

A Society for All

Maria Teresa Aguirre

The WACC-supported TV campaign 'Pode ser melhor' (It Can Be Better) and pilot TV programme 'Pode ser melhor ainda?' (It Can Be Even Better) of the Brazilian NGO COMULHER on the rights of disabled people have won first prize in the professional category of the competition 'A Society for All', organised by the Colombian digital news agency DISNNET.

The aim of the yearly prize is to promote the elimination of all forms of exclusion propagated, and reinforced, by the images and languages of the mainstream media. DISNNET organises the competition each year with institutional support from private groups such as Ascopar, Human Capital Group; the Latin American Group for the Participation, Integration and Inclusion of Disabled People (GLARP IIPD); and the Telethon Foundation. In 2003 the event received the support of the Vice-Presidency of Colombia and the United Nations Information Centre for Colombia, Ecuador and Venezuela ? CINU/ONU.

Representatives from Comulher (Communication and Women) received the first prize from the Vice-President of Colombia in a ceremony held at the Luis Angel Arango Library in Bogotá on International Human Rights Day, 10th December 2003

Funded with a grant from WACC, the TV campaign 'Pode Ser Melhor' began in 1999 with endorsement from the Human Rights Commission of the Municipal Chamber of Sao Paulo. Between 1999 and 2000 the group received basic audiovisual training from COMULHER and produced 3 TV spots for broadcast in cable TV: 'The Right to Communicate?' (35 seconds); 'Sign Language?' (40 seconds) and 'Get to Know Us ?'(30 seconds).

In 2002 the programme's second stage 'Pode Ser Melhor Ainda?' (It Can Be Even Better) was launched, once again with support from WACC. The project included more advanced audio-visual training for a group of 20 disabled people, Brasil Projeto para TV, and the production of a 24 minutes pilot TV programme, completely designed, scripted and filmed by the participants themselves. Some members of the group were trained by professional communicators who gave their time for free. COMULHER wants to establish an agreement with a number of Sao Paulo cable TV as well as university TV channels from the Pontifical Catholic University of Sao Paulo (PUC/SP) and TV USP, from the University of Sao Paulo. The agreement would commit Brasil Projeto para TV and COMULHER to making six programmes entirely produced and edited by disabled people. It is expected that the international recognition brought by winning the prize 'A Society for All' will help negotiations along.

Created in 1985 in Sao Paulo, Brazil, COMULHER specialises in video production and audiovisual training for young people, women and, in the last four years, disabled people. COMULHER's campaigning activities began several years ago when the group helped organise several TV campaigns around issues of health, race discrimination, poverty and empowerment. Its 'Vamos cantar an AIDS?' campaign was one of COMULHER's better known efforts to address the issue of AIDS and young people through music.

'The prize belongs not just to COMULHER and the Brasil Projecto TV but also to WACC' said COMULHER's coordinator Maria Angelica Lemus. 'We are now negotiating support from some national foundations ? however it was WACC's support that enabled us to get started with the campaign.'

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<http://comulher.sites.uol.com.br/projetoatual.htm>