

**T**HE AMARC 5 session in which women from Africa, South America and the Philippines sketched the conditions in which they were developing radio broadcasting proved one of the most interesting opportunities to learn about what radio can offer and the difference it makes in the lives of individuals in countries we seldom hear about.

It rated well alongside the discussions on new technological developments, such as digital audio broadcasting which will change the face of radio worldwide, and the possibilities offered by shortwave radio.

Vicky Quevedo, a community radio broadcaster from

Chile, spoke of the difficulty women in her country have in finding support as they move up through the ranks. A significant part of the problem was the Catholic church, she said. It enjoys greater political power than in any other South American country and its attitude towards women is extremely reactionary.

Divorce is illegal and medical intervention in pregnancies banned. She said even though the "model" Chilean family was in crisis, it was impossible to raise questions about family structures and values.

It was out of this situation that a year ago, on August 31, Radio Tierra (Radio Earth) – with a specific feminist focus – went on air for the first time in Chile.

The station broadcasts from Monday to Sunday, 117 hours per week, between 7am and midnight, on a 5kw transmitter which ensures that programmes can be heard in most of Santiago.

Answering the question of what it meant to be a feminist radio station she said programming was aimed not only at women, but at the whole of society, based on the belief that the knowledge, experience and wisdom of women should have a place in society where it could be discussed and debated.

"Feminism is not an absolute truth, but it is a contribution to our understanding of the world. Feminist radio offers these contribu-



*Libby Lloyd of Speak magazine interviews one of community radio's characters, Margaretta D'Arcy who runs Radio Pirate Women from her home in Galway, Ireland.*

## Women: illusions of strength become reality

tions to the rest of society so they can use it in their analysis of their world."

Each day at least a dozen women – "popular correspondents" – from the poorer sectors of Santiago contribute to the daily news programmes. The idea, says Quevedo, is to allow women to decide what are newsworthy issues and how they will talk about them. To make news out of issues that other media might not even regard as news!

"It is therefore a very political project because it questions the positions of power that are deeply ingrained in all of us."

She says Radio Tierra is not "maternal or paternal" radio. "What we want is that the listeners speak with their own voices, from their social perspective and position in society."

There are 23 women working full time at Radio Tierra; but if the popular correspondents, children and young people who are involved in programming are included then the number rises to between 70 and 80 people.

Edda Sanga, a journalist from Tanzania, emphasised that whether one was talking about women's radio or general radio, men and women needed to work together.

However, the pain and anger among women caused by the way in which they saw themselves negatively portrayed in the media – as sex objects, as unequal to men, as passive recipients of themes and values

handed down from generation to generation – prompted journalists to form the Tanzanian Women's Association in 1986.

From this base women began to write and produce programmes from their perspective.

"We began with rural women who were living in superstitious environments. They were poor, uninformed, having children they could not take care of, and so we started our own forum of mothers' programmes to give them a voice for the first time and to increase the flow of information."

Other programme subjects include sexuality and in particular the Aids pandemic.

"We still see Aids patients going back to the rural areas where the women, without gloves or other sanitary equipment, take care of these people."

A radio campaign for the women of Peru has emerged under the shadow of terrorist violence and the authoritarian rule of a president who recently dissolved the country's congressional government.

**S**KETCHING the socio-political context in Peru a woman from the feminist radio collective, Gaby Ayzanoa, said: "The violence in our country has led to the deaths of 25 000 Peruvians and 4 000 who have disappeared. The country is also in an economic crisis with 70 percent of the people living in poverty. The Peruvian state is incapable of offering basic services to its population – people are homeless, have no lights and no water."

It is in this situation, where more than half the nation's population are women and where women are the breadwinners in more than 50 percent of households, that radio is being used to address the needs and reflect the experiences of Peruvian women.

A variety of radio programmes are produced, and with the help of sympathetic professional journalists and despite the fear of censorship, these programmes are flighted on more than 50 commercial radio stations.

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Programmes reflect the work of various community health care projects such as, "A cup of milk" while others tackle issues such as violence against women, be it rape, abortion, domestic violence or structural violence.

"The voice of women through radio programmes has opened up a public space that we've wanted access to for years. It offers legitimacy for the voices of women."

The work is not limited to radio, however, campaigns are designed as multi-media projects which include a range of activities.

"We don't treat our audience as if they're all the same people, we try to incorporate all kinds of people. We recognise that within an audience of women there will be a diversity of age, race and social class."

The style of media attempts to be more subtle and less stridently political, says Ayzanoa. "We include discussions of dreams women have for changing their daily lives. Central to our work is poetry, love and creativity."

Another field where women are at work is on the international airwaves. Feminist International Radio Endeavour (Fire) broadcasts for two hours a day, an hour each in English and Spanish from the small Caribbean state of Costa Rica.

Staffed by a multi-lingual, multi-cultural team of four women based at the studios of Radio Peace International, Fire has been on the air since May 1991. A division of their project is the Women's International News Gathering Service - Wings - through which programming material is compiled.

One of the women working at the station, Jeanne Carstensen, said their aim was to strengthen an international consciousness among women via the power of shortwave radio.

"By building this consciousness we hope to be able to contribute to, for example, inter-continental campaigns for women's rights."

At the forefront of tackling stereotyping and oppression of women in the mass media is the Women's Media Circle in the Philippines.

Ana Leah Sarabia said the power of media to create illusions meant it could be used to create illusions of strength or weakness. "We women should take over the media so that we can destroy existing illusions of weakness and create our own illusion of strength, and then make it a reality."

# Elections for elections' sake?

Filipino activist Aida Santos says gender and development issues must feature prominently in South Africa's first democratic elections.

By CHANTEL EDWARDS

"The most vivid image I have of South Africa is that of black women walking down a road carrying bundles on their head, looking for water," says Aida Santos. "I spoke to women who pay R10 for a barrel of water that is so brown they can't even wash their clothes in it. Further along I saw lush green farms with irrigation systems."

She is the executive director for Wedpro (Women's Education, Development, Productivity and Research Organisation) in the Philippines, training co-ordinator for the Feminist Foundation and a women and development consultant to various local and international development organisations.

According to Santos, who visited the country as guest of the Theological Exchange Programme, the Philippines and South Africa show many similarities in gender and developmental issues, the one fundamental difference being apartheid which has had the effect of sidelining women's issues. "Many progressive political parties have a good policy of non-sexism and non-racism, but I would like to see concrete examples of this policy," she says.

Despite the relative success of the women's movement in the Philippines over the past decade, 50 per cent of women still work as domestic servants or prostitutes. The social system remains elitist and the

country's Judea-Christian principles, which disallow abortion and divorce, increase the suffering.

Women's experiences here reverberate in the Phillipine context: land resources, support services, health, migratory labour and violence (public and private) are all common issues.

Santos says it is crucial that the personal concerns of women be addressed now, and this is where developmental issues come into play.

"The gender issue is inextricably linked to developmental issues as it is the women who ultimately suffers. It is not something that can be addressed later, it must be dealt with now. Over half of the population are women and yet political parties are not addressing development issues."

Most of the women she encountered during her visit were not interested in the elections, they are consumed by the daily struggle of living.

"Women have played a very important role in your political history. What has all this struggle been for if not for the majority of people?"

"The key issue for women is what does the transition and election mean to their personal lives? You do not have elections for elections' sake. Developmental issues are election issues."

"The electoral struggle must serve the women's cause."



Aida Santos: has the struggle not been for the majority?