

## CHAPTER 30

# Radio Voices Without Frontiers Global Antidiscrimination Broadcast

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**Figure 30.1** RVSF (*Radio Voix Sans Frontières*) Logo

**N**o One Is Illegal!<sup>1</sup> This is a manifesto and an example of an expanding community-based migrant rights movement that has taken off in Canada, especially in the aftermath of 9/11. Increasing border controls between Canada and the United States to keep goods flowing but people contained have been creating what some call the new “Fortress North America.”<sup>2</sup> It is a familiar refrain, as the term *Fortress Europe* has been used to describe the increasingly restrictive immigration policies (e.g., the Schengen Agreement)<sup>3</sup> designed to keep people of European countries moving freely within their borders but to keep *out* non-Europeans. Meanwhile, the reasons why people from Asia, Africa, and Latin America keep migrating remain compelling—armed violence, ethnic and racial conflict, economic globalization, and environmental degradation are just a few (Taran, 2000, “Causes of Migration,” ¶ 5). Migration-receiving countries now commonly characterize undocumented workers as “illegal migrants,” rendering them outside the law, with no legal status, no legal identity, and no existence, and effectively denying them any human rights (Taran, 2000, “Ten General Trends,” ¶ 7).

One of the spaces where all migrants do have a voice and a status is on community radio. Check your local listings, and chances are that you’ll find a broadcast and/or podcast produced by and about migrant communities—refugees, temporary workers, migrants with no legal status, new and established immigrants, and so on. In Canada, chances are you’ll find all of the above, including programming by members of the No One is Illegal migrant rights movement mentioned earlier. The beauty of community radio is that it breaks down the traditional divide between broadcaster and listener. With community radio, the listener can become the broadcaster and get engaged in the production of media and in the process of communication. Linked to movements for social change, the strength of community radio is its ability to reflect the concerns of local communities. Yet,

local realities often have global catalysts and global resonance. Migration is one of these areas of global concern. Imagine, not just one program about migrant rights or discrimination issues but dozens of programs on a similar theme being broadcast on the same day, not by circumstance but by direct action, a concerted effort by broadcasters around the world. *That* is Radio Voices Without Frontiers.

Every March 21, through the use of traditional and new communications technologies, journalists from every corner of the globe advocate against racial discrimination during a (typically) 24-hour broadcast. Running for more than a decade, Radio Voices Without Frontiers, also known by its French acronym RVSF—*Radio Voix Sans Frontières*—has become the flagship project of the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC).<sup>4</sup> Relying on an expanding international network of community radio practitioners, RVSF is one of the first community media production and distribution projects to be organized on a global scale.

The project is a testament to the socially inclusive ethos of community radio and to how the local is traced through the global and back again. Although the Voices Without Frontiers Network was started in Europe in 1996, the first broadcast took place in 1997 to commemorate the European Year Against Racism. It remained a regional event until 2000, when North American broadcasters joined the campaign. By 2001, it had become a global broadcast with the participation of broadcasters from all continents.

By 2004, programming in nine languages was broadcast on some 200 community radio stations worldwide. Focusing largely on the 2004 campaign, this chapter will demonstrate how RVSF attempts to develop its potential in using ICTs (information and communication technologies) for development and building international solidarity. It will also share the lessons learned to date and observations about the process of international network building. The lessons and reflections below are drawn from my

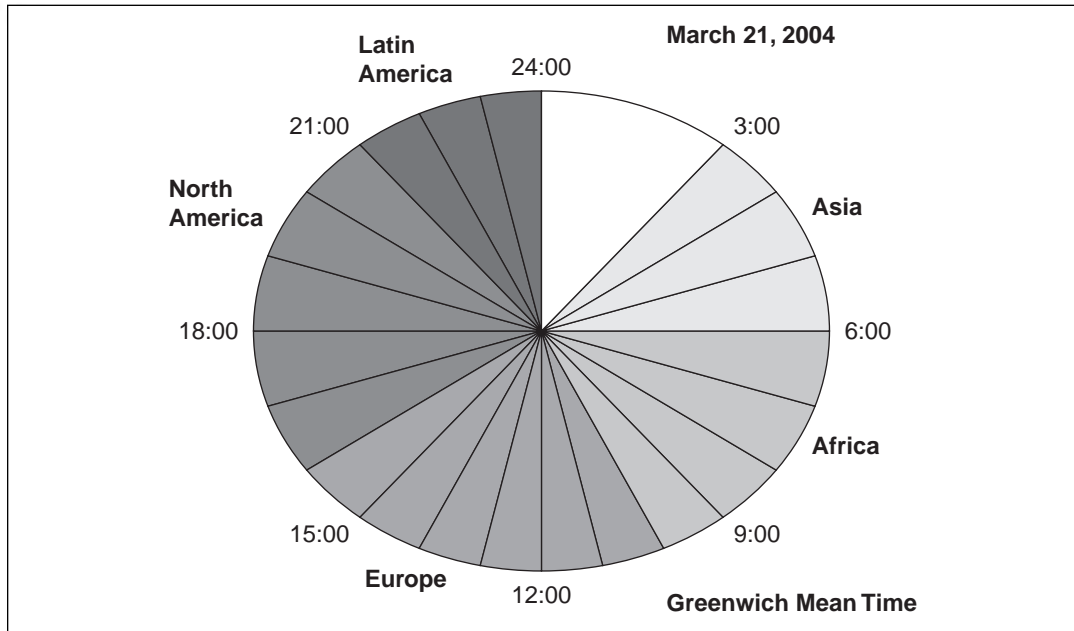
experience as the coordinator of the RVSF broadcast from 2000 to 2004 (in 2000 as the North American broadcast coordinator; from 2001–2004 as the international broadcast coordinator). This chapter does not dwell on theory but, in many ways, reflects my experience as a practitioner and advocate of media for community development since the early 1990s. RVSF has been an opportunity to test and put into practice the ideals of community radio on a global scale.

### An Inspiring Experiment in Community Media

Community media researcher and advocate, Bruce Girard (1992) says that when community radio broadcasts succeed they are marked with passion rarely seen in commercial or large-scale State media. “This passion arises out of a desire to empower listeners by encouraging and enabling

their participation, not only in the radio but in the social, cultural and political processes that affect the community,” states Girard (p. 3). Almost 20 years later, this observation still holds true. Broadcasters are highly motivated when they advocate for and are part of a social change process. Through its content and structure, the 2004 RVSF broadcast is a testament to the passion and transformational struggle of community radio broadcasters (Figure 30.2).

Programming on March 21, 2004 began with the first-ever broadcast from Asia: The marathon kicks off in Kathmandu, Nepal. Suman of AMARC–Asia Pacific has spent the past 24 hours trying to upload audio to the RVSF server. Finally, at 3:00 A.M. GMT (Greenwich Mean Time), all is ready to go, and he adjusts his audio player to the 3-hour Internet broadcast in Nepali and Arabic. This is the first major contribution to the global broadcast from the Asia-Pacific region, produced in partnership with Radio Sagarmatha, Nepal’s first community radio station.



**Figure 30.2** The 2004 RVSF Broadcast Time Clock

In the meantime, at close to 6:00 A.M. GMT, Gilles Eric of the Simbani news agency is gearing up for a live broadcast from Johannesburg, South Africa. Journalists from throughout Africa have been assembled in the newly created studios and are about to go on the air, one language team at a time. While a phone call confirms all is going well in the local studios, the constant buffering of the Web stream creates an inaudible Web cast for the first time in the 4-year collaboration with RVSF. Luckily, the French, Portuguese and English programs go off without a hitch on the satellite broadcaster, Channel Africa.

Four hours later, the European team is ready to take the baton. Francesco of AMISnet (Agenzia Multimediale d'Informazione Sociale) in Rome sends a staccato e-mail message—only 10 minutes before going on air. Following tradition, the social information agency has gathered a multicultural crew in the studio. Hosts will take turns announcing in Italian, French, Spanish, and English. Last-minute news that some programming from Africa has fallen through creates a hurried shuffle and gives Europe an extra hour in the global broadcast schedule. The 1-hour Lusophone feed from Radio Universidade Marao in Portugal is matched by a 1-hour feed from 15 community-access stations in the United Kingdom and a contribution from the Palestine News Network. In total, Europe broadcasts globally for 6 hours.

In a home office, the international coordinator is zigzagging time zones to communicate between continents and across hemispheres. Next, the baton is in North American hands. This year, three different broadcast hubs participate. There is French programming from the *Reseau Francophone des Amériques* in Ottawa. Spanish programming is broadcast live from Radio Centre-Ville in Montreal. And a blend of English programs from community radio stations in Canada and the United States are broadcast live from KCSB-FM in Santa Barbara. As the 5 hours of programming come to a close, Elizabeth, KCSB Staff Advisor, denounces the U.S.-led

occupation of Iraq and the closing music fades into Latin beats.

The final 3 hours of the marathon have now begun. This time the baton is in Latin America. Uruguay's Internet radio station, Radio Mundo Real, has spent the past few days putting together the 3-hour feed of programs collected by Chile's Radio Tierra in Santiago. Contributions come from Uruguay, Chile, Argentina, Ecuador, Peru, and Mexico.

With programming in nine languages, the 21-hour broadcast is realized with some 70 community radio stations or production groups and 90 contributors and team members from 29 different countries (Table 30.1). These are the people of Radio Voices Without Frontiers.

## Producing and Distributing Through a Global Network

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Coordinating the RVSF broadcast from 2000 to 2004 gave me the opportunity to witness the potential created by ICTs as tools for development and network building. It was a time when the potential for building international solidarity through Internet networking was growing momentum. In 1994, the Zapatista Revolution, facilitated by Internet communication, was seen as a turning point in global mobilization. And then, in 1999, the civil society protests in Seattle against the World Trade Organization (also coordinated greatly through the Internet) inspired even more energy and excitement. Today, with the so-called personal media revolution putting a blog, podcast, and vodcast within reach of almost anyone with an Internet connection, the potential of Internet networking as a great democratic force is expanding more boundaries. RVSF was and still is an experiment in testing this potential. The most important characteristics of the broadcast are presented below along with some insights on the challenges of putting it together as well as lessons learned. Specifically, we consider a

**Table 30.1** 2004 RVSF Broadcast Schedule

Broadcast Hub	KCSB-FM	CINQ-FM	Radio Tierra		AMISnet	Simbani	AMARC Asia-Pacific
Location	Santa Barbara	Montreal	Santiago	START TIME	Rome	Johannesburg	Kathmandu
<i>Time Zone</i>	<i>GMT – 8</i>	<i>GMT – 5</i>	<i>GMT – 4</i>	<i>GMT*</i>	<i>GMT + 1</i>	<i>GMT + 2</i>	<i>GMT +5:45</i>
Asia	19:00– 22:00	22:00– 1:00	13:00– 2:00	3:00– 6:00	4:00– 7:00	5:00– 8:00	8:45– 11:45
Africa	22:00– 3:00	1:00– 6:00	2:00– 5:00	6:00– 11:00	7:00– 12:00	8:00– 13:00	11:45– 16:45
Europe	3:00– 8:00	6:00– 11:00	7:00– 12:00	11:00– 16:00	12:00– 17:00	13:00– 18:00	16:45– 21:45
North America	8:00– 13:00	11:00– 16:00	12:00– 17:00	16:00– 21:00	17:00– 22:00	18:00– 23:00	21:45– 3:45
Latin America	13:00– 18:00	16:00– 19:00	17:00– 20:00	21:00– 24:00	22:00– 1:00	23:00– 2:00	3:45– 6:45

*Note:* The Global Broadcast marathon started at 3:00 Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) and ended at 24:00 GMT (see middle column). It moved from Asia, to Africa, to Europe, to North America, and finally to Latin America. The shaded boxes indicate the GMT and corresponding regional time of the live broadcast.

broadcast that mixes new and old technologies, promotes collaborative work practices, fosters international solidarity on discrimination issues through participatory programming, and attempts to build a global network through activism.

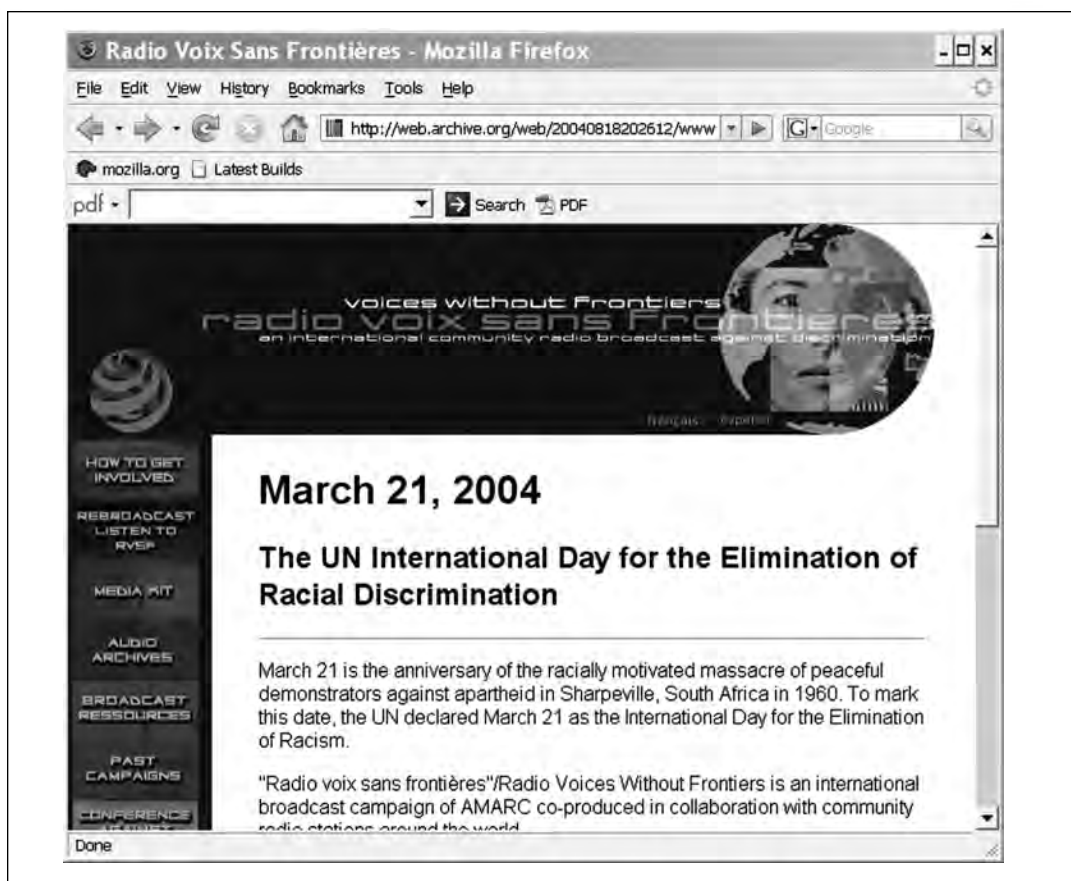
## A Mix of New and Old Technologies

RVSF is a global broadcast that spreads information in a new way, in particular, through a mix of technologies—satellite, Internet, and broadcast radio. With their multimedia digital platform, ICTs offer a means of producing and distributing content on a local and global level—locally, on radio stations that carry RVSF programming to an audience of thousands and, globally, through

the Internet to a potential audience of millions (Figure 30.3). Here’s how it is done.

In 2004, RVSF was not only Web cast on [www.rvsf.amarc.org](http://www.rvsf.amarc.org) but was also distributed by satellite and picked up by community radio stations around the world. With some 70 participating stations, it is estimated that 200 stations reaching millions of listeners worldwide carried RVSF programming on March 21.

Sometimes RVSF programming is available on regional or global satellite and is picked up by broadcasters “on demand” (this is the case with Italy’s Global Radio and Latin America’s Asociación Latinoamericana de Educación Radiofónica). It is also available on established program slots of regional satellite networks; for example, “Native America Calling” aired on American Indian Radio on Satellite (AIROS) service.



**Figure 30.3** Screenshot of RVSF 2004 Web Site

Source: Contributor & AMARC created/permission granted by AMARC.

Programming carried on the *Web* stream is what makes RVSF a global continuous broadcast. In 2004, it was hosted by AMARC's home base in Montreal; in other years, different Internet Service Providers (ISPs) or networks (e.g., the Community Media Association in the United Kingdom) have hosted regional portions of the Web cast.

Despite offering different options for picking up RVSF programming, distribution remains the biggest weakness of the broadcast. Commenting on the RVSF campaign in 2001, AMARC Board member and KCSB Staff Advisor Elizabeth Robinson (2001) said,

It's a process that we don't know very well in the U.S.—a focus day where everybody does the

same thing on the same day. (Usually) we go to our little stations and we do what we do but getting people to commit their programming for one day to a common theme is new to us.

Precisely because it's new, the "build it and they will come" approach does not work for a new-technologies broadcast. "On-demand" satellite distribution and Web casting are forms of narrow-casting, not broadcasting, as they outreach specific rather than general audiences. These specific audiences might indeed tune in but only if they know you exist, so just making programming available via satellite does not mean a broadcaster will carry it. Audiences, in this case community radio stations, need to be actively solicited.

Another important aspect of the broadcast is the RVSF Web site. The Web site is the window to the global campaign; it is the only element that presents the broadcast as a global initiative. As a nongovernmental organization (NGO) based initiative, with the mandate to broker information, this is arguably one of the most important aspects of the international effort.

The Web site platform has gone through many incarnations—it was first published in HTML (Hypertext Markup Language), then it moved to an organizational content management system, and at the time of writing, it is still on a wiki platform. Each move has been made to make the site more accessible and more sustainable.

When using HTML, there is usually just one webmaster responsible for managing Web site content. In contrast, using the open-source platform wiki<sup>5</sup> makes it easier to access and change content. In the case of the RVSF Web site, there is still a webmaster responsible for the overall structure of the site; however, by using a set of simple commands, various individuals can be responsible for managing content.

For RVSE, this means that content can be added and revised in a more timely manner and by different sets of people.

Another ICT used to facilitate working together is File Transfer Protocol, or FTP. It is a relatively simple new technology that is used to connect two computers over the Internet so that the user of one computer can transfer files and perform file commands on the other computer. During a typical RVSF campaign, an FTP site is made available to all regions for posting temporary and permanent audio files to be shared and exchanged.

The audio archives<sup>6</sup> are another important part of the mix. Although the global broadcast is a 1-day campaign, radio stations (and civil society) are encouraged to listen to or download audio archives and broadcast RVSF programs on their local radio stations throughout the year. In general, archives are an important way to preserve the historical memory of community radio

and to keep the spotlight on targeted social issues. At the end of the 2004 broadcast, there were 31 individual archives and 11 complete broadcast hours published on the Web site (Figure 30.4). If you check the site now, you'll only find archives as of 2005. The crash of AMARC's server and a nasty virus invasion resulted in the loss of much information—an anecdote mentioned as a cautionary tale about relying too heavily on computer networks (J.-P. Théberge, AMARC-International, personal communication, November 29, 2006).

This survey of the technological mix used in the broadcast illustrates how ICTs are helping people communicate (although imperfectly) from the many to the many. Yet, ICTs can also reconstruct the same power imbalances that are being redressed. Thanks to different technical and human resource capacities between regions and within regions, the RVSF broadcast sometimes reflects North-South power imbalances but also those that are North-North and South-South. For example, Radio Mundo Real in Uruguay is a fully functioning Internet radio station, while Radio Tierra in Chile barely has a reliable dial-up connection. CJSF in Vancouver may be in the global North, but that didn't help when trying to figure out how to enter a URL in an audio player. It's also worth noting that FTP may be a simple technology, but if you don't have access to a high-speed connection it is very impractical. In Kathmandu, the Asia-Pacific coordinator set up a plan just in case the local Internet connection was unsuccessful; he would ship an audio CD by airmail to New Delhi for upload from there. Also, while digital radio production is now more common, it is still not universal, nor is Internet broadcasting. Therefore, RVSF still accepts audiocassettes and accommodates analog production and broadcasting.

Together, this is undeniable proof that technology is not an end in itself. But it also shows how technology is always adapted on a local level—each of these radio stations found ways to produce and distribute their programs, whether



**Figure 30.4** Screenshot of 2004 RVSF Archives

Source: Contributor & AMARC created/permission granted by AMARC.

by mailing recorded audiocassettes, uploading digital audio, downloading the Web stream, or broadcasting live on their analog stations. In other words, they were able to participate in the broadcast by using a mix of traditional and new technologies.

The regional coordinator for AMARC Asia-Pacific, Suman Basnet, says that a global campaign cannot be over reliant on the Internet: "Internet is not a reality in most of the communities in the Asia-Pacific" (personal communication, December 10, 2006). Clearly, stations without an Internet connection cannot stream content or download audio files.

To be successful, Basnet says, "global campaigns must also have smaller—community to community—exchanges within them." This is true especially for the Asia-Pacific region because of language constraints. "Most community radios in the region exist in areas where English is not understood. Most of Asia-Pacific's contributions were in local languages/dialects. Therefore programs produced by one community radio could not be used by another," says Basnet (personal communication, December 10, 2006).

This reality is built into the design of the broadcast. Stations can still be part of the global campaign by producing local programming and



by exchanging programming with other local or regional stations, even by snail mail.

Yet, as Basnet points out, this means that more lead time is needed for planning and for promotion of the broadcast within the region. In other words, enough effort needs to be placed on preparing, not just on gathering the right technological mix.

## New Ways of Working

How does it all come together? General operations are managed using electronic lists, news groups, online workspaces (e.g., FTP), Web sites (Wiki platform), and instant messaging services. RVSF producer María Suárez Toro (Kidd, 2002) of Feminist Internet Radio Endeavor (FIRE) in Costa Rica says, “Too many people think that the technology is the communication” (p. 18). Her production strategy focuses on access and finding creative ways of using technology (Suarez, 2000). In other words, it is the networking opportunity provided by the technology that creates communication not the technology itself (p. 20).

For RVSE, this means going beyond hierarchical relationships and applying new ways of working. As an example, the international coordinator, regional teams, and partners, located in five continents, work together on coordination, mobilization, programming, distribution, and promotion. There are common campaign objectives, timelines, and responsibilities, but these are adapted to each region’s priorities, work cultures, and capacities.

A big challenge for RVSE is overcoming language barriers. Group interaction online is difficult because there is no common language. Language divides are often just seen as communication barriers, while the power relations implicated in the use of one language over another are ignored. One of the ways this is addressed is by sending out collective messages in three working languages (English, French, and Spanish). On an operational level, this becomes a time-consuming and challenging task to sustain.

Managing “activist fatigue” is another concern. The whole broadcast relies on the volunteer

participation of community radio broadcasters, independent producers, and affinity groups—sometimes voices are from the marginalized communities themselves and sometimes they are from activists who represent them. Because of social inequalities, the communities being targeted may have the least amount of time to contribute to a campaign or project. The challenge is then to be creative and flexible in coming up with ways to involve people while at the same time accepting their limits.

## New Technologies Meet Social Activism

But what do you actually hear in the broadcast? The RVSE campaign encourages the analysis of a global issue (racial discrimination) on local levels, and through the sharing of experiences it fosters local, regional, and global solidarity on these issues.

In fact, the linking of global issues on a local level is what community radio does best. Since the inception of the international campaign, programming on March 21 has illustrated how the same global economic and political forces are shaping regressive policies in the North and the South. Neocolonialism, xenophobia, the creation of Continental Fortresses, and the communication divide are regular features of RVSE. Each year, a broadcast theme is chosen, which is linked to a current event. In 2002, the theme was the post-9/11 environment; in 2003, it was the impending Iraq War; in 2004, the theme was communication rights in the context of the World Summit on the Information Society. In general, programming usually reflects three major themes: (1) migration; (2) systemic racism and antiracism work; and (3) identity, difference, and self-determination.

Here are some highlights of the 2004 broadcast—one of the most diverse and dynamic ever:

*Asia-Pacific:* For the first time, there was a special 3-hour broadcast from Asia with contributions from community radio stations and producers in Nepal, Sri Lanka, India, and the Philippines. Stories covered included the following:

- Caste-based discrimination in Nepal and education as a key to overcoming it
- The case of the *dalits*, who are not allowed to worship in Hindu temples because of their social status as “low caste”
- The history, present situation, and future prospects of the Kumals, a so-called low-caste group from Nepal’s Palpa region
- A discriminatory law that makes it difficult for women to acquire citizenship in Nepal
- Discrimination against indigenous people in Nepal and ways to fight it
- The role of mass media in challenging discrimination

*Africa:* Working with a team of journalists throughout the African continent, RVSF broadcast live from the (no-longer operational) Simbani News Agency of AMARC Africa in Johannesburg, South Africa. There were stories on the following:

- South Africa: farmers rights, xenophobia, human rights, the role of ICTs, youth in the South African education system of the postapartheid era, and HIV/AIDS and antiretroviral drugs
- Gambia: forced marriages, women, and employment
- Ghana: Marginalization of people who practice traditional religions, digital divides
- Tanzania: community radio and AIDS awareness campaigns
- Community radio in Ethiopia
- Media and reconciliation on the Ivory Coast
- Media and conflict resolution
- NGOs and the right to communicate

*Europe:* Hosted by AMISnet in Rome, one of the unique features of the broadcast was the Link Lusofono, a collaboration between Portuguese speakers from community radio

stations in 12 countries. There were also contributions from 15 access radio stations (a new tier of local radio in the United Kingdom with programs for social and educational benefit, legalized in July 2004). Stories covered included the following:

- Racial discrimination in Romania
- The living conditions of the Roma people in the Czech and Slovak Republic
- Youth on racial discrimination in Europe
- The Bossi-Fini law and its effects on migrants living in Italy
- The behaviour of the Israeli army and the discrimination between Muslim and Christian Palestinians
- The “administrative genocide” in Slovenia when a number of nonethnic Slovenes were erased from the public registries after Slovenia declared independence from Yugoslavia in 1991
- Multiculturalism and freedom of speech issues in the Netherlands
- An inquiry on the situation of 400 African asylum seekers who live in an occupied building in Rome
- Media and migration issues

*North America:* For the first time ever, there was a 1-hour national feed in French by the Ottawa-based Réseau Francophone des Amériques and a 1-hour feed in Spanish by Radio Centre-Ville in Montreal. The English broadcast came from KCSB-FM in Santa Barbara, California. Featured stories included the following:

- The impact of U.S. immigration policies on U.S.-Mexico border residents
- Actions against the deportation of refugees in Canada
- Anti-immigration laws around the world
- Racism in sports media

- Poverty, women, and discrimination
- Reparations for victims of discrimination in the United States
- Community media at the World Summit on the Information Society
- Struggles of resistance and self-determination in Haiti, India, and the United States; for example, one story covered a *rapero*'s efforts to build Latino cultural consciousness in the United States through music.
- Relations between Anglophones and minority Francophones in Canada

*Latin America:* From the broadcast centers of Radio Mundo Real in Uruguay, in collaboration with Radio Tierra in Chile, the broadcast featured contributions from community radio stations and producers in Chile, Mexico, Argentina, Uruguay, Peru, and Ecuador. Stories covered were as follows:

- Promoting citizenship, civics, and democratic culture in Latin America
- Migration struggles on the U.S.-Mexico border
- Media and discrimination against women in Mexico
- The Andean communities and their struggle for water in Cochabamba, Bolivia
- The role of women in the Mapuche community in Chile
- Violence against women
- Refugee struggles in Ecuador
- The Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission and its report on discrimination against indigenous peoples, peasants, and women
- Racial discrimination against rural peoples who migrate to urban centers in Peru
- Racism in Argentina
- A public forum for art, politics, and human rights in Argentina

As described above, the concept of participatory communication is well represented in the programming content of the broadcast. According to Bruce Girard (1992), “the role of the radio [community radio] is to respond to the priorities set by the community, to facilitate their discussion, to reinforce them, and to challenge them” (p. 3). In the case of RVSF, this role was bestowed on the broadcast coordinators. As long as contributions were on theme and respected the principles of the broadcast, all contributions were accepted and included in the broadcast according to priorities set by each region.

Nevertheless, RVSF is not just a series of regional broadcasts but is presented as a global broadcast on a common theme. In this respect, there could be more interactivity, including live discussion/commentary between regions during the broadcast. There could also be more joint programming; for example, the lineup could include a cross-continental panel on migration policy. Of course, this is only possible permitting there are adequate technical and financial resources—a common challenge for community radio initiatives. Earlier, the call for more local-to-local exchanges was reported; there is also a need for more region-to-region exchanges; in both cases, the imperative is to raise the bar and increase the chances of making a social impact.

## Building a Network on a Day of Hope

RVSF remains a day of hope as it fosters the incorporation of people into a worldwide antidiscrimination community radio network. The International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination commemorates the anniversary of the 1960 Sharpeville massacre, when antiapartheid demonstrators were killed in a South African town. Almost 50 years later, and in a postapartheid South Africa, Sharpeville remains an international symbol of resistance and hope and has become the common reference point across the RVSF antidiscrimination network.



**Photo 30.1** RVSF International Broadcast in Johannesburg, South Africa, 2001

Source: Waag Society.

Elizabeth Robinson (2001) has helped coordinate the RVSF broadcast in North America since 2000. Commenting on the importance of the campaign, she refers to the beginning of the 20th century:

[At the time, it was said that] *the* problem of the 20th century was going to be race and racism. Well, we are now in the 21st century and it remains a problem. So, I think one of the things that we wanted to do in North America when we joined the campaign was to remind people that it was still a problem. But also to educate people about the problem and all of the various sorts of resistance to these human problems that are expansive in the world today.

To address racism issues, many events have been organized under the RVSF banner: conferences and training workshops on content production and mobilization. RVSF teams have also come together for remote broadcasts at events

such as the World Social Forum in Brazil, the UN World Summit on Sustainable Development in South Africa, and the UN World Conference Against Racism also in South Africa. The broadcasts have always taken place in parallel with advocacy work at official and counterforums. This kind of advocacy is considered a priority for AMARC and many other international NGOs.

Media studies professor and longtime community media activist Dorothy Kidd (2002) regards attending counterforums of UN conferences and other global meetings as one of the most important networking areas for international NGOs (INGOs)—these meetings become opportunities to influence official organizations. Kidd notes that the most successful NGO strategy has been discursive, in which “knowledge does appear to be power” (p. 7). These forums are opportunities for NGOs to broker alternative information and put a human face on complex social problems by featuring individual testimonies and stories (p. 7).

Yet, Kidd (2002) cautions that sometimes these advocacy efforts result in INGOs losing touch with their activist roots and compromising their goals to a United Nations and government focus (p. 14). In this respect, AMARC is present at most of these international gatherings with both advocacy and broadcaster contingents, so it becomes more difficult to lose focus and easier to keep both the lobbying efforts and activist roots in play. When it comes to RVSE, whether on March 21 or at global forums, more work needs to be done to partner with community and antidiscrimination organizations as well as other affinity groups to ensure that the broadcast network is truly connected to a broad network of social activists.

RVSE is an opportunity to create a dialogue between the institution of community radio and the social movement of community radio. It is a symbolic and therefore discursive initiative, but it is also a vehicle for networking among community radio and social activists who continue the lived social struggle for rights and dignity.

Elizabeth Robinson (2001) says about the RVSE broadcast,

The possibility of not only linking with other stations in our own region but of linking with people all over the world is irresistible in some ways and I think it points to all the best of what we are; . . . it reminds us of our potential.

Rosario Puga (2004) of Radio Tierra in Chile shares this perspective: "As a global initiative, Voces Sin Fronteras represents the great potential of radio exchange initiatives" (p. 3).

The long-term objective of the RVSE initiative has been to develop a sustainable program of work, incorporating broadcast and training components throughout the year in every region of the world. In a nutshell, RVSE is an opportunity to test and put into practice the many ideals held by the progressive communications community.

## Conclusion

While economic globalization continues to push and control the migration of peoples, the themes

of migration, discrimination, and racism will remain contemporary for some time to come. This makes RVSE an important expression of international solidarity.

The continuing growth of community radio around the world positions it as a part of a social movement—one where the global forces shaping local contexts are being heard, debated, contested, and repositioned:

Community radio is a great equalizer. As proponents of community radio, if we do not campaign against racial discrimination then it will be like doctors stopping to provide a cure. It is our primary job to raise our voices against all kinds of discrimination. (S. Basnet, personal communication, December 10, 2006)

For more than a decade, the Radio Voices Without Frontiers broadcast campaign has been raising voices and expanding global and local mediascapes through a mix of new and traditional technologies. It's an experiment still worth pursuing, regardless of the challenges.

At the end of the day each March 21, participants are sustained with their sense of euphoria. A community radio broadcast marathon around the world has been realized, collectively. Imagine what could happen if this year's listeners, social activists, and displaced people became next year's broadcasters? *Another kind of communication is possible*: That is the message and the struggle.

## Notes

1. See <http://nooneisillegal-montreal.blogspot.com/> and <http://solidarityacrossborders.org/en/node> as an example of the migrants' rights issues addressed by this community-based activist network.

2. *Fortress Europe* is the term given (usually pejoratively) to the concept of the European Union's efforts to keep non-EU goods, businesses, and nationals out of the Union's 25 member states (Wikipedia at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fortress\\_Europe](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fortress_Europe), accessed December 2006). The term *Fortress North America* is sometimes used to make a parallel between EU border policies and the increasingly harmonized border controls between the U.S. and Canada since September 11, 2001.

3. The 1985 Schengen Agreement is an agreement among European states that sets out a common policy on the temporary entry of persons and the integration of external border controls. It is touted as a way to simplify the circulation of people between member states. In practice, it creates a class of non-European “undesireables.”

4. See [www.amarc.org](http://www.amarc.org).

5. See [www.wiki.org](http://www.wiki.org) for more information about Wiki.

6. To see the audio archives, go to [www.rvsf.amarc.org](http://www.rvsf.amarc.org). Click on “audio archives” in the main menu and then scroll to see the list of archives by year, as of 2005 (information from previous years is no longer on line).

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