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## Table of contents

1	Zimbabwean Trevor Ncube takes over South African M & G.....	2
	by Nawaal Deane.....	2
2	Xenophobic sentiments about the sale of M&G .....	4
	by Nawaal Deane.....	4
3	Comment: Partner Consultation.....	6
	<i>Working together as an unanticipated by-product</i> .....	6
	by Jeanette Minnie.....	6
4	No slogan-mongering .....	8
	<i>News: Partner consultation</i> .....	8
	by Marlies Lensink .....	8
5	Nuns and priests as journalists for Rádio Ecclesia in Angola .....	10
	<i>Partner Profile</i> .....	10
	by Inge Ruigrok.....	10
6	Hivhop’s Tentacles.....	12
	<i>Publication project review Hivhop</i> .....	12
	by Thomas Gesthuizen .....	12
7	Interview : Jamal is glad ‘his’ radio does stir up debates.....	15
	by Marlies Lensink.....	15
8	Zapiro: Checking for Reds.....	17

## 1 Zimbabwean Trevor Ncube takes over South African M & G

by Nawaal Deane

**Trevor Ncube bought the South African newspaper Mail & Guardian on July 16, adding it to his other two privately owned Zimbabwean newspapers; *The Independent* and *The Standard*. Driven by business Ncube's main focus is to turn the M&G around and begin making a profit. Describing himself he says: "A Zimbabwean in charge of a company in Botswana owns a newspaper in South Africa. Why not?"**

The new owner has been described as a media tycoon but laughs when he hears this label. "I'm a deeply religious man and the lord answered my prayers when I became the owner of the Mail & Guardian."

Ncube has built a reputation as an enterprising businessman, publisher and highly acclaimed journalist who has criticised Robert Mugabe's regime and managed to scoop the M&G with the financial backing of his company, Newtrust Company Botswana Limited. Ncube obtained 87,5% share holding in the M&G Media Limited from the Guardian Newspapers while the Guardian continues to hold a 10% stake in the newspaper.



*Trevor Ncube*

### *NePAD*

The M&G is South Africa's leading weekly paper that prides itself on its editorial independence and has played a key role in the struggle against apartheid. Formerly known as *The Weekly Mail*, which was launched in 1985, it was then bought over by the UK based Guardian Newspaper Limited in 1991 and renamed. As one of the strongest voices for freedom of expression the M&G is well known for its investigative expose and political analysis.

Ironically Ncube applied to the M&G as a young journalist but was turned down by Anton Harber, former editor of the M&G. From as far back as 1989, Ncube was an avid reader of the M&G. "The M&G sits very well with my own beliefs and interests as far as independent media in a democratic country."

He says that one of his key objectives is to position the publication as a significant regional player. "I think that coming as it does against the backdrop of NEPAD and the African Union, my acquisition symbolises the values in these bodies. I think it also makes us realise we [as Africans] are interconnected."

### *Part of the solution*

Ncube is one of a handful of African entrepreneurs who has acquired cross-border investments and says his acquisition allows him to broaden his scope in the region. "There is an awareness that we as Africans understand African conditions and challenges. We are in a better position to be part of the solution." He says that we do need the expertise of Western countries but localised ownership is necessary.

His arrival was a result of the Guardian announcing last year that it was searching for an empowerment company to buy them out on the basis that it was "only right that the newspaper be owned by an African company, rather than a foreign, white media group."

The Guardian however was not willing to sell unless editorial independence of the paper was guaranteed. The paper had made substantial losses, incurring a R12 million loss a year with R50 million loss in the past ten years. Ncube had to ensure that he had cash reserves available to keep the paper afloat for the next few years.

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Read further: Xenophobic sentiments about the sale of M&G

*More information:*

[www.mg.co.za](http://www.mg.co.za) – Mail&Guardian online

## 2 Xenophobic sentiments about the sale of M&G

by Nawaal Deane

**The ownership of the Mail & Guardian (M&G) by a Zimbabwean citizen has sparked off a debate in the South African media that has shed a spotlight on xenophobic attitudes still prevalent in the new democracy.**

Trevor Ncube was one of four prospective buyers when the Guardian first announced that they would be looking to sell their majority share. Amongst those were a local media giant group; New Africa Investment Limited (NAIL) under CE Saki Macozoma and president Thabo Mbeki's brother, Moeletsi Mbeki.

After the sale was announced Moeletsi Mbeki slammed the Guardian accusing it of being biased against any local South Africans who has links with the government. In a newspaper report he said; "From the beginning, the priorities of the British company had been to sell the newspaper to anyone who did not sympathise with the ruling party." He said that the M&G was a foreign company anyway. "It was foreigners selling to foreigners."

### *South African values*

Further xenophobic sentiments about the sale of the paper was expressed by Snuki Zikakala, a prominent labour journalist who accused the Guardian of selling the paper to Ncube to avoid the paper "falling into the wrong hands". In a full length letter to a daily newspaper he asks the question: "Why do South Africans allow the media to be controlled by foreigners, by people who do not share South African values and who do not understand where this country is coming from nor where it is heading; by people who are not committed to the transformation of the country."

Ncube brushes aside these sentiments saying that the majority of South Africans have been very welcoming and that these attitudes are just a result of jealousy or envy that does not deserve much attention.

### *Solid brand*

He has concrete plans for the newspaper but also for the region. "The M&G has had a solid brand name. However, within the context of a new South Africa its commercial potential has not been fully exploited." He says the greatest challenge facing the M&G is to turn its brand name into commercial success. "Winning more black readers is fundamental to the M&G's future relevance and commercial viability."

His long-term vision is to be a regional media player, and the M&G, with its presence in Southern Africa, affords the opportunity of setting the idea in motion. "You know, I'd like to debunk the notion that we allow ourselves to be contained by borders that divide us."

Ncube does not shy away from the M&G's reputation for "Thabo bashing" with most media players and government officials viewing the paper as anti-ANC and generally anti-black business. "A newspaper does not benefit from gratuitous hostility to the status quo. In a young democracy like South Africa, for us to exercise influence, we

need to engage the ruling party and government on issues of national importance." But he insists that the M&G will "not pander to power".

After this statement he was bombarded with a backlash of opinion pieces in various newspapers, speculating on whether or not the M&G under Ncube's ownership, will now compromise the editorial integrity of the paper. "Making such a public point of this strategy will undoubtedly create the perception among the paper's liberal and highly fickle niche readership that it is all just one big sell-out in the interest of filthy lucre," says Chris Moerdyk, in a marketing column in one of the Sunday papers.

*Self-censored and over-polite*

He stirred further controversy in a recent interview when he said that there are signs that South Africa is heading down the same road as Zimbabwe, where the media is self-censored and over-polite to the authorities. "I am concerned about the parallels [between the ANC-led SA and the Zanu-PF led Zimbabwe]; a degree of intolerance, of not being able to accommodate and engage with opposing views, and a tendency to assume that unity means we should all think alike."

These sentiments brought an outcry from various government officials who accused Ncube of being an Afro-pessimist. In his defence Ncube said that he was misunderstood. But this statement did not make him very popular.

An editorial by the Sunday Independent was devoted to Ncube's statements denying that there is any comparison between the two countries. "Ncube, you are wrong about your comparison between Zimbabwe and South Africa. Mbeki is not going to seize land unconstitutionally... if he tried to do these things he wouldn't stand a chance."

Far from being riled the M&G's new owner continues to push ahead boasting a profit for the month of August. He is unconcerned about the debate that he has caused in South Africa because he feels that people are far too ego driven. "People focus on building personalities, instead of building institutes. When I'm gone, the M&G should remain."

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Read also: Zimbabwean Trevor Ncube takes over South African M & G

*More information:*

[www.mg.co.za](http://www.mg.co.za) -Mail & Guardian Online

### 3 Comment: Partner Consultation

#### Working together as an unanticipated by-product

by Jeanette Minnie

**NiZA's partner meetings in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region, which spans 14 countries with NiZA operational in twelve, is beginning to develop as one of the premier networking events of activist media organisations in the sub-continent. And this is happening spontaneously as an unanticipated by-product of NiZA's search for equality and integrity in North-South relations.**

At these consultations, the networking is not only among individuals, but also between organisations, and between sectors of organisations. It is by now a mantra of non-governmental/civil society development theory that strategic co-operation between organisations in the non-profit sector can lead to better and more sustainable results. Effective collaboration leads to more effective use of scarce resources such as time, money and people. It also results in stronger and more discernible impact on target communities.

It was therefore gratifying to witness the enthusiastic exploration of such co-operation at NiZA's partner consultation in Namibia. The consultation was held during September 2002 with NiZA's partner organisations in the Media Programme. About two-thirds of the Programme's 40 partner organisations in the southern African region were present.

#### *True needs*

The fact that the consultation was officially held as part of a mid-term 'donor' review of the Media Programme did not interest them very much, except for some revealing statistical data about which partners and countries were receiving most of the 'bounty'. They instead pounced on the moment to explore linkages with each other, to strengthen bonds in and between sectors, to settle some scores with each other and to build new alliances.

Accordingly, they recommended a series of proposals to NiZA covering policy, process and structure to help them achieve these self-designed goals. Whether this was convenient to NiZA or not - was not their concern. After all, NiZA always says that its Media Programme must be driven by the true needs of its partners!

One could hardly wish for a better result. Strengthening co-operation between partners was not a formal objective of this consultation. NiZA has long been encouraging the concept of 'Exchange and Linking' between its partners. The results until now have not been very good. It is as if partner organisations have been unable to conceptualise how co-operation could benefit them.

#### *A prenuptial agreement*

At this meeting, however, aided by an empowering pre-consultation workshop on capacity assessment and enhancement (unfortunately not attended by all partners),

organisations of their own accord began discovering how much more effective they could be if they worked together.

A community-publishing project began to see how it could aid advocacy for freedom of expression. Media advocacy groups decided to meet jointly in the near future so that they could fully appraise each other of their programmes and projects in order to lay a foundation for practical co-operation.

Other surprises also took place. Partners in the print and broadcasting community media sectors, previously grouped and organised on separate lines by NiZA, decided by majority vote to form one group. On presenting the report of their working group to the plenary, their rapporteur said: "This was not a marriage made in heaven. It was more like negotiating a prenuptial agreement". We are all looking forward to the next partner consultation to see whether this alliance will hold.

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## 4 No slogan-mongering

### News: Partner consultation

by Marlies Lensink

**‘It makes you feel like a fool in the eyes of all your partners,’ says Bob van der Winden. ‘Our entire plan was pulled to pieces after all.’ A NiZA partner consultation took place at the end of September in Windhoek, where more than half of NiZA’s 40 media partners attended a mid-term review of the PSO-sponsored Media project.**

This year NiZA had adopted an entirely new approach at the request of PSO. ‘We wanted the organisations to get much more involved in the objectives of the entire Media Sector Plan. We had always talked to them primarily about their own projects, not about the whole of NiZA’s policy.’

The representatives of the organisations appeared to greet this idea rather eagerly, judging by the scathing criticism they came up with. ‘In particular what they pointed out to us was that NiZA had got stuck with bureaucracy so much as to almost getting out of touch with the fast-changing trends in development cooperation.’

#### *Wait*

For instance, PSO had not listed exchanges as an option under the heading of ‘technical assistance’ until only two years ago. This has meanwhile changed. Van der Winden: ‘But it still takes too long also with us for a proposal to be approved and a project being enabled to get started; together with PSO we will now cut back that period from four to two months. If a request was issued in October, our partners sometimes got the money only by March, which was obviously a problem in the case of small projects in particular.’

NiZA has also promised to give up its monopoly of information regarding partner organisations. A lot of reports that may contain valuable information for everybody are gathering dust on a shelf in Amsterdam. ‘We are currently working hard at developing a data base that will be open to all partner organisations. It should be ready to be released by January.’

Van der Winden admits being ‘slightly frightened’ by the new approach, but says it is ‘terribly worthwhile’ after all. ‘One is finding out that people really have something to report with regard to one’s policy. In the normal course of events we are primarily a money-bags for them, the gateway to funds for their projects, aren’t we?’

#### *Networking*

Another brandnew phenomenon in development cooperation that reigned supreme in Windhoek was networking. ‘NiZA has been creating opportunities for them, for instance by organising meetings like this; this time, they seized upon the opportunity 150 per cent.’ Since two years already NiZA had tried, with gentle insistence, to reach

the stage where its partners got to networking. This is a method that is increasingly valued by development organisations. One day during lunch, Van der Winden sat next to someone from the department of journalism at the Polytechnic in Windhoek; the man was desperately looking for a photography teacher. 'Monty Cooper of Rhodes University in Grahamstown, South Africa, happened to sit at the same table. He said he was travelling to Namibia shortly and was willing to give a few lessons. Whereupon somebody from Zimbabwe said, "Are you fond of giving these courses? We could do with someone as well." So that was settled. Without NiZA, all these people would never have met each other.' This is just a tiny example of how useful networking can be, according to Van der Winden, but networks can be larger and more formal as well: 'Training institutes in southern Africa are going to exchange curriculums through Samtran (Southern African Media Training Network) – that is going to be networking on a grander scale!'

*Fashionable items*

Even more interestingly, networks that exceed the boundaries of the region itself are beginning to take shape. 'Direct links between people in a global network are obviously much more sustainable than links with development agencies. Development cooperation is by no means an endless affair; I see a gradual trend towards reduction.' Direct contacts, for instance between schools of journalism in the South and similar institutions in the West, are a much stronger basis to build further exchanges on than links through development organisations like NiZA.

Van der Winden is the first to admit that featuring on the agenda during those five days in Windhoek were all too fashionable items. 'Yet we maintain that we do not follow fashion; we are not guilty of slogan-mongering. After all, we are an organisation that is really drawing practical conclusions from the debate that is going on.'

To be honest, it is relatively easy for NiZA to talk like this. 'Media organisations are mostly dynamic and vocal. Health care services are naturally much more sluggish, also in other parts of the world. But starting in a relatively easy corner is a good idea anyway. If there is one organisation which is able to put the new relations into practice it must be us, coming from a anti-apartheid solidarity not a charity background as we do. If we can't do it, who will?'

Anyway, the work is becoming the more attractive for it for the staff of donor organisations. The developments in Windhoek have had an energising effect on Van der Winden: 'I am just walking on air!'

## 5 Nuns and priests as journalists for Rádio Ecclesia in Angola

### Partner Profile

by Inge Ruigrok

**With the purpose of extending its reach to the smallest corners of the country, Rádio Ecclesia is setting up a FM network in Angola with the help of NiZA. The Catholic broadcaster, which came back on the air in 1997 after being silenced for almost two decades, is a thorn in the side of the Angolan government because of its constant efforts to air alternative and often-dissenting views in the country.**



Rádio Ecclesia's project of establishing a FM network has everything to do with the new prospects of peace in Angola. Elections are scheduled to take place within two years, following the signing of a cease-fire between the Angolan army and UNITA rebels in April. The Catholic radio station is determined to give airtime to as many different opinions as possible. 'Most people don't know any other voice than that of the Government', says Jose Paulo, the station's chief-editor. 'There is not an independent radio station that can reach out to the villages, and bring just the facts of what happened.'

The change to stereo will eventually mean an end to broadcasting on short wave, which has a more limited reach. Rádio Ecclesia is setting up FM transmitters in Benguela, Huambo, and the country's 14 other main cities, which at first will simply rebroadcast its signal from Luanda, but later will also produce local output. A satellite system will not only link the network of FM stations, but will also permit data transmission to the regional stations. The new network, a project that is being financed by NiZA among other organisations, should be up and running by the end of 2003.

#### *No-go areas*

Since the conflict ended, reporting on the situation in the country has become easier, says Jose Paulo. 'UNITA has lost the war, and is trying to transform itself into a political party. They are eager to get their message across to people, and are more approachable.' Also logistically, searching for news has become less difficult. Areas that were previously no-go zones have opened up. Rádio Ecclesia is about to send a radio crew from Luanda overland to Zambia, through the province of Moxico.

'It will be the first time in 25 years', says Paulo. 'The situation never allowed us to go deep inside Angola. Even when the roads were open we couldn't risk sending our reporters. But now security is not a problem; you can go anywhere. A few weeks ago, journalists from South Africa entered Angola via Namibia and travelled the country. They didn't have any trouble. It is just that the roads are very bad, and the land mines worry us. Even soldiers don't know where they are; they are not indicated on maps.'

### *Kidnapping*

However, the government has still not done away with some old habits. Since its first appearance at the end of 1954, Rádio Ecclésia and its employees have been subjected to a great deal of official harassment because of its editorial policy. The station continued to report on the civil war in the country, even after the Angolan authorities issued an implicit order for a blackout of news about the conflict, and thus remained one of the few sources of information about what was really going on.

Over the years, political events forced many of the Rádio Ecclésia staff to flee the country, and the radio station was silent for nearly two decades, up to March 1997, when it made a new start. Despite the new dispensation, government doors remain closed. 'It is virtually impossible to get an interview with a Minister, or even to verify information', says Jose Paulo. Four armed men snatched Paulo himself from the streets of Luanda in June 2000, after the station had aired a live debate on the role of oil and diamonds in fuelling the conflict in Angola. The kidnappers' car, however, got stuck in a bush track enabling Paulo to escape while being shot at.

'Many government officials are afraid to say anything', says Paulo. 'When we informed the Ministry of Communications about the expansion of our radio network, they didn't reply. Instead, we found out that they started implementing our project. The government-run radio station is trying to extend its reach as well. In a way, that is good, because we can compete.'

But, according to Paulo, the government is not playing a fair game. Not daring to close down Rádio Ecclésia, the authorities resorted to carrying out a campaign of buying Rádio Ecclésia's most talented staff. 'Seven journalists have left our station already and are now working in government television or radio. They were offered 1000 dollars a month, a car, and a nice house. It is a way to weaken us. We have to handle our programs with new people.'

### *Nuns and priests*

Jose Paulo decided to hire journalists who feel closer to the Christian identity of the radio station: nuns and priests. 'They just finished their studies at a Catholic university in Portugal, and are good journalists. Most importantly, the government won't be able to buy them. Then there is the old cast who will remain with us on contracts stating that they are not allowed to leave the radio station within five years.'

With this new strategy, and the change to stereo, Rádio Ecclésia is trying to get ready for the run-up to the elections. Many new programs are in the pipeline; one of them carries a title that translates from Portuguese into 'taking the truth out of the shadow'. 'It is about the truth that happened during the war and nobody was able to tell', Paulo explains. 'We are already making interviews. We find that people very much want to talk. They want to express their feelings about the country, about their lives. That kind of programs we want to air once the radio station reaches the provinces.'

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*Meer informatie: [www.recclesia.org](http://www.recclesia.org)*

## 6 Hivhop's Tentacles

### Publication project review Hivhop

by Thomas Gesthuizen

**An octopus; this is the label attached to the project structure of Hivhop in a project review due to be published by NiZA. The metaphor seems appropriate. Dozens of tentacles have grown in Cape Town, Amsterdam and Tanzania since Bush Radio started the project of using hiphop as a medium two years ago. The report in short by co-author of the review Tomas Gesthuizen.**



*Thomas Gesthuizen ©*

The central nerve system of the octopus has firmly rooted in Cape Town, with occasional new impulses emanating from it to the tail ends. Life follows art, it seems, since hiphop as a form of expression has an analogous non-linear structure, manifesting itself for example in graffiti art with its seemingly indecipherable texts, in hiphop beats which within a few minutes pass in review myriad fragments from the history of music, and in rap texts with their dense referential structure.

The Hivhop project has partly developed along the lines of the hiphop scene prevailing in the Cape, in Amsterdam and internationally. Personal contacts and networks have played a major role in mobilising participants. The octopus has stuck wherever it found a receptive ground for its suckers.

#### *Radioshow*

The forthcoming report describes how Bush Radio's and NiZA's initial objective – to develop the weekly hiphop radio show into an effective medium of communication for development – got mixed with other interests that presented themselves, including the need for an aids education campaign aimed at young people in the Cape.

Neither in South Africa nor the Netherlands anybody insisted on it that an unambiguous course should be singled out. So by the end of the first year Hivhop had developed into a complex project with a number of not always interrelated activities going on internationally. According to Hivhop co-ordinator, Shaheen Ariefdien, it was a conscious decision not to adopt a too rigid project policy because, "That's not the way we work here at Bush Radio. All things are interlinked and people do learn lessons from all results."

#### *Friction*

As Hivhop was linked to NiZA's Media Programme, several international exchanges have taken place between Cape Town, Amsterdam and Dar es Salaam (Tanzania). The

diversity of the various parties' backgrounds and interests were a source of inspiration and knowledge as well as a source of friction and mutual incomprehension, often arising from inadequate communication between the Netherlands and South Africa.

Shameema, who is a rapper with the Godessa rap group in the Cape, participated in workshops with Bush Radio going into social issues such as aids and drugs, departing from the idea that a rapper who is educating her public should herself know one or two things about the problems at hand. She was then invited to come over to the Netherlands as part of the Hivhop exchange.

Contrary to her expectations, creating aids awareness was not on the agenda. She was expected to join in a performance of hiphop theatre group Made in da Shade in the Amsterdam Frascati theatre. Yet the exchange was not a waste of effort, according to Shameema: "I have learned a lot about expression, performance, management, et cetera." The Amsterdam public was treated to an energetic interactive performance dealing with widely varied issues such as gender, poverty, and the ways mass media operate.

#### *Dominoes*

The exchanges have offered participating artists an opportunity to acquire experience; yet apparently a more important common denominator of the Hivhop exchanges is to be found in the sphere of empowerment and awareness raising. The participants draw on the history of American and, later on, local rap; the major themes of self-development and identity do not always feature conspicuously in the current hiphop culture.

When one gets into contact with the Bush Radio Hivhop team, it is hard not to get enthusiastic about the way it fuses entertainment and information together into a remarkable form of hiphop activism, while respecting the audience and participants in the projects with a positive development-oriented outlook. Shaheen Ariefdien: "I believe in the potential of the human mind. The history of mankind has gone through many plagues and has emerged triumphantly. It has known its apartheid. Of course, I am an optimist; this is a game of dominoes, and more dominoes are going to fall over."

#### *Headwarmers*

Witness to the deep-rooted conviction of Shaheen and his team that small initiatives can have major effects is, among others, Bush Radio's weekly workshops for fledgling rappers. In the workshops a variety of issues are put up for discussion among the participants as well as guests. It is with initiatives such as these that Hivhop excels as an accessible shoestring project with strong local roots.

Indeed, its major effects seem to be apparent on a grassroots level, for example in the form of the active participation in Bush's activities of students who had come in through Hivhop, and in the feedback of listeners to the weekly Headwarmers hiphop show that started it all. In view of this, Hivhop and NiZA's financial project support in 2002 has focused on activities linked directly to Bush Radio.

#### *Interlinkages*

Bush Radio's weekly broadcasts and workshops continue, but at the same time the 'tentacles' of the project keep stirring, among other places in Amsterdam. Participants

proclaim their enthusiasm about all the things the collaboration has taught them, and say they see interlinkages. Informal contacts between some ex-participants by E-mail continue. Thus Cape rapper Devious and the Tanzanian rap group X Plastaz have planned a joint performance at an aids conference at KIT in Amsterdam to be held in December 2002; there is no direct link to Hivhop here, but the theme of the conference is, of course, closely related to the theme of the Hivhop project.

On the basis of their own experiences and the project review Bush Radio en NiZA are currently considering the question of how to get on with Hivhop. Issues to be discussed include the quantifiability of project results, project management, and the question whether the Hivhop format should be disseminated among other community radio stations.

*Thomas Gesthuizen - through his foundation [Madunia](http://www.madunia.nl) – has been involved with various stages of the Hivhop project. He has written the project review, together with Richard Thon and Tony Samara. [thomas@africanhiphop.com](mailto:thomas@africanhiphop.com)*

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*Meer informatie:*

[www.bushradio.co.za](http://www.bushradio.co.za)  
[www.africanhiphop.com](http://www.africanhiphop.com)  
[www.madunia.nl](http://www.madunia.nl)

## 7 Interview : Jamal is glad 'his' radio does stir up debates

by Marlies Lensink

**Siraj Jamal was actually trained as a teacher. Seven years ago he started volunteering as a radiomaker, working with and for children for the community radio station, Bush Radio in Cape Town. When Crew (Children's Radio Education Workshop) became a success, he quit his teacher's job and from then on he has worked full-time for Bush Radio, which is one of NiZA's southern African partners. Several other radio stations in the West Cape have meanwhile copied the example.**

"It was absolutely essential to have a children's programme for children", said Jamal, who was a guest at *A la carte Zuidelijk Afrika*, the event staged by NiZA at the Amsterdam KIT Tropenmuseum on October 5th 'The voice of children had hardly been heard in South Africa. In my view, if we wanted to save our community, that was not how it should be. Children should be given a mandate.'

The first group consisted of a number of children of ten to thirteen years of age. In the initial stage they were strictly supervised. Subjects were handed to them on a plate and they were assisted in devising their texts. But soon they were able to get through the job with far less help. "After some time, I remained as the only adult involved. The entire organisation had been taken over by the children themselves."

### *Commitment from parents*

Every Saturday, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. they make their own radio programmes. In the beginning it was mainly children from somewhat better-off families who found their way to the studio. This was not as intended by Jamal. So he contacted schools in a number of townships to select some of their students. Bush Radio bears the cost of transporting them to the studio, and Jamal himself has regularly picked them up and delivered them in his own car.

A certain commitment is expected from the parents though. "At one stage we were more like a youth centre where children could spend the whole Saturday safely and were entertained. That was not our intention, of course."

The group of children is constantly changing. While some children have kept coming through the years, others quit after a few months. "Those are the ones who prefer to play soccer or who have found out that their talents are in a different area after all." But young radiomakers are never in short supply; for Jamal, repeatedly having to turn away children is the most difficult aspect of his job. So far, more than 2,000 boys and girls have taken part in the project.

### *Pleasantly surprised*

Initially the children were split up into two groups. A combined group of white and coloured children and a group of black children took turns with each other at making the



programme. "But as time went by they gained an interest in each other, as it very soon happens with children," said Jamal. "This resulted in the white kids visiting a township for the first time in their lives, to make a programme. They had heard that going there was extremely dangerous and that they would come across a lot of misery only, so they were pleasantly surprised. That is a first step towards nation building!"

Another positive side-effect could be seen in the contact between boys and girls. When they first came together, the boys threw themselves upon the technical equipment. Jamal: "They acted the tough guys who knew that that was their department. I have always deliberately put more girls than boys at the controls – call it positive action. The result being that now nobody is surprised anymore at the girls' doing the technical jobs." The children also learn a lot on ethics, which is obviously an important issue in journalism. Jamal: "Where to learn that better than with us, on the job?"

### *Frowned upon*

In 2000 the Bushkids drew up the 'African Charter on Children's Broadcasting'. One year later the charter was even tabled at and ratified by a conference of the Commonwealth. The issues discussed included: To what extent should radio be used for educational purposes? In what ways can children's radio contribute to the preservation of traditions? How does globalisation enter into the picture? What are children allowed or not allowed to say in a radio programme?

Views on the latter question differ in Cape Town. 'Programmes made by our children are often frowned upon. Recently we had a ten-year-old boy making rather harsh statements on the Israeli-Palestinian question. Some people felt outraged.'

Jamal himself though is glad 'his' radio does stir up debates. And what, if you ask him, is considered most important by the children themselves? He knows the answer to that: 'They say, we want more fun in South Africa. There are Muslim children whose school starts at 8 a.m. Then school is over at 12.30 p.m., they have to go straight on to a special Islamic school. After that there is still some homework to be done. No time is left for creativity and having fun. Perhaps Crew is able to do something about that.'

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8 Zapiro: Checking for Reds



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