radio of all the Palpals,” Gunakar says. The experiences gained during the last six and half years have made CRM even more energetic. The radio staff has learned a lot in mobilising and involving the community to make the radio station a real community radio.

“We cannot develop without communication. Community radio gives us the opportunity to communicate and speak our mind, and to increase the interaction between leaders and their people.” – *Singha Bahadur Thapa, Bhairabsthan, Palpa.*

### **The community**

Madanpokhara village is situated at the slope of a small hill facing North. It is 1.6 km. off the main highway, connecting Butwal, a commercial center in the Western Nepal region, with Pokhara, a tourist centre. The radio station is 12.6 km. away from the district headquarters of Tansen. At the North-Eastern side of the village there is a big valley surrounded by small hills. Its shape is like a bowl and in actuality, serves as the rice bowl to the people living around the valley.

Although the name Community Radio Madanpokhara suggests that its target community is confined to the Madanpokhara VDC, the broadcast coverage includes the majority of the Palpa district and some of the neighboring districts as well, namely: Gulmi, Agrhakhanchi, Syangja, Parbat, Baglung and as far as Myagdi district. After the reinstallation of



the transmission tower at Bagnas in August 2007 and the increase of transmission power to 500 watts, all 65 VDCs will have better reception. On this basis, the number of people served by radio is over 1.5 million, but the target population of Palpa district is 265,000.

Interestingly, Palpa and its neighboring districts share similar ethnic background, culture, religion, environment, habitat, agriculture practices, and economy. The majority of families in this area is farmers. A considerable number of the family members work in foreign countries. Remittance money plays an important role in the local economy. The caste structure and ethnic composition of the communities of this area are also similar. Brahman, Chhetri, Magar, Newar, Dalits (deprived), and other castes which form the rural communities of Palpa, also compose those of the other districts, with more or less the same ratio.

Although there are over a dozen linguistic groups, almost all of them understand and speak Nepali, which is the common language in hill areas. In the Terai area where Maithili, Bhojpuri and Awadhi speaking people cannot understand and speak Nepali easily, language may pose a problem.

Agriculture is the first occupation. The people love to experiment with new ideas and techniques in agriculture and share experiences with fellow farmers. This particular characteristic of communicating and sharing is considered as the seed of development in this village. There are many successful farmers in the village who are known for their dairy, poultry, vegetable, coffee and sericulture farming. They are proud of their ginger and coffee farming which is exported to foreign countries.

The people of Madanpokhara village have been practising community forestry long before the government in the country introduced community foresting. When the idea of Village Radio was first discussed in the village, the community forest

user groups showed their interest with commitments to donate money for the station. At present many Community Forest User Groups support the radio.

CRM has helped to develop agriculture and forest in this area and at the same time the farmers and forest user groups have helped to sustain the radio station. The cooperation between the radio station and the farmers and forest users has been a model for other villagers and new community radio stations.

Outside the windows of the main building, there are satellite receivers for BBC Nepali language programme, Communication Corner's daily programmes and a satellite radio antenna to receive programmes from Equal Access. The studio equipment consists of audio mixers, compressors, transmitters and a telephone hybrid. There is a power backup system of 5 KVA which can supply electricity for 6 hours to run the station.

GSM and CDMA mobile telephone systems are spreading in the rural areas. The station has two telephone lines; most of the staff members own their own mobile telephones.

Community Radio Madanpokhara has a modest multimedia workshop, but still needs more powerful computers to digitise all its archives and maintain its operational records, plus the music and sound files. Similarly, the station needs to upgrade to quality, digital recorders.

## **Programming**

The main objective of CRM is to make the community the owner of information and knowledge. CRM believes that knowledge is the main ingredient of human development, and knowledge spreads through communication. Hence the basic principle of the programmes aired by CRM is the development of the community through communication.

Since the reporters and programme producers work closely with the members of the community, the voices of all sectors of the community, from farmers and laborers to policy makers are included in the programmes. They are accountable to the listeners for whatever programme they produce and broadcast, including advertisements. There are many cases when the audience have prohibited and discontinued advertisements.

Very few radio stations think and plan the content of their programmes before acquiring a broadcasting license. However, CRM was clear about its content and it had planned nearly four years before going on air. It had categorised its programmes in various sections such as education, health, forestry and culture, among others. Radio Sub-committee members were given responsibilities for particular programmes. The members were also clear about the advertisement policy. The local rural community newspaper, *Gaunle Deurali*, had already set an example regarding content and advertisements. In addition, the barefoot journalist training had clearly explained and popularised the concept of community journalism in this area. Consequently, there is no conflict of interest regarding the programme and posting of advertisements.

CRM gives priority to local events, local news, local problems and issues and raising local agendas that are crucial for the well-being and development of the community. Programming, as mentioned before, is largely in Nepali, except for except one Magar programme twice a week.

### **Brief description of the daily programmes**

While most of the programmes are produced in and by the community, a few relevant programmes on current affairs or development made by other organisations are also aired.

The daily programme of CRM starts with a devotional song and a thirty-minute religious programme at 5:30 in the morning.

## Programme segments for 80 hours 30 minutes per week

Types of programme	Time (Hours)	CRM Product	Out Product	Percentage
Educational	17.40	10.10	7.30	22
Informative	25.30	8.05	17.25	32
Entertainment	21.00	15.45	5.15	26
Religious	3.30	2.00	1.30	4
Cultural	5.20	5.20	00	7
Ethnics	5.00	4.30	0.30	6
Sport	2.30	0.30	2.00	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>80.30</b>	<b>46.20</b>	<b>34.10</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source: CRM Weekly Programme Schedule, July, 2007*

It is followed by *Kayakairan* at 6 o'clock, a news and current affairs programme produced by Communication Corner (CC), a Kathmandu-based producer. CRM receives this programme through satellite and provides live broadcasting. At present, it is the most popular programme.

At 6:40 in the morning, local news is broadcast, with snippets of memorable ideas, thoughts/sayings of great thinkers. Immediately following this broadcast, are public programmes. At 7 o'clock, the national news from Radio Nepal is relayed.

From 7:30 to 8 o'clock in the morning, different programmes are aired on different days, namely: *Mahila Sansar* (Women's World) on Sunday; *Utpidit Aawaj* (Voice of the underprivileged people) on Monday; *Sancho Bisancho* (Health programme) and *Apang Sachetana* (on the handicapped) is aired alternately on Tuesday; *Ghar Pariwar* (Household and family issues) and *Paka Pusta* (experiences of senior citizens) on Wednesday; *Sahitya Pratibha* (literary talents) on Thursday;

*Aafnai Paurakh Aafnai Gaurab* (non-timber forest product, vegetable, ginger and coffee producers' programme) on Friday; and *Naya Nepal* (new Nepal, regarding the reconstruction of a new nation, produced by Equal Access, a Kathmandu based organisation) on Saturday.

After a ten-minute intellectual reading, at 8 o'clock in the morning, *Nepal Chautari*, an online discussion is aired, during which listeners from all over the country ask questions to guest speakers, particularly political leaders, through a toll-free telephone line. Over 30 FM stations broadcast this programme live. It is coordinated/produced by Antenna Foundation, a Kathmandu-based radio and TV programme producer.

At 9 o'clock in the morning, there is a book reading programme that runs for fifteen minutes. It is followed by a variety of programmes: *Pahal* (discussion on issues of conflict, produced by Antenna Foundation) on Sunday; *Badalindo Nepal* (changing faces of Nepal, produced by CC) on Monday; *Sandesh* (email messages to the family from local people working in other countries) on Tuesday; *Mismas* (music with review of music and artists) on Wednesday; *Katwal* (on Dalits, i.e. so called untouchable people) on Thursday; *Naya Nepal* (produced by Equal Access) on Friday; and *Sangalo* (Interview with singers/artists and information about new music albums in the market) on Saturday.

On Monday from 10 to 11 o'clock in the morning, there is a programme for teenagers called *Saathisanga Manka Kura* (Chatting with my best friend) produced by EA.

In the afternoon, programming resumes at 4 o'clock. For thirty minutes, varying programmes are aired on different days: music/song programmes, early childhood development, gender equality, forestry development, *Paribesh Bolchha* on village activities.

There are 36 women communication groups or the Mahila Sanchar Samuha, in the villages targeted by CRM. These groups organise interaction meetings and cultural events on social issues like polygamy, dowry system, women trafficking, problems of single women (widows), domestic violence and alcohol abuse, among others. They also organise song and drama competitions. These programmes are recorded and broadcast in different programmes such as *Mahila Sansar* (women's world) and *Ghar Pariwar* (household and family).

The BBC Nepali programme follows from 8:45 to 9:15 in the evening every day. It is one of the popular programmes in the rural area. The community radio signs off at 10 o'clock in the evening.

A popular programme among students is the *Hamro Pathashala* (Our School), from 7:20 to 8 o'clock in the evening and again in the following hour between 9:15 to 10. Students from class 8, 9 and 10 do not have to pay tuition to take part in the school broadcast. Local teachers air live programmes in English, Mathematics and Science subjects. Poor students who miss class and cannot afford to pay for a private teacher directly benefit from this programme.

*“We do these things not for monetary benefit but for the sustainability of the radio because we are convinced that the radio speaks our voice.” — Gam Bahadur*

### **Programmes from external sources**

Equal Access Nepal, Antenna Foundation and Communication Corner are the main external programme providers. They produce different kinds of programmes with





*The local high school, just below the hill where Community Radio Madanpokhara is perched. (CAA)*

### Hamro Pathashala – going to school over the Radio

Shanti Thapa sits in her room under the tin roof and is hunched over her notebook, carefully writing down the lesson of the day in the glimmer of the small oil lamp. She listens thoughtfully to the words on the radio and carefully notes down the answers to last week’s homework.

Community Radio Madanpokhara has launched an initiative to help students pass the SLC (class10) exam. Through the radio, students receive extra classes in Math, Science and English.

“At school there is so much noise and it is difficult to concentrate because there are 54 students in my class but here in my room I feel comfortable and I can fully concentrate on my studies,” Shanti says.

Shanti studies in class 8 and lives with her parents at ward no. 1, in Rupse VDC. Oftentimes, she has to skip class because she has to look after the cattle, chicken and goats while taking care of her four younger brothers and sisters. In addition to this, she cannot go to school during harvest time.



The radio programme is an opportunity for students like Shanti who cannot regularly attend school and who cannot afford to pay tuition fee for a private teacher. Like most of the students, her toughest subjects are English, Math and Science.

“I am confident that I will pass the SLC exam. With the radio, I can study these subjects at home quietly, which I cannot do at school. I also discuss the subjects with my friends,” Shanti says.

“I encourage her to study hard,” says her mother Narishara Thapa. “I make sure that she has eaten her dal bhat before the programme begins in the evening and nobody disturbs her when she is listening to the radio. It is important for her future that she passes the SLC.”

In these remote areas, there is a high percentage of students who fail the SLC exam. Shanti studies in Shree Karnadhar Secondary School. To wit, all the SLC students in her school failed last year. Only two students had passed in the year before last. Apart from inexperienced teachers, there is also a shortage of teachers, because the villagers cannot give adequate salaries.

“I hope the programme can replace private teachers and give the children from poor families a good opportunity. If they listen carefully and learn, they can learn just as much as in a private tuition. The radio is the cheapest means of education and gives all families an opportunity to learn,” says Lokendra, a local teacher.

At present the programmes are broadcast once a week for an half hour. Three schools have been chosen as pilot schools. The impact of these programmes will be monitored after the SLC exam. “It is too early to judge the impact of the programme, but let us hope that there will be a 10 percent improvement in the result,” says Lokendra. (MS Nepal Newsletter, December, 2006)

Produced by the local teachers, *Hamro Pathshala* is an innovation of CRM to address the educational needs of disadvantaged students. It was started in August 2006 with the school teachers and students of the local high school.

the support of international NGOs and donors. They send the programmes through satellite to FM stations all over the country. For this service, the FM stations get different kinds of support, such as, training, equipment, human resource and fee for air time. However, CRM generates advertisement revenue from news and current affair programmes produced by Communication Corner.

### **Impact of community radio**

- Prem Bahadur Gaire, a farmer, got rid of pests which had infested his farm of beans by spraying extracts of Titepati, a locally abundant plant. Thus, he saved money and health. He learned this from other farmers who spoke on the radio.
- In Devinagar VDC, a woman was staying at her maternal home after her husband married a second wife. After hearing *Mahila Sansar* (women's world) programme she was inspired and encouraged to report her problem to the radio. CRM produced a case story based on her problem. When her husband heard the programme he realised his mistake and took his wife back home. Now they are living together happily. "We can raise our voices against social exploitation," says this lady.
- According to CRM, 12 cases on domestic violence reported by women from different communities have been solved through dialogues initiated by the women's organisations.
- With the support of District Eye Hospital, the radio conducted a free eye camp in seven VDCs, benefiting more than 1,200 handicapped persons.

- CRM coordinated a rescue work of a major bus accident at Chidipani village in which 32 passengers died and many were injured. The community radio contacted the mission hospital, spoke with the doctors and police in delivering immediate medical service.

## Personnel

From the beginning, CRM has been running on volunteers' spirit. Presently, there are 14 full time and 7 part time staff members. They get minimal remunerations ranging from Rs 500 to Rs. 7000, to meet their basic needs and transportation costs. (US\$1=Rs. 65). They are like paid volunteers. But the station does not have a salary increment policy. Village Radio Representatives, freelancers and stringers are not counted among paid staff. They are paid only for their stories/reports which are broadcast through radio.

Among the full time staff, there are 10 males and 4 females, whereas among part time staff, the ratio is 6 to 1. Out of 21 staff members, 14 are from high caste families, 4 are from ethnic communities and 3 from Dalit (so called untouchable) community.

There are 86 volunteer reporters who get remuneration only when their report is broadcast. Among them, 68 are males and 18 are females. In this number, 61 hail from high caste families, while 18 belong to ethnic communities and 7 volunteers from the Dalit community.

When the station needs new staff members, it usually recruits from among volunteer workers. There is very little turnover of staff. However, any vacancy in upper posts is usually filled by the staff from lower posts.

There is adequate opportunity to learn and increase one's skill within the station. Any staff can benefit from the facilities of the station. In-house trainings are conducted regularly. In addition, new staff members have the opportunity to participate in external training organised by various organisations that produce and distribute radio programmes.

## **Organisation and management**

Although the official license holder of the radio is Madanpokhara VDC, all decisions regarding management and operation of the station are taken up by an independent body, the *Radio Sabha* or Radio Council, to manage the radio station as an autonomous body. The Council has representation from the Madanpokhara VDC, 6 members from the civil society, farmers and intellectuals, the Community Forest Users Groups, the underprivileged, dalits and ethnic groups and various other organisations

The Radio Council elects members of the Managing Committee as prescribed in the regulation. It recommends the financial, administrative and programme policies. The Radio Managing Committee (RMC) looks after the daily work of the radio station. It is responsible for overall management.

The Madanpokhara VDC appoints the manager for 5 years. He must be a Nepali citizen, must hold a university degree and should be between 30 to 60 years of age. He is responsible for routine management and programmes. Decisions regarding routine work and programme production are taken up by the manager. However, he consults with members of the working committee and concerned staff in making major decisions.

Since there is no law separating community radio from commercial radio, CRM has to pay annual fees and taxes like other stations. The objectives and nature of programmes which

CRM broadcasts are different from other stations. However, the programme sponsoring organisations treat CRM as any other commercial station. Thus, it has to face unhealthy competition with commercial stations.

Technicians and experts are not available locally when there is breakdown of equipment and transmitter. Acquiring technical and expert services from Kathmandu is costly and time consuming.

### **Plans and Prospects**

CRM has an existing partnership with MS Nepal, Danish Association for International Cooperation. Under the partnership, MS Nepal has provided new transmitters and studio equipment. It has helped increase community mobilisation, the training of reporters and the quality of its programmes. There are plans to put forth a new partnership agreement. One of the programmes under this agreement is the ‘creation of a democratic society.’ Some of the major objectives of this project are to strengthen local democratic practices and culture, resulting in a transparent and corruption-free society, as well as the development of local leadership. This programme will certainly increase community-based activities of CRM and widen its horizon.

CRM is also working in cooperation with UNESCO. Its Community Multimedia Center (CMC) project has helped to popularise digital technology in the villages. Internet browsing through radio is one of the programmes supported by the CMC project. Six local schools now have computers and wireless connection because of this project. CMC is going to develop more projects for the community with the cooperation of CRM.

To date, staff members are working as paid volunteers, but without any extra facilities. Upon the installation of the

transmitter, CRM must increase its air time and it is only natural that the staff will expect a reasonable increment in salary and facilities. They will need more training as well. CRM is aware of these and is planning accordingly. It is going to train more people in different skills of programme production, such as script writing, interviewing, etc. Most of the training will be conducted in-house. At the same time, the financial management will also be improved.



*Madanpokhara operates digitally, all programmes are produced and stored in computer; recordings are done on a digital voice recorder and downloaded to PC for editing and playback. (CAA)*

The station is in its seventh year of operation and the replacement of old equipment, particularly field equipment such as recorders and microphones is imperative.

To increase station income, it has offered services to the locals for a fee. These services include photocopying, faxing,

printing and scanning. CRM has already produced and marketed two audio cassettes of local songs. According to Gunakar Aryal, they are going to produce the cassettes and CDs of the lessons of the school programmes broadcast through radio.

CRM has different kinds of cooperation and partnerships with different international and local NGOs. Some of them provide support for programmes, training and equipment while others sponsor programmes and pay air time fees. CRM helps them deliver their services and messages to the grassroots level.

### **Strengths and weaknesses, threats and opportunities**

CRM has a strong community base. It is popular among its audience and is the most listened-to station in the district. It has survived through the insurgency period and two emergency situations. Even during the King's direct rule, it did not stop broadcasting news. Staff members are working with the spirit of volunteers. CRM has its own buildings and equipment. The community is providing financial support as well. There is no threat of closure to the station because of financial problems or lack of community support. However, the political situation is not stable and can adversely affect the smooth development of this community station.

The internal conflict and insurgency which had hindered the development of the country for more than ten years has not completely ended. The Maoists have joined the government and are committed to working peacefully for the formulation of a new Constitution through the election of a constituent assembly. In the meantime, however, other new interest groups with arms have emerged, particularly in the Terai area, and threaten FM stations if they broadcast any news against them. Last year, many radio journalists received threats of being killed and some stations had to be temporarily closed.



While the CRM has not received any direct threats, occasionally these groups pressure other VDCs and community groups to inhibit cooperation with the station. This indirect pressure is likely one of the reasons why the decision of VDCs to donate Rs. 10,000 each to CRM has not yet been fulfilled. Whenever CRM broadcasts news against their interests, they protest indirectly. Should the present political instability continue, radio may not be able to carry on its programme activities, particularly the community based programming.

Respecting the role of FM stations in the People's Movement and democratisation of the country, the new Government has exempted these stations from paying renewal and royalty fees in the last two fiscal years. However, these fees have not been abolished from the regulation.

There is no law differentiating community radio from commercial and public service broadcasting. All the FM stations are governed by the same law. Many license holders call themselves community radio only to get donor support. There is no binding rule. According to Gunakar Aryal, this "has created an unhealthy situation. Real principles of community radio are deteriorating. In the name of community radio, false practices are emerging. There is an unhealthy competition between the FM stations to get advertisements and sponsored programmes. This situation has created problems for community radio."

Aryal maintains that there is an urgent need to formulate specific laws and regulations relating to community radio. The Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (ACRB) also is advocating for this. The matter was examined by the High Level Media Advisory Commission constituted in 2007, which has now recommended to the government the formulation of clear cut laws to categorise radio stations.

## Lessons learned

CRM has a strong network of community-based organisations. “Radio helps to mobilise the community,” stresses Som Nath Aryal. “There is a close relation between community mobilisation and effective radio programming.”

Other local stations have also learned this lesson and they have started forming listeners’ clubs with the same name *Radio Sangi Samuha*. Som Nath Aryal emphasises that CRM needs FORGs in different occupational/professional groups. “This is the basis of making radio a real community radio,” he says.

Gunakar Aryal highlights the importance of the high power transmitters, as the topography greatly affects the reception and quality of sound. “People switch to other stations if the signal and sound quality is not good,” he says.

All the members and journalists of the community radio must have a strong feeling for community, a kind of belongingness to the community for the development of a community radio. Conversely, community radio should follow the basic principles of reporting and there should be no political slanting, otherwise, a community radio will not serve its audience honestly.

CRM has not only contributed to social change, but has played an active role in democracy, having participated in the political rallies against autocratic rule. In the People’s Movement of 2006, the FORGs led the rallies and demonstrations during the difficult time. CRM has advocated for equity and social justice. It has also protested against caste and gender discrimination. The so-called untouchables and the single women of many villages are now enjoying equal rights and dignity in religious and public places.

Because of the in-depth reporting regarding the unfinished village electrification project of Chirtungdhara village, the villagers were able to receive electricity from the main grid in less than a month. Health camps encompassing eye services, blood donations and aid for disabled people were organised by CBOs under the CRM and have benefited hundreds of villagers. From market prices to bus schedules, CRM has indeed provided public service.

Incidents of domestic violence and gender discrimination have been reduced and criminals have been put to jail because of the radio broadcasts. It has helped increase the enrolment of female students in schools and job opportunities for the villagers. Villagers have learned new farming techniques, including organic farming. Cash crop has replaced the traditional crop in many villages. They have started adopting new seeds and animals. The production of milk has increased in Palpa and neighboring districts. CRM organises district level cultural events and competitions on national and religious festivals, such as Teej, Holi and sports events. Its cultural teams also participate in events and competitions organised by others.

Madanpokhara village was declared a model village by the government a long time ago. However, with community radio, Madanpokhara really is a model village.

# Backpack Radio

by Madhu Acharya



*Typical Doko Radio studio set up. The doko are used here to hold the speakers in place. (MA)*

Doko is a basket tied by thongs and carried on one's back. This backpack is the most common way of transporting small items in the steep Nepali mountains. Imagine a doko-basket carrying an FM radio transmitter, a generator to support its power supply, a laptop, a few microphones and a sound mixer. Load up and start trekking. It's a long journey to Nepal's far-flung shadow regions to broadcast the people's voices.

Backpack radio or Doko Radio is a mobile, micro community radio 'station' travelling from village to village in rural Nepal, far from the reach of urban radio signals and other forms of modern communications.

Local political leaders, civil society elders, women, children, youth, farmers are invited to join in open discussions and voice their opinions on local issues, gender and caste equalities, changing cultural values, children and youth, education, agriculture and indigenous technology.

This mobile broadcasting and multimedia unit informs the rural communities about democratic practices, recent political settlements, peace pacts and the workings of the constituent assembly, the election process—all in a simple, friendly format to these new listeners.

Doko Radio is a myth-breaker, it destroys the idea that radio is owned only by the state, that only highly educated people can use radio. The more the deprived communities get to hear their own voices on the radio, the more they want radio in their own villages. In this way, Doko Radio has gone beyond the confines of the fixed studios in cities.

## Doko Radio: bringing information to people's doorsteps

by Ninamma Rai



*In Humla, the villagers set up the antenna on a tall rooftop. (MA)*

“With a small antenna connected to the transmitter in a small room, simple equipment and a modest investment — I was unaware that this combination could have such a massive impact,” said one excited villager as he visited the Doko Radio studio and participated in the group discussion. Doko Radio, in essence, is a combination of a mobile broadcasting unit and a portable studio. The Nepali word ‘*doko*’ refers to a cone-shaped bamboo basket used to carry all sorts of items such as firewood, fodder and food. Thus, as the name ‘Doko Radio’ suggests, all the goods and equipment required to set up and run an FM radio station are carried in a *doko* and brought to remote villages where radio waves hardly reach at all.

The first of its kind in Nepal, Doko Radio encourages villagers to set up and run their own community radio. It demonstrates that, unlike mainstream media, community radio stations can be cost-effective and operated by the ordinary people. The equipment used in Doko Radio can be easily dismantled and transported, and just as easily assembled. Because of this, geographically isolated areas can now become accessible. Programmes can be more suitably adapted to the needs of the people.

By bringing information right to the doorsteps of the people and providing them with vital knowledge, Doko Radio has a unique role in promoting democratic practices and a sense of civic awareness, especially in today’s political transition period marked by civil strife and an information vacuum. In this situation it is easy to mislead the public. Hence, in an effort to reach those who are excluded, particularly during this time of political transition to more democratic processes and government by the people, the Antenna Foundation of Nepal (AFN) initiated the idea of Doko Radio. By airing group discussions in the village with political party representatives and civil servants, Doko Radio aims to encourage democratic practice and increase citizen participation in these processes. It



is particularly important therefore that communities create their own programmes, relevant to them and to their aspirations. In demonstrating that low-cost communication and information media can be adapted to the village context, Doko Radio demystifies the complexity of radio.



*Doko used to carry flowers. It is carried on one's back with thongs tied around the head (MA)*

### **Germination of an idea: where it all began**

The concept of Doko Radio as a mobile broadcasting studio originated with AFN, an independent, non-governmental and non-profit organisation dedicated to the development of

public broadcasting in Nepal. It was developed with financial support from the international organisation, Chemonics. AFN realised clearly the potential role of radio for achieving a smooth political transition, and strove to reach out to the grassroots population to enable them to make informed decisions. Thus the idea of 'Doko Radio' was born.

Among the programmes which AFN currently produces are: *Naya Bato Naya Paila*, a 15-minute radio soap opera aired thrice a week is aimed at fostering youth involvement in the promotion of peace at local and national levels; *Nepal Chautari*, a daily live talk show focusing on Nepal's political transition issues; and *Sambidhan Sabhako Bahas*, a weekly one-hour educational/information radio discussion on the Constituent Assembly elections and issues. The latest radio



*On arrival, all the villagers come to participate in the Doko Radio. (MA)*

programmes are two weekly half-hour radio magazines promoting good health practices for people working in remote areas. The programme also features role models to inspire community health workers.

The arrival of Doko Radio has created much excitement and interest. Experiments with Doko Radio have been successful in the following districts of Nepal:

- 1) Huti Village Development Committee (VDC) in Darchula District, far western development region
- 2) Simkot VDC in Humla district, mid-western development region
- 3) Barpak VDC in Gorkha district, western development region
- 4) Chame VDC in Manang district, western development region
- 5) Nele VDC in Solukhumbu district, eastern development region

During our visits to these districts, it was found that Doko Radio waves could reach a radius of 35 to 50 km, hence, the surrounding 6 to 7 VDCs around Huti, Simkot, Barpak, Chame and Nele were also recipients of broadcasts. Coverage depends largely on the terrain; hills tend to block wave propagation. However, if the village is perched on top of a hill, then the radio waves travel a longer distance. Doko Radio began its first journey on March 16, 2007 to Barpak. The fifth fieldtrip, which was also the final location of the first phase, was to Chame on June 3, 2007.

### **The Doko Radio facility: radio-in-a-box**

Doko Radio is in effect radio in a box: a dipole antenna, a 30-watt FM transmitter, a CD/cassette player and a four input mixer (two for microphones and one for a laptop and a CD/

cassette player each). A 650-VA generator fueled by kerosene serves as the back up power supply. As Doko Radio involves intense traveling, sometimes even as long as three days to reach a location, fuel must also be carried. Flammable fuels are prohibited on aircraft, so one has to purchase it after landing or send the villagers for it.

Cultural programmes, interviews and discussions are recorded using cassette recorders and microphones, and then downloaded to a laptop. Once edited, these programmes are then broadcast via the FM transmitter. Group discussions are

In an attempt to find a bamboo pole on which to mount the antenna, the people of Barpak were of great help, even bringing in more than one pole. Upon hearing the broadcast, they could not believe that it came from the studio. They were totally unaware how quickly and efficiently a radio station could be setup. They were thus very enthusiastic about starting their own radio station and producing their own programmes.



*In Barpak, people gather to discuss or to sing. (MA)*



generally aired live in the mornings. The people can tune to 98.4 MHz, the frequency specified in the Doko Radio license issued by the Ministry of Information and Communication.

In Huti, a 62-year old man came to recite an excerpt of the Ramayana. He seemed excited about the prospect of hearing his own voice on the radio. Some villagers had to walk for more than four kilometers just to visit the studio. Most of them would request to delay the broadcast until they had returned to their homes to enable them to tune-in together with their families and friends.

While choosing a place to set up the studio, factors such as the safety and security of the members and equipment, space and accessibility of the studio for members and visitors. As the make-shift studio does not provide perfect insulation against noise, the sound quality of the recording is compromised to a certain degree. A condenser microphone is used for indoor recordings because it is sensitive enough to pick up even faint noises, while a wireless, dynamic microphone is used for outdoors.

Doko Radio remains in the field/district for about a week and transmits its programmes. Two hundred portable radio sets are distributed free of charge at each field site. The distribution of radio sets in all locations was made with the help of *Aama Samuha* or mothers' group, as well as local clubs. Women are encouraged to participate in the group discussions and to have their songs recorded. An attempt has been made to ensure that Doko Radio is gender-sensitive. Once the broadcast is done, the equipment is packed and Doko Radio once again journeys on to a new place. Locals, however, get to keep the radio sets as a souvenir. They can use these radio sets to listen to Radio Nepal, with the hope of having them realise the need for more, and more relevant information.

In Simkot, as more people came to know about Doko Radio, the more challenging it became. Everyone had a story to tell and a song to sing. On any given day, 30 to 35 recordings took place, with more than 50 visitors at the studio. Some claimed that they had walked for more than three hours just to reach the studio and be recorded. It was as if Doko Radio opened the floodgates and the voiceless found an outlet to ventilate their emotions. A grieving family came to make a public appeal for the release of their son, abducted by Maoists. The team brought in a Maoist as a guest in the discussions on pressing issues of abduction, extortion and bribery— matters which could not be questioned earlier, but here, were brought out in the open (Subede: 2007).



*Doko Radio is gender sensitive and holds special programmes for women. (MA)*

The Doko Radio team comprises five people—team leader, producer, assistant producer, a technician and a researcher. The team is aided by two different AFN officers in each location. The team composition is rotated to ensure that all officers receive this field experience.

## An overview of Doko Radio programmes

The programmes of Doko Radio are participatory in nature, encouraging locals to express their opinions. Programmes are broadcast for three hours in the morning followed by a re-broadcast in the evening. Doko Radio facilitates local group discussions on various social, political and contemporary issues: culture, folklore, poems, domestic violence, the right of young women to education, the constituent assembly, reconstruction and civic responsibility. Dialogue with representatives of the government and various political parties are encouraged, together with local leaders, teachers, youth and other local organisations.

During its one week stay in a particular field location, Doko Radio strives to encompass and accommodate the feelings and views of as many stakeholders as possible. By presenting the ease of setting up an FM radio station, Doko Radio plants the idea of establishing a community radio station. It is stressed, however, that the drive to set up the radio station has to emanate from the community. Past experiences have shown that projects imposed on the community rarely meet with success.

Poems, literary works, musical compositions, audio recordings and other materials collected during the brief stay at a field location, are strictly confidential. To prevent the infringement of copyright, these materials are not to be used for any purpose without the consent or authorisation of the owner.

*“Once something comes out in the open, it can no longer be ignored.”  
—a villager*





*Young girl singing (MA)*

## **Impact and accomplishment**

Each field location offered its own unique response to the project.

- The makeshift studio was used for conducting discussions, often a frank exchange of ideas. Radio was not just utilised as a transmitting device but as a practical instrument for two-way communication.
- By stimulating interaction and dialogue, efforts to empower a cross-section of the community provided an avenue to make local leaders accountable and responsive.
- People with diverse backgrounds from varying age groups participated. The assumption about language and

illiteracy posing a problem was unfounded. The excitement and enthusiasm expressed by locals overcame such barriers. Instant feedback was incorporated into the programmes, making it possible for Doko Radio not only to transmit but also receive information.

- For women, usually confined within the periphery of their villages and thus having only a limited knowledge of the outside world, Doko Radio was an eye-opening experience, an opportunity to experience firsthand the power of radio technology. Many said that by coming to the studio and having their voices recorded, their confidence was boosted. Engaging in such activities allowed women to pause from their traditional activities. Doko Radio gave them a kind of ‘personal freedom.’
- As local talents became more active, Doko Radio became a wonderful form of entertainment. In the words of one of the villagers, “It added flavor to our dull life.” Indeed, it was a welcome change to be able to listen to stories and news relevant to their own surroundings. People could relate to the programmes because the content was of local relevance. Hearing their friends, relatives, and even themselves on the radio was an exciting experience. Doko Radio played an important role in documenting and preserving local culture. Some of the recorded songs were short of being forgotten. Locals regularly approached the Doko Radio crew to record their cultural performances. It was agreed that these materials would be properly stored for record-keeping.
- Initially, some people were cynical about the transient nature of Doko Radio. They were not convinced that the presence of Doko Radio would achieve much during its temporary stay. However, before the week was over, they suddenly had a change of heart. The response shown by

the people, the topics covered, the group discussions and the information passed about the Constituent Assembly were enough to sway them in favor of Doko Radio. Additionally, the popularity of the programmes could also be judged by the numerous letters sent by the listeners. This motivated the crew to come up with even better programmes.

### **Future plans: Doko Radio Phase II**

Though the accomplishments might not seem tangible at first, there is no denying that the mobile, micro Doko Radio has shown itself to be an effective agent for change. Apart from disseminating crucial information on the upcoming Constituent Assembly, the rural folk need not travel far to obtain updates on current affairs. Doko Radio also provided a window of opportunity to learn about radio technology. Group discussions facilitated by Doko Radio prompted respective parties to assess their current state and propose the necessary actions.

The success of Doko Radio encouraged AFN to launch *Doko Radio: Phase II*. This second phase is expected to be grander and more extensive in terms of coverage area and number of beneficiaries. The Doko Radio team will be composed of five members, namely: team leader, technician, radio producer and two assistant producers. Collaboration will be undertaken with different community radio stations from the five development zones of Nepal. Each of the field radio stations will also receive an audio-capable laptop, professional sound card, field recorder and three microphones.

Prior to the commencement of Doko Radio's travel to the remote areas, each radio station will select two of its reporters to be trained by the Doko Radio crew members. Training will involve facilitating group discussions at the grassroots level,

identifying and addressing issues about the upcoming Constituent Assembly election, developing relevant radio programmes and other professional skills. Each team of two journalists per station will be expected to travel to one location every week over the course of four months. Audio recordings will be relayed to the radio station and edited into one hour programmes that will be broadcast weekly throughout the project period.

The production and broadcast of these programmes will be monitored by AFN. As this takes place, the Doko Radio team will travel to fifteen districts, three from each of the development zones of Nepal ensuring geographic, ethnic and socio-economic diversity. Villagers will be invited to a multi-media event where they will receive radio sets and CDs, tapes as well as print materials on awareness-raising issues. Provision will also be made for viewing of documentaries and film screenings to raise mass awareness about the upcoming Constituent Assembly election, as well as the peace process. Public hearings will be held and opinions recorded. Maximum participation will be encouraged. In this way, policymakers, government officials and politicians in Kathmandu will have the opportunity to listen to the voices of the people living on the periphery. The planners in the centre will have an idea about what the rest of the country is saying.

During its temporary stay in the villages selected, Doko Radio has successfully given voice to the voiceless. It has significantly increased the thirst for information among the people. It has demonstrated that there are cost-effective and creative solutions in addressing the needs of the people. Judging by the interest and enthusiasm shown by the villager, we can foresee another period of anxious growth of community radio in Nepal.



# 4

## Tambuli Community Radio: a strategy for upscaling

by Louie Tabing



*Carabao or water buffalo, symbol of the agricultural economy, symbol of power. Tambuli is literally the carabao horn, now and in the old days a symbol of people power through communication. (CAA)*

### The Background

The Philippines was one of the first countries to start radio in Asia in the early 1920s and has since had a florid history from department store radio to blaring networks competing in thousands of kilowatts. Alongside commercial radio, there have been several worthy endeavours to set up radio to promote social development and education. UNESCO has fulfilled a significant role in this history.

The earliest UNESCO initiative dates to 1967, in the city of Cotobato, southern Philippines, where UNDA, the world wide organisation of Catholic broadcasters met under the leadership of Fr. James B. Reuter, a Jesuit then involved in the setting up and programming of Radio Veritas and also a principal contact for the many church-oriented radio stations that began springing up in the Philippines. In the 60s, radio reception increased by quantum leaps due to the invention and marketing of the transistor in cheaply made, portable sets. Radio transmission at that time, however, was still expensive and in normal conditions required several thousand kilowatts of electric energy, also expensive. Nonetheless, several medium-wave radio stations were set up by the church, both Catholic and Protestant. They met to take stock and to coordinate the work of social development by radio. At this meeting, they invited a representative of the Director General of UNESCO, Dr Solomon V. Arnaldo, then Deputy Director of the UNESCO Bangkok Office.

Addressing the group of several hundred church broadcasters from all over the world, Dr. Arnaldo referred to the meeting held in Bangkok 16-23 May 1966, when UNESCO presented its new approach to broadcasting for development. The basic ideas for this paper were provided by Dr. Wilbur Schramm of Stanford University, and eventually became the basis for his book, *Mass Media and National Development*, a classic and basic reference in this field (Schramm 1964). The Bangkok Report stated that in any national development plan (economic, social, educational), broadcasting has a valuable contribution to make as a prime mover in development, especially here in Asia, where development is the keynote of almost all the countries of the region. Three principles (S.V. Arnaldo: 1967) are central to this new approach, namely:

“First, that broadcasting is basically a trust and responsibility placed on all those who organise, operate and control radio and television.

“Second, that in order to enable radio and television to discharge this fundamental obligation in a truly effective and purposeful manner, it is imperative that broadcasting must be recognised and supported by all governmental as well as non-governmental agencies as a vital and indispensable force in the furtherance of the basic objectives of all Asian nations to establish and sustain a modern, progressive society.



“Third, that broadcasting has great potentialities to transmit knowledge, to disseminate information and to influence public opinion in positive and constructive directions; and that these potentialities should be applied to create the social climate and to communicate the skills required for building this modern society.”

These principles have been invisibly guiding the work of building community broadcasting in the Philippines. But I wish to solidly underline the first concept, that broadcasting is basically a trust. For trust is what has distinguished all the efforts of community broadcasters, from radio run for commercial profit, government prestige, or almost any other kind of broadcasting. Trust, the trust of the people, the trust of the community of listeners.

This introduction presents the basis for creating the Tambuli Community Radio Project and the Foundation that followed it. We also point to new directions of community radio in the Philippines, new partners who continue this work following the Tambuli framework.

*- by Carlos A. Arnaldo*

The 1960s—those were the good years for Philippine media, high saturation of the country for all economic classes, rapid growth of broadcast networks and single ownership of several media. In the late 60s leading up to martial law, TV managers finally realised that they were dealing with a truly mass medium, that over 70 % saturation of TV in Manila meant that the masses were watching TV, not just the elite, that TV should advertise soap and soft drinks, and not just cars and airline travel. Mass media in the Philippines before martial law was a politically and commercially driven market, aimed at selling votes or goods to the public.

Of course this meant that the major networks now wielded real power over the airwaves and could put up and support candidates with a good margin of success, or counter the

power of antagonistic political leaders. That was the situation of media just prior to martial law and its consequent twenty-four years of government-controlled media (C. Arnaldo 1969, 1970).

This was also unfortunately, the origin of the four Ps — profit, propaganda, power and privilege the advantages bestowed on the owners and controllers of media. When Ferdinand E. Marcos, re-elected in 1969 through the power of the media, declared Martial Law in 1972, the first thing he did was to padlock the media and dismantle its ownership, allowing only those loyal to him and his new programme of government to open, manage and control media. But all during this period, media remained the handmaiden to profit, propaganda, power and prestige.

### **New forms of broadcasting**

Many broadcasters reflected on that situation, thinking that perhaps the 1986 administration of Cory Aquino, wife of slain Senator Ninoy Aquino, might be the moment to launch a new form of broadcasting.

We reflected on the situation of media following the People Power revolution where Radio Veritas, normally a conservative, low profile music and news station, played a significant role in the fall of former President Ferdinand Marcos. For several hours, it was the only radio on the air broadcasting 50 Kilowatts strong all over the country! It seemed then that this Catholic-owned Radio Veritas might be an excellent alternative to the entrenched commercial system, since in principle, it was independent of commerce and politics. But Radio Veritas was not in any position to bring about changes in the system.

To this day, most media companies in the Philippines, like most businesses are still owned by politicians or big businessmen whose main aim is either to make money or to

protect and enhance investments. The four Ps (profit, propaganda, power and privilege) remain as vibrant as ever. In this light, it even seems, incongruous to think that a commercially driven broadcasting network could serve as an effective ‘press watchdog.’ It may be watching out more for its own master! With rare exception, very few programmes exhibited authentic public service, or adhered to an independent editorial policy or opened any kind of access to the media system for alternative voices to speak out.

As former national chairman of the Philippine Foundation of Rural Broadcasters (PFRB), a professional association of radio hosts of rural programmes, I regularly sent our members recorded radio spots and plugs on integrated pest management. One series of short clips advised that farmers check the economic threshold level of pest infestation before spraying chemicals, while exploring possible ways to use organic pesticides. This way, the production cost of farmers and health hazards are greatly reduced. But the tapes were returned with a curt note, “Sorry, these materials run counter to the commercial objectives of the station. The station manager prevents us from airing them.” Evidently, the power of commercial sponsors, especially chemicals and sprays, were reaching into the decision-making of programmers!

On another occasion, we distributed copies of a short spot discussing the benefits of plant and fruit juices over carbonised soft drinks. Again, we were informed that soft drink bottlers threatened to drop the station from its ad placement list.

Often our prepared media materials on planting, municipal seminars, local health problems, and community events were not given airtime by national and regional radio because they focused on the interests of urban centers. In this media landscape, it was difficult to see how useful information can get to the ordinary citizen and especially to those in the rural countryside.



*Replanting seedlings in Pampanga (CAA)*

While there were then about 500 radio stations ranging from commercial and religious to government broadcasters, they were all in the urban centers competing for listeners in the ‘ratings game.’ But the far-flung towns, districts and islands did not receive strong signals. On the peripheral coasts and

islands, radio signals from neighboring countries such as Malaysia, Indonesia and China were better received. Marginal areas were not served at all. The people needed open access to communication.

We did a few experiments with the UNESCO 10 watt transmitter designed by the late British Engineer, Martin Allard. One obvious challenge was to carry the DZLB programme from the station of the Institute of Development Communication in Los Baños to its rural audience, as their 5 Kilowatt transmitter was off the air. But few listeners then had FM receivers and the 10 watts did not propagate very far.

We set up another 10-watt transmitter project on the island of Batanes in the far northern islands. This included training producers and technicians and setting up a community media council to run the station. It was highly successful, but only for a few months. The government broadcaster, Philippine Broadcasting Network, set up a 5 Kilowatt station and all the community personnel were drawn like metal shreds to the magnet of salaried positions.

*“I believe that there are two problems facing communities that want to develop: poverty and ignorance. But ignorance is worse than poverty. And the way out of ignorance is radio, that gives the means to make informed decisions, form free opinions and channel the energies of the community.”* —Len Peters, Treasurer Grande Rivire Tourism Development Organisation, Toco, Trinidad and Tobago

### **Tambuli: focus on small radio**

With this short-term experience, we had to revise our original proposal for UNESCO funding in accordance with the

logical framework approach (LFA) of DANIDA, the aid agency of Denmark, which had manifested interest to support the project through UNESCO's International Program for the Development of Communication (IPDC). We had to scale down from 50 and 100 kilowatt transmission to more local radio of 10 to 100 watts. We had to think community as well as programme content. That ten-day writing attempt proved to be almost fruitless because of my little familiarity with computers, zero knowledge about writing proposals and overall lack of writing skills. The intricate discussion of LFA totally unnerved me.

One exercise however that I found worth doing was the problem analysis. In analysing information flows, I discovered that any single problem always led to another problem in a spiraling and intensifying pattern. Inadequate information, for instance, contributed to the slow development of a community, this then led to economic stagnation, to restlessness, and other social ills. On the other side of the spectrum, improving the communication situation can be expected to bring about more informed decisions, improvement in livelihood, better rural economy, enhanced democratic participation in the affairs of the community and the general well being of a nation.

Another eye opener in the proposal writing exercise was describing in a matrix, the objectives, results and verifiable indicators. Identified activities had to respond to objectives, show impact and provide guideposts to discern that impact. When the project was eventually approved, I literally carried the matrix to the field where I used it in discussions with other rural broadcasters and we put the finishing touches on it. Since then, I have also used that matrix to explain the project, to evaluate, or to implement various activities.

The new project now focused on small stations in remote communities. It sought to empower communities with a facility to 'signal a call' for a community gathering. The *barangay* or village chief used the horn of a carabao (or water buffalo) to call for an assembly. It was called a *tambuli*. In fishing villages,



the horn used by the *barangay* (village) chief was the conch or a big sea shell. In other regions, it was known as *budyong* or *vhudyadong*. Tambuli thus became the name and acronym of the project: *Tinig ng Aming Munting Bayan upang Umunlad ang Lalong Maliliit* or the voice of our small town for the development of the least privileged.

With the rural broadcasters, we organised a consultation among experts, personalities and concerned government agencies including the UP College of Development Communication Los Baños, UP College of Mass Communication Diliman, National Telecommunications Commission, and lawmakers involved in communication. It was decided to set up community radio stations as a collective project.

The experience of the first two stations, now envisaged as pilots experimenting with the 10-watt transmitter, led this Tambuli Community Radio project to set up six model community stations – two pilot stations for the first two years and four stations in the expansion phase of four years. The stations would be located in remote, depressed areas, and operated by the people themselves. If successful in upscaling, the project could be renewed to implement a larger number of stations. It is important to note that from the start we were already concerned with upscaling, this was not an afterthought.

Initially Danida did not look too favourably at first upon the decision to increase the number of stations, beyond the six, as a further expansion was not foreseen. Efficient management and efficacy of the project nevertheless persuaded this donor to agree to an expansion. In the 10-year period 1990-2000, Tambuli was able to set up 24 radio stations. And the Tambuli Community Radio Foundation is still assisting various communities in setting up their radios.

In 1996, the Project was awarded the IPDC Rural Communication prize, and Ms. Charing Gozos, the station



manager of DWTP, Partido was invited to join me to receive the award of US\$20,000. The project ended officially in January 2001 with the creation of the aforementioned Tambuli Community Radio Foundation.

The following chapters highlight specific Tambuli stations in various parts of the country. We thought of establishing first a laboratory type experiment near Manila in the town of Laurel, province of Batangas on the shores of Lake Taal. This community, however, got polarised into political factions and eventually it was necessary to pull out the equipment and close the station. Ironically, the more geographically remote, like the Island of Olutanga off the coast of Zamboanga, the more robust and independent a station becomes. But Laurel is still very strong and talented and we believe one day, the differences can be settled and the town will be on air again. I say this, because we write of a similar case, Radio Partido, that won the IPDC prize. They too had difficulties, but our hopes are nonetheless strong for a renaissance.

### **The community process**

We spent a lot of time on geography, looking at maps, and on statistics, checking poverty indices. Before we focused on a potential site, we analysed the area according to the following criteria;

1. Little or no effective communication system, and no station effectively serving the needs of the community.
2. Economically disadvantaged –the prospective community is among the more economically depressed sections of the province or the area. But it is judged that radio can make a measurable impact on that community. In certain areas, a town covers several *barangays* or districts each of which is potentially capable of interacting with the others and thus able to contribute to development at very local levels as well as *barangay* and town levels.



*Poling the bangka in Aklan. (CAA)*

3. Presence of a dependable cooperator or cooperators – there is a local organisation or institution capable of spearheading the project and overseeing its implementation. This could be a school, a cooperative, a religious group, a local government unit, a foundation, or an established professional association willing and capable to pursue the goals of community radio. Failing the existence of such groups, it was estimated whether the community encountered was capable of setting up such an organisation.
4. Absence of political, social or other factors that might threaten the existence of community radio or hinder the project implementation.

Once the site was selected, we held discussions with the community on their problems, how they could solve them, and how communication might help, how radio might be used as a tool. If the village did not have a community development

association, we urged them to organise one and use it as the basis for forming the community media council to run the radio.

We then held a series of training courses with the community according to the tasks to which they were best suited:

- Management;
- Production;
- Technical operations;
- Broadcasting on the air.

#### Tambuli Radio Production Modules

- nature of the radio medium
- community radio concepts and practice
- speaking on the air
- scriptwriting
- news gathering
- writing and reporting
- participatory programming
- media laws and practice
- dramatising information
- technical operations

We provided a basic set of equipment, selecting from among the proven semi-professional level gear.

### **New directions**

Both during, but especially after the project, the Tambuli Foundation has been active in cooperating with new partners in the development of community radio. This has helped to continue the work of Tambuli almost eight years from the end of international financing and served to promote the concept and process of community radio as formulated and espoused

### Basic Community Radio Equipment

- 10 or 20-watt exciter either coupled to the booster transmitter or used as a VHF link to a remote site transmitter, with omni-directional antenna
- 100-watt booster transmitter (the principal source of transmission)
- four-bay antenna, jampro configuration preferred
- 1 double-deck tape player/recorder
- 2 CD-rom players
- audio amplifier
- 6 to 8-channel mixer
- loudspeakers
- several microphones
- portable tape recorder and microphones, supply of batteries
- basic tools (multimeter, soldering irons, screwdrivers, pliers etc)
- in some cases, a communications radio set to link to walkie-talkies

by Tambuli. Among these, the principal cooperators are: UNICEF, local government units, educational institutions, the Philippine Military.

### **UNICEF (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund)**

UNICEF has sought the assistance of Tambuli to set up local radio stations for children and schools, under the project title, ComPAS. This is the acronym for community radio and public address system. Implemented under the United Nations Children's Fund's (UNICEF) Fifth Country Programme for Children or CPC-V 1999 to 2003, ComPAS radio combines the community features of *Tambuli* and the CATS (community audio tower system) models of village loudspeakers. Setting up new ComPAS stations is no longer part of the sixth country programme. UNICEF preferred to guide and support these fourteen stations so that they serve as models for other communities.

UNICEF supported ComPAS community radio stations  
are situated in:

1. Poblacion Dinalungan, Aurora
2. Masla, Tadian, Mountain Province
3. Igbucagay, Hamtic, Antique
4. Lantangan, Pontevedra, Capiz
5. Catarman, Northern Samar
6. Zillovia, Talacogon, Agusan del Sur
7. Jordan, Guimaras
8. San Pablo, Isabela
9. Gasi, Kiamba, Sarangani
10. Kiadsam, Sen. Ninoy Aquino, Sultan Kudarat
11. Lamare, Bayog, Zamboanga Sibugay
12. Pangao-an Magpet North Cotabato
13. Kahaponan, Valencia Bukidnon
14. Ipil, Zamboanga del Sur

Presently there are fourteen model ComPAS stations located in remote villages in Mindanao, Visayas and Luzon that were all put up by UNICEF and the provincial or municipal or *barangay* governments of the Philippines.

Designed to create a conducive, child-friendly environment in all spheres of community life, the ComPAS project was the output of UNICEF's effort to support a child-friendly movement. Dr. Teresa Stuart, the UNICEF communication officer who initiated the ComPAS idea, said at the time, "This cost-effective technology is designed to facilitate learning and participation of community members, particularly local leaders, service providers, teachers, mothers, fathers, children and youth. ComPAS helps children realise their rights to survival, health, nutrition, education, protection and participation while addressing other poverty alleviation measures."

UNICEF financed the training and the equipment. The local governments organised the participants, provided the building

or space, secured the radio license and monitored the ComPAS projects. Most ComPAS radio stations have progressed way beyond child rights and child protection, and tackle a broad spectrum of community issues.

### ***Local Government Units (barangay, town or provincial governments)***

Normally, media professionals are wary of too close a relationship with government offices at any level. The experience of Tambuli at the local government levels, however, has in most cases proven to be stable, non-partisan, and supportive in terms of resources allocation. Most problems concern inter-party rivalry rather than the exertion of influence on the station, with the exception of gambling protected by some high ranking politicians in some regions. The very first Tambuli station, Laurel in Batangas, was closely supported by the town government which even gave rice bonuses at Christmas time to the staff. The provincial government of Pampanga has provided funds for equipment and a contribution to salaries for the educational station at the Pampanga Agricultural College. The town governments of Gonzaga and Sta. Teresita in Cagayan have provided office and studio space for the community radios there.

It is noteworthy in this regard that the station manager of Sta. Teresita was especially strict with regard to the non-partisan stance of the station and did not allow candidates to continue their staff broadcasts during election period, as this on air work gave the candidate extra exposure. He followed strictly the guidelines prepared by Tambuli on political programmes. In the case of ComPAS Radio in Magpet, Cotobato, the management decided to close the station entirely rather than let politicians loose on the microphone. Some local governments, however, can also be negative, as when the newly elected mayor of Cuyo closed the community station, housed for almost two

years in the municipal building, a decision of the previous mayor. But when local government units understand the non-political stance of Tambuli stations, they generally respect this mandate and are supportive of the development thrust provided to them.

### *Educational institutions*

Educational institutions, especially at tertiary level can usually marshal large funds and provide logistics and resources normally unavailable to community stations. In most of the Tambuli stations, these institutions have provided office and studio space, technical manpower, and the assignment of teaching staff to programme production as part of the institution's outreach programme. Such advantages so far have been provided with complete openness. Contrary to doubts that may have been manifested at the beginning of such tie-ups, due to an over-academic approach or bureaucratic ways of decision-making, however, almost all such stations have given positive results. The first experiment was with the Aklan Agricultural College (now Aklan State University) in Banga. Due to the dynamism of its former president, the late Helmar Aguilar, the college provided studio and technical space, technicians, equipment and the backing of its outreach faculty under the leadership of Dr. Porferio Bullo. In Cabagan, Isabela, the Isabela State University has integrated practical courses with the academic curriculum and assigned two of its staff to run the station. New community stations are currently under preparation for university campuses in Nueva Ecija, Nueva Vizcaya, Bataan, Cagayan, Benguet, Romblon and Cavite (Indang), plus a private high school in General Trias.

### *the Philippine Military*

Media managers are also normally wary of military use and/or control of media as this can easily be abused for seizing



power by force or for propaganda purposes. But in the case at hand, the military officers involved are more concerned about their image vis à vis the public. Soldiers combating insurgency were often assigned to far, remote areas and faced not only the hostility of the opposing forces but also the problems of ignorance, or worse, stereotyped images. In seeking to remedy this, they believed that mobilising the community in development projects presented a more positive image to the public, while at the same time assisted in removing many of the causes for rebellion and anti-government agitation.

The basic concept was formulated as early as 2004 and aimed to support Army operations through information dissemination, education and promotion of community relations and activities. Community radio could thus bridge the communication gap between the people and the government, particularly the Army. The project should encourage direct participation of the community, thus giving them responsiveness and a way to correlate their activities with wider national development goals, peace and order as top priority.

While the first initiatives were taken by the Army, gradually, community participation and involvement of local government units increased, making for a more participatory facility. The fact that communities are now more deeply involved in these projects as in other Tambuli stations augurs well for the radio as a community tool and less as a propaganda machine.

The Tambuli Foundation has cooperated by way of training and advice, with several units of the military to set up local radio stations. A few have been set up already and at this writing, preparations are underway to introduce another set of stations all over the Philippines.



*Tuyo or dried fish, the staple food of the poor, often used as the symbol of the poverty of the rural half of the nation. (CAA)*

Young people talking to young people  
—not adults trying to talk to children

For some years, the town school, St. John Academy, had been pondering the possibilities of a radio station, as a tool for career development for their students, but also to spur to the upliftment of the community, a major agricultural and semi-industrial zone. Atty. Silvestre Pascual, Board of Directors, and Mr. Joel Pascual, School Administrator St. John Academy, General Trias (Cavite Province) invited Tambuli to run a test broadcast in order to understand the workings of radio and what it takes to set it up.

The technical team headed by Edgar Mendoza set up a 20 watt transmitter in the computer room of the school and ran a cable to the

roof where a dipole antenna was mounted on a 4-meter pipe. “The broadcast should reach all of General Trias, and probably stretch into the surrounding towns,” said Edgar. Choy Arnaldo and Louie Tabing ran out to call students milling in the courtyard, “We’re on the air, nasa radio na tayo, come in and talk!”



*Young people talking to young people (CAA)*

Immediately, the 3rd and 4th year students took the lead and selected two emcees, Heidi and Christopher. They animated the programme for almost two hours, giving greetings, offering dedications, sharing problems



*Heidi, Christopher, Joel Pascual, Administrator, Bobbie (CAA)*

(“My girl friend and I love each other, but there is a big age gap between us”) and advice (“Just love, love is more important, love conquers all!”), interviews, announcements. All of this was unscripted and totally impromptu. But the youngsters managed to keep a flow and kept their audience glued to the listening sets. They expressed humour and spoke in both English and Tagalog.

An sms was received and Joel showed the text on his cel phone to Heidi. “Your programme is great, we hear you at the rural bank in town!”

They periodically gave the call sign, “You’re on DWSJ, from St John Academy in General Trias, Cavite, this is a test broadcast. We’re on 100 Megahertz, perfect 100. Have fun.”



*“Have fun” that’s radio. (CAA)*

The last two words were our message to the kids, but they also shared it with the audience, everybody laughing and clapping at each station ID.

The test broadcast was short, just under two hours, but the young kids expressed a lot of talent and learned quickly the skills of talking and handling radio. “We need community radio to help the young folk find their careers and to build up the agricultural base of our economy,” said Atty S. Pascual, co-Founder of the La Salle affiliated schools of General Trias.

## Echo from a Highland Valley

By Louie Tabing



*The Community Audio Tower System (CATS) tower and house in Maragusan that Tambuli Project converted into a real transmission station. (LNT)*

Over the last three decades, and in many parts of the world, there have been several experiments with loudspeaker radio, often supported by international aid agencies. One successful loudspeaker radio was set up among some of the indigenous peoples in northern Thailand in the 1990s. These set-ups are very well adapted to small villages of several hundred or so. Many of these early experiments were reduced over time to making public announcements; several, however, eventually wore out their audiences and signed off permanently. Much of this may have been due to the one-way usage of this communication tool. But others grew to a higher stature, by converting their pole-perched loudspeakers to broadcast antennas, and by engaging the efforts and enthusiasm of the people, thus becoming a truly participative community radio station.

In a muddy town called New Albay in Maragusan, Compostella Province on the large island of Mindanao, DXLM also began as loudspeaker radio.

“The receiver’s volume control is the house window,” mused Frank Endaya of the community audio towers in New Albay, Maragusan, Compostella Province. “Yes, New Albay has its own ‘radio.’ The people, however, have no choice but to listen. If they don’t want to listen to the programme, they have to plug their ears with coffee beans!” he added jokingly referring to the ‘garrison-style’ of village broadcasting, introduced by FAO and UNDP in Asia in the 1970s. As regional information officer of the Department of Agriculture, Frank helped put up the loudspeaker towers in 1995.

While the townsfolk call it radio, it is not radio, as we know it. It is an array of six loudspeakers mounted on top of a 20-meter mast beside a two-storey residence where the simple audio production system is housed.

The ‘radio’ served an estimated 4,000 residents in New Albay. Also known as the CATS or Community Audio Tower System, twenty-three volunteer programme participants manned the production booth daily from 4 o’clock to 6 o’clock in the morning and in the evenings from 5 o’clock to 6 o’clock. On the agenda were various subject matters on agriculture, religion, health, education, cooking, governance, women, senior citizens and childcare.

### **CATS - DXLM, an extension agent to Maraguseños**

DXLM became a crucial component in the development of New Albay. The programme was received in every home, shop, field and workplace. The programme discussions ushered in livelihood opportunities—motivating students to engage in additional income-generating projects such as raising ducks and planting rambutan fruit. Integrated farming technologies are also encouraged, such as the adoption of hybrid varieties of rice and efficient use of the irrigation system.



“It is obvious how our *barangay* has progressed,” observed Mrs. Mila Rose Tabuco, a former *barangay* captain. “You now see better-built houses with TV antennas atop roofs. More farmers are able to send their children to school; some even manage to take up college studies.” During her term as a public servant, Mrs. Tabuco used her morning show *Barangay Ngayon* or The Town Today to inform the community about the resolutions and ordinances passed by the village council. She also used her programme as a way to explain the intricate but pertinent provisions of the Local Government Code. It is through local government that most rural folk confront the administration and political leaders.

### **A summer and banana capital**

Maragusan derives its name from the many tributaries leading to the Agusan river. Maragusan boasts of lush mountains 630 metres above sea level, and over thirty waterfalls and cold springs. A number of commercial resorts seek to earn from the burgeoning tourist trade. The Maragusan Tourism Office focuses on ecology adventure activities such as mountain climbing, trekking, mountain biking, camping, falls hopping and farm tours. Situated about 140 kilometers to the northeast of the commercially bustling metro city of Davao, the valley presents itself as a refuge from the congestion, heat and pressure of the populous city. Hence Davaoeños popularly call Maragusan their summer capital or paradise valley.

With the town’s natural protection against typhoons, Maragusan is an agricultural haven. It produces banana, coffee, coconuts and other high value vegetables apart from the staple crops of rice and corn. Stanfilco, a multi-national agricultural company manages thousands of hectares of banana plantation in Maragusan. The company employs hundreds and pays a substantial amount of taxes to the otherwise cash-strapped





*Banana plantation in Maragusan: bane or boon? (LNT)*

municipality. As an apparent means to recompense and appease the people, the company has put up a foundation named *Kasilag* which supports livelihood programmes.

In this precarious cohabitation with abundant nature, environmental protection has become a monumental task for the municipal government and its neighboring communities. Mining operations and illegal logging are creeping in and intensifying issues. Several local development foundations and civic groups have been organised to support conservation efforts and stimulate progress. DXLM is thus regarded as the media partner, synthesising and shaping the public stance of the community on these concerns vital to the community's development.

The road to Maragusan, this ecological paradise, is a frustrating disaster. While the first hour from Davao is a breeze on a winding highway zipping past the fast developing municipalities of Panabo, Tagum and Nabunturan, getting to the

interior is a 2-hour grind over forty kilometers of dusty, muddy, or stony road snaking through coconut groves and treacherous mountain edges. Buses ply the route to and from Davao, but the local way of transporting people and goods is the motorcycle or *habal-habal*. Some motorcycles are loaded with five or six passengers several of whom are themselves carrying boxes of tomatoes and bunches of bananas on their shoulders!

### **‘Transmitterising’ the loudspeakers**

Without a doubt, CATS proved to be an effective tool for information sharing and learning. The agriculture extension agents and the village officials used the communication platform to their advantage, claiming one hundred percent audience share. Nonetheless, CATS had its inherent drawbacks. Residents, particularly those in the area immediately surrounding the speaker tower, began to complain of the blaring sound. Others invoked their right to choose when to tune-in to the station.

In 1996, Frank Endaya invited me to visit Maragusan where he conveyed to me the community’s interest to *transmitterise* the system, that is, to add transmission facilities to the simple production studio to broadcast the signal to ordinary radio sets. It was an opportune moment for the Tambuli Project. Maragusan had an efficient management in place; programmers were trained by the College of Development Communication experts; the Department of Agriculture was a willing partner; and the station already had its own building together with rudimentary production equipment and the *trompas* (loudspeakers) mounted on a steel tower. And the people needed a larger outreach.

Tambuli provided a 20-watt transmitter and antenna. Since the coverage would be expanded, town-wide, more radio

producers were recruited and trained. Programme output was increased and the management structure was reinforced to handle the new work. Tambuli provided technical advice and training. The Department of Agriculture supported a cooperative livelihood fishpond for the volunteers; and the Municipality of Maragusan offered to help support expenses for the new radio station.

### A voice echoing in Maragusan

Dubbed as **Lanog sa Maragusan** or echo of Maragusan, on 98.8 megahertz, DXLM transformed itself into a community radio on November 14, 1997. Its opening coincided with the town's founding anniversary in November 25.



*DXLM broadcasters working in tandem (LNT)*

Maria Teresita Borja, a UPLB expert from the College of Development Communication trained the new participants in a 4-day course on broadcasting. She was assisted by Clay Clavecilla, Tambuli staff trainer. The new broadcasters had to expand their vision from the old village to a town-wide outlook.

“Initially, we felt very timid and awkward talking on real radio. We were used to addressing only the residents of our village. Now we have to bear in mind the listeners of the whole town,” said Dads Varona, a former CATS announcer. “Eventually, we have gotten used to being town celebrities,” he adds laughing.

Cornelio Valez, the *barangay* captain, feels that he has benefited politically from being a broadcaster of the new DXLM and jokingly adds that he could run and get elected in any public office owing to his sudden popularity. But, he adds, that is not his goal.

### **Community Media Council**

The Maragusan Community Media Council, created in 1997, is the main decision making body for DXLM. It is composed of representatives of women, educators, the religious, farmers, youth cooperatives and government, among others. Initially, there were 17 members, most of whom are also broadcasters.

The council’s primary role is to formulate the station’s policies, resolve contentious issues and undertake major decisions in the operation of the station. Members of the council do not receive salaries. However, a monthly honorarium of 300 pesos is offered to the members who meet once a month.

The active participation of the *Kapisanan ng mga Brodkasters sa Maragusan* (KBM), an organisation of

broadcasters, has aided the operations of the media council in managing its operations. Rules about programme preparation, selection of issues and usage of studio facilities are discussed both by the media council and the KBM.

### **A savory programme concoction for Maraguseños**

Today, with over 40 volunteer programme-makers and correspondents, DXLM starts the day at 5 o'clock and signs off at 8 in the evening. The station's programme scheme tries to achieve a happy mix of information and entertainment. Although developmental and educational topics dominate the programme log, the station also 'pampers' the audience with music and a greetings programme. Local, national and even foreign news are aired regularly. Understandably, there is a prominence of local news such as *barangay* updates, police and security matters, market prices of commodities and municipal government projects.

In the morning, the station opens with **Morning Myx** a favorite among early risers. It dishes out lively music, greetings, market reports and news handled by Willie Lindong, a municipal market supervisor in tandem with a different lady co-host for each day of the week. In the same timeslot, **Straight from the Heart**, a sentimental programme goes on air once a week, with discussions covering affairs of the heart, as well as family and social issues. The programme's youthful host Tonton Alferez, is becoming a popular town personality.

The Department of Education, Culture and Sports finds in DXLM a fitting medium for its outreach programme called **Alternative Learning System** or ALS which serves out-of-school youths and adults seeking advanced learning. ALS has several hundred enrollees in both elementary and high school levels, who tune-in to lessons, take exams and receive



certificates of completion. In order to make the education programme sound less like rote classroom instruction, a teacher is paired with a regular broadcaster.

“This is where Davao or Cebu-based stations cannot compete with us,” declares station manager Alona Hernandez. Local news and local broadcasters are heard on DXLM, but she laments the shortage of reports coming from the different *barangays*. She says there is a plan to have daily *barangay* round-up reports wherein every *barangay* chief provides a report through VHF transceivers. “This will give us a picture of what is happening in the whole municipality. At the same time, this will increase the motivation for every household to listen.”

Despite the shortage of news, two programmes have been discontinued. The assigned host of the programme of the Mansaka tribe, the original ethnic people of Maragusan, has not been producing regularly, as he felt inadequately trained for programme hosting. Hernandez decided to conduct training for



*DXLM broadcasters interview the lady village chieftain of New Albay. (LNT)*

new participants in DXLM especially to bring into the mainstream those marginalised groups in Maragusan. The other show taken off the air was the special programme on women, hosted by Loreta ‘Inday’ Gonzales, the chairperson of Violence Against Women, an organisation that helps women who are victims of abuse. Despite its cancellation, the programme had contributed significantly to the empowerment of women. For instance, a housewife who experienced years of physical abuse from her husband approached DXLM. A complaint was filed with the women and children’s desk of the police. While no lawsuit was brought to court, the husband had to make a signed pledge not to harm his wife. This notable proceeding serves as a stern warning to would-be offenders. Realising the programme’s potential to promote the rights of children and women, Gonzales vows to revive the programme.

Two networks of radio transceiver owners, Kabalikat Civicon and Recon, gather additional news for DXLM. The local president of Civicom, Oddylin Dayupay, is a religious pastor, a fellow broadcaster of DXLM and currently chairs the KBM. The radio hobbyists not only serve as news reporters but also engage in developmental and public service programmes complementing those of the local government.

To date, the most popular show is **Lanog sa Maragusan** which encourages listeners to interact with other listeners through phone, SMS, letters and actual studio visits. The programme tackles local issues and problems. It serves as an outlet for announcements, meetings and public service items.

Despite huge strides in programme content, the Maragusan Media Council chairperson, Cesar Escudro, still believes that “there is need to strengthen the local content as well as provide greater motivation for the people to participate. I am looking forward to the days when the people of Maragusan will really take DXLM as their own. Every Maraguseño should be free to go on the air and take part in the programmes. Not only is he a





*Frank Endaya (seated), an old hand in rural broadcasting from the Department of Agriculture, demonstrates programme hosting to community volunteers at Maragusan radio. (LNT)*

listener but he should also express his thoughts and ideas. He must share his joys and his feelings through DXLM.”

### **Technical Operations**

A studio-to-transmitter link built by Mon Servando (Technician of Radio Olutanga in Zamboanga) connects New Albay to the main transmitter 5 kilometers away. The municipal government donated a new set of production equipment for the main studio, and provided a room of 25 square meters in the basement of the municipal gymnasium. On the rooftop, an antenna is fixed 20 meters from the ground level. The location of the municipal government complex is somewhat elevated.

“We could get better signal propagation if the transmission house is placed at that mountain side near the Globe mobile

phone transmitter.” Dondon Hernandez, the station engineer, was pointing to a resort area about 150 meters higher than the *poblacion* (town) and which is half a kilometer away. This means that a programme line will have to be run to the transmitter site. Or one has to set up a VHF link. The transmitter cannot be more than 40 meters away from the antenna or signal power weakens. Long transmission cable is expensive and will incur power losses along the line.

DXLM is fortunate to have Dondon. A licensed electronics and communications engineer, Dondon works single-handedly the 7-day-a-week operation of the equipment. His role is essential to the continued and smooth operation of the station. He says he visits the antenna-transmitter connections regularly to ensure that the transmitter is in proper condition. Any breach in the cable connections can damage vital chips in the transmitters.

### **Lanog sa Maragusan: sustaining a dream**

Presently, the municipal government provides a monthly subsidy to the radio station and shoulders the salary of the engineer. Most of the broadcasters, including the station manager, are volunteers who are either employed by the municipal government and other private entities, or are self employed. Thus, they do not draw their primary salary from the radio station.

Another form of income for the community radio is derived from informal advertising by the local business establishments. There is a small commission for those who bring in advertising revenues. Occasionally, the media council organises raffle draws and marketing of health products for additional funds. These funds are utilized for the maintenance of equipment, supplies, transportation, communication, repair and other incidental expenses.

For the future, the media council is preparing to acquire a higher power transmitter to extend the coverage of the station to all the *barangays* of Maragusan. In programming aspects, the station manager disclosed that the Maragusan municipal council session will be aired live on DXLM as soon as remote equipment is acquired by the station. Presently, DXLM airs the Monday flag raising ceremony during which municipal schedules and plans for the week are announced and queries are clarified.

DXLM is practically heard in most homes in Maragusan. No government programme is complete without the participation of DXLM. A household without an FM radio receiver for tuning to DXLM, whether for entertainment or for news and community-relevant information, becomes uninformed and isolated.

For the many who have witnessed the developments brought about by DXLM, it has not only brought hope and inspiration but also offered the realisation of a dream.

## Child-friendly action is total development

By Louie Tabing

It is still dark in *barangay* Pangao-an in Magpet North, Cotabato province. As early as 4 o'clock in the morning, as mothers prepare to send their children to school and farmers feed their animals, ComPAS Radio crackles both on powerful loudspeakers and on home transistor radios: "This is ComPAS Radio of Pangao-an on 99.3 MHZ FM, your child-friendly community station."

Just like any regular FM broadcast stations, ComPAS ng Pangao-an can be heard on regular receivers. Its programmes consist of music, interviews and features, from home making and farming to health and local interests. What is special about this radio station is that its programmes broadcast on radio also blare all over the village over four powerful speakers hoisted on the station's 20-meter antenna tower. It is situated in a forgotten village in Mindanao where it is unlikely to find any such communication facility.

### ComPAS a direction finder?

ComPAS is the acronym for community radio and public address system. It is an adaptation of two earlier initiatives in community communication systems that have proven to be effective in sustaining the exchange and access to need-based knowledge and skills. These initiatives are the *Tambuli* community radio project financed by UNESCO and Danida, and the community audio tower system or CATS project supported by FAO/UNDP.

As it is implemented under the United Nations Children's Fund's (UNICEF) Fifth Country Programme for Children or CPC V, ComPAS radio consists of two alternative models: (1) a public address system with an FM transmitter; or (2) a stand-alone basic public address system.



*Pangao-an village building houses the children's station in Magpet, Cotabato. (LNT)*

In Pangao-an, Cotabato, ComPAS adopts the first model, combining four loudspeakers with a 40-watt FM transmitter giving an effective range of 20 – 30 kilometer radius. Hence, the radio signal of Pangao-an ComPAS covers a large part of the municipality and is heard in the surrounding low-lying areas.

Pangao-an is a poor *barangay* (village) in the mountainous town of Magpet in North Cotabato, in central Mindanao. It is known for its fruit production. The development communication project was set up by the community in 2003, through the assistance of UNICEF, for the purpose of promoting the rights of children. Now visitors particularly educators and government officials, are amazed to see that a small, depressed village is using radio for development and education as well as in all its information campaigns.



## Operators of ComPAS

A distinctive feature of this radio station is that it is run by volunteers: adults, adolescents, seniors and children. They participated in a one-week workshop on the use and management of radio. They do not receive any financial compensation but draw inspiration from the fact that they have become a daily part of the lives of enlivened villagers and families.



*Magpet child broadcasters. (LNT)*

Volunteers organised themselves into an association called ComPAS Radio Broadcasters that include the *barangay* captain, some members of the local council, workers, nutrition worker, religious leaders, senior citizens, farmers, business leaders, women, teachers, youth, children and the indigenous people, mainly the Subanons. The Association president Sonica Sumilac, is a leader of a women's group. Regular monthly meetings are held for effective planning and conflict resolution involving operations. The broadcasters' association drafts policies in the operation of ComPAS and serves as an advisory committee. The staff and management officers such as the station manager, production supervisor, producers, technicians, and reporters are *barangay* locals.

A retired school principal, Nestor Borra, serves as the ComPAS station manager. A farmer who doubles as a photographer has been designated as the technician. Rendering long hours in the studio, he is the only participant receiving a 500 peso allowance from the station. Meanwhile, a licensed radio engineer based in the capital town of Kidapawan makes weekly visits to look after the hardware side of ComPAS Radio.

### **ComPAS programmes**

ComPAS encourages dialogue and discussion on a wide range of topics of common interest among community constituents. ComPAS thus helps to integrate community development activities, facilitates quick response during emergencies, and serves as a unifying, socialising facility in the community.

Programmes on health, agriculture, nutrition, village governance, education, solid waste management, public service and music are aired on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 4 o'clock to 7 o'clock in the morning and again at 11 o'clock to 2 o'clock in the afternoon. Religious programmes are



aired on Sundays. The station adjusts its programming so as not to interfere with school hours, as the station and the loudspeakers are situated a few meters away from the school compound.

A school-on-the-air programme gives lessons on modern rice production technology. Instructions on the propagation of vegetables and fruit trees, (durian, bread fruit, *lanzones*, *rambutan*, rubber tree, coffee and banana) formed the content of another module. To gain a certificate from these subjects, registered enrollees are required to listen to all the lessons and take a qualifying exam. The station also deals with forest protection, river silting, sanitation and use of chemicals in agriculture.

For its consistent solid waste management activities, the village was nominated for a national award. The programme is spearheaded by former village councilor Hermana Talutalo, now newly elected barangay captain. She admitted that her election might have been helped by her radio campaign.

Through ComPAS, campaigns on breastfeeding and prevention of diarrhea, post-natal death and iodine deficiency reached the residents of Pangao-an and the peripheral villages. The station is also an effective platform to air public service announcements of meetings, community gatherings and the recovery of lost items, and even farm animals.

A very popular programme is “Pareng Gob” (my buddy, the governor) that emanates from the radio DXND in the provincial capital and carried by ComPAS. In this programme, the provincial executive talks about a wide range of development projects and agricultural topics. Since the programme content is largely about agriculture, nobody questions the fact that the programme can be used as a vehicle for the government executive to gain political leverage.

In the promotion of the rights and welfare of children, the newly elected village captain confirms that the radio has indeed helped in bringing the message of child protection to the community. Programmes run by children tackle issues concerning their studies, families and society. Mothers are also given tips on how to take care of their children's nutrition, health and social upbringing. Discussions on practices for early childhood care and child protection sanitation are daily fare. Radio spots on the use of iodized salt, oral rehydration therapy, post natal deaths as well as jingles on *Salamat Nanay* (thank you, mother) are repeatedly aired.

Meanwhile, adult programmes remind family members of their responsibilities towards children. Corporal punishment has suddenly become a thing of the past. Issues and cases about child abuse are often discussed not only on the air but in small gatherings inside and outside the home. Questions on instituting discipline without physical or oral punishment brought on heated discussions. Through radio, the community earned its renown as a 'child-friendly *barangay*.'

When I visited Pangao-an ComPAS in October 2007, just about a month after the barangay elections, I learned that the station had to be put off the air for a certain period to prevent it from being used for partisan political purposes during and even after the election. Some of the staff were actively campaigning for public office and feelings became intense as the rivalry between candidates heated up.

### **Plans and prospects**

On the one hand, municipal officials are now upbeat about ComPAS. The town mayor Efren Piñol, talks of plans to upgrade the facility and possibly harness ComPAS in the town's information campaigns on tax collection, agriculture,

health, solid waste management and environment. Thought has been given to setting up a high-powered municipal radio that would be linked to Pangao-an ComPAS, or even a unified Magpet municipal station.

On the other hand, villagers are determined not to let go of their hold on the local facility. The 20 participants of the radio and officers of the broadcasters' organisation take pride in embodying the avowed principles of community radio – owned, run and controlled by the people. They expressed their hope that the municipal officials would help upgrade Pangao-an ComPAS and offer the village association some financial assistance.

What weakens this position somewhat is the high incidence of drop-outs among participants. For instance, the two original children participants who were in 6<sup>th</sup> grade have graduated and eventually moved to the big cities of Kidapawan and Davao. Little thought was given to recruiting and training their successors. Furthermore, the programmes of the indigenous people (who comprise about 10 percent of the population) and their active participation, are less frequent owing to their distance from the station. Also, one day salaries may become an issue. Even though it is accepted that volunteers do not receive any pay, the officers of the association feel that there is a need to raise money for petty cash for the purchase of supplies and spare parts, repairs and transportation as well as to provide allowance for the regulars.

Association president, Sonica Sumilac, pointed out the need for training old volunteers, as well as for new recruits. This will also be an occasion for the volunteers to express their renewal of commitment to the cause of ComPAS Radio. There are plans to take in child volunteers from upper and lower grade students as well as from out-of-school youth. The lower grade pupils can serve as understudies for the older students when

they move on to municipal high schools. Great interest has been stirred among the villagers who look forward to training and joining the ComPAS staff.

At present, the main source of income for the station is a 500 peso rental for a receiving antenna for the village internet connection. There are plans to hold an internet programme or conduct “radio browsing” on air; radio hosts answer questions from the listeners by checking possible responses on the internet. Listeners text, call, or write their questions or requests, or come personally to the station. There are also small contributions from villagers and officials. The *barangay* government pays the electricity bill.

Although licensing can be difficult, as the National Telecommunications Commission is not always keen on attributing frequencies for community radio, local leaders are not perturbed. “As long as radio is serving the interests of their neglected communities, national agencies would not dare interfere,” they say.

Despite the problems, there is no doubt that ComPAS radio contributes extensively to the overall development of the community. In setting up these projects, UNICEF officer, Dr. Teresa Stuart, declared: “A socially, economically and politically wholesome community life is needed to promote the welfare of children.”

Seen, however from the children’s point of view, president of the ComPAS Broadcaster’s Association, Sonica Sumilac, asserts, “How we develop the children of Pangao-an will make an impact on the development of our community and society.”

ComPAS operates on both philosophies.

## DWEE 107.1 FM: Changing Paradigms in Public Service

by Dunstan Lamberto T. Decena II

Communication is an essential tool to enhance efficiency and effectiveness of communities, as well as to facilitate the implementation of programmes and policies. Clear and distinct communication is a process that empowers people, and influences individual and group behavior, and the paradigms evolving therefrom. In the history of development, the communication process integrates, expounds and clarifies information with direct bearing on human life, promotion of personal and societal values, the improvement of economic and political engagements and the rights of peoples. Information and communications technologies expand people's awareness of social norms and broadens the trends in maximising the means for survival, cultural maturity and opportunities for growth.



*Henry Mandig, a mainstay volunteer in radio DWEE in Magalang Pampanga. (CAA)*

It is in accordance with this philosophy of communication that community radio was selected by the Pampanga Agricultural College (PAC) to extend its services to a broader rural audience, thus to fulfill its larger mandate to serve the province. This is the third major educational institution to venture into radio with the Tambuli Community Radio Foundation.

The Pampanga Agricultural College has been yearning to reach out and share its research outputs, professional experiences and agricultural expertise for the farmers of that province. The establishment of DWEE 107.1 FM community radio station provided the ideal instrument for outreach. The general broadcast operations are patterned closely on the models developed by the Tambuli Community Radio project, the ideals and guidelines of the Kapisanan ng mga Broadcasters sa Pilipinas (the Philippine Broadcasters Association) and the regulations of the National Telecommunications Commission.

### **DWEE-FM history**

DWEE-FM was founded by Dr. Zosimo M. Batad, former President of Pampanga Agricultural College, with the assistance of Mr. Louie Tabing, Executive Director of Tambuli Community Radio Foundation, Inc. The Municipality of Magalang, and the different sectors of the community participated in the organisation. The main objective of the project was to put up a community radio as an instrument of extension, communication and development for the use of its students and faculty. The station also served as a communication laboratory and a means of building the school's rapport with its larger community.

The project commenced with the signing of a Memorandum of Agreement between PAC and Tambuli on 28 March 2001. Tambuli then launched a training workshop for 20 participants from the community. Topics included: basic skills in talking on radio, interviewing, radio news gathering, reporting, voicing and performance, and handling of programmes like magazine commentaries, music, panel discussions and drama.





*Low-power transmission equipment of DWEE. (LNT)*

A further result of the training was the establishment of the Radio Management Council to formulate policies and take management decisions for smooth operations. The council's members represent a cross-section of the community with Dr. Epifania Gosio as chair, and Henry Mandig as programme coordinator, both from PAC, and other members from among the farmers, women, businessmen, agriculture, the civil society and the municipality. The broadcasters are volunteers from the college and from various sectors of the community.

The purchase of equipment and the construction of a radio booth followed after the President of the Republic, approved in May 2001 the release of PhP 112,000 (US\$2,488) as financial assistance for purchasing radio equipment. The budgetary allocation of the college which included a benchmark survey, technical survey and supplementary equipment was approximately PhP 250,000 (US\$5,555), more than double the



assistance given by the national government. Through the donations of civil-minded individuals and service organisations in the community, construction was completed on 10 July 2001.

On 31 July 2001, the license to broadcast on 107.1 MHz was granted by National Telecommunications Commission. Transmitter power was 20-watts. On 15 July 2002 DWEE was inaugurated with former Department of Agriculture Secretary Leonardo Montemayor as special guest. The regular programme had already started on 22 May 2002 with the involvement of different departments of the local government like representatives from the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Office of the Provincial Agriculturist and the Agricultural Training Institute. Recently, the station added shows catering to the programmes of Government Owned and/or Controlled Corporations (GOCCs) like Philhealth and the PAG-IBIG Fund in relation to housing and health care needs, questions and concerns of their beneficiaries.

A recent survey indicated that the radio coverage can reach part of Pampanga, and can extend to some areas of the provinces of Tarlac and Nueva Ecija. About 5,000 audience which include the faculty, non-teaching staff, students and farmers listen to its programmes regularly.

In January 2006, a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) was signed by Municipality of Magalang, and the college president. The memorandum referred to the Local Government Code of 1991 whereby every local government unit should provide agricultural extension and onsite research services and facilities through the transfer of appropriate technology and assistance to farmers and other collective organisations. This MOA was therefore instrumental in formalising the municipality's subvention of PhP 80,000 every year for the station's operating expenses and the honorarium of its volunteers. As community stations venture into development operations, it is extremely

beneficial to explore such logistical and financial resources made available by partners in education and local government units.

### **Role of Tambuli Community Radio Foundation**

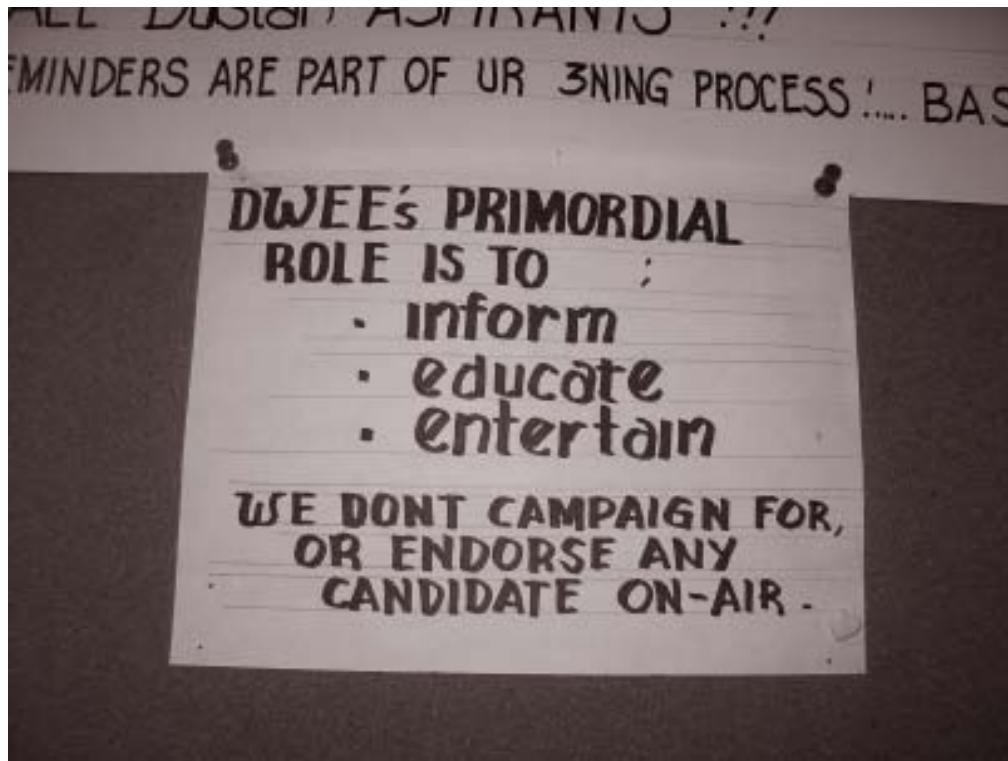
The presence and role of the Tambuli specialists in the creation of this community radio was indispensable. Tambuli, the recognised pioneer in community radio management and operations, contributed skills building and technical experience. Technicians helped assess and survey the coverage area, conducted benchmark socio-economic and communication research, and provided guidance for acquiring the license, purchase and installation of equipment.

On the other hand, Tambuli also ensured that the college would create the Radio Management Council and continue its participatory process of development, and that the station resources would be used for public service and not to gain profit, enhance business, nor support political or economic vested interests.

### **Breakthroughs**

Without thorough evaluative research, it is difficult to determine with exactitude the impact of DWEE on the social and economic life of its listeners. An indication of the station's thrust can be gained through a description of certain breakthroughs the station has made.

***Election Coverage.*** Early on before its inauguration, DWEE-FM already found its social relevance and mission by venturing into a live coverage of election results in Magalang, Pampanga on 14 May 2001. All radio management council members were enjoined to participate in such a noble cause to help ensure a clean, honest and peaceful election in the town. This endeavor also resulted in promoting the existence and utility of the station.



*A management reminder inside the premises of DWEE. (LNT)*

Considering the sensitivity of this undertaking and mindful of the risks involved in Philippine elections, the council members recognised their insufficiency in skills to handle and deal with the programme. To prepare for the event, Louie Tabing and Evelyn Agato conducted an election orientation seminar 12 May 2001, just two days before the election. The coverage was successful and met the objectives of bringing live information to the community and helping ensure a credible election. It also made known to the community its prowess in shaping a well informed, participative and empowered community.

***Occupational Safety on Health*** In support of the programmes and policies of government agencies, 28 episodes on occupational safety and health were aired. The episodes were in drama format and translated into the vernacular. The series covered tuberculosis prevention, drug abuse prevention

in the workplace, HIV diseases and AIDS prevention, the policies of the government towards those health problems, as well as chemical safety and construction safety. Programmes were scheduled throughout 2005.

***Soroptimist International of Magalang*** The station reserved a programme slot for Soroptimist International, an organisation promoting women’s welfare and development. The programme mainstreams gender equality, advancement of women’s rights and role in society, women empowerment, and women’s opportunities in livelihood programmes.

***School on Air*** One of the outstanding programmes of DWEE-FM 107.1 was the “Go Modern—Agriculture School on Air.” The programme carried two major crop projects—hybrid rice and hybrid corn. It was jointly funded by Open Academy and the Department of Agriculture—Agricultural Training Institute, in collaboration with the office of the Provincial Agriculturist, the municipalities of Magalang, Mabalacat, Mexico, and Arayat.

‘Go modern’ integrated Internet technology and short messaging system (SMS) specifically used to receive and answer queries as well as sending information to the audience particularly the student farmers. The programme also tested and documented the impact of the interaction between the farmers and the experts through the Internet and text messaging.

The recently concluded 3<sup>rd</sup> school-on-air programme on hybrid rice and hybrid corn hosted by Romel Basa from PAC had 162 graduating farmers from various towns of Pampanga. It was followed by *Itanong Mo Kay Doc* (Ask the Doctor).

In view of the number of farmers who participated in the programme and forwarded their questions through text messaging, the programme director of Open Academy, Roger F.

Barroga, ordered the INFOTEXT software which has an equipped GSM Modem/SIM holder. With this advanced technology, a personal computer can be used to receive and send text messages to farmers, record all participants' queries in the database, direct questions to PAC experts, capture and save questions and answers for content analysis, and broadcast relevant farming information.

Few farmers particularly in rice and corn are professional agriculturists; rather, they gained their farming knowledge from experience. With the fast advancement of agricultural and biotechnological research, however, they have to catch up with and adopt the new procedures in order to keep in pace with competition and production demands. For small scale farmers, these radio programmes are a principal resource to augment and update their agricultural know-how.

Lately, the college underwent a re-organisation which augurs well for the future direction of DWEE. The PAC is pressing forward to focus substantial resources of the station on agricultural extension. It will also be utilised by the college as a laboratory of the students of development communication.

In this consistently high yield province of the Luzon Central Plains, the Pampanga Agricultural College fulfils a vital role in providing the technical knowledge and skills directly linked to farm production. As the extension arm of this educational institution, Radio DWEE is well poised between the research lab and the *palayan* (rice paddy field), between the classroom and the farmers, to spread far across in this dynamic province the knowledge and skills needed for economic development and social enhancement. It is nonetheless important that DWEE maintain its distinctive personality as a community station and as a concourse for participatory development action.

## Child Broadcasters: small hands on radio

by Gerniña C. Balagot

*This is the DWTG Tangguyob Ti Gonzaga station.  
This is where issues, news and views are heard.  
DWTG Tangguyob Ti Gonzaga 102.5 MHz FM  
at the municipal hall of Gonzaga.  
DWTG is the station that serves the community.*

This is the opening spiel of children on DWTG Tangguyob Ti Gonzaga (Tambuli of Gonzaga) community radio. Children from 9 to 16 run this small community station on weekends with programmes made by kids, for kids in this small town of Cagayan province in the very north of the Philippines.

“With little supervision, our children broadcasters developed their own programmes and tackled broad issues



*Child broadcasters on the air. (LNT)*



which they felt were important to them as children,” says station manager ‘Sir’ Emy Amad Bucaneg. The radio’s policy is to ensure that the youth have a say in matters concerning them, such as values-based education, health and nutrition, and local ordinances passed by the *Sangguniang Kabataan*, the local youth council. When it came to music and entertainment, naturally the younger generation knows exactly what entertains them and their audience.

Children’s radio is unique to Gonzaga. It is not at all the practice in the commercial stations of Tuguegarao City and the neighboring municipalities. They cater exclusively to adult audiences.

How did this happen? In 1997, DWTG *Tangguyob Ti Gonzaga* community radio undertook to represent a cross-section of the community, not only farmers, fishermen and educators, but also the youth. With the creation of the Community Media Council (CMC), the multi-sectoral body mandated by the community to manage the station through decision-making policies, programme direction and broadcast production, the youth was well represented.

“This station features kids talking to kids, not teachers and adults trying to talk to children.”

### **“Small” hands-on Training**

In collaboration with the Tambuli Community Radio project and the Cultural Center of the Philippines, a seven-day training course was set up for thirteen elementary and high school students. While the training was customised for children, the



workshop covered basic skills in radio production (use of sound mixers, tape decks and tape) as well as general communication principles. Through skits and storytelling exercises, the children became aware of their community and how they could participate through radio in improving the lives of their families and friends. Group dynamics enabled the children to speak out and develop their little ideas into broadcast programmes.

### **Gonzaga: farmers and fishermen**

The municipality of Gonzaga (one of 28 comprising the province of Cagayan) is situated on the Babuyan Channel on the northern tip of Luzon, looking northwards towards Batanes and Taiwan and northeast to the great Pacific Ocean. The coast continues from Gonzaga northeastwards to Sta. Ana and San Vicente, with the Sierra Madre ridge towering to the east and south.

A 3<sup>rd</sup> class municipality for years, Gonzaga was elevated to 2<sup>nd</sup> class status in 2005. Despite recent economic developments, however, the majority of the population still remains below the poverty line. The municipality has identified some of the deterrent factors to development: the shortage of capital for small and medium enterprises (SMEs); the lack of processing factories and appropriate technology; and unskilled manpower. Farmers comprise 80 percent of the manpower; fishermen only 15 percent; while the rest are engaged in various other small jobs.

In this remote north end of the Philippines, it is important to ensure that updated information regularly reaches the 12 baranggays along the coast: weather, power cuts, new bridge construction (many rivers and streams cut across the roads, and this is aggravated in rainy season). But it is also important to encourage and facilitate the participation of the people in local affairs.

### Saving the River: small hands join big hands

DWTG Tangguyob Ti Gonzaga partnered with the Local Government Unit to run an information campaign against illegal fishing in the Wangag River, the source of irrigation for an estimated 1,000 hectares of farm lands in Gonzaga. In 1997, illegal dynamite fishing was rampant in the watershed and the once bountiful river was robbed of its fish, thereby also slowly killing the river.

Through the weekly radio show *Ti Kabakiran Dagiti Tattao Ken Ti Aglawlaw*, the activities of the Wangag River Restoration Project was made known, enjoining the listeners to report violators and illegal fishing incidences. The show also presented news briefs about the lost livelihood and health hazards posed to fishermen. The massive information campaign through the community radio was supported by weekly conservation efforts by the local officials, engaging locals to participate in coastal clean-ups.

The children broadcasters also echoed these concerns and activities on their programmes. They became part of the weekly coastal clean-ups, coming with their parents, siblings and friends.

The increased participation gradually resulted in bringing back the cleanliness and fish resources of the river. In affirmation of the conservation efforts of Wangag River, the watershed was awarded the 2nd runner-up prize in the Cleanest River of the Philippines given by the Gawad Pangulo sa Kapitaligiran at the Malacañang Palace in 2002. The river similarly received provincial and regional citations.

### Children on-board

Weekends were reserved for child broadcasters. This allowed them to prepare for their board work in their spare time and keep up with their studies during the week. Two days before their schedule, the young hosts submit their scripts to Sir Emy who advises and suggests but never criticises harshly. Saturday mornings, the kids run live musical entertainment, showcasing young talents in singing and playing musical

instruments. On some occasions, they play just outside the station, in full view of the passing public. Apart from entertaining the listeners, the programme has become a way to enhance talent and prepare for more professional performances.

*“We prepared for the interviews by researching about the topic and asking our teachers or elders about the people we would be interviewing. We were told during our training about the importance of being prepared before going on-air.” — a former child broadcaster*



*Two students from high school and elementary grade, give live performance just outside the municipal hall of Gonzaga, Cagayan. (LNT)*

The youngsters also hold literary and musical contests; they invite young students to sing live on radio. It is a real competition, complete with judges and prizes for the lucky winners. The CMC covered the finances of holding the contest. After a midday break, the children resume at 4 o'clock in the afternoon.

In succeeding years, the programming evolved, with one show in particular becoming a venue to introduce local officials and town personalities to fellow youths, with delightful interviews about their professions and musings about life. The children invited teachers, doctors, firemen and even their parents to talk about varied topics. On one occasion, the children invited the town's mayor and asked him about his programmes for young people. Like everyone, the municipal leader was game to answer.

"The topics chosen by children broadcasters are a refreshing attack on mostly mature issues. It is nice to know they are doing their part," said one avid parent. This comment is a manifestation that adults also tune in to children broadcasters, making for a wide audience base of these programmes.

Owing to the political nature of the work of these young broadcasters, some are concurrent members of the Sangguniang Kabataan (the city youth council) or SK, it is no surprise that they aspire for local office. One former child broadcaster, Bernardo Carlos, also the SK Chairman during his time, is now a *Baranggay* Captain.

## **Kids' programmes**

*"Hello and Hi, the Barkada Style!"*

The kids engage in storytelling and balagtas, a form of debate in verse, named after Francisco Balagtas, a prominent Filipino.

“Children Kulit”

Comical entertainment with kids ages 9-11. They air funny quips and jokes, at times impersonating local personalities. They also pose unusual and often thought-provoking questions.

“Youth Hour”

Discussions on the activities of the local “Sangguniang Kabataan” (SK), which drafts policies and programmes for the youth. This is mandated by the Local Government Code of 1991. Youth are encouraged to get involved in real issues: sports fests, math and science fairs, fundraising activities, outreach programmes and tutorials sessions for out-of-school youths. Local health centers also tap the SK in information drives in the prevention of drug abuse and HIV/AIDS.

### Growing up, growing out

I visited Gonzaga in January 2007, and was pleased to find out that four former youth volunteer broadcasters received the Young Student Leadership Award from the municipality for their active involvement in the community. But the disappointing part was that the children’s programmes have since ceased. Students graduate from high school, or move to neighboring towns or



*A lady from a nearby village listens to DWTG. (LNT)*

simply grow up and turn to other interests. The community radio now airs music by request, as the young broadcasters no longer perform dramas or do live interviews.

There are nonetheless some positive outcomes of these pioneer broadcasts. A number of child broadcasters have gone on to become professionals in their own right. Many pursued courses in computer science, engineering, medicine and nursing, and have since been working in reputable organisations. One or two return to visit the station.

Despite the end of children's radio, the young hosts becoming professionals are a source of pride for Emy Bucaneg and the rest of DWTG station management. Through their voluntary work at the station, they were able to develop their own potential and hone their communication skills, thus enabling them to find better opportunities for growth as individuals. With their employment, some contributed to putting their younger siblings through school and helping out with their family expenses. In a sense, this is their way of giving back to the community through their professions.

Thus, the experience of children's programmes has not been totally lost on Gonzaga. At present, recruitment for children broadcasters is being actively pursued by the station management. The CMC plans to embark on an educational module for school-aged children. An elementary teacher has begun recording lessons for broadcast however these have been halted due to a conflict in scheduling. The broadcasts will target students who need remedial lessons.

In the experience of Gonzaga, community radio has recognised the role that children assume in societal affairs. By developing their potential and creating social awareness, they build the capacity to effect change in their own small spheres of influence. Bright-eyed and eager, their dreams become a springboard for change.

Small hands have become big hands.



## The Voice of Manduyog

Porferio G. Bullo

When the idea of a community radio station run by a college was first proposed, it was met with cold skepticism. We already had some experiences of radio run by colleges and institutes, subject to their academic administration and paperwork. We also feared classroom type programme being fitted into radio, as if that were the only form of extension. Notwithstanding, our first visit to Banga on the island of Panay was full of surprises. We were met at the airport by a dozen young men and women wearing black, safari jackets with the call sign loud and clear — DYMT Tambuli Community Radio. Two covered their mouths with hand held transceivers to call the jeeps and warn Banga we were on the way, prepare *merienda* (drinks and snacks)! As this was the first time community radio operated in the region, the safari jackets served as a way of identifying the broadcasters and showing their roles: broadcaster, technician, programmer.



*DYMT in safari jackets (CAA)*



Aklan State College of Agriculture is a lush green campus with neatly aligned cottages for guests, a large concourse with reception and the station on one side, the administration on the other, and gardens all around. “Magandang hapon po sa ating mga panauhin galing sa Maynila,” said the on air announcer, turning in our direction, “kasama din ang dalawang opisyal ng UNESCO, na sina Choy Arnaldo sa Paris at si Miss Nina Wernberg na taga Danida, ating sponsor sa Denmark . . .” (Good afternoon to our visitors from Manila, also including two officials from UNESCO, Choy Arnaldo from Paris and Miss Nina Wernberg of Danida, our sponsor in Denmark.” The whole town knew we arrived!

*Before, we used to listen to radio,  
now we are the ones listened to.”*

—Porferio Bullo, Voice of Manduyog

In our first discussion, we learned that their community media council included a representative of the handicapped, the motorised tricycle association, fishermen and women. “Can we also have transceivers?” asked a small thin fellow in a T-shirt, head of the tricycle drivers. “Then we can coordinate traffic better and even give reports to the station.”

“Good idea,” I said, “and perhaps we should also have a short training on how to hand transceivers, and make concise reports for radio.”

## **The background**

In 1992, the Extension and Rural Development Service Center (ERDSC) was created under the Aklan State College of Agriculture, now known as the Aklan State University (ASU), in the Visayas region in the Philippines. ERDSC is guided by its mission to stimulate rural development through the provision of appropriate assistance to disadvantaged groups in the community. At the same time, news was buzzing around

through the local newspaper, that “UNESCO is helping rural communities establish community radio.” Extension and radio should go hand in hand. Within a year, our college in Banga became the fourth site of the Tambuli Community Radio Project. Ibajay, a small town nearby was selected as another site fulfilling the Tambuli criteria.

In October of 1993, the TAMBULI management conducted training on Basic Community Broadcasting and newsletter production at ERDSC. This was attended by representatives of the varied groups of farmers, senior citizens, rural women, out-of-school youths, young adults, market vendors, transport groups, the religious, people with disability, the academe, local government, police force, media and health. Through consultations, representatives nominated members to the Community Media Council (CMC), and even identified radio broadcasters from their sectors. The CMC served as the policy making body in the operation of the community radio station. All these positions were in the true spirit of volunteerism. Marcelo Gomez, a retired government employee, was elected as the first Chairman of the CMC and the author, as the first station manager of the community radio.

With the creation of the CMC, a test broadcast was conducted using the temporary station identification DYMT “Tambuli Manduyog.” Manduyog is an historic hill located just beside the studio, where the transmitter and the antenna are positioned. On April 24, 1998, the DYMT-FM Community Radio application for a license to broadcast was approved by the National Telecommunications Commission. In the same year, the community radio became a member of the Kapisanan ng mga Brodkaster ng Pilipinas (KBP), an association of radio and television networks in the country. DYMT-FM Community Radio was the first Tambuli radio station to be granted membership in the KBP. As an extension service of the College, the management, represented by the Station Manager, became

part of the KBP Annual Top Level Management Conference where policies in the broadcast industry were discussed for implementation.

### **Community Radio as an Extension Service**

The province of Aklan in the Philippines encompasses the northeastern portion of Panay Island and the area of nearby Boracay Island, both situated in the Visayan group of Islands.

Banga is one of the 17 municipalities of Aklan, located at about 9 kilometers South of Kalibo, the capital center of the Province. Banga is a fourth class municipality composed of 30 *barangays* or villages. It has a total land area of 6,468 hectares, mostly composed of rolling hills for cultivating rice, corn, livestock and poultry. Fruit trees such as rambutan, citrus, coconuts and lanzones also grow in this substantial area with other minor crops. Secondary growth forests cover the land mass with mahogany, gemelina, palms and bamboos growing along the steep hills.

Since the land area is rich in agricultural resource, farming is the main occupation among locals. Academic instruction further supports this industry, with the ASU offering degree courses in Agriculture, Forestry and Environmental Sciences. With five campuses spread in different municipalities of the province of Aklan, the University carries out its four core functions of instruction, research, production and extension and rural development services. Extension work includes the adoption of depressed *barangays* or villages; the provision of non-formal education involving employable skills training program, seminars and workshops; farming technology transfer; and collaboration with government and non-government organisations for cooperation and assistance.

In the provision of extension and rural development services, the operations of a community radio is thus a significant player. There are other radio stations in the city of Kalibo nine kilometers away, but these are all commercial stations with programming geared towards higher ratings and financial rewards. There is a need to involve marginalised sectors of farmers, senior citizens, the disabled, out-of-school youths and rural women. The DYMT Community Radio revolutionised its programming to meet these demands.

The initial broadcasts of DYMT were conducted in an open space within ERDSC office. In 1994, after an official visit made by a Philippine Senator, financial assistance was provided in the amount of US\$ 2,000 for the construction and establishment of a separate air-conditioned radio booth.

In 2000, another proposal was sent for the expansion and upgrading of the community radio. A special allocation was released through the Regional Director of the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) amounting to US\$ 12,000. At present, the station is occupying an area of about 50 sq. meters within the building of ERDSC.

### **Broadcast Range**

The Voice of Manduyog uses a low powered 20-watt FM transmitter. The broadcast range is a 6 to 15 kilometre radius depending on the terrain. In June 2000, the antenna was hit by lightning, burning out the transmitter. Using available funds received from DBM, we purchased a new 300-watt transmitter. Local technicians installed a lightning arrester as a preventive measure. The installation of the transmitter increased the coverage to a 10-30 kilometre radius. With this, more people have access to the benefits of community radio.



*DYMT Radio Booth, Jemuel Garcia, tricycle driver and pastor on the air. (CAA)*

After two years of operating on a 300-watt transmitter, DYMT ran into a conflict with the NTC, the latter declaring that community radios should not operate beyond the 20-watt capacity. A case was filed by the Commission against the University management. DYMT Radio pleaded their case, saying that the radio is “for the people and by the people,” as it is being used for their development. The NTC advised the ASU management to return to the 20-watt transmitter capacity and the case was settled.

## **Programming**

As approved by NTC, the DYMT Community Radio broadcasts from 6 o’clock in the morning to 10 o’clock in the evening. However, due to resource constraints, the radio

transmits only until 8 o'clock in the evening on weekdays and up to 12 in the afternoon on Saturdays and Sundays.

Since its inauguration and up to the present, the station ID goes:

*DYMT Community Radio proudly announces that DYMT-FM Voice of Mount Manduyog is a community radio station that carries people's voices, ideas, dreams and aspirations on FM airwaves, 100.9 MHz, a member of the Kapisanan ng mga Brodkaster ng Pilipinas with National Telecommunication Commission Permit Number BSD 0102 – 2005. The station is based at the Aklan State University with its studio located at the Extension and Community Services Office, and the transmitter atop the historic Mount Manduyog. DYMT-FM is a project of UNESCO, DANIDA and the Philippine Government through Tambuli or Tinig ng Aming Munting Bayan Upang Umunlad ang Lalong Maliliit, in cooperation with the Aklan State University through its Extension and Community Services and the people of Banga who spearhead the operation in the true spirit of volunteerism.*

Essentially, programming is guided by its mission to “promote peace, cooperation and development through the sharing of beliefs, ideas, information and experiences among individuals and institutions.” Specifically, it is guided by the following objectives: first, to enable locals regardless of status and belief to have access to relevant information; second, to freely express themselves; third, to link together as a





*At the Village on the air programme, The barangay captain dialogues with his villagers. (CAA)*

community; fourth, to acquire a sense of identity; and fifth, to elevate the audience from mere listeners to participants and stewards of the community radio.

The programs in the DYMT Community Radio are varied—from news, public service and features, to music and local interests. Among the flagship programmes:

***Barangayan sa Kahanginan (Village on the Air)*** With a *karaoke*, a tape recorder and some musical instruments, volunteer broadcasters troop to the *barangay* (village) to launch their program. The *Barangayan* often starts with a prayer, followed by an introduction of guests and hosts. The programme then focuses on discussion and consultation with locals. People are asked to assess their socioeconomic standing and provide alternative solutions for problem areas. Village



leaders are invited to present their views and action plans. All these activities are recorded and aired on the following Sunday, with the whole village excitedly anticipating the broadcast. The familiar atmosphere evokes candidness among the participants and contributes to the program's high level of participation and popularity. The involvement of the local community becomes a prelude to people empowerment.

***PatRole sa Panguma (Farmer's School-on-the-Air)*** The DYMT Farmer's School-on-the-Air is a one-hour-a-week programme simultaneously heard on three other radio stations in the Province of Aklan. The program is hosted by the faculty of the College of Agriculture, Forestry and Environmental Sciences of the University, as well as technicians from ERDSC. Agricultural news and special topics such as hybrid rice technology and other rice-based farming technologies are aired. The programme enlisted the cooperation of different groups concerned with the promotion of the Integrated Crop Management for rice and hybrid rice commercialisation program in the Province of Aklan. Hundreds of farmer participants availed of the Farmer's School-on-the Air program.

***Farm Watch*** Farm Watch is a one hour radio broadcast three times a week. Hosted by the Municipal Agricultural Officer (MAO) of the municipality of Banga, the programme consists of farming updates, features on agricultural technologies and stories shared from successful farmers. The program encourages community folk to get more involved in livelihood activities.

***From the Station Manager's Desk*** The extension and rural development activities of the University are often heard on the programme *From the Station Manager's Desk*. Issues and concerns involving the operations of the DYMT Community Radio are discussed on air. Commentaries on social issues are part of the agenda.

***Limog it Pag-eaom (Voice of Hope)*** With a vibrant tourism industry boosted by the neighboring island destination of Boracay, the growing incidence of child and drug abuse, as well as sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV AIDS are no longer isolated issues. In addressing the need to inform and arm the community with practical preventive measures, DYMT Community Radio entered into a joint program with two other radio stations, namely RMN-DYKR and GMA-DYRU. Dubbed the Voice of Hope, the three stations simultaneously broadcast interviews and feature segments on child abuse, drug abuse and health issues, enjoining listeners to be vigilant and report such abuses.

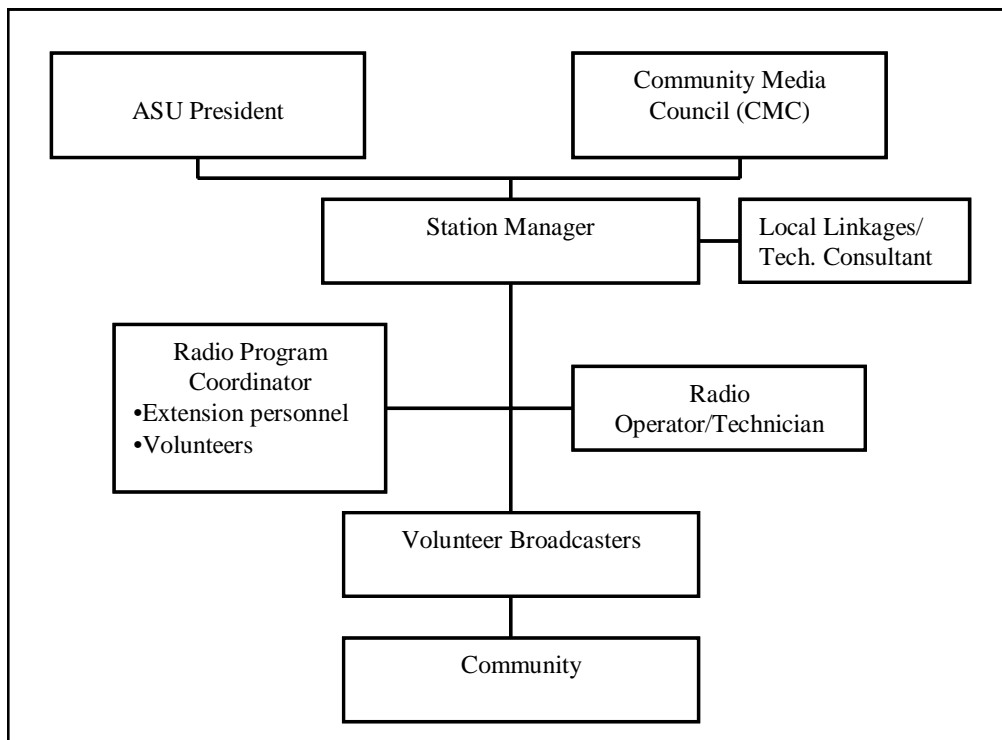
***Governor's Report to the People*** Once a week, the Governor of the Province of Aklan reports his weekly accomplishments and activities over DYMT Community Radio in tandem with four other radio stations that alternately host the programme: RMN-DYKR, IBC-DYRG, GMA-DYRU and DYQM-FM. An open forum immediately follows the report, with the public handing questions through the radio staff or through telephone calls from any of the five radio stations. This programme elicits transparency in governance as well as people empowerment. Patterned after the Governor's Report, "Limog it Akeanon sa Kongreso" or Voice of Aklanons in Congress is another weekly engagement between the locals and the congressional representative of the Province of Aklan.

## **Management and Fund Sourcing**

The Community Media Council meets at least twice a year or as requested by the station manager. The CMC membership changes with the leadership from the representative sector. Usually, the head of each of the sectors is also the appointed member of the CMC. The Station Manager, on the other hand, is concurrently the Director of ERDSC. (See Figure 1)

The production of broadcast materials is facilitated by the designated Radio Programme Coordinator and the extension personnel of the ERDSC, however, most of the time this is done by the volunteers themselves. The Radio Operator/Technician is a regular staff of the ERDSC and an NTC licensed radio operator/technician. In 2002, the ASU management hired a regular consultant from the NTC to provide technical assistance to the DYMT Community Radio.

**Figure 1. Organisational Structure of the DYMT Community Radio**



Apart from the regular annual budget allocated to the ERDSC, DYMT management conducts its own fundraising activities and linkages with other agencies, institutions and individuals involved in rural development work. For instance, volunteers sang Christmas carols in raising funds for the purchase of a *karaoke* console used in the *Barangayan* programme. Some sponsors financed the T-shirts and vests of

the volunteers while others, such as the Philippine Rice Research Institute, share their expertise with the Farmer's School On-the-Air.

In January 2001, DYMT Community Radio launched *The Dream*, a project aimed at raising one million pesos (US\$ 20,000) to be deposited in the name of DYMT-FM 100.9 MHz Community Radio Foundation. The funds are deposited and only the interest is used for radio operations and a meager allowance for its volunteer broadcasters. As of 2004, Php 48,154.68 (US\$950) was recorded.



*Prior to recording, the technicians prepare the equipment. (CAA)*

### **Personnel remuneration and development**

When DYMT Community Radio was just beginning, the management was able to provide Php500 (USD10) per month to volunteer broadcasters. This stipend was later disallowed by the

Commission on Audit (COA) because the funds were not formally earmarked for such appropriations. CMC and volunteer broadcasters no longer receive this allowance.

There are, nonetheless three personnel paid from the budget of the ERDSC: the station manager, the radio programme coordinator and the radio operator/technician. Other personnel from the ERDSC who provide minimal assistance to the volunteers in the production of their broadcast materials are also paid out of same budget. The only full time employee is the radio operator.

Responding to the eagerness of the volunteers, DYMT Community Radio offered training for personal and professional fulfillment. The DYMT management encouraged and assisted its volunteers through lectures and reviews for the KBP Accreditation Examinations. In its maiden broadcast in 1994, eight volunteers of DYMT Community Radio passed the exam. Six of them made it to the Top Ten.

Members and volunteers broadcasters are likewise invited to attend training and conferences in radio work and broadcasting here and abroad. To cite, Michelle Tan and Salvacion Villasis, both volunteer radio programme coordinators, attended the Radio Production Training for Asian Women Broadcasters in Bangkok, Thailand in 2000. This was sponsored by Integrated Skills for Women in Development (ISWID) and Women's Information and Communication Service. The station manager has also been invited to present a paper on "Empowerment through Community Radio: The Aklan Philippine Experience" to the First SEAMEO Education Congress: Challenges in the New Millennium, held in Bangkok in 2001. The forum was a venue for educators to share experiences and exchange new ideas for the advancement of quality education.

In 1997, the Philippine National Volunteers Service Coordinating Agency (PNVSCA) granted a proposal from the DYMT management for a volunteer specialised in community radio broadcasting to provide assistance to local volunteers. Charlotte George, a British national under the Volunteer Service Overseas (VSO), conducted a course in the preparation of broadcast materials and radio production methods.

*“We often speak of communication as a means to development: set up communication facilities and then make efforts for development, like a two step flow. What we fail to see is that **communication is the process of development.** Accessing radio and speaking through radio to people and to the leaders is the first step in exchanging ideas and moving towards decisions and action to improve one’s lot in life and to advance one’s community.” —Carlos Arnaldo*

### **DYMT community radio on rural empowerment**

For more than a decade, DYMT Community Radio has steadily worked to fulfil its mission of community development and empowerment. Starting with only thirteen volunteers, the radio now counts fifty volunteer broadcasters, more than half of whom passed the KBP Announcer’s Accreditation Examinations. Sectoral support has also been sustained, with



the same fifteen sectors representing the community of Banga. At least seven government and non-government institutions have their own programs in the station. As of latest count, there are sixty different programmes airing on a weekly broadcast, some of which are simulcast with four radio stations in the Province of Aklan. Hardly known at the start, DYMT Community Radio is now a proud member of the Association of Broadcasters in the Philippines and the Philippine Foundation of Rural Broadcasters.

DYMT Community Radio has also been the recipient of countless awards from prestigious institutions such as the KBP Golden Dove Award as the Best Non-commercial Radio Station-Provincial Category in the country; Outstanding *Kapisanan ng mga Brodkaster sa Pilipinas* (KBP) from the Association of Broadcasters in the Philippines Local Chapter for KBP Golden Dove Award; Agricultural Radio Program of the Year Award for *Barangayan sa Kahanginan*; and Best in Environmental Campaign in Radio Awards, among others.

Locals recount personal victories brought about by DYMT Community Radio. During the Second National Conference on Community Broadcasting, in September 1997, a 72-year old woman named Sofia Navarra from *Barangay Lapnag* in Banga narrated how DYMT assisted her in recovering a missing cemetery lot that had been grabbed by some unscrupulous people. In the state of utter desperation after years of fruitless efforts to gain back the property, she found renewed hope and dependable allies among the staff of the station. While expressing deep gratitude and loyalty to the community radio, the old lady remarked that there are many other people in her community who had been helped by DYMT.

Live broadcasts of the municipal council sessions had regularly informed the community about the ordinances passed by their elected officials, thus, providing the people with



informed choices during elections. Three volunteer broadcasters who ran for election in the *barangay* won, including the one in a wheel chair representing the handicapped.



*At Ibajay, visiting actress ChinChin Gutierrez is interviewed. On air she sang an Aklanon lullaby. She now has an album of lullabies of the Philippines, Uyayi. (CAA)*

The incidence of misdemeanours and illegal activities in the community such as gambling, littering, alcoholism, rumor-mongering and adultery, among others have been significantly reduced, with locals vigilantly reporting such activities.

## **Future directions**

***Academic Inquiry*** Despite the obvious contributions of DYMT Community Radio as cited above, an academic inquiry on the DYMT Community Radio performance with reference to its mandate would seem to be in order. I prepared and presented a research proposal to the University Research In-

House Review Committee for a study on the contributions of the community radio based on the functions delineated by UNESCO, Tambuli and DYMT's own mandate. I was advised to write a book on DYMT Community Radio accomplishments on rural empowerment encompassing the first decade.

***Resources for Sustainability*** Fund raising projects such as "The Dream" have to be pursued more vigorously to minimise dependence on the University. While the relationship between the ASU management and the DYMT Community Radio management has been mutual and has not wavered for more than a decade, the station still needs more financial stability to it can expand and grow with the needs of its community.

***Broadcast coverage*** Wider broadcast coverage means power and prestige. It also means reaching more people with a clear, strong signal. Moreover, the extension services of the ASU covers the whole Province of Aklan and nearby provinces with an area radius of about 30 to 50 kilometers. With its many linkages with agencies and institutions, the University continues to introduce livelihood technologies suitable for broadcast to further effect rural empowerment and development. It will be more efficient for the community radio to produce programmes for a greater number of people.

The Representative of the Province of Aklan, has submitted House Bill No. 3299, an "Act Granting the Aklan State University a Franchise to Construct, Install, Establish, Operate and Maintain for Non-commercial Purposes an Educational Radio Station in the Aklan State University, Municipality of Banga, Province of Aklan." The bill is presently pending in Congress.

***Programming*** Due to limited funding sources, the number of volunteers, of representatives of marginalised sectors of rural

women, the disabled, senior citizens, and out-of-school youths is decreasing at an alarming rate. Stronger and more outspoken sectors have an increasing participation. To address this, DYMT Community Radio management should allocate programming schedules for these least advantaged sectors. Special assistance such as regular staff assistance on the production of programmes, provision of needed supplies and equipment, sourcing for sponsors and even a special budget must be considered. The management needs to re-visit its mission and slowly re-structure its programming.

Despite its humble beginnings, DYMT Community Radio has progressed and evolved. And this has taken place mainly through the people's conscious effort, hard work and dedication.

## Balinsasayaw: the faint crier in the Sulu Sea

By Louie Tabing



*An abandoned guard house to watch for illegal fishing activities in marine waters of Magsaysay, Cuyo, Palawan. (LNT)*

*Balinsasayaw* is the name of a particular species of swallow indigenous to Cuyo Island and many of the coastal areas of the large island of Palawan. They like to build their nests high in open caves. Their nests, held together with the bird's saliva, are famous for making the delicious soup delicacy called *nido* or birds' nest soup. They chirp and chitter in a high pitched, but unmistakable voice.

When Mon Servando built his first transmitter, he named it after this bird, *balinsasayaw*, the electronic swallow crying over the sea to the islands of Cuyo.

On the Philippine map, the island of Cuyo is a tiny dot in a small archipelago in the Sulu Sea, north east of Palawan and west of Panay Island.

The island of some 4,300 hectares is now divided into the municipalities of the old town of Cuyo and the new town, Magsaysay, which was detached from Cuyo in 1973. A total of 45,000 Cuyonons constitute the primary audience of DWMC. Inhabitants of the nearby islands of Agutaya and Amanpulo, which totally lack communication facilities, are secondary but important targets of the station's programmes.

Cuyonons are Malay in origin, and Cuyo is the oldest town in the province of Palawan. Almost half of the original inhabitants of Palawan—considered as the last frontier of Philippine environment—speak the Cuyonen dialect. As the oldest town, Cuyo has held back the hands of time and preserved its cultural heritage through dances, folk media, songs and music. These original art forms have become part of Christian religious festivities where the townsfolk parade the image of their patron St. Agustin.

The serene and laidback culture is probably a main reason why Cuyonons stay on the island despite the lack of social services and career opportunities. The Cuyo group of islands is rich in fishing grounds owing to its untouched coral reefs. Transporting fish, however, is problematic. The quickest but most expensive way is the one-hour plane ride to the capital, Puerto Princesa; the cheaper but slower way is the 17-hour boat ride. Transport to Manila is twice as long and more expensive.

The island's economy is tied to the bountiful marine products of the sea and the subsistence agriculture on the rolling farmlands. Currently the big export of Cuyo to Manila is live fish despite the issues which surround the method of fishing. Divers use cyanide to stun the fish, but this is also hazardous for the coral reefs and the environment, as well as for the health of the divers. Knowledge of this danger has in no way reduced or eliminated cyanide fishing. Tons of live fish are hauled daily from Cuyo to Manila by influential traders.

Processed cashew and copra are the dominant crops sold in markets outside the island. Additional income is derived from the struggling tourism industry and furniture making. While rice is imported from either Palawan or Panay, vegetables are homegrown. More recently, farming of edible seaweeds, locally called *lato*, raised along silted coastal areas of Cuyo and Magsaysay, is becoming a popular industry.

As a coastal community, the people put environmental conservation very high on their list of concerns. The mangroves constitute another fragile resource that Cuyonons are desperately protecting against the pressure of increasing population and economic hardships. Even though they live on a

small island, the people want to crack down on illegal gambling, prostitution, drug addiction, alcoholism and corruption among some of their leaders. *Balinsasayaw*, a fledgling community radio located in the town of Magsaysay is thus the hope of many Cuyonons for their social and economic development.

### The Mon Servando factor

Solomon ‘Mon’ Servando started building radio transmitters when he was in second year high school. Propelled by his keen interest in electronics, Mon learned electronics at an early age and presented his transmitter as his science project in 1977. His battery powered AM transmitter went on the air from the school’s power house. It was a short-lived affair, because he had to leave school for three years. But the flare for electronics never stopped burning within him.



*Mon Servando at a Tambuli transmitter workshop with Tambuli Engineer Romy Carballo and technician Kiddie Labindao. (LNT)*



When he finally finished high school, he was accepted as a scholar for a 3-year industrial technology course at the prestigious Meralco Foundation Institute in Manila. With his diploma, he was then employed in a semi-conductor company. He also joined a magazine, *Electronic Impulses*, where he was able to interact with creative and inventive specialists.

As he progressed in competence and salary, Mon was lured to work in the communication department of a giant corporation. But Manila's corporate world was frustrating for the provincial boy who preferred to express his imaginative prowess. Attempts of recruitment into rebel groups were added pressures on this young intellectual. Mon packed his things and headed back to Palawan.

### **First community radios in Palawan**

In 1988, Mon Servando tried to settle in Brooke's Point with his older, favorite brother Romy. He set up an FM station in Brooke's Point, using a 10-watt FM transmitter. The radio captivated the whole town — a new phenomenon in a remote town that had poor communication facilities. Nonetheless, the city-based radios in Puerto Princesa felt threatened, and had Mon's station closed down, citing its lack of license from the National Telecommunications Commission.

After a year in Brooke's Point, Mon returned home to his native Cuyo where again, as a hobby, he built an AM transmitter. He only wanted to play around with music but the station proved to be a good tool for linking the 10 populated islands around Cuyo. People realised how valuable the radio was for the islanders who had no other means of communication. Soon there was an increased demand for the station to go on-the-air for extended hours especially for fishermen in the sea.



The one-man station could hardly cope with the song requests, dedications, greetings and public service announcements. Meantime, it received generous contributions from the community for the station's operation. Only operating on a truck battery, the airtime was limited from 10 o'clock in the morning until the battery wore down in two to three hours. Despite the short schedule, the community support was enormous. This time, NTC did not mind its operating without the benefit of a license.

When the antenna hoisted onto bamboo poles was brought down by a strong typhoon, a Catholic priest, by the name of Fr. Jesse de los Reyes helped Mon raise it again. He then built a 100-watt transmitter for wider coverage and cleaner signal. It could be heard in some parts of mainland Palawan about 80 kilometers away. Varying programmes from homemaking to agriculture, popular music, news and religion were aired. This encouraged more volunteers to take interest in radio operations.

When Fr. de los Reyes was transferred to the resort town of El Nido, he pleaded with Mon to build a station similar to the one in Cuyo. The priest anticipated that the station could be licensed under the Radio Veritas franchise owned by the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines. But after the El Nido station was operational, the Cuyo station was hit by yet another disaster—this time in the form of the lack of maintenance and the lack of leadership support.

### **Balinsasayaw, the bird, the transmitter**

I was informed of Mon's electronics wizardry by Fr. Jesse de los Reyes. He walked into our offices at Tambuli asking assistance for the station he and Mon set up in Cuyo. At the time, we were having problems procuring transmitters from abroad, turning us to seek local suppliers. But no local engineers accepted our challenge to build the transmitters.



*Louie Tabing in a huddle with DWMC broadcasters. (LNT)*

I sent our project technician, Quiddie Labindao, to Cuyo. He was to invite Mon to build FM transmitters for the Tambuli Project. But Mon was reluctant to come to Manila; he just gave a few pointers on how to assemble one, but could not be persuaded to return to the big city. Later, I was on a cursory visit to El Nido in 1997 when I chanced upon him in town as he was inspecting the already battered AM station which he set up. I somehow convinced him to come to Manila and help us build transmitters.

Using only substitute parts purchased from an electronics scrap dealer, the first Tambuli transmitter was born in two weeks time. We named it *Balinsasayaw*, after the highly prized swallow of Palawan, whose nest is the source of the popular *nido* soup. Mon and the ecstatic project staff celebrated the arrival of *Balinsasayaw* with free flowing coconut wine.

Mon built two other transmitters, one for a station in Mindanao which Tambuli set up in collaboration with the Gender and Peace Movement; the other was brought home to Cuyo by Mon.

### Rebirth of DWMC

In the few weeks working with the Project staff, Mon Servando also imbibed the concepts of community radio and the importance of participatory interaction with the people. Tambuli also offered him some production equipment and other training assistance to enable him to properly set up a real community radio in his native town of Magsaysay. At that time, the AM station which he put up years ago in Cuyo was already falling apart.



*Girls from the municipal high school across the DWMC studio enjoy spending their hours running teenage programs. (LNT)*

### Get your license to broadcast!

Legitimising a community radio operation is elementary. All operators must obtain a license to broadcast, at the risk of being shut down. Initial leniency or tolerance should not become an excuse for avoiding this task. Governments may have different requirements in terms of fees and procedures, but in most cases, it is mainly bureaucratic. Often, it can also happen that an applicant is subjected to red tape, graft and corruption and discrimination in the regulatory government agency. Nonetheless, these legal statutes will give security and status to the station. Otherwise, any opposing party could use the lack of a license to bring down the station, no matter how noble the goals. However, as is evident in many community radios in Asia, when the regulating authority unjustly denies the issuance of a license, the operators eventually decide how the radio will manage itself.

On the part of programme makers, it may seem an odd requirement to obtain authorisation to go on the air, although this is mainly to certify the competence of those selected to broadcast professionally. The *Kapisanan ng mga Brodkasters sa Pilipinas* (KBP), the Philippine association of commercial station operators conducts examinations for their programme personnel, and upon qualifying, a certificate is given, allowing the candidate to go on the air. This certificate should be considered rather as a level of competence, but not as an authorisation to speak on the air, more so, because this is not a legal requirement for non-member stations. Any person should be free to speak on air and participate freely on community broadcasts.

All over the world, the right to self-expression and communication is recognised. The right to speak freely is a basic human right, and must be honored and upheld. Therefore the right to speak on radio, even on a non-regular basis, is only using that right to free expression.

It will be a disservice to limit expression on radio to those who took up formal communication courses and those who were 'qualified as competent' to exercise the right to use the medium of radio. Radio is a medium that must be made available to every man, woman or child who has an idea or information to share, an opinion to advance, a joy to manifest, a grievance to express or a talent to exhibit.

A more serious disservice the station can do for the community is to accommodate and patronise only praises and favorable comments.

*“Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression, this right includes the freedom to hold opinions, without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.”*

— Article XIX of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

When Mon returned home, he organised a multi-sectoral group of leaders to serve as the Community Radio Council (CRC) as well as the programme makers. I sent Jimmy Ronquillo, Tambuli consultant, to help organise and orient the CRC. Evelyn Agato, a veteran producer from the Philippine Broadcasting Service, provided the basic training for the newly recruited participants.

For lack of an office space, Mon Servando's home became a makeshift station for a short time. Eventually, the League of Barangays (villages) and the municipal council offered to house the DWMC in a dilapidated government building vacated by a previous project of Palawan Council for Sustainable Development or PCSD. After making some improvements, the station remained there for two years.

In these two years, the official ownership of DWMC was still unclear. Was it the station of Mon Servando? Did it belong to the CRC or to the municipality? The more popular assumption was that the station was owned by the community through the CRC which did not yet have a juridical personality. The official ownership of the station would have been clear had the council filed an application for a license from the National Telecommunications Commission (NTC). Notwithstanding, the radio council was given the assurance that the operations of the station would be supported by the local government and that it could be housed in the PCSD building.

The community radio had one unmistakable mission—to be an instrument for the betterment of the community. One of its major campaigns involved environmental conservation. It was during this time that the use of cyanide was fast becoming the norm in fishing. Hence, the involvement of the villagers was significant in rallying pressure on those who engaged in these illegal activities.



However, despite the euphoric launch of the station, the change of administration in the local government elections of 2001 proved ruinous for DWMC. The incoming mayor declared that the station was not municipal property and that the radio operations were not to be under its auspices. The municipal council nullified the previous council's resolution allowing the radio station to occupy the PCSD building. Cuyo's first community radio was summarily ejected from the government building like a delinquent tenant.

The fall-out from municipal graces started a problematic episode for the radio as well as for Mon Servando and the staff. Despite the perceived political vendetta against the station, Mon continued to operate the radio underground. In the period of the incumbent administration from 2001 to 2004, the station was a fugitive. Like a guerrilla, it would strike when and where it could. The equipment was temporarily housed in Mon Servando's house. When situation became critical, the equipment would be hidden elsewhere. Clandestinely, *Balinsasayaw* went on and off-the-air. Mon himself was once brought to court for libel charges but was acquitted. He was even summoned by the church officials for "violating the Cannon law." Devoid of a license to operate, the station was in deep peril.

### **Cuyo revisited**

When I visited Cuyo in July of 2007, I found a different community radio. Today, with a new administration, the radio is again heard on the airwaves. The station is properly housed in a decent, private building in front of the Magsaysay high school, several hundred meters away from the municipal building. Although it is still unlicensed, its operation is on an *ad hoc* basis with five regular volunteers manning its programmes.



A more inspired Mon Servando is still the heart and soul of the operation. He is being assisted by a small dedicated group composed of a school teacher, a member of the municipal council, a municipal registrar and a religious leader. At present, the radio is heard everyday from 5 o'clock to 8 o'clock in the evening. This is due to the erratic electricity supply on the island. It is only in the evenings when the power supply is stable. Popular recorded music dominates the airwaves. Occasionally, a group of singers come to the station to perform live. The station still draws a good following among the Cuyonons, and especially from neighboring islands. When the power becomes more regular, Mon sees extended hours of programming. There are plans to begin recruiting new members.

For several months, the station used to have an outside broadcast link (studio to transmitter link) with the radio carrying live broadcasts from villages far from the station. With this mobile transmitter, villagers conduct live singing sessions and interact with the station-based anchor or guests. But the mobile transmitter personally made by Mon, had to be sold to another station.

With a community demonstrating its passion for singing and with hardly any leisure establishments to boast of, the radio staff is planning to put up a videoke programme where people come and sing to their hearts delight. A sing-along system and DVD machine with a TV monitor will be added. Some worthwhile discussions could then be interspersed with music. Group participation may have to be scheduled from village to village or from association to association.

### **Gleanings and reflections**

This little crier voice in the Sulu Sea has had all kinds of ups and downs, such as the inventive creation of its own

transmitter on the one hand, and a victim to political vendetta on the other. Critical to its survival is not only being inventive, but also having dedicated persons and groups to the ideals of participatory development through radio. Equally important is the need to institutionalise that participation through the community media council. And corollary to this is the importance of clarifying ownership, preferably through this council and legitimising broadcast by obtaining the license to broadcast.

The station should utilise all forms of entertainment in order to draw participation from the community members. Entertainment programmes then become a platform for information dissemination or even as a forum for discussion regarding relevant community issues. The pitfall of development communicators is filling up broadcast time with programmes containing only serious educational content, neglecting that radio, from the vantage point of most listeners, should be an entertainment medium.

Conditioned by commercial stations, Filipino listeners look at radio as a source of music and entertainment. Community radio, no matter how noble, should still provide entertainment. When listeners turn away from the station, it is difficult to entice them to return.

Creativity, personal knowledge of the audience and research will play major roles in presenting attractive programmes. Relating the programmes to the practical needs of the people is always received positively. People appreciate locally produced programme materials – whether educational or entertainment — no matter how simply prepared they might be. Staging participatory programmes is also a way to invite listeners. It can be used to gauge the community's acceptance of the radio and its worth.

## Olutanga, the World's Most Beautiful Island

By Louie Tabing



*Half of the adventure of Olutanga is getting there. A machine gun is mounted on a military pump boat that ferries passengers across the bandit-infested straits between mainland Mindanao and Olutanga island. (LNT)*

“With our community radio DXOI, Olutanga will be the most beautiful island in the world!” I did not believe it when I heard it straight from Toto Val Samonte, the station manager of DXOI, set up by Tambuli in 1993. I actually took it as a joke when he made this remark during the graduation of the first batch of 18 trainees. When Toto repeated this same prediction at the meeting of community communicators in Quezon City two years later, I felt he was really exaggerating. Toto was always a visionary.

Olutanga, at the time, was impressive to me only as a site for a community radio, not for its potential to be an outstanding island. The people there were a poor, forgotten community. The first time I visited Olutanga in September 1992, I sought out my long time friend Romy Enriquez, veteran broadcaster and regional chairman of the Philippine Foundation of Rural Broadcasters, a highly regarded tri-media personality in the Western Mindanao region.

## Getting there

Transportation in the southern seas can be problematic and risky. From Zamboanga City, it takes 8 hours by a rickety boat through the southern coast of the peninsula, towards the war-torn island of Basilan. The boat is packed with boxes of soft drinks, beer and other basic needs of the island residents. In Olutanga, the boat loads animals, fish, vegetables, fruits and people. One can also take an hour boat ride from Alicia, about 3 hours bus ride from Zamboanga. The most direct route is from Imelda (three hour ride from Pagadian), to Guicam. Buses cannot get through the muddy, gullied roads, but only motorcycles called *habal-habal* that seat up to five passengers. Barangay Guicam at the southern shores of the mainland is ten minutes away by boat which departs every hour or so or when the waters are calm. Getting to Olutanga is part of the story of being there.



*A passenger boat brings goods, traders and passengers to Olutanga Island from Zamboanga City twice a week. (LNT)*

The southern routes have always been infested with lost commands and renegade troops who turn to robbery, kidnapping and terrorism. In 1995, the town of Ipil, midway to Zamboanga, was the scene of barbaric burning, robbery and killing by Abu Sayaf bandits. It was not surprising then that the way leading towards Olutanga from Zamboanga City is littered with dozens of military and police checkpoints. “What are those checkpoints for?” I asked Romy.

“They are to ensure that all illegal cargos of goods and people get through!” he replied without batting an eyelash.

Once on the road, Romy occasionally pointed out certain sites saying “This is where the Bishop was abducted two weeks ago,” or “This was where scores of people died during the MNLF military encounter,” or yet another— “At this curve, the bus that was carrying three soldiers was ambushed.” All the way I was getting goose pimples.

When I finally asked, “Is it really worth coming here?” I never forgot Romy’s next words: “This is where community radio will change the lives of many people.”

### **An ideal place for a community radio?**

Originally Bishop Federico Escaler proposed the town of Ipil as the site for the first Tambuli station in Mindanao. Upon our visit there, after a four-hour bumpy and dusty drive from Zamboanga City, Romy and I were unimpressed with that ‘flourishing town.’ It boasted of several banks, a number of secondary and tertiary schools, hospitals and other social services and facilities. The archdiocese officials revealed their plan to put up a one-kilowatt station in the same town for the sole purpose of the church. During this visit, we were also informed that another private outfit was poised to establish a community radio in the town. Openly, we announced to the



prelature officials that the Project was looking for a more isolated, economically depressed and communication-deficient town. “Perhaps you should go to Olutanga,” one of the priests recommended in exasperation.

“Olutanga, the forgotten island. This is where community radio will change the lives of many people.” –Romy Enriquez, PFRB

Undaunted, Romy and I proceeded to the island of Olutanga, carrying with us the bit of information that the community of around 40 thousand inhabitants is a mixture of Muslims, Catholics, Protestants and other denominations. Despite the short notice, Fr. Vergel Sinoy, the parish priest of the town of Mabuhay in Olutanga, received us well and even gathered the leaders for a brief orientation on community radio. Despite the warm welcome, it seemed there was a feeling of reluctance and skepticism among our audience. We later found out that a group before us came promising a series of training workshops on theater arts, but never returned after mulcting payment from the participants.

We needed to prove our good intentions right away. We had to guarantee that we were not collecting any money. We would bring and demonstrate the equipment to them as soon as they organised a group of residents to serve as Tambuli’s cooperating partner. The local organisation should be non-partisan and should not belong to any religious denomination. It would make decisions for the station and be accountable for these decisions. We had to emphasise throughout the orientation that the project would conduct the training at no cost.



“It’s quite unreasonable that we come to offer them an opportunity and yet we need to prove our credentials to them,” Romy murmured as we were leaving the island. But I replied, recalling his earlier endorsement of the island, “I am now more convinced that they deserve the project.” Geographically, economically and socially, the island is isolated from the rest of its neighboring towns and from the whole province of Zamboanga. We also observed that Olutanga’s generally flat and slightly rolling terrain was favorable for low power FM signal propagation. Despite their earlier skepticism, we succeeded in arousing curiosity about setting up a local broadcast station. That day, we left with a feeling of certainty that Olutanga would be the next project site for Tambuli.

### **Organising key players**

With his background in community organising and knowledge of the native tongue, Romy took charge of laying the groundwork for the Tambuli project. In a few months time, Romy reported that two groups of leaders had been organised. The Olutanga Islanders Media Development Foundation (OIMDF) registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission, and headed by Meriam Aranas, president of an organisation for women and a former member of the municipal council. Its vice president was Lilia Zamodio, the elementary school principal.

The Community Media Council, composed of multi-sectoral representation, undertook the management and editorial decisions for the radio station. Nap Aboc, a prominent businessman in the town of Mabuhay, served as the chairperson of the CMC. A station manager was then appointed by the CMC. The council also invited and screened volunteers to be trained in broadcasting skills.

“I thought they did not believe us, Romy. How were you able to generate so much enthusiasm among those leaders?” Romy had succeeded in bringing together the cream of the crop on the island for a project that was initially met with skepticism. Members of both the CMC and the OIMDF hailed from all the three towns of the island, various religious denominations and political affiliations. I also noted in Romy’s report that Aranas and Aboc are leaders in opposing political parties and that they do not always see eye-to-eye on many issues.

“Louie, there are 17 resolutions from multiple groups on the island all pleading to Tambuli to put up a community radio in Olutanga. I told them that if they don’t organise quickly enough, we’ll bring the project back to Ipil. But if they organise and show that they can work together for the good of the island, you personally will bring the equipment right away start the training promptly.”



*Signing a memorandum of collaboration among leaders in Olutanga. From left, Napoleon Aboc, Louie Tabing, Meriam Aranas, Romy Enriquez and other municipal leaders. (LNT)*

“What about the legalities, Romy? Processing the license will take some time.” I was hesitant to start without the license. But Romy assured me that the foundation is working on it. He added, “And we will help. We need to ride on their enthusiasm. Otherwise, we forever lose the chance for them to truly believe us.”

The Tambuli project management team in Manila noted this hurried approach based purely on enthusiasm, but also appreciated the urgency and the fragility of that enthusiasm. Hence, within three weeks, we began to install basic equipment, adding this time a three horsepower generator for the frequent blackouts. The studio was conditionally set up in the church *convento* where the training for programme production was conducted for the volunteers.

### **First training**

Fifteen participants were chosen by the CMC to undergo training on community radio broadcasting. They included fishermen, farmers, women, youth, the religious, teachers, motorcycle operators, government employees and laborers. Four graduates of a two-year radio operator course opted to serve as technicians for the station.

Training sessions were held from 24 July to 13 August 1993. At the same time, test broadcasts were also conducted, and some programmes produced by the trainees were actually aired. Three principal trainers handled the programme-making sessions – Gel Matela, a radio instructor from the College of Development Communication, University of the Philippines, Los Baños, Romy Enriquez and myself.

Romy Carballo, the project engineer, trained the four technicians in broadcast operations. A veteran in radio

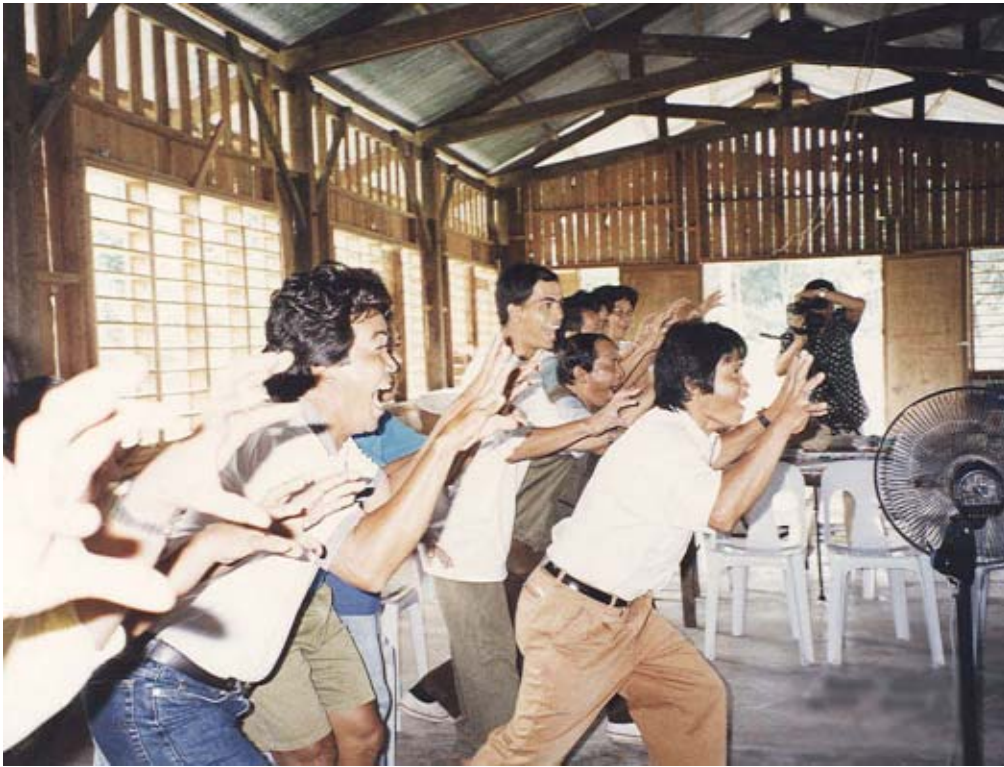
broadcasting, Romy explained the house rules laying special emphasis on promptness, discipline and programme preparation. “If you are on radio, you must diligently observe the time. You cannot give an 8 o’clock time check if you come at 8:01. While the job is voluntary in nature, you are not exempted from meeting the expectations of your listeners. Accepting to run a programme is a public commitment.”

Living in a community of improvisation, some trainees forgot these lessons. On one occasion, two teachers came 15 minutes late. Romy who was already in the middle of his presentation directed his attention to the teachers. “You are teachers. You don’t allow your students to come late, do you? That is discipline. On radio, you are not doing this just because it is the rule. You have a commitment to a large number of people. As volunteers you have an agreement with them to come on time and be prepared. If you don’t accept that arrangement, then you can just be a market vendor who runs her own time. On radio, your time is also the listeners’ time.”

From that point on, everybody observed discipline. Programmes were of exact duration. Participants came at the agreed hour. Talks were limited to their schedule on the log. “If I do nothing else, let that be my contribution to development of this community radio,” Romy said in justifying his unforgiving discipline.

The provisional station went on-the-air from 5 o’clock to 8 o’clock in the morning on a test-broadcast basis. Some programmes were aired live. With the temporary 25-foot high antenna, the station could be heard in most parts of the island with the occasional spillover to mainland Zamboanga.

In the final days of the two week training, I asked the participants how they rated the training programme. One farmer said, “This is the only time in my life that I learned to wake up and have my breakfast at 12:30 in the morning.”



*An animation session during the community radio training. (LNT)*

“Why so early?” I asked.

“Well, I need to wash and dress up, walk 11 kilometers to make it to the 5 o’clock schedule on time!” He explained, with more pride than resentment.

I learned later on that there were actually four producers from Talusan and a farther village, who had to walk five kilometers on dark, muddy paths to arrive on time for the radio programme.

A separate workshop-training was also conducted for members of the CMC, the Foundation and the broadcasters. The workshop covered media laws and practices, decision making, conflict management, resource generation, financial management and basic radio management. A decision was reached during the joint meeting to designate the call name of



the station as DXOI, *Tingog sa Olutanga* or voice of Olutanga. (The letters O and I represent Olutanga Island. D is for Philippines and X is for Mindanao.)

The appointment of the station manager was also held during the joint meeting. Toto Val Samonte was unanimously chosen. Despite being a member of the Citizens Armed Forces Geographical Unit (CAFGU), a paramilitary armed group, Toto has remained non-partisan in managing the affairs of DXOI. Romy explained to me in earnest, “Toto has leadership, was a top performer in the training and has shown level headedness. He deserves the high regard among the participants and the members of the management group. Like you said, they decide what is good for themselves and for DXOI.”

### **Mutual enthusiasm and willingness to dip in the pocket**

Although the Tambuli willingly provided the equipment and technical assistance commensurate to the enthusiasm of the people, we urged the leaders to involve every Olutangan in shouldering the responsibility of operating the station.

It was then decided that a small building was needed to house the station. Several fund raising schemes were considered. First, there was the *piso-piso* scheme where every Olutangan would be asked to put in their share of at least one peso if only to give them the chance to claim ownership of the station. Although the response was heartwarming, it was not enough. The station was still short of two hundred thousand pesos. Hence, a raffle draw was set up. One *carabao* (water buffalo) and a number of other items were offered as prizes. The response was encouraging. It was at this time that Tambuli opted to shoulder the remaining balance of 80,000 pesos. With the completion of the budget, a modest 24 square meter house was erected on a 300 square meter lot donated by the municipal government of Mabuhay.



There still remained, however, the issue of extending aid for the sustenance of volunteers, especially for those who have no other means of income. We all recognised that one day the enthusiasm of volunteers would wear out. We recruited facilitators from the University of the Philippines Institute for Small Scale Industries to help the volunteers identify and plan livelihood ventures that they or their family members could engage in. This also became a means to spark the interest of the community to design projects for themselves.

A loan of 5000 pesos (over US\$185 in 1992) was extended by the project to volunteers engaged in an income generating activity. A total of 60,000 pesos was allotted to the more needy members of the volunteer staff. Among the projects chosen were the establishment of a piggery; the setting up of fish cages for aquaculture; upholstery making and an electronics repair shop. The idea behind the venture did not only help the volunteers, it was also a topic for discussion on radio based on their own first-hand experience.

After two years, I was surprised that Toto announced that most volunteers were ready to pay back the loan! As a gesture of goodwill, the project then offered to reward the amount to the station in order to cover its operating expenses. Officially, we justified the grant by the fact that Tambuli is not a financing agency. On the other hand, condoning the loan was probably not a totally judicious decision. Normally, responsibility to pay a loan should not be so simply dismissed.

### **Nearly Two Stations in One**

Two years into the operation of Radio Olutanga, it became evident that the station could not cover all parts of the island. The southern town of Suba Nipa, 18 kilometers away from Mabuhay, was hardly reached by the station. A hill blocked the

signal from penetrating most of Suba Nipa even when the Mabuhay transmitter was already upgraded to 100 watts. In 1995, a directional receiving antenna was installed in Suba Nipa and the Mabuhay programme was rebroadcast using a 20-watt transmitter. However, at certain times of the day, the relay station could also be used to feed the 16,000 Suba Nipans with programmes that the southern-based volunteers might generate locally.

The set up did not last long. When the transmitter in Mabuhay was hit by lightning, the Suba Nipa transmitter was recalled. Some politics also came into play. Finding that they could use the transmitter locally, the Suba Nipans were less interested in airing Mabuhay programmes. They argued that the signal coming from the mother station was too weak to be relayed by the spare transmitter. We were discreetly informed that there was initially a competition between the old town that used to be all of Olutanga and Mabuhay, the now busier center. Mabuhay relates more congenially with the neighboring municipality of Talusan and the mainland town of Alicia than it does with Suba Nipa. Regrettably, returning the spare transmitter to Suba Nipa was never considered again.

### **An island of portable radio**

In the early 1990s when cellular phone was still far from being fashionable on the island, hand-held transceivers were common. According to estimates, there were over 150 of them in the towns of Mabuhay and Talusan alone. Most were unlicensed and likely smuggled from Malaysia, but the gadgets were certainly handy on an island with limited communications. In fact, toting a radio receiver in a leather ‘holster’ was a status symbol. There was also an association of radio operators in existence. Noting this, we urged the DXOI management to recruit selected transceiver operators to serve as reporters.

In July 1995, Tambuli conducted a two day workshop for the radio operators on basic news gathering and reporting. Soon, the programs of DXOI did not only air the latest news but even included casual greetings from people who were using transceivers the way we now use our mobile phones.

As the audience base grew, Tambuli provided a transceiver base and a handheld radio to DXOI for the purpose of accommodating callers. But the transceivers did not have the proper connection to the audio console mixer. The studio microphone is simply positioned close to the speaker of the radio base. The sound is not high quality, but Toto pointed out, “For as long as the report or the conversation is understood, that is quality to us. The more important thing is that more Olutangans are now participating. And we are doubly sure that if any emergency crops up, the whole island is promptly alerted.”

### **Final visit to the most beautiful island**

I returned to Olutanga in August of 2007, nearly ten years after I last saw the island. Toto Samonte had invited me as principal guest in the “Anibersaya 2007,” the celebration of the 14th anniversary of DXOI. I had only been hearing random reports from Toto, Nap Aboc or Meriam Aranas and a few visitors to the island. Tambuli had been busy putting up other stations in the late 1990s, as well as helping UNICEF in set up community radios since early 2000.

I learned that the community station unceremoniously went off the air for 5 years from 2001 to June of 2006. The split between the leadership of the Olutanga Media Development Foundation and the Community Media Council worsened. A new station manager was appointed by the CMC in 2000. When Toto, the heart and soul of the station, relinquished his role in

DXOI, a number of volunteers also tendered their resignations. Support from the citizenry dwindled. The light of the station flickered and finally went out.

However, the Olutangans would not bear to make DXOI just another memory. The 25-meter tower and the small building which they collectively put up were there to remind them of the facilities wasting away. For eight years, DXOI had given them hope and tangible public service. Each volunteer, who had been a hero and an idol of sorts, was being asked persistently when the station would go back on air.

Eventually in 2006, with the unrelenting appeal from the islanders, Toto was persuaded to pick up the pieces and revive DXOI. The municipal government allotted 120,000 pesos annually to subsidise the operations of DXOI. The former



*DXOI distributed transistor radios during “anibersaya” in celebration of its 14th anniversary . (LNT)*

volunteers were summoned back to the station. A core group of decision makers from the government and non-government organisations was constituted. The stalwarts — Boy Inot, Crispin Zarate and Dodong Genovea were once again on the air. New recruits and correspondents were also lined up. There is even greater involvement with the communities located along the shoreline. Now, Radio Olutanga broadcasts 15 hours a day.

On the occasion of the 14<sup>th</sup> anniversary of DXOI, over three thousand Olutangans filled up the unfinished gymnasium of Mabuhay. They came to attend a raffle draw for the DXOI fundraising where dozens of beautiful receivers were the coveted prize. Among the major events for the night was a singing contest with participants from various villages. Listeners from as far as the mountainous areas of the town of Alicia, traveled by boat to see the affair. Meriam Aranas and Nap Aboc were seated there side by side. The old school principal and other prominent officers were also present at the presidential table. Town officials of Mabuhay and the neighboring towns graced the occasion.

Pandemonium broke when the event host declared “Mabuhay ang DXOI!” (Long live DXOI!) On that occasion, Toto’s usually soft voice was again reverberating in the plaza and over the station proclaiming that “Olutanga is the most beautiful island in the world!”

Still perplexed by Toto’s paradigm, I reflected. When a small island of several villages can bootstrap its own development; when through political and social rivalries, it can put all hands together and draw hard; when its people can rally in full force behind their leaders and undertake the tasks of development in harmony as a community, then indeed that is a beautiful island!

## Partido: a stolen hope

By Louie Tabing



*A little boy manages traffic in a road repair point along the highway leading to Partido, Camarines Sur. (LNT)*

“I got involved in radio broadcasting because my community was sick, sick with the plague of gambling,” said Mrs. Charing Gozos, housewife and mother of a family. “My neighbours are losing 50,000 pesos (US\$2300) a day in a ‘no win’ numbers game called *jueteng*, and no one is trying to stop it. So I announce daily on the radio where the gambling will take place and I advise the police to go there and stop it, but sometimes they do not go. But the gamblers are still afraid of being raided. So I close my programme with pleas to the people not to give up their savings!”<sup>1</sup>

At the height of Charing’s ‘guerilla campaign’ to stop gambling, right in the middle of her programme, a man walked in and brandished to her face a 45 caliber automatic. The intruder said: “You’re going to stop this now.”



To which Gozos replied, “Who are you? Get out of here! This is a community radio station, the people do not like you and they’re going to stop gambling.” In her excitement, she didn’t think of turning off her microphone and didn’t realise that this potentially fatal conversation was going out on the air. But the intruder apparently did, and his eyes glowed with anger, as he quickly left.

The gambling operators are usually powerful people with the proverbial three Gs – gold, guns, and goons. Entrenched in high places and with access to big resources, the gambling lords can perpetuate illegal operations through bribery, intimidation and the use of influence.

The Radio Partido staff however refused to cower. Encouraged by some well-meaning citizens, the staff was determined to fight the menace. The community radio exposed the names of the gambling operators. They discreetly followed the *jueteng* collectors and pinpointed locations of clandestine draws. Where local police action could not be instigated, the staff contacted national agencies. They rallied the people to support the drive, and they were always well informed. The staff ignored the threats on their lives, even the warnings of their own relatives. To intensify the action, Tambuli production staff helped DWTP prepare dramatised spots against gambling.

Where national campaigns failed, this little band of local radio crusaders stopped *jueteng* in Partido in early 1998. For several months, *jueteng* was finally brought to a halt, it was estimated that several millions of pesos were saved from falling into the hands of the gambling lords and government crooks.

The elation, however, was short-lived. One evening, unknown persons raided the station and stole its equipment, forcing the station to close down. To this day, no one has been arrested nor prosecuted. Ironically, in the same year, the application papers for the license to operate were ready from the National Telecommunications Commission.

These images and remembrances were going through my brain, as I was driving back to Bicol to write this chapter. When we were putting up Radio Partido in the late 1990’s, the 500-kilometer Manila-Naga route was already a first-rate highway. There were occasional rough spots, but it was a pleasant drive along the coconut plantations and rice fields. The new Quirino Highway would certainly be a welcome development for the four million Bicolanos in the far south of Luzon. Now renamed

the Rolando Andaya Highway, it would bypass the long and predominantly winding road in Camarines Norte and traverse the southern section of the peninsula.

I thought that August 2007 would be a good time to drive south, but I was met with serious disappointment. The newly built highway was worse for wear. Over a hundred small sections were undergoing repair, being readied for repair or abandoned while repair was to be undertaken. What caused all this damage to a road so recently constructed? Was it the 20 or so tropical storms a year that wreak havoc in Bicol? Was the road constructed with sub-standard materials and the stuffed budgets pocketed? Was it the transport of heavy goods on 18-wheeler trucks that dug up the road into moon craters?

“Any or all of those answers could be correct,” said Ato Peña, the former Executive Director of Partido Resources Development Foundation (PRDF); now he is the provincial budget officer of Camarines Sur. “Actually, they reflect the many social concerns that Radio Partido of Goa was trying to address – eliminating government corruption, value formation and redirecting people’s preoccupation towards development.”

Charing Gozos, former station manager of Radio Partido, adds that within the locality of Goa, as well as in the Partido District of Camarines Sur, there are even more pressing problems. “There are issues of illegal logging, illegal gambling, illegal quarrying, dynamite fishing, low agricultural production, drug addition, distorted values and apathy of the public towards social issues.”

*“The community radio should have an independent character. It must be run by the people themselves.” —Ato Peña, Radio Partido*



*Clay Clavecilla (centre) explains to visiting Roskilde University graduate students the choice of the name DWTP as the radio station sign is being put up. (LNT)*

### **Partido, ideal site for community radio**

The town of Goa where the radio was put up in 1994 is about one hour away from Naga, the capital city of Camarines Sur. The service area is the larger portion of Partido district, comprising several fishing and farming towns on the eastern side of Mt. Isarog, facing the Ragay Gulf. At least three towns of Goa (San Jose, Sangay and Tigaon) are covered by the signal from the 100-watt transmitter. Portions of other neighboring towns receive weaker signals depending on their distance and location. Goa's population is 45,000 inhabitants while the rest of the towns in the coverage area hold an estimated population of 250,000.

At the outset, Partido met all of the Tambuli Project's criteria for the establishment of a community radio. Though composed of ten towns, Partido district receives little information. During our initial visit, there were no other existing

radio stations in the area. Geographically secluded and blocked by Mt. Isarog, Partido does not receive clear signals from the main city of Naga, 60 kilometers away, where there are about a dozen AM and FM stations,. The broadcasts from nearby radio stations in the southern cities of Iriga and Legaspi, are irrelevant to this isolated community.

Compared to other districts in Camarines Sur, Partido is economically disadvantaged. Some of this is due to the high incidence of insurgency in the Bicol region. Weather conditions in this region are perennially hostile, Bicol being one of the hardest hit typhoon areas of the country, with the worst recorded calamity in 2005 when typhoon *Milenyo* inundated many towns and destroyed vast agricultural fields.

Despite the many natural and man-made setbacks, Ato Peña described the people as exceptionally strong with an enviable cooperative spirit. When strong typhoons battered the community, he recalled, the people took the initiative to repair their roads, restore fallen electric posts, clean up the public places, trim windblown trees and fix their school buildings rather than wait for the local government support. The stark reality is that government aid is usually poured into the big cities.

Weather permitting, farming and the fishing industries thrive, with a good number of cottage processing activities flourishing such as mat weaving, basket and bag making, bottling of fruit preserves and designing of home decors. These are made from varying forms of local farm materials.

To further stimulate progress in the district, the PRDF, a non-government organisation chaired by Eduardo Pilapil (then Post Master General) undertook to prepare the proposal for setting up community radio. As the objective of PRDF is to help promote economic growth among the residents, Tambuli found here a strong ally.

## **The Community Media Council**

A Community Media Council (CMC) was formed by representatives of all sectors of society (civic and academic leaders, the municipal health officer, members of different political parties and leaders from religious sects, the youth, laborers, fisher folk, farmers, tricycle drivers, and women). Dr. Germites Dineros, the President of Partido State College (now a university) was elected as Chairperson of the council. The Vice-chairperson, who eventually succeeded Dineros upon his death, was David Villaralbo, the Principal of the town's biggest elementary school. Despite the professional composition of the media council, it was also desired to have representatives of the marginalised sectors of women and children in key staff positions. Rosario Gozos, a teacher/housewife, was appointed as the volunteer station manager. Surprising even herself, she turned out to be a broadcast idealist and zealous crusader on crucial developmental issues, especially gambling.

The Council worked to formulate operational rules, policies and regulations. It would approve the programming concepts and ideas submitted by the station manager. At the time, it was to the management's advantage that the Tambuli Project had already developed sets of rules and guidelines in a booklet covering issues such as the code of conduct of broadcasters; management and programming for community radio; and the technical guidelines. The media council adopted most of the guidelines prescribed by Tambuli.

We held several orientation seminars before launching the project. With recommendations from the officers of the PRDF, we identified key role players from the community, about 50 eager participants, to attend the basic training and orientation on community radio in the latter part of December of 1994 so that the station could open in time for New Year. Understandably, both management officers and programmers were broadcast

neophytes. Nonetheless, they were experts when it came to determining which issues and discussions would be beneficial to their community. Whereas academics and professionals would be only guided by surveys and studies, the volunteers were more aware of the listening habits and preferences of their fellow villagers.

They named their station DWTP for *Tambuli kan Partido*. Hopes were high that their radio station would make an impact on individuals, families and villages in Partido.

### **The Facilities of Radio Partido**

Initially, the radio occupied a section of the local rectory where, it was assumed, to be less susceptible to intervention by local politicians. However, about a year after, the CMC realised that the church itself had its own rigid outlook on certain social issues particularly family planning and the use of artificial birth control devices. Hence, the station was then temporarily relocated to the Partido College. On the top floor of the four-storey building, the station also had the advantage of good antenna height. The college could also have been an excellent partner for educational extension, but this relocation lasted only several months and DWTP finally transferred to the Alfelor building, a commercial complex in the centre of town.

### **Production Personnel**

Aside from the regular staff, the station maintained eight volunteers who served as programme producers, hosts, announcers, news gatherers, reporters and technicians. The regulars were chosen on the basis of their *AWIT* – ability, willingness, interest and time.

Regularly, new recruits were trained to beef up the staff and to replace drop-outs. For in a non-salary volunteer arrangement,





*Eager volunteers keenly milling around Tambuli Engineer Romy Carballo (in baseball cap) and Partido Resources Development Foundation Director Ato Peña (in black shirt) at the start of DWTP's test broadcast. (LNT)*

it was inevitable that some of the most valuable participants would eventually leave— to seek salaried employment, graduate from school, migration and or work pressure. On the other hand, those who chose to stay, affirmed their commitment to the station. “There is a sense of fulfillment working for DWTP,” is often the sentiment shared by the other volunteers, perhaps due to the camaraderie, altruism or the training involved. Whatever the reason, each volunteer carried with him/her a feeling of pride in working for the community, and perhaps some of what we call that basic “trust of the broadcaster.”

## **Programming**

The radio programmes reflected the full range of community involvement in the sectors of concern: agriculture, fisheries, culture, family life, education, religion, public service

and entertainment. On weekdays, broadcasts were from 6 o'clock in the morning to 12 noon. On Saturdays, with more volunteers available, the programme continued to 9 o'clock in the evening.

The radio station opened with a morning prayer followed by news and tips on farming. Community news of thirty minutes were aired at 6:30 in the morning. A public service programme then dealt with community actions. Listeners' questions and predicaments were acted upon or referred to agencies or institutions for resolution. At 9 o'clock, a programme on varying topics covering family affairs, health and other practical information was heard. Throughout the day, public service announcements and community activities were announced. At the end of the day, the latest news edition was broadcast before sign-off.

On the weekends with extended scheduling, programmes included shows on entertainment, religion, culture, youth, music and community life. Most popular were *Barangayan* (the social life of the village) and *Harana* (serenade). In these programmes the village performers made the show. On a pre-arranged schedule, they come to the station or prepare the programme in their own *barangay* using a *karaoke* machine. This event was always regarded by the villagers as an important affair, hence, young and old alike came dressed in their Sunday best. Some select from their clothes chest a dusty and old styled *barong tagalog* (native style embroidered shirt) and *terno* (native dress usually of white woven fibres) to show off, unaware that costumes are not visible to the radio listeners! We had a prescribed model of presentation, but the villagers usually designed their own show including content, sequence, performers, master of ceremonies, singers, opening and closing messages.

According to Rosario Gozos, *Barangayan* and *Harana* were the banner programmes; "They allow for participation of

the people. At that hour, they grabbed all the attention of the Partido listeners. One of those young *barangay* performers has even gained regional and national prominence,” she said at the time.

Apart from live entertainment, the program showcased the community’s cottage industries, special dishes, personalities, talents and scenic spots. For instance, burger patty made from banana flower and curried macaroni became popular in restaurant menus after they were heard on the air.

While Radio Partido necessarily made use of existing broadcast formats from other commercial stations, the community broadcasters distinguished themselves by their strong emphasis on information and developmental programmes: education, value formation, and healthy eating habits among children. Such programs are also standard fare on Philippine medium-wave radio stations; hence many listeners were surprised to hear these discussions also on the FM band.

Politics was also one of the major topics heard on Radio Partido. Complaints and grievances which would normally be coursed through the bureaucratic hierarchy, or simply unexpressed, were instantly brought to public attention. Political leaders had no other recourse but to address these problems in earnest. To remain non-partisan, the community station was careful not to be identified with politicians. The station supported worthy undertakings of government such as tax campaigns but was careful not to promote what it perceived might be propaganda schemes. The politicians were often interviewed, but never allowed to serve as programme hosts.

Moreover, the media council made it a policy for the station not to mention the names of people who could be adversely affected by a complaint until his side is heard. Gozos explained that the *hiya* culture (the element of shame or embarrassment, or losing face) had to be taken into account. This community radio approach differs sharply from the blunt manner in which

local or national issues are handled on commercial stations. The community radio would be sharply reprimanded if it were to cause any shame to local leaders, whether or not a misdemeanor has been committed. Rather, a leader, even though repentant, must be allowed to recover, to 'save face.' Otherwise, there could be a severe backlash on the station and its staff. This is not to condone misdemeanors or to absolve the guilty. Rather the broadcasters deal with this closely in a highly sensitive interpersonal situation.

### **Resource Generation**

Since Radio Partido was run by unpaid volunteers, there were less operational expenses to worry about. The low energy consuming transmitter also reduced costs. But there were other costs to cover: monthly rental, transportation, supplies, repairs and honoraria. The PRDF subsidised the space rental fee, while the station raised funds by holding raffle draws, soliciting contributions from community members and institutional sponsorship from business establishments. Recognising the value of service that the station was carrying out for the community, support from well meaning individuals was not difficult to find. A store, for instance, would pay between 500 to 1,000 pesos per month. In return, the station would announce the store location and the store owner as sponsor of the programmes. The radio did not make any public endorsement of the store, since simply being a supporter was itself a valuable manifestation of goodwill by the business establishment.

### **On Licensing**

While the station management was aware of the legal requirement to apply for a license to broadcast, no action was undertaken. And since there was no interference on the FM band, there were no complaints. Nonetheless, the media council

looked into varying possibilities to legitimise its operation. One possibility was to operate as a member station of an existing commercial network, though this might have imposed restrictions on programme and hindered the openness of the station to make programmes as it wished. Another solution is to operate as a station under the franchise of the University of the Philippines, again with the risk of programme restriction. Or simply to apply directly for legal papers under the name of the Partido Resources Development Foundation.

The National Telecommunications Commission (NTC), the regulating agency expressed leniency towards the operation of the station given the low-power transmission and the general lack of communication facilities in the area. Upon visiting the Partido facilities, they found that the radio was being operated by a licensed technician. Hence, the operations of Radio Partido could be fully and directly legalized, and the station would be entirely independent.

### **Impact of Radio Partido on the Community**

Several reputable communication schools such as the Ateneo de Naga, the University of the Philippines Los Baños and Diliman campuses conducted research and evaluation of Radio Partido. Seeking to determine the social impact of the station, many researchers pointed to the station's high level of acceptance among the population of Goa and the outlying towns within the Partido district. The relevance of local content as well as the participatory, interactive policy of the station were cited as the radio's most important attributes.

When Tambuli received the UNESCO-IPDC Prize for Rural Communication in 1996, Mrs. Charing Gozos was selected to represent the then six Tambuli stations. At the ceremony, she casually narrated her experiences and the station's influence on the lives of many families. She talked about a young father who

came to the station one day with his two sons. The father was looking for his wife who ran away from home after a serious fight. He had beaten her up while drunk. She was nowhere to be found among relatives and friends. He aired his plea for his wife to return home, at least for the sake of their children. The toddlers also appealed to their mother. Before leaving the station, the father requested the station to play their theme song “Power of Love.” A copy was offered by one of the listeners, and the song was played repeatedly. After two days, the man returned to the station to express his gratitude. His wife had returned. To this day, Gozos attributes the incident not only to the power of love, but to the power of community radio. The Secretary General of UNESCO, Federico Mayor, could not



*The fearless lady DWTP manager Charing Gozos explains how she and her staff waged war against illegal activities. (LNT)*



help but jokingly remark, “Mrs. Gozos, I recommend that you put up a Tambuli station here in UNESCO, Paris. Here, there are many lost husbands and wives.”

Apart from its impact on the lives of its listeners, Radio Partido also prioritised environmental protection and conservation. In a remarkable case, the staff proudly recounted how the dwindling mangrove forests along the shorelines of Caramoan town were rehabilitated through community action propelled by the radio. The radio significantly increased the level of awareness and vigilance among the people on environmental issues. As a result, illegal logging and illegal mining activities were not condoned. When mountainside residents brought samples of sulfur rocks illegally mined from Mt. Isarog to the station, the announcer promptly called on local officials and concerned national government agencies to act on the issue.

### **Future Plans**

It is now 2008, ten years after the radio equipment was stolen and the radio taken off the air. It is easy to say that ten years off the air means failure. But the core group from the moribund Partido Resources Development Foundation reveals plans to restart the broadcast operations in Goa. Although a new commercial station is already transmitting from Partido, the residents still yearn for the development-oriented programmes which were the trademark of Radio Partido. The people want not only a station in the community but one dedicated to its development and its people.

The provincial government is ready to render financial assistance for the purchase of new equipment. Through a memorandum of understanding, the Armed Forces of the Philippines will facilitate the application for the station’s license. Training and technical assistance will be provided by the

Tambuli Community Radio Foundation. For volunteers who have no other means of livelihood, a cooperative will be created to ensure that non-earning volunteers find opportunities to engage in livelihood activities.

Ato Peña, the prime mover of the revival movement insists that while government assistance is being secured, “The community radio should have an independent character. It must be run by the people themselves. A government-operated station will always be perceived as biased, especially when discussing political issues. On the other hand, a community radio will be an avenue for people to express their sentiments. The radio will be an effective and candid link between the people and the government.”

The new station will be housed in a building owned by the local government. But the community media council will manage the station. Gozos is billed to fill the post of station manager. While a few of the trained personnel are now employed in commercial stations, they all expressed willingness to return to Radio Partido.

A few battles may have been lost and enemies may have rejoiced, but the stolen hope of Partido will be on the air in August 2008! Sometimes success just takes a little time.



# 5

## India: sculpting the identity of community radio

By Ashish Sen and Ramnath Bhat



*On the way to Budikote. (CAA)*

More than a decade after the Supreme Court of India declared in 1995 that airwaves are public property, the Government announced guidelines and legislation to enable non-governmental and community-based organisations (NGOs and CBOs) to be eligible for community radio. However, between precept and practice, the pace of implementation has raised worrying questions pertaining to equity and inclusiveness. More than a year has passed since the guidelines were announced on 16 November 2006. There are still no NGO or CBO driven community radio stations in operation. At the end of 2007, a little more than 10 applicants from this sector have received a Letter of Intent from the Information and Broadcasting Ministry.

While the direction of media reform in India normally responds to the usual paradigm of supply and demand, reform procedures today appear to be exclusionary and piece-meal, and little is known about how they work. The slow course of decentralisation is disturbing not just in terms of its pace, but also because of its selective and reactive characteristics. It is evident that the community has been paying the heaviest price on a non-level and ambivalent playing field.

In this period of hiatus, the lines clearly distinguishing public and private broadcasting are vulnerable to blurring. While the government-owned All India Radio (AIR) appears to have reduced subsidised programmes, the leasing of airtime on AIR FM to private radio was introduced, though it was a temporary phenomenon and prelude to the eventual licensing of private stations.

The ambivalence in political will towards media reform is sharpened on taking a close look at broadcast legislation. The Prasar Bharati Act of 1990 — in many ways considered a watershed in media legislation— demonstrates this substantially. While the Bill was based on the Verghese Committee Report of 1978, there were significant differences characteristic of exclusion and piecemeal decentralisation. The Verghese Committee had favored the creation of a ‘Trust’ in the service of the public, as against the Prasar Bharati Bill which proposed a Corporation that did not have the same statutory dignity and power. The objectives of the Corporation would also appear to fall short of the Verghese Report’s recommendations which wanted the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting to shed its responsibility for broadcasting altogether. The Prasar Bharati Bill’s provision for a representative of the ministry as a part time Governor is at variance with the ‘full autonomy’ suggested by the Verghese Committee. The Verghese Committee Report also underlined the need for a decentralised structure with powers delegated at regional and local levels. In sharp contrast, the Prasar Bharati Bill says little about the devolution of the powers of the Government of India and its executive boards. Consequently, despite obtaining ‘autonomous status’ under this Act, the Prasar Bharati’s functioning has been described as ‘de facto under the influence of the Government of India’ in various ways.

The current Broadcast Bill, which has been the subject of considerable debate, raises similar concerns pertinent to media democratisation. There is no quarreling with the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting’s implicit postulation that freedom needs to be discharged with responsibility.

The title of the bill itself would hardly appear to be ‘enabling.’ The title itself - Broadcast Services Regulation Bill 2007 – bespeaks regulatory overtones rather than those of freedom of expression! At a recent round table discussion, the provisions pointed out, “While regulation in itself cannot be

wished away, a comprehensive legislation regarding a precious public resource such as the airwaves should speak the language of enabling and facilitating, rather than prohibiting.” The proposal to set up a Broadcast Regulatory Authority of India (BRAI) evokes similar anxiety. The need for an independent or ombudsman-like body that facilitates social justice, universal access and equity, is not disputed. But surely a body or agency that would oversee broadcasting in India should simply be called the Broadcasting Authority of India, rather than Broadcasting Regulatory Authority of India. The former would go a long way in reposing trust and credibility that the Authority would be truly autonomous, free from constant supervision and interference from the Central Government.

The 16 November 2006 guidelines enabling community based NGOs to be eligible for community radio licenses is a welcome step not only in terms of strengthening the public domain, but bringing the community itself onto centre stage. But there is need to move more quickly from precept to practice. Otherwise the issue of equal access will continue to constitute a formidable challenge. In its current avatar, the guidelines subsume both campus and community in the same breath. This does not seem realistic. Neither would it appear to substantially answer questions related to equity. Access without inclusiveness could be akin to information without communication. Media Reform in India thus needs to ensure that communities, especially poor communities that are also producers of information, are able to communicate it in a manner that they deem fit. Otherwise, information could well be akin to dead wood.

The history of Radio in India is embedded in the Raj, the British colonial period. In August 1921, The Times of India in collaboration with the Post and Telegraphs Department, broadcast from its Bombay office, a special programme of music “at the request” of Sir George Lloyd, the Governor of Bombay province. The Telegraph Act of 1885, used for this broadcast, continues to hold sway, despite advancements made in broadcast technology. It will continue to do so until a new communication bill is passed by parliament and made into a law.

Between 1921 and 1923, deliberations had started on the formation of a radio company in India. Records confirm that the first radio service started in Calcutta in November 1923. The next year saw the formation of the Madras Presidency Radio Club, which was closely followed by the Bombay Radio club. The British government did not really understand the power of radio or its likely impact. Instead it looked at the entire system of broadcasting mainly as a new source of revenue, from license fees imposed on the clubs, to tax earned from importing the transmitters and sales tax on the radio receiver sets.



However, with the Freedom movement garnering momentum in the country during the 1920s and the 1930s, officials in Delhi started wondering how radio could be controlled without appearing to do so.

A registration fee for receiving sets was proposed, censorship of information began and the first set of guidelines for Broadcasting in British India was issued on 27<sup>th</sup> March, 1925. The government of India was prepared to grant a license to private enterprise for provision of broadcasting by means of stations to be erected in British India. The license was to be for ten years from the date of commencing at least one station. During the first five years, subject to satisfactory performance, the government would undertake not to give license to any other person or company for purpose of providing broadcasting service. Thus began the tradition of state controlled media.

Under the supervision of a Central Broadcasting Advisory Committee, the India State Broadcasting Committee was formed in the thirties. In 1935, it was renamed All India Radio (AIR). With this, big broadcasting took over. Ever since, despite the proliferation of regional/local channels, Indian broadcasting remained under the clutch of centralisation. It was only in 1977 that the committee on autonomy for broadcasting recommended a more autonomous and decentralised structure with the “licensing of local franchise stations and independent production agencies that could be given time over the national broadcast system.”

Until 2001, AIR was the only radio operator in the country. Its extensive service covers nearly 90 per cent of India’s geographic area and 98.82 percent of the country’s population. It broadcasts in 24 languages and 146 dialects in home services. In external services it broadcasts in 26 languages (16 national and 10 foreign).

AIR also has an extensive network of almost 80 local radio stations across the country. However, the question of community management and ownership does not arise as the structure is entirely controlled by AIR.

In 1994, the government of India decided to lease time to private companies on AIR FM in New Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai and Goa. Six years later, the scenario had drastically changed. In 1999, through an executive order of the Cabinet, the government announced a framework under which licenses to operate fully independent FM radio stations in selected urban areas would be granted to private companies.

Between 2000 and 2007, the number of FM stations has steadily grown across urban cities in the country. Currently there are more than 80 private FM radio stations. However, their broadcasts are limited to music programmes. News broadcast remains the prerogative of All India Radio.

In 2001, the government initiated *Gyan Vani* (Knowledge voice), an FM service that was licensed to the Indira Gandhi National Open University. Its terms include 20 per cent community interactive programming with unofficial projections for community programming ranging as high as 40 percent of broadcasting time. Although the government had plans to start 40 such stations in the country, only 16 are operational.

In 2003, the Indian government endorsed legislation enabling what it ambiguously dubbed as community radio. This enabled educational institutions (schools and universities) recognised by the central or state governments to run their own 'community' radio stations. In actual fact, these stations should be more appropriately described as educational or campus radio stations. Ownership of the stations rests with the university.

Finally, the 16 November 2006 guidelines included NGOs, CBOs and *krishi darshans* (agricultural universities) to be eligible to own and run their community radio stations.

Challenges, however, remain. In terms of programming, community radio stations (like commercial or private stations) are not allowed to broadcast news. Transmitter and antenna costs remain exorbitant although there have been recent initiatives to bring in more players in this area. While a Community Radio Forum has been formed, it needs to go to scale and enhance membership across the country. In many ways, the issues related to community radio are disseminated largely to the converted. It needs to open its horizons through awareness related programmes especially at the grassroots level.

It is in this context that with the guidance and help of Voices (Bangalore) and Myrada (Budikote), and the development support of UNESCO, Namma Dhwani community radio was established on cable, and like Radio Pastapur in Hyderabad and scores of other worthwhile initiatives, they are still working to obtain their license to broadcast.

## Namma Dhwani: building a community to build radio

Abridged and adapted from the research report prepared by Seema B. Nair, Megan Jennaway and Andrew Skuse, *Local Information Networks: the Namma Dhwani Media Centre*



*Festive trumpet and musicians at the Karnataka Festival in Budikote. These are important occasions for villagers, and a means of communication. (CAA)*

Budikote is a very small town in the Kolar District of eastern Karnataka State, in South India. There are some 3016 people in 611 houses. The nearest municipality is in the sub district of Bangarpet, 12 kilometres away. Budikote is the Panchayat (self-government) headquarters for the surrounding eight villages. It is bounded by the neighbouring states of

Andhra Pradesh to the north and Tamil Nadu to the southeast, hence, the people of Budikote speak Kannada, Tamil and Telugu with equal ease. However, when engaging in personal conversations, most people tend to use Telugu.

The average literacy is around 45%, although it is only 20% for women compared to 80% for men. Budikote has 4 schools: one combined primary and secondary school, a high school, an Urdu primary school and one private school. The total student population of 3500 children is drawn from Budikote and the 18 surrounding villages. There are 39 teachers from government and private schools but this yields a rather high student teacher ratio of 90:1. Technological facilities are limited. Although the high school in Budikote has approximately ten computers, access depends on the availability of electricity. In summer, electricity may be available up to fourteen hours a day, however, in Budikote, power cuts and blackouts are frequent throughout the year.

Budikote has one Primary Health Care Center, and one private clinic. Both are only open during the daytime, but after sunset, no doctors are available for emergencies.

Although a minority of the community (28 out of 611 families) can be classified as either Scheduled Caste (SC) or Scheduled Tribe (ST), the village shows considerable caste homogeneity. The social structure is also reflected in the physical layout of the village, which is segmented into different streets for different castes and/or professions. In many households, the concept of caste purity is still maintained, with families discouraging caste interaction, especially with Dalits.

The majority of Budikote's population depends upon agriculture as the main means of livelihood. Consequently, a family's ownership of land tends to determine its socio-

economic status within the community, with landless labourers representing the poorest strata of society. In a Participatory Rural Appraisal conducted in 2000, 495 out of 592 families were classified as Below the Poverty Line (BPL).

An overwhelming majority of the community are Hindus (84%), followed by a smaller group of Muslims (15%). Christians and Jains together constitute 1% of the local population. Budikote's four temples, a mosque and a church reflect this religious diversity.

In 1991, the Mysore Resettlement and Development Agency (MYRADA) organised a needs assessment survey, which showed that people lacked locally relevant information but that they also wanted that information through a medium, which is accessible to them.

This survey later formed the rationale for setting up Namma Dhwani (Our Voices) community radio station in Budikote. Even without that survey, it can be quite safely said that community radio is sorely needed in most rural areas of India. There are several reasons for this. An understanding of the administrative structure helps to understand why. The state is divided into districts, which are then further divided into sub-districts. These are called Talukas. These Talukas are then divided into Gram Panchayats. The Gram Panchayat is akin to a local self-government unit and assumes responsibilities for the surrounding few villages, usually around 8 or 10 villages. Budikote has one such Gram Panchayat and is responsible for 8 surrounding villages. Usually the Gram Panchayat is responsible for undertaking developmental activities in the village like laying of roads, hospitals, any new housing schemes, birth and death certification etc. There are many occasions wherein the GP does not undertake these activities honestly or in time. Therefore the community cannot avail of these benefits. Further, due to lack of information, people are ignorant about their

rights. In the case of Budikote, it is located between the borders of three states and is therefore finds itself living in an information darkness. Even worse, because of the various languages spoken, no mainstream media caters to this small village. Therefore, as mentioned earlier, there is a need for information passed through local media.

Second and most important, because of lack of media, people do not get opportunities to express their views and concerns. Only local self-owned media like community media can be truly participatory in all aspects. Therefore, a community radio station would be able to fill in the void by enabling people to express their views, issues and concerns, their joys and sorrows.

### **Cable radio and multimedia**

Namma Dhwani or (Our Voices in the local language, Kannada) was set up at a local Panchayat-owned building, close to the main bus stop. This makes the radio centre very accessible. The radio station is located on the upper floor of the building, the ground floor is occupied by Jagruthi Resource Center, set up by Namma Dhwani partner MYRADA. Namma Dhwani acts as a communications arm of the resource center and shares a community-based management committee with the resource center.

The radio station has a control room and a studio, plus an area for computer work and learning. UNESCO supported Namma Dhwani with studio and multimedia equipment, for transmission over the local cable service. Soon, the Namma Dhwani initiative was reaching 300 plus households in the area.

Producers use both digital and analogue recording techniques. Programmes produced by Namma Dhwani are



### Studio Equipment

- 4 microphones (with cables and mic stands)
- One round table
- 2 mixing consoles (12 and 8 track)
- 2 digital voice recorders
- 2 Workstations/Editing machines
- 1 DVD player
- 1 Studio amplifier
- 2 Cassette Decks
- 1 External amplifier
- 1 Speaker set
- Furniture

distributed through a cable network in the village and over two loudspeakers. Some of the radio programmes are also routed through multimedia channels and through portable devices like cell phones and pocket computers.

Two-month computer training classes are conducted at the radio centre for the youth of Budikote and surrounding villages. Only a nominal fee is charged. These students come from poor families and are dropouts seeking to enhance their skills for job opportunities. They are trained in the fundamentals of computer operations, MS-Office, regional language transliteration software and use of Enrich. The training syllabus is contextualised to include modules like tallying and recording *sangha* (self-help groups) accounts and other local language transliteration software. Regular workshops and seminars are conducted to boost students' confidence in interpersonal communication skills.

Children are given access to the computers at the centre. They explore educational CDs and sometimes convert these into audio formats on the radio. For example, a child uses



*Youngsters come to Namma Dhvani to learn computer. (CAA)*

information from a CD on the history of Karnataka to make an audio programme on the same topic. Children who do not attend school are provided similar access in a two-week workshop to evaluate the ways through which they can participate in the computer literacy programme.

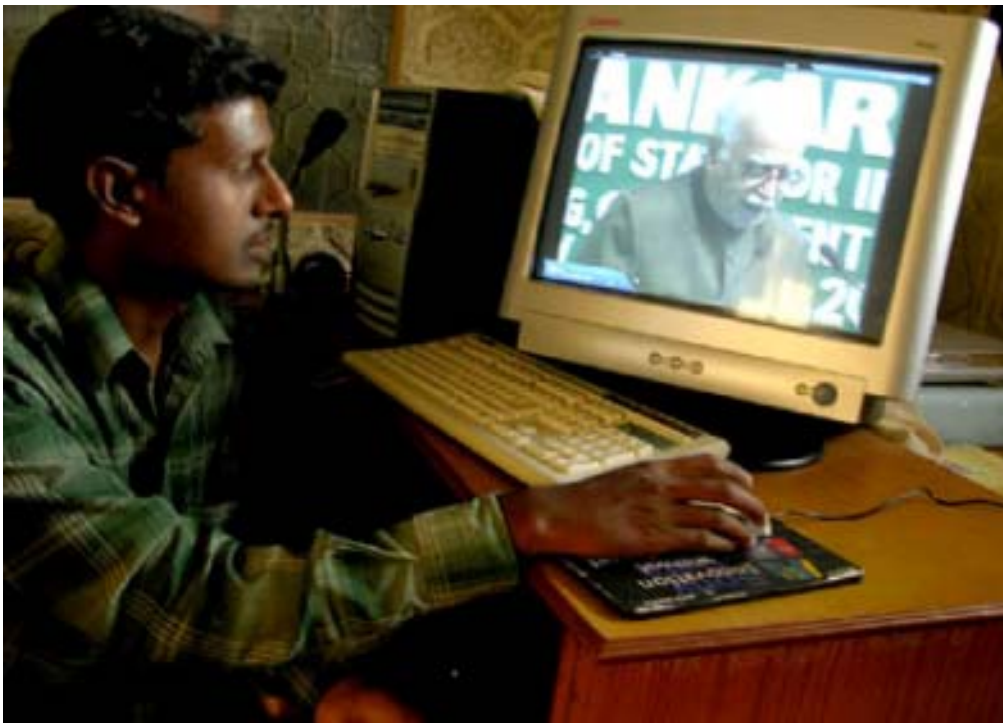
Namma Dhvani has also started maintaining its administrative documents on the computers, making the process more efficient, easy to access and, best of all, paperless.

MYRADA's local Resource Centre is an asset to the community. The centre focuses on setting up and training community-based organisations and providing them with information that link them to government and private institutions. The Resource Centre is the information collection

centre, with Namma Dhwani disseminating it to the community. Until now, Namma Dhwani has built sustainable strong relations with government departments of horticulture, agriculture, women and child welfare and various other important district block offices.

The station itself is located right at the very entrance of the village, as one arrives from the sub-district, Bangarpet. Two minutes away from the radio station is the bus stand and there is a main road connecting the village to Bangarpet which has a railway station. Local people find it convenient to come and participate in Namma Dhwani.

From the start, Namma Dhwani has been ‘broadcasting’ over an existing cable service already laid out and servicing the



*Production manager, Rajiu, editing. The minister in the photo was predicting the broad expansion of community radio in India, saying the country needs some 5000 stations. (CAA)*



*Sunita preparing the news. (CAA)*

town. Namma Dhwani has its assigned frequency on this cable and reaches all the wired homes with fair regularity. The advantage of cable is that it can also carry still photos and video images. So at times the station sends on the cable news photos taken that day, or video documentaries. In effect the cable, without any license required, enables Namma Dhwani to disseminate both radio and TV signals! The station has applied for a license to broadcast, and at the time of writing, has obtained a Letter of Intent (LOI). Now Namma Dhwani has separately applied for a frequency allocation, after which it can purchase a transmitter and antenna. However, as per current community radio policy, ND is entitled to a 100-watt transmitter and is allowed to place an antenna 30 meters above ground level.

## **Programmes: women taking over?**

Locally produced audio programmes are cablecast through Namma Dhwani. The programme formats are both live shows and radio features. At present, audio programmes reach 325 houses in the village for two hours everyday between 7-9 PM in the evening. In an effort to distribute its audio content and widen its network of users on a weekly basis, Namma Dhwani sends audio tapes for a nominal fee, to resource centres in three other villages: Kamasamudram, Thorlakki and Dinahalli. These are on topics concerning local government, health, education and awareness. Loudspeaker broadcasts of nearly an hour using Namma Dhwani programmes take place every day in these villages. Namma Dhwani has also begun to produce selected programmes of about 9 hours each week for three villages.

Programme ideas emerge from core team meetings, feedback letters and requests from resource centres for the loudspeaker broadcasts. After discussing what was played last week and the responses to that, the team takes stock of the needs for the coming week. All programmes are made by the local team, known as community resource people (CRPs) and the volunteers from Budikote. Male CRPs make programmes mainly about the department, the hospital, and official, newsworthy people. The women CRPs focus more on colloquial programmes and with more female volunteers participating in the station, these programmes are becoming more prominent. For example, on Saturday evenings Namma Dhwani practically becomes an all women zone,' with women becoming technicians, anchors, and show hosts talking particularly of issues that affect them.

Feedback on the programmes is collected regularly. One interesting feedback mechanism is the letters show every Friday evening, wherein the community responds to that week's programming. Several listener groups discuss programmes and send their letters to the station so that even the illiterate listener has a chance to communicate their opinions.





*Young school girls at the annual tri-regional Karnataka festival, a new generation of youth that participate in radio (CAA)*

A total of more than 800 spoken word programmes have been made since Namma Dhwani's inception. Apart from these programmes, a database of about 115 folk songs and drama that has been recorded and documented. As a sample, the chart below describes areas of programming, which used to be followed a few years ago, the proportions remain more or less the same today.

Table 1 is a brief listenership profile of Namma Dhwani, based on feedback letters that Namma Dhwani has received from April 2003 to March 2004. I would like to specify that this is only an analysis of the letters we have received and does not render the only face of the listener. Out of the 281 letters surveyed, 76.5% have come from Self Help Groups in Budikote. There are a total of 10 Women's SHGs and 3 Men's Watershed Development Groups. Only 7.1% of the letters come from the rest of the community who do not belong to any



### Seeing the programme graphically

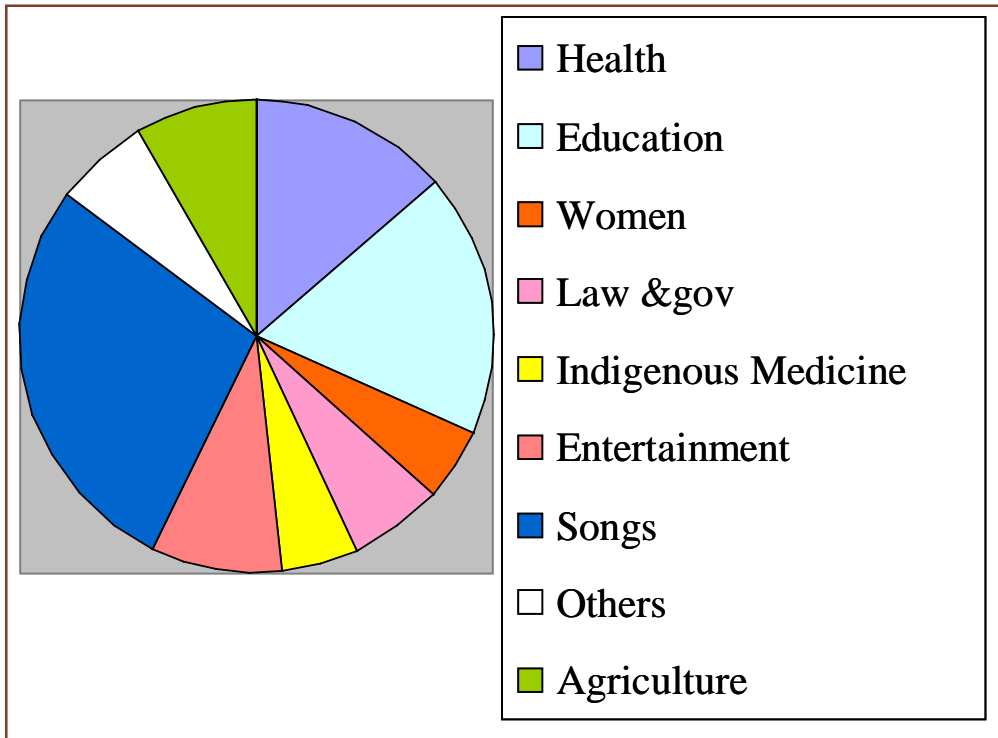


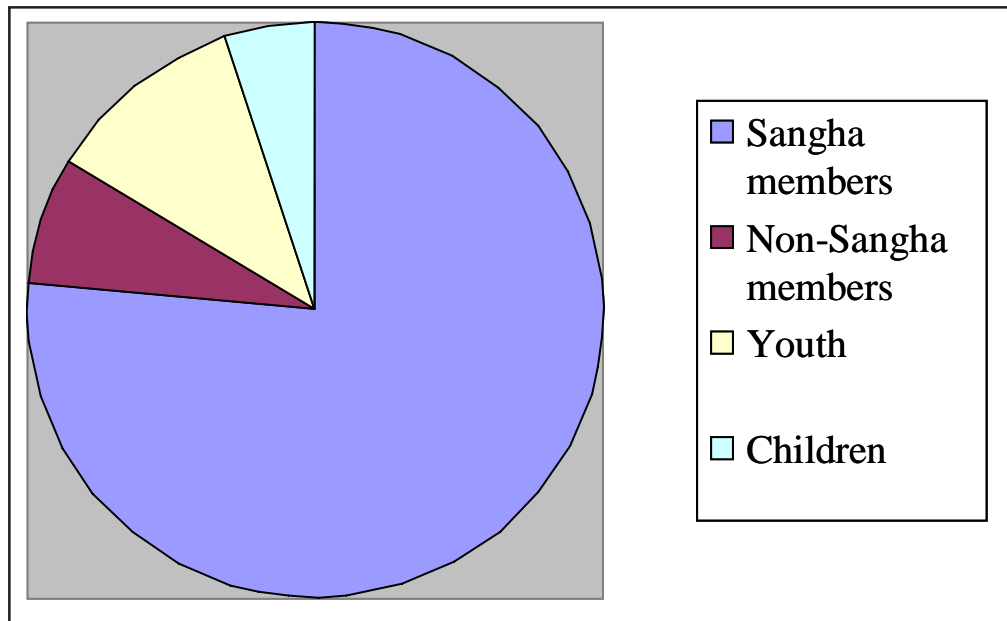
Figure 1- Programming areas- Jan, 2004

kind of community-based organisations. 11.3% of the letters come from youth from the average age group of 16-25. Children have 4.9 % of the feedback letters have come from children of the community between the age groups 8-16.

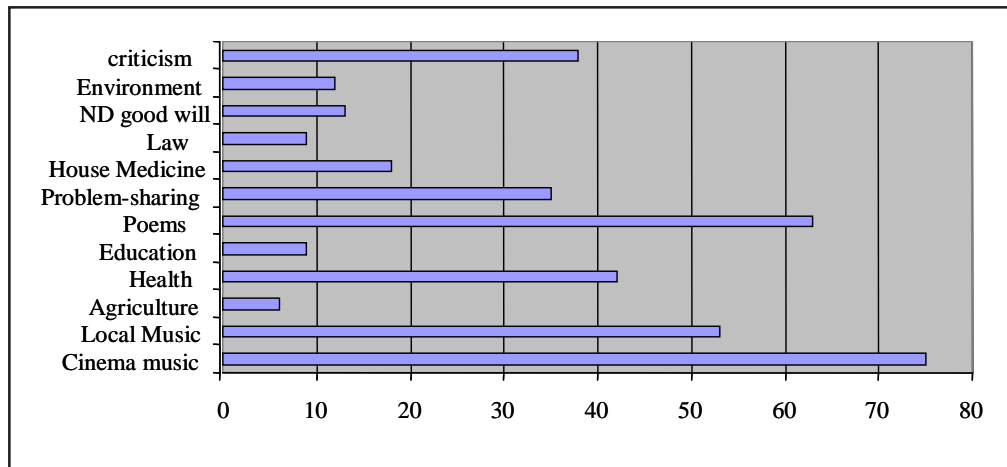
### Table 2 - Listeners' preference

Namma Dhwani in its programming schedule dedicates about 15 minutes every cable cast for cinema music. About 23.2% of the listeners wrote to request for cinema music in Kannada, Telegu, Tamil and Hindi. Not far behind is the demand for local music. This category also includes pre-recorded devotional music. Among the listeners, 16.4% of listeners wrote asking for specific local music from community members to be played. Popular among the artists are Nanda

## Listeners' profile



## Listeners' preferences



Devi, Govindappa and C. Venkatesh. All these three artists do not have any formal training in music but after participating in Namma Dhvani their talent has been appreciated by almost all listeners. Sixteen letters were written in appreciation of specific poems, drama and songs sung by C. Venkatesh.

Surprisingly, only 1.4 % of the listeners mentioned agriculture as a specific area of interest or appreciation. A tallied 13% of the listeners wrote to ask, appreciate or request a repeat of programmes related to health. In particular programmes about sex-related diseases, diabetes, stress-related problems and skin problems were appreciated.

Among the varied listeners, 2.7% wrote about education related programmes. Some of the ones that were most appreciated included parent and teacher roles in a child's education, importance of child education, etc. Requests were also made for more information about science and literature-related topics.

One of the most interesting findings of the feedback letters is the potential for poetry and writing as a means of communication. A recorded 19% of the listeners included poems in their letters to Namma Dhwani. Most of the poems are dedicated to Namma Dhwani. Some others were prosaic about nature and the environment.

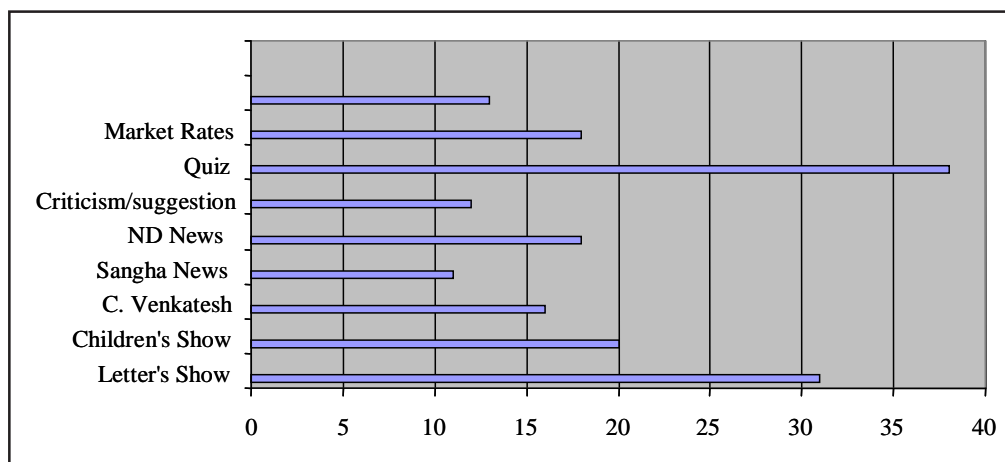
About 10.8% of the listeners wrote to share their problems about reception or cable problems. This has also become a good way for us to communicate with the people and guide them through the tuning process, or direct the cable operator for maintaining the network. About 5.5% of the listeners wrote to appreciate, ask for repeats of the house hold medicine slot. Some also wrote back with feedback about the results of their experimenting with new recipes, herbs, etc.

An appreciation for law-related programmes is evident in 2.7% of the letters indicated. These include the dowry act, consumer acts, writing a will and obtaining land records, etc.

A recorded 4% of the letters carried goodwill messages for Namma Dhwani appreciating the programmes. About 11% of

the letters carried criticism and suggestions about programming. This is very important for the producers and volunteers who take the cue from these letters to sound better and make better programmes.

A tallied 38% of the letters also contained criticism of the programmes made, suggestions of topics to be covered and requests for repeats.



**Table 3- Specific show requests**

Table 3 shows letters that request or appreciate specific programmes or series of programmes. The Letter's Show compared initially by Balu and Mangala Gowri is the most popular show of the station. The casual and humorous tone of programme is much appreciated by the members of the community, many of whom gather in houses and listen to it as a group. The quiz segment involves children and *sanghas* women. Children usually participate in general knowledge quizzes; the women *sanghas* competed with each other in a quiz about basic general knowledge and *sangha* history, rules and regulations.

Continuous assessment and analysis of specific outcomes of project activities is carried out by the researcher who lives in the community and observes behaviour patterns of the community, socio-economic conditions and power equations, particularly with regard to women.

The action researcher is building capacity in the community to document peoples' impressions on the initiative and how it has affected their lives. The focus areas of research at present are: education – formal and informal learning and ICT content in education; governance – locally relevant issues and institutions, response of local political institutions, panchayat expenditure; identifying organised and non-organised poor in terms of community-based organisations, not only in economic terms but also with regard to media.

### **Personnel**

Namma Dhwani is part of the Jagruthi Community Resource Centre in Kolar district, Karnataka. The radio station comprises three studio managers who are supported by a team of 30 volunteers: women from the self-help groups, farmer community, shopkeepers, children, youth. Volunteers are also selected from the computer class students. A group of 4 people were trained to form the production personnel. Thirteen representatives were chosen from the local self help groups to form a management committee. In due time, Namma Dhwani expanded to involve the local school children in the form of children's clubs as well. Further, Namma Dhwani also formed a Disabilities Club wherein people with disabilities assembled at Namma Dhwani every weekend to discuss their issues.

Once UNESCO came forward to support Namma Dhwani with equipment and studio support, Namma Dhwani formed linkages with the local cable operator. Soon, the Namma

Dhwani initiative was reaching out to 300 plus households in the area. The volunteer base, which soon evolved to include men, youth and children expanded in response to the growing audience coverage. By 2004, Namma Dhwani also started reaching Ambedkar Colony and Kodgurki villages through loudspeaker narrowcast. Once these communities also started listening to Namma Dhwani, people came forward to volunteer and make programmes.

In early 2005, Namma Dhwani formalised its linkage with the MYRADA-supported Jagruti Resource Centre, which has a membership of more than 300 self help groups. Each group pays around Rs. 50 as membership fees and receives a number of capacity building programmes in return. Further, the JRC also audits their books of accounts, provides linkages with local institutions like banks, hospitals, blood banks, and so on.

In early 2005, Namma Dhwani became the communication arm of JRC and merged its organisational structure with that of the resource center. This meant that there was one resource center manager, Mr. Balakrishna, who doubled up as the Namma Dhwani station manager. There are presently two studio managers, Nagaraj and Vijaya, both are from Budikote and nearby village, Banahalli. Further, another villager, Prasanna has also been hired as the ICT manager, who takes responsibility for taking computer classes at the RC. These classes mainly deal with MS Office, HTML, Photoshop, C and C++ programming, etc. The revenue earned from these classes is ploughed back in to the ND radio station through the resource centre. Membership fees from the SHGs are also used to keep the radio station running.

Every week the Namma Dhwani team holds a meeting to discuss the programme for the week and exchange ideas proposed by the studio managers for the following week. These weekly meetings are written up and presented at the monthly



management committee. The present management committee shares responsibility for the resource centre and the community radio station. Further, each of the studio managers also prepares a monthly report detailing their contribution to the community radio station and the reasons for doing their programmes. This report also contains details about the capacity building efforts for other NGOs, volunteers etc. Documentation and feedback from the community is also discussed at both staff and management committee meetings.

Namma Dhwani's present staff comprises of mainly young local community members who are not 'qualified' in the conventional sense of the word. Most of the staff have completed their basic schooling, but have not gone on to complete college due to various reasons. A common reason is that most of them do not have sufficient funds to complete their education. All the present staff at Namma Dhwani started off as volunteers and the station manager keenly monitors their performance, so as to slowly nurture them to become employees of the radio station. If successful, they are taken on a probationary basis and their capacity to handle the job is monitored. After a period of two or three months, they are permanently employed. Usually, the only 'qualification' required to become an employee for Namma Dhwani is a keen interest in serving the needs of their community, a certain aptitude towards the skills involved in speaking for radio, handling radio equipment, transferring skills to volunteers and community members, willingness to be alert and constantly and consistently identify locally relevant issues for radio programmes.

Namma Dhwani has prepared a training module especially for local volunteers. The first part of the training module starts with the concept of Community Radio and its importance to the local community. Once the volunteers are clear about this module, then their special interest areas are identified, for technical skills, or speaking for radio, or field reporting. Based

on their interests, they are handled specific tasks. If they perform well and are interested in a longer association, then the JRC takes a decision to hire them as personnel under the resource centre but assigned to the radio station.

All employed staff receive salaries every month by the resource centre. The payment structure is based on the monthly report, which the staff are required to give to the management committee. If there is a drastic shortcoming in the work output, then the personnel are given the opportunity to present their case to the management committee.

Namma Dhwani always faces the problem of maintaining a continuing volunteer force. This is due to a fairly hectic migration of the youth to the nearest city of Bangalore. Agriculture has fallen out of favour as an occupation and most young people prefer city jobs that give a consistent income. Secondly, since Namma Dhwani has a policy of not paying volunteers a salary (conveyance and actual costs are covered), most volunteers can't afford to spend too much time on making programs.

Namma Dhwani has a code of conduct for its personnel. It is similar to most other radio stations inasmuch as it outlines some of the common do's and don'ts. It is posted clearly outside the main door of the radio station.

As of now, the community radio station has only been reaching a limited number of villages, within reach of the cable and the tower speakers in some villages. Now that it has applied for a license to broadcast, it will soon be reaching a cluster of some 55 to 60 villages. Hence, Namma Dhwani is now planning to devise a set of fresh guidelines and programme policies, and to accommodate the increased participation from a larger group of people, once the audience expands.

### **Namma Dhwani Guidelines**

- No smoking on the premises
- No footwear allowed inside the studio
- No food or liquids allowed inside
- No shouting or making unnecessary noise in the premises
- Borrow equipment for field recording after informing the staff
- Maintain silence when recording is going on
- Give proper respect to the staff
- Treat all volunteers and participants with due courtesy
- All borrowed CDs or tapes must be returned within a specific time frame
- Equipment must be handled with due care
- After making the programmes or speaking on air, sign the cue sheet with your name, place, kind of programme and signature
- Volunteers should submit all bills relating to food, local transport, etc.

### **Management & Sustainability**

The management committee formulated a mission statement in very simple and clear terms detailing the goals and objectives of the radio station. These are as follows:

- To ensure that every house in Budikote receives Namma Dhwani programmes.
- To earn revenue so that Namma Dhwani is self sustainable.
- To ensure that every self-help group member in Budikote participates in Namma Dhwani programmes.
- To get a license for Namma Dhwani.

These goals and objectives are recalled and discussed in regular workshops and discussions. They form the guiding beacon for programme-making.

The management committee is responsible for the following:

- 1) Supervise management and administrative matters.
- 2) Evaluate programming and provision of regular documented feedback.
- 3) Develop encouraging programmes by women.
- 4) Recruit volunteers, with emphasis on women and youth.

The committee initially convened twice a month to evaluate programming, provide feedback and discuss management issues. The committee members are also community motivators, promoters and facilitators.

During this period, the management committee formulated a wish list. It was interesting to discover that Namma Dhwani wanted “every family in Budikote to have access to radio services in their homes, with community members not only as listeners and users, but also programmers and content producers.”

With community radio legislation in India finally seeing the light of day, Namma Dhwani is well on its way to securing a license. In November 2007, it was one of the first seven grassroots community based organisations to receive a Letter of Intent from the Government of India in this regard.

Namma Dhwani has been able to meet its running costs on its own for the past two and a half years. Realising that it could not depend on external support indefinitely, the Namma Dhwani media centre drew up a plan of action operationalising a revenue generation plan. This included:

- 1) Sale or rental of tapes to other villages and three nearby resource centres;
- 2) Training programmes in computers and audio production;

- 3) Use of the centre (digital camera, photo-copier, internet) for a fee.

Financial sustainability has been substantially enhanced by the collaboration with the Jagruthi resource centre. As the information arm of the resource centre, Namma Dhwani carries out several of its communication activities. These serve as regular income generation mechanisms which include audio/video documentation and production as well as coverage of event-based activities. In addition, Namma Dhwani has also established itself as a training and production centre for community programmes. It has participated as a media partner for several community based campaigns and movements and has produced several programmes for them which have been broadcast over All India Radio. These have included legal awareness, universal birth registration, and disabilities.

It is worthy to note that the key factor in strengthening Namma Dhwani's sustainability was the early formation of a management committee. The process began long before the station had embarked on cable casting.

### **Broadcasting: new opportunities for improvement**

The Government of India, specifically the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, promulgated the community radio policy in November 2006, permitting NGOs, agricultural universities, and educational institutions to apply for a community radio license. Namma Dhwani soon applied for a community radio license and was granted a Letter of Intent (LOI) in November 2007. It was at this point that all the project partners held a pivotal meeting to discuss the opportunities for improvement of the rural service, especially in view of the additional 55 to 60 villages to be reached in the new coverage area. This meeting was attended by the Namma Dhwani production team, management committee, MYRADA and VOICES.

One of the first priorities is to upgrade the equipment to allow Namma Dhwani to transit smoothly from cable and narrowcast to full broadcasting. At present, the hardware is outdated and cannot take advantage of the latest technological innovations in the market. New computers are needed with integrated multimedia elements and hybrid phone-in unit. Condenser and dynamic microphones together with more precise recording machines are required, especially with transmission gear.

Further, Namma Dhwani could improve its office design by moving the present ICT centre to a new space on the main floor of the building. This would provide on the upper floor, a larger studio space and a spare room for video work and training volunteers. Furthermore, the soundproofing for studio was done at low cost, using hay with risk of bugs and insects. Improved cooling and soundproofing could be achieved with a higher quality of absorbent materials.

In addition to the expanded coverage, and the plan to increase airtime from one and a half to eight hours per day, Namma Dhwani has a growing base of loyal volunteers in addition to the two studio managers, one station manager, and an ICT manager. It was estimated that a team of about 40 volunteers from a larger area be selected. They would need thorough training in the following areas:

- Sensitisation to the concept of community radio-principles, of community ownership, management, and local content;
- Importance of research and feedback in a community radio station, methods of ethnographic research wherein local community members can regularly collect feedback as well as study community reactions to the radio programmes so that positive feedback can be used to enhance the programming and negative feedback can be considered to change the programming;



- Pre-production training in field recording, preparing for interviews, scriptwriting for radio, logistics for programming, maintaining a cue sheet, stock book for equipment, and selecting the relevant formats for the local content;
- Production recording training involving recording in the studio, talking in front of the microphone, studio etiquette, programming and recording guidelines;
- Post production training including editing, mixing, use of sound effects, music, fade in and fade out.

Further, the present community radio policy also allows five minutes of local advertising for every hour of programming. To use this time to generate some revenue, Namma Dhwani needs personnel to scout for advertisements, to make the ads, and to edit them on a daily basis.

Apart from this, there were other challenges which Namma Dhwani needs to prepare for. In broadcast operations, managers and producers would need legal training about the copyright law in order to prepare guidelines on sharing content, use of music, as well as ethics in programming and advertising. Namma Dhwani shares a management committee with the resource center, and this management committee has been taking up responsibilities of the radio station, including critical decisions like programming, finances, volunteers and equipment. The partners all felt that a second round of capacity building for the management committee would be essential. This would involve the committee preparing for a longer broadcast schedule, more equipment, larger human capital base, etc. Further, the management committee also needs to now actively build linkages with local institutions for the community radio station. At present, Namma Dhwani has good linkages with hospitals, government departments, doctors, lawyers, and other experts in Budikote and a few surrounding villages. Since a

larger community would begin to tune in, the management committee should take responsibilities of building linkages with institutions in a larger area. Further, it would also be useful to build linkages with government departments at the sub district or district levels, so Namma Dhwani can offer to produce special programs on government campaigns like HIV/AIDS and in turn generate limited revenue for itself. This would in turn contribute to its sustainability.

In sum, the meeting sought to anticipate all the changes to be brought about by switching from cable to full broadcast.

## **Reviews and Researches**

Ever since Namma Dhwani was set up as a tripartite partnership between the community of Budikote, MYRADA and VOICES, there has been a keen interest in the project in terms of research. In 2000, there was only a two-tiered structure of broadcasting in India, public radio and private commercial radio. Since then, Namma Dhwani has emerged as one of the key initiatives which could demonstrate the feasibility of a third tier in Indian radio and media, in general. It generated a fair amount of interest in the academic sphere as well. In early 2002, the Queensland University of Technology (QUT) and UNESCO entered into a partnership with Namma Dhwani for conducting Ethnographic Action Research (EAR) to see how community radio can impact on poverty reduction. This, in turn, was integrated in the Information and Communication Technology for Poverty Reduction (ICTPR).

This has benefited Namma Dhwani, especially in the area of community participation, feedback, programming and organisational structure. The most recent is Local Information Networks (Social and Technological Considerations) of which this chapter is an abridged and adapted version.

## Conclusion

In microcosmos, Namma Dhwani represents a model for setting up community radio. It is deeply sown in a rural village and works within and through the local information networks already operating in that village, particularly through the *sanghas*, or self-help groups. It has the tutoring of two NGOs, VOICES in Bangalore which coaches and guides the development of the radio station along participatory, community orientations; and MYRADA, a grassroots organisation based in Budikote and the Jagruthi Resource Centre which shares the same building with Namma Dhwani and also co-manages and administers the station. UNESCO assistance has also been critical for provision of equipment, technical advice and overall support to the training and research activities benefiting Namma Dhwani and a number of other projects as well.

### Understanding local information networks

For local initiatives to be successful, people using local information networks need to be aware of the social context in which they operate. This enables them to be sensitive not only to local beliefs and traditions, but also to local power structures.

A community multimedia centre such as Namma Dhwani needs to know how members of its community relate to each other socially and spatially. Namma Dhwani learned this lesson when participants realised that making the centre a woman-only zone on Saturday nights had failed to consider community constraints on women's mobility. The LIN researchers then went out to investigate the relationship between the *sanghas* (self-help groups) and their neighbourhood network. Focusing upon one *sangha* in particular, Navjyoti, we were able to verify that all the women lived within a neighbourhood, as

consisting of just five intersecting or conjoined streets. We then asked why the women lived where they did, and their answers revealed that most had only moved there subsequent to marriage (most *sangha* members are married women). In other words, the basis of association between these women was not so much residence as the fact that their husbands belonged to the same families.

Out of seventeen women in the *sangha*, fourteen belonged to one of three extended families (patrilines) based around related males. Seven households belonged to the first family and three to each of the two. The four remaining families belonged to lower caste groups and other than through the *sangha*, had little interaction with the three main families.

The exercise of ‘mapping’ the Navjyoti sangha was useful for several reasons. It allowed us to see how neighbourhood networks are themselves manifestations of more pervasive family networks based upon kinship. Second, it exposed dominant family groupings that might impact upon power relations within an information network, whether to facilitate or hinder the flow of information. And finally, it revealed the incorporation of low status minority groups within the network, albeit that the relationship between individual members, across caste, is unlikely to be horizontal, and this in turn could conceivably affect the flow of information within this network.

Having a grasp of the local social ‘map’ is therefore imperative when trying to involve local people in a community initiative such as this. Vanaja, a second-year bachelor degree student, maintains that even though she is from a neighbouring village that cannot receive Namma Dhwani’s cablecasts, the Centre nonetheless provides an outlet for her creativity. Being a part of Namma Dhwani gives her the space and freedom to innovate.

“People still point the finger at me and question my motives for wanting to come here, because they don’t like boys and girls mingling. But if I stop coming, I am the one who loses, not them” (Nair: 2006).

## The challenges to community radio in India

By Ashish Sen and Ramnath Bhat



*Vijaya, studio manager, hosts several programmes and implements policy on programmes and behaviour on radio. She is only 22! (CAA)*

Tossed about in the wake of government guidelines, the initial euphoria to develop community radio, has since given way to substantial concerns in the face of slow progress and problematic implementation. In some ways, the legislation has produced more questions than solutions regarding the course of community radio in the country. While there are no easy answers, it is evident that the current stage of consolidation poses challenges that question both the policy and its implementation.

The current policy subsumes as a single category both campus radio under educational institutions and community radio supported by NGO applicants. However, do campus and grassroots communities reflect the same identity? Can they? The question is particularly significant in the context of community ownership and management. Ownership and management are critical for community radio to operate. But while campus radio transmits programmes by the students, the radio station's management and ownership does not rest with the community of students who are transient in the university. On the other side of the coin, some advocates of community radio have articulated their concern regarding the possibility of undue domination by or influence of an NGO over the rural community.

The cost and access of appropriate technology for community radio poses yet another challenge. Currently, transmitter and antenna costs articulated by authorised dealers like BEL and WEBEL range between Rs 4 lakhs to 5 lakhs (US\$10,000 to US\$12,500). This amount is considerably more than global market prices and does not conform to the spirit of the policy, which underscores that community radio is a voice for the voiceless. Prices for equivalent material in Italy, United States, China, Indonesia and the Philippines are far more modest. This overpricing is all the more outrageous because of the potential market for transmitters, modestly estimated at 5,000 in this initial period.

Concerning transmission, the policy permits a transmitter power of 100 watts. However, given the diversity of topography in the country, this seriously cuts back the coverage of FM transmission over mountainous and hilly regions like Kutch in Gujarat (where one of the first community based initiatives in the country was started). The fact that mobile broadcasting is not permitted poses yet another limitation: it will not be possible to give live coverage of cultural events in remote villages.



A further constraint is linked to the 'age' of the NGO applicant. Currently, the policy permits NGOs that have been in existence for three years to be eligible for licenses, presuming that this duration is long enough to judge the track record of the applicant. However, in areas vulnerable to floods and famines, there are credible and community based NGOs that have come up only very recently. The aid and disaster relief NGOs in the tsunami hit areas in South India are cases in point. And in other cases, suppose a community itself wishes to create its own NGO or community association to own and run the station. Would they have to wait three years to show their track record?

Finally, a substantial challenge pertains to awareness and understanding of the function and potential of radio in a rural community. Despite consultations and workshops that have taken place in different parts of the country, community radio has yet to take on the dimensions of a truly mass movement like the right to information struggle in the country. Admittedly, a movement needs time to grow. But in addition to time, it is necessary to put into place efficient mechanisms to build community radio in the whole country, proportional to the size and needs of each community. At present, the list of applicants for radio licenses are heavily skewed towards educational institutions, and very much less for grassroot communities. Part of this is due to the earlier eligibility of campus radio in 2003. But the main reason for this lacuna is the fact that many communities are totally unaware of the potential of radio, its practice and advantages for the people.

In this fragile context, it seems all the more logical and all the more necessary to create a countrywide network. Early in 2007, a few months after the community radio policy guidelines were announced, the Community Radio Forum was formed. However, almost a year later, the Forum is still only in the final stages of registration. This slow process has impeded its growth, scale and lobbying potential.

The relevance of a membership-driven community radio forum in the country cannot be underestimated. If community radio is to reach its proper scale in the country, it needs a legitimate network that can lobby, influence policy and build strategic alliances with key stakeholders. The Community Radio Forum provides such a platform, but the pace of its work requires deliberate acceleration if demand is to be commensurate with supply.



# 6

## Project Manager's Notes

by Louie Tabing



*We were riding the jeep one afternoon, returning from Calamba in Laguna province and we happened to pass a wayside market near Tanay, Rizal. A lady was selling bananas, guavas and lanzones. Louie quickly whipped out his tape recorder and microphone – he had a story for tomorrow morning's programme. (CAA)*

While repairing a buzz saw, it is difficult if not impossible to read the manual to understand how it works, while the saw is still running in your hands. Similarly, while working to set up community radio it is a rarity to be able to sit back and write down one's notes. It's like repairing a buzz saw. You have to keep on going.

We are fortunate to have this set of notes literally written on airplanes, waiting rooms at airports, a coffee stand at a bus stop, and burning the midnight oil. It is the cross fertilisation of having encountered community radio operators all over Asia and swapping notes and seeing how it works on their side. It is also the fruit of setting up over 24 local stations in the Philippines in a diversity of situations –remote islands, isolated mountain towns, coastal villages. Louie offers his practical hindsight on several important issues, but particularly the philosophy of participation, long-term sustenance, and dealing with people.

## **Participatory radio**

Participation is the essence of community radio. Participation means involving the local community in decision-making, the day-to-day operations of the station, and ensuring that the station addresses community needs.

When locally-based radio tackles people's concerns, but mainly as perceived by an external operator or NGO, it is not truly community radio. The community itself must operate the station. Wide participation by members of the community in every aspect of its operation is what makes community radio distinct from all other types of radio. It contributes to a dynamic communication cycle that leads to people empowerment. Ordinary citizens must feel that they own and control the facility, its programmes, its producers and its ideals.

It can often happen that the very concept and the reasons for community radio emanate, not from the community, but from an external group or NGO, a manager or an initiator. This is the risk in some situations in India where the law stipulates that the license to broadcast must be presented by an NGO with at least three years experience. The law does not provide for communities to directly submit a request for a license, unless that community has formed an NGO that has operated for three years. In Bangalore, however, both VOICES and MYRADA

have worked to involve the people of Budikote in the conception and operations of Radio Namma Dhwani. This station promises to be thoroughly community based.

Otherwise, even if the concept of community radio is well presented, the urgings for participation might be conceived by the community participants only as task sharing, but not as empowerment. If people are simply asked by the facilitators what they expect from the latter, participation could be construed only as an ‘assigned obligation.’ Thus, the animators or the NGO must be able to actively involve the people in the process of conceptualisation so that participation itself is not seen as an imposition. Neither should the general lack of skills, time and resources of the participants be allowed to inhibit participation.

The community itself is the radio’s most important resource. Through their participation, community members come to develop a sense of ownership of the station, which in turn helps to ensure the sustainability of the station over the long term. Community participation also helps to ensure that the station is responsive to the needs of the people it serves through its programming.

Attaining and sustaining a dynamic level of participation are major challenges to the initiators and to the radio management who will eventually assume the challenge of keeping volunteers enthusiastic. The management board, together with the station manager and regular participants, should pursue an unrelenting drive for citizen involvement in the radio. Together with the members of the community themselves, they should develop practical methodologies that cater to the needs and disposition of the audience.

Participation is also about finding out which members or sectors of the community are not active, and knowing the reason of their inertia. If one village district, or religious group,





*Everyone, even children should have a way to participate in programmes.  
(Madanpohara, UNESCO)*

or marginalised peasant, caste or tribe is not sufficiently involved, efforts must be taken to make them participate in the station's programming and management. This means directly approaching groups within those communities, through interviews or the preparation of a feature on the group, or assigning a regular slot for them. It will take a determined and persistent endeavor by the community radio organiser, animator, management and staff to sustain a high amount of quality involvement among its audience.

If the community has a sense of ownership of the radio, developed from a constant and regular participation, then it is more likely to succeed. If anyone is considering setting up a community station, the first thing he should do is to begin a consultation process with the community about the idea, and ask them how they would like to shape their station. Once the station is up and running, pro-actively promoting community participation should be a continuing process.

## Participation in management

To handle station operations, a management group has to be organised. Members of the management group and the core of programme makers must be selected in a democratic manner. They assume responsibility to the community, but it is not intended that they monopolise decision-making. They should devise ways of obtaining, processing and adopting ideas from the public.



*In Budikote, India, Vijaya interviews the Panchayat leader. (Rajiu in Budikote)*

In most communities we start with a group of 7 to 15 people who serve on the management board or council for a term of one or two years. The members of the council are chosen from the key sectors of the community (peasants, women, youth, traders, the religious, local government, and educators). In many instances, these representatives are already the elected or designated head of existing sectoral organisations. While one aims at a reasonable balance, it is

virtually impossible to obtain perfect symmetry in representation. Members of the council are expected to speak for the whole community, rather than simply promote their own parochial interests. The sectoral representatives are encouraged to consult regularly their constituencies and members on issues concerning radio operations.

At times, such 'sectoral' representation can be tricky and deceiving. While all the sectoral representatives are present and active, it is possible that a certain family, party, denomination or commercial group actually dominates the overall composition of the council. The initiators of the community radio project must size up the social and political dynamics in order to understand the alliances at work, thus to achieve a more effective proportional representation.

Long experience has also shown the wisdom of rotating the principal officers, both in order to avoid domination by one group, and to contribute to the training of new management and leaders.

### **Participation in programming**

The most sensitive area of involvement is in the programme making activities of the radio. This is the frontline area of service. The quality and quantity of information, news, commentaries, analysis or even entertainment that the station renders, makes or breaks a station.

Training is part of the process to develop the skills of volunteer programme makers. And thus, finding and selecting trainees from the community is an important process. Regular programme makers usually come from the cream of the crop of the community, although they are not necessarily those with high educational background or with superior social standing. As in the selection of members of the management board, regular programmers must come from different sectors and

interests. We usually follow these criteria in selecting programme makers:

- unquestionable moral standing in the community
- good oral communication ability
- sincere interest in the affairs of the masses
- availability to perform regular duties
- pleasant on-air personality

Additional programmers' qualifications may include writing and analytical skills, especially for writers and staff not announcing on air. Availability to attend regular duties is crucial. For this, it is important that volunteers are able to determine what they can contribute in terms of time, talent, resources or services. Unlike in a professional commercial set up, the community radio cannot impose a uniform level of involvement on all volunteers. But commitment to regularity and reliability is essential.



*A police officer runs a programme on traffic and civic duty in Laurel, Batangas, Philippines. (CAA)*

The audience too must be involved in programme making, particularly in providing feedback information to the station. A feedback system can be set up using letters to the station or to its hosts, text (SMS), telephone calls, surveys and interviews. Discussion programmes, forums, field interviews, man-on-the-street interviews and open-line telephone patch discussions are common formats where ordinary people are brought in to give their reactions and ideas. Studio visits by guests as well as outside production sessions should be encouraged. The involvement of the audience in decision making, which includes creating the title of a programme, choosing the programme co-hosts, serving as judges in a singing contest or determining the winner in a debate all contribute to bringing about a sense of “belongingness.”

A crucial point in encouraging programme participation is to present radio as a simple means of expression, people talking to people, rather than a skill that needs technical or professional training. To set unattainable and inconsequential standards of quality will unnerve those who could contribute most to using radio as an opportunity for empowerment and self expression.

### **Participation in operational aspects**

One of the reasons that the community sustained interest in the DXOI Olutanga station in southern Philippines was the way people became involved in building the station. Some people contributed their labor to build the small studio. Others offered materials, while some donated money. There were also households that cooked food for the builders. Fund raising activities such as raffle draws were held in support of the station.

Aside from the management and programme-making role, equipment operators constitute an important group of



## **Introducing radio to ordinary people**

(One of the Tambuli training modules)

To be a broadcaster, you have to pass three courses, Community Radio 101, 102 and 103. It is a 3-minute course!

**Com Radio 101** – What is radio? Radio is simply people talking to people. Community radio is simply giving the opportunity for people to talk to a wider audience and to gain easy access to a more extensive array of ideas on issues that affect them.

No one should be afraid to use radio. I was in broadcasting for almost 4 decades now. I still know little about the electronics side of radio. I still cannot explain to you how the voice in the studio is processed and passed on to a radio receiver hundreds or thousands of kilometers away. All I can tell you is, just speak as if you are talking to someone in front of you.

**Com Radio 102** – If you are to do a radio program, be you, be new and be true. While you may be inspired by the many influential voices on air, try not to mimic those personalities. Don't go too far from who you are. Just be yourself, and improve the talents you have.

Say something that is new every day, in every program. Find something that your audience is interested in and introduce new concepts, ideas or at least a new way of looking at things.

**Com Radio 103** – Your biggest responsibility is to uplift the lives of individuals, families and the community. You must strive to open the listener's eyes to useful realities and opportunities.

One inspirational exhortation from the Bible is the 1st letter of Paul to the Corinthians, Chapter 13: "You may be able to speak the languages of men and even of angels, but if you don't have love, you are just like a noisy gong and a clanging bell. You may have the gift of inspired preaching. You may be able to move mountains, you may even give up yourself to be burnt but if you don't have love, it does you no good."

A true broadcaster must become a real part of the lives of his or her community and people.



volunteers or partly paid staff. They may be graduates of electronics or technology courses, or simply enthusiasts who have a keen sense and know how to operate technical machines.

Other roles and tasks in community radio include:

- proposal writing to partners and donors;
- soliciting for donations;
- securing and renewing the license to broadcast;
- equipment repair and maintenance;
- designing and carrying out audience research and surveys;
- designing the station's logo;
- being informants.

Organising a listeners' club is one way by which loyalty and involvement to the radio can be achieved. Radio Madanpokhara in Nepal developed a network of listener clubs with strong participation from women, farmers and the youth. The listeners clubs make an annual action plan to stimulate creative and sustainable development work in their locality. Members of the community participate through a wide range of different forums, meeting each month to decide on radio programmes based on the needs of their communities. The station also developed a community audio tower project run by local women. Wide participation is assured among listeners.

### **Neighborhood and village production**

One of the most successful programme formats for encouraging participation at the village level in the Philippines is the *Barangayan sa Himpapawid* (the village on the air). The villages use their own karaoke song playback machine. This is usually a large stand-alone console containing two cassette tape recorders, an AM/FM radio receiver, a loudspeaker, and one or

two microphones. Mainly designed as a sing-along system, we used the *karaoke* as a village production tool and public address system. Since many villagers already own *karaoke*, the Project did not even have to purchase this.



*In Laurel on the shores of Lake Taal in the Philippines, a very small barangayan has their own karaoke and prepares the Sunday programme. (CAA)*

When we first introduced this method of village production, we did not have to teach people very much about the techniques of the *karaoke*. We just gave recommendations on how to operate the *karaoke* more effectively for broadcast (cueing audio cassettes, for example, in order to skip the 4 or 5

seconds of silence before the music). We needed to remind them that they are not seen, but only heard; hence visual presentations such as dance numbers have to be described orally. We also had to urge the host to maintain a continuous narration, and to avoid long gaps or delays in the production. The most significant advance was making use of a sequence guide that stipulated the order and the length of each of the numbers in minutes and seconds.

*Karaoke* produced programmes are then sent to the station for airing on assigned dates. Villages take turns producing programmes for the community radio. While many use the *karaoke* for singing and musical programmes, the sequence guide also included discussion of local issues, moral messages and practical tips. Some villagers talked about herbal concoctions, menus and problems with planting new rice varieties, the lack of desks or classrooms, the issue of teachers who have gone on an extended leaves. Town leaders are more alert now, for the townsfolk may ask them questions on-air during the *barangayan*. In this simple way, radio with the *karaoke* has become an empowering tool for the villagers.

Community radio thus evolves on the kind and amount of participation of its people. And this participation is itself a form of communication, the first step in the development process, leading to empowerment.

### **Keeping community radio going**

Sustainability refers to the capacity of the radio station to carry on a sound operation for a desired duration or for a reasonably long period. By way of corollary, the word sustainability also refers to the community radio's ability to earn money, which will support its operation and allow it to undertake the upgrading of its facilities and the renewal of staff

and programmes. Nonetheless, the station's viability must also be seen in terms of the stability of the station's internal organisation and its harmonious relations with the community.

All of this depends, of course, on the country where the radio is situated and the laws that govern the operations of community radio. In the Philippines, the current social and political dispositions towards democratic media are positive factors for sustainability. In India and Nepal, and some other countries, laws that limit the power of transmitters or the percentage of advertising in community radio stations tend to reduce the possibilities of expanding community media and earning from the commercial sponsors. Furthermore, in some countries the distinction between community media and commercial media is not always clear, and hence there can often be an overlapping of concepts and misapplication of the law. In a very few countries, national legislators have seen fit to reserve one tenth of the FM spectrum per region of 150 square kilometres, for community radio frequencies. But everywhere that governments refuse to recognise community radio and disregard the principles of national democratic media, community radio will have a most difficult time. Clearly, there is need for legislation that not only protects community radios but that promotes growth and the possibilities of earning finances, both from national and international sources.

The community's capacity to participate and support their community radio facility is a crucial factor towards maintaining its operation. Many radio stations have died a natural death simply because the real stakeholders — the people — have not been involved. If the community is not given the chance to participate in the radio project's inception, programme preparation, decision-making, operations, responsibility-taking and assessment, its target audience will likely talk grudgingly about it and perhaps wish that the station disappears. Hence those very small projects, like each listener contributing a

handful of paddy rice per month in Madanpokhara, Nepal, or the *piso-piso* (only one peso) campaign in Olutanga Island, Philippines, though financially modest, are very important community-wise.

Sustainability also hinges on the soundness of the institution or organisation handling the community radio as well as on the integrity of the personalities handling the station's management, programming and finances. This involves the availability of professional and technical resources. For example, spare parts and technical assistance must be easily available in any way possible.

Observers, would-be-operators and cynics of community radio often wrongly consider mainstream media as the one and only model, and then they ask the question of financial sustainability of community radio. In that context, can a small non-profit station survive? Of course not, or with great difficulty. Where will it get funds, unless it is supported by the government? Who will pay the salaries of employees? Can it compete with commercial and professional broadcast outfits for listeners? Will community folks listen to a bunch of non-professionals? Will there be enough programme materials? The misgivings simply abound. But the premises are wrong. Community radio does not necessarily have to be commercial or supported solely by government.

In the late 1990s, during a community media international seminar in Manila, Meriam Aranas, then president of Olutanga Island Media Development Foundation in Zamboanga del Sur (now Sibugay), gave an interesting response on this issue. When asked about the capacity of DXOI to continue operating without external help, she replied, "Please do not think that DXOI is about to fall apart. We are far from that. We will continue to operate the station because we need it. Yes, we are seeking external support in order to expand our operation and

upgrade our facilities. We also need it to be independent from vested political and commercial interests. But it does not mean that without outside help, we will stop operating the simple facility. There are unlimited human resources on our island. The people on the island will keep us going.”

Aranas further elaborated that they had to raise funds primarily to pay the monthly electric bills, to buy supplies, to pay for repairs and transportation. But these are taken care of by the *piso-piso* (one peso each) contributions from the people. DXOI maintains a modest level of operations that does not require a staggering budget. This is one of the most significant decisions for any station management — that of determining an affordable operational mode that will not cause severe strain on management and participants.

One should resist the temptation to abuse the imagination by comparing community radio operations with those of commercial or mainstream broadcasting stations, where every aspect of operation, from salaries and supplies, to communication and transportation is budgeted and paid for. A station can shorten broadcast hours to the affordable and necessary just to ensure priority programmes and community news. The scale of operation will determine how much electricity is consumed. The air conditioning system might actually demand higher power than all the rest of the equipment in the station. Why then should the station use an expensive cooling unit if the radio is on the air only for a few hours? An electric fan should be enough to cool both the operators and equipment. In colder localities, there is no need for the cooling gadget, especially during morning hours.

The management should determine the number of daily broadcast hours, types of equipment to acquire and operate, number of personnel and the type of programmes based on what it can reasonably support. One station may opt to



broadcast only one or two hours of daily news and public service, while another runs a 16-hour programme with drama, field reports and documentaries while maintaining a staff of fifty people. Everything depends on the available personnel, resources, needs and priorities.

There are many systems of community radio ownership and operational modes based on circumstances and legalities of the country or state. The sources of support and fundraising strategies are correspondingly designed according to the station's management status may it be a cooperative, a foundation, a school, the local government, a church group or an association.

There is no denying that financial sustainability is paramount in the operation of a radio station. But there are countless ways for community radio to earn its keep. Among the current practices that work are the following:

***Institutional support*** Most community radio stations are under the auspices of private, government or church institutions where an independent group of management and programme making staff are given the elbow room to make decisions. In most cases the station's operational requirements are partly supported by the institution. These stations, while strictly non-commercial, may allow limited institutional sponsorship of their programmes by advertisers and by business or non-business entities who desire to gain community goodwill. Without having to air direct advertisement, the local commercial establishments are helped by way of announcements such as "The following programme is supported by Aling Petra's Bakery located at the corner of Rizal and Mabini street. They produce the Vitamin A-fortified bun." In turn, the bakery may offer a subsidy of several hundred pesos (rupiahs or dollars) a month for the operation of the station.

Stations can also enter into contractual arrangements with international agencies, non-governmental organisations and business entities. It can actually stimulate commerce in the area without having to violate its non-commercial status. For instance, the announcement of the demand for certain agricultural or fishery product in the area may be of service to traders. In turn, traders can offer to pay or donate some money to the station. Some other stations actually charge a fee for airtime users such as the church, NGOs, commercial entities or government units.

Other local institutions, NGOs, civic associations, churches and local government units can be sources of support in return for the radio serving their communication needs. The local government, for one, will benefit most from radio broadcasts on their campaigns for tax collection, health, agriculture, and registration. They can be invited to allocate a yearly subsidy for the station's operation without compromising the integrity of the station's editorial decisions.

***Outright commercial advertisement*** While the commercial sponsorship of community programmes may strike a discordant note, the radio can accept commercial advertising if this is allowed under the country's broadcasting laws and is in coherence with its license to broadcast. However, the station should be judicious in its advertising policy and operation. Among the advertisers that might give negative influences on the community's radio are vendors or distributors of alcoholic drinks, mining companies known for illegal pollution practices, loggers violating ecological and environmental norms and practices, transport companies or sea vessels engage in dynamite or cyanide fishing, gambling lords, loggers, or smugglers. Messages from these sources would normally run counter to the mandate and policy of a community station concerned about its youth and environment. What the station could gain in money, would be lost in drunkenness and pollution.

***Shares in cooperatives*** A community radio can be owned by a multi-purpose cooperative or by a single-purpose media cooperative whose only purpose is the operation of the community radio. One advantage is that it can officially engage in money-making ventures of various forms. A cooperative type of operation is an ideal proposal because of its social purpose, wide base of ownership and its potential to engage in commercial activities and especially as a long-term financial source for the station. As a cooperative, it can place an application to operate a commercial station, wherein the profit will not go into the pockets of individuals and stockholders, but into the resources of the station. However, organising a cooperative requires a rather high level of financial skill and experience, and is often considered too complicated to apply to community radio. Nonetheless, it is worthy to note that the very first community radio in Sutatenza Colombia in 1947 did set up its own cooperative and that was the beginning of the little mountainous town's thrust for development.

***Membership fees*** In some countries, community radio operators require a subscription fee from its listeners, or it forms listeners clubs each of which contributes to the maintenance of the station. Members are offered special incentives, identification cards, prizes, or privileges such as the right to receive transcripts of popular programmes, free announcements, discounts in CDs, discounts in seminars and member certificates. The station promotes membership campaign on-the-air through its programmes. Radio Lumbini in Nepal runs a programme called Friends of Radio Lumbini wherein a member pays an annual fee of NPR 100 or US\$1.30. Backed by the businessmen of the town and its broad membership in the city and the surrounding districts, Radio Lumbini now owns its own three story building with a large multimedia workshop on the main floor and offices to rent, to cover building costs and operations.



*Collecting fees from listener clubs and with the generosity of businessmen, Radio Lumbini now owns its own building. (CAA)*

**Community donations** The station may seek voluntary donations from individuals, families and the community, which it serves. Outside of raising revenue, these donations strengthen the sense of ownership among the listeners towards the radio. There are various strategies to collect donations. One station in Central Philippines originated a programme called *pakalansing* (sound of fortune). On air, good fortune is wished for the donors while rattling a glass jar containing coin donations. Another station encourages well-wishers and on-air greeters to include in their request some contribution to cover electric costs. Some stations put a donation box in public places, banks, churches, and shops or just outside the radio station. Institutional donors may be given incentives, certificates and corresponding acknowledgements.

Donations take the form of cash or gifts in kind, such as agricultural or fishery products, tapes, CDs, coffee, office supplies and food. The proceeds can either be for sale, auction or use by the station and the staff. Other donations in the form of professional services may have a more practical function. In-kind donations, in place of cash, are often convenient and low-cost ways for individuals or business establishments to support the community radio.

***Institutional levying*** Some community radio stations are affiliated with an academic or a church organisation which charges a levy from students and members to support the radio stations. This idea of a levy charged either to individuals or on the basis of financial transactions could be adapted to suit many local circumstances.

***Professional broadcasting services*** The station staff, usually consisting of the cream of the crop in the community, can assess its available talent and capacities, which can be offered for a fee. This can be production of programmes, spots or jingles for playing in the radio station, organising or hosting of community events, spearheading or participating in social campaigns such as those pertaining to environment, health, education, tax drive or agriculture.

***Institutional campaigns*** Many national and international organisations have campaigns that require the use of media and community radio. Through a memorandum of agreement, these institutions can finance airtime and a production fee, as well as other services rendered by the radio station that helps them to meet their objectives. In some instances, organisations under the UN system, aid agencies and other international groups allocate financial assistance not only for the specific campaign, but for capacity building of the community radio.

***Classified ads*** A practical service that the station can offer the community is advertising, be it personal, business, or

service oriented. It can specify certain charges for varied services. Obituaries and public service announcements can also be a source of income for many community radios.

**Business project operation.** Some stations that are not restricted by their license or the broadcasting laws of the country, could engage directly in business ventures such as operating a multimedia centre, a radio repair shop, a store, a computer shop, a rice trading center or an eatery, or offer paid scanning or photocopy services. The services rendered may be discussed on-the-air while providing practical entrepreneurial insights.

***Sale of Airtime*** Aside from selling advertising spots or announcements, one of the biggest assets of community radios is its airtime. A station could conceivably sell air time in blocks of fifteen minutes, 30 minutes or a whole hour. This is especially a valued asset during election time. It must be stressed, however, that a block of time might be sold to a third party, the station is still responsible for whatever content is broadcast! Laws or other policies of the station must not be infringed upon by the buyer nor should the programme go against the principles and aims of the station. Hence, prior to concluding any sale of airtime to third parties, the station management must assure itself that the external operator is not going to air messages or information contrary to the philosophy and policies of the station. It is best if this is put in writing in any such sale contract of airtime. Management must be particularly watchful at election time, when aside from seeking to avoid obnoxious candidates, one must also be careful to allot time equally to all parties.

***Organising and conducting community events*** By bringing together members of a community for events, the community radio can raise funds in a variety of ways: singing competitions, beauty pageants, spelling bees and even dances,



concerts, garage sales, band shows, exhibits, agricultural fairs, movie premiers or benefit shows. These can be organized by the station and entrance fees can be collected from both the exhibitors and the audience. In these gatherings, souvenirs, photos, key chains, T-shirts and other products can be sold as an additional income. Commercial sponsors can also be invited to provide some assistance in terms of giveaways and prizes. Co-promotions may also be done, wherein the community radio co-produces the event with other groups allowing both to have a share in the profit.

*Auction of donated goods* Some individuals and organizations provide goods or services to a media group instead of money. The donated items can be auctioned to raise funds.



*In Laurel, the people, old and young generally like to sing and perform in public. (CAA)*

***Karaoke sing-along service*** In some countries, *karaoke* is a very popular form of entertainment. It can be conducted over the radio or on a sing-along system where singers pay to sing live along with a playback machine. Because it is broadcast on the air, the whole community listens. It can be offered to certain associations, groups, villages and neighborhoods wishing to have some fun while providing a chance to develop local talents.

***Selling programme materials*** Some stations, especially those that have organised cultural or historical events, have also sold souvenir materials such as tapes, CDs, prints and transcriptions. Participants who would like to have a keepsake of their interviews and performances are prospective buyers. If there is a demand, some radio programmes may be transcribed and reproduced for sale. The station can partner with commercial stores, NGOs and government organisations in marketing these items. Promotional items like T-shirts, stickers, hats, bags, vests, pens or even radios or TVs are not necessarily big money makers, but if they carry the logo or emblem of the station, they serve as an institutional reminder.

***Seminars, workshops and training courses*** The community radio can organise training courses, seminars, educational trips and skills improvement on various topics and themes such as goat raising, meat processing, silk skin printing, computer programming, stage acting, painting, voice lessons, guitar playing, virgin coconut oil making, and fruit preservation, among others. Skilled staff and experts from various private and government stations may be tapped to conduct the capacity development activity. A reasonable fee can be charged to the participants.

***Grants from foundations and international donors*** National and international donors are increasingly aware of the importance of community media in development and

governance. Although donor grants are often substantial which is relative to other sources of revenue, this is never taken as a sustainable source of income. Grants, while effective in providing start-up funds, may breed dependence on an unsustainable source of operational support. Grants must be used to establish income generating potential and to build the capacity of the organisation towards self-reliance and financial sustainability.

***Equipment grant*** There are broadcast institutions in advanced countries that, in the process of upgrading their facilities, wish to donate their used equipment to community radios in developing countries. While gifts of new or used equipment do not directly contribute to the finances of the community radio, wise selection of such donations can improve the capacity of the station. At one time, Radio Sweden was giving away a hundred 10 watt FM exciters. These are the basic working horse of all FM transmission.

***Nationals residing and working elsewhere*** In many countries, a community may have many of its members living and working abroad. Such external groups are waiting to be tapped. The community radio can organise reunions or homecoming events and maintain contact with them through letters or e-mails. The station can compile a listing of these potential contributors. It can also initiate an electronic or printed newsletter for these non-resident natives.

***Other schemes*** The list of revenue generating schemes can never be exhaustive. Others worth mentioning are:

- space, equipment and studio rental
- professional services as host or master of ceremonies in community events or as judges in contests
- raffle draws
- sale of radio receiver sets

- communication services – fax, internet, printing, scanning, photo copying, telephone, etc
- media consultancy
- communication students internship
- audio and audio visual production
- endowment funds

One crucial point in being able to access external resources is to find someone in the community who has the ability and willingness to write project proposals and solicitation requests. He/she would be an important resource.

Community radios around the world have sustained their operations largely because of the presence of enthusiastic community support and volunteerism. The station must be able to show that it is serving the community and is not being burdened by the demands of the community. It must also demonstrate its willingness to provide services without having to be paid.

### **Technical difficulties**

Like any electronic appliance, the technical equipment in the station is not immune to breakdown. As most community radios are normally installed in remote communities, finding spare parts, repair, substitute equipment and technical expertise is a problem.

Faced with this reality, we always try to procure and recommend locally available equipment rather than imported goods. With locally acquired equipment, after-purchase servicing and purchase of spare parts are easier to accomplish. While foreign-made products may be of better quality and reliability, breakdown is not easy to solve.

A community radio project needs to find competent technicians and provide them with adequate training. A

common problem in hinterland communities is the lack or the unsteady supply of electricity. Aside from lightning, power fluctuation is often the cause of transmitter and equipment breakdown. One can also consider alternative power sources—wind, sun and diesel generators. These will require additional initial capital investment.

### **The customs agent's reward**

We had a curious experience when a batch of 500 solar-dynamo receiver sets was reported to be at the Customs office. These receivers were to be distributed as a handy tool among the sites where there was limited electricity and very few radio sets. The multi-power source receivers, pretty cheap at US\$13 a piece, would come in handy in rural areas as it can be driven by either sunlight, dynamo, electricity or battery.

When the shipment arrived, we were thrilled to receive this novelty from the Bureau of Customs. Naturally, I asked the Project technician to make a count, the broker informed us that eight pieces of the radio have been taken by the customs examiner as 'samples.' While a bit depressed about the missing items, I took that as perhaps a standard procedure. Nonetheless, we had to make a factual report to UNESCO that we received 492 of the 500 units that were sent to us.

Our UNESCO project officer in Paris replied that such an act of the government was unacceptable. It is in the agreement that Philippine government would not levy anything on equipment and assistance on the grant. In a letter, we had to convey this point to the Commissioner of Customs. Unexpectedly, a customs examiner visited us seeking apology for having taken the units. He confessed that, "I was asked by our Commissioner to return the units to Tambuli. If not, I will be fired from my job. Unfortunately, I have given them away as gifts to my friends and some relatives. Hence I am apologizing to you and promising that I will find ways to return them."

However, we told him, that the unit is not available in the local market. They were bought in Hong Kong. He continued, "I ask that you give me time. Someone I know is going to Hong Kong and I will ask that he buy the units for me. Incidentally, I have brought some vegetables for you from my small farm."

Even though we initially turned down the vegetables, we had to take them, awkwardly, when he insisted. Not accepting would mean we were not taking his apology and his offer to compensate for it.

He made good his promise in several weeks. Upon receipt of the returned items, we sent a letter of thanks to the Commissioner. We thought that was the end of the story. No. Several months later, the examiner returned to the office. He was bringing with him a bigger load of vegetables. He was so thankful for letting him off the hook. The Commissioner did not only exonerate him. He was given a promotion!

This time he had to bring home all the vegetables and he accepted our short word on integrity and uprightness.

### **Importing equipment**

Time and time again, the Project receives equipment from organizations such as UNESCO according to the list prepared and approved. Bringing in technical equipment into the country would be easier if the shipment were identified as coming from a UN organization and that the shipment is free of import duties. Repeatedly we had to obtain a fresh certification from the Department of Finance that indeed UNESCO importations are tax free and that the Project is a UNESCO project.

Among such equipment were – transmitters, tape recorders, turntables, antenna, oscilloscope, SWR meters, cables, microphones, audio mixers, microphones, connectors and assorted tools. Importing transmitters posed additional problems, as these were also ‘security’ items and subject to various regulations of the National Telecommunication Commission. Fortunately we were dealing with small box-like gadgets that did not have to be identified as transmitters. Hence, as they came in a lump with other pieces of equipment, the Bureau of Customs did not make much fuss. We also



learned the technique of labelling the equipment as either oscillator or amplifier if we needed to transport them either locally or internationally like when we had to make demonstrations.

On another occasion however, a batch of six 20 watt transmitters from the United Kingdom was intercepted by the Bureau of Customs. After tedious negotiations and mind-numbing talks with the bureaucracy and six months of equipment sitting at the customs' warehouse, the Project got the clearance from the National Telecommunications Commission where the Project Manager had to sign a waiver saying that the equipment would not be installed without proper clearance from the agency.

## **Dealing with People**

Inevitably community work involves people. People are of all kinds. One must be ready to work with everyone. In community radio, that is not always easy!

### ***Volunteerism***

Committed to the welfare of the community and the mission of the radio, volunteers should take charge of both the management and content of the community radio. The willingness of community members to produce programmes and help in the operation of the facility is one of the distinguishing marks of community radio. Attracting volunteers is more than just a cost-effective scheme. They also represent an important element of broad community participation and involvement. Volunteers are people who offer their time and skills free of cost. In general, they contribute on a part-time basis, oftentimes for only a couple of hours per week or a few hours per month.

Without core funding from government and commercial advertising, a normal community radio cannot pay a full sized staff. In countries where labor costs are relatively low, community stations manage to fully or partly pay their staff. But many others have relied almost exclusively on non-paid volunteers. Still others have developed a model in which they use both methods. Each model has positive and negative aspects. The radio management must strike a balance based on available resources and the needs of the community being served. In many stations in Asia, volunteers are given some form of incentive such as minor honoraria or livelihood assistance. Certain participants are provided loans that allow them or their family members to undertake income-generating projects. A community media volunteer normally gains practical experience, and this becomes an extra credential when he looks for gainful employment elsewhere. Otherwise, working in media is fun, offers exposure and builds confidence and skills.

Volunteerism also brings with it, the difficulty of replacing volunteers who have moved on. One way to ensure renewal of staff is to designate understudies or apprentices who can readily take over in case the main person leaves. Co-hosting in a radio program is also a way to improve the quality of presentation, and also prepare a new host. Some new volunteers are continually recruited and given training to afford a wide range of participation among community members. Volunteers can often be recruited at the local high school or university that may have communication courses or even a communication school. This is especially the case for those community stations co-established with an educational institution.

In community media, if there are paid staff members, their focus is usually on management, coordination and training of volunteers who carry out the bulk of the work. In mixed models, paid staff members are also involved in the production of essential programming, especially daily news and current affairs programmes.

Religious and civic organizations may also be invited to participate by running their programmes and providing financial assistance to the station. However some rules must be put in place. Such assistance should not compromise the editorial decisions of the station and should be contracted according to the philosophy and policies of the station. The contributors may not use their programmes to indulge in political, partisan or denominational tirades against other persons or organizations. The same rules for selling block time apply here.

The life of community radios depend on volunteerism, institutional stability, socio-political environment, professional availability, technical and financial resources.

### *On the involvement of women*

Filipino women, especially in the countryside where socialization has been limited by poverty, tradition and inadequate educational attainment, are often shy, reserved and timid. It takes quite bit of coaxing to get them into a radio project. This is likely true of a lot of Asian villages as well. Housewives prefer that the men folk participate in unfamiliar ventures. On the other hand, you always meet some outgoing women who manifest a gritty readiness to get involved!

In many rural communities of Asia, however, collectively promoting women's rights hasn't yet taken center stage. Our initial talks about special programmes concerning women empowerment have been met with a degree of apathy. The lack of eagerness could be due to family traditions and/or social norms. Rural families are less inclined to alter the traditional position of women as housekeepers while husbands are the gregarious community events participants.

Once women get involved however, they are dependable and dynamic participants. They adhere to rules. They are meticulous. They are less suspected to be involved in anomalies

and malfeasance. They are consistently enthusiastic. In lending activities and credit cooperatives, they are usually the most prompt to repay loans. And wherever women participate, men become usually become more enthusiastic. Women generally become conscientious and devoted performers.

As a school teacher, Mrs. Rosario Gozos was appointed station manager of DWTP in Partido, Camarines Sur. She spearheaded the successful drive against illegal gambling and illegal logging. Among other things, she initiated an all-women Saturday morning program. In less than three years, DWTP became a power in the community contributing greatly to the progress and well-being of Partido.

Mrs. Meriam Aranas, the president of the Olutanga Islanders Media Development Foundation, is a strong willed leader of an active women's group promoting livelihood and conservation. She registered the association and led the drive to construct a building for the community radio DXOI.

Lyn Villasis, a soft spoken beautician, hosts a story telling program for children for years and became one of the most popular personalities in her station DYMT in Banga, Aklan.

Malou Angolluan, is a youthful college graduate who worked as a volunteer for DWRA in Cabagan, Isabela. Her dedication has inspired her colleagues and earned profuse admiration from her listeners. She even turned down several offers to work in bigger commercial stations.

Vijaya is only 22 and a college student, but she is the production manager of Namma Dhvani in Budikote, India. Her colleague, Sunita, is 18 and is the news editor and announcer.

At Madanpokhara, Nepal, Juni, 20, is radio producer and announcer. In India and Nepal, not only are the women dynamic, but they start very young.

Similarly, Kolyani started her career at 19 as a librarian in Mahaweli Community Radio. She eventually married Sunil, a senior producer and together they run the Kothmale station, though perhaps less now, as she has three children.

Agnes Mendis was the project secretary in Kandy and Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka, an elderly lady and university graduate. She translated an encyclopedia into Sinhala, and was invited to present it to a French scientific audience. She kept an eye on the finances and rendered the accountant superfluous.

Well perhaps women are not so shy!

### *Priests, Clergy and Religious*

Normally, the clergy and members of the church are persons dedicated to humanity and social development. And yet, underneath the cloth, one often finds a man of clay. It is therefore not possible to make blanket policies and decisions concerning relations with the church clergy. Each situation has to be examined and weighed in the socio-political scale.

In one community where we set up a radio, rivalries among political figures became extremely bitter. The priest happened to be elected as the chairperson of the community media council. Sadly he had a 'friar mentality' reminiscent of the Spanish colonial times, and had never shown fondness in getting the people to participate in decision-making. He distrusted local leadership motives. He refused to call the council's meeting for months. He ran the station by himself and confined his involvement to his minions. When the election period came, the priest threw his support for the mayoralty candidate whom he thought to be the people's favorite. The candidate was perceived to be only a sentimental choice as he was then languishing in jail and was prevented from campaigning. With

the station conveniently located in the convent also thanks to the priest's maneuvering, he took the occasion to use the programmes to build up his favored candidate and downsize the opponent. But in the end, the inevitable happened. The rival politician won the election. The newly elected mayor grudgingly complained to the Tambuli Project Manager on how the parish priest used the station for politics. When confronted, the parish priest showed more vehemence than contrition. He was eventually reassigned and the community radio project died a natural death.

In another case, a senior priest, often called the 'monsignor,' got elected as head of the community media council. As such, he was mainly responsible for organising the community leaders. But despite his social status, he had pretty limited exposure to new ideas, and no flair for encouraging participation among the community. He had no experience in transparent accounting of resources only in receiving the church collections, which are never audited. People complained that he was a closed-minded, difficult person. Initially it did not occur that the monsignor would be a problem. Nobody objected when he put up the station in his *convento*. He even talked about the church openness to public discussions, giving assurances that he would allow access for voices of even the radical elements in the community.

It was appalling however when after a few months, we found a large sign at the studio saying, "Do not entertain complaints." The community media council that he headed met regularly during the first few months, then the number of meetings became sparse. The council members were grumbling when no meeting was ever held for months. Reminded by the Project Manager of his mandate, he griped that he was being dictated upon.

Meantime, community leaders became agitated. There was apparent neglect of the radio's operation. The programs



stagnated despite the presence of competent and well-meaning broadcasters. A few volunteers dropped out. The remaining staff waned in enthusiasm. Resources and community assistance for operation became scant. Issues about accounting of receipts and donations were raised. Participants and community leaders formally demanded that the priest give up position in the council and that the station be moved out of the convent. When the organization eventually disintegrated, the station had to be moved to the school.

It is obvious that some members of the clergy, especially those of the 'old school,' have a flair for dominance and centrism. They cannot trust other people and cannot understand the participatory approach to development.

From experience, I have found it necessary to put all the communications in writing and provide copies to several responsible people in the community. Formal memoranda of agreement are signed. Receipts are issued for all equipment and materials. Absolute trust or 'word of honor,' even for the man of cloth, is not recommended.

On the other hand, the community radio must give equal access to every legitimate religious group. But policies have to be formulated so that that religious programmes do not become staging platforms to lambaste other religious groups and denominations, or worse, the personal 'messianic mission' of some.

### *On the involvement of politicians*

After decades of practice as a broadcast journalist, deep skepticism has coated my general attitude towards politicians. Whenever a political personality talks, I instinctively try to figure out, sometimes vainly, what is at the back of this politicians' head?

In the Tambuli project, a major and nagging question was whether we should deal with politicians or avoid them totally. After numerous and sometimes lengthy discussions, the overriding thought is that politicians have to participate in operating the radio station. After all, politicians are inescapable elements of community life. They could be influential cogs in community development. The project cannot do away with politicians. Political opportunists however are quick to see the potentials of a communication in furthering their own personal interests. They realize that a community-wide medium can help them gain popularity, earn public admiration and get votes.

Our approach then is to try placing the politician's role in a logical and balanced perspective. If, for instance, partisan politicians or supporters wish to be involved in the community media council, then all parties must be effectively represented.

In some cases, political figures express their intent to keep their hands off the project. Others would offer resources and even heavy personal involvement. Even those who publicly proclaim a hands-off attitude may have already positioned their lackeys and ardent followers in key positions in the station – either as a generous benefactor, as a high-strung member of the management council or as a domineering station manager. In a small town or island or village with a web of inter-relationships, it is difficult to find anyone with no political connection! Extension of a political interest easily creeps into sensitive decision-making.

The way they influence the programming and decisions of the radio comes in varying degrees and schemes. Political leaders always publicly express unconditional concern for the masses. And they usually make a candid pledge of non-interference in the radio's editorial policies and decision. A few make good of this promise and adhere to their public commitment. If not, the station management has to assert itself and to keep reminding the public about the station's independence of partisan interests.

The shrewd politicians may intervene covertly. Quite often the saying comes into play: “He who has honey in his mouth has the sting on his tail.” This is not only about politicians but can also refer to some eloquent members of the community. But there are always exceptions.

The community radio must strive not to be identified with, much less be attached to, any political entity. It must manifest its neutrality at all times giving equal opportunities to all partisan groups. Even when politicians can provide funds, the station must not be beholden to them.

Some stations make it a policy that when anyone on its staff takes a partisan activity, such as running in an election or serving an election campaign, he must resign or take a one-year leave of absence.

Evenhandedness, balance and integrity must be the top banner in community radio.

### *Interference by vested interests*

In the operation of a community radio, and all media ventures for that matter, there is an expected interplay of political, religious, business and personal interests. There are also ideological missionaries, military campaigners, government propagandists and lobbyists.

The interested parties try to seize the usefulness and power of the medium to their respective gains. Understandably, these maneuvers can upset the management and the staff who strive for fairness and equal opportunity. The operators of the station must accept the reality that there are always advantage seekers must be prepared to detect and deal with them.

The project initiator and the management should always try to achieve a balance in the composition of both the staff and

community media council. Crash courses on democratic communication should be conducted for the participants. Written guidelines and a professional code of ethics must be distributed, posted in common areas and discussed off or on air. Some stations, as part of their hourly breaks, include in their station ID, the mission and standard of the station if only to impress on the community and participants that the station stands for the welfare of the public rather of personal, business, or political interests.

As a matter of principle, community radio should promote dynamic interaction among various sectors and members of the community. It should give equal opportunities to individuals, groups and sectors to be heard. It should not show bias towards any sector, unless it is a social advocacy

### ***Partnering: the host organization***

The term host organization refers to the agency, which has the larger share of responsibility in establishing and maintaining the community radio. This may be a school, civic organization, cooperative, church organization or local government unit. There is always a tendency on the part of the host organization to control or dominate the station – in terms of number of staff, policies, programming and management. Aside from providing technical and material assistance, the host should help generate support from the various other sectors as well as from community members. It must be stressed however that the officers of the host organization should clearly understand their role and that the relationships must be explicit, preferably in a written memorandum of undertaking.

Ideally, the multi-sectoral radio management council should make decisions for the station, not the host organization. When there is an inept, inactive or emasculated CMC, the host organization may be tempted to take upon itself this decision-

making process. But the host organization should rather animate, re-invigorate or re-constitute the community media council when needed. The host organization should maintain a liberal stance on programming and policies that an independent management council decides. It must encourage free exchange of ideas within the council as well as in the programming of the station. If only to encourage openness and freedom of expression, it must tolerate with civility, any criticism of itself. And certainly, programme handlers and community radio management should seek to settle differences with the host in personal dialogues, rather than on air. The host organization may make arrangements for it to run certain programmes or take certain time slots for its information, education and communication needs, but it should not impose its will on the other programmes or programme producers or their participants, especially if they are from other organizations.

### *On dealing with sensitive problems*

It is inevitable that community radio has to deal with groups or individuals who are engaged in activities and business that have adverse social impact – illegal loggers, gambling lords, mining operators, drug dealers. Some of them may be organisations that have legitimate papers, even though they are involved in nefarious activities. One instinctive role that radio can play is to help the community deal with these issues by seeking and reporting facts, providing analysis and commentaries on the issues at hand. The radio can eventually try to broadcast an open forum for discussion of community problems and issues. Community radio must encourage community members to articulate their observations and opinions on sensitive issues affecting their lives.

An ethical and moral question is whether the community radio should accept donations from illegal perpetrators. Some people would like to treat donations from the questionable individuals and establishments just like any contribution for

community radio support. To reject their offering is like publicly accusing them of these questioned activities. Hence, it should be clear that any such financial assistance will not be accepted in order to influence the editorial decision or policy of the radio. Such donor's gift may be drawn up in a formal statement and signed, with the stipulation that this financial assistance has no strings attached.

A radio plug or an extended station ID should be regularly aired, stating the community radio's adherence to democratic principles and editorial independence.





# 7

## Epilog

By Carlos A. Arnaldo and Louie Tabinog

The stories told here of community radio represent almost forty years of professional experience. Certainly by this time, we must be able to analyse our efforts and see where mistakes have been made but also where creative ideas have paid off. In our work, contacts with colleagues such as, Dr. Teresa Stuart, officer of UNICEF responsible for setting up the ComPAS radio stations in the Philippines have been very inspiring. Dr. Stuart has left us her notes on her experiences, her hindsight.

We reproduce them here, highlighted in colour, as a synthesis of experiences and lessons from various community radio stations in Asia, and we offer further comment.

From this empirical context we leap to the future and gaze into the crystal ball. Where is community radio heading next?



*Multimedia at work in Tansen, Nepal, one of the community stations. (UNESCO)*

## A Synthesis of Experiences

### *The need for radio*

- “The prospective community must feel and express the need for their own radio. Communities that are already saturated with radio and television signals and are close to urban areas have easy access to information and entertainment and therefore do not need their own community radio.”

Basic to setting up community radio is determining the future site for it. Tambuli Community radio has set up criteria for selecting such sites; saturation of the media is certainly a hindrance. These criteria can be applied in almost any country. One usually looks for isolated communities, poor but with potential, and a certain level of inter-activity of the community, both among themselves and with other communities. Potential sites usually show a great lack of urban media or very weak signals and only intermittent delivery of newspapers. Or urban signals may penetrate to the site, but their messages are irrelevant to the villagers. One seeks to identify strong cooperators, individuals as well as organisations or groups of people.

### *The dynamism of partnerships*

- When starting new partnerships and collaboration in the operations of community radio, whether these be local government offices, NGOs, or UN agencies, or educational institutions, it is important to spell out specific roles and responsibilities from the inception to the end of project support.

While this point may seem very obvious, even banal, real social relationships are very complicated, and hidden agenda are not always evident on first encounter.

Sometimes politics can get out of hand. One such case was when Tambuli visited an island province as a prospective community radio site. There was strong bickering between the governor and congressman and this leadership wedge stiffly polarised the people to the extent that even the clergy took sides. Had Tambuli continued to set up the radio, it was very possible that the community radio would become not only a political arena, but a virtual war zone.

In a related situation, it was known that a congressman was supporting or at least protecting the gambling racket in town. And yet the congressman was the only person capable of donating a transmitter to the station to maintain its operation. Should the station accept this transmitter? Should this donation be announced? Should the station insist on its right to freedom of expression and its mandate to serve the people?

On the other hand, some positive surprises also occur. In the story of Radio Manduyog, there was some hesitation to work with a large educational institution. As it turned out, there were great benefits from their outreach programme, their offer of logistics and facilities, and financial support. Similarly, there was also some question of cooperating with government offices. But the work with certain municipal governments in the Philippines has proven to be very positive, and provided important social links to town initiated activities such as youth councils, sports festivals, and town improvement projects.

A principal reason for these successes is that early in the media council meetings, it was clearly enunciated that the station must maintain its editorial and management independence from all external sources, whether politicians or

elected government officers, and even from highly placed school officials or other high officers of the partnering institution or NGO. Along with this, it is essential to underscore the need for independence of management and production operations. Once a programme log or season is approved for operations, producers and technicians should be free to work creatively on their programmes without interference from outside persons. In the cases cited, this principal has generally been well respected.

Simple and obvious as they may be, what makes it difficult to put these rules into practice is the growing spread in all countries of the number and variety of partnering institutions for community radio, from international agencies, to educational institutions, to municipal governments, and even the military as is a recent case in the Philippines. It can also be problematic in India where legislation for submitting a request for the license to broadcast, has given a slight edge to known NGOs over the grassroots communities concerned. When these partners or host organisations offer resources as well, such as salaries, office space, equipment, it may become more difficult to shake off these ‘influences,’ when they are not conducive to attaining the ideals of the station. Hence, in the early sessions of the media council’s meetings, it is helpful to lay down these guidelines early and in writing.

### *Factors in participatory management*

- The following factors are vital to success at each stage of the project cycle and beyond the life of the project: commitment of the community administration to provide legitimacy and support to sustain it beyond its project life; an active community organisation to keep the project moving; dedicated frontline workers who cooperate with the community and provide technical inputs; linkages with

municipal and provincial bodies for resource and social mobilization of health, education, social welfare, agriculture, public works, as well as with academic and research institutions, NGOs, socio-civic organisations and the business community; well-defined and agreed policies, terms of reference; guides and tools for operation, management, coordination, documentation and reporting within the community and with cooperating agencies and international organisations.

In a word, the long-term sustainability of community radio revolves around the community media council and its linkages with partners, NGOs, government units and agencies, for programme input, technical and logistical support. It is equally essential that such linkages be spelled out in memoranda of agreements or contracts or guides or policy formulations. These then form, together with the management manual, the basic tools for operating radio.

### ***Deviation from ideals by persons with vested interests, hidden agenda***

- Politics and vested interests are unavoidable in any community; problems and issues related to these must be identified and discussed by community members before they happen. Guidelines/operating procedures must then be agreed upon and adhered to. Non-compliance to guidelines particularly by the leaders usually spells failure because participants tend to get discouraged and lose enthusiasm.

This point emphasises again the need to be wary of partnering or linking with various kinds of political persons or institutions. The only prevention for this is to understand the socio-political matrix of the town or village, and analyze all the



interconnections between persons, families, businesses and government offices. Those living in the town are well aware of these alliances and interplays, but those outside can only learn by observing and discussing with the more experienced town members.

### *Ownership of the whole communication process*

- Community radio succeeds and endures when the community operating it develops a sense of ownership of, not only the communication technology, but of the entire process and the positive results that happen on a continuing basis.

This is very true and very well formulated. It is ownership of the entire process of communication that is important. Once that is achieved, a community station will be very strong. This can become more difficult in countries or towns where a partnering NGO tends to be dominant and over-influential in programme policy and decisions, or where legislation accords an overriding preference or privilege to the NGO over the grassroots community.

### *Harmonious broadcasting atmosphere*

- Respect and cooperation among the community broadcasters are the building blocks for collective decision-making, teamwork and cohesive social interaction.

Unlike commercial broadcasting, where professionals are often in competition with each other for advertising commissions, best time slots, more attention and popularity, or government broadcasting where in lieu of the competitive

landscape, one could lapse into rigid regularity and lack of spark, community broadcasting is usually very dynamic and alive. There is a certain camaraderie in the air and a joy to outdo one another in generosity and creativity. One also finds a healthy dependence on others for advice and one prefers joint or collective decisions to merely one's own idea. Community broadcasters have no hesitation to endorse one another's programmes and to complement their colleagues on successful programmes. These points too distinguish community radio from the usual commercial or government broadcasting.

### *Technical Support*

- Broadcasting equipment must always be in good condition. A qualified radio technician must be identified, locally available and engaged from the start to provide preventive maintenance of equipment and to promptly trouble-shoot problems when these occur.

This is the key to regular uninterrupted transmission. One recurring phrase always comes to mind like a clanging church bell: "Back up, and back up, and back up." If you go on field recording, bring extra batteries; bring an extra microphone and several blank cassettes or mini-discs. Always listen to your interview with earphones so you can tell that the voices are passing on to the recording tape. For transmission, set up two transmitters. One is always ready for stand-by.

Fortunately, in most project sites in Asia, we have been able to find capable technicians, and on occasion some very ingenious ones who design their own transmitters or antennas. These technical workers should be encouraged to continue studies to higher levels of engineering attainment. They should be supported to set up radio and electronic appliance repair shops.



*At St. John's Academy, General Trias, Cavite, Quiddie Labindao prepares the transmitter, antenna connection, power meter, mixer and audio cassette and microphone for test broadcast. (CAA)*

When in the process of upscaling from a pilot project phase, it may even be necessary to set up a regional technical laboratory or a core group of trained technicians, to service community radios in a given area. This would provide technical expertise available to the stations, back-up equipment and spare parts, and in some cases, even on-the-job training for those community members so inclined. Later, as the new projects evolve, this facility can be converted to a commercial electronics repair and supply shop.

### ***Creative programme formats***

- Technical assistance in the development and production of various radio programme formats is fundamental, that is, the facility for putting into radio form, the various

messages of development, education, health and so forth. Likewise, content material from various development agencies and institutions are the lifeblood of the radio programmes. Facilitating agencies must be ready and able to provide these upon request and help expand the community's resource pool.

This is perhaps the most ingenious of these points, for it poses a basic question, what is the format of community radio? And the immediate response is, there is none! Recall the dictum in COM 101, community radio is people talking to people. Any programme format that can record and broadcast people talking to people is community radio. It can be a talk show, an interview, a recorded spot, a magazine programme mixed with music and interviews (like *Barangayan sa Himpapawid*). It can be phone calls received on the air and rebroadcast live from the studio. It can be reading sms messages from cel phones about a disaster. It can be browsing the internet and explaining one's discoveries to the listening community. It can be a drama presentation. And it can be all of these. That is why when building the on-air studio, we encourage the selection of a fairly large room to accommodate a large table for visitors to enter and speak. We also urge the technicians to wire patches for cel phones, fixed lines and radio communications, so that any incoming information can be immediately shared with the community.

In effect, there is no limit to the variety of programme formats that can be used in community radio. It is therefore beneficial to have regular training in programme production to ensure that novel ideas are applied with technical correctness and programme smoothness. Training and professional advice are conducive for this.

## Where is community radio headed?



*The plains before Khuvsgo in Mongolia, dry but rich in summer, iced to sub-zero in winter, a wide avenue of caravans to the north lakes and frozen steppes. Two community stations are in operation here since 2006-2007 for the Darkhad and Tsaaten nomads. (CAA)*

What then is the future of community radio? At present in most Asian countries, there are many hindrances, political, economical and within the realm of media operators. For community radio to start and flourish, it is essential that there first be favourable legislation. Before 1990, when in some countries, the one and only national broadcaster was the government media, it was very difficult to convince the media holders to give up their monopoly. One, however, did the Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation, but this opening was limited and always subject to the regulations and whims of the national broadcaster. This, however, has not prevented the community stations from serving their mandate. Mongolia has been

experimenting with six community radios in remote provinces, two of them among the nomadic Darkhad and Tsaaten tribes. Other countries are starting to follow. Since 1990, except for the People's Republic of China and the People's Republic of Korea, monopoly broadcasting in most Asian countries has since given way to commercial broadcasting, over hertzian waves, cable, and now telephone and internet. But legislation favoring the establishment of community radio has been slow in coming.

### **The move to consolidation, exchange of information and lobbying**

In countries where there is as yet no legislation, there is need of a group of high-minded citizens, with background in jurisprudence of the country, communication as it operates in many different countries, and the concepts of community radio. In Nepal, this was started by a few individuals linked to various non-governmental media organisations. It was a loosely organised group, never formalised as an association, until several years after the first station was granted its license in 1997. Nonetheless, this group together with journalists and citizens' movements managed to contribute to the formulation of the white paper on communication policy in 1990 and eventually lobbied for the new Broadcasting Act. In this context, it should be underscored that the initial mandate of Radio Sagarmatha in Kathmandu, was to serve as a model for other community stations, a training ground for their personnel, and an advisory source. This first station has thus been very instrumental in the setting up of some 27 other community stations. There is always need of an in-country resource centre.

As a development partner, UNESCO has supported four community media projects in Nepal: Radio Sagarmatha and Community Radio Madanpokhara, and two projects to assist



the overall sector of community radio in its operations, establishment of norms and guidance for its future development. In 2002, the Association of Community Radio Broadcasters was established, “the first democratically representative community radio group, bringing together virtually all of the country’s non-profit radio stations, a significant step forward for a sector characterized by multiple, often competing networks of stations.” (IPDC: 2008) Since 2006, this association has been the main implementer of projects in training, setting up norms, strengthening participatory broadcasting and integrating into networks.

In India, since the declaration by the Supreme Court in 1995 that the air waves are public and no single person or entity has a monopoly of their use, communication specialists and organisations began militating for community radio and setting up experiments in preparation for that day. Since 2006, several of these individuals and groups have been communicating with each other over a nationwide forum, which also includes persons and organisations from outside India, and some international agency officials. This Community Radio Forum (CRF) has helped very much to clarify concepts and issues, and to try to harmonise the efforts of the members. There are nonetheless, several differences of opinion! Furthermore, both UNDP and UNESCO have been very supportive of this new community radio movement. Both these and other UN agencies have accompanied the Government in its organisation of consultative meetings. UNDP published a book (Mukhopadhyay: 2004) on setting up community radio in the Indian setting. The latest of the joint consultations occurred in 2007 soon after the 2006 announcement of policy guidelines widening the scope of ownership of community radio. UNESCO has facilitated advocacy sessions with civil society and had also supported experiments such as that of the Deccan Development Society to set up a community radio production centre in Pastapur, Andhra

Pradesh operated by the women of a Dalit community, and of VOICES and MYRADA of Karnataka to set up a community radio station on cable in Budikote in that state. The organisations involved have been extremely significant in the evolution of community radio in India and have stockpiled years of experience.

The country examples of Nepal and India show the significant role of citizens and people's organisations in lobbying for community radio legislation. The role of international agencies is not to be underestimated, as they usually have the resources for consultations and recruitment of high level legal and communication experts. What is needed beyond these two examples is a solid and dynamic nationwide movement, comprising communication scholars and legal experts, community based organisations and associated NGOs and backed by international agencies to present a united front of expertise to the government bodies responsible for formulating law. In effect this is what is still happening in Nepal through the Association of Community Radio Broadcasters, and in India through the informal forum, the latter, so far without the formal organisation. In a country as large as India it is understandably difficult to gather all the proponents in a single venue and reach a harmonious and coherent policy from the diversity of regions, languages, and socio-geographic situations. The current forum on the internet is a good start. The next step, actually being currently pursued is gradually moving from discussion to the formation of a representative movement, a high possibility with the support of international agencies. Such a movement may then do more:

- Work for technical equipment designed and manufactured in-country and at more reachable prices, complete with local servicing and technicians on call. In India for example, if the current market is estimated at 5,000 community radio stations, that should be a viable enough

figure for local design and manufacture at reachable prices, plus export to countries that cannot do their own manufacturing.

- Lobby for less restriction on limitations of antenna height and transmitter power. These two configurations depend not on the ‘definition of community radio,’ but on the topography of the land. Height and power may be needed in mountainous country, to ensure reaching the farthest villages, or in extremely large regions such as the steppes in Mongolia.
- Liberalise the interpretations of non-profit broadcasting, to enable community stations to earn in order to maintain their operations as a viable, sustainable entity.
- Represent community radio stations in the country or in specific districts or provinces, before national and international agencies desirous of using their services to promulgate messages within the scope of their respective mandates. Many national and international development agencies, now seeing the power of community radio, prefer to cooperate with them, but find it difficult to deal with a score or so stations on a single issue or campaign. If there were a front representative from among them, then this could greatly facilitate discussions and cooperation, including pre- and post-evaluation as well.

Of further significance to India in particular because of its size and its large numbers of poor communities, but also to many other countries in analogous situations is the possibility of networking. Many of the world’s international agencies, and doubtless national ones too, have been examining their communication and marketing budgets and today tend towards streamlining their strategies. When an agency knows that there are so many dozen community radio stations in a country and

so many score multimedia centres, it makes sense to consolidate efforts and work with groups of such media resources under a single budget and programme campaign, rather than attempt to accommodate 40 such media groups individually. Hence, if community radio stations in a region or country are networked and share common platforms, together they can likely negotiate programme budgets to their benefit. By networking, it is not essential that they all be ‘wired’ into the same programme schedule, but that, sharing similar ideals and concepts, they can each, working as a group, provide output services attractive to prospective agencies. In this regard, a regional or national association of community broadcasters can be a powerful lobbyist for these media contracts.

### **Role of an implementing group**

In the Philippines, various types of community radio were set up as early as the 1960s by various church organisations, notably DXMS and DXND in Cotabato by the Oblate Fathers, and DZJO in Infanta by the Discalced Carmelites. But the major thrust for community radio came in 1990 with the Tambuli Community Radio project financed by UNESCO and Danida. From the start, the creators of Tambuli knew that international financing would end one day, but that the task of building radio had to be continued. Hence towards the end of the project, the Tambuli Community Radio Foundation was set up to continue the work after the departure of the funders. The remaining equipment, a project jeep and office supplies were donated to the Foundation. Their earnings would come from new proponents of community radio, or were offered gratis. In this way, Tambuli has continued another 8 years after the formal close of the project and still cooperates with educational institutions, municipal governments and new partners for the setting up of community radio. A further advantage of Tambuli today is that it already linked with several partners in various

fields: the Philippines Federation of Rural Broadcasters (for expertise in radio production and operations), the communication schools both private and those integrated under the University of the Philippines System, various electronics and radio equipment suppliers. This puts Tambuli in a pivotal position to call upon advice, services and other resources.

### **Community radio under the umbrella of the national public service broadcaster**

The community radio experience of Sri Lanka should not be overlooked. Several scholars and researchers do not consider Guirandurokotte or Kothmale as community stations, because they are not run and managed by the community, but by the national broadcaster. Nonetheless, the two stations have blazed trails in community radio work that at least rival the achievements of what scholars say are authentic community stations. They have pioneered on-the-air classes and barefoot medical clinics, interlinking with the internet and multimedia production. And they have fully served their communities. For those countries where the government broadcaster is still the dominant form of media, the community stations of Sri Lanka show how community radio can be integrated within the ranks of public service broadcasting run by the state. In a similar way, Mongolia and Laos have set up their community radio experiments within the purview of the national broadcaster.

These four country examples help us to understand some of the dynamics at work and how people and people's organisations might go about introducing community radio in their countries or expanding its reach in a more rational and efficient way. For any country desirous of setting up community radio on a large scale, the following are necessary:

- A forum or a point of 'encounter' where people can meet and discuss the issues at stake. This could be a virtual



*At the last valley, we had to rent horses and ride four hours through the marshes and hills up to the ice line to reach the Mongolian nomadic tribe of the Tsaaten. (CAA)*

forum on the internet, or it could be face to face meetings. This could be few individuals, as in the early part of creating community radio in Nepal before 2000, or it could be several hundred people connecting online, as in India. Prior to legislation on community broadcasting, this group will need recourse to high level experts in jurisprudence and communication.



- An implementing group in the country. This could be a community station itself (like Radio Sagarmatha in Nepal); an association or foundation created for this purpose (like Tambuli in the Philippines); or a public service broadcaster, that has discovered the benefits of community radio as complementary to its regular programme (as in Sri Lanka).
- Equally necessary are linkages to several resources groups for technical support, research, management, development issues.
- As has been the case in several Asian countries, the support of international agencies, not only for funding, but for prestige and standing before the national instances of law and telecommunication has already been proven beneficial.

Finally, this analysis would be incomplete without a word of the new trends in multimedia and linkages to radio. It is very interesting to follow the debates on the freedom of expression on the internet, as this is beginning to show that the large numbers of ordinary citizens on internet have gradually begun to be a lobbying force for freedom of the internet from censure, from government restrictions, and excessive payments on software or services. Though such lobbyists may originate from individual countries, they are quickly joined by others around the world, thus becoming a planetary forum. This is happening alongside the similar movements to create and expand community radio in some conservative countries. From the advances made in just the last ten years, it would not be surprising if the thrust to free the internet also impacts on the parallel movement to open the air waves to community radio in a more generous and positive way.

This leads us to recognise that there are already several technological linkages between multimedia and radio. It will be

recalled in the late 1990s that a famous ‘free’ radio in Serbia, Eastern Europe, B-92, was frequently attacked by the government in power, sacked and eventually destroyed. But the news from this radio kept on circulating, not only in that country, but all over Europe and the world and wherever it was heard, it was recorded and re-broadcast. To achieve this, the station producers digitally recorded daily the entire news programme and uploaded it to a server, for streaming (simultaneous reception of programmes) and downloading (download and listen at will) to individuals all over the world. Eventually, B92 Radio contributed to the ousting of the then head of state, Milosevic.

Hence, should anyone wish to start community radio, digital radio on the internet is worth a try; it needs no license to broadcast, and would be heard automatically world-wide. This is an immediate possibility often overlooked. Admittedly, it does not have the same ‘feel and look’ as analog radio over the airwaves!

Furthermore, most disco lounges are now operating digitally, with all music stored on CD-roms or in electronic files on computer. The DJ merely lists the pieces he wants, performs ségués and fade-outs as desired or these too can be automated. And in this way, he animates a whole evening from the keyboard. Rapper DJs even add a turntable with vinyl records so they can whisk the records back and forth for ‘scratch’ effect. The lesson to draw is that it is easier today to start community radio digitally from the PC and digitally recorded voices or music. Many of today’s MP3 and MP4 players have voice recording capability with either an integrated or external microphone. Workable models are now available in Asian countries from less than US\$10 to US\$70 for simple models or from US\$120 to US\$180 for brand name digital voice recorders. Free editing software is also available online. Thus, teaching young people how to record, edit, line up recorded files in a programme is greatly simplified.

It is also worthy of note that some international agencies are supporting the creation of multimedia operations oriented to their sectoral domains, to the exclusion of community radio. It would be more meaningful to support multimedia operations linked to community radio, the latter being only one of many digital by-products of the centre. For as a multimedia operation, it could also move into digital video and digital TV news, as is already available on Youtube and similar websites. In this regard, the little rural station Namma Dhwani, on cable, can send still photos, video and live TV down the cable. In effect, this little rural station is already effectively a multimedia station. Moving it to the web would increase its audience world-wide, though the numbers of Budikote listeners with access to internet today might be quite limited.

In brief, while the thrust of community radio has so far been mainly on hertzian waves, the future challenge is to expand to World Wide Web. And there, it will be enriched by photos, video, live radio and live TV. But it may no longer be “community radio” as we know it today.

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## The Contributors

**Madhu Acharya** (Nepal) holds an MA in Journalism and Mass Communication, from Tribhuvan University 2005. Academic studies were preceded by a decade of professional work in community media as pioneer producer at Radio Sagarmatha and founder/principal officer of Antenna Foundation Nepal. These two main activities have brought Madhu to be involved in dozens of consultancies and training seminars in Nepal, Asia and Europe. He has written extensively in both Nepali and English about broadcasting, and particularly the community radio movement in Nepal, notably *Success of Community Radio In Nepal*. Co-authored with Ghamaraj Luintel, the book speaks about the success and failures of six different community radio stations across the country. Madhu has shown his talents both in research and writing, and in hands-on radio production.

**Carlos A. Arnaldo** (Philippines) though born in Manila, has lived most of his life abroad, winning a four year scholarship to the Jesuit-run Regis High School in New York; he continued studies at Ateneo de Manila completing his Master of Arts in Philosophy 1965 and Master of Arts in Communication 1974. He served as programme director of Radio Veritas and later director of ABS-CBN National Affairs where he won the Citizens' Committee for Mass Media Awards for the election coverage *Bilang ng Bayan* in 1970 and *Sandigan* on the new Philippine Constitution in 1970. He was selected one of the Ten Outstanding Young Men of the Philippines for Broadcast Journalism in 1971. After a year of martial law, he applied to UNESCO, Paris in 1973 as programme officer in the Communication Division, and completed his career there as Chief of Communication Development, and subsequently as Chief of Free Flow of Information in 2000. He was instrumental

in setting up Community Radio in Africa, the Caribbean and Asia Pacific. He wrote an overview of mass media in the Philippines just prior to martial law, and has edited several works of UNESCO, notably the *Non-violence and Television*, and *Public Service Broadcasting: let democratic voices be heard*. (choyarnaldo@hotmail.com)

**Gerniña C. Balagot** (Philippines) is a communication specialist for a foreign-assisted project in the Philippines. She worked as a producer/writer for the longest running investigative TV news magazine programme, *The Probe Team*. Ms. Balagot joined the Probe Media Foundation as a facilitator for the month-long “Imaging the Mekong Documentary Fellowship Training Workshop” which helped 12 media practitioners from the Mekong region create documentaries for the development of their respective country issues. Noteworthy among her documentaries on culture, politics, health and current affairs, is the sequence involving children of war, commissioned by the US Institute of Peace. She has been involved in research on community radio, specifically participatory governance, with the Tambuli Community Radio Project. Ms. Balagot holds a bachelor’s degree in Film and Audiovisual Communications (2000) and a Masters in Public Administration (2007), both at the University of the Philippines, Diliman. (gbalagot@gmail.com)

**Ramnath Bhat** (India) is a young, and fiercely dedicated communicator specialising in community and participatory media. He completed his studies for a Bachelor of Arts in Media Studies from the Manipal Institute of Communication. As program executive of VOICES since 2004, a non-governmental organisation in Bangalore, he worked on two community radio stations: Namma Dhwani in Karnataka, and Kalanjiam Community Radio Station in Tamil Nadu. In addition to this, he has also worked on multimedia projects involving ICTs and as a researcher has used the Ethnographic Action Research in

Community Media for Development. Ram served as UNESCO trainer in Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, in addition to various community media centres in India. He has a keen interest in community media, ethnography and an active fascination for the Free and Open Source Movement. (ram@voicesindia.org)

**Porferio Gregorio Bullo, Ph.D.** (Philippines) was the director for Extension and Rural Development Services Center of the Aklan State University from 1993 to 2002 and the station manager of DYMT Community Radio during this same period. He was one of the key principals who established the Voice of Manduyog and linked the Aklan Colleges of Agriculture extension work to radio. Currently, he is working for his University Professor academic rank in the same University. He is a qualified farm technician and broadcaster, the latter certified by the *Kapisanan ng mga Brodkaster*. As SEAMES-SEARCA scholar, Professor Bullo earned his Ph.D. in Rural Development from the Central Luzon State University, majoring in Organisation and Management; this was preceded by an MS in Agricultural Economics from Xavier University, Cagayan de Oro City. Dr. Bullo is holder of the Grand Knight of Columbus Award and the First Place Professional Media Award in the Broadcast Category, in recognition of his crucial role in creating awareness on the programmes of the Western Visayas Agriculture and Resources Research and Development Consortium among the people of Region VI, offered by the Philippine Council for Agriculture, Forestry and Natural Resources Research and Development (PCARRD) and the Department of Science and Technology (DOST). Through his radio programme *From the Station Manager's Desk*, he advocated the technology transfer modalities thereby influencing technology adoption and utilisation in the Visayas.

**MJR David** (Sri Lanka) earned his MA in Communication from the University of the Philippines, Institute of Development Communication, Los Baños. He was part of the original

Mahaweli Community Radio team and served as senior radio producer for both Guirandurokotte and Kothmale stations, before the civil strife forced him to leave the country for higher studies abroad. He has served as freelance journalist. As senior lecturer at the University of Colombo and consultant to the Sri Lanka Broadcasting corporation, he has written several articles on community radio in Sri Lanka and Asia. He was also project manager of the Kothmale Community Radio Internet Project.

**Dunstan Lamberto T. Decena II** (Philippines) is a research associate at the Publications Office of the National College of Public Administration and Governance, University of the Philippines, Diliman. Academic research in public administration and doctoral studies have immersed Mr. Decena in diverse issues in local and national governance, Philippine economy, conflicts and political stability, as well as project management. As a political affairs officer at the House of Representatives, Mr. Decena drafted House Bills for his principal and supervised projects in the congressional district. He has written papers on pork barrel politics, environmentally sustainable transport, cost-benefit analysis on the use of Bio-ethanol as an alternative fuel, sugar importation, policy process in the Philippine House of Representatives, Disaster Risk Reduction, Maritime Safety and Pollution, and Agrarian Reform. Mr. Decena gained his bachelor's degree in Philosophy at Casiciaco Recoletos Seminary and his Masters in Public Administration at the University of the Philippines, Diliman, where he is also pursuing his Doctorate in Public Administration. (dunstand2003@gmail.com)

**Vinaya Kasajoo** (Nepal) is author in both English and Nepali, media consultant, journalist and media trainer. His focus is pro-people media, or the empowerment of people through communication. He specialises in writing pieces on information technology especially for development of rural communities. Since graduating Bachelor of Arts from Tribhuvan University,

Kathmandu in 1977, Kasajoo has been active as Training Coordinator of the Nepal Press Institute for twenty years, and has held management and editorial positions in several newspapers and news agencies. He is an Ashoka Fellow and laureate of the Dayashankar Palikhe Memorial Journalism Award 2004. vinaya@wlink.com.np

**Seema B. Nair** (India) is a communications professional with more than six years' experience in United Nations, non-governmental organisations and media organisations. Graduated MS in Communication from Manipal Institute of Communication in 2001, she served as project leader for UNESCO's Cross Cutting Theme project, on ICT and achievement of Millennium Development Goals in collaboration with Queensland University of Technology and University of Adelaide. She was also Project Coordinator of the Community Multimedia Centre Pilot project across South Asia and Advisor on Community Radio/Media, ICT and other UNESCO/IPDC projects in Asia. Prior to this, Ms Nair was Project Coordinator and Ethnographic Researcher for VOICES in Bangalore, and particularly was the Project Co-ordinator of *Namma Dhwani* – India's first rural cable community radio station. She is a freelance regional correspondent and author of many articles and researches. Her principal work is *Local Information Networks* published by UNESCO. Today she is co-founder of MARAA, a media collective in Bangalore networking with people working in community multimedia.

**Ninamma Rai** (Nepal) holds a Master of Arts in Economics from the Nowrosjee Wadia College, Pune and is candidate for a Master of Science in Development Management from American University, School of International Science, Washington DC. For more than two years, she has engaged in sociological research with the Antenna Foundation Nepal on development issues, village communication and participation, and experimenting with new formats in community radio; and has



authored several pieces on these researches. She received the Hall of Nations Award from American University. (ninamma@yahoo.com)

**Ashish Sen** (India) is director, Madhyam Communications and VOICES, and president of Asia Pacific Region of AMARC (World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters). He is also International Advisory Board Member – Goldsmith’s College, University of London, founder member of the Community Radio Forum and a Trustee of the Dev Nandan Ubhayaker Foundation for the Arts, Bangalore. Mr. Sen has over three decades of professional experience in print, broadcast and development communications. Starting as a journalist with the Business Standard, Ananda Bazar Group of Publications, Calcutta where he subsequently became Assistant Editor, Sen writes regularly on development issues for mainstream newspapers development journals and publications. These include newspapers like the *New Indian Express*, *Asian Age* and *Bangalore Bias*. Among the recent publications he has contributed to are: *Community Radio – Step by Step* (Produced jointly by VOICES and UNDP); *Our World , Our Voice, Our Media* (Produced jointly by VOICES and the Resource Centers for Participatory Learning and Action ); *The Role and Impact of Alternative Media* (Produced by AMIC India). Under his directorship, VOICES has initiated and facilitated several community media initiatives, notably the Namma Dhvani Community Radio in Rural Karnataka. Mr. Sen has a postgraduate degree in History from King’s College Cambridge University, UK and was a visiting faculty member at the Centre of Culture and Communication, St. Louis University, USA in 1994. (voices@vsnl.com)

**Louie N. Tabing** (Philippines) completed his Bachelor of Science in Agriculture, majoring in development communication, at the University of the Philippines in Los Baños, 1970 and undertook graduate studies in Mass



Communication, at the College of Mass Communication, University of the Philippines, Diliman, Quezon City 1972 – 1974. This academic education was rounded out by professional courses in radio programme production at the Radio Nederland Training Center in Hilversum, Netherlands 1974; and in educational television production at the British Broadcasting Corporation, Milton Keynes, England 1990. He began his career in 1969 as agricultural and farm program producer at Radio Veritas where he learned the craft of rural radio on the air with farmers, spending weekends recording their voices. He became programme director from 1979 to 1983, leaving the station to become freelance producer and host of *Sa Kabukiran* (in the countryside) on DZMM of the ABS-CBN Network from 1998 to the present. Aside from the Tambuli Community Radio Project where he served as project manager from 1990 to 2001, he has been radio trainer on a number of projects, notably the Compas stations put up by UNICEF, and on UNESCO assignments in Uganda, Papua New Guinea, Nepal and East Timor. For his development communication leadership, he earned the monickers ‘guru’ of community radio and ‘dean’ of rural broadcasters in the Philippines. He has authored several books and manuals on radio production and training, the most widely read being *How to do Community Radio*. Tabing is the laureate of several awards, notably Distinguished Alumnus award from University of the Philippines at Los Baños; Outstanding Radio Journalist, from the Rotary Club International; three time awardee of the Hall of Fame, Dangerous Drugs Board. (Intabing@yahoo.com)

