

## SEEKING BRIDE, MOTORBIKE, AND \$7,000 (continued from front page)

“The drama exactly reflects my story,” says Lalita. She talks about Shilpa (the young female character in the drama), explaining that Shilpa’s parents believe she may get involved with a boy at school. “People started gossiping about me and my male friends at school and my parents believed that,” she says. “That is why they started forcing me into marriage.”

*Hilkor* is produced by PMC. We are experts at creating entertainment that addresses the rights of women and girls. Nepal has the third highest rate of early marriage in Asia and only 53 percent of women over the age of 15 can read and write.

*Hilkor* was broadcast April 2016 to April 2017 in the Maithili language and is now being rebroadcast. The 104-episode drama covers a wide range of issues including rights of women and girls, child marriage, family planning, domestic violence,

gender-based violence, gender equality, reproductive health, maternal and child health, and nutrition. PMC partnered with Nepal’s premier communication and production house, Antenna Foundation (AFN), to broadcast over 40 stations nationwide.



“I dream if I could stop Shilpa from obeying her family,” says Lalita about *Hilkor*. She says she has learned that crying and complaining about life is not a solution and that listening to the drama has made her feel empowered and hopeful for other girls. “If I had a chance to listen to *Hilkor* before in my life, I would have filed a case against my parents and would not get married.” ■



### THE WOMAN WRITING THE STORY TO END EARLY MARRIAGE IN NEPAL

Sneha Jha spent her early childhood in the Mahottari district of Nepal and grew up in Kathmandu. Her mother instilled in her unusual ideas: she didn’t have to marry young and her studies were important.

Though many see her as a positive role model, Sneha believes the real credit for her decisions not to marry young goes to her mother.

“In the story, we have a positive character who acts as a role model in our life,” says Sneha. “I do not consider myself a hero; for me, the hero is someone who is a positive character in my life, and it is my mom.”

The precarious and emotional situations Sneha found herself in facing marriage proposals, with no control over the situations, inspire her fictional characters and storylines with authentic emotions, interactions, and character development.

In February 2017, Sneha got married. Her husband was a man of her choosing and she felt she was ready.

“From my childhood, I used to think that women should not be dependent on men,” says Sneha. “I still believe that women in any relationship should not be dependent on men and that is how they can maintain their individuality and self-respect. Through my writing I know I have to keep people from getting married early.” ■

“I was only 15 when I appeared for my SLC (School Leaving Certificate) exams,” says Sneha, “and from around that time, people had started approaching my family with marriage proposals [for me]. But in my case it was different. In that regard, I consider myself a lucky person. My mother was against my marrying early.”

Today Sneha works for PMC’s Nepal team. She writes the early marriage storyline in *Hilkor* – the same story that has reached Lalita and so many other listeners. Sneha’s personal story is deeply connected to stories she writes. Some of the proposals for 15-year-old Sneha even asked for no dowry, a benefit many parents would not have dismissed. In Sneha’s case, her parents even turned down the marriage proposals from very wealthy families. Her priority was her studies.



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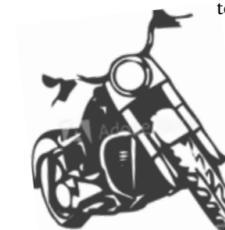
## SEEKING BRIDE, MOTORBIKE, AND \$7,000

**W**hen Lalita Raut’s brother told her “we need to follow the culture,” she was dubious and fearful. Her fears were warranted.

Lalita was born and raised in Janakpur, Mujeliya in southeastern Nepal. It’s common for young girls to be married in Nepal. In fact, 37 percent of girls in Nepal marry before age 18, and 10 percent are married by age 15. Lalita was about to join the 37 percent.

Her brother informed her that a boy from another district, Morang, was ready to marry her. The boy’s father worked as the principal of a college and her soon-to-be husband studied business (working toward his bachelor’s degree) while owning a bread factory. Her brother even visited Morang, met the groom’s father, saw a large home, and returned to Janakpur pleased with what would become his sister’s circumstances.

Lalita stopped her studies even though she was only 17 years old and not yet done with the 10th grade. Her family scraped together enough money to pay the huge dowry of \$7,000 US in cash and provide a motorbike. The financial sacrifice seemed worthwhile. This investment would buy Lalita a fine life, remove the financial burden of caring for her, and guarantee that she would no longer have any contact with unsavory



boys in school that could compromise her or her reputation. She would be a married woman.

The married woman part became true, but most of the other aspects of her new life were false. After she was married, Lalita quickly learned that her husband had not even completed high school and that her father-in-law, instead of being the principal of a college, was illiterate. The home her brother had been shown was someone else’s. Her new family was very poor.

Lalita found herself pregnant, physically and mentally abused, and in a community where she knew nobody. She ran from the violent household, while pregnant, back to her brother’s home. Her husband and his family never came to see her, even after the birth of her daughter, but they later filed a legal case against Lalita accusing her of neglecting her husband and in-laws.

Now 22 years old with a 3.5 year old daughter, Lalita lives with her parents and listens avidly to a PMC radio drama, *Hilkor* (“Ripples in the Water”). In it, she hears her story and she hopes that other girls will know the truth and be able to avoid situations exactly like hers.

[More about Lalita’s story inside >](#)

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# PMC PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

## GAMES DESIGNED FOR BURUNDI SCHOOLS TO HELP DETER VIOLENCE

School grounds were full of games, dancing, laughing, listening, and learning in multiple Burundi provinces in September and November of 2016. It was part of the activities surrounding PMC's radio drama, *Agashi* ("Hey! Look Again"), designed to address sexual and gender-based violence. The Burundian team responsible for production decided to extend the drama's messages into schools.

Over five days in September, members of the *Agashi* team went to two school districts with "Jeux Concours" or competitive quiz games on gender-based violence. The games occurred in two provinces in Eastern Burundi, reaching more than 1,600 students. The trip was such a success that the team took the lessons learned and visited 14 schools in four provinces in November. They were able to reach an additional 8,500 students.

"The questions were designed to measure both the level of understanding and to involve them in the fight against violence," says Bernard Bankukira, *Agashi's* Communications and Promotion Officer.

During the sessions, team members would ask open-ended and yes/no questions

## EXCITEMENT IN THE STREETS OF NIGERIA

Thousands of spectators took to the streets and markets across two Nigerian states in February. People clamored to watch live roadshow performances and participate in the interactive radio sessions all related to popular PMC radio dramas *Jangala* ("Song of Life") and *A Dade Ana Yi* ("Truth Always Prevails").

"Everywhere we went, curiosity was written on faces irrespective of gender," said Population Media Center Resident Representative, Abom Ephraim Okon. "People were eager to know what was happening, they quickly gathered to find out what the train was about."



Some of the school children participating with PMC staff at back right.

about forms of gender-based violence, perpetrators and victims, consequences to victims and perpetrators, actions to be taken to support the victims, and structures for providing moral, legal, economic, and health assistance.

"I am so much delighted that my students have gained enormous knowledge that will help them to contribute to the fight against gender-based violence," said Father Bacinoni, Headmaster of Lycée Buyengero, in Rumonge province. "This session will reinforce in them the spirit of research and the desire to acquire new knowledge about gender-based violence."

In celebration of World Radio Day, the Nigerian producers of the dramas organized the two-day events across these two states. It was the perfect moment to celebrate radio – and all it can do to improve people's lives.

*Jangala* and *A Dade Ana Yi* are designed to do more than just entertain – although that is certainly important. These dramas are designed to seamlessly weave human rights, health, and environmental information into the stories.

PMC's Nigerian staff decided to conduct interactive radio sessions about major issues where people could call in and talk with experts. Then, the roadshows filled the streets with live performances of the dramas, dance

PMC looks for ways to extend the impact of radio or TV dramas by engaging communities.

"Serial dramas are the cornerstone of our intervention," says Kriss Barker, PMC's Vice President of International Programs. "Mass media allows us to reach huge audiences with an effective tool for behavior change, but we also work to engage lots of key community groups to extend the impact."

The Burundi team chose schools because students are a large population subject to gender-based violence and their efforts are vital for eradicating this injustice. ■



Participants celebrating World Radio Day and PMC's radio shows in Nigeria.

competitions, demonstrations (like the uses of a female condom), discussions, and promotional giveaways.

"Most people attested to the fact that they have been listening to PMC's dramas," said Okon. "They were happy and excited." ■

# PMC CURRENT EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

## PMC-ARIZONA CHAPTER ANNOUNCES VIDEO CONTEST WINNERS

Students from Desert View High School and Palo Verde Magnet High School in Tucson dominated the third annual video contest sponsored by the Population Media Center's Arizona Chapter.

The "One Planet, Many People" video contest, open to high school students throughout Arizona, featured cash prizes for creating a short video, under two minutes, exploring how a rapidly growing human population might impact the world, Arizona, or the student's future quality of life.

"This year, over 500 students from multiple high schools participated in the contest, producing more than 60 video entries. The contest provides a great project-based learning opportunity for students to develop their research and creative skills while also learning about issues that are critical to their long-term quality of life," said Keith Kaback, M.D., Executive Director of Population Media Center's Arizona Chapter.

Pedro Marquez and Marcus Maley from Desert View High School won first place and \$500 for their video "Overpopulation" in the freshmen category. Brianna Yanez from Palo Verde Magnet High School won first place and \$500 for her video "Our World As It Is" in the upper class category. You can see more winners and watch the first place videos at [www.populationmedia.org/arizona](http://www.populationmedia.org/arizona). ■



Endeavor Community School in Cocoa, Florida with a copy of *OVER*.

## PMC'S BIG BOOK WITH A BIGGER MESSAGE RECEIVES IPPY AWARD

This year's 21st annual Independent Publisher Book Awards (IPPYs) recognized *Overdevelopment*, *Overpopulation*, *Overshoot* (*OVER*) as an Outstanding Book of the Year. *OVER* tied for "Most Likely to Save the Planet."

Weighing in at over seven pounds, *OVER* features over 150 heart-wrenching images of the earth's beauty and destruction. It depicts the realities of today's inequality – ranging from income to gender to race. *OVER*'s provocative photo essays resulted in 275 unique media articles in more than 50 countries with a circulation of over 1.1 billion. PMC partnered with Population Institute and the Foundation for Deep Ecology for the project. ■

# PMC PEOPLE

## RECENT NEW MEMBERS OF PMC'S BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Jeff Burrow from Dallas, Texas joined June 24, 2016.** Jeff is the founder of S3R Holdings, LLC, a commercial real estate investment and development company and is co-owner of The Lot, a family-oriented restaurant in East Dallas. He recently completed his Masters Degree in Public Policy with a focus on Social Policy at American University in Washington D.C.

**Madeline Di Nonno from Marina del Rey, California joined November 30, 2016.** Madeline is the Chief Executive Officer of the Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media, the only research-based nonprofit working with the entertainment and media community to systemically improve gender and diversity representation in children's entertainment.

**Crystal Hayling from San Mateo, California joined September 27, 2016.** Crystal is the Managing Director for the Aspen Environmental Leadership Program and Senior Advisor to the Aspen Philanthropy and Society Program. She has lived and worked domestically and in Asia, with a focus on strategic philanthropy and healthcare, including serving as CEO of the Blue Shield of California Foundation. ■

## MOLLY FRIZZELL JOINS PMC

We are pleased to announce the arrival of Molly Frizzell as a Program and Partnership Development Associate this past winter. Molly has over seven years of program and partnership development experience in both nonprofit and mass media contexts. In addition to recent behavior change communication on a community level, she says she discovered the power of content to change lives on a national scale as a marketer integrating health messaging into serial dramas at Univision Communications, Inc. ■

## POWER OF PMC STORIES

PMC produced a five minute video designed to show the power of PMC stories in countries all over the world. You are invited to watch it, share it, and enjoy it. It's featured on our homepage at: [www.PopulationMedia.org](http://www.PopulationMedia.org).

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# TRAINERS AROUND THE WORLD

## SUSTAINABLE IMPACT REQUIRES BEING PART OF THE COMMUNITY

Dede Keita will explain that you need to fully understand a community to make a sustainable impact. PMC completely agrees and builds this fundamental principal into our approach to creating long-lasting change.

"I was quickly seduced by PMC's particular strategy," says Dede. "The radio shows with a story arc spread over many episodes was different from conventional and traditional methods of communication known in the field, and it was a novelty for the countries concerned."

The countries Dede references were Mali, Burkina Faso, and Côte d'Ivoire. It was 14 years ago when Dede began working as Project Manager for PMC's *Cesiri Tono* ("Fruits of Perseverance"). This 144-episode radio serial drama aired November 2004 through October 2005 in Dioula, which is a widely spoken language in all three countries.

"*Cesiri Tono* focused on child labor issues, child trafficking, exploitation, reproductive health, gender equality, and other related issues," says Dede. "I was in charge of coordinating the production and dissemination of the drama in the three countries and strengthening the partnerships with stakeholders, local press, research agencies, marketing agencies, and other local organizations dealing with the same social issues."

Dede was born in Mali and was a perfect fit for overseeing PMC's *Cesiri Tono*.

PMC hires local writers, producers, and essential in-country staff to create culturally-specific and popular TV and radio shows.

"We need a lot of great trainers who speak numerous languages," says Kriss Barker, PMC's Vice President of International Programs, currently overseeing dramas in more than 10 countries. "Dede is a great trainer. She led the *Cesiri Tono* project very successfully for three years learning the methodology first-hand in addition to attending a PMC training workshop. She really understands how research is used to develop content in our dramas."

PMC conducts extensive ethnographic and formative research that guides local in-country teams with character development, storylines, media placement, and issue treatment and solutions. This is the backbone to making the characters "real" dynamic people with different facets to their personality that resonate with target audiences. This is essential for behavior change because people must see themselves reflected to build motivation, self-efficacy, and resiliency.

"There is sociocultural research, anthropological research, and there is a literature review of material that exists in country in the specific domains of inquiry," says Dede. "It is through all of these tools that we come to understand the real problems that touch society, the



Dede Keita speaks French and Bambara and trains PMC teams in PMC's methodology for creating dramas for social change.

needs of the society, the needs of the people, the needs in the situation, and needs of the partners in development."

PMC believes this customization is essential for effectiveness, but it's also this customization that allows PMC's methodology to be so versatile and work across different issues, cultures, languages, religions, and media markets. PMC's entertaining TV and radio shows are unique, and the process for building them is reproducible and empirical. It's a very agile intervention.

"What delights me is the dynamism of the methodology," says Dede. "It can be applied to all the evils that affect society (the promotion of reproductive health and gender equality in particular); the stories are diverse because the same problem is treated differently from one place to another; and PMC's strategy allows writers and producers the ability to take into account the sociocultural realities and the facts of the moment." ■

## PMC VOLUNTEERS NEEDED SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 2017

### WHAT IS IT?

Our first-ever annual campaign to reach more people.

### WHAT DO I DO?

We will build powerful stories. You will share them.



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