

Taking children seriously

by Firdoze Bulbulia

International festivals, conferences and other events for children's television and other media have emerged as powerful sites of social activism, raising the visibility of media for and by children, and generating global networks of producers with a shared commitment to quality programming that reflects and responds to children's lives. In recent years these international events have become much more than a showcase of fine work. The committees that determine their agendas have shifted their focus towards global exchange, local empowerment and children's participation, encouraging dialogue between policy-makers, television producers, researchers, and children themselves.

In March 2007, South Africa will host the 5th World Summit on Media for Children around the theme "Media as a Tool for Global Peace and Democracy".

To mark the summit's debut in Africa, it will showcase the diversity of Africa's media environment, but will also highlight global interconnectedness, relying on the South African concept *ubuntu* – "I am because you are" – to feature global needs, and to collectively explore possibilities. The summit's objective is to ensure that the multiplicity of children's voices are heard.

The agenda for the 2007 summit will include round tables, workshops, panels, master classes, plenary sessions, exhibitions and an international children's summit, building on the lessons learned

from the adolescent's forum held at the 2004 summit in Brazil. Issues will be raised such as: the globalisation of children's media, children's access in the information society, children's media rights, investing in children's media, comparative regulatory approaches, the role of content providers, children and media in war and conflict, health, HIV/Aids and its impact on children's media, south-south partnerships, training for adult and youth producers of children's media, and how children participate meaningfully in the creation of their own media.

The expected outcomes will include research initiatives and production projects designed to amplify unique children's voices and cultures, through media created locally and shared globally.

The manifold issues to be discussed call for a varied and professional attendance including policy makers, regulators, children's rights organizations, producers, film makers, radio specialists, researchers, academics, Internet service providers, web designers, new technology specialists, content developers of traditional and new media platforms, cultural studies specialists, commercial as well as public broadcasters, and children from around the world.

The world summit movement was initiated by Dr Patricia Edgar in May 1993 when she presented the idea to a meeting hosted by the Prix Jeunesse festival in Munich. It was clear at that time that children's programming was rapidly changing, and that the increasingly globalised nature of broadcasting meant that children's programming considerations

could not remain a purely domestic issue.

World summits have been held every three years and bring together producers, broadcasters, researchers, and regulators of media for children and other professionals and community leaders.

Unlike the Prix Jeunesse Festival and Japan Prize (started in 1965 by NHK, the Japanese public broadcaster), each summit is hosted by a different country. Regional and world summits have continued since the first world summit in Australia (1995), including world summits in England (1998), Greece (2001), and Brazil (2004), and regional summits in Asia (1996), and Africa (1997, 2000).

The multiple global perspectives and the three-year break between summits allow for a flexible and open perspective on central media outlets and topics that are relevant to children. While the first summit focused primarily on television, subsequent summits have included radio, Internet content, and youth-produced video.

The summit movement's goals are: to raise the status of children's programming; to emphasise to key players in broadcasting the importance of issues relating to children; to achieve a greater understanding of developments in children's television around the world; to promote a charter of guiding principles in children's television; to ensure that the provision of programmes for children will be guaranteed as the communications revolution proceeds; and to assist the developing world by providing opportunities for quality children's programming in the future. ■

International events dealing with children's media

- ED-MEDIA: World Conference on Educational Multimedia, Hypermedia, and Telecommunications
www.aace.org/conf/edmedia/default.htm
- Australian Teachers of Media (ATOM) National Conference
e-Merging Realities: Youth/Media/Education
www.atomconference2006.com
- International Communications Association (ICA) division on instructional and developmental communication
www.icahdq.org
- International Conference for Interaction Design and Children
www.cs.uta.fi/idc2006/index.html
- International Central Institute for Youth and Educational Television (IZI)
www.br-online.de/jugend/izi/english/home.htm
- Japan Prize International Educational Program Contest
www.nhk.or.jp/jp-prize/index_e.html
- Kidscreen Summit
www.kidscreensummit.com
- Prix Jeunesse International
www.prixjeunesse.de
- World Summit on Media for Children
www.childrensmediasummit.com
- Youth Media Development Forum
www.plan-international.org/wherewework/westafrica/youthforum/