

INTERNATIONAL
PROGRAMME FOR THE
DEVELOPMENT OF
COMMUNICATION

**AWARD CEREMONY FOR THE IPDC-
UNESCO PRIZE FOR RURAL
COMMUNICATION:
SPEECH BY MR. TORBEN KROGH, IPDC
CHAIRMAN**

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Speech by Mr. Torben Krogh, IPDC Chairman, for the Award ceremony of the IPDC-UNESCO Prize for Rural Communication

Ladies and Gentlemen!

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all to the award ceremony of the IPDC-UNESCO Prize for Rural Communication. The Prize is intended to recognize a meritorious and innovative activity in improving communication in rural communities, chiefly in the developing countries. It was established in 1985 by the Executive Board of UNESCO in pursuance of a decision of the 5th session of the Intergovernmental Council of the IPDC. Consisting of a cheque of US\$ 20,000 and of a special diploma, the Prize is awarded every other year.

This year, IPDC received thirty-eight nominations from twenty-eight different countries. The nominations submitted had to meet a set of strict criteria established by the IPDC Bureau and be endorsed by the National Commissions of the member states of UNESCO or by appropriate non-governmental organizations having consultative status with UNESCO.

The Bureau short-listed three candidates for the Prize: the Community Media Centre of Banikoara (Benin), the newspaper Malayala Manorama (India), and Community Radio Madanpokhara (Nepal). The Banikoara CMC in Benin is a successful local enterprise, combining well-developed radio content and a dynamic and growing telecentre. It offers a range of training programmes based on new information technologies and the Internet, and has been a major factor in overcoming the Banikoara's isolation and contributing to local development. Community radio Madanpokhara is a well-known Nepalese community radio station, providing awareness programmes to the local population in the fields of education, health, agriculture, and gender equity, just to name a few. One of its important activities is the implementation of distance education programmes, which target the rural poor and disadvantaged students who cannot afford private tuition.

While wishing to acknowledge the impressive achievements of all three finalists, the IPDC Bureau finally decided to single out the daily newspaper Malayala Manorala from Kerala, India, which submitted a most outstanding candidature describing in great detail the remarkable project it initiated in May 2004.

Thus, ladies and gentlemen, UNESCO is very pleased to award this year's IPDC-UNESCO Prize for Rural Communication to Malayala Manorama for its imaginative communication campaign - « Pala Thulli » (Many a drop) - aimed at raising awareness about water conservation as a solution to droughts in the state of Kerala, in India.

The project was launched by the largest circulating Malayalam daily to inculcate a new water culture among the people that would preserve Kerala's plentiful rainwater and protect rivers and other water sources from drying up.

The devastating drought that Kerala suffered in 2004 made the flaws in its water management practices quite evident. The Malayala Manorama group was flooded with reports of people's miseries. It decided that it could not be a mere spectator. It launched an editorial campaign "Pala thulli" which included regular articles on water

management techniques in the Malayala Manorama daily and a host of other activities. The newspaper organized exhibitions and video shows demonstrating various methods of water conservation. The campaign has stirred public consciousness on water conservation, especially rainwater harvesting, and empowered thousands of people to conserve water, thus limiting the impact of the draught.

It is a rare occasion when a media group transcends its expected role of expressing and creating opinions, and sets about to solve the problems of the people directly. It is even more exceptional when such an initiative is taken up by a mainstream newspaper like Malayala Manorama, which has a circulation of 1,4 million, catering to various sections of society. By selecting Malayala Manorama as the laureate of this year's Rural Communication Prize, the IPDC Bureau wishes to stress this important aspect and encourage other mainstream media to engage in similar activities. It is also important to highlight that this communication campaign, aimed at Kerala's rural population, is not the conventional one-medium campaign but a multiple media campaign with multi-layer effects. The results of the campaign are phenomenal and have been reported on widely by media in India and abroad.

Ladies and Gentlemen!

It is a happy coincidence that this Prize should be awarded just one day before 22 March, designated in 1993 by the United Nations General Assembly as World Water Day, in celebration of this vital resource. While the world's population tripled in the 20th century, the use of renewable water resources has grown six-fold. Within the next fifty years, the world population will increase by another 40 to 50 %. This population growth - coupled with industrialization and urbanization - will result in an increasing demand for water and will have serious consequences on the environment. Already there is more waste water generated and dispersed today than at any other time in the history of our planet: more than one out of six people (in other words 1.1 billion people) lack access to safe drinking water, and more than two out of six (i.e. 2.6 billion people) lack adequate sanitation. 3900 children die every day from water borne diseases (WHO 2004). The 4th World Water Forum taking place at this very moment in Mexico is a sign of the growing international concern over the problem of scarcity of water resources. Water is truly a development issue and Malayala Manorama's exceptional efforts to raise the awareness on water issues among its readers through the "Palla Thulli" (Many a Drop) campaign deserve the recognition of the international community.

UNESCO is mandated to implement the international water agenda, consisting primarily in promoting integrated water resources management. With this award, we also wish to remind the world that water is precious. Let us not waste it.

We are very pleased that the chief news editor of Malayala Manorama, Mr. Mathews Varghese, is here with us to receive the award. Let us salute the efforts of the thousands of people in India who are behind this campaign and make them feel that we are proud of their achievements. Through this award, we convey our appreciation for their good work.

Thank you.