



**WORLD ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY RADIO BROADCASTERS  
(AMARC)  
AMARC INTERNATIONAL**

**AMARC – ACTIVITIES REPORT 2003**

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## AMARC INTERNATIONAL – ACTIVITIES REPORT 2003

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The AMARC 8 World Conference was the most important activity of AMARC in 2003. Under the motto "Voices for a Better World: Community Media and Social Justice", more than 200 delegates from 59 countries gathered for seven days to discuss the state of community broadcasting in the world in Katmandu, Nepal, February 21-27, 2003.

AMARC 8 General Assembly elected a new International Board of Directors, decided the organization's Strategic Plan of Action for the period 2003-2006 and adopted the ***Katmandu declaration***. Delegates to AMARC 8 also agreed in an ***International Charter on Community Media*** on the basis of discussions and debate initiated in 1998 in Milan, at the AMARC 7 Conference. This was undoubtedly, the largest gathering of community broadcasters to take place in the Asia- Pacific region and a cornerstone for the development of a strong community radio movement. AMARC Assembly insisted the radio spectrum be recognized as part of the global commons and called on governments to give community media first access to the radio waves.

The world community radio movement faces big challenges. AMARC Strategic Plan 2003-2006 adopted by the General Assembly AMARC 8, tackles some of them : We need to continue with our institutional reinforcement and expand our services to community radios. We also need to consolidate our projects and programs in the areas of : Public Education and mobilization, Lobbying and Advocacy, ICT's and Capacity Building, the Women's International Network, the development of the Asia Pacific Region and the establishment of a Community Media Fund.

AMARC participation in the WSIS in Geneva on December 2003, in Mumbai in January 2004 for the 4<sup>th</sup> WSF and the expected world broadcast on March 21<sup>st</sup> 2004, for the UN Day Against Racism & Discrimination by Radio voices Without Frontiers are all strengthening AMARC's role in support of community radio development for a better World.

### 2 GENERAL OPERATIONS AND INSTITUTIONAL REINFORCEMENT

AMARC International faces important financial challenges in reestablishing core-funding from CIDA or in obtaining a renewal for two years from Montreal International. This is closely associated to our accumulated deficit. The deficit has been considerably reduced in 2003, but it will still have an important impact in the operations for 2004, as we want to finish with it in 2004. Nonetheless, 2003 was a good year for the institutional reinforcement, permitting to clarify the relationship and bring up to date the relationship with funders. AMARC's new International Board of Directors proceeded to the recruitment of a new General Secretary on the basis of the improved financial situation and outlook for the future. Michelle Ntab, Regional Coordinator for Africa, helped as Acting General Secretary the close involvement of the Members of the Board involvement in management of staff, finances and general operations.

Evaluation started at the IBOD meeting in December 2003, showed that it might be necessary to advance to a more integrated approach of AMARC operations worldwide. This situation is an opportunity to draw from our weaknesses and strength, on the opportunities and threats to define in a more precise way what does

the IBOD expects of the Secretariat; what do the regions or the members expect from the Secretariat and determine realistic objectives for the 2004 action plan.

AMARC-Africa's flagship project, the Simbani Africa News Agency, is the most recent endeavor aimed at increasing the capacity and strengthening of community radio broadcasters within its membership network. Simbani Africa News Agency is a first for the continent and will promote development by relevant information dissemination through radio. The use of New ICTs is favored for the dissemination of the information gathered by community radio journalists for the Agency. Thus, the project has a strong training component on the use of these technologies

AMARC LAC has been undergoing a restructuring in the last couple of years with the goal of democratizing and decentralizing the processes of AMARC work in this region. Main programs are: Gender, legislation, Pulsar news agency, training. This new way of doing things is reflected in the emergence of a Central American Radio Network and the strengthening of a Regional Women's Network. Regional representatives of WIN have been very active in various international conferences and forums including the UN Conference Against Racism and Discrimination in South Africa, the World Summit on Sustainable Development, in the last two World Social Forums in Porto Alegre, Brazil and in the international radio campaign Voices Without Frontiers coordinated by AMARC International on march 21 (UN International Day against Racism and Discrimination).

In Europe, AMARC Europe has not yet solved financial and organizational difficulties from the past years. Nonetheless, the necessary steps are being taken to rebuild the movement in that part of the world. In spite of the difficulties some interesting activities have taken place. These include the completion of the project Women on line, which developed training materials for women on new technologies and the organization of the Speak-up WIN radio campaign against violence against women.

### **3. PROJECTS AND PROGRAMMES**

#### **3a. Public Education and Mobilization**

In the area of projects and programmes for 2003 we have first to consider that in the Public education and mobilization area it was a good year. We participated on the WSF in Porto Alegre and put forward the 2003 edition of RVSF, besides the AMARC 8 Conference at Katmandu.

There were also some shortcomings. We were not able to re-launch AMARC-Link, or InteRadio and our AMARC Website lacked up-dating, but, again, we already solved those problems. These problems will be solved in 2004 as our new ICT Officer will allow for a new and interactive website that will serve our fund-raising and notoriety efforts as well as to give service to our members.

We have to stress the importance of the construction of the AMARC Asia Region as one of our most important achievements. This allowed for an extraordinary good experience at the 4<sup>th</sup> World Social Forum in Mumbai by the end of January 2004, with the support of Development & Peace and EED. We can proudly state that AMARC extended its efforts to the Asian region successfully. The 21 of March RVSF, supported by IDRC will also become an important opportunity for global coordination of the community radio movement

*World Social Forum in Porto Alegre* : AMARC was an active partner in the communications space at World Social Forum in January 2003 in Porto Alegre

including organizing, a radio production studio and webcast from the event. Partners with AMARC at WSF included Association for Progressive Communications (APC), Agencia Latinoamericana de Informacion (ALAI), Asociacion Lationamerican Educativa Radiofonica (ALER), Feminist International Radio Endeavour). AMARC's involvement in WSF has been supported by additional funding from Development and Peace. AMARC was actively engaged in the preparation and implementation of media and communications related workshops at the World Social Forum 2003 in Porto Alegre.

*Radio Voix Sans Frontières* : Radio Voix Sans frontiers, 2003 was the sixth annual broadcast campaign organized by AMARC to mark United Nations International Day Against Racism on 21 March. The 2003 broadcast operated through regional hubs in Montreal, Johannesburg, Rome and Asuncion and carried the theme "Promote peace, combat racism".

### **3b. Legislation and advocacy**

AMARC has been actively involved all through 2003 active in the preparatory meetings and during the World Summit on the Information Society, WSIS, held in Geneva in December 2003. We have consistently advocated for community media recognition as an important actor for development in the information society. Thus, AMARC also participated actively in the Campaign for Communications Rights in the Information Society, CRIS, in the organization of the Community Media Forum held during the Summit and contributed to the Civil Society Declaration presented to the WSIS. Furthermore, AMARC and its Bridging the Digital Divide (BDO) partners, successfully highlighted best experiences in ICT4D exhibits during the WSIS.

The slim results of the first phase of the WSIS, have increased the challenges facing civil society organizations for the Tunis, WSIS final meeting in 2005. The accumulated experience of the President and the executive for the CRIS campaign and the quality of partnerships arising from that occasion, should be transferred to other issues, other areas and activities in 2004. We need to confirm our presence as an NGO and publicize our efforts. Comprehensive world campaigns might be the way of the future in topics related to the strategic plan.

### **3c. ICTs and capacity building**

AMARC has continued in 2003 with its work with One World International and other partners, in the use of ICTs for development in Africa. Among other aspects, on the development of a joint content management system (CMS) for exchange of on-line media content allowing for an appropriate use of ICTs in facilitating content exchanges for Africa's fight against poverty and for development.

Development work also continued on an on-line toolkit on multi-media skills in partnership with APC and UNESCO in the I train on line site. AMARC has contributed with training modules on community radio and multimedia production.

The CATIA-CIDA project has helped maintaining a relationship with CIDA but has had scheduling problems that show that integration is not an easy question in Global organizations. We need to actively seek new opportunities in this area with IDRC or other funders for the LAC and AP region.

### **3d. Women's International Network**

The AMARC Women's International Network, has organized on-line discussion on the WSIS process and are closely involved in the WSIS gender caucus. An international meeting of the AMARC Women's Network was held in Katmandu. Members of the network worked through the year to participate in the WSIS prepare for this.

In the coming years, WIN will focus its work on increasing women's involvement in community media – both at the production and management levels. WIN will also continue lobbying and advocacy for greater recognition and support for community media within official or governmental spaces as well as in major events organized by civil society.

### **3e. Asia regional development**

AMARC 8 was undoubtedly, the largest gathering of community broadcasters to take place in the Asia- Pacific region and a cornerstone for the development of a strong community radio movement.

The Asia-Pacific region participants that gathered in Kathmandu, Nepal during AMARC 8 constituted a Regional Committee currently consisting of 16 members from 15 countries. This Committee has a mandate to prepare statutes for the Asia-Pacific regional section of AMARC, to establish an Asia-Pacific regional office of AMARC in Kathmandu, Nepal and to oversee projects and programmes in the region.

According to the endorsed plan of action, the work of AMARC Asia will focus on building a stronger network of radios in the region to share information on programming, management of community radios and technology and to consolidate information and experiences about community radio. It will act against human rights violations and harassment of community broadcasters and will strive to enhance the role of women in the sector.

The legal entity to establish a working autonomous office is in the working. Legal entity issue may be solved in 2004, allowing for further development for the region. For the mean time, management will be coordinated with the International Secretariat. Continuing funding and new regional opportunities must be explored for June 2004. AMARC experience in regional and international level should help to get from its best experiences the means to meet the challenge of organizing a Regional Office.

### **3.f. Community Media Fund**

Finally, in terms of the Community media Fund, the basic work has started benefiting of the CATIA project. Nonetheless, AMARC needs a specific fund-raising strategy strictly connected with facilitating the execution of the 2003-2006 strategic plan. The development of an inclusive and comprehensive fund-raising strategy is a key element in achieving the projects and programmes for the action plan for 2004.

## **4. LOOKING FORWARD**

We face the challenge of the representation and development of a comprehensive worldwide INGO able to support global development of community radio. This means to reinforce the services to our constituency and to define to define clear orientations.

We need to enhance our lobbying in favor of the recognition of the community media sector, particularly on the community radio legislation, financing and recognition as a fundamental tool for development. After a very active participation in the preparatory process and in the WSIS in Geneva, we need to reinforce our alliances to prepare accordingly for the Tunes second phase in 2005, in order to advance in the recognition of the communications rights in the information Society. We also need to concentrate ourselves in developing a proper fundraising and communications strategy and develop a more integrated approach to facilitate the synergy of our worldwide presence.

The community radio movement has a strong dynamics. We do not embrace it in its entirety. In terms of global organization, we work in an unknown territory. Good discussions and clear objectives can certainly help establish a clearer picture of the challenges we are facing and how we may confront them.