

## **Environmental and Cultural Based Indigenous Community Radio: Radio Ruyuk FM, West Java**

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### **Abstract**

Ruyuk FM Radio is a radio community focusing on reforestation and local culture program. A comprehensive study of this radio is interesting because of the uniqueness in the process of its establishment, programs, involvement of women, and accomplishments. The study of Ruyuk FM Radio uses the concept of community radio, among others, by Fraser and Estrada (2001) and Jankowski and Prehn (2002). This study is a descriptive case study using qualitative research method and was implemented in January 2011-June 2012. Ruyuk FM Radio was established in 2007 in the Village of Mandalamekar, Tasikmalaya, West Java, by a group of non government organization's activists *Mitra Alam Munggaran* (MAM). The presence of Ruyuk FM Radio encouraged community groups, including women's groups, to produce and share a variety of information on nature conservation, local culture, and society. The main program of Ruyuk FM Radio of promoting forest conservation has restored unity of Mandalamekar villagers in handling and managing water resources in the forest. Efforts by villagers to conserve forest and manage water sources, has officially been recognized and awarded at District, Provincial and International levels. Effort to preserve local culture was implemented through arts, culture and language programs.

**Key words: community radio, forest conservation, Sundanese culture, women participation**

### **Introduction**

Community radio is a medium for community groups to inform and communicate community issues, such as water pollution, conflict between residents, maternal and child health, public policy villages, and politics<sup>1</sup>, as well as local arts and culture (Fraser and Estrada, 2001; Jankowski and Prehn, 2002; Nasir et al., 2007; Seneviratne, 2007). Birowo dkk.<sup>2</sup>) stated that the community needed a community radio to express their opinions and interests. This is in line with the basic principles of community radio by the Declaration of the World Association of Community Broadcasters (AMARC<sup>3</sup>) in 1988, that is: "Community radio responds to the needs of the community it serves, contributing to its development within progressive perspectives in favor of social change. Community radio strives to democratize communication through community participation in different forms in accordance with each specific social context" (Fraser and Estrada, 2001:3).

In Indonesia, some community radio stations are specializing in issues of nature conservation, water management, preservation of local culture, critics to the village government, and labor issues. One example of a community radio station based on the preservation of forest and cultural issues is Ruyuk FM Community Radio (*in short*: Ruyuk FM) in Tasikmalaya, West Java.

Selection of Ruyuk FM as an object of research was conducted through multistage purposive sampling, namely: (1) mapping of all community radio in West Java which is in the process of legalization, the number was 197 radio stations in 2010, and (2) confirming the legalization process and existence of Ruyuk FM through interviews with members of the Regional Indonesian Broadcasting Commission (*Komisi Penyiaran Indonesia Daerah*, KPID) West Java, administrators of Indonesia Community Radio Network (*Jaringan Radio Komunitas Indonesia*, JRKI), caretaker of Farmer Voice Radio Network (*Jaringan Radio Suara Petani*, JRSP), management and listeners of Ruyuk FM, as well as conducting field trips.

The study was conducted in January 2011-June 2012 and implemented in the form of a case study (Denzin and Lincoln, 2009; Mulyana, 2001) at Ruyuk FM using the concept of community media (Howley, 2005; Jankowski and Prehn, 2002) and community radio (Fraser and Estrada, 2001; Jankowski and Prehn, 2002 ; Howley, 2005; Solervicens, 2008). The study used a qualitative descriptive method (Moleong, 1999; Mulyana, 2001) based on a very wide variety of data sources to systematically investigate individuals, groups, or events related to the object of research.

### **Ruyuk FM: Establishment Process, Challenges and Successes**

*Establishment Process.* In 2000s, forest in the Mandalamekar Village was in poor condition due to illegal logging, causing environmental and social problems. The loss of large trees reduced the watershed function. Water discharge and water supplies were decreasing. It often sparked horizontal disputes, especially among farmers. Concerned about these problems, in 2002 some youth combined efforts to find solutions to the problems in their communities. Later, they formed a self-help groups named *Mitra Alam Munggaran* (MAM), a group of people who care about the environment. MAM members had a diverse background, consisting of farmers, traders, teachers, students, village officials and religious leaders. The first main activity of MAM was restoring the fountain in the Mandalamekar Village.

At that time, the activists in MAM and community leaders continued to look for effective ways to communicate with local residents, who are scattered in the hills with difficult access. The problem of distance and difficulty of access could impede the delivery of information, which was thought could be then solved by the establishment of a community media.

MAM activists and community leaders held several meetings to discuss the establishment of community radio as a medium of information. Community radio is important to expand the parties concerned on forest as water sources in the Mandalamekar Village. They invited the Chairman of JRKI, Bowo Usodo, to discuss the basic concepts and the process of the establishment of community radio. "Aware that we need help from the outside, I reinforced the network with JRKI," said Irma Meilandi<sup>4)</sup> (37), founder and activist of Ruyuk FM. Finally, on October 5, 2007, Radio Community Mandala Ruyuk-with air name Ruyuk FM-was established in the Mandalamekar Village, District Jatiwaras, Tasikmalaya Regency, West Java. The word *Ruyuk* means wildwood/wilderness. The choice of the name "Ruyuk" illustrates the importance of forest conservation information through community radio.

**Utilization.** Since Ruyuk FM was founded in 2007, Mandalamekar villagers living in remote areas had received some benefits. Due to its hilly geographical conditions, many people in Mandalamekar Village area could not enjoy television broadcasts, found community radio as alternative media for information, knowledge and entertainment. Yana Noviadi<sup>5)</sup>, Mandalamekar Village chief and founder of Ruyuk Radio FM, said, "Community radio could build awareness and knowledge of the villagers to conserve the forest. Villagers also been actively involved in managing the media community".

During its development, Ruyuk FM has become information center for Mandalamekar citizen. The information covered many issues, such as, child birth, someone death, fish harvesting in the river<sup>6)</sup>.

**Challenges.** At early time of establishment, Ruyuk FM only staffed by four people. They did infrastructure installation and test radio broadcast. Lack of information and knowledge regarding the establishment of community radio stations did not make the managers discouraged. They had encountered some funny experiences. Sharif Hidayat (41), announcer Ruyuk FM, said, in 2006, it began mounting radio antenna using bamboo. Then, a citizen donated a compact disc (CD) track. Test broadcasts started with a transmitter power of only a few meters away. To get a broader coverage area, radio antenna was raised to the mangosteen tree. As a result, the coverage

of the transmitter has increased considerably. Ruyuk FM began broadcasting an interactive program with audience, accepting song requests by mobile phone. "We're confused, at that time it's hard to find the song requested by listener. We play the song that was available. They would be proud just to listen that their request had been read on air" said Ayat<sup>7)</sup>, the on air alias for Sharif Hidayat.

A year later, a technician from Community Radio Network (*Jaringan Radio Komunitas*, JRK) West Java came to check the installation of radio antennas. Apparently, it was then noticed that the antenna was wrongly mounted. The technician was surprised and amazed that a radio with wrongly mounted antenna did not cause radio equipment broken and short-circuited. In fact, Ruyuk FM could continually broadcast for a year. After the radio antenna was properly installed, the radio coverage becomes much wider, reaching neighboring village. "We were from the beginning did everything by self-taught, no coach. Thus we just installed everything as thought were right. This because we did not have adequate information," said Yana<sup>8)</sup>. Furthermore Yana said that the material for broadcasting was gradually improved. The initial target of Ruyuk FM was to be heard by residents.

Getting people who were willing to be broadcaster on Ruyuk FM was not easy. They need to be convinced. This was because not many people had enough courage to broadcast on the radio. If there were any people who dare to broadcast on the radio, usually were young person. The problem was, when these young people get jobs outside the Mandalamekar Village, they could not continue to broadcast on the radio. "Turn over was fast. Suddenly, I knew they were in Lampung, Jakarta, or somewhere else. The process was disturbing", complained Irman<sup>9)</sup>

However, since the end of 2009, Ruyuk FM broadcasters were filled by groups of people who had regular jobs, such as farmers, village officials and religious leaders. Women's groups began participating in radio broadcasts although only participating in singing on the show "Live Karaoke", "*Cianjuran*", and Sundanese arts.

**Funding.** Operational costs of Ruyuk FM was obtained from donations of Mandalamekar villagers, both who living in the village and who were working elsewhere. During the establishment of radio studio, some residents voluntarily work or donate building materials.

Ayat said, originally Ruyuk FM studio was a rice and copra storage building. The meeting place was located in front of the broadcast room that could be visited by anyone, anytime, because the door was never locked. The wall was an array of bricks and the floor was

still a bare ground. Announcer sits on the ground during the broadcast because there was no table. This often caused announcer body to be bitten by small insects causing itching. "If the insect got into the flesh, it took two to three months to recovery. The habitat of this insect was inside the red brick that was not cemented. Ayat added<sup>10</sup>).

Then, the radio managers, led by Yana Noviadi (44), raising funds to cement the walls, installing tile and make the table for broadcasting. Help came from residents in the form of building materials and volunteer labor. They worked together to renovate the studio and make a table radio broadcasting. "There was someone brought timber, saws, carpentry tools. We made the broadcast table at night," recalls Ayat<sup>11</sup>).

A computer for broadcasting was obtained from an activist. Besides being used for broadcasting, the computer was also used to study computer operation in the afternoon for children/teenagers in Mandalamekar Village.

Financial assistance has also come through the program JRK West Java on HIV and bird flu, as well as grants from The Body Shop Foundation through its plant herbal program<sup>12</sup>). Irman said, in Ruyuk FM there was an existing broadcast program "Health" that drives people back to herbal medicine. Community of Mandalamekar has been practicing herbal medicine for a long time, because of the difficulty of getting treatment from a doctor or hospital. The sick people usually go to the midwife or community health center (*Pusat Kesehatan Masyarakat*, Puskesmas) in the neighboring village. In 2010 there were establishment of *Puskesmas Pembantu* (Pustu) in Mandalamekar Village. The existence of herbal treatment program in cooperation with The Body Shop Foundation empowers the community to grow, collect, and produce medicinal plants.

Raising funds by Ruyuk FM was justifiable as long as the funding from other institutions was based on honest and transparent relationships. Acceptance of funds was also not binding and non-participants in accordance with the characteristics of community radio.

**Success.** In 2008, Ruyuk FM as media networks for Mandalamekar villagers was strengthened with the establishment of the Village blog Mandalamekar (<http://mandalamekar.wordpress.com>) that contains information about activities, events and agenda in Mandalamekar Village. Blog are equipped with photos, videos, and opinions of Mandalamekar. Other social media networks that were being built in 2011, were a portal

(<http://mandalamekar.or.id>), Facebook (Desa Mandalamekar and Ruyuk Mandalamekar) and twitter (@ mandalamekar and @ ruyuk\_fm).

Due to the success of rural communities to conserve forests and managing water sources, Mandalamekar Village has been awarded at the District, Provincial and International levels. In consecutive years, in 2009 and 2010, the Mandalamekar Village became the First Champion in Tasikmalaya District Level as "*Desa Peduli Hutan dan Konservasi Alam/The village of Forest and Nature Conservation Concern*". In 2010, the Mandalamekar Village also received an award as the Second Champion "*Lomba Penghijauan dan Konservasi Alam Wana Lestari/Competition of Reforestation and Nature Conservation Wana Lestari*" Category *Desa Peduli Kehutanan*, West Java Province.

In 2011, Irman Meilandi, one of the founder of Ruyuk FM, received an international award in the field of nature conservation from a non-profit organization "Seacology" headquartered in California, USA. "Seacology" with working programs are available in 46 countries provide international award each year to individuals on outstanding achievements in preserving the environment and culture in their living area. Certificate "Seacology Prize 2011" was delivered directly to Irma at headquarters "Seacology", California, on Wednesday, October 6, 2011. In addition to receiving the award, Irma was also a keynote speaker at the event "Seacology"<sup>13</sup>).

### **Programs of Reforestation and Sundanese Culture at Ruyuk FM**

Community radio as an alternative media aims to give voice to community members who do not speak up and away from the city center. Irman<sup>14</sup>) said, "The voice of the common people is difficult to get a place in the mainstream media. Radio community should take on this role so that the aspirations of the people are also heard". Community radio as an alternative medium could promote programs that can help the community in the development and advancement of their social lives.

***Reforestation program.*** The main broadcast material at Ruyuk FM is the management of forest and water resources. One of the flagship programs is "Conservation and Livelihoods", which contains about the importance of protecting natural resources and biodiversity in the Mandalamekar Village. In this program, the community is asked to perform seeding, planting and maintenance of trees in the forest. This is consistent with the mission and purpose of MAM,

which in Sundanese it reads “*leuweung nganteng kaca nunggal*” (*hutan lestari cermin kehidupan/sustain forest reflects living*). Tata Sumitra<sup>15</sup>, MAM activist, explains (he was informed) that global warming has caused climate change and it’s detrimental to farmers, such as lack of water availability. To overcome this, MAM pioneered reforestation in the forest-edge near the village that has been damaged. Planting trees in the forest could rejuvenate water spring needed by the people for agriculture and water supply.

To support the knowledge and skills of farmers, Ruyuk FM broadcast program "Agricultural Extension". Broadcaster "Agricultural Extension" Ade Priatna<sup>16</sup> (43), who work as teacher of Mathematics in SMPN 2 Jatiwaras, said, "Initially, local farmers performed farming traditionally with conventional technologies, so they just get a sense of fatigue, no optimal yield for sale. By the existence of agricultural information from Ruyuk FM, farmers became more advanced in agricultural and farming technology so the production has selling values".

The reforestation program was supported by an off air program, visiting water spring in Karang Soak in protected forests. There they cleared the shrubs and weeds. This activity involves a junior high school students and Women Community on Environmental Movement (*Komunitas Perempuan Pegiat Lingkungan*, KPPL) formed by MAM in 2008. Ruyuk FM invites listeners to participate in reforestation activities in protected forests through radio broadcasts. At night, the event was broadcast in the form of news.

Results of Ruyuk FM broadcasts on forest conservation since 2007 began to appear in the dry season of 2011. At that time, residents have a supply of water from springs located in the reforested are in Mandalamekar Village. "This dry season, we are able to irrigate 80 percent of our rice fields," said Yana<sup>17</sup>. While in other villages, rice fields dried up due to drought.

**Local cultural programs.** Reforestation Program in Ruyuk FM was supported by the preservation of Sundanese language and Sundanese cultural program. This program contains advice, adherence to religion, and the importance of protecting nature. This was in line with the concept of community radio expressed by Fraser and Estrada (2001), that one of the main functions of community radio is to promote and reflect the culture, character and local identity.



Ambu Pohaci and Ayat were broadcasting "Ngamumule Bahasa Sunda"  
(Documentation: Emilia Bassar, 1/7/2011).

Ruyuk FM broadcast radio program in Sundanese "*Ngamumule Sundanese*" every Friday at 19:00 to 20:00. This program is nurtured by Ayat and Dedeh Nur Resmiati (59), or commonly called Ambu Pohaci. The purpose of this program is to familiarize residents Mandalamekar with high level Sundanese in everyday life. Using Sundanese must reflect Sundanese people that have great respect for parents, friendly, smiling, and gentle. In addition, Ruyuk FM broadcast Sundanese songs "*Cianjuran*" sung directly (live) by three to four women accompanied by harp and flute music plays.

Effort to preserve the language and culture of Sundanese not only broadcast on air but also off air through various activities in the Mandalamekar Village. Sundanese cultural programs are expected to motivate and encourage young people to love and care for the language and culture in the midst of the bombardment of television shows. That is why, it is necessary to have an alternative program that reflect Sundanese culture in accordance with the community identity.

### **Participation of Women in Ruyuk FM Radio**

Management of community radio is voluntary according to the availability of time and effort of community member. Not all community members can be engaged at any time in radio management. Thus, one needs to set up a management body representing various community groups in the community.



Currently, the management Ruyuk FM is still dominated by men. There are five women activists and 17 male activists in Ruyuk FM. Two of the women are administrators of Community Broadcasting Council (*Dewan Penyiaran Komunitas*, DPK) and the other three are administrators of Implementing Community Broadcasting Board (*Badan Pelaksana Penyiaran Komunitas*, BPPK).

***The beginning of women's involvement.*** The involvement of women activists in Ruyuk FM began since the establishment of KPPL. At first, KPPL had five-member and coordinated by Ida Rosida. KPPL task was to provide some food and drinking water when a group of men planting trees in protected forests in Karang Soak.

MAM and KPPL activities in the Karang Soak forest that were broadcasted by Ruyuk FM made Ida Rosida interested to come to the radio. Initially she was singing karaoke on the radio using the microphone. After feeling comfortable singing on the radio, she occasionally broadcast on the radio. When the broadcast got a response from the listener, Ida was happy and increase its broadcast to became a routine program.

According to Irman, was not easy to attract women's groups to be active in community radio. Women activists in Ruyuk FM began their involvement with the studio with singing on the radio. Approaches to women's groups were conducted to follow the women's wishes. "Our fellow women initially were approached not to be broadcaster, what more important were to offer what they like, if they like singing then let them sing. Every Saturday night they play Karaoke. Every Friday night *Cianjuran*. They know only that," said Irman<sup>18</sup>).

In line with the statement by Irah Sumirah (44), mother of two boys, she initially feared broadcasting in the radio. "I could not talk, afraid of making mistakes. What to talk about? How's that?" said Irah<sup>19</sup>), recalling her beginning to participate in Ruyuk FM.

Momentum for women's activist involvement occurs when Ruyuk FM managers hold Jamboree for Radio Community Network in 2011 that lifted the spirit and confidence of women.

***Capacity building of women activists.*** Generally, women's involvement in Ruyuk FM is still non-technical, such as receiving guests and preparing consumption. Managerial ability of women activists is still lacking. This is due to their limited knowledge, insight and expertise.

To enhance the capabilities and expertise of women activists, radio managers involved them in board meetings. Several times they were given the opportunity to participate in training

or attend the meeting organized by the partners of Ruyuk FM, such as JRKI, JRK West Java and Combine Resource Institution (CRI).

### **Closing Remarks**

Ruyuk FM was founded by virtually all components of Mandalamekar villagers. The radio was established to fulfill the community needs in Mandalamekar Village to disseminate information about the importance of protecting water resources. They were involved from radio establishment to radio management. This was an opportunity for the community to express their aspirations, ideas and thoughts through community radio; because Ruyuk FM was established by, for and about communities in Mandalamekar Village.

Programs in Ruyuk FM reflect the direction and purpose of Ruyuk FM, to provide information and education to the public on the importance of conserving forests and Sundanese culture.

The involvement of women in the management of Ruyuk FM gave its own color to the radio programs and activities. Capacity building of women activists improved their confidence and skills in managing and producing broadcasting material.

There were at least eight phases undergone by Ruyuk FM to become a medium for the community to raise awareness and knowledge about forest restoration and preserving Sundanese culture in Mandalamekar Village. The first phase was forming institutions concerned with the preservation of forests. The second phase was setting up community radio as a medium of communication and information for the community. The third stage was playing songs from the CD and read the song requests from listeners over the phone. The fourth stage was delivering concise information about the activities of the Mandalamekar Village. The fifth stage was inviting members of the community, including women, to become broadcasters on the radio. The sixth stage was creating benefits out of Ruyuk FM broadcasting. Community started coming into the radio studio and participating in the activities of Ruyuk FM. Seventh stage was making the Ruyuk FM as a center of information, knowledge and entertainment for Mandalamekar villagers. Eighth phases was strengthening Ruyuk FM networking with other organizations and expanding the dissemination of information through social media (blogs, portals, facebook, and twitter).

The above stages shows that the establishment of community radio stations was supported by the community and the radio become the source of information for the community.

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- 2) Birowo, M. A., Prakoso, I., dan Nasir, A., 2007, *Mengapa Radio Komunitas?*, Yogyakarta: Combine Research Institute, hal. 13-14, dalam Haryanto, I. dan Ramdojo, J. J., 2009, *Dinamika Radio Komunitas*, Jakarta: LSPP, hal. 14.
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- 4) Daily newspaper Pikiran Rakyat, 10 November 2011.
- 5) Interview, 26 March 2011.
- 6) Daily newspaper Pikiran Rakyat, 10 November 2011.
- 7) Interview, 3 June 2012.
- 8) Interview, 1 July 2011.
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- 10) Interview, 3 June 2012.
- 11) Interview, 3 June 2012.
- 12) Some examples of herbs that were collected by residents of Mandalamekar, namely leaves of *Jatropha*, lempuyang, natural ginger, turmeric and betel.
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