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### Reporting Africa

Broadcast:

Jeremy: Welcome to another of our series in radio conferencing a full hour round table on how the media handles big issues. The initiative is brought to you by SA Fm, along with the Media Monitoring project and the Open Society Foundation.

On Friday we observed Africa Day and our attention this morning turns to how the media covers the continent.

I suggest to you that you turn on any television set, you read international newspapers, drought, war, famine, HIV/Aids, corruption, the list is endless. But that is the picture that is painted of Africa, of course that is the stark reality of the continent.

But do we approach our journalism entirely from this perspective? Do we get beyond the crisis? Do we unpack the issues instead of relegating the continent to a one-dimensional image of poverty, death and destruction? What about other media issues as well as far as the continent of Africa is concerned? Press freedom, media literacy, and the role of technology. All of that under discussion this morning in the full hour between ten and eleven o'clock.

William Bird is the director of the Media Monitoring Project he's in Johannesburg with me this morning along with Thabo Mophuthing who is the executive producer at SABC Africa. Luckson Chipare former regional director of media that is the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) is on the line to us from Namibia.

And a little later on we are hoping to be joined by Chris Khobato who is the director of Highway Africa at the Rhodes school of journalism with a specific focus on technology in the role of journalism.

William Bird let me kick off the discussion with you if I can maybe an overall impression, do we tend, when I say we, "the media", the broad church, do we reduce Africa to a series of disaster?

William: Hi good morning, yes, I think the simple answer is obviously yes, we tend to do so and I think for some of the reasons you just mentioned, we're faced with an enormous number of challenges and you have an issue where unless a crisis is sometimes brought to the attention of international media and international agenda by a media they don't tend to be noticed.

Darfur is a case in point when foreign media went in and raised the issue of what was happening there, it just wasn't on anyone's international agenda in terms of doing something about it so there is a clear issue and importance of media to

raise particularly disaster situations around conflict but we also need to be looking at how we tend represent Africa within Africa.

**Jeremy: When you say "We" are you talking about the South African Media?**

William: Well I'm talking about South African and also African media and I'm one of those who like to think of South Africa as part of Africa and not as an outsider. I think one of the key things we've been seeing is the criticism of how international media cover Africa, which is well and good but I think what we would particularly be interested in is how African media reports on Africa. What are the particular challenges that African media faces in reports on Africa? Because there are huge range of issues there.

If we look at South African media over the last few years, there has been what I think is a very positive shift in the way we've started to report on Africa primarily because you've seen a formation of things like TAEF, which is The All African Editors Forum. You're starting to see greater cooperation and engagement with other African editors. You're starting to see a bit more African content. I still don't think its anywhere near the levels where it should be, just in terms of giving us a reasonably rounded image of Africa as an enormous continent with billions of stories everyday but I think we are starting to get there.

**Jeremy: Thabo Mophuthing from SABC Africa, you are an executive producer. How is your agenda shaped in term of the stories that you put together? Is it entirely shaped by the negative perception that we have of this continent?**

Thabo: well, as things are now I think the trend is that most of our stories are the negative. I mean a couple of weeks ago one of my colleagues was saying, "Damn your bulletin is so gloomy, the only good stories that we have are **sports** stories". Those are the challenges that we are facing.

But when it comes to those stories which are concentrating on development you see less of those stories I mean there has also been a story of a bridge being built between the two Congo's linking the two Congo's but those stories you'll never see in the media I've never seen those stories in our local newspapers now, but those are the stories that are over shadowing our bulletins, Darfur, Somalia and other crisis that are happening in the continent.

When it also comes to television we don't have partnerships with other broadcasters in the continent to tell you, like the stories I'm talking about in regard to the two Congo's, if those people could send us the material, it could help us enhance to portray those positive stories that are happening in the continent.

**Jeremy: So is it simply a question of logistics and technology?**

Thabo: That also and when it comes to newspapers and radio there has been some sort of a way forward regarding to that but when it comes to television we are still lagging behind.

**Jeremy: Luckson Chipare on the line to us from Namibia, you're a former regional director of MISA, that is the Media Institute of Southern Africa, you are now an independent media consultant. You've listened to what our two panellists here in**

Johannesburg have had to say, if we continue reporting Africa from this negative perception in other words reinforcing the stereotypes all the time. What is the long time consequence then in terms of our place in the world?

Luckson: Good morning, Jeremy and good morning to the listeners. I think the long term consequence is that Africa will always be marginalised. This is why it is important for African journalists to begin to bring Africa and the good stories about Africa into the **main fold** of the media. Largely the stories are quite negative wherever you go, not that there are no good stories, there are good stories, but it is just the focus and this is just not internationally, but within our own newsrooms is to look at the bad news not so much about the good news as it was mentioned about this bridge that is being built between countries and that sort of thing.

**Jeremy: But hang in that's a sort of mind set that is unique to Africa newsrooms, it's the nature of news to report on the negative, you know its that old debate about good news doesn't sell.**

Luckson: Correct, but I think a concerted effort needs to be put into this whole process of how we report our news. I know that you've just mentioned that good news makes no news at all but I think that we have to make some effort to begin to address some of the issues that are taking place within our continent so that we get a much brighter picture, less ugly and less depressing.

**Jeremy: Well answer the question yourself when you say a concerted effort is needed. Where do we start that effort?**

Luckson: I've been involved with some of those efforts within Africa you might be aware that there is the whole process of African media development initiative taking place which was largely as a result of the British Commission. Which if you remember they mentioned that there was a need to make media in Africa a little bit much more developed, so that media in all its facets should begin to be part of this whole democratization process or deepening of democracy within Africa.

So out of that there has been some initiatives to begin to look at how media can be developed in Africa especially when we look at those countries where there is virtually very little media, that is something that is going on and obviously there are other places where there is need for looking at you know, local media, community media we call it and begin to see how communities are communicating and how communities are able to heard by authorities by whoever around there own issues.

There is development, which is very much local but what needs to happen and I think you were mentioning that exchanges, long time ago within MISA we established what we called MISA Net, an exchange of new stories across the 11 countries in Southern Africa which was an opportunity at that time, in 1994, there were not much websites and internet and all that but at least it was a start where people could exchange stories and be able to report on stories that are happening across the border or within the region.

More exchanges are really needed so that we get more stories coming from other countries so that they can use them if they do so wish. That is one element, another thing we have to look at how our editors look at those stories

(exchanged stories), do they then look at them and put some of them in their news stories as well.

**Jeremy: William Bird I like this notion of exchanging of news stories and if we do more of that surely that takes away some of the ignorance African countries have of each other. The Less ignorance we have perhaps the better job we can do of in terms of reporting.**

William: Yeah there is no doubt; the more information people have the better decisions they tend to make. I mean its generally true that where you have a more free media they tend to get a better media, a media that reports more informed way and more balanced and in a better way generally so you are tending to find that where you have better information you are going to get more balanced stories and that's a fairly basic thing of reporting in general on any subject let alone on Africa.

I think one of the things that we just need to put into context is the fact that when we talk about Africa, its this enormous continent, its incredibly, fundamentally, substantially huge anyone whose flown from South Africa to Europe you spend most of that 10 hour flight, 8 hours of which flying over Africa, its just that last little bit where you start to get to Europe, so and that's just flying over Africa. I mean you talk about 54 countries and I think its close over 800 million people, it's quite staggering.

But if you look at it, one of the very fine pieces I think that was written on Friday about Africa Day was by Zubeda Jafa in the Star, she talked about some of the issues and challenges that are around Africa but she put it in a little bit of context where she says that 46 out of 54 countries are now multi party democracies now that's a figure that I certainly wasn't aware of because again we tend to have a fairly overwhelmingly negative version of our continent.

If we are starting to share those stories, starting to get some of them being told just between other journalist we are going to start to get somewhere I think, but we also have problems over the fact that in addition to 54 countries we have probably several thousands different languages and we need to start overcoming some of those barriers as well.

**Jeremy: Thabo Mophuthing let me come back to you, executive producer at SABC Africa, William Bird talks about well informed reporting of the continent, we are not going to have well informed reporting of the continent unless we have well informed reporters. To what extent is that an issue?**

Thabo: That's a bigger issue because when you look now as a series recording regarding to special recording on Africa, we have this over reliance in foreign corresponding media and if anything was to happen in Zimbabwe first thing I'll do is switch on to maybe BBC or Sky News. That's over reliance because those people when reporting on the continent, I've seen some people explaining South Africa as a crime ridden country.

I think when it comes to the SABC, SABC is now opening doors to some African countries, I know of Senegal, Nigeria, and the DRC. The SABC is going to hire local people to be able to report those stories because, you cannot take a South African to go and report about issues they are not familiar with.

**Jeremy: It's well that we are going to hire local people but it has to be local people who are experts in their subjects?**

Thabo: Yes, that's also another thing because I think also it needs proper training. I've listened to other people when they report on other issues, I know one issue that has created a lot of debate, the land reform in Zimbabwe, people have been reporting on it and they don't know the history behind it and people end up making assumptions. So I think from our part as broadcasters we need to train people properly. People to be ambitious about the continent and people who have a passion to really see the development of the continent

**Jeremy: Luckson Chipare, let me bring you back into the conversation and you are a media consultant in Namibia. I would have some concern when we say we have to be ambitious about the continent when we are reporting it because could that not affect our objectivity because begin to look at the continent through rose-tinted spectacles**

Luckson: I think it would be fallacy on our part to actually say we should be ambitious in that respect but what we would be saying I think is that we should be open to also reporting the good news and also to seeing those things as being part of what is going on in Africa. I think because of maybe space constraints we tend to highlight the negatives; we tend to highlight the big issues and that sort of thing, which is common with media.

**Jeremy: Surely it just not the space issue, are we just not deeply cynical as a body of journalists about the continent of Africa?**

Luckson: I suppose there is a level of cynicism, but I think with time we should be able to overcome that. I think the cynicism would have been a product of the way things have always been. Media has largely become, if you look at our own situation here, media has largely been in English, in foreign languages but not local and therefore most of the issues are taken from that perspective.

What we should be looking at is how can we also be looking at things from a local perspective as it was said about the SABC having local people. Let them interpret the things the way they see them locally but of course it should also be objective not just be able to do some kind of sunshine journalism around issues that are actually happening.

**Jeremy: William I'm I just being grouchy when I talk about overwhelming cynicism from the body of journalism about the rest of Africa that we have that almost a predisposition to it and which ever way we are going to look at the story we are going to start off from a negative prima?**

William: No, I think the general overwhelming discourse around Africa is that it's exactly that, it's generally, incredibly negative all the stereotypes we talked about at the beginning we're talking about trying to redress stereotypes of Africa that have been put in place by media in some way, shape or form for at least 250 years.

**Jeremy: The charge is by the western media?**

William: Well, yes its western media but its not just western media, as we've seen some media now, I think are very much African media but they still tend to have very similar ideas, thoughts and beliefs about Africa themselves. I think it's something that we see within African governments in terms of their own beliefs and in terms of what they are able to do.

But I think its not just about the fact that we have a negative disposition, its also about, and I think you hit on a key issue when you talked about you need inform journalists and skill journalists to report because its not just the fact that we are telling these negative stories its the way that we are telling these negative stories and I'll give you a quick example, if you think back to the floods in the New Orleans, there was huge amount of reporting on that was across most major media in terms of newspapers, radios and television

And what's interesting and what of typifies the kind of reporting that you get on a disaster in a developed nation is that things are always explained in understanding how this had happened and then there is a follow up on how rebuilding efforts is going, what was the fault of government, what is the role of government, again lots of critic of the American government.

Now up to very recently and I still think it tends to happen but there are some exceptions, when you see a disaster in Africa, it tends to be a disaster, people die in numbers and that's it! it's suddenly gone off the news agenda.

**Jeremy: So let me bring you back in the conversation Thabo Mophuthing. Is it a question then of poor content and analysis as William Bird is obviously suggesting?**

Thabo: As things are now, the media on the continent we act as vultures we go on and on about the bad and we don't follow through things.

**Jeremy: Is it because we don't want to, because we can't, because we don't have the resources, we don't have the money, and we don't have the training or all of the above?**

Thabo: I think it could be all of that. I was staying in Nigeria during the elections, as soon as the other parties went to the courts, I saw most of the foreign media leaving saying that there was no story to report here, while there was something because, I mean these people are going through court challenging the outcome of the elections and I was asking myself is it because people are not picking up guns and fighting, they are doing it through legitimate court of law? So these are the issues, but we as Africans thought that we should stay behind and report on what the opposition party is doing. So I think that's where we have to identify the issues we shouldn't just act like how foreign media are covering our continent.

**Jeremy: I want to raise two issues. One is how we engender the culture of more context and analysis and the other perhaps more simple question is how do we train journalists to report Africa properly?**

Jeremy: Reporting Africa a round table discussion on media on SA Fm this morning its in association with Media Monitoring Project and the Open Society Foundation.

Luckson Chipare let me come back to you, former regional director of the Media Institute of Southern Africa you are in Namibia you are now an independent media consultant. Let me ask you an obvious question and leading on from our discussion for the past 20 minutes.

What is the optimum way of training journalists to report Africa properly and by that I mean allowing them to give context to the story into the issues and reasonable and informed analysis?

Luckson: There has to be a, as I said earlier on a concerted effort to actually train journalists. A lot of the training that we have seen of late has been workshops-type, which has really not helped much in terms of honing the skills, of staying with the story and covering the story objectively. And I think what needs to happen is more and more long-term training, we have seen quite a large number of young people coming into the profession who need training and therefore what we should be looking at is providing more facilities for that training.

**Jeremy: Lets talk about those facilities. Is that an indictment against the media owners themselves or against the journalism schools?**

Luckson: I think it's both. On one hand, in most of Africa the biggest problem we have is ownership of the media being largely owned by politicians who's interests are not really on long term coverage of stories but more of promoting themselves. So you tend to find that one, they don't pay those journalists well and as a result they don't get the right kind of journalists to come in and work for them and therefore what needs to happen is that there should be that associations between the owners and institutions where training is taken on and on a long term basis.

I've been involved with some projects in some countries where they are looking at putting in place mechanisms, which will allow people to be trained on a long term basis which means that they can expect to go in for, lets say, 3 years and also looking at issues such as placements where young journalists are placed within media organisations on a long term basis so that they can acquire skills on the job working with seasoned journalists. On that side I think that's what needs to take place.

On the side of institutions what needs to happen is, of course, we have seen quite a number of countries coming up with training at university level which is good and then what needs to happen is that once that training has taken place there needs to be now more practical training taking place in media houses. So if that were to take place then that would help.

But I think when we talk about coverage then we go to the other issue where media houses now need to be able to put in funds to enable a sustainable way of coverage.

**Jeremy: Lets get to that in just a moment, but William Bird from the Media Monitoring Project, that's a fairly despondent critic of the level of skills training that we have in the continent, isn't it?**

William: Yes I think so, I mean, I don't think they spend nearly enough time on training these things, certainly from a South African perspective we've seen SANEF skills audit in the few years prior to the showing that there are a severe lack of skills particularly on legal knowledge and other various ethics knowledge. I think there are various challenges that we have and I don't think that we are doing enough.

There are some universities that are doing these things that are having courses specifically on reporting in Africa. Rhodes being one of those. But I think where Luckson is spot on again is in terms of talking about long-term training and we need to be thinking long term. Many of the challenges that we face aren't things that are going to go away over night.

If we talk about gender based violence, if we're talking about HIV/Aids, addressing violence against children, these are all significant challenges that unless you have consistent plans and long term approaches to them, we are never going to be addressing the particular stereotypes that we need to address.

**Jeremy: Thabo Mophuthing from SABC Africa, that's one side of the training equation, the other side is of course on the job training and the mentorship. To what extent do you think that happens?**

Thabo: It doesn't happen quite a lot. If it does happen, I think the period is too short for a person to have learnt something. I mean you cannot have 6 months training for some one who is just from school, I think you need more than that because the other trend I've seen is people would go to universities or technikons and then would come to have the training which is six months and then they are not employed.

I think that's where the problem is, you train people for those 6 months to be able to complete their course but after that they are not employed. But if you say to someone, well I'll offer you employment and we'll train you for about a year or so, I think that would help because you cannot do for people to just complete their studies.

**Jeremy: Luckson Chipare in Namibia let me return to you now and pick up on the other issue that you raised, one was the skills and training issue, which I think we had a universal agreement here that we are falling short on that fund. The other problem of course is news selection as far as African stories are concerned and allocating funds in order for journalists to get on to the scene and to cover the stories properly. That of course is the other big challenge facing newsrooms as they are trying to grapple with reporting the continent.**

Luckson: Yes, certainly and it also relates to the kind of pay that these journalists are paid. Particularly when it comes to the print side, a lot of the newspapers are owned by people whose interests are more on self promoting and that sort of thing and maybe looking after their personal interests.

The pay they give to journalists on average, this was based on the research that was done two years ago, on average an African journalist earns about \$120 a month. Now with that kind of pay, what do you expect? Then the other issue is what they put in as media owners in terms of following up the stories, they don't provide enough for a journalist to actually stay with a story for a weeks or so and

therefore nothing like that happens because these media houses are run on a short of shoe string budget kind of arrangement.

**Jeremy: But Luckson, with respect, is that not the reality of a developing continent, but we are not going to have that vast amounts of network money as they do in the United States Of America. Is it not incumbent upon journalists and media houses to think smarter and to be more creative in the way in which they cover the stories?**

Luckson: Yes of course they should be encouraged to think smarter and think creatively but at the same time the reality as you've just pointed out is that there is hardly funds going into media in terms of getting the stories and following up on the stories. So I don't know what should we do?

What other countries I've looked at and I've worked in one particular country where some donors have come in and have said that they would like to help and I think that's what we should be looking at may be as countries they should be looking at how they can stretch the limited resources that are available, working with those that want to see that kind of development taking place and ensuring that in the end that there is a fairly well focused development of media in the country

**Jeremy: William Bird I'm now more despondent that I've ever been in my life cause what I'm hearing Luckson say is that the future on journalism in this continent is going to be dependent on donor funding. That must be a concern surely?**

William: There is a lot of truth in what Luckson is saying obviously, and I strongly would support his assertions that we do need some of these initiatives from donors but I don't think its nearly as bleak as suggesting that we aren't going to be covering these things as well, I know that certainly if you look at some of our own reporting in South Africa of Africa there are a number of instances where it has improved significant.

**Jeremy: Give us an example.**

William: Two examples, the Friday example from The Star I've mentioned, The Weekender had an example of understanding African identity, just from a whole lot of intellectual perspectives of what African identity is.

But recently if you look at the crash of the Kenyan Airways in Douala in Cameroon, you saw that for one of the first times there was actually consistent follow up and reporting on that particular story and about the possible causes of that. Where so often you just hear about the aeroplane went down, they have no idea why so many people died and that's the end of it and you tend to get very graphic and horrible images. This is one of the first times in a disaster that I can remember in the years I've been monitoring where you are starting to get very much the sense that there is process; people are going in and doing investigating.

**Jeremy: Thabo how do you see that was that a water-shed moment in journalism and in Southern Africa, because I agree with William, I think the reporting on that air crash has been exemplary.**

Thabo: Well I think so too, but also if you were watching the news on SABC Africa a couple of days ago there was a fire in one of the government building in Lesotho and there was an SABC crew there and the tape was confiscated and they were accompanied to the border. I think that is another challenge that we are facing, that governments are in hindrance to us reporting good and the bad on the continent.

**Jeremy: You've just opened another door to our conversation this morning. To what extent is that a problem not only to that localised problem in Lesotho but for the rest of Africa as well? Surely that is also, you know we've dealt with skills, we've dealt with funding, now let's deal with censorship.**

Thabo: That's the biggest problem, also when you are a foreigner, if you've come from South Africa and you are going to report in another country, there will be very stringent media accreditations that one has to fill in.

**Jeremy: More so than in other countries?**

Thabo: More so in other countries because they are more weary of foreign journalists coming to report on their country and that's where there are challenges that need to be addressed by governments and also because of the media loss.

**Jeremy: Luckson Chipare to the issue then of freedom of media to operate in African countries it remains as Thabo has mentioned as possible the single biggest problem that we have.**

Luckson: Yes it is, it certainly is. I was quite horrified to hear, I was actually in South Africa then when the incident Thabo is talking about happened, I heard it on SAfm, that journalists had been escorted by the police to the Maseru bridge.

That is a foreign journalist in a sense, but if you look at some countries for instance Eritrea five years ago where they took literary all editors of independent media and put them all in jail and most of them are still in jail. Ethiopia two years ago after the elections they banned all what we normally call, independent, which means they are not government people, some of the editors were jailed, some skipped the country, until two months ago the courts ruled that there was nothing wrong which they did.

So you find that these things happen a lot in Africa and it is quite an indictment on the continent where local media including foreign media are not able to report because of stringent rules by governments stringent laws, draconian laws, we've seen that happening in Zimbabwe.

**Jeremy: And William Bird, how does the media fight back?**

William: Well I think one of the things in terms of the more positive elements we've seen that in spite of incredibly repressive regimes in a number of countries, particularly around media, we've seen that there are a range of very positive ways that journalists with very little resources, capacity are able to do and tell the most amazing and incredible stories. I think some of it comes down to initiative of the journalists and getting support from the independent owners. We're seeing for example, recently from Trevor Ncube received an independent publishers

honours award for particularly these issues on reporting in particularly difficult circumstances. So you are starting to see owners of independent media that are able to fight back to some degree.

**Jeremy: Reporting Africa, our special radio conference and we're joined now by a fourth guest on the panel today. Samungu, who is a regional director Interpress Service News Agency Africa. Farah, good morning to you and thanks for joining us.**

**Just an overview from you first of all as the conversation continues, is it becoming more or less difficult for media to operate in the continent given all the issues that we have discussed before you arrived, skills issues, funding issues, press freedom issues, government clamp down issues, you know the list goes on and on?**

Farai: You know it's a very difficult answer to say yes or no because, we were just talking the other day, whilst there is quite a lot of, democratic phases are opening up in many African countries, which is welcomed, but as they open up in other places are also narrowing or actually not happening at all.

I guess as media we need to ensure continues to happen is to find ways to continue to build the momentum that democracy brings for media and even in those places that are difficult, like if you look at where I come from in Zimbabwe, you know you just have to continuously look for ways in which stories continue to be told under those difficult circumstances.

**Jeremy: On censor sometimes that you increasingly need more courage to operate these days than less these days?**

Farai: Well you do, there is no question about that. At the news agencies we found that it's increasingly difficult to get journalists to write a certain kind of story for you especially from difficult countries.

So whatever you can get them to cover without necessarily putting them in danger because you have to think about what happens when these journalists are in danger, do we have enough resources to protect them?

**Jeremy: That's the one side to the equation. The flip side to it is that as these media lights shut down the consequences become more and more dire as we are exposed to less information.**

Farai: Absolutely, but I think one has to look at ways in which we have to continue telling stories in other ways.

**Jeremy: There was one phrase that you used which intrigued me, you said its incumbent upon the media to build momentum. How does the media start that process?**

Farai: Democracy ushers a certain level of freedom and ways in which as media we can begin to ask questions that we were never able to ask. We begin to raise issues that people used to sort of skirt around and as the media I think we have to continue working with journalists that have demonstrated courage that we are talking about, because even in these times of difficulty you know there are

people still doing it. So I think we have to continue building and ensuring that they are strengthened to continue doing what they are doing.

**Jeremy: I wonder if media sometimes is afraid of all the freedoms that democracy brings?**

Farai: What do you mean by that?

**Jeremy: Well they have all this latitude to operate yet they've been working in a constrained environment for such a long time. But once that expression of freedom is opened to them, they simple don't have the courage to step up and use it.**

Farai: I'm not sure whether it courage or maybe resources, because all of a sudden you have all these things that you can do and maybe you don't have enough journalists who are prepared to take up that space and resources take time to build. So I don't think its more of fear, I think its sometimes you get all these things ushered and I don't think media is prepared to take up that **space**.

**Jeremy: I'm glad you mentioned the word resources because that segues nicely into our next guest who is on the line to us from Grahams Town, the director of Highway Africa at the Rhodes school of journalism, also a regular contributor to this programme. Chris Khobato good morning to you.**

Chris: Good morning Jeremy and thanks for having me.

**Jeremy: It's a pleasure; it's always nice to talk to you. Is better technology going to be the saviour of media around the continent?**

Chris: Certainly Jeremy I think it will assist, but of course you cannot take away issues of integrity, issues of courage, issues of education and all that. Technology will certainly assist us in many respects and we've seen it now with the proliferation of mobile phones and all that. You're coverage of the elections in the DRC and elections in Nigeria would not have been possible without better technology.

**Jeremy: But technology costs money, doesn't it?**

Chris: It does cost money, but what is happening Jeremy, there are two aspects to it. There is obviously the cost to communicate, access to networks, the affordability issue comes into play, but more and more you actually find that the cost of technology itself are coming down to the point where, you Jeremy will be able to send out a correspondent armed with a laptop, their mobile phone and maybe a little camera and they are going to be able to cover the elections I some other country and send you everything in real time

**Jeremy: Are you confident that media owners are embracing the notion of new technology in terms of the way the stories are being covered and are they adequately resourcing that technology by funding?**

Chris: It's a very uneven picture across. You know you tend to find in a country like Kenya for example; we'll take one group, The Nation Media Group. You know they are very conscious that ICTs are at the heart of their media operations.

So definitely they will have a whole strategy around how are we going to deliver to Kenyans in the diasporas so their online activities become quite important or an online strategy, how are we going to deliver across East Africa, Uganda, Tanzania, where they actually have a footprint for their television, their radio, all that. They have an integrated way in which they are dealing with different content.

You find the same with lets say Mail and Guardian here in South Africa and Media 24. Then you also do have across the continent AllAfrica.COM. So there are a few that are very conscious that ICTs technology is quite you know, its actually very business savvy if you have an integrated technology strategy and they integrate that. But of course there are others who might not be very much in tune with what technology could do to them.

**Jeremy: Farai Samungu, it all well for the journalists to have the technology but of course the recipients of that product have got to have that technology as well, don't they?**

Farai: That continues to be a big problem especially in Africa. And we were actually talking with Chris at some forum together and we were saying, do you not embrace technologies because people cannot access it. You continue to do it because I think whilst a lot of people cannot access these new technologies, radio continues to be the medium that is still most accessible in Africa. People are trying, like you find with the use of mobile phones for example, there is much more that people can do which they couldn't do before.

In Africa we don't want to be left behind in terms of understanding what is available, what we can do and how can we deliver on the different platforms. So it is difficult, a lot of people still can't access it, but at the same time, I think we should embrace it, inch by inch, you know things happen slowly.

**Jeremy: Luckson Chipare in Namibia, I'm sure you'd agree with that, while accessibility remains a problem you couldn't turn a blind eye to it?**

Luckson: Certainly not, and I think we've seen that happen quite a lot in poorer countries in West Africa where they've used technology to the best for the various countries, particularly around elections, campaigning for elections and things like that. So one shouldn't give up because of accessibility.

**Jeremy: Chris Khobato, let me come back to you. To what extent as we report on this continent of ours is traditional media going to be sidelined by other aspects of media blogging. You yourself have just mentioned mobile phones and that's question to that, have traditional media left it too late?**

Chris: No I don't think so Jeremy. Unlike trends else where lets say the United States, where you do have 60% of the population with access to broadband, on the continent you are actually going to find a much more integrated strategy. Print is always going to remain relevant, but radio remains our key source of information on news on the continent, it's going to remain so.

What really is going to change is that we will find that we will have to use other platforms in conjunction with what we do. So radio and the Internet become

quite important. But how do you manage your radio station if for example if it is across the continent? That's when the internet comes into play, that's where different software come into play, for example what we call content management systems of managing your contents and syndicating your content around the continent.

So for me its neither this or that, is it that radio for example is going to become irrelevant, if anything radio is going to become more important because we are going to find it on our mobile hand sets and we have over 160 million Africans who own a mobile phone. So its going to playing also, we don't see maybe traditional descends of maybe me carrying a mobile wireless radio, but it will be radio delivered to me on my mobile phone.

So unlike else where we are not going to see print die, television die. If anything those are going to grow. But they are going to be integrated with other new media.

**Jeremy:** With the panel's permission then as we come to the end of this discussion this morning, I want to go round the table one more time. We've put a number of issues on the table this morning, skills, funding, media freedom, and censorship. All the obstacles that exist as far as reporting Africa is concerned, I think we've touched on all of them.

**William Bird from the Media Monitoring Project, what then, and a question to all of you is the way forward, how do we then start to report Africa better?**

William: Well I think we need to look at the various roles, we need to at the role that governments can play in terms of allowing and facilitating reporting and certainly by providing general access to information and making life easier for journalists.

**Jeremy:** In other words they need to back off, that's what you're saying?

William: They need to back of but they also need to work with journalists, they need to give them information about things and very basic things they need to be reporting on. I think they need to look at what media practitioners can do, and certainly there is a level that we've spoken of training that needs to occur, but we also need commitment from media owners and some media owners and some media in some countries are making great efforts to make sure that these things happen. If you look around the great lakes region, you'll see that certainly media makes efforts to ensure that journalists are getting training is certainly something that we can be quite hopeful about.

In terms of civil society, organisations like ours; I think we need to encourage people to be critical of their media, to say that hey, we are not hearing these stories, what is happening around the rest of Africa. We need people to be monitoring the media, ideally what I'd like to see if an Africa of media monitoring so that we can start to get an idea of what Africa is reporting on Africa, which stories are we telling.

**Jeremy:** Lets move on around the table, Thabo Mophuthing, executive producer SABC Africa. I'm more than happy for you to raise the question of paying journalists more, which I'm sure you'd agree. But aside from that William has

**spoken about government involvement training, the need to be more critical. What else is on that list?**

Thabo: I think we need to form partnerships within broadcasters ourselves on the continent, whether radio, whether print and so forth.

**Jeremy: How difficult is that to do I wonder?**

Thabo: Well talking from my experience it has been difficult. Sometimes something would happen in another country you don't know where to start, as to who will provide that information. And also like I said before there are stringent rules for people to be sending information for us and also technology, people will tell you that they will mail it, if you need a tape on a story, they say they'll mail it.

**Jeremy: Excuse my ignorance on this one but to the best of my knowledge is there any gathering on all African broadcasters actually get down and talk about these issues?**

Thabo: Well I know more about Southern Africa, I don't know more about the rest of the continent that's what I'm talking about.

**Jeremy: But your point, you need to forge partnerships with the rest of the continent.**

Thabo: That would be only the starting point, because there are other issues we relate to in terms of technology, all the other challenges that we were facing regarding that part of reporting on the continent.

**Jeremy: Farai Somungu from the Interpress News Service. Partnerships are important. What else do we need in order to facilitate better reporting?**

Farai: I think one cannot over state the importance of the skills on the continent, but I think I'll just bring a point which was discussed earlier but making our journalists multi media journalists, because you go into countries and you are looking for a radio reporter or you are looking for someone who is good in print but you know in this day and age you have to do everything and I think we need to give them skills so that they can do that and deliver on the different platforms.

You know the other thing is trying to support journalists to do work that they haven't done before, investigative journalism in Africa. Which is a very difficult and dangerous area but non the less its is still very important to look at you know the issues of oil in Africa. And we need provide journalists with the support to do that work effectively.

**Jeremy: Are you optimistic, do you think we can deliver to this list we've come up with?**

Farai: I think we can because we are already doing that, maybe not at the level we would like to see but it can happen. And also the other area that I also want to look into is reminding journalists to look at other areas like climate change, desertification for example because there is reruns on reporting on other things we forget about things that might actually undermine our very livelihood.

Jeremy: Critical to the long term absolutely.

Jeremy: Luckson Chipare in Namibia, former regional director at MISA, now an independent media consultant do you want to add on to that list?

Luckson: Yes, I think mine will be on the issue on access to information legislation, you know in Africa not many countries, I think at this stage we are counting about three or four have access to information. Journalists and I think if they were to work in concert with citizens to ensure that they get access to this information so that they can report accurately about issues that affect the citizens.

And Chris Khobato in Grahamstown, I'm going to give the final word to you and perhaps you can pick up on a point that Farai made a little earlier. The Multi Media approach is critical isn't it?

Chris: It is critical Jeremy, we are finding that as media business and most of the time whenever they want to reduce on the costs they look to the newsrooms, you know reduce the staff there so its quite critical for journalists to become much more multi media savvy in order for them to deliver.

It's no longer viable to send a whole team of ten people to cover the elections or the situation in Somalia, you just need maybe one or two people and those people it becomes quite great for them to be able to do most of the stuff there in the field.

So really the issue of cost of technology is going to become important, but more importantly is the cost of communication and great changes are coming up Jeremy that are going to affect the price of access to the internet, mobile phones, telephone calls, they are going to really come down in the next two years.

Jeremy: Chris Khobato that's where we are going to leave it for now thanks for joining us and thanks for listening to this special radio conference this morning on reporting Africa a project in association with the Media Monitoring Project and the Open Society Foundation.

I'm Jeremy Maggs thank you very much for listening.