

Respected Chairperson of the International Programme for Development Communication (IPDC), UNESCO,

The Director-General of UNESCO, The Assistant Director- General,

Council members, All distinguished guests,

Ladies and gentlemen.

It is an honor and a matter of great pride for me to receive this award on behalf of Community Radio Support Centre, Nepal Forum of Environmental Journalists and its Preident Mr. Laxman Uprety. I would like to thank IPDC-UNESCO and the jury members for this recognition that has been given to us.

Please allow me to recall that 15 years ago it was UNESCO that provided the much needed push to the local initiative to open up Nepal's airwaves for community broadcasting.

UNESCO IPDC was instrumental in helping realize the dream of community radio in Nepal. Radio Sagarmatha, Kathmandu - the first community radio station of South Asia, was born in 1997 because UNESCO supported the idea and helped in its fruition. In this occasion, I would like to acknowledge UNESCO's incredible contribution to the community radio movement in Nepal. With much gratitude, I would like to recall the support and cooperation of Mr. Wijayananda Jayaweera, Mr. Hara Padhy and other professionals of UNESCO who helped to make community radio a reality.

CRSC - a special division of NEFEJ has been working tirelessly, since 2000, to keep the notion of community alive within Nepal's independent radio movement. Some of the main highlights of its activities include developing a shared understanding of the principles of community radio, demonstrating mobile broadcasting stations in remotest parts of the country to demystify FM technology, lobbying and advocating for enabling policies and laws, and supporting, promoting and facilitating the community radio movement in Nepal in general.

CRSC has been directly involved in promoting over 125 community radio stations by encouraging community groups to set up their own media. It has brought out more than 20 publications on different aspects of community radio broadcasting and is currently developing a full-fledged resource center. It has concluded last year the piloting of the Community Radio Performance Assessment System in 15 stations of Nepal with support of UNESCO, Kathmandu. The Assessment System, which we developed, with 7 composites, 60 indicators and matrices is an effort to measure the fitness and effectiveness of radio stations in an objective manner and to ensure that the spirit and intent of community broadcasting is not lost in the growth.

With this award, the community radio sector of Nepal has completed a full circle. Therefore I would like to receive this honor on behalf of the entire community radio sector of Nepal including all those that continue to work hard for its promotion.

As you all know, community radio is the voice of the voiceless and marginalized. UNESCO's support to this sector has given amplitude and strength to the marginalized million. I am proud to inform you that today community radio in Nepal reaches 85% of Nepal's population of 27 million. Thanks to your support that this has been possible.

Today's award enhances our motivation, commitment and strength to keep marching on, to ensure that the poorest of the poor, the women, the physically challenged, the indigenous people, as well as the young and the elderly can use the airwaves for improving their lives for their today as well as their tomorrow. To have a world body such as UNESCO and INGOs such as Free Voice and Open Society Institute as supporters and allies means a lot to us, to say the least.

Lastly, I would also like to thank the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters, AMARC for nominating CRSC/NEFEJ for the award. As for the award, I would like to inform this respected assembly that CRSC/NEFEJ has decided to use the prize money to set up a trust fund to generate resources to award organizations or individuals working on community communications in my country. We will be grateful to any support we receive towards the same in the future.

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Thank you very much once again for this award and the honor. Thank you !

Raghu Mainali, Coordinator, CRSC/NEFEJ,
Kathmandu, Nepal, March 22, 2012
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