

# JOURNALISM NETWORK

**Coordinator:** Swedish School of Social Science, University of Helsinki, Finland

**Partners:** University of Tampere, Finland; University of Jyväskylä, Finland; University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania; University of Zambia, Zambia; University of Namibia, Namibia

**Study areas:** Communication and Information Sciences

## What are the main aims of your network?

The basic aim is to increase knowledge about journalism and to increase the standard of instructions in journalism in the 4 countries involved. The means to reach this goal is to increase all levels of cooperation between journalism education institutions in Finland and the participating African countries. For the time being, we have focused mainly on student and teacher exchange, but in the long run, joint research projects are a possibility. The institutions at both ends express their wishes concerning themes to be discussed in the joint meetings, and we have also tried to provide concrete teaching assistance whenever possible.

## What kind of activities are there in your network?

Representatives of the two Finnish partners have had long-lasting contacts with the African institutions. So the network was born based on old contacts, but it has gradually begun to involve more and more people at both ends. By now, all the Finnish partners also have bilateral agreements with one or all African partners, thus supporting the North-South-South programme. Since the beginning, 3 African students (one from each country) per academic year have visited the Finnish partners. They have participated in three-month certificate courses dealing with Foreign reporting, Journalism and Media policies. Also 3 Finnish students (one per institution) per year have studied and completed their three months' internship in the partner countries in Africa, all in the same country per year.

African teachers have visited Finland each year, the length of the visits varying from 1 week to 1 month. They have taught courses, attended seminars and get acquainted with our libraries and services. Finnish teachers have visited the African partners, the visits have varied from 2 to 3 weeks. Finnish teachers have taken care of the University of Namibia press photo course 3 times due to the lack of teaching staff in Windhoek.

Planning meeting for the intensive course was held in Helsinki in February 2008. All institutions participated in the meeting. The Intensive Course will be held in Lusaka June 2009 with the theme "Community Media and Community Aspects in Journalism". All institutions in the network will participate in the course.

## What sort of successes and challenges have you encountered during your project?

Today, we have a critical mass of young journalists in all the 4 countries having in-depth experience and knowledge about Africa and Finland. Most of them have already utilised their special



knowledge in their work. We now also have teachers at both ends aware of how journalism is taught among the other partner institutions.

The exchange has been more difficult to arrange among teachers, and the integration of partner teachers in the normal curricula has not been easy. In Finland, difficulties have been in the integration of visiting teachers in the fairly fixed courses. However, for example at the University of Namibia, the curriculum renewal process has utilized information and experience gained from the partners.

The student exchange has been fluent and rewarding, and the students have been enthusiastic about the experience. The scholarships have been scarce, and this has been a problem especially for African students who cannot invest extra money for the trip themselves. However, everything has turned out well and the students have also studied hard.

Another challenge is making sure the student will get credit for their studies at the other end. The immigration and press accreditation processes have also been problematic. Each country has its own procedure, and even within the same country the procedure can change quite frequently. Journalism is a special case compared with many other professions because it is so visible.

### Your advice to forthcoming networks

Base the activity on the core of the profession you represent and challenge the regulations which might prevent you from doing that.

