Networks Enabling Grassroots Participation

Voices of the Amazon: Community Radio

BY JANICE BIEHN

PWRDF Communications and Marketing Coordinator

The voices, knowledge and ideas from people most affected by the effects of climate change are rarely heard in the media. The urban poor, farmers, Indigenous communities, and vulnerable women in the Global South tend to be absent from most climate policy conversations at national or international levels, partly due to lack of access to information and platforms to express their views.

As a result, for the most part, people at the forefront of the climate crisis do not have real opportunities to help shape the policy responses promoted by their governments. This is the situation in the Amazon, a massive region that spans nine countries, contains extensive forest reserves, Indigenous reservations, national parks, and is home to an impressive diversity of cultures, languages, geography and nature.

Yet it is under threat. Deforestation, the expansion of agriculture, along with economies linked to drug trafficking, mining and cattle ranching imperil the land and the people who inhabit it.

The World Association for Christian Communication (WACC), a fellow member of the ACT Alliance, is the lead partner of a new project being funded by PWRDF called Voices of the Amazon Community Radio Networks Enabling Grassroots Participation in Environmental Policy. WACC will work with the Latin American Network of Radio Education (ALER), a regional organization at the forefront of the community radio movement for more than 50 years producing content about the Amazon. PWRDF will contribute $55,000 a year for three years. WACC will support local capacity building and equipment by investing EUR 30,000 in Colombia (with PWRDF partner Grupo Comunicarte), the Ecuadorean Network of Community Radio Broadcasters and its network of six radio stations in the Amazon region; and the Amazon Radio Network, a Catholic broadcasting network in Brazil.

Communication in the Amazon is hampered by distance, weather that affects electronic devices, the centrality of rivers as communication routes and insufficient infrastructure. Internet and cell phone service quality is low and cost-prohibitive for many. Print media is rarely received outside of urban areas and television is too expensive to produce. Furthermore, there are very few journalism-training opportunities in the region.

The project will strengthen local communication and advocacy capacities among grassroots communities in Colombia, Ecuador and Brazil, with the long-term objective of establishing a network of grassroots communicators capable of employing radio and digital platforms to support local organizing and participation in policy-making for the protection of their ecosystems.

This network will play a key role in informing local communities, producing content in local languages, and highlighting local knowledge and culture as vital elements central to climate policies. A local needs assessment in the first year will identify key advocacy opportunities and allies looking to avoid duplication of efforts or missed opportunities. This includes looking at opportunities to engage with ecumenical and Anglican organizations throughout the project. WACC has already connected with the Anglican Church in Para State, Brazil, and explored the possibility of their participation in the project by joining the broadcasting network and receiving training.

Grupo Comunicarte in Colombia is one of three partners participating in a World Association of Christian Communication project to protect the Amazon region.

PWRDF is also supporting Grupo Comunicarte’s community radio program with $41,400 over three years to train citizen-journalists across 15 radio stations. Their reporting will promote awareness and protection of the Páramos – an at-risk ecosystem that is the source of 70% of Colombia’s water.

SO, WHAT’S THE PLAN?

BY JANICE BIEHN

In ancient Egypt, Pharaoh was vexed by his vivid dreams. He sought the help of Joseph, who was known to be gifted with an ability to interpret dreams. Joseph saw clearly that Pharaoh’s visions of seven fat cows and seven scarred stalks of grain foretold seven years of abundance, followed by seven years of famine. He urged Pharaoh to plan for this disaster:

“Let Pharaoh appoint commissioners over the land, to gather the food of seven good years and store it up during the seven years of famine, so that the land may not be ruined....”

(Genesis 41:34-36)

The P in PWRDF could well stand for Planning, given how much of it we do around here. As I write this, my colleagues are busy planning events with Mary Olivers of Church World Service, set to take place in Winnipeg in April; we have just finished planning our annual resources (which you can read about on page 3) and others are working on PWRDF’s strategic plan for 2024-2029. Our partners also know a thing or two about planning. They plan what seeds to sow and when, or how to dig the next well, when to schedule training sessions, or how to find new ways to earn an income. Our partners research, study and sometimes consult us to figure out their next steps. For indeed, as Robbie Burns, the Scottish bard said, “the best laid plans of mice and men often go awry.” In other words, expect the unexpected, whether it be a cyclone, an earthquake or even, say, a global pandemic.

In this issue of Under the Sun we dive into forward planning. Read about our partners in El Salvador, the Amazon region and Sri Lanka investing in the future of their communities; learn about planning your legacy, and check out our resources (which you can read about in this issue and in future issues). Our partners research, study and consult us to figure out their next steps. For indeed, as Robbie Burns, the Scottish bard said, “the best laid plans of mice and men often go awry.”

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Laying the Groundwork for Peace in Sri Lanka

By Christine Hills
PWRDF Public Engagement Program Officer

PWRDF has allocated $14,000 to support the restoration and ongoing work of the New Oppuravillam in Vavuniya, Sri Lanka where education, community and awareness building and skills development were key components of its founder’s vision.

In 1981, Rev. Dr. Donald Jayapala Kanagaratnam, principal of the Theological College of Lanka, established “Oppuravillam,” a house of peace, on land owned by his family near Vavuniya. Known during the Sri Lankan Civil War as the border town, his vision was to build good relationships between the Sinhalese, Tamil and Muslim communities and to demonstrate that the communities could live in harmony jointly contributing to the development of their lives and their communities.

Following his death in 1995, Oppuravillam was taken over by the Sri Lankan army after the conflict ended in 2009. It was gifted to the Diocese of Colombo by his family where a Management Committee (OMPAC), headed by the Archdeacon of Jaffna, oversees its management with support from the Reconciliation and Peace Desk of the Diocese of Colombo. With funding from Episcopal Relief and Development (ERD) and other partners, repairs and additions began and two resident counsellors were installed. The vision for the New Oppuravillam is in keeping with the Church’s calling to embody Peace and Reconciliation:

• To create opportunities for alienated communities to come together to enter into dialogue, to learn, understand, appreciate and accept the “otherness” of all; and recognize the “oneness” of all;
• To be “Prepared”, offering a place of hope and comfort to those in need, the poor, the deprived, the traumatized, the vulnerable, the aged, the abandoned, the lonely;
• To establish a residential Centre for Dialogue to be used by parishes, diocesan organizations and groups to meet, learn and share, and to offer exposure visits and retreats.

PWRDF is supporting New Oppuravillam’s training centre for local women’s groups.

Education Forms Foundation for Equality in El Salvador

By Duncan Chalmers
PWRDF Youth Council

Earlier this year, I had the privilege of joining a number of PWRDF staff and a few other Canadian youth in a project development process with long-time PWRDF partner CoCoSI. CoCoSI (Committee Against AIDS) is a community-based organization in El Salvador that promotes gender equality through education.

Led by CoCoSI staff and program participants (primarily LGBTIQIA+ youth), this involved a series of four participatory Zoom sessions that helped to create a platform for the sharing of ideas and the elicitation of constructive feedback on the proposed project.

Above all, this process — a new approach for PWRDF — served as an amazing mechanism to connect the voices, perspectives, and experiences of youth in El Salvador with those of young people here in Canada. As such, in addition to strengthening CoCoSI’s case for project PWRDF’s partnership model.

Following this proposal design process, CoCoSI submitted their application to PWRDF, which was subsequently approved. The project, Educating and Fostering Youth and LGBTIQIA+ Leadership for Gender Justice in Cabañas, will centre primarily on strengthening the support and mobilization of sexual and reproductive health and rights advocacy for LGBTIQIA+ individuals in one of the most impoverished and under-served parts of El Salvador. Through a range of workshops, public advocacy activities, and communication campaigns, the project will ultimately work to strengthen the ability of LGBTIQIA+ youth and allies to advocate for their human rights, and foster a culture of peace and societal inclusion.

PWRDF is supporting the project with a $30,000 grant.

CoCoSI is a community-based organization of professionals and youth who develop educational workshops for women, children, adolescents, teens, people living with HIV, prison populations, and the public at large. Made up of young people — many of whom lived as refugees in Northern Thailand during El Salvador’s bloody civil war of the 1980s and 90s — CoCoSI is part of a national network of AIDS organizations; the only one based in and working in rural communities.
NEW RESOURCES INVITE US TO MAKE A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE

BY CHRISTINE HILLS
PWRDF Public Engagement Program Officer

PWRDF’s 2023 annual resources enliven the overall work of PWRDF and partners around the world and extend an invitation: “Let’s Make a World of Difference.” These colourful resources feature stories of PWRDF partners and reflect the progress made over more than 60 years, promoting sustainable development and providing humanitarian relief.

Many churches across Canada designate a day to hold a PWRDF Sunday and pieces have been produced to assemble a PWRDF Sunday Kit. PWRDF’s Super Friends return with a 10th edition for children and young people. PWRDF resources are a welcome addition to display tables, bulletin boards, synods, fundraising dinners, worship services; anywhere else that Anglicans gather. In April 2024, PWRDF will embark on a five-year strategic plan that will carry us into the future for a long time, as a legacy of work that has been done and the lasting partnerships that have been made and grown.

Bookmarks, placemats and bulletin covers are among the many colourful annual resources available for 2023.
THANKS TO YOU

Anglican parishes across Canada are supporting PWRDF and making a world of difference!

By Christine Hills
PWRDF Public Engagement Officer

PWRDF wants to hear from you!

Please share your fundraising success stories to inspire others and to spread the word about the good work you have done!
Email Christine Hills at chills@pwrdf.org and tell us all about it. Many thanks to all of our donors.

CONFIRMING THEIR CHOICE

Confirmation students of St. James Church in Port aux Basques completed their Stewardship Project raising $604 for PWRDF. After perusing the World of Gifts, they were interested in farming in six countries and decided to ‘Buy the whole farm’. Goats, pigs, rabbits and dairy sheds were among the gifts included with this gift, but they weren’t finished yet! They rest of the funds went towards three new baby kits for moms in Lesotho.

IN THE EYE OF FIONA

On December 18, Holy Trinity Guildwood in the Diocese of Toronto held a concert to enjoy the season and raise funds for PWRDF’s Hurricane Fiona response. Guest musicians joined Holy Trinity’s choir and other local talent to offer an afternoon of entertainment and giving, filled with music and Christmas celebration. PWRDF Executive Director Wil Postma updated those gathered in person and online about the aftermath and destruction caused by Hurricane Fiona. Generous parishioners and friends raised $1,940 to support those affected by Fiona.

OH BABY!

Last Christmas, the Church of Saint Andrew in Cole Harbour, N.S. selected a project from PWRDF’s World of Gifts for their Advent fundraiser and created a display to promote it. They focused on the Special Delivery kits for new moms in Lesotho and called it their ‘Oh Baby’ campaign. Each time a parishioner donated $25 for a new baby kit, they added a diaper in a bassinet that was placed in front of the altar. By Christmas the bassinet was full and the diapers were then donated to a local women’s shelter. They raised more than $2,000 for the New Baby initiative!

YES! I WANT TO SUPPORT PWRDF

YOUR GIFT CAN MAKE A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE. THANK YOU!

Donations can be made online at pwrdf.org/give-today or by filling out this form and mailing to the address below.

Name: ____________________________________________
Postal Code: ______________________________________
Phone: __________________________________________
Email address: ____________________________________

I have enclosed a one-time gift of $ __________
OR I would like to make a monthly gift of $ __________
Please make cheque payable to PWRDF or provide credit card information.

Card #: ____________________________
Expiration Date: ______________________
Signature: ____________________________

I would like to make a monthly gift of $ __________
by pre-authorized chequing to be withdrawn on
1st of month ________ 16th of month ________
Please enclose a personal cheque marked “void.”

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Follow us on Instagram @pwrdf_justgeneration

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Wild ride

Mark your calendars for June 23, 1 p.m. EDT for the launch of this year’s campaign, in support of PWRDF programs working with refugees and internally displaced people. Visit pwrdf.org/webinars for details.

PWRDF
The Presbyterian World Relief and Development Fund
The Anglican Church of Canada

Charitable number: 866 434640 RR0001   June-2023

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PWRDFwants to hear from you!

Please share your fundraising success stories to inspire others and to spread the word about the good work you have done!

Email Christine Hills at chills@pwrdf.org and tell us all about it. Many thanks to all of our donors.