

Amplifying Women's Voices: A Story of Women Making Airwaves for Peace

by Bianca Miglioretto

Women Making Airwaves for Peace (WMAP) is a cross-cultural radio seminar for women broadcasters on the role of community radio in peace building, disaster mitigation and preparedness and climate change organised by Isis International in collaboration with AMARC-WIN Asia Pacific.

The five day seminar brings together around 30 women community radio broadcasters from the Asia Pacific region. It is a space where participants share their experiences, particularly best practices towards engendered peace building and disaster mitigation -- enabling community radio to empower women in crisis situations.

The seminar also enhances the skills of the participants in radio production and digital audio editing. It sharpens their perspectives in engendered peace journalism, interview techniques, feminist broadcasting and more.

The seminar methodology is interactive as participants are given the opportunity to be resource persons, trainers, facilitators, producers

and translators at the same time. Moreover, the participants produce radio programmes during the seminar that they broadcast in their respective radio stations. The seminar is conducted in English, at the same time enabling the participation of Non-English speaking women through peer translation. Isis International was able to provide a substantial number of scholarships to guarantee the participation of grassroots broadcasters.

Pilot Training in Southern Philippines

Pilot trainings were successfully conducted in 2006 and 2007 in partnership with Mindanao Women Writers Inc. and consisted of three workshops in Northwestern Mindanao. From

these workshops, a standardised module was developed and a guide on Engendered Peace Journalism was produced. The participants recorded and disseminated among the radio stations in their region a CD with 10 public service announcements on Culture of Peace and Cultural Diversity in the local languages.

WMAP for South East Asia and the Pacific, South and Central Asia

The second run of the training took place in collaboration with AMARC-WIN Asia Pacific on October 16 - 20 2009 in Manila, Philippines with 30 participants from 10 different countries in South-East Asia, the Pacific and Sudan. During the seminar the community radio broadcasters produced three radio programmes on women's role in peace building and disaster mitigation which they broadcasted in their radio stations. They also interviewed each other and the organisers and brought home sound bites to share the unique experience with the listeners in their respective communities.

“For me the highlight of this seminar was learning from the experiences of the community radios in Aceh Indonesia after the tsunami. An experience that could have helped us a lot in Manila during the Ketsana floods.” commented Madella T. Santiago, a participant from the Philippines.

“This training went deeper because we analyzed our existing skills and the problems we encounter in our daily radio work and searched for means to improve ourselves, learning from each other.” explained Adivasulevu Chute from Fiji.

WMAP for South and Central Asia Following the second trainings in the Philippines, 30 women community radio broadcasters from nine countries in South and Central Asia and the

Pacific gathered in Mysore, India to participate in the third WMAP seminar on February 13 – 18, 2010.

Aside from peace building, disaster mitigation and sustainable responses to climate change the seminar discussed management and sustainability of community radio stations as well as enhancing women's access to decision making positions.

During this leg of WMAP, participants were given the opportunity to share their experiences on the ground, as community radio practitioners. Specific stories included women community radio journalists in post-conflict Nepal, responses of indigenous women to climate change in India, and integrating women citizen journalists in radio programming. A specific case from Afghanistan was also presented – Radio Sahar's role in Women's Empowerment.

Women Making Airwaves for Peace has proven to be an enriching experiences for its participants. “This seminar was an excellent exposure to community radio. I got energized to do more live broadcasts.” said Preeti Candrasekar from India. For Shahla Saiq from Afghanistan the seminar “... was a women friendly environment where we learned a lot, such as interview techniques.” Parul Gupta from India emphasised: “It was also a space to interact and communicate with other non-english speaking participants.”

The radio programmes produced during the seminars consist of a variety of creative radio formats such as radio reports, story telling, radio drama, studio discussion and feature the experiences of women broadcasters from Afghanistan, Fiji, India, Kyrgystan, Nepal, Philippines and Sri Lanka. ◆

All the outputs of Women Making Airwaves for Peace are available on www.isisinternational.org