



## 4. Women in Community and Indigenous Media

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### INTRODUCTION

Female members of the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC) are taking advantage of the organizing presence of community and indigenous media outlets that are active in GAMAG globally. This is in order to address the lack of clear and specific rules recognizing women's rights to communication and the transformation of gender stereotypes into laws and public policy. It is also so that these outlets develop their own instruments to support women's participation and negotiation within their own collectives, networks, movements and national and local decision-making bodies.

Although there are different expressions and disparities between countries and contexts, generally speaking, women have found community radio to be an ideal medium for participation. These spaces for participation have been occupied by women, regardless of legal or political restrictions that might exist in community media within each country, or the presence or absence of a gender perspective in these media. Furthermore, there is undeniable evidence that where there are explicit legal or political conditions in place to promote women's participation on an equal footing with male colleagues in the media, the process of integration and strengthening can take place more quickly, and indicators can be found to measure the progress of these efforts.

<sup>23</sup> For this chapter the author consulted: Mónica Valdés, Colombia, Regional Vice President of AMARC ALC; Wi Wendy Quintero, Nicaragua, Vice President of the AMARC ALC Women's Network; Celeste Farbman, AMARC programme 'Nos Quemaron Por Brujas', Argentina, and; Norma Montiel, Representative of the Women's Network of AMARC Mexico.

This chapter seeks to offer some answers to the question of what progress has been achieved by women participating in community radio projects between 2013 and 2018, based on experiences in Colombia, Nicaragua, Mexico and Argentina. The answers show that conditions differ country to country, and that women's position in community media is also fairly disparate.

## EVIDENCE

### **NICARAGUA**

There are no specific laws concerning community media in the country. Community radio programs that do exist were formed out of grass-roots adherence to the concepts of community radio broadcasting. These radio stations depend on advertising and funding raised from other types of projects. The women who participate in these programs depend on whatever revenues are at hand, and the work of network organizing depends on the availability and time each woman has to devote to it. So, in general, conditions are unfavorable for this form of media. For example, the women's network of AMARC Nicaragua has made an effort to draft gender policies that encourage women's presence in community radio, but their organizational processes have not been enough for them to complete the process.

### **COLOMBIA**

In Colombia there is a law on the books regarding community media, but it does not incorporate a gender perspective. Community media have played a crucial role in the peacebuilding process in that country, and in this, women's involvement has been fundamental. However, there have been no specific efforts to strengthen and support women in their work with this type of media. Within the Colombian political context, the priority is placed on efforts to build peace, but this has not yet included specific measures for women to organize or establish minimum criteria for gaining a stronger foothold in such media. In Colombia, therefore, there is no organization

of women, nor the express manifestation of the need to address this sector in particular.

## **ARGENTINA**

The Audiovisual Media Law of Argentina was, at the time of its promulgation, Latin America's most progressive law on freedom of expression, but this distinction did not necessarily guarantee a gender perspective in the media, including in community media.

According to Emi Farías of Red Nosotras en el Mundo; a gender perspective is not present in the law, even less after recent decrees that repealed various articles of the law. However, the 'Defensoría del Público' (Office of the Public Defender) still exists, one of the remaining vestiges of the Law's original intent. This Office is, in practice, the entity that protects the rights of audiences, community media and women. Speaking more specifically of women's participation in the media, Argentine women have created huge mobilizations in favor of women's rights. In the past two years, they have organized large-scale movements claiming justice in femicide cases, protesting violence against women and demanding decriminalization of abortion. The Argentine women involved in community media have organized themselves around the feminist moment, so they have not generated long-term organizational structures, but their organization around specific issues has built lasting ties of solidarity.

## **MEXICO**

Mexico's situation is that most community radio concessions are members of the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters, and it is within this Association that the necessary conditions have been created for women to organize to defend freedom of expression and their right to information. AMARC has incorporated Gender Policy into its internal organizational policies, and it is through these that compliance indicators can be established in keeping with the respective context.

The network is growing every day. Some of the indicators used to consider a radio station's membership application are: the number of women participating, mechanisms for increasing women's participation, the mainstreaming of a gendered perspective across the full range of programming, the use of inclusive language, etc. While these indicators may be somewhat subjective and contextual, the challenge is to establish these indicators on a methodological and institutional level.

## CONCLUSIONS

- The articulation of women's participation in community radio broadcasting may lack mechanisms of organization. However, this does not prevent gender equality from playing an important role in the organization and mobilization of organizations and women around situations in which rights are violated.
- Women in community communications are fundamental in social peace efforts, such as in Colombia's peacebuilding process.
- Organizing outside of an organization, or non-institutional organization, is valuable and important, but the creation of legal or regulatory frameworks can be useful tools for advancing toward substantive equality.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

More needs to be done to ensure that women are appropriately introduced and represented in this sector, according to Miglioretto and Randhawa (2017). They propose strategies to improve women's position in community radio and to promote good regulatory practices. The set of recommendations presented below are aimed mainly at regulatory bodies:

## **ENCOURAGE DIVERSITY OF REPRESENTATION IN APPLICATIONS FOR RADIO LICENSES**

- The decision to grant a license to an applicant should take into account the diversity that exists within the committee or representatives applying for a licence. This is not limited to the issue of gender, although this is undoubtedly an important component. The applicants should also demonstrate that a serious effort has been made to include a diversity of voices from other marginalized segments of the community including, for example, indigenous women, Dalit women (one of the lower castes in India), migrant women, disabled or differently abled women and/or LGBTQI people.
- In cases where a licence applicants are found to be insufficiently diverse, regulators may ask them to present a plan to improve diversity and ensure the inclusion of diverse voices, both on the air and in station management.

## **INDICATE A COMMITMENT TO INVOLVE DIVERSE PERSONS IN THE STATION**

- Licence holders should state on their application how they ensure the full and equal participation of women in the station, from voices on the air to station management, working with technical equipment and volunteers. This should include how prospective women volunteers and the radio team will be included, as well as measures taken to ensure that marginalized communities are represented, and how training programs will be created and implemented.

## **APPLICATIONS FOR STATIONS MANAGED AND MADE UP EXCLUSIVELY OF WOMEN**

- While the radio frequency spectrum operates equally for all genders, community radio licenses should be granted to committees made up exclusively of women. It is expected that the applicants in these cases comply with the diversity criteria

indicated above. Here, diversity would mean a fuller range of experience among participating women, with an emphasis on the involvement of women from marginalized groups and prioritization of these voices.

## **COMMITMENT TO FUND AND TRAIN WOMEN IN RADIO BROADCASTING**

- Licence applications should include a summary of how women's radio broadcasting and the training of women in technical positions, on the air and in station management will be carried out; with special emphasis on how these aspects of the station will be financed on an ongoing basis.
- The station must commit to introducing gender policies or, when the station has no gender policy, it should provide a timeline for when these will be drafted and implemented.

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