João Paulo Malerba chronicles, in Chapter 11, the work of CRIAR Brasil in developing a network of social communicators and community radio stations to combat violence against women. Broadcasters are trained as social communicators in order to engage local communities. The resulting discussions inform the design of learning materials, including series of short audio spots, radio drama serials and magazine programmes broadcast on more than 100 community radio stations. At the heart of the participatory process is consultation with concerned communities in order to inform decision-making about programme content, and community dialogue facilitated through media broadcasting, which in turn underlies a constructivist approach to learning and the use of stories as a pedagogical tool.

More information: www.col.org/LearningWithCM

COL's Healthy Communities programme: www.col.org/HealthyCommunities
Training and Social Mobilisation to Combat Violence against Women

João Paulo Malerba

The Radio Network to Combat Violence against Women was created in 2010. It was a joint effort by the Centro de Imprensa, Assessoria e Rádio (CRIAR Brasil) and the Superintendent of Women’s Rights of the State Government, involving female popular communication workers from all around the state of Rio de Janeiro.

Based in Rio de Janeiro, CRIAR has worked for 17 years with popular communication for the defense of human rights all around Brazil, through the production of educational materials, training and social mobilisation. It also seeks to promote the democratisation of communication and is one of the founders of the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC) Brasil.

The idea for the Radio Network project emerged from a sad reality: every 15 seconds a woman is a victim of violence in Brazil. In the majority of cases the aggressor is a relative or lives in the same house as the woman. Because it touches on private and emotional issues, this makes violence against women a difficult issue to address in the media. The main objective of the project is therefore to form a network of popular social communication workers who are prepared to approach the problem in an open and responsible way. The idea is to use community radio for its educational, informative and motivating power in combating this type of violence.

In the first phase of the project, the radio stations participating in the network decided for themselves on the most important points to be addressed in relation to violence against women. From this process a number of educational materials were produced, including:

- an information booklet
- ten audio spots – short, high-impact audio messages that would be available for frequent, repeated broadcast in a station’s schedule
• 20-minute long journalistic programmes in which the content was not dated, making it possible to repeat and rebroadcast them at any time

The purpose of this material was to involve the community in information dissemination and discussion about violence against women. Brazil has a sort of culture of silence with respect to domestic violence, which discourages any interference in conflicts between a husband and wife, painting such instances as a private matter and not subject to external intervention. A central goal of the project was to break with this practice by mobilising listeners through radio broadcasts to create and foster networks in the community that would offer women protection.

The approach taken by the project focused on the use of radio drama to depict violence against women in family situations, followed by messages that encouraged complaints about violence against women to be taken to the authorities. The messages were based on the Maria da Penha Law, a federal law that increases the severity of punishment for aggressions against women.

These materials were broadcast on more than 100 community radio stations in the state of Rio de Janeiro, and also made available on a social networking site (www.radiotube.org.br) designed to share informational and educational content, including audio, video and text, with a focus on citizenship.
Text-based materials were designed to meet the needs of broadcasters as well as citizens. Previous experiences had shown that even more than the audio material, local broadcasters need printed information at hand while talking about the issue. The booklet therefore presents strategies on how to summarise the subject and link to the local networks and other resources. Based on demands from participants in the network, the booklet includes the complete Maria da Penha Law as well as a list of services available to women. In this way, popular social communicators in the network have the essential information about how to proceed with complaints concerning violence.

The approach to training and content creation was based on three key elements: a) the issue of sexism in society; b) the fundamental rights of women; and c) the exchange of information, life stories and experiences among women and the participation of women in the community. The depiction of the issues began with macro-community situations and carried through the daily situations of the participants. The objective was not only to create a space for training and content development for the radio programmes, but also to raise awareness and understanding among social communicators about violence against women, enabling those communicators to discuss, rather than simply present, issues on the radio.

The method used in designing programmes and developing content was participatory and constructivist. Not only teachers but also participants contributed to the learning process, bringing their own personal experiences and life stories to bear. This method has been effective in bringing the issue of violence against women into the everyday realities of the concerned communities and generating active participation from women. When community radio broadcasters engaged with the theme, highlighting its proximity and relevance to community life, citizens began to act proactively to counter violence against women.

The booklet was also used in a two-day thematic training of 40 popular social communicators working for community broadcasters. More than learning communication techniques, these women deepened their understanding of the issues, exchanging information and life experiences with members of government involved in women’s rights. These two-day training workshops ended with participants producing audio materials about the topics.

The last phase of the CRIAR project was to structure the network in such a way that it would continue and go beyond itself. A virtual community was established at the social networking site www.radiotube.org.br, through which broadcasters and other members of civil society share and discuss information about citizenship. The objective was to widen the exchange, increasing the number of actors involved in the network.
(including other radio stations), sensitising them and encouraging them to join in the struggle to combat violence against women.

Rosangela da Silva Santiago, who works in Bicuda FM Community Radio in Rio de Janeiro, said the training was important in helping her to identify and distinguish different types of violence against women (such as psychological violence and verbal abuse): “I've seen these types of situations happen. They have already happened to me. I felt somehow it was natural and I didn’t realise that this was a form of violence against me. The training was essential to prepare me and enable me to identify and assist victims of gender violence.”

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**Excerpt of audio spot script**

**SPOT 8 – TYPES OF VIOLENCE**

**Broadcaster #1:** Violence against women is not only physical, which may leave marks on a woman’s body or even sometimes take her life. Domestic or family violence happens at home. It is usually practised by someone who lives with the victim. Alongside physical and sexual violence, there may also be psychological effects, as well as neglect or abandonment.

*Bridge:* impact sound effect #1

**Broadcaster #1:** Slander, defamation and abuse of the honour or reputation of the woman is a kind of moral violence. Damaging, destroying or withholding objects, documents or property is also a form of violence.

*Bridge:* impact sound effect #1

**Broadcaster #1:** Sexual violence (that also happens in relationships among couples) is when a woman is forced to have sexual relations or engage in practices without her consent.

*Bridge:* impact sound effect #2

**Broadcaster #1:** In all these cases, violence against women is a crime and must be denounced.

**Broadcaster #2:** Stopping violence against women — a victory for the whole society.

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**Male voice:** Production by CRIAR Brasil …

**Female voice:** With support from the Superintendent of Women’s Rights of the State Government.

**Male voice:** Brazil …

**Female voice:** A country of all …

**Male voice:** Men and women.
João Paulo Malerba is a researcher at the Community Communication Laboratory of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ), with special expertise in communication policy and legislation, particularly at the community level. He co-ordinates social projects at CRIAR Brasil, a non-governmental organisation working in popular communication and the democratisation of communication throughout the country. João is the executive co-ordinator of the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC) Brasil. He holds an MA in Communication and Culture from UFRJ and speaks and offers training about radio, community journalism, and communication theory. Email: joaopaulorj@yahoo.com.br

Centro de Imprensa, Assessoria e Rádio (CRIAR Brasil) is a non-governmental organisation that has been promoting the democratisation of communication since 1994. Its mission is: “To support social movement organisations on strategic communication and production, consulting, research, and training in radio and other platforms — print, Internet and audiovisual. It aims at the realisation of human rights, focusing on the right to communicate.”

For further reference, see:

- CRIAR Brasil – www.criarbrasil.org.br (Portuguese)