

Quick to cover Sumatra earthquake

When the Padang earthquake hit Indonesia on 30 September, ABU member GlobeCast was quick to provide services for broadcasters covering the disaster.

With planes to Padang in Sumatra grounded, GlobeCast chartered a plane for its staff and equipment. Working in partnership with AP Global Media Services, it was quickly on the scene.

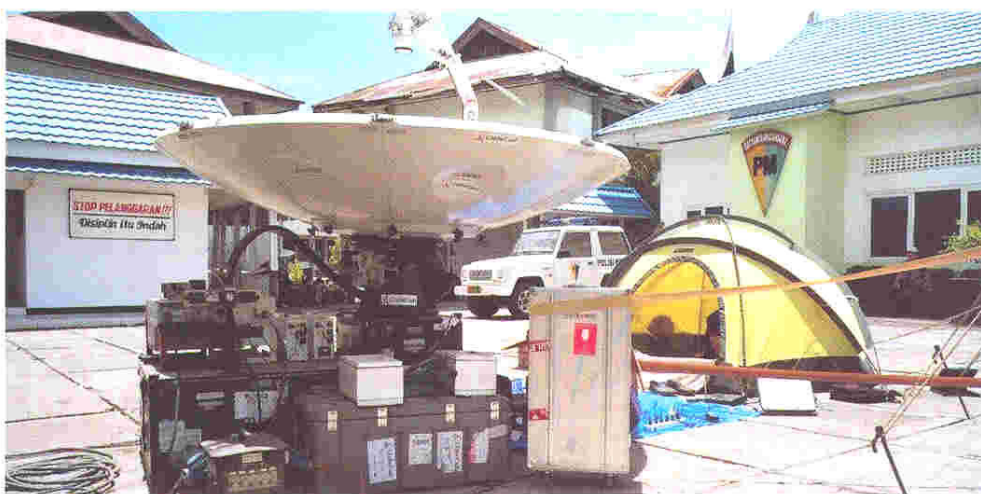
All rooms in hotels left standing from the earthquake were taken up by aid officials and volunteers, so Jay Sim and Ronaldo Raborar from GlobeCast's Singapore office set up tents in the Padang police compound.

The joint deployment with AP serviced more than 20 broadcasters covering the disaster. And when the broadcasters wound down their coverage, GlobeCast was the last service provider to leave the devastated area.

The earthquake, measuring 7.6, killed more than 1,100 people, injured thousands of others and destroyed or damaged more than 200 thousand houses and other buildings.



Australian firemen working at the disaster site



GlobeCast team set up tents in the Padang police compound

Radio 'a fragile lifeline' in South Pacific

The risks that radio stations in the South Pacific face in times of natural disaster have been highlighted in a Radio New Zealand International programme.

The programme, 'Mailbox', said the tsunami that hit Samoa, American Samoa and Tonga on 29 September, killing more than 180 people, saw brave dedication

to duty from several radio stations.

However, the programme said it was pure luck that radio station studios in Pago Pago and Apia were not swept out to sea, as their buildings were totally exposed to the Pacific.

Across the Pacific, other radio station studios and facilities were at sea level and would not stand a chance if the wrong tsunami hit in the wrong place,

it said. Radio was an extremely fragile lifeline.

The programme also looked at a problem faced by tourists in the region when disaster struck. They were told to listen to the local radio for instructions but most local Pacific radio stations broadcast only in local languages.

In Samoa, it said, the only two English

speaking stations were no longer broadcasting live after the tsunami struck, and hundreds of tourists had no idea what was happening, as the only live broadcast they could hear was completely in Samoan.

The programme included an interview with a DJ at KKHJ-FM in Pago Pago who was trapped in the studios as the waves smashed into the ground floor of her building.

Satellite interference still a problem for broadcasters

Interference to satellite signals continues to be a serious problem for many broadcasters, an international meeting in Geneva has heard.

Speakers at a forum of the World Broadcasting Unions International Satellite Operations Group (WBU-ISOG) said most interference was unintentional, but some was deliberately done for political reasons or caused by military activity.

Stewart Sanders of SES, one of the world's leading satellite operators, said interference was often caused by operator error or poor maintenance. One way to tackle the problem was through training and certification of uplink operators, he said.

The meeting also heard calls for the installation of 'identifiers' in encoders that would help trace the source of rogue transmissions.

The WBU-ISOG Chairman, Dick Tauber of CNN, said it was reassuring to see that many satellite operators had got

together to fight the problem and share data.

"They should all be involved in this, and I think they will all be within the next six months," he said. "WBU-ISOG has the same concerns that you have."

On another issue, the meeting was told that high definition television equipment manufacturers had made good progress in enabling HD satellite feeds to be transmitted globally using encoders and decoders from different manufacturers.

A programme of MPEG-4 interoperability tests sponsored by WBU-ISOG involved 12 major equipment manufacturers and a range of HD video and audio formats.

Of the 1,024 video tests conducted, 848 were successful – an unconditional pass rate of 83 percent. Manufacturers want another round of tests, possibly in 2010.

The meeting also heard that the demand from broadcasters for satellite space during the 2010 soccer World Cup



ABU members in Geneva

in South Africa is higher than at any previous World Cup.

Rhys Morgan of Intelsat said the demand was being driven partly by plans by European broadcasters to cover the tournament in HD.

Sabrina Cubbon of AsiaSat also noted an increase in HD feeds of sports events to Asian broadcasters.

The two-day meeting at European Broadcasting Union headquarters on 30 November-1 December attracted about 80 participants.

Organised by the world's regional broadcasting unions including the ABU, it brought together broadcasters, satellite operators and other broadcasting service providers.

MediaCorp unveils its convergent newsroom

Singapore's main media company, MediaCorp, has announced the launch of its convergent newsroom, said to be the first of its kind in Asia.

Known as the MediaCorp NewsHub, the newsroom groups journalists across news platforms to produce local content tailored for television, radio, print and online platforms.

The team was brought together progressively over the last year, starting with the business and sports desks. The MediaCorp NewsHub became fully operational

on 1 October with the merging of the General News desk.

As a 'one-stop shop' for news content, the team is responsible for all local news content that appears across the print, radio and television platforms that includes Channel NewsAsia, TODAY, 938LIVE and websites such as channelnewsasia.com.

The Director of MediaCorp NewsHub, Chitra Rajaram, said: "You can sense the new dynamism and see the synergies in the midst of editors and reporters shouting across to each other in the newsroom.

"For the journalists, a new facet of reporting the news has been opened, and all of them will become conversant in more than one medium."

MediaCorp's Deputy CEO, Shaun Seow, said: "In these fast-moving and challenging times where the 24 hour news cycle and plethora of choices compete for the consumers' attention, we had to re-think the traditional business model of providing news. The integrated newsroom is a response to these shifts.

"Convergence is not new to media organisations around the world. It began

in Germany but in recent years, The Telegraph in London, Murdoch's News Corporation and the ABC in Australia are convergent success stories.

"MediaCorp has the most comprehensive range of news media platforms in Singapore and the convergent newsroom will help to improve the quality of news output considerably."

For news makers, it means a single point to contact journalists for media coverage across platforms, with a new email address: mediacorpnewshub@mediacorp.com.sg.

Asiavision turns to file transfer

Asiavision's new file transfer system was a key focus when journalists and engineers from member broadcasters met in New Delhi in November.

The two-day meeting, hosted by Doordarshan (DDI), discussed operational procedures for the system and included training from SoftBank, a Japanese media and telecommunications company that is Asiavision's service provider for the system.

Members have begun uploading and downloading on a trial basis. Once the trials have been reviewed, the exchange of news by file transfer will begin in earnest.

The new system will operate alongside the existing satellite-based exchange for any members who wish to use it. The aim is not to replace the satellite feeds but to offer members a second option.

The ABU News Group decided to launch the system at its annual meeting in July, primarily to enable Asiavision members who are unable to send news by satellite – because of costs or technical limitations – to start contributing news items for the first time.

A key step forward came at the ABU annual meetings in Ulaanbaatar in early October, when the Technical Committee approved the operating parameters for the new system. It will use MPEG4 compression with a minimum bit rate of 3Mbps.

Asiavision is paying the start-up costs and monthly charges for the system, with members being responsible for their own Internet connections.

The Asiavision Coordinators' Meeting in New Delhi brought together 40 people including representatives of 17 of the news exchange's 19 members.



DDI's Aruna Sharma and K Ganesan at the opening ceremony

DDI's Director General, Aruna Sharma, opened the meeting. She said many countries shared common problems and the media had an important role to play in sharing news and information to help overcome these problems.

Also at the opening were DDI's Director General (News), K Ganesan, and its Engineer-in-Chief, R R Prasad.

Kentaro Fukushima of SoftBank conducted training on Xdrive, the online storage system Asiavision is using for the new system. Apart from addressing a joint session of journalists and engineers, he joined both groups during their separate meetings.

Members showed enthusiasm about the file transfer system and had many questions and suggestions about how to ensure it runs smoothly.

They asked the Asiavision centre in Kuala Lumpur to draw up guidelines for using the new file transfer system, covering such areas as the duration of items offered and the format for naming items.

The meeting recommended that once the system is up and running, the News Group should consider a new fee structure for broadcasters who wish to join Asiavision using only the file transfer system, to encourage more broadcasters to join.

On another issue, participants were pleased to note that the News Group had increased funding for Asiavision training in 2009/10 to its highest level yet, with more than US\$200,000 allocated for training and fellowships

for Asiavision members.

DDI proved excellent hosts, running the meeting without a hitch and laying on a dinner and a half-day bus tour of New Delhi for participants.



Participants in New Delhi discuss file transfer



Other participants pose for a photo

AIB launches new global sourcebook

The London-based Association of International Broadcasting (AIB) has launched a new sourcebook that lists detailed contact data for over 1700 electronic media companies.

The 388 page directory covers TV, radio, cable, satellite, IPTV and mobile platforms in 175 countries.

In addition to contact data, the AIB Global Broadcasting Sourcebook contains analysis and background information on the development of electronic media in different parts of the world.

It suggests that in Asia, based on

research by Media Partners Asia (MPA), the operational environment for media is starting to show sharp improvement, with advertising markets already on the rebound.

MPA predicts that much of the future growth will be focused on China, India, Indonesia, the Philippines and Vietnam, and that profit growth will be driven by Internet media companies, pay-TV and broadband services distributors, and "lean, nimble minded content providers and TV broadcasters plugging content through today's digital pipes."

The sourcebook can be purchased through the AIB website at www.aib.org.uk.

AIB Global Broadcasting Sourcebook

THE WORLDWIDE ELECTRONIC MEDIA DIRECTORY | TV | RADIO | CABLE | SATELLITE | IPTV | MOBILE | 2009-10 EDITION



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MediaCorp to launch new radio channel

Singapore's largest media company, MediaCorp, will unveil a new radio channel with an Indian flavour on 28 November.

The channel, Masti 96.3, will broadcast Hindi programmes daily from 5pm to 8pm on Expat Radio 96.3FM.

MediaCorp is launching it in partnership with Deshee FM (Singapore), which is run by Singapore residents with an in depth knowledge of the Indian expatriate community in Singapore.

The channel will include updates on weather in Singapore and the main cities of India, traffic, business, sports updates, Bollywood music and entertainment.

MediaCorp said it was designed for the Indian and Southeast Asian communities residing in Singapore, especially those who loved Hindi music.



MediaCorp is launching a new Indian channel with Deshee FM