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## PAPER 03

The following paper is an introduction to a multimedia training & production project which was developed and realized by the lecturer in an African context.

It is anticipated that such an intercultural exchange, repeated and further developed, would have a good chance to receive sponsorship through fellowship programs for international interns delegated by media related foundations, academic and commercial organisations worldwide, thereby **providing a reliable source of financial support for establishment and operation of a local radio- & multimedia system to be developed in rural Cambodia.**

Such an internship program underwent a trial period from April '96 to April '97, with four groups of participants from Germany (who paid for travel, accommodation and tutoring), twinned with young colleagues from Zimbabwe, Zambia, Botswana and Mozambique and accommodated at a rented RBO venue in the capital Harare. Their co-produced radio programs, with authentic content from local African environments, were - in several language versions - on air in Germany, Austria, U.S.A., Zimbabwe, Zambia, Botswana, Namibia, Ethiopia, Kenya and Tanzania.

### TASK:

- Replace all African context, including local and regional terms, with a Cambodian equivalent (having in mind the 1621 local communities which exist in this country, and which are supposed to be self-governing since local elections took place in February, 2002).
- Replace “Radio Bridge Overseas”, RBO, with your department of the Royal University of Phnom Penh, the Cambodia Communication Institute, as the facilitator.
- Identify then aspects & areas of possible interest which could be incorporated in a development plan for **a local radio- & multimedia system to be developed in rural Cambodia.**



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**YOUNG INTERNET REPORTERS' NETWORK**  
 MULTIMEDIA ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN THE SADC-REGION  
 proposed by © RADIO BRIDGE OVERSEAS

**WHAT IS THE APPROACH?**

Multimedia shall be understood as a combination of any two or more different media types (text, graphics, images, audio, video). Whilst researching for one story, the multimedia approach seeks to gather material for print, audio, picture and video at the same time. Electronic devices are already available allowing digital capturing of audio, still-picture and video with the same piece of hardware. With that multimedia approach one has a newspaper-, radio- or video-story and one can combine them on the Internet or on a CD-ROM.

However, in an African context, there is no professional profile available which could match the challenges of such Internet-work; no journalist - be it in the print or in the electronic media - has received a training which would empower him/her to cope with the upcoming demands. And this is true not only for the technological and creative aspect of multimedia programming, it is even more true for the understanding of a media concept that undertakes to communicate cross-culturally.

At the same time, major efforts are being made by educational organisations to equip schools in the South with connectivity. The process is meant to allow access to additional learning material and to interactive methods of "Global Learning"; it does not recognize connectivity of a school as a potential communication tool for its surrounding community. RADIO BRIDGE OVERSEAS is convinced that this development should be utilized to empower students and their communities to enter new avenues of communication within their region and with the world. Here is a tool at hand which provides a chance to bid farewell to a formalized and quite often misused one-way-road of information through the traditional mass media, instead, introducing a modern mode of grassroots-based story-telling by a new generation of **Community-Internet-Reporters**.

Radio Bridge Overseas, as a media organisation with special interest in the grassroots, wants to exploit this development by launching an Internet-based media training initiative. The target for this far reaching program will be "A"-level students from schools with

Internet facilities in the SADC-region (Pilot Phase). The idea is to arm the young mind with basic journalistic skills and cultivate a spirit of tolerance among the youth. A network for regular exchange will be created to give the students the medium through which they will debate or share ideas on topical issues of their choice from within their own environments.

This, it is hoped, will go a long way in bridging the rift created by cultural, ethnic and religious differences that has seen escalating conflicts in Africa today. Also, this initiative will not only help the participating students earn money for their school, but will prepare some of them for life after school because they may earn money as free lance journalists using the multimedia journalistic skills acquired in their last year of high school.

**In Africa, you cannot open a radio station or a publishing house once you leave school, but you can pull resources with others and purchase a computerized device which allows you to produce and sell multimedia content on your own, or you pay rent for continued usage of the Internet-facility at your former school, thereby helping to maintain it.**

The project tries to combine the actual production and distribution of multimedia-stories from Africa with a sustainable intercultural exchange, realized through the establishment of an internship/training-scheme that will allow media-students from the South and the North to work together on radio- & Internet-features for a given local community, and also to distribute such co-productions to a worldwide audience.

Such an experience will help to influence professional attitudes of participants ...

> from the South who will have learned to use formats for their issues which enhance the creativity and technical realisation necessary - not only for international marketing and mobilisation of interest of audiences beyond their own cultural environment - but will also facilitate the development of media in their own environment.

> from the North who will be more sensitized to authentic expressions from the South. They will be more prepared to allow space for other values than their own; the usual filter of Northern biases regarding Southern issues will be applied less often in a situation where they may become responsible for programming.

### **WHAT WILL BE ACHIEVED?**

Schools which are already connected to Internet will be identified as power houses for grassroots communication in 13 SADC-countries (13 schools with connectivity do exist in Zimbabwe alone!)

At least one school in each country will have built a lasting partnership for communication with a community of its choice (in a rural setting it would be the surrounding one)

Student/Teacher/Parents-Clubs will participate in RBO-organised online-training sessions, based on a CD-Rom-Manual and accompanied by online tutorials; they will have learned techniques of how to identify and to produce stories from their environment, how to

exchange such multimedia content through Internet with other schools, how to turn such activities into a profitable local and international business

A strict regime of online tutorials by RBO will introduce final exams providing successful participants with a **Certificate as a Grassroots Story Teller**; a new type of media profession will spread throughout the region - Internet-Reporters and Small Scale Multimedia Entrepreneurs will have emerged out of school

Participating schools will have acquired a new role within their community which goes beyond that of a provider of formal education, it will offer itself as a medium of community participation, and it will secure operational funds for continued Internet-based learning and communication by hiring out its technical facilities to trained school-leavers who want to start a business on their own

To achieve all this, existing Internet-facilities at partner-schools must be upgraded with some hard- & software (multimedia production tools) provided by donors as seed-investment under a contract of this pilot phase; all project-related activities of RADIO BRIDGE OVERSEAS need funding for the period of the pilot phase (two years)

RADIO BRIDGE OVERSEAS, as developer & organiser of online training and exchange of programming will continue to act as the clearing house of this project beyond the pilot phase; after completion of the pilot phase a marketable system will be in place which will allow RADIO BRIDGE OVERSEAS to sustain its role within the project by selling such training- & service packages globally.