Demystifying Media at the Grassroots: Rural Women Using Media for Change

By Diane Bailey, Member of IAWRT USA Chapter

On Wednesday, 29 February at this year’s Commission on the Status of Women at the United Nations, IAWRT brought together five (5) women actively involved in using media to improve the lives of women.

From the Pacific Islands, Sharon Bhagwan-Rolls, who heads femLINKpacific, a feminist media and policy network established in 2000 as a result of the political crisis in Fiji, spoke about her organization’s focus on peace and security. femLINKpacific coordinates a regional women’s and policy network specifically focusing on UN Security Council Resolution 1325, which advocates for women being involved in preventing and resolving conflict. With correspondents and partners in Fiji, Bougainville, Solomon Islands and Tonga, Sharon said femLINKpacific works to empower women, the disabled and underserved communities by creating an environment for their voices to be heard. “What unites us as women using community media” says Sharon, “is that we have all faced political crises, armed conflict, there was a 10-year war in Bougainville, and currently in Fiji we are still in a political situation that is a result of the military coup of 2006”.

Michele Montas, a prize-winning Haitian journalist, ran a radio station in Haiti for many years, told the audience that radio is vital in a country where 45% of men, and 49% of women are illiterate. After the fall of the Duvalier dictatorship in 1986, Michele says there were cries of “babouket la tonbe”, Creole for “the muzzle has fallen”. In the years since “Baby Doc” Duvalier
Demystifying Media at the Grassroots . . .

went into exile, grassroots organizations, peasant groups and NGOs formed over 60 community radio stations throughout the country so convinced were the Haitian people that communication and dialogue were key to resolving the country’s problems. The devastating earthquake of January 2010 forced many community radio stations to focus more on providing information about health and jobs as rural areas played host to those displaced by the earthquake. Since radio is the most trusted media in Haiti, says Michele, in the aftermath of the quake, community programs started echoing the voices of the voiceless from the displaced in the camps set up to house them as well as those from poor urban neighborhoods.

In post-conflict Sierra Leone, radio has also helped give women a voice. Sheila Patricka Dallas-Katzman, who headed UN Radio in Sierra Leone, described how women wrote their own radio dramas to illustrate some of the challenges they faced. Sheila described it as “radio by the people, and for the people” and said broadcasts on International Women’s Day and other occasions offered calls that helped create both a forum for discussion and a good place to learn what was happening in different parts of the country. One of the women she mentored, Martha Chigozie, confirmed the power and positivity of bringing women together, saying that women now no longer believed what they had been told about “being seen but not heard”. Martha’s organization is devising new strategies to empower women. Radio, she said, has been key in helping women to network, attend school, become literate, and access micro-credit schemes.

In southern Africa, GenderLinks has found that media is critical to promoting gender equality. Loveness Jambaya Nyakujarah, an Alliance and Partnership manager with the organization, said they have been able to create “centers of excellence” which allow women’s voices and perspectives to be heard. Working across the 15 countries of SADC, the Southern African Development Community, GenderLinks works to create an enabling environment for gender policies in media houses. Loveness says advertising agencies have come to them before designing adverts. Some adverts that denigrated women have been pulled as a result of the organization’s efforts to sensitize media houses and citizens in general. The organization has helped create country networks on gender and the media, and strives to affirm and award good practices.

Racheal Nakitare, the President of IAWRT and a broadcaster herself, said the media in her country is the second most trusted source of information according to an infor track survey carried out last year. She shared the Kenyan experience where media continues to play a critical role in the run up to the first general election under the new constitution. The biggest gain for women in the new constitution is the 30% representation in political office and the not more than two thirds of any gender rule in all appointments. The proposed devolved structure of government will share out executive powers and move the services closer to the people who are predominantly in the rural areas. “The onus lies with the media to ensure that the citizen understand these provisions and play their rightful role in deciding the next government.” Racheal said.

To read full story, please visit: http://www.iawrt.org/node/2321

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As part of the nationwide “More Women in Politics” campaign launched by civil society organizations in Cameroon last year, IAWRT Cameroon Chapter took part in “The Yellow Ribbon Campaign for More Women in Councils in 2012.”

This encourages all women and men who support having more women in councils to wear a yellow ribbon commencing the International Women’s Day until the 2012 council and parliamentary elections to take place by the end of this year.

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Inspirational Quotes for IWD 2012

“The fastest way to change society is to mobilize the women of the world.”
~ Charles Malik

“Follow your instincts. That’s where true wisdom manifests itself.”
~ Oprah Winfrey

Martha Chigozie (in blue), founder of TEDEWOSIL, sharing her grassroots experience in organizing women groups in Sierra Leone.
Message from the President

In relation to this year's discussion on financing for gender equality and women empowerment, gender responsive governance and engaging young boys and girls to advance gender equality, IAWRT mounted a powerful side event where media moguls shared information on the different interventions used to engage with rural women.

It is very disappointing, to say the least, to learn that the UN Commission on the Status of Women failed to adopt the agreed conclusion at its 56th session on the basis of “safeguarding traditional values” at the expense of human rights and fundamental freedoms of women. In the words of Michelle Bachelet, Under Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN-Women, it was “a disappointing inability to reach consensus.”

This is the first time I have heard that CSW did not adopt agreed conclusion. What sense would it make if governments started to renege on promises and signed agreements? We cannot possibly reopen negotiations on already established international agreements on women's rights. What traditional values would be more important than protection and fulfillment of human rights for all? This is where we begin to define our role as journalists and programme makers in safeguarding the gains made so far in gender equality and women empowerment.

The board has sent out an announcement to members to apply for small grants to produce radio and television documentaries that highlight women as changemakers. We encourage members to identify and highlight women changemakers on just about any issues that have impacted or continue to impact on society, especially those that promote women's cause. I urge you to engage with rural women as well.

Violence against women and girls is one of the most pervasive human rights violations in the world. It is rooted in structural gender inequality and discrimination. IAWRT's Regional Meeting scheduled for May 2012 in Tanzania will re-examine the theme of Gender-Based Violence.

On a more positive note, IAWRT will continue to impact on the professional development of our members by providing scholarships to further media related education. Our gratitude to goes to our main funder, FOKUS, who has helped women accomplish various education levels through the scholarship that started in 2001.

I urge all of you to take advantage of the opportunities and also make personal commitments towards ensuring women's gains are not eroded.

Best wishes,

Racheal
The Tanzania Chapter
By Rose Haji-Mwalimu, Head of IAWRT Tanzania

It took three (3) long years to have it registered as a non-government organization (NGO) on 13 March 2012 by virtue of the NGO Act 2002 with registration No. 00NGO00005333 under the name of Association of Women in Radio and Television Tanzania Chapter (AWRTT). Initially, it is sharing office space with another NGO, Culture and Development East Africa (CDEA).

Despite the challenges confronted by Tanzania in its early stage, it has been dedicated in pursuing its lined up activities by raising funds and networking with other organizations to support its activities, building capacities of its members in the advent of new media technologies, enhancing professionalism by developing code of conduct for media, and participating in the campaigns against gender-based violence.

To date, the Chapter has generated support and resources from UN Women, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Tanzania Media Fund, Ford Foundation, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Financial Education Fund (FEF), HIVOS, GTZ, European Union, and the Department for International Development (DFID).

The Tanzania Chapter continues to mainstream its activities into existing radio and television programs especially on gender-based violence. Activities featured were 16 Days of Activism, HIV and AIDS, International Women’s Day and Gender Media Monitoring.

As a way of moving forward, Tanzania Chapter is bound for its values of professionalism, integrity, maturity, honesty, ability to look at challenges as opportunities, and uplifting voice of the voiceless.

Along with its 14 members, Rose H. Mwalimu; Flora Nzema; Evodia Ndonde; Asia Mohammed; June Jao; Lucy Ogutu; Justina Katunzi; Yvonne Msemembo; Dina Chahali; Luis Restuta; Regina Kessy; Bestina Magutu; Razia Mwawanga; and Fatuma Mwatulanga, it is hosting the next IAWRT Regional Meeting in Tanzania on 28-30 May 2012.

In mid 1990’s, five members from Radio Tanzania Dar Es Salaam, now Tanzania Broadcasting Corporation joined IAWRT—Betty Mkwasa, Penzi Nyamungumi, Edda Sanga, Rose Haji and Sarah Dumba.

However, IAWRT’s momentum pitched up only in 2007 when two young members of the Tanzania Women’s Association (TAMWA) had an opportunity to go to Norway for an exchange program and became members of IAWRT. Thereafter, two members (Rose Haji Mwalimu and Flora Nzema) from Tanzania were able to attend the IAWRT Bi-Annual Conference in Nairobi in 2007 and revived its membership by paying their arrears in membership fees. Subsequently in 2008, the movement recruited seven (7) members and held its first general meeting and elected the leadership of Rose H. Mwalimu (Chair), Flora Nzema (Secretary General), and Evodia Ndonde (Interim Treasurer). Two (2) committees were also formed to coordinate radio and television and another critical decision drawn from this meeting was the intent to form a chapter.

In November 2009, during the 33rd Biennial Conference in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, the IAWRT International Board installed the Tanzania Chapter with a total of 14 individual members.

Flora Nzema (leftmost) and Rose Haji-Mwalimu (rightmost) with Sara Nakibuuka (Uganda) in the middle during the Gala and Awards Night of the 34th IAWRT Biennial Conference In Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
About 70 radio and television professionals from around the world are expected to attend IAWRT Regional Conference on 28-30 May 2012 in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. IAWRT Tanzania Chapter will serve as the local host having the Minister of Community Development, Gender and Children, Ms. Sophia Simba, to discuss the magnitude of the problem, the challenges and opportunities to mitigate the scourge on the theme, “Gender Based Violence: Stakes, Challenges and Opportunities.”

This year’s theme and venue enhances the United Nations’ initiative of KILIMANJARO CLIMB UNiTE Campaign to end violence against women and children as one of the activities to commemorate the International Women’s Day 2012 on 8th of March in Tanzania.

People from different walks of life including African film stars, musicians, local and international journalists, government officials as well as UN officials took part to the climb that was flagged off by the President of the United Republic of Tanzania Hon. Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete.

This risky undertaking is to send the message to the world that violence against women and children is as dangerous as climbing the mountain and must STOP!

Violence against women is a violation of human rights, causing harms in families and leaving countless women living in pain and fear in every country in the world. It can only be eliminated, by addressing discrimination, promoting women’s equality and empowerment, and ensuring that women’s and children’s human rights are fulfilled. Millions of women continue to suffer in the home and in the community with devastating effects. It is therefore important to adopt national laws to address all forms of violence against women and girls, in line with international rights standards.

Over the last two decades, violence against women has been recognized worldwide as a major development concern, and a human rights violation. Hence, IAWRT-Tanzania believes that media is a right platform to provide forum for promoting dialogues between citizens and government and facilitate public discussions on acts of violence against women in society. The contribution made by the media is clear, to provide information, which is the basis for proper informed debate on Gender Based Violence. Media provides public with timely and accurate information on the affairs of government and shapes the climate of democratic debate and helps the establishment and maintenance of good governance on issues concerning violence against women.

IAWRT intends to see that all forms of violence against women are addressed through prevention, policy development, implementation, and economic empowerment. Participants will share experiences and raise public awareness on women’s rights and media production on issues of the role of media in making women’s concerns heard.
MARGO SMIT: Paving the way for more Ageeths

Margo Smit is the director of the Dutch-Flemish Association of Investigative Journalists, VVOJ. She is also an independent, self-employed investigative TV-documentary filmmaker. Smit studied journalism in the United States. In 1989, she began working as a news and features reporter for a Dutch commercial TV station and later as their political correspondent. In 1997, she transferred to KRO Reporter, an investigative television documentary series on Dutch public TV, where she worked till 2009. Smit investigated for example the Dutch monarchy, nuclear safety and proliferation, accounting transparency at multinationals, Islam, honorary killings and the banking industry.

Margo was invited to serve as the resource person during the Investigative Journalism Session organized by the IAWRT Norwegian Chapter as part of the 34th Biennial Conference in Malaysia in November 2011.

“On the day the approval of my IAWRT membership came in the e-mail, the Netherlands’ first female TV journalist hosting the first Dutch TV show on woman’s issues passed away. Ageeth Scherphuis (yes, try your tongue around this real Dutch name ;-) in the early 1950s started her career as a secretary at a local paper, for ‘real’ journalism wasn’t the work of a woman, the chief editor told her. But she persisted and succeeded, first to become a TV-presenter, then in 1975 to get the woman’s show on air, and after that to do the hard core, in depth reportage and interview (though she did those for a magazine, yes, one on paper...).

IAWRT was already there when Ageeth fought her battles. To my knowledge, she wasn’t a member. But she should have been: IAWRT would have strengthened her, and she would have contributed to IAWRT and this wonderful resource we call female colleagues. Today, there still are many battles to be fought, for women in radio and television, in my country and around the world.

I am proud to be a new IAWRT member, and to try and contribute. I want to share my by now 20 years of knowledge of investigative reporting for public television, to help deflect criticism of bias that (even thoroughly researched) documentaries so often are met with. Transparency in methods of reporting and documenting can put the emphasis back to where it belongs: on the stories and the issues in them. And I want to learn from this network of incredible, powerful women that I first met in Kuala Lumpur in November 2011. And thus perhaps, in the long run, I might help level the playing field. For the many young Ageeths eager to enter the profession, from all over this world.”

- Margo

OB joins ABU

Former IAWRT President, Olya Booyar, was recently brought into the fold of the Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union (ABU) family in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

With Olya’s outstanding qualifications as a journalist, broadcaster and media executive and her extensive years in the field of media and broadcasting industry, ABU is confident that she will be an asset to the organization. Hence, will be in charge of upgrading ABU’s communication channels to its members worldwide. On the immediate, Olya will be reviewing ABU’s current publication activities and mapping a way forward exploring various platforms—paper and electronic publishing, web, audio-visual resources, and social media.

Likewise, Olya runs the pilot stage of the “Broadcasting for All: Focus on Gender” project of the ABU with AIBD and FES which will explore possible ways on how the gender guidelines will be implemented and adopted, initially in six (6) of its pilot countries in the Asia-Pacific region where majority IAWRT members are taking the lead.

The IAWRT family wishes Olya the best in enriching her relationships with ABU and venturing another challenge of elevating gender equity issue in media.
2nd Asian Women’s Festival Gains a Success

By Jai Chandiram, Head of IAWRT India Chapter

IAWRT India Chapter, in collaboration with the Department of Electronic Media and Mass Communication–Pondicherry University, garners another success in the recently concluded 2nd Asian Women Festival in Puducherry on March 9-11, 2012.

The International selection of films celebrated a diversity of women filmmakers, covering the gamut from international favorites to artistic experiments along the fringes of the genre to community videos. The festival offered a films package comprising 36 films from 13 countries: Bangladesh, Bhutan, Canada, China, France, India, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, Pakistan, Thailand, Turkey, and USA.

The festival drew students and faculty from different departments of the University, which made the venue (SOM Auditorium) full with the participation of people from within and outside the University. Students’ feedback and participation in the discussions indicate that the festival was successful in introducing a wide range of meaningful films and enriching learning through cross-disciplinary platforms.

For the ceremonial opening, Ms. Jai Chandiram, Head of IAWRT India Chapter, delivered the keynote address; Ms. Shazia Ilimi, journalist and a member of IAWRT India Chapter delivered the inaugural address; and Prof. J.A.K. Tareen, Vice Chancellor of Pondicherry University, presided over the function.

9th Edition of International Women’s Festival “KIN”

The IAWRT Members are invited to join and send their entries to the 9th edition of International Women's Festival “KIN” (Armenian woman), which will be held on 1-5 December 2012 in Yerevan. The festival's goals are to promote women’s creativity, establish network between/among women filmmakers around the globe, better understanding of the cultural diversity and address, through films, issues of violence, inequality, discrimination and other problems related to women’s rights and gender problems.

Submission Deadline: 28 August 2012

For more details, please visit http://kinfestival.wordpress.com

Nepal-Africa Film Festival 2012

Dr. Manju Mishra, an IAWRT Nepal Member and the Chairperson of the College of Journalism and Mass Communication (CJMC) is organizing the Nepal-Africa Film Festival 2012 from 28 May to 1 June 2012 at the Russian Cultural Center, Kathmandu, Nepal. The theme, “Seeing Africa through the African Eyes” will showcase twelve selected films portraying African cultures and traditions in documentaries, drama, animated films, among others. This is in collaboration with her African partners from Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, and Zambia with support from Fredskorpset Norway.

For more information, please visit http://www.nepalafricafilmfestival.org/
IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENTS TO IAWRT MEMBERS

CALL FOR PROPOSAL TO AVOID SHORT DOCUMENTARY PRODUCTION GRANT

IAWRT is holding its 3rd Short Documentary Production Grant Project for IAWRT members to produce compelling documentaries on issues affecting women worldwide. This year, 20 IAWRT producers will be selected to support the production of a five-minute radio or television/video documentaries on the topic—CHANGEMAKERS. Ten (10) radio and ten (10) video production applications will be selected, respectively.

CHANGEMAKERS are the women in our lives who are taking a stand on local, regional and international issues. They are taking risks, asking difficult questions and finding new solutions to the problems of our times. Who are the CHANGEMAKERS in your community, region or country?

For more details, guidelines and application forms please follow the link, http://www.iawrt.org/category/3/18/135

Submission Deadline: 15th May 2012

IAWRT-FOKUS SCHOLARSHIP

It is time to apply for the IAWRT-FOKUS Study Scholarship for 2012. The aim of the scholarship is to provide an opportunity and financial support to dynamic media professionals who have demonstrated academic, professional excellence and extracurricular achievements and are likely to be future leaders, decision makers and opinion leaders in their profession. The scholarship fund is full or partial support for short term or long-term academic program in media studies and media projects.

We are looking for a broad geographical spread thereby encouraging diversity. Think out of the Box. Scholarships are not limited to pursuing degrees or diplomas at universities.

For more details on the criteria and application form, please visit, http://www.iawrt.org/category/3/18/140

Submission Deadline: 15th May 2012

IAWRT to undertake Gender Mainstreaming Case Studies in the South

Taking off from IAWRT's involvement with ABU, AIBD and FES in developing gender guidelines for broadcasting organizations in Asia-Pacific—“Broadcasting for All: Focus on Gender”—it is heading its way to undertake case studies in the South.

Throughout the process, IAWRT has shown unrivalled skills and expertise in the partnership while developing itself a unique capacity as an organization of professional media women promoting gender mainstreaming.

This project envisons undertaking and analyzing case studies of gender equity conditions and developments in the South where IAWRT has chapters. While doing this, it will help build the capacity of IAWRT members and the media professionals who will be involved in the project, on gender equity issues.

IAWRT is underway in doing its preliminary work with regard to the project and will provide more details to its members, particularly to the chapters, on the third day of the Regional Meeting in Tanzania by end of May.

FEEDBACK

I enjoyed the newsletter! I was challenged to aim high in my broadcasting work.
- Soneni, Gwizi, Zimbabwe

Congratulations for the very good job you are doing!
- Cristina Sarbu, Romania

The newsletter is great!
- Lis Kirkby, Australia

What a wonderful time to see those beautiful faces once more.
- Muyunda Chilwesa, Zambia

AIBD welcomes IAWRT

AIBD welcomes the membership of IAWRT to its network and hopes for a closer cooperation and strengthening of its partnership particularly in the areas of international media dialogue, broadcast development and training.

AIBD also extends its invitation to IAWRT members in the forthcoming Asia Media Summit (AMS) on 29-30 May 2012 in Bangkok with Thai PBS as the host.

For online registration, please go to http://www.aibd.org.my/ams