



NAMIBIA

Radio Cooperation develops democracy

An objective and independent public service company which reviews the political power and educates the society is a prerequisite for Namibia to develop into a democratic society. Therefore, an exchange between the Swedish Radio (SR) and the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) was initiated, a partnership that has also led to new ideas for the Swedish Radio Theatre.

“It has been very enriching and educational. We are extremely pleased with this cooperation, says Ted Scott,” project coordinator and training manager at the NBC.

The Namibian Broadcasting Corporation previously acted as a propaganda channel for the South African occupational forces and only became an independent public service company during the time of Namibia’s independence in 1990. Today, the NBC owns one TV channel and ten radio stations. The Namibian population of over two million people speaks ten different languages, and although English is the official language, the

news are broadcasted in every language, one on each channel.

NBC is financed through government funds but due to limited resources, employee training has suffered. Four years ago the NBC launched a collaboration with the Swedish Radio through funding from Sida. The Swedish Radio has a long experience of similar projects. It has supported public service companies in developing countries since 1996 through the SR MDO (Swedish Radio Media Development Organization).

“When our relationship began, the NBC had big problems. The news were difficult to



Soini Negongo of
NBC, in Stockholm
interviewing Sabina
Flinkenberg Veii,
Swedish shop owner
with Namibian roots.

PHOTO: GLYNIS BEUKES

understand because of a pompous language and there were lacks in source criticism. There was also too much focus on government events and not enough news about ordinary people,” says Tomas Lindblad, project coordinator at SR MDO.

In the first phase of the project, the focus was on radio news and to strengthen NBC in its role as a society watchdog as well as in combating corruption and how to convey balanced and independent news. In the second phase, which began in 2012, they chose to focus on digital media.

“Today, public service companies are expected to create content for radio and TV, the web and social media. Multiple platforms are something that SR has worked with for a long time,” says Thomas Lindblad.

“It favors democracy when information is available on different platforms. For example, most people in Namibia have at least one cell phone. We need to learn how to work with this and other platforms,” says Ted Scott.

Two editorial areas were selected: sports and education for young people. The Namibian journalists have collaborated with their Swedish counterparts in producing a series of programs that have been broadcasted on Namibian television, radio and web during the autumn of 2013.

“The young target audience is facing big problems with unemployment. Therefore, they chose to make a series of programs on entrepreneurship,” says Thomas Lindblad.



NBC Executive Sport Producer Sakkie Shikufa planning the daily broadcast.

PHOTO: TOMAS LINDBLAD

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/TED SCOTT

“The participants have implemented their new skills in innovative ways with their limited local resources. This is one of the reasons for the project becoming so successful,” says Ted Scott.

“However, this type of exchange should be beneficial for the Swedish partner too,” says Thomas Lindblad and stresses that the project has inspired Swedish Radio employees to new ideas.

The Swedish Radio Theatre, for example, has initiated a partnership where the NBC has visited Namibian schools and collected stories of young people. From these stories, scripts will be written for future radio plays.

THE FACTS

PARTNERS

The Namibian Broadcasting Cooperation, a parastatal organization broadcasting nationally on radio and television, and the Swedish Radio.

COST

8,300,000 SEK

SIDA CONTRIBUTION

7,580,000 SEK

PARTNER CONTRIBUTION

72,000 SEK

TIMEFRAME

2008–2013

RESULTS

■ The NBC has developed a specific department for education, training and competence enhancement of the current staff.

■ Changes have been made with regards to news reporting and new programs and new program formats have been introduced.

■ Audience evaluations have been incorporated into the evaluations and program planning systems, which enabled NBC to increase revenues through license and advertisement fees.

■ In phase two of the project the education and sports production groups have gained special focus. They have produced a series of programs, one of them focusing on entrepreneurship for the 18–25 year old target listeners connected to the high level of youth unemployment in Namibia.

■ NBC staff visited Stockholm to learn how radio programs are made in Sweden. NBC staff conducted interviews in Namibian schools which will be edited and put together into programs together with the SR staff.