

# highwayAFRICA

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## **CONCEPT DOCUMENT FOR HIGHWAY AFRICA CONFERENCE 2007**

**Theme: Quality and Professionalism in Journalism and the Media: the case for New Media**

**Dates: 10-12 September 2007**

**Venue: Eden Grove Complex, Rhodes University, Grahamstown**

### **I. Background**

Highway Africa is a partnership between Rhodes University (School of Journalism and Media Studies) and the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), with the support of several partners, development agencies and sponsors.

For ten years the Highway Africa conference has been at the centre of Africa's debates on journalism and new media. The conference has over the years become the largest annual gathering of African journalists in the world (531 in 2006). In the last four years Highway Africa has evolved into a multi-pronged programme with the following components:

- **Research:** mapping the terrain of the challenges of the interface of technology, journalism and the media
- **Education and Training:** responding to the gaps identified in the research this project makes a practical intervention by re-skilling, upskilling, education and training journalists.
- **News Agency:** a niche news agency with a network of correspondents across the continent it offers weekly news digest on ICT developments in Africa
- **Conference:** the flagship of the programme, it is the forum for critical reflection on journalism, media and technology and a celebration of Africa

## **2. 2007 Theme: Quality and Professionalism in Journalism and the Media: the case for New Media**

Having in the past four years tracked the role of the media in relation to the concept of the Information Society, Highway Africa now wishes to tackle some of the practical challenges that journalists and media institutions face in the **production of media; publishing; and the dissemination/distribution of media products.**

The challenges in the production of media and its distribution impinge on the quality of journalism and the professionalism of journalists. The 2007 conference will seek to address a number of questions related to quality and professionalism in their interface with the deployment and use of technology in the newsroom. The questions to be addressed include:

- What is professionalism?
- How do we measure quality?
- What technology should be available in the ideal newsroom?
- What should be the technical and journalistic skills of journalists?
- What knowledge management policies and practices should be adopted?
- How do gender policies impact on journalism and media institutions? How do we develop and implement gender policies?
- How does technology impact on professionalism and quality?
- What are the ethical issues arising from digital journalism?
- What has been the impact of technology on basic principles of journalism: accuracy; balance; fairness; right of reply; etc.?
- What is the role of news research? How should research be organised?
- What is the role of digital archiving?
- What is the case for 'converged journalism' and multi-skilling of journalists in Africa?
- What is the role of free software and open source in supporting African media?

Via formal presentations, keynote addresses, workshops, interviews and practical examples, the Highway Africa Conference will explore the challenges of **print, radio, television, online and multimedia.**

## **3. Venue & Participants**

Highway Africa takes place in Grahamstown, close to the South African city of Port Elizabeth. The venue is the Rhodes University campus which provides access to state-of-the-art facilities. These include the brand-new and "intelligent" building called the "Africa Media Matrix" which houses the School of Journalism and Media Studies. There is a convergent computer lab for skills training, and fully equipped seminar rooms. Accommodation ranges from high quality University Residence rooms through to B&Bs, hotels and guest houses.

A limited number of sponsorships will be made available for participants who are unable to cover their costs.

#### **4. Parallel and Linked Events**

- Highway Africa – SABC New Media Awards ceremony – live televised event
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Digital Citizen Indaba – using new media for citizen journalism
- Training programmes: Advanced Digital Journalism
- Meetings of SA National Editors Forum, Southern African National Editors Forum, The African Editors Forum, community radio representatives
- Free and Open Source Software and African Media: training workshop programme on use of FOSS in the newsroom
- Book launches
- Exhibitions

For more information: [www.highwayafrica.ru.ac.za](http://www.highwayafrica.ru.ac.za)

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For news on ICT developments in Africa: <http://hana.ru.ac.za>