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## 1 ‘Travel 240 Kilometres to pick up your e-mail’

### AMARC conference on community radio

by Peter van den Akker

**It was a rather poor chosen moment for this meeting. Last December’s AMARC conference coincided with the international Geneva conference on the ‘digital divide’, WSIS. In any case, the meeting at Johannesburg’s Witwatersrand University resembled an informal party of a few interested organisations rather than the Community Radio Festival promised by the conference title, which the organizers had hoped would have drawn a much broader audience from the whole of Africa.**

Representatives of fourteen stations attended the Festival, which focused on the consequences, opportunities and prospects of galloping technological developments in the acquisition and transmission of information.

Will the computer and digital mice eat away at the foundations of community radio, cutting off its access to the exchange of information, which has become so natural for the rest of the world? Or should Africans just seize the border-crossing opportunities ICT offers to them? Thus the question highlighted at the AMARC Africa Community Radio Festival.

#### *Missing the boat*

In her address Tina James, co-ordinator of the Catalysing Access to ICTs in Africa (CATIA) project emphasized the risk that Africa misses the boat in the ICT revolution.

In the 1960s post-colonial Africa was burdened with Western-dictated communication structures. Something similar seems to evolve today, as Africa runs the risk of falling behind owing to the deepening gulf between rich and poor. The rural poor in particular have no share in the world-wide dialogue through the Internet at a time when, in the view of Tina James, it is all-important that the poor too make their voices heard in that dialogue.

#### *Lightning*

Redembta Mivololo couldn’t have been in agreement more. She told those present at the Festival how she, as Managing Director of the Kenyan Mangelete community radio station, has to travel some 240 Kilometres between her office and a cybercafé in Nairobi every time she wants to pick up, on payment of some 1,000 Kenyan shilling, the e-mail addressed to her radio station.

Thando Nxumalo, technical manager of Teemenang community radio station (Kimberley, South Africa), explained that his station’s transmitting equipment is struck by lightning so often, that the station is often off the air for several days. Its electric bills are far beyond its means.

“We have no choice but to keep using analogue studio equipment,” replied Natasha Tibinyanga (Namibia) when Noma Rangana of the Open Society Foundation for South Africa asked her somewhat sternly why her Windhoek-based Katutura community radio station had not yet switched over to digital technology. “In our analogue studio there are buckets everywhere as we lack the money even to have our leaky studio roof repaired.”

*Against the odds*

Community radio in Africa remains a story of broadcasting against the financial odds. However inexpensive radio may be as a medium, most community radio stations are hardly able, if not unable, to support themselves, said Lumko Mtimde, a consultant working for the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA).

“Yet community radio is vital to the digital future of Africa,” said René Roemersma, who together with Wiebe de Wolf on behalf of NiZA showed participants around in the new opportunities presented by computers, satellites and cyberspace. Roemersma added: “At the same time it is evident that community radio stations are absolutely unable to make the great leap forward all by themselves.”

This is where CATIA comes in. Its ambition is to help community radio stations and possibly also public broadcasters to connect to the Internet, which will enable them to communicate with other radio stations.

The World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC – Association Mondiale des Radiodiffuseurs Communautaires) initiated CATIA, with Oneworld Radio and PANOS.

“It will take a lot of meetings the coming year to get CATIA moving indeed,” said Wiebe de Wolf. “It’s just a matter of getting started,” said René Roemersma. “That’s exactly what we have been doing during the Festival.”

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For more information: <http://www.africa.amarc.org>

AMARC, an international non-profit organisation initiated in 1983 as an informal ‘movement’, was formally established in 1988. Its membership has meanwhile risen to over 3,000, scattered over five continents. The international secretariat is based in Canada. AMARC Africa is based in Johannesburg.

## 2 JED – One of the DRC’s Most Valuable Assets

### Partner Profile

by Kristina Stockwood

**Journalist in Danger (Journaliste en Danger, JED) is a leading defender of media freedom in the DRC, and one of the most effective free expression groups in all of Africa. Despite its poor press freedom record of the past few years, the DRC government has been responsive to lobbying generated by JED. Today, the nature of media freedom violations has changed drastically, with few journalists imprisoned for their work.**

JED was established in 1998 with a membership of more than 100 journalists from across the country and its membership continues to grow. At the time of JED’s founding, media freedom violations were committed almost daily in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) with complete impunity.

This small group has had an enormous impact on the media in the DRC. Among other successes, JED alerts have pressured the government to lift bans on radio stations, obtained medical treatment for ailing journalists in prison, and resulted in their release.

In its 2003 annual report, issued to mark International Human Rights Day, JED notes there were 66 attacks against the media this year, but only two journalists were imprisoned for more than two days. In 2002, that figure stood at 16. For the first time since 1997, no journalists remain in prison on December 10<sup>th</sup>.

#### *Network of volunteers*

JED operates a network of volunteer monitors throughout the country who provide information on media violations. When journalists are harassed or jailed, or a news organisation threatened, JED sends an alert out locally and internationally, including through the International Freedom of Expression Exchange (IFEX).

JED has been a member of IFEX since 1999, and also belongs to the press freedom network of Reporters Without Borders (RSF), another IFEX member. JED’s work is highly regarded by members of the international press freedom movement.

President M’Baya Tshimanga and Secretary General Tshivis Tshivuadi have said that without these alerts, which generate protest letters from international sources, the authorities would carry out even greater violence and they would get away with it.

Several years ago, JED reported that one journalist was freed from prison after a week because local authorities “were troubled by the broadcast of news of his imprisonment over international radio,” following alerts disseminated on his case.

*Widely used*

JED also operates a regional alert network on behalf of the Organisation of Central African Media (OMAC.) In addition, JED information and reports are widely used by alternative and mainstream media around the world for information about the DRC.

Since its creation, JED has managed to keep working under the harshest circumstances, at times fighting against threats to the personal safety of its staff, not to mention working in a country undergoing civil strife, and doing it all with very little funds. Tshimanga and another of JED's courageous leaders were forced into hiding several times from 1999 to 2002, and moved about frequently, not often sleeping in the same place.

*Decriminalise press laws*

At times there has not been enough money for JED to pay the staff. On occasion, JED's leaders, who receive no salary for their work, have sold personal belongings to keep the organisation going. This may underline an ongoing concern about the group's sustainability – a constant battle for many small NGOs which find it hard to raise core funds for their work, particularly when they are so occupied with their day-to-day challenges.

With some key support from a few donors over the past few years, JED has managed to strengthen its alerts reporting network and Tshimanga has been able to focus more on management and fundraising.

The people running JED believe that promoting free expression is essential to bring about peace and democracy in the DRC. Their work is key to promoting greater adherence to international human rights principles, to which the DRC is a signatory.

To that end, JED has organised a number of workshops and conferences to promote human rights in the country. The group is currently engaged in a campaign to decriminalise press laws in the DRC, which is possible thanks in part to a willingness of the current government to engage in dialogue. Things have improved, and it is a credit to JED that they now number government officials among the participants at their events.

More information: <http://www.jed-congo.org> or <http://www.ifex.org>.

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### 3 A chorus of voices is saying: Let go

#### Review “Taking over the Driver’s Seat”

by David Sogge

**In Dutch museums are stately paintings of the Boards of Directors of orphanages and other charitable activities of 17<sup>th</sup> century Holland. These were donors of that era. Their portraits leave no room for doubt about their high social status, their moral earnestness, and especially their supreme self-assurance: for they controlled the money.**

Today long chains of bureaucracies and donor boards manage funding in ways undreamt of in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Yet perhaps the most striking difference today is the call on donors to share or even give up control. A chorus of voices is saying: Let go!

From its beginning in 2000, those running NIZA’s Media Sector programme committed themselves to doing just that. Half way through the programme’s four-year plan they asked two seasoned observers based in the Netherlands – the development consultant Chudi Ukpabi and journalist Inge Ruigrok – to assemble a progress report. NIZA has now published it as a brochure, the better to engage itself and others in a wider discussion meant to shift thinking about who makes key decisions and how.

#### *Talk is cheap*

The authors note that donor talk has been changing. Terms like ‘participation’ and ‘ownership’ have circulated in the aid industry for a decade already. How sincere is this? Talk, after all, is cheap. The authors rightly assume that no one, including NIZA, has found the right answer, and therefore take an open, inquisitive approach to the topic. They stay away from aid policy papers and conference reports saturated with all the earnest talk about ownership. Instead they focus on what NIZA’s partners and associates in southern Africa have to say about it.

The authors heard a great many things. Here is a sample, summarised:

- Genuine local ownership will not take root where grant-seekers, merely to get funding, draw up proposals that fit donor priorities, neither will it flourish where donors merely keep talking, or devise empty rituals, about ownership as ways of masking their continued control.
- Ownership is mainly about taking responsibility, and about developing expertise to the point where the main point is to share resources, not claim them to the exclusion of others.
- Commitment and acceptance of responsibility will take place where people own an organisation and its processes. In the face of violence and bribery (such as in today’s Zimbabwe) local initiatives will easily break without that kind of commitment.

- Involvement of end users, such as members of radio audiences, can help anchor a sense of ownership by NIZA's partner organisations.
- To get the most from experts and other 'capacity building' measures, NIZA partner organisations have to learn how to set the tasks and manage the outsiders.
- NIZA's intention to move decision-making 'further southwards' is a good idea, but needs further thought. For NIZA to say to its current partners, "You tell us what NIZA should do", isn't necessarily the best way forward. It creates risks by raising expectations which, if later not met, would expose NIZA to accusations of bad faith. Besides, NIZA media staff has valid viewpoints and know-how to share.
- Financial self-reliance is perhaps the most decisive measure of genuine ownership.

#### *SAMTRAN*

Ownership issues crop up not only between NIZA and its counterparts, but also among counterparts themselves. The authors look at the case of a NIZA-inspired body, the Southern African Media Trainers' Network, SAMTRAN, launched in late 2001. They note doubts expressed about the network's local ownership where voluntary time and effort to make it work are uneven.

They also bring out a paradox: network members are expected to share knowledge, yet many face incentives to hold on to their intellectual property (curriculum materials, &c.) to retain competitive advantages. Partners too have to learn about letting go.

#### *Faddish*

This accessible and thoughtful report should help advance debate about the aid encounter at the middle-lower ends of the aid chain. Yet we know that aid system priorities – sometimes well chosen, sometimes faddish, sometimes just plain destructive – are determined higher on that chain.

NIZA's Media Programme, and therefore its partners, often have to twist and bend their ideas so that their proposals fit funding authorities' priorities of the day – and then claim "ownership" of ideas they may have doubts about. Might NIZA's next published report tackle such issues?

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*Review by David Sogge, whose latest book is Give and Take – What's the Matter with Foreign Aid? (Zed Books, London 2002) dsogge@antenna.nl*

Taking over the Driver's Seat. Experiences with and ideas about ownership in the NIZA Media Sector Plan by Chudi Ukpabi and Inge Ruigrok



## 4 Walking up and down the World Summit on the Information Society

Reportage by Jo van der Spek

It was a global marketplace in the Palexpo, especially in Hall 4, ICT for development ([www.ict-4d.org/marketplace/en/default.htm](http://www.ict-4d.org/marketplace/en/default.htm)), where South Africa had created a great safari environment, with Radio Lora ([www.lora.ch/welcome.shtml](http://www.lora.ch/welcome.shtml)) streaming from a cabin. But even in Hall 1,



with the mediacentre ([www.itu.int/wsis/geneva/newsroom/index.html](http://www.itu.int/wsis/geneva/newsroom/index.html)) and government and company stalls, there was a quite exotic feel to everything. Blond Swiss ladies dressed like Mauritanian women, with posters calling for a closure of the digital gap, a cyberpuzzle from ARS ELECTRONICA ([www.aec.at/en/index.asp](http://www.aec.at/en/index.asp)) offering you a chance to reconfigure your face and a speakers' corner of the International Federation of Journalists.

However, one of the first shocks I got was when I (wearing a press accreditation) discovered that you could walk DOWN the stairs to Hall 4, but not UP the stairs to the realm of media, government and private companies. No way, you had to walk all the way back to the entrance hall, go once again through the security check ([www.aec.at/en/index.asp](http://www.aec.at/en/index.asp)), to go back to your workplace: the media centre. Losing 20 minutes of valuable time and peace of mind...

Now the media have been a contentious issue of WSIS. Under pressure from China, Egypt and Mexico the Final Declaration ([www.itu.int/wsis/documents/doc\\_single-en-1161.asp](http://www.itu.int/wsis/documents/doc_single-en-1161.asp)) threatened to make freedom of the press subject to limitation by national laws. In other words: freedom for governments to oppress the press.

On the other hand a lot of mainly African developing countries had put their hopes on the establishment of a Digital Solidarity Fund (<http://www.google.nl/search?q=WSIS+networking&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8&hl=nl&lr=>), to bridge the digital divide. In the end it was a kind of trade off: the clause that permitted censorship on a national scale was left out, and the Digital Solidarity Fund was put on a low fire.

### *No failure*

South African Media expert Tracey Naughton was moderately content: "I am of the view that the WSIS Declaration of Principles is not as visionary as it ought to have been but that this cannot be equated to failure." In fact, one cannot expect more. "It is at least not as regressive as we thought it would shape up to be at the end our preparation. Given the disparate views that range from totalitarian approaches of nations like China and Mexico to the US thinly disguised regressive and sly withdrawal from the freedom of expression they espoused to the rest of the world."

No doubt the effort to make a concerted stand in Geneva has cemented co-operation between colleagues, and raised awareness of the issues at stake, both challenges and threats.

*Right to talk back*

The Right to communicate ([www.comunica.org/](http://www.comunica.org/)) is a more fundamental and more clearly defined demand than freedom of expression, or freedom of the press. Freedom can mean anything these days of anti-terrorism and security.

But the right to communicate is just this: the right to send and receive messages, with all possible means. So please remember: media are just one form of communication, and mostly only down to the listeners/readers/viewers. Walking up and down a staircase, without being pushed back by a deaf and dumb security person, is another one.

The right to talk back, which is now within reach thanks to ICTs, cannot be denied to any human being. But this is still beyond the capacity of the delegates to grapple with, I'm afraid.



*Impression*

HIGHwayAfrica ([www.highwayafrica.org.za](http://www.highwayafrica.org.za)) is, “a vibrant and growing network of African journalists empowered to advance democracy and development through their understanding and use of appropriate technologies”. This Highway staged a news agency that produced daily articles from the summit, see: ([www.highwayafrica.org.za/hana/](http://www.highwayafrica.org.za/hana/))

Here's a handful of headers:

A new media study launched today at the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) shows that little or no media attention is given to issues related to the information society and ICTs by mainstream media in Africa

Zimbabwean President, Robert Mugabe, has accused “the rich imperialist northern countries” of using ICTs as tools of espionage and propaganda

Funding for information technologies in the least developed countries has proved to be the most difficult obstacle to overcome in the negotiations leading up to the World Summit on the Information Society

Following intense lobbying by media and civil society groups, the declaration to be presented to the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) has included more progressive clauses on freedom of expression and the role of the media in the information society.

Disappointed that initial promises of equal partnerships between governments and civil societies in the WSIS processes have been empty ones, over 300 civil society organizations gathered in Geneva have decided to come up with their own separate Civil Society Declaration to WSIS.

World leaders have agreed to set up a workforce early next year to come up with a framework to build the Digital Solidarity Fund (DSF), to be created to finance projects to bridge the digital divide between South and North.

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specialized in tactical media in crisis areas*

<http://www.radioreedflute.net>

## 5 The 25% factor

### Comment

**By Jeanette Minnie**

I heard a saying in a futuristic movie recently about a democracy that had declined into a tyranny. The saying went something like this: during a tyranny 25% of the people you know will become informers against you, 25% will remain silent about the abuses they witness, and 25% will be indeterminate – doing anything they have to in order to survive. The remaining 25% will save you.

Forging alliances and agreeing to cooperate is very difficult in Zimbabwe. It is difficult even in secure and stable societies – but in this context it does not matter so much. Who do you trust in a tyrannical society? The 25% factor looms large in your mind.

It is against this background that some observers and supporters of the battle for media freedom are watching with great interest the first steps in an immensely delicate process. That is: the development of cooperation between media NGO's in Zimbabwe, and between the media sector and the broader human rights sector in Zimbabwe.

#### *Agenda for change*

Zimbabwean NGO's are also attempting to connect with other African NGO's across the continent and with their international counterparts in a more meaningful advocacy drive. ZANU PF has become immune to criticism from “the North” -- calling it a (white) racist backlash. It is mainly other Africans that stand a chance in influencing events.

From a media freedom and human rights advocacy perspective, this means finding more effective ways for the civil society of Zimbabwe to spread the story of what is happening to them and how they would like to see their problems solved. This story must be spread to Africa in the first place and subsequently to the rest of the world.

They also believe in participatory democracy and do not want to see the issues of their country exclusively negotiated by the ruling ZANU PF and MDC opposition parties only. Spreading their story and gaining access to the agenda for change entails cooperation and the sharing of limited resources, as well as the development of effective advocacy networks, within and without Zimbabwe.

#### *Joint strategic plan*

NiZA has assisted Zimbabwean human rights NGO's to discuss cooperation by funding a two-day workshop in Harare at the end of October. The workshop was proposed and hosted by the Media Monitoring Project of Zimbabwe (MMPZ) and MISA-Zimbabwe and included other African and international NGO's.

They explored internal, African and international human rights cooperation in respect of Zimbabwe with an emphasis on the freedom of expression crisis. Significantly, four of

the media NGO's agreed to meet "in the near future" to discuss how to strengthen internal cooperation and to draft a joint strategic plan on media freedom advocacy for the country. These are MMPZ, MISA-Zimbabwe, the Zimbabwe Union of Journalists (ZUJ) and the Independent Journalists Association of Zimbabwe (IJAZ).

At this meeting values will be contested between journalists who work in the privately-owned media and those who work in the state-owned media. However, who employs you in Zimbabwe is not an automatic indication of where your sympathies lie. Only time will tell who falls into which 25% of the equation. It will not be an easy meeting.

*Jeanette Minnie is an advisor to NiZA on the issue of freedom of expression. She has been a director of the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) and the Freedom of Expression Institute (FXI), South Africa.*

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**Zimbabwean organisations that attended the meeting included the Crisis Coalition, the Zimbabwean Human Rights NGO Forum, the Amani Trust, the Zimbabwe Election Support Network, the ZUJ, Kubatana.net, the Civic Education Network Trust, IJAZ, the Association of Women's Organisations of Zimbabwe (WOZA) and the Combined Harare Residents Association.**

## 6 “Poverty is public enemy number one”

### A conference of journalism students

by Roelien Merkens and Hanneke van Houwelingen

**“If one of these little houses catches alight, it’s often the end of an entire quarter,” said Sam Moodley, a first-year student, during a tour of the townships of Cape Town. In the slums of Khayelitsha ‘hokkies’ made of corrugated iron alternate with brick houses. From the minivan six future journalists saw everyday life in the townships unfolding before their eyes.**

It is this life, led by almost four million inhabitants, which is easily forgotten. That is why a number of journalism students at the Peninsula Technicon (Bellville) decided to put the issue on the agenda and organize a conference, addressing the question of what impact the media may have on poverty development in their societies.



From 20 to 24 October some twenty students from five different countries (Botswana, Namibia, Swaziland, South Africa and the Netherlands) met to discuss media professionalisation, cultural differences, the after-effects of the apartheid regime, and the current poverty situation. As it had done the year before, NiZA also sponsored the 2003 edition of this so-called Journalism Week, organized for the second time now by first-year students as a permanent feature of the curriculum.

#### *Human rights violations*

Visits to the District Six Museum and Robben Island were scheduled to precede the start of the workshops on media and poverty development. 21-year old Tamlynn Johannes, president of Journalism Week 2003: “The two study visits were a good introduction to the conference. There is an indirect link between human rights violations and poverty.”

The District Six Museum tells the story of a multi-racial district declared white-only under apartheid; in the new townships of today’s Cape Flats new houses were built for the coloured and black inhabitants of District Six whose homes had been pulled down. “Robben Island in particular made a deep impression on the students. The reactions of some, whose fathers or other people they knew had been jailed there, were highly emotional,” said Tamlynn.

#### *Poverty*

Poverty and media: Tamlynn is convinced the combination merited a conference. “Poverty is a huge problem. No less than 50 per cent of South Africans live below the

poverty line. The media, however, show hardly any interest in it. Unfortunately, a lot more attention is being given to the rich and glamorous.”

On the final day the conference was to produce a number of answers to the question: What role for the media? Unlike other guest speakers such as the leading South African journalist, Zubeida Jaffer, and Minister of Western Cape Marius Fransman (social services and poverty alleviation) neither of whom entered into the issue at any length, Professor Guy Berger of the Department of Journalism of Rhodes University, Grahamstown, gave concrete advice on how the media should cover poverty: “Poverty is public enemy number one; by their reports, reporters can make a difference.”

#### *Route map*

Berger’s ‘route map’ for journalists: Turn the underprivileged into a source; put poverty on the news agenda on a daily basis; do not report on the poor in negative ways only; and stir up debate on the issue of poverty, especially among politicians. “By presenting the real side of society one can bring about improvements on a large scale – without the journalist lapsing into the position of a development worker.” His conclusion:

*Press can play a role*

*Only if you are pro-active*

*Organize a strategy*

*Reap the results and reduce poverty.*

#### *Reality*

Tamlynn was able to look back on a successful week: “A very interesting debate about poverty has taken place between journalists-to-be, each with his or her own cultural background. Besides, I have learned a lot organisation-wise. I have grown as a person.” The president admitted, however, that she would go about it in a different way if she was given a chance to organize another week like this, starting earlier and deciding on a more efficient organisation.

Many of her fellow students also think that some things could have been done differently. 23-year old Pentech student, Sam Moodley: “There was too much talking on media impartiality and ethics at the expense of the actual theme of poverty.” The real eye-opener, in his view, was the tour of Khayelitsha. “Some people say a tour of the townships is the wrong form of tourism, but I believe it is a good way to get a more realistic picture of society.” In the words of one of the guest speakers during the conference, Marius Fransman: “We all know about poverty, but what we know is not enough.”

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## 7 Zapiro: Heavy Load



Zapiro ©