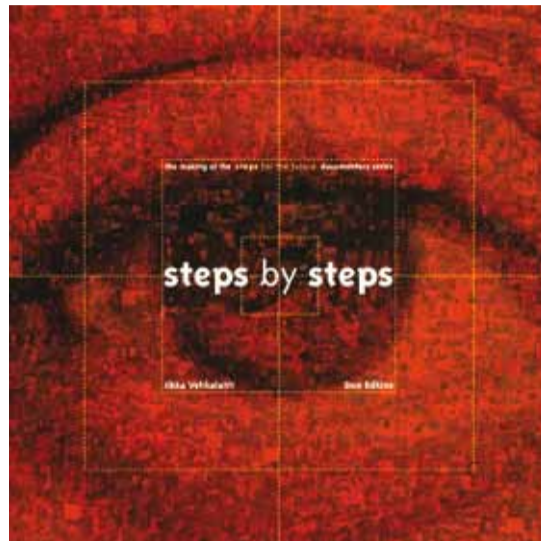


An epic adventure of documentary film-making

IN A FRANK, OFFBEAT MEMOIR, FINNISH FILMMAKER IIKKA VEHKALAHTI AND HIS SOUTH AFRICAN PARTNER DON EDKINS, TELL THEIR STORY OF HOW THEY DEVELOPED AN INFECTIOUS CONCEPT, CHARMED BIG BROADCASTERS – AND NEARLY DIDN'T GET THE FILMS MADE. ALETTE SCHOON GETS TAKEN ALONG FOR THE RIDE



Steps by steps: The Making of the Steps for the Future Documentary Series

By Iikka Vehkalahti and Don Edkins

Published by Fanele, an imprint of Jacana Media

In 2000, Finnish documentary producer Iikka Vehkalahti flew in for a quick visit and was struck by the raw talent of our filmmakers and their silence about Aids. In a moment of frustration and inspiration, he had a crazy idea. Why not raise millions of rands and produce a whole series of documentary films about Aids in Southern Africa? But he didn't want, as he bluntly puts it, "fucking Unicef educational films". No, his dream was real documentary films that were about characters and life as it happens. Films that would nurture talent here and put struggling township filmmakers on the map. In a frank, offbeat memoir, Vehkalahti and his South African partner Don Edkins, tell the cliff-hanger story of how they developed an infectious concept, charmed their way into the boardrooms of the big broadcasters – and nearly didn't get the films made.

The book chronicles an important moment in the history of South African documentary film-making. The Steps for the Future project provided a chance for local filmmakers to work with some of the best international documentary makers to tell the Aids story. It was about the regional tragedy of Aids in seven countries, but it was also about love, sex and desire, about family and fear, death and hope. The list of film producers who worked on the Steps project reads like a Who's Who of Southern African documentary filmmakers. Many of them made a name for themselves through these films. Through the Steps project they were able to sidestep the usual SABC sausage-factory budgets that force producers to shoot in four days and edit in five, and find out what our stories would look like if we had the luxury of time that international producers have.

The resulting 36 Steps films were good films that greatly moved international audiences in Europe, the UK, Canada and Australia. More importantly for South Africans, they allowed the SABC to create its first-ever documentary prime time slot, and beat audience ratings on all the other channels over the next few weeks. The Steps team went on to create one of the most successful film outreach projects ever, training more than 300 facilitators to screen the films on to strung-up sheets at small town sports fields and school halls all over Southern Africa.

This book is much more than a dry history of the project. *Steps by steps* airs all the linen from this project's two-year fling with the region. Vehkalahti

and Edkins take turns to share all the secrets of how to leap head-first into the funding world and make it up as you go along. And how not to lose your mind – and your overdraft facility – in the process. It's all here: the long, flirtatious meetings reeling in the funders, the bitter emails of rejection, the thrill of discovering others who share your dreams. We eavesdrop as Vehkalahti and Edkins panelbeat late-night discussions with filmmakers into sexy titles and blurbs for films – all without ripping out the heart and principles of the project, of course.

In the spirit of the documentary, they decide to show, not just tell with this book. Instead of just describing some of the highs and lows of running a project of this ambition, they give us access to large sections of their email exchange, showing how they fed the bait to broadcasters and played them off against one another. A heart-wrenching email from a Mozambican filmmaker shares his desire to kill someone or kill himself after receiving feedback from the commissioning editors. In fact, so many little emails are part of the text that they actually become a feature. One gets a real sense of an international community of filmmakers suddenly discovering their Southern African counterparts, and the journey they walk together to bring these films to life.

The book includes guidelines on why funders fund certain projects, advice on how to mentor filmmakers and how to conduct community screenings, as well as the ethics of making films about Aids under extremely stressful conditions. These are all interspersed in a highly readable story that reads like an epic adventure. The design may look a bit like an annual report, but once you get stuck in the narrative, it's a very good read.

As a documentary filmmaker myself, I have to confess there have been times when I've been a bit snotty about the high-flying, big-budget schmoozing world of executive producers. This book helped me remember: it's about the magical feat of pulling a project that you've only imagined, into the real world, kicking and screaming.

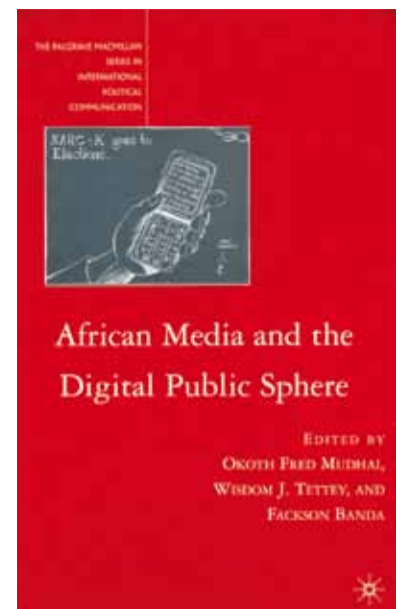
Included with the book is a DVD of five Steps for the Future documentary films about HIV/Aids in Southern Africa.

ANALYSING ICTS AND POLITICS

This book examines, from theoretical and empirical perspectives, the claims that new information and communication technologies (ICTs) are catalysts of democratic change in Africa.

Contributors do so from optimist, pragmatist-realist, and pessimist stances by analysing the words and deeds of various political actors, organisations and institutions, from government units to political parties and party leaders to civil society organisations and minority groups.

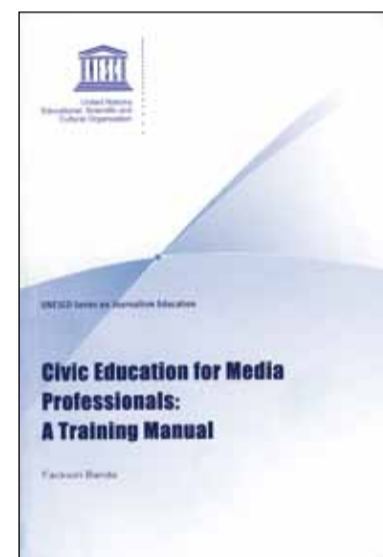
Contributors are African and Africanist scholars, based in Africa and around the world, whose research and/or practice focus on the relationship between the new digital media and democracy on the continent.



African Media and the Digital Public Sphere

Edited by Okoth Fred Mudhai, Wisdom J Tetey and Fackson Banda

Published by Palgrave Macmillan



Civic Education for Media Professionals: A training manual

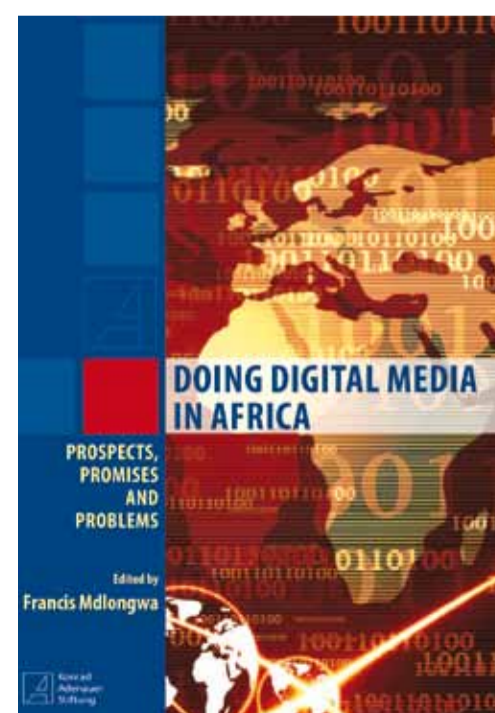
By Fackson Banda

Published by Unesco

THE MEDIA AND THE PROMOTION OF ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

Published by Unesco as part of its series on journalism education, this training manual is aimed at journalism students and media professionals in developing countries, providing them with essential knowledge for the analysis of the relationship between media functions and active citizenship, and the underlying nexus of democracy, development and the media.

NEW PLATFORMS NEW POSSIBILITIES



The Sol Plaatje Institute for Media Leadership and the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung run regular Africa media leadership conferences in which attention is paid to the unique situations media companies face on this continent. Last year the conference in Uganda focused on the digital challenges. The most useful of those discussions and ideas are brought together in this book.

Available from www.kas.de/rofi/doc/kas_17062-544-2-30.pdf

Doing digital media in Africa

Edited by Francis Mdlongwa

Published by Konrad Adenauer Stiftung