



Rajesh Jantilal/African Media Online



David Larsen/African Media Online

# AMPLIFYING AFRICA'S VOICE

**IN AN AMBITIOUS €2.2-MILLION PROJECT, MORE THAN 100 JOURNALISTS FROM 34 AFRICAN COUNTRIES WILL WORK TOGETHER TO HELP THE REST OF THE WORLD SEE THROUGH AFRICAN EYES: TO LOVE WHAT WE LOVE AND HATE WHAT WE HATE. DAVID LARSEN LOOKS TO 2010 AND BEYOND**

**I**t was early July 2008. I had just published a new post on one of Africa Media Online's blogs, when I received a phone call from Maarten Koets, the deputy managing director of World Press Photo.

For years, I had been trying to find some common ground between Maarten and myself around the training of African photojournalists. World Press Photo not only runs the world's largest annual photojournalism competition, but has also executed innovative training programmes for photojournalists in Africa.

My posting was about our upcoming African Photo Entrepreneur Programme that we were about to launch. Maarten believed what we were doing was in line with a project conceived by World Press Photo and FreeVoice, another Dutch-based organisation, to empower African journalists ahead of the 2010 Fifa World Cup in South Africa.

At last we had found some common ground!

The parameters of that common ground were mapped out in late-night sessions by Maarten, myself and Dominique le Roux, Africa Media Online's media manager.

By the time we were done, Maarten looked across the table and laughed: "When I share this with everyone in Holland, people are going to fall off their chairs. It is so huge!"

What we had all recognised was that the 2010 Fifa World Cup is a massive opportunity, not just for South Africa, but for all of Africa.

Our plan was to make sure that we, as Africans, get to tell Africa's 2010 story.

The plan includes the recruitment and training of more than 100 journalists from all over the continent including reporters, photographers and radio journalists. These will be known as the All Stars, who will report on the lead-up to the event itself from their home nations. This content will be distributed to African and global media markets.

Participants, or their employer media organisations, get 50% of all revenue from sales. From these All Stars, a dream team of 18 journalists will be selected to travel to South Africa during the World Cup and to report on the event. The other members of the All Stars will continue to report from their home nations.

The partner organisations are working to their strengths: World Press Photo will train photojournalists, FreeVoice will train radio journalists and reporters, while Africa Media Online will provide the technological backbone to recruit the journalists, market and sell the content through its global distribution network and provide the logistical support for the Dream Team while in South Africa.

Lokaalmondiaal, another Dutch organisation, will represent the content to the Dutch public through their website [www.roadto2010.nl](http://www.roadto2010.nl) and will write a book about the project, to be published by the Tropenmuseum press in Amsterdam.

The Tropenmuseum itself ([www.tropenmuseum.nl](http://www.tropenmuseum.nl)) will produce an exhibition about the World Cup in South Africa, allowing the Dutch public to engage with the event.

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All of this, of course, was dependent on funding.

At a glittering award ceremony in Amsterdam in February, "Twenty Ten: African media on the road to 2010 (and beyond)" was presented with a cheque for €2.2 million from the Dutch Postcode Lottery.

We got the message out, built the application system, selected the 108 journalists and are in the process of running online refresher courses, developing curricula and building a new online media management marketing and sales system.

From September to November, we will run training programmes around World Cup qualifying events in Ghana, Egypt, Nigeria and Burkina Faso. From these workshops, and from commissions given to journalists in the months leading up to the World Cup and during the event itself, there will be a constant stream of content.

The challenge for Africa Media Online is to ensure that the content gets to the market, both in Africa and around the world. To do this, we have built and improved a multimedia web-based media management and sales system for the distribution of print and broadcast quality files.

Delivering to a multilingual audience is also a challenge. Content will be produced in French and English, but for it to have global appeal it has to be re-purposed for markets in Korea, Latin America, India, Sweden, China and other African countries. For the international market, this problem is largely solved as we have worked hard to set up relationships with more than 20 distribution partners in many regions around the world.

For the African market we have been working on a unique solution with funding from the European Union through Gijima KZN. The funding has provided for the translation of our African Archival Thesaurus (AAT) into the major trade languages of Africa – Swahili, Arabic, French, Portuguese and English. Content can now be tagged in English or French, but searched for in any of the languages.

So why are we doing all of this? We're not trying to compete with the wire services. It is not so much the blow-by-blow account of what happens on the field that we are interested in; it is what impact the soccer and all that surrounds it will have on African society, African creativity, African entrepreneurship, African sport, African pride.

We want to bring the story to the world from an authentically African perspective. So not only are the 108 journalists from 34 African countries Africans, so too will the editor-in-chief, editors and team leaders be Africans.

A representative of the Dutch Postcode Lottery admitted to me that what really caught their attention was the element of sustainability. Not only are we helping to skill-up journalists and their organisations, but we are also supporting the development of systems for the ongoing distribution of African media content to African and global markets.

This is what excites me about the project. It is not just the event of the 2010 Fifa World Cup, but the potential of the event to act as a catalyst for African voices to compete in the global information order.

During the World Cup, the 18 journalists will be divided into three teams: two of these will be based in Gauteng and the third will take a road trip from Gauteng to Cape Town in time for the semi-finals. So not only will we be reporting from the big cities, we will also be looking for the behind-the-scenes story: the trip home with a star player, the impact of the competition in Hluhluwe or Knysna, the affect on the aspirations of children in the Klein Karoo.

At a time when the world is galvanised to focus on Africa, we want to help them see through African eyes to love what we love and hate what we hate. If we can do that, then perhaps they will not just join us on the road to 2010, but also on the road beyond.

*Africa Media Online is actively looking to partner with media organisations in this project. Should you be interested contact David Larsen on editor@africamediaonline.com.*



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### USEFUL LINKS

- Africa Media Online [www.africamediaonline.com](http://www.africamediaonline.com)
- Digital Picture Library Manager blog [digitalpicturelibrarymanager.wordpress.com/](http://digitalpicturelibrarymanager.wordpress.com/)
- Free Voice [www.freevoice.nl](http://www.freevoice.nl)
- lokaalmondiaal [www.lokaalmondiaal.net](http://www.lokaalmondiaal.net)
- lokaalmondiaal's 2010 site [www.roadto2010.nl](http://www.roadto2010.nl)
- Tropenmuseum [www.tropenmuseum.nl](http://www.tropenmuseum.nl)
- World Press Photo [www.worldpressphoto.org](http://www.worldpressphoto.org)



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