



**Media News**  
Media Southern Africa

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**Netherlands institute for Southern Africa**

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## 1 Independent weekly launched

by Berendien Bos

**Launching an independent newspaper in Swaziland seems a risky business, considering the ruling monarch's clampdown on the opposition last year. However, after one month on the streets, the usual uproar about critical papers like *The Guardian* has not been heard. Moreover, circulation figures give reasons for optimism.**

**The Guardian**  
of Swaziland

In November 2000, King Mswati III ordered the closure of the independent newspaper publishers, the Observer Group, which left the country with only two state-oriented newspapers. A group of unemployed journalists decided to launch a new independent paper to bring back the balance. They started publishing their newspaper on the Internet. "It was an unusual choice to start on the net before launching the print version," says managing director Michael Motsa. "Due to donor restrictions, we were constrained to the Internet."

It did prove to be a success. At that time, Swaziland went through an unprecedented period of opposition to the absolute rule of the Mswati dynasty. *The Guardian* provided an important platform for banned political parties and others who fight the cause of multi-partism.

With new funds from abroad, *The Guardian* was able to add a print version in order to improve their access to the Swazi people. Motsa: "Our first issues were concentrated in the country's major cities, Mbabane and Manzini, but we are now expanding to other areas."

"The readers seem to like our fearless approach to issues. We published a story about the King being ill. All media houses, including the independent ones, were afraid to write about it. Nothing has happened to us – at least so far – and we doubt that anything will." So far so good, it seems, though you never know when their luck will change. Motsa: "The government is cautious about us so far, but they just hope the paper will die quickly."

Without outside funding, this could soon be the case, because financial sustainability is the paper's biggest challenge. For the near future, NiZA supports the weekly paper to cover running costs. A senior NiZA consultant and a junior consultant from Swaziland will work with *The Guardian* to set up a business plan.

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*More information:*

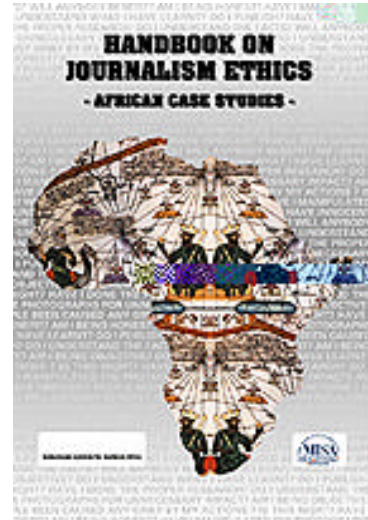
The Guardian of Swaziland: [www.theguardian.co.sz](http://www.theguardian.co.sz)

## 2 Ethics and African journalism

### Book release

by Berendien Bos

**Sensational and unprofessional; these are only two of the stereotypes that haunt the African media. The people get the media they deserve, as the saying goes. Lack of ethical behaviour is the consequence of the socio-economic situation in many African countries. The belief that bulging brown envelopes and other forms of bribes are necessary for journalists to make a living is widespread, and is very often accepted even by journalists.**



Communications consultant Chudi Ukpabi thinks that this is not the main issue when talking about ethics: "There is only one type of professional journalism, but journalists might have different roles in relation to social, economic, cultural and political interests and conflicts in their society." To work under these circumstances is not particularly easy. Ukpabi: "The African society is in a delicate balance of social, political, ethnic, cultural, economic conflicts and changes. In this process, the role of African journalists extends beyond just the protection of the press and freedom of information. It includes other roles such as promotion of human rights, good leadership, good governance, development, and the fight to eliminate poverty in Africa."

### *Quality*

Ukpabi is the editor of a book on ethics and journalism in Africa. The book is the result of the seminar on ethics and journalism held two years ago in Ghana. It is a joint effort by African journalists in collaboration with NiZA, MISA, sponsored by a group of Dutch, German and African donors.

The various country case studies in the book discuss the issue of ethics and journalism in practice from different points of view. From survival gratification to conflict journalism, from community radio to digital manipulation. Ukpabi: "Ethics form the primary basis for strengthening the quality of African journalism. Only then can the media sector fulfil these extra tasks and roles, essential for African societies."

The book also includes practical training material on a floppy disc. It encourages journalists to re-assess their own ethics, be it on their own or with their colleagues in a workshop. After all, although the fact remains that, while one cannot live on ethics alone, it certainly serves as food for thought.

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C. Ukpabi (ed.), *Handbook of Journalism Ethics - African Case Studies*  
(Cape Town 2001)

The book is available from: MISA Headquarters in Windhoek, Namibia  
Media Institute of Southern Africa, Private Bag 13386, Windhoek, Namibia  
Tel: ++264 61 232975/Fax: ++ 264 61 248016

### 3 Partner Profile

by Shelley Knipe

**You can feel the energy and the buzz, you can hear people chattering away about new programme plans and forthcoming interviews; the telephones are ringing and the entire place is buzzing with excitement.**



**You can hear all of this, but not see much really, since the reception room is cornered off from the rest of the station.**

How appropriate for a media outlet that deals with sound. A radio is playing, no, make that more than one radio, and a presenter's lively voice comes across the airwaves. "This is Bassie Montewa, on Bush Radio - 89.5 FM..." He plays a latest release by a well-known South African musician, and then introduces a guest he's about to interview. Today, Bush Radio is talking about drug abuse.

#### *Diversity*

This is Bush Radio, broadcasting on 89.5FM. The station has been broadcasting since 9 August 1995, and it's still going strong. For five years, Bush broadcast twelve hours each day, but since June of 2000, the station has been broadcasting twenty-four hours a day. (1) That's twenty-four hours of information, education and entertainment. Bush Radio broadcasts to the Cape Metropolitan area, but more specifically, its target audience is the residents of the Cape Flats, where the most impoverished areas in Cape Town are. But who is Bush Radio's audience exactly? Ask the station's director, Zane Ibrahim, and the response you'd probably get is, "Well, that depends on what time of the day you're talking about!". Bush Radio is well known and celebrated for its diversity in programming. In the space of just one day, you could choose from programmes dealing with political education, gender, health and labour issues, as well as lively talkshows with musicians from the townships, and much, much more. And musical diversity? There's a choice of reggae, hip-hop, r'n'b, jazz, blues, kwaito and drum and bass.... It doesn't get any better than this.

But Bush Radio is not only diverse in its programming: on any normal day you could walk into the station and find programme producers, men and women from diverse social and cultural backgrounds, young and old. Some of the youngest volunteers are nine years old and are part of CREW, the Children's Radio Education Workshop. Here and there you would also find people from other countries, such as Sweden, The Netherlands or Canada, who are at Bush Radio performing their journalism internships.

#### *Access*

Bush Radio has a rich history. It originates from an initiative called CASET (Cassette Education Trust). In the late 80's, CASET produced audiocassettes that contained information regarding human rights and political education. These cassettes were distributed to people living in the townships, who had little or no access to this type of information. Very soon, the same people who established CASET began discussing the

possibilities of starting a community radio station. Out of these discussions, Bush Radio was born.

The combination of this rich history and the ongoing quest to promote equality, diversity, education and information to its community is what keeps Bush Radio going strong. After all, they don't call it "the mother of community radio" for nothing.

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<sup>1</sup> At the time of writing (April 2001), Bush Radio is in the middle of renegotiations about their 24-hour broadcasting license. There is a serious chance that Bush will have to share the frequency with a new community radio station in the area around Cape Town.

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## 4 Interview with Zane Ibrahim

### More than filling airtime

by Berendien Bos

**April 2001: These are tough times for Bush Radio. As we speak with director Zane Ibrahim, the community radio may lose part of its 24-hour airtime. A group of Christians has reclaimed 12 hours of the 89.5-FM frequency on which Bush has been broadcasting for the past 5 years.**



It is a problem that many community stations face, especially in Cape Town and Johannesburg. Due to lack of space, stations with similar views are obliged to share a frequency. This is where the problems start. Who determines whether stations have similar views, and when does one speak of a community radio? Ibrahim: ‘The word “Community” has been hijacked by religious community groups. Bush belongs to a part of the community radio sector that is genuinely committed to social change. These stations, whose numbers are dwindling, could best be described as Development Media Outlets.’

Ibrahim refers to Bush’ mission statement, which clearly states that Bush aims “to ensure that communities without access to resources take part in producing ethical and responsible radio. (...) Through such radio, communities will affirm their own dignity and identity, and promote social responsibility and critical thinking.” In other words, radio is a tool to develop the community and not an end in itself. Thus, Bush broadcasts programmes like the HiVhop show, which informs young people about HIV/AIDS through hip-hop music. And successfully, too, according to the many youngsters that phone in each Friday to ask questions or simply to tell their own experiences. Their close contact with the community earned the radio station the Prince Claus award for “Urban heroes” in 2000.

#### *Training*

It is clear that Bush Radio does more than broadcasting. In addition to a few paid staff members, the station runs on 15 trainees and 70 volunteers each year. Ibrahim thinks that the station will be an officially recognised training institute in five years’ time. Since 1996, the station has been running the Children’s Educational Radio Workshop, which has turned out more than 100 young radio producers, ready for a further ‘career’ in broadcasting. The older trainees are educated in basic journalism skills, broadcasting skills, management and technique. Most of them continue their career successfully in the broadcasting sector, whether established or experimental. It is the fate of every successful radio station...

## 5 Watching the watchdogs

by Jeanette Minnie

**Monitoring of the media by non-governmental organisations, established specifically for this purpose, is becoming increasingly popular in the countries of the southern African sub-continent. In Zimbabwe a Media Monitoring Project has existed for two years now. A similar initiative is currently in development in Namibia. A number of organisations in South Africa monitor their media - one has been doing so for almost 10 years. Media monitoring has also been conducted during elections in Malawi and Tanzania.**

The main aim of these dedicated monitoring groups is to assess how well the media is informing the public - particularly (but not only) during elections - in order to promote the public's right to know and to promote better practises in journalism. They use at least three methodologies to assess the media - quantitative monitoring, qualitative monitoring and discourse analysis. In Zimbabwe, they are beginning to develop linkages with civic groups in order to survey public opinion on the media and to develop media literacy among the public. Overall these efforts are directed at building more mature democracies in which the public have a stronger voice.

### *Access to information*

What distinguishes these initiatives from more conventional approaches to the promotion of freedom of expression in Africa, is that they emphasise the public's right of access to information, and not only the rights of journalists. They naturally support press freedom, because it is an essential precondition for the public being served well.

These media monitoring groups are welcome new additions to Africa's complex media landscape. Public broadcasting institutions (particularly radio) are still the dominant form of one-way communication in the countries of southern Africa. With few exceptions these are largely state-controlled institutions broadcasting ruling party propaganda. The last decade, however, has seen considerable growth in the number of privately owned newspapers, but their reach is limited by a lack of resources and by high rates of illiteracy. For the most part they are also severely constrained by economic and legal impediments to press freedom. In addition, many are also plagued by poor professional standards of journalism, and sometimes by owners with partisan political agendas masquerading as independent media.

Media readers, viewers and listeners in Africa must develop media literacy skills to critically consume media in order to have an impact on the quality of the media products they receive. The media monitoring projects aim to contribute to this process.

### *More information:*

Media Monitoring Project of Zimbabwe (MMPZ) [www.icon.co.zw/mmpz](http://www.icon.co.zw/mmpz)

Media Monitoring Project (MMP) - South Africa [www.sn.apc.org/mmp/index.html](http://www.sn.apc.org/mmp/index.html)

Media Monitoring Project of Tanzania (MMPTZ) [www.jeas-tanzania.org](http://www.jeas-tanzania.org) (Under Domestic Initiatives)

Media Monitoring Project of Malawi [www.article19.org](http://www.article19.org)



Jeanette Minnie is an international media freedom and media law and policy consultant. She has previously held a number of media positions in South and Southern Africa including as Executive Director of the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) and Executive Director of the Freedom of Expression Institute (FXI) in South Africa. Minnie is a consultant on Media diversity & Freedom of Expression for NiZA.  
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