BUILDING COMMUNITY -- SHAPING CHANGE
THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY, CITIZEN AND ALTERNATIVE MEDIA IN REGIONAL
TRANSFORMATION

A Pre-conference by the Community Communication section of the IAMCR & UNESCO Chair on
Community Media, University of Hyderabad
In collaboration with CEMCA, AMARC, UNESCO, Ideosync and Ford Foundation
University of Hyderabad, July 13-14, 2014

SUMMARY REPORT

JULY 13, 2014

10.00-11.00 am:

OPENING PLENARY (CONFERENCE HALL)

The two-day Pre-conference on *Building Community-Shaping Change – The Role of Community,
Citizen and Alternative Media in Regional Transformation* began with Arne Hintz (Cardiff
University, UK) welcoming the participants and giving a brief overview of International
Association for Media and Communication Research (IAMCR). Hintz shared IAMCR's
involvement in community media through research, and also expressed the importance of such
a pre-conference being hosted, keeping in view the vibrant community media in the South
Asian region. He noted the importance of this pre-conference in bringing together advocates,
activists, researchers and practitioners to have an exchange and hold intense discussions. Such
a pre-conference also made it possible to bring together different organizations from the region
working in the field of community media. Following this, Vinod Pavarala (UNESCO Chair on
Community Media, University of Hyderabad) expressed the opportunity present at the pre-
conference to share and showcase the work being done in community media in the South Asian
region.

Shubhranshu Choudhary, winner of the Google Digital Activism Award 2014 for his initiative CGNetSwara, delivered the keynote address. Mr. Choudhary highlighted the need for democratizing journalism. He shared his story of the journey with CGNetSwara through a short documentary by National Geographic Channel, following which he expressed few of his concerns with regard to mainstream and alternative media. He said the centralized nature of mainstream media creates problems of ownership and hoped for creation of an alternative media owned and funded by the community, which could be organic in nature. The mainstream media is still very aristocratic in nature and no political democracy can function without a democratic media. CGNetSwara was started due to the absence of a democratic communication platform and to ensure access and voice to the last person in Chhattisgarh, a media dark zone in India. It is created using the old and new technologies of radio and the Internet, respectively, to create a dialogue and democratize communication. Choudhary concluded by stressing on the need to create better communication systems in order to create a better world.

11.00 – 12.30 pm

PLENARY: COMMUNITY RADIO POLICY IN SOUTH ASIA – TOWARDS A RIGHTS-BASED DISCOURSE (CONFERENCE HALL)

The status of CR policies in South Asia was explored, with a focus on moving towards a rights-based discourse. Ashish Sen, Community Media Consultant from India spoke of the need to re-think the 'development' paradigm in which much of the discourse around CR was rooted, in India. Drawing on a number of regional and national consultations, he elucidated the linkages between Freedom of Expression, the Right to Communicate and CR. Sen observed that CR was not a new phenomenon in South Asia, and that, it had been around in three countries of the region for ten years or more. He then outlined the various declarations, including the recent Kathmandu Declaration of August, 2013. Citing the MoU signed between AMARC and the SAARC Information Centre, he spoke of some strategic alliances being forged between CR and campaigns on food security, disaster mitigation, and minority welfare.

Min Bahadur Shahi, Deputy President, AMARC Asia-Pacific, shed light on the state of CR in Nepal, and spoke about how the lack of recognition of CR as a separate tier of broadcasting was an infringement from the perspective of rights. Outlining the meaning of a rights-based discourse, Shahi said, it pertains to the conscious and systematic application of human rights standards to CR, bringing in principles of human rights in broadcasting, and identifying right-holders and their entitlements. He also noted that some of the constraints to a rights-based approach emanate from the non-progressive functioning of administration, lack of understanding of being rights-holders and duty-bearers, weak national and regional civil society

movements, widespread inequalities and lack of access, and the disconnect between the masses and policy-makers.

M C Rasmin of the Sri Lanka Development Journalists Forum outlined all the constitutional and legal provisions in Sri Lanka, to identify and examine the various ways in which they override and limit freedom of expression. The Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation (SLBC) Act, for instance, says that the SLBC is independent, but with the head and the board members being political appointments, it curtails the independence of the body. In stating the various legal provisions, Rasmin also stated that an inactive civil society was a worrying phenomenon in Sri Lanka today. He also went on to outline the opportunities present in the current legal framework, to explore opportunities and break new ground for CR in the island-nation.

S M Shameem Reza of the University of Dhaka spoke about the status of CR in Bangladesh. NGOs, which are quite active in Bangladesh, were most proactive in advocating for CR. The Caretaker Government that was backed by the Armed Forces had passed the CR policy in 2008. Since it was not a democratically elected government, there would be certain gaps in ensuring freedom of expression, he said. He also spoke of how the term 'development' helps ease government anxieties, as opposed to making claims for rights. He pointed to the constraints in the policy, especially in terms of the eligibility criteria that allow only NGOs to apply for a license, the broadcast of only development news, and the issue of development advertisements. He stated that this ensured that the community has the right to listen, if not to broadcast. He concluded with some suggestions for improvement, including lifting the ban on marginalized groups, and connecting with other social movements.

Vinod Pavarala, the UNESCO Chair on Community Media, who moderated the session, spoke about the dominance of the development discourse in two countries of South Asia, viz., India and Bangladesh. While in Bangladesh, NGOs are a reigning force, civil society in Sri Lanka has been decimated after the war. CR is significant as an aspiration, in Sri Lanka, he said. The discussion that followed focused on the status of the marginalized in the CR landscapes of each of the countries, on the difficulties of the licensing process in India, and the possibility of exploring educational radio in Sri Lanka.

1.30 – 3.00 pm

Parallel Session 1: THE DALIT VOICE IN COMMUNITY RADIO: EXPERIENCES, CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES IN SOUTH ASIA [AMARC PANEL 1]

The moderator Ramnath Bhat initiated the session outlining the possible areas to probe into, in looking at dalit issues and CR, like content, management opportunities and CR personnel. J B Biswakorma of UNESCO Nepal spoke of access of CR to dalits in Nepal. Drawing on the AMARC definition of CR as the 'voice of the voiceless', he spoke about how dalits were politically,

economically and socially deprived groups and, therefore, fit the definition. He then spoke about the participation of members of the dalit community in CRs in Nepal, and stated that in principle, they were accepted in CR stations. He observed that the percentage of dalits among volunteers was high and that they have the power of decision-making. In terms of content, he said, programmes on dalit issues were made only by dalit organisations and that this was comparatively lesser in CRs. He highlighted the challenges, ranging from lack of acceptance of dalits as station managers, to mere tokenism, to lack of specific plans to enhance the capacities of dalits. The need of the hour, he said, was to formulate an inclusive CR policy.

AHM Bazlur Rahman of Bangladesh spoke about two kinds of dalits in Bangladesh, the Bengali dalits and the non-Bengali dalits. He said the government had passed the Anti-Discrimination Law of 2014, in order to put an end to discrimination. He identified four major deficits as dalit issues, including the deficit of information, participation, accountability and alternatives. In Bangladesh, the 14 CRs had organized sensitization programmes for producers and station managers on dalit issues, fellowships were awarded to dalit youth, and today, 10 CRs broadcast on dalit issues.

General Narsamma of Sangham Radio, Pastapur, said that the mainstream media ignore dalits. She said women in rural areas engaged in small-scale agriculture had wealth of experience to share. Sangham Radio has been part of the lives of the dalit women in Pastapur, earlier via narrowcasting and since 2008, via broadcasting. The radio reaches 70 villages and a number of programmes were aired on aspects relevant to the local community comprising dalits, she said.

Rem Bahadur Biswokorma of the Jagran Media Centre, Nepal spoke of the dalits as voiceless, resourceless and powerless. He said positive things were beginning to happen in the CR space when it comes to inclusion of dalits and other excluded groups, citing various declarations like the Kathmandu and Korea Declarations.

Parallel Session 2: CITIZENS' MEDIA/COMMUNITY MEDIA: REGIONAL TRANSFORMATION, TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGE AND NEW PERSPECTIVES

This session started with Dorothy Kidd (University of San Francisco) presenting her paper titled, "Mega-Mining, Indigenous and Citizens' Media in Regional Transformation." Kidd spoke about social movement communications with focus on the social movements in South America that provided greater access to people and sought independence from dominant forms of media. Mining was a nexus of crisis and conflict giving rise to over 200 conflicts, affecting 300 communities, primarily indigenous. The new contenders of social movements included indigenous communities, mining affected communities, citizen support groups, environment groups and labour based groups. Social movements now included community media practitioners as well. Listing few takeaways for community media from social movements, she

highlighted the need for community media to be a movement away from media-based institutions and a tool for bridging groups.

Stefania Milan (Tilburg University), in her presentation titled "Data Activism – Citizen Journalism meets big data," looked at how nature of information is now changing towards big data and how the digital traces left behind are being collected for different purposes. Big Data is the data resulting from government functions; online distribution and archiving and; human and machine interaction. There was a 50-fold increase in data generation between 2010 and 2014. She explored the idea of whether big data can be used for community media where there is more user generated content. She further presented the idea of data activism as a data epistemology, a new form of civic participation, a series of data journalism practices and a new form of social organizing.

Kanyika Shaw (University of Thai Chamber of Commerce) while presenting on The Todsakan Project highlighted the role of digital media in community communication. The project focused on the youth since it was believed that this age group was not interested in the folk and ritual media. It looked at how the youth could use digital media to capture folk media. The youth of Tai Yuan used video and phone camera to produce short films in documentary style.

Aashish Kumar (Hofstra University, New York) was the final speaker for the session and he shared his ongoing project on "Suburban Communities and Universities as collaborators in Participatory Media Practice," which is a year-long training and capacity building project. It looks at how students and the University could collaborate with community-based organizations on a participatory media project. The initial stages involved surveying the organizations in the surrounding areas, workshops and presentation of proposals on areas to work together.

3.30-4.30pm

Parallel Session 1: COLLABORATIONS ACROSS REGIONS USING COMMUNITY MEDIA MANCH PLATFORM – CR ADDRESSING DISASTER AND MITIGATION

This session focused on the role of CR in disaster mitigation. Ideosync Media Combine's N. Ramakrishnan introduced the work done by his organization in the CR space, especially about training and setting up 7 CR stations over the last 12 years and providing guidance in the application process. The key learnings that emerged from this engagement were, he said, that there was no space for cross-dialogue, very few opportunities and shortage of capacity. The Community Media Manch platform was part of Ideosync's Grassroots Mediascapes initiatives and is supported by Ford Foundation. The online platform was designed through participatory engagement, with a very enabling User Interface (UI) flow. It is a forum to discuss issues

pertinent to CR, share audio, video and text-based content, collaborate and co-create, and a space for peer training and learning through webinars.

Two sets of stations hand-held by Ideosync and engaged in the usage of the Manch platform presented case studies on using it to share resources on disaster. First, representatives of Brahmaputra Radio and Henvalvani spoke of their collaboration. The fact that they were in geographically similar conditions, worked on similar community media platforms, and faced similar issues made the collaboration a useful and efficient one, they said. They outlined the process of engagement, from the selection of groups, research and survey, selection of themes and issues, production, and narrowcasting and broadcasting. They also spoke of the challenges they faced, including technical hindrances, lack of human resources, language barriers and the translation of the script and data.

Next, representatives of Gurgaon ki Awaaz and Kumaon Vani discussed their unique project on connecting workers who had migrated from Mukhteshwar (a location served by Kumaon Vani) to Gurgaon (a location served by Gurgaon ki Awaaz). The stations made six programmes jointly on migration and divided them according to themes. The collaborations involved writing scripts, recording interviews, uploading materials on the Manch platform and providing feedback. The two teams were appreciative of the space offered by the platform to collaborate, ideate and innovate, together.

Parallel Session 2: ENGENDERING TIES, BUILDING COMMUNITY: THE CASE OF SHADI KHAMPUR NEIGHBOURHOOD MUSEUM PROJECT

This session showcased the process of initiating the Shadi Khampur Neighbourhood Museum Project by the Centre for Community Knowledge (CCK) and Jana Natya Manch, a street theatre group from New Delhi. Komita Dhanda spoke on how Jana Natya Manch collaborated with CCK for this project to understand the neighbourhood and community of Shadi Khampur, while Surajit Sarkar (CCK) expressed how CCK wanted to initiate a city museum, which looks at the 'lived' experiences and narratives highlighting the diversity of the city. Archana Kumar (Lady Irwin College) outlined the project process, which started with marking of the neighbourhood with the help of volunteers, followed by the collection of oral memories, narratives, and histories of residents belonging to the Shadi Khampur area. Family discourses, local material cultures, photographs were also collected. The museum was set up with the help of the volunteers and neighbourhood in Studio Safdar, Jana Natya Manch's bookstore cafe. The museum, which was open for three months, was accepted and encouraged by the neighbourhood, whose residents took great pride in showcasing their identity. The museum shared stories, not of kings and queens but, of people who made Delhi and used a bottom-up approach to create a people-centered view of Delhi.

4.30-5.30pm

Parallel Session 1: COLLABORATIONS ACROSS REGIONS USING COMMUNITY MEDIA MANCH PLATFORM – CR ADDRESSING GENDER ISSUES

Ashok Kumar Sunhal of Alwar ki Awaaz and Arti Manchanda of Alfaaz-e-Mewat spoke about the collaboration between the two stations on the central theme of women and governance. Manch was used as a platform to reach out to women and hold live discussions. The show, titled, *Dastak*, looked at how women could come together and discuss their issues. It was a series of six episodes produced in magazine format. The show also spoke about women in panchayats and the stories of women in the area of Mewat. The challenge of the Community Media Manch platform was varying quality of programs, online share, and time management in planning and production.

Radha Shukla of Waqt ki Awaaz shared the experience of her station's collaboration with Radio Awaaz. The theme for the radio series was rituals and festivals, especially chosen because women's participation is high in these events. The Manch platform was used to share research notes, vox populi and interviews. A key challenge in the collaboration was poor internet connectivity.

Parallel Session 2: SOCIONITY PROJECT: MOBILE COMMUNITY MEDIA APPLICATIONS

The Socionity Project of IIIT-Hyderabad is a two-year project aimed at identifying apps that could be of use to the average citizen and to empower them through technology. TB Dinesh of Janastu and Navjyoti Singh of IIIT-Hyderabad showcased their project wherein the website develops and narrates the content across cultural boundaries. The project is aimed at web access to the non-literate. The two year time period includes identifying applications, their designing, execution and impact, they said. Set in workshop mode, the web-tools were showcased for participants to see.

Parallel Session 3: DOING PV -- A HANDS-ON EXPLORATION OF THE WHAT, WHY AND HOW OF PARTICIPATORY VIDEO (WORKSHOP)

The workshop started with the screening of four videos where the concept of participatory video was introduced to the participants. After the screening, the facilitators, including Gareth Benest, InsightShare, UK and Chris High, Open University, UK, encouraged the participants to raise questions that could then become the basis for later discussions. An activity with the camera was then organised where every participant could handle the camera and also be a part of the video. The video was then played for everyone to see. The group then discussed certain concepts and processes associated with participatory video. The discussions centered around the difference between community video and participatory video, achieving group consensus

on a selected topic, disseminating the videos produced through participatory video, processes to increase the impact of participatory video and the influence of change in technology landscape on participatory video.

JULY 14, 2014

9.30 – 10.30 am

Parallel Session 1: ACROSS SPECTRUM(S): SOGI AND CR IN SOUTH ASIA [AMARC PANEL 2]

The AMARC Panel began with Maica Lagman (President, AMARC Asia-Pacific) introducing the Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) initiative started by AMARC in 2010. The initiative looked at how community radio stations could take the cause of SOGI forward by not delving on the framework of morality but that of human rights. Priyanka D (Radio Jockey, Radio Active) shared her story of being a transgender RJ in a community radio station. She spoke about how her radio show takes a more rights-based perspective and focuses on issues of housing, police harassment, employment opportunities, and education for the transgender community. She highlighted the need for activism on radio especially for issues of gender identity. Nimmi Chauhan (WIN, AMARC Asia-Pacific) spoke about the necessity of a space for communication, dialogue and articulation within and with the larger community. Community radio stations must build alliances to work together. Issues related to sexual minorities can be linked with gender and should not be viewed in isolation. She stressed on the need to synergise and energise together through collaborations and networking.

Parallel Session 2: SOCIAL ENTERPRISE MODELS TO BUILD COMMUNITY MEDIA

Successful models of social entrepreneurship in the community media space were showcased in this session. Meera K of Citizen Matters spoke about her hyper-local, online, community news portal in Bangalore. She highlighted the need for credible information and transparency, and the need for citizen involvement in the same. The solution, she said, was found in city-focused, citizen-oriented digital media that provided in-depth, investigative, watchdog reporting. Calling the model a 'hybrid' model, she drew up the revenue schemes for Citizen Matters. It comprised of traditional and alternative trends. Advertisements, coupons, listings, feature supplements, sponsorships, e-commerce and target market analytics were some sources of revenue generation. This is complemented by non-profit news networks, crowd funding, bringing in convergence capacities on the website to increase relevance and revenue. Citizen Matters also organized lectures, workshops and debates, besides providing DIY guides to citizens on various issues central to their lives. She also outlined the challenges, including the cost of original content, local advertisement expectations, lack of maturity of online advertising in the country and lack of journalism-friendly investors. Citizen Matters has had a good impact, she said,

especially in the form of uncovering scams and abuse of power (where they collaborated with citizens), in encouraging transparency and reducing corruption, and in helping people solve their problems.

Vincent D'Souza, who publishes 3 hyper-local newspapers in three neighbourhoods of Chennai, spoke about his venture. The focus, he said, was on doing the content well and then getting the advertisers. In keeping with his idea that neighbourhoods deserve space in the media, he spoke about how his newspapers provided key everyday updates from the neighbourhoods and encouraged citizen-journalists. From showcasing traditional music festivals to providing journalism training in the summer for school children, his newspapers engage the citizens, he said. He also stated that he sees opportunity in 'data', since newspapers have a lot of data.

10.30 – 11.30 am

Parallel Session 1: THE POTENTIAL FOR COMMUNITY TV IN SOUTH ASIA [CEMCA PANEL 1]

Vasuki Belavadi of the University of Hyderabad said there were time-slots for communities or separate channels for community television in many countries. However, in India, there's no such opportunity yet. The funding model, mostly, is based on public funding and inputs from local NGOs. Elsewhere, subscription-based models also exist, he said. In India, the cable revolution and satellite altered the television broadcasting landscape. He spoke of how in the case of CR, narrowcasting initiatives came first and the policy shift happened later. He said, community television is a capital-intensive experiment. Therefore, alternatives could be found. For instance, regional channels could allocate time-slots for the community. He also said that it was time to start lobbying efforts with the government for community television in India.

Sajan Venniyoor, independent media consultant, spoke about how cable television entered in the easiest manner in India. He cited examples of interesting television experiments, like the Byrraju Foundation's experiment with wifi for television. Highlighting a paradox, he said, the Narrowcasting Division of Doordarshan was renamed as Community Television. He also cited the example of dalit television channel on the Internet and said that technology is a game-changer. In Bangladesh, CR entered the mediascape in 2008 and that it is now time for community television. AHM Bazlur Rahman of BNNRC, Bangladesh said the government was supportive and also cited a community television experiment started in 2007. He said they broadcast for 18 hours a day with a reach of 13 kilometres. Ankuran Dutta of CEMCA spoke about how terrestrial broadcasting was difficult for television and suggested that the vastness of the Internet can save community video. He said the government has sanctioned bandwidth to 200 panchayats in the last two years, and hence, this should be put to the best use.

Parallel Session 2: WOMEN IN COMMUNITY COMMUNICATION

This session examined the participation of women in community communication highlighting different processes and projects. Disha Mullick (Khabar Lahariya) shared the story of *Khabar Lahariya t*hrough a short video. The newspaper is a local language weekly brought out entirely by women from marginalised communities in their own language (Bundeli) from three districts of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. The uniqueness of the initiative is the reporting by women who have been suppressed for years. They report on topics of concern to them and their region like water, drought, rape, etc.

Algole Narsamma (Sangham Radio, DDS) spoke about Sangham community radio where the station was for masses without literacy. The station produces programmes on traditional knowledge of herbs with the help of local doctors, information regarding farming through farmers, etc. She spoke on how women associated with Sangham radio also completed a research on BT Cotton and its effect on farmers and soil. Arti Jaiman (Gurgaon ki Awaaz) highlighted on the need for women in communication since it breaks stereotypes and encourages other women to participate. She expressed how women constantly negotiate to be in community communication due to various factors like finance, family pressure, safety, etc. A major challenge is the access to media by women.

Ram Bhat (Maraa) looked at the process of Community Learning Program (CLP) in community radio stations. A CLP is not an awareness-based radio program but has a focused topic and audience, definite aims and objectives. The CLP has a story-based approach with multi-channel engagement and collaborations with partners and stakeholders. Tools like message matrix, episode plan are used in this process. Ram expressed how the CLP includes testimonies from the community with local solutions. It looks at building trust with the community, going beyond programming and values the community as a knowledge resource.

Gazala Shaikh (Development Alternatives) spoke about the importance of women as communicators who achieve a sense of identity and also unleashes their latent potential as a change maker. A major challenge to women increasingly participating in communication, she conveyed, was opposition and resistance from family and community.

11.30 – 12.30 am

Parallel Session 1: SELF-ASSESSMENT OF CR – TOOLS AND EXPERIENCES [CEMCA PANEL 2]

This session, moderated by Jo Tacchi of RMIT University (Australia) explored the need for self-assessment of community radio stations, the toolkits available, and the experiences of stations that went through such a process. Kanchan K. Malik (University of Hyderabad) explained the Community Radio Continuous Improvement Toolkit (CRCIT) developed by the UNESCO Chair

with the support of CEMCA. The CRCIT contains nine parameters based on which the community radio station can assess its own performance. The toolkit, which was developed through a consultative process with stakeholders, takes into account core principles of CR across the globe. The field-testing of the toolkit also provided inputs for its development.

Rukmini Vemraju (Consultant, Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, India) outlined the process of peer review of community radio stations initiated by the Ministry. The process, which was voluntary in nature, looked at how community radio stations across the country could learn from each other. The process, which started with a community radio station undertaking a self-assessment, requires the stations to be aware of its areas of strengths and improvement, then visit two other peer stations to discuss the same. Every participating station was visited by two stations, and had the opportunity of visiting two stations. An end line workshop was also held to collate the learning.

Raghu Mainali (Nepal) looked at the relevance of critical evaluation of CR performance to check its strength in the media environment. He elaborated the CR Performance Assessment System, a toolkit developed with seven composites and 60 indicators with scores. It included areas like community participation, governance, station management, finance, etc. The toolkit was tested in 2011-12 with the help of UNESCO. Pinky Chandran (Radio Active) shared her station's experience of being a part of the self-assessment process. She explained how the station had initially used the Self Assessment Toolkit developed by CEMCA in 2011 and then the CRCIT in 2014 and that such a process gives time for a station to reflect with all the stakeholders and look at action points for the future.

Parallel Session 2: SUSTAINABILITY AND COMMUNITY MOBILISATION IN COMMUNITY RADIO

This session explored the issue of sustainability in CR. Fr. Thomas Joseph Therakam of Radio Mattoli spoke about the various kinds of sustainability that come to the fore in running a CR station. Programme sustainability, he said, is needed to broadcast a variety of programmes. Sharing his station's experience, he said, the station provided free broadcast space to NGOs and Self- Help Groups to mobilize people's participation. He then spoke about human resource sustainability, and how his station was focused on participatory communication for content generation. Volunteer-driven and a values-based approach were essential to nurture a positive environment, he said. Financial sustainability could be achieved by tapping funds from organisations like NABARD, he said. Technical sustainability was achieved through capacity-building programmes for volunteers at his station, he shared.

Kshitij Katiyar of Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai spoke about Waqt Ki Awaaz CR station, providing an overview of the team and its activities. The team is eager to learn computer skills, which they find to be a good opportunity. He said the station has incentivized

participation by focusing on community interests. For instance, announcing examination results, having phone-in sessions and the like are some such measures. Anuradha Kunte of Yeralavani CR spoke about how her NGO runs the station in a remote area and has been catering to the indigenous population for the last three years. She spoke of challenges like bad transportation and roads that dissuade participation and force dependency on skilled staff. She spoke of how the station had adopted a yearly theme this far, on agriculture, enterprise development and technology, one each for the three years of its existence. Broadcasting for 10 hours a day, the radio station airs programmes in Kannada and Marathi, she said. Citing an example of the CR's intervention in local affairs, she spoke of how they had lobbied with the government to bring water to remote areas. The NGO also provided employment opportunities for women, she said.

1.30 – 3.00 pm

Parallel Session 1: COMMUNITY MEDIA, LOCALITY AND SOCIAL CHANGE

The session began with a presentation on Krishi Vignan Kendras by Bidu Bhushan Dash of Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai. He spoke about how technology transfer to agriculture, animal husbandry and other agro-based areas continues to happen. The CR policy in India allowed KVKs to run CRs, and this has seen a rise in the number of CRs being run by these organisations. Drawing from his study on KVKs, he concluded that KVKs promote participation exponentially, with KVK CRs reaching as many as 40 villages. M C Rasmin of SDJF spoke about his organisation's theatre initiative to promote active non-violence and freedom of religion in Sri Lanka. Providing a background of the situation of Muslim youth in Sri Lanka, he spoke about how the community theatre initiative chose the themes of peace and pluralism. He said 82% of the participants were women and 90% felt that the major issue in Sri Lankan society is intolerance. He concluded by saying that the initiative reaches 15000 community members of whom 5000 are women and children.

Pooja Murada of SM Sehgal Foundation that runs Alfaz-e-Mewat CR, spoke about how the Meo Muslims are among those that have the lowest social indicators. The CR bridges a gap between the government and the community members. Most of the phone calls received at the station are to do with lack of proper governance, she said. She gave examples of village-level micro-planning on the radio and how it bridged very important gaps. The outcomes, she said, are that mothers have begun monitoring midday meals, there have been legal literacy camps, and 107 ration shops are now functional.

Aparna Moitra of Jharkhand Mobile Vaani spoke about the mobile-based community media. About 50,000 calls are received in a typical month, she said, averaging about 3000 calls a day. Jharkhand is a state with poor development indicators and political instability. In this scenario,

Mobile Vaani caters to an important gap, she said. The three cornerstones of deploying this tool have been community building, content, and technology. Volunteer clubs now exist at the grassroot community level, and the content is user-generated which makes the process democratic but disorganized. She also spoke of content-specific channels to enable discussion on forums. The session drew to a close with the final presentation on CR in Bangladesh, with Bikash Bhowmick and Md. Shazzad Hussain talking about the role of CR in helping disaster-affected communities, giving information and serving as an access point.

Parallel Session 2: COMMUNICATION RECEPTIONS -- RURAL COMMUNICATION AND TECHNOLOGY

TB Dinesh (Janastu) noted the re-narration Culture and the web in the present times. Re-narration is being practiced at every moment nowadays on the web, by editors, NGOs, etc. In this context, the web page Alipi (222.ally.in) was introduced wherein the page re-narrates a web page. The browser reconstructs the page, translating it in the language and associating it to the closest region. Navjyoti Singh (IIT Hyderabad) looked at rurality and smart phones. He highlighted dependency of web on textual form and its need to become independent of language. Externalized memories are reused in web and interfacing it with mobile technology will result in new uses of mobile in the future. He noted the prospect of bringing high quality information to local people through such interfacing. Ram Bhat, Maraa shared the Community Radio Policy Portal which works as a frequency finder. The project, which is in its initial stages helps in signal strength mapping and a sample was collected in New Delhi. It would also help community radio station track its callers.

3.00 pm – 4.00 pm

Parallel Session 1: VIDEO AT THE GRASSROOTS -- WOMEN AND PARTICIPATORY VIDEO IN INDIA

In this session moderated by Janardhan Rao Cheeli of NAARM (Hyderabad), Daxaben Maheta spoke about Video SEWA, a women's cooperative using participatory video to address issues of gender discrimination. Technology was a still a challenge in terms of everyday use. Kayonaaz Kalyanwala introduced Video volunteers, a media and grassroots activism organization working through a network of community correspondents. She highlighted that the impact of community journalism is more in women than men. She shared a project wherein community women, making them active stakeholders in the process, monitored a UNDP funded project. Chinna Narsamma (Community Media Trust, DDS) spoke about participatory video being a platform for every voice from rural area to be heard. The trust is run by Dalit women who are trained in video production and have made several films screened at different international film

festivals. Their film on BT cotton, including perspectives from different countries, focused on the effect of BT cotton on marginal farmers, livestock and soil.

Parallel Session 2: RURAL COMMUNICATION PROJECTS

Shalini A of Janastu and IIT-H spoke about their attempts at deploying the smart phone to help shepherds. *Follow the Sheep* is a unique call for mapping the herding activities of shepherds, to understand grassland ecosystems and help conserve the commons. Using geo-tracking systems, information on local water bodies, pastures, farms forests and the greens would be mapped so as to provide data on ecosystems, she said. Ultimately, the idea is to see how smart phones could be used by non-literates, she said. Dipti Desai of Mama TV talked about how the processes involved in sheep wool removal and processing, for instance, are documented by their initiative. Sunil Lohar and Vaibhav Srivastav spoke about their efforts in safeguarding and reviving local crafts. Raghurajpur is a village in Puri, home to artists called *chitrakaras*. In an attempt to revive the mural painting art, the Raghurajpur Experiment retrieved information from ageing artisans, collected information and has documented it. The knowledge was imparted through training. Though the art is predominantly done by men, many women came forward to learn and practise the art, they said.

4.30 – 5.30 pm

PLENARY: FACILITATING COMMUNITY MEDIA IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION

This session, moderated by AHM Bazlur Rahman of BNNRC, Bangladesh, was intended to share some of the emerging issues in community media across the South Asian region. Archana Kapoor of the Community Radio Association (India) spoke about the need to keep engaging with the government and to continue to ensure that freedom of expression and participation remain central concerns. Ramnath Bhat of Community Radio Forum, India said that different countries had various ways to lay pathways to infrastructure. The Universal Obligation Fund (UOF) was one such opportunity in India, he said. Imbalances between urban and rural markets and carriage-content distribution impact all media in an interconnected manner, he stated. It is important to assert ourselves to broaden the definition to include independent journalism, he said. Suman Basnet of AMARC Asia-Pacific spoke about the problem of legislation. He said, at the Seoul conference of AMARC Asia-Pacific in December 2013, there was a discussion on the lack of legislative frameworks for community radio. He went on to say that legislations sometimes also create difficulties. Therefore, an enabling environment is needed. Bijoy Patro of OneWorld South Asia spoke about deepening and widening the social and political participation for security and mutual benefits. Developing open-source platforms for easy access to flow of information could be a way forward, he said.

CONCLUSION

The pre-conference drew to a close with renewed commitment to strengthen and create enabling environments for community media to thrive, to deepen democracy and accentuate pluralism. Prof. Vinod Pavarala, UNESCO Chair on Community Media and Dr. Arne Hintz, Chair of the Community Communication Section of IAMCR thanked the participants for an intense two-day interaction on varied aspects of community media.

A Report prepared for the UNESCO Chair on Community Media by
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