

What is our challenge?

There are around 800 million radios in Sub Saharan Africa and approximately 70 percent of Africans have access to a mobile phone. How do we increase the BBC's audience amongst them?

The aim of the Connected Studio: World Service Africa - Cape Town event is to generate new products and technologies that better distribute BBC audio content to an African audience. A pilot service of the best of these will be built and tested.

Who is the audience? What are their needs and behaviours? What technology is relevant?

AUDIENCE - Our target audience is communities across Africa, in urban and rural areas, who have difficulty accessing the BBC and locally generated content that is relevant to them. The growth of mobile is changing things and radio and mobile are merging.

NEEDS - As people use their mobile devices in more aspects of their daily lives, their expectations are changing. They want content that is relevant to them, which will keep them up-to-date and well informed, and help them to develop new skills and be successful.

Cost is also a factor, particularly as data charges are relatively high, and so as a result rich media content, including audio, is often consumed offline.

BEHAVIOURS - These are people who want to know more. According to UNICEF only a minority of young people in developing countries do not watch television, listen to radio or read a newspaper at least once a week. We know that radio is the primary source of news for many Africans, and research in Kenya and Ghana shows that a significant proportion of regular mobile users listen to radio on their phones, and many users regularly send SMS messages to radio and television stations. They don't want to sit through programmes that are not interesting to them - they want to be able to consume content when it suits them.

TECHNOLOGY - We want to explore the creative use of technology to find new ways to distribute BBC content to African listeners. We hope to achieve this by making the most of existing technologies, for instance: Internet Protocol (IP), Raspberry Pi, audio streaming, software defined radio, podcasts, mobile phones (from basic to Smart) and radio transmission, to develop tools that present the BBC's unrivalled African content in ways relevant to communities across Sub-Saharan Africa.

The Challenge

Using technologies that complement one another, and the resources available at the event (BBC content, Raspberry Pis, Radiodan, etc.), we want to develop imaginative and relevant ways of distributing content which improve the audience's experience.

These are the questions we'd like to answer:

- What is the next generation of radio?
- How do users get access the audio content that is relevant to them? How do we get this content to them? And how do they use it at a time that suits, and at a low/no cost?
- How do we continue to provide the highest quality news coverage to audiences on the platforms they use regularly? How can we plug ourselves in to their daily digital routine?
- What new ways are there to distribute audio to a younger audience on radios and mobile digital devices so that they can easily consume, contribute to and share BBC content.