

EVENT

Climate change: the media's role



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The deterioration of the environment and shrinking vital resources are complex topics which need to be covered by the media. These issues in connection with sustainable development impact scientific aspects, economic fallout and public healthcare.

While the media have a crucial role to play in raising awareness and of course educating the general public, the issues related to climate change are still not given enough air time on TV and radio, nor enough space in the press.

The conference on "Radio-television and climate change: a mission for public service" organised by UNESCO on 4 and 5 September 2009 will examine the capacity to inform as well as the availability of relevant information and reliable references.

On this occasion two French operators, CFI, specialised in media cooperation, and the IRD, a research institute for development, will be putting forward an ambitious project to raise awareness among journalists of the challenges with regard to sustainable development as well as upgrade their knowledge, to smooth relations between the local players involved. A specific training module on the production of scientific documentaries is slated for roll-out by end 2009, with its main aim being to enhance the circulation of information to the public, in an objective, educational and creative manner.

Relying on its network of experts, IRD Audiovisual has set out to promote research programmes conducted in cooperation with countries in the south. For its part, CFI will provide support for TV channels in the production of news programmes (TV magazines, documentaries, video clips etc.) from design through to post-production.

Now that the media are seeking advice to cover such complex issues, CFI is reasserting its commitment to southern TV channels, helping to foster professionalism among journalists and directors in order to produce telling reports on the environment catering to the general public.

Editorial

The issues linked to sustainable development and the future of our planet are arousing growing interest in debates waging in our society and are starting to become widely reported in northern countries.

However, certain sections of the media in the South are still experiencing problems taking this information on board, sometimes pointing out that the viewpoint of programmes available is all too often far removed from the concerns of their audience.

As a player promoting North-South media cooperation for 20 years, CFI was therefore very keen to join in the conference on this subject organised by UNESCO in Paris on 4 & 5 September 2009. Rallying the efforts of the highest ranking officials from the regional Broadcasting Unions and representatives from various sections of the media from the South should lead to greater awareness and bring about concrete initiatives to which CFI will bring its experience of cooperation at local level.

In actual fact, local production and local programmes in particular hold the key to the media in the South managing to increase the impact of local initiatives. CFI already conducts over a hundred assignments every year with southern TV channels, and is already working with UNESCO, the IRD and other partners to put forward new approaches aimed at tackling these environmental topics.

Etienne Fiette
Managing Director of CFI

3 questions for Brigitte Surugue, Productions Manager, IRD Audiovisual

1. How does IRD Audiovisual alert public opinion to environmental issues?

IRD Audiovisual produces and co-produces scientific documentaries about humankind and our environment, which caters to the general public, taking great care to check that the scientific message is put across correctly. IRD Audiovisual thus liaises between scientists and audiovisual professionals.

2. How can the media from emerging countries be supported to uphold their responsibility of providing information?

CFI and IRD Audiovisual have decided to join forces in order to put forward training courses on directing and producing scientific subjects. These training initiatives aim to shape regular production of vulgarisation programmes on television channels in developing countries.

3. What premium does this CFI/IRD collaboration offer?

CFI and IRD work in roughly the same geographical areas. Teaming up provides added value, with each institution bringing different skills pertaining to broadcasting, production and directing on scientific themes developed within the IRD.

CFI IN THE FIELD

From economic reporting to investigation

Since July 2009, within the scope of the project entitled "Media for democracy and transparency in the Democratic Republic of Congo" backed by the UK



Department for International Development (DFID), CFI is upgrading the professional practices of the editing staff at DRC TV channels. Three sequential training sessions combine the methods underpinning economic journalism with those of investigative journalism, empowering journalists to report on development opportunities and setbacks in DRC.

The themes covered include the management of mining resources, forests and forestry issues and electricity-related issues.

The aims: to develop freedom of expression and balance the different opinions, put across useful, good-quality information and enlighten citizens.

Raising awareness via programmes

Since 2007, CFI has been offering all its TV partners over 110 hours' worth of TV magazines and documentaries covering environmental issues such as the climate, new energies and forest protection.

These programmes are in certain cases tied in with world solidarity actions (World water day, world health day, world food day etc) and TV channels can thus make a special night of it, and thus bolster their schedule.

Experts help them to organise and fund documentary slots which can feature local productions alongside the weekly programme provided by CFI. They dispense advice on editing televised debates to provide further food for thought and give it a local dimension.

In the past few months, CFI has broadcast: *Les gardiens de la forêt* (14 episodes); the 30 episodes of the series *Regards* on renewable energy; the 52' investigative programme entitled *Scénario 2010: climat en crise* and the series *Jangal* on wildlife protection.

CFI also got involved in the broadcasting of Yann-Arthus Bertrand's film *Home* on 5 June 2009 by offering it to TV partners. The impact of this awareness-raising operation is currently undergoing assessment in TV channels in the South.

Encouraging multilateral initiatives with UNESCO

CFI and UNESCO, in partnership with the Portuguese state television (RTP), provided the Sao Tome state television (TVS) with a series of three training sessions in order to learn how to set up a production unit for educational programmes.



Firstly, the organisation of a seminar on the media's educational role won the support of all the programme directors in Portuguese-language TV channels across Africa, invited for the occasion.

At two hands-on workshops on putting reports together, 10 TVS journalists and directors learnt professional practices, producing five educational documentaries, followed by a public debate in the TVS studio attended by the interested parties.

The themes covered were fishing, tourism, honey and HIV-AIDS, a topic which is still taboo in Sao Tome.

EN BREF

PROTECTION AND PRESERVATION OF WATER

This was the theme of CFI's training course for Thai channel ModernNine TV (part of MCOT).

For three weeks, Thai workers were trained in writing techniques for subjects on sustainable development. Experts underlined the importance of highlighting local initiatives. Jacqueline Benousilio, director of Thalassa (a popular

French TV magazine about the sea), supervised the writing workshop, sharing her passion for and thorough grasp of water-related topics with young documentary filmmakers.

IN ALGERIAN OASES, AND ON THE MEDITERRANEAN COAST

Partnering the COPEAM University organised by the Algerian TV channel, CFI has been coordinating the TV workshop for four

years. At this workshop 50 young journalists from 15 different countries in the Mediterranean basin are guided through the production of news subjects for TV and Internet.

At the Taghit 2009 edition, CFI experts (journalists and editors, mostly from France Télévisions) used the theme of oases to teach young Mediterranean professionals how to produce subjects of

general interest with an environmental slant. The subjects produced (which can be viewed on the Website www.uni-copeam.org) cover topics such as oasis flooding, the development of sustainable tourism and environment preservation.