

MDI Sports Training Evaluation

The National Broadcasting Corporation of Papua New Guinea (NBC) was granted the exclusive broadcasting licence for the 15th Pacific Games held from 4 – 18 July 2015. In preparation for this event and in response to the Citizen Access to Information in Papua New Guinea 2014 survey¹, the Media for Development Initiative (MDI) collaborated with NBC to provide sports training for staff. The training consisted of two workshops and on-site mentoring, provided by the sports trainer, Aaron Kearney. The first workshop was conducted between 16 and 21 March 2015 with 14 participants and the second was conducted between 16 and 24 May 2015 with a larger group including the original 14 participants.

Methodology

This report provides findings from interviews conducted with the trainer, a focus group discussion with NBC staff and audience feedback collected through NBCs SMS short code.

The focus group was conducted on July 21, 2015 and comprised six males and one female, four senior personnel and three junior staff. Their Games assignments included commentating, play-by-play (a detailed running commentary on a sporting contest), analyst, reporter and executive producer roles. All NBC staff who participated in the focus group were from National Radio, as the participating Provincial staff had returned to their province immediately after the Games ended. Please note that Provincial NBC staff were unable to attend the interviews and therefore there is only data from NBC National staff.

Over two-thousand (2141) text messages were received during the Games (4 to 18 July 2015). Audience feedback via SMS provided information on the reach and content of NBCs coverage of the Games. A point to note here is the impact of Digital Shortwave Transmission, which was launched just prior to the Games commencing. This enabled significant reach for NBC, which allowed NBC to receive invaluable feedback on its coverage.

Trainer Profile

Aaron Kearney is a broadcaster, journalist, and sports commentator with the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC). He is an A-League Soccer commentator, occasional host of the A-League Lounge podcast, and has called the W-League for ABC TV and is a freelance writer.

Aaron has covered some major world sporting events including the Olympics, the FIFA and Rugby League World Cups and the AFC Champions League. He is currently the host of 1233 ABC Newcastle Breakfast Show. Aaron also established a Sports Commentary training course that was delivered in Papua New Guinea and the Tiwi Islands. Aaron also previously worked with MDI in 2010.

Aaron worked with the participants and the sports production team to ensure that the mentoring addressed the production process for making and covering sports content for radio. These included improving skills in sports commentary, preparing a radio show, developing regional network for collecting sports content, and using social media as a broadcast platform.

¹ Australian Broadcasting Corporation International Development. (2014). *Citizen Access to Information in Papua New Guinea 2014*. Melbourne: ABC ID.

Aaron also focused on the production and presentation involved in making engaging sports content for radio. Resources and tools were provided for the production team to refer to when making future shows and covering future sporting events in the Pacific.

Key Findings

1. Training Impact

The overwhelming response from NBC staff who participated in the sports training was positive, stating that it was key to supporting their work during the Pacific Games. The trainer's involvement, support and mentoring during the Games was also noted as a bonus for the group, who said that he did well to visit the various venues and give useful tips on location.

"He did help me personally with a simple thing like if you are outdoors and want to reduce noise, you just pull your coat over your mic and mouth and talk." Trainee 1, Male

"We were equipped with very important tools. When you're commentating you can get very nervous, but if you have the tools, you'll be okay so the training was really good." Trainee 2, Male

"With me, particularly on commentating, Aaron taught us simple ways to do it and to stick by it, get ourselves prepared and we kept that at the back of our heads." Trainee 3, Female

"Six months ago, I knew nothing about basketball and the training really helped." Trainee 4, Male

"The interview skills – open ended, closed questions, straight questions and just refining the art of interviewing really helped us." Trainee 5, Male

Some lessons learned included interviewing techniques, researching and concept mapping, which trainees noted as important tools for sports broadcasting. This further included commentary, play-by-play and analyst roles.

An important achievement for the activity is NBC now has an increased number of broadcasters capable of calling games and producing sports programs, both in the Provincial stations and at National Radio. Furthermore, these broadcasters include women who participated in the Games coverage.

"...we have female voices to be heard across PNG with the same credibility, the same respect and the same capacity as the male voices." Aaron Kearny, Trainer

"I wanted a guy to do sideline commentary for netball because I was in the commentary booth." Trainee 3, Female

2. Training Format

The format used for the sports training was suitable for both the trainer and staff. The two workshops and in-field mentoring increased trainer and trainee familiarity, confidence, learning strengths, weaknesses and understanding the work environment (including venues for games). The format enriched the learning experience where the trainer and trainee interacted both in the safe space of a workshop with theory and practical sessions and then in the real world situation during the Games.

“After the first one [workshop]...it takes a bit of time for them to get used to you...understand you and so the first week really wasn’t long enough. But by coming back for that second trip, we made huge progress because we had the momentum for the first one, they already understood the system so I was able to build on it, refresh it and I had an understanding of what were the strengths and weaknesses of the team by that point.” Aaron Kearny, Trainer

There was great confidence in the trainees following the second workshop and face-to-face interaction again just before the Games.

“I was concerned about our ability to do it and by the end of the second one, I was very confident in our ability to do it.” Aaron Kearny, Trainer

3. Support Divisions

The NBC technical services division was a key partner in radio broadcasting for the Games, and they were commended for bringing the Games to air. While there were glitches in the early stages of the Games, the technical team managed to keep the broadcast going until the end.

“We only take ourselves to the venues, but the techs make it happen. When you feel good about a good broadcast on the day, the techs also feel good about their work.” Trainee 6, Male

Both the trainer and trainees highlighted technical services and technical advancements as important support systems for broadcasting in general. From the focus group, the following challenges were raised:

- A budget cutback did not allow NBC to purchase equipment needed for the Games coverage.
- A majority of the technicians comprised newly graduated UNITECH students who had minimal on-the-job experience. Some lacked the experience of how to work under the pressure of covering a big event like the Pacific Games. An initial plan to fly-in experienced technicians from the provinces did not eventuate due to budget cutbacks.
- External service providers such as Datec, who were hired by the Games Organising Committee (GOC), did not wire up some of the venues, meaning NBC technicians had to spend considerable time ensuring the Games could be broadcast. Examples of these incidents were at the Taurama Aquatic Centre, where NBC was allocated an empty booth, and at the Caritas Arena, where the media were banned from cabling because NBC technicians cracked a hole in the ceiling trying to wire it up.

In instances where technical services were not quick to respond, one group member stressed a point about improvising.

“I called Ryan Pini’s first gold win using my mobile phone. One of the worst things that can happen to a commentator is if your equipment fails you, so you need to learn to improvise using what you’ve got.” Trainee 7, Male

4. Audience Feedback on Games Coverage

NBC’s Digital Shortwave Transmission enabled a wider reach for the broadcaster, which received 2141 SMSs (between July 3 and 18), with 343 messages thanking NBC for the coverage.

“You all are great announcers; we are hearing you loud and clear from North Mekeo in Bereina. We are grateful for the live coverage on the opening ceremony of 2015 Pacific Games.” Audience 1

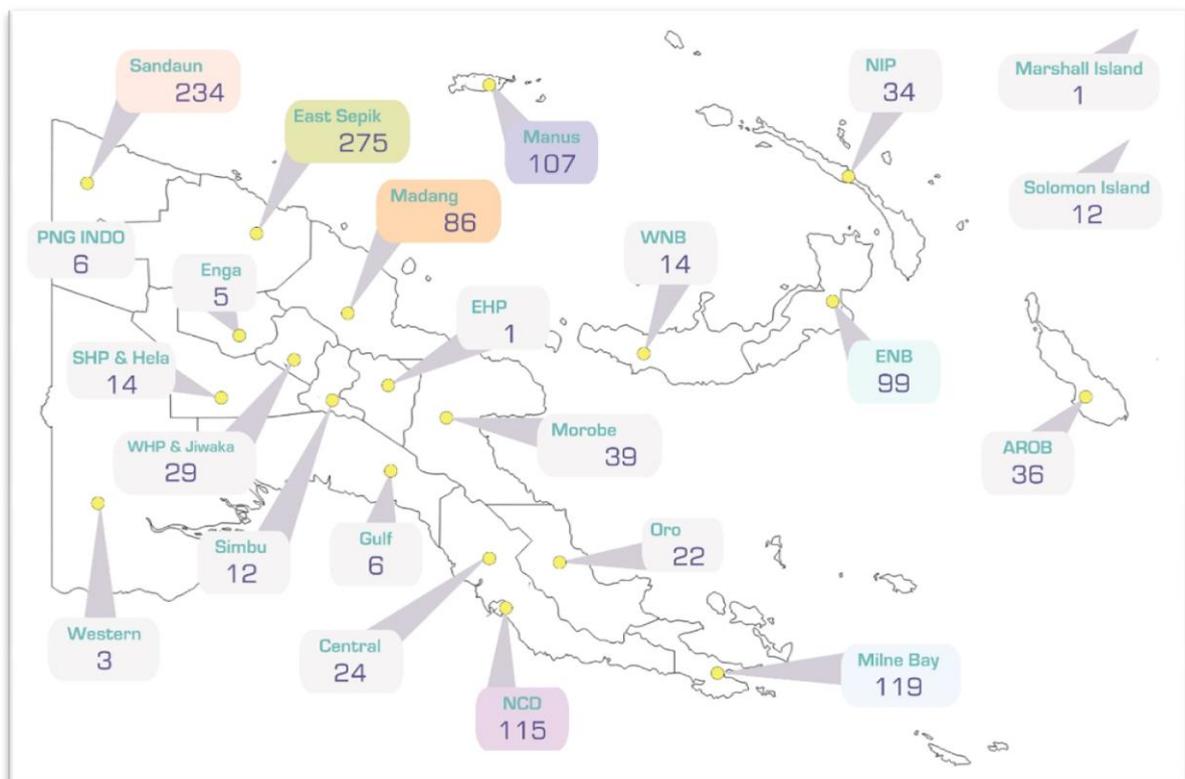
“Tenk yu tru lo NBC live coverage me stap lo Busu Mouten Bumayong LAE iluk olsem me stap lo Pom yet taim me harim keep up d gud work na GO 4 GOLD PNG.” Audience 2

[Thank you to NBC for the live coverage. I’m at Busu Mountain Bumayong, Lae and it looks [feels] like I’m in Port Moresby when I hear [NBC]. Keep up the good work and go for gold PNG.]

“jst over d owners stanley ranges n under d shadows of mt victoria, lies kokoda station, in oro, tnks NBC 4 d live coverage of d 2015, ur reception is clear, GO PNG GO 4 GOLD.” Audience 3

[Just over the Owen Stanley Ranges and under the shadow of Mt. Victoria lies Kokoda Station in Oro. Thanks NBC for the live coverage of the 2015 [Games], your reception is clear. Go PNG go for gold.]

The following illustration shows NBCs reach during the Games. The highest number of text messages came from Sandaun and East Sepik, followed by NCD, Milne Bay and Manus. The Highlands region showed little interaction with the broadcaster during the Games. Some messages came from rural remote villages in outer lying districts. Below is also a list of provinces, sub-provincial locations and other countries from where NBC received feedback through SMS.



PROVINCE	SUB-PROVINCIAL LOCATIONS
Central	Yule Island, Rigo, Hula, Hiri district, Amazon Bay, Abau, Keveri, Bereina
East New Britain	Rabaul, Kokopo, Duke of York Islands, Pomio, Kerevat
East Sepik	Yawasoro, Yangoru, Wosera, Wewak, Walis Island, Mushu Island, Passam, Pagwi, Sepik River, Middle Sepik, Maprik, Kubalia, Kairiru Island, Drekike, Kawanga Sepik Boarder, Kaindi, Dagua, Chambri, Brandi, Angoram, Ambunti
Eastern Highlands	Waninara
Enga	Wabag, Tsak Valley
Hela	Tari, Mt. Ambua, Lake Kopyago
Jiwaka	General
Madang	Transgogol, Megiar, Middle Ramu, Rai Coast, Saidor, Karkar Island, Josephstal, Hagahaii, Bogia
Manus	Pobuma, Momote, Lorengau, Loniu, Lou Island, Lirau Island, Kapou, BP Island, Andra Island, Ahu Island, Lombrum
Milne Bay	Trobrian Islands, Tagula Sudest Island, Rabaraba, Salamo, Panawina Island, Normanby, Misima, Lovai, Fergusson Island, Esa ala, Dogura, Agaun and Alotau
Morobe	Menyamya, Markham, Patrol Post, Salamaua, Lae, Kabwum, Bulolo, Finchaffan
National Capital District	3 Mile, 4 Mile, 5 Mile, 6 Mile, 7 Mile, 8 Mile, 9 Mile and 14 Mile, Laloki, Sogeri, Taurama, Bomana and NCD central
New Ireland	Namatanai, New Hanova, Mussau, Kavieng
Oro	Ioma, Kokoda, Popondeta, Tufi, Afore
Sandaun	Aitape, Nuku, Lumi, Arop, Vanimo
Simbu	General
Southern Highlands	Pangia, Mendi, Ialibu
West New Britain	Kimbe, Hoskins
Western	Awaba
Western Highlands	Tambul, Mt. Hagen, Baiya
Others	
Autonomous Region of Bougainville	Tinputz, Buka, Kieta, Buin, Awara
Marshall Island	Yoke
Solomon Islands	Choiseul Island, Western Province, Renbell Province

5. The Future for Sports Programming at NBC

Both the trainer and trainees noted that consistent and quality sports programs need to be continued and that the current momentum needs to be capitalised. There is a desire to build networks within the sporting arena in Papua New Guinea (and abroad) to strengthen their sports coverage within NBC. Those in the provincial stations now have the incentive of shortwave transmission so programs and game calls can be conducted at a provincial level there and supplied to National Radio for weekend and TokSport programs.

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