



# ADDING VALUE

An adept communicator with a solid journalistic background and an infectious laugh, Head of Strategy **Lem van Eupen** advises **Radio Netherlands Worldwide** Director General Jan Hoek and Editor in Chief Rik Rensen on target areas, target audiences, distribution mix and strategic partnerships. Less than a year into her new role, her aim is to be innovative in the broadest sense

**R**NW's partnership with one of the largest cable networks in India, Incablenet, has given two million listeners access to our English programmes. In India, of course, there is an existing media landscape of local, national, international providers, and we needed to look at what added value RNW can bring to this mix.

For India we focus on two issues at present: one is sustainable development – we do that through a programme called "Earthbeat" – and the other issue is everything to do with human rights or ethical issues – through a programme called "The state we're in". These programmes we share with the Indian partner station network because we feel that those are issues in which the Netherlands has a certain knowledge and expertise, that could be worthwhile for an Indian audience.

### **Last year RNW began establishing partnerships with FM stations in India, so you already have a foothold in the country. Who is your audience?**

In India, broadcasting in English means that you are targeting a group of relatively higher educated internationally orientated people. India has become a world player, there are more people now in India who are looking at what is happening in the rest of the world. There always has to be a match between the information needs and desires that people have and what we can offer.

This information need and desire will be different in various countries and regions. Rather than distribute the same content worldwide to as large an audience as possible we have chosen to tell specific stories to specific audiences, because we feel we need to focus, to find a niche where we can make a difference.

### **How do you tailor programmes to local needs?**

It means finding out from our partners what they

would like from us, and of course we have to be able to produce it! At the moment we are going through this interesting process of formulating a new multi-year plan for 2010-2014, which also includes a performance agreement with the Dutch Ministry of Culture.

We are going through a reassessment and underpinning of strategic choices regarding target areas, target groups, distribution mix, partnerships, content. We ask: where do we still need short wave, where can we fully focus on the internet, where is TV the most appropriate platform, where can we work with mobile? Of course the content is the other issue.

All the research that we have done to arrive at choices in terms of target areas and target groups and distribution then provides a useful framework for the programme division, the Editor in Chief and everyone who is working in the various language departments to decide what to focus on for specific target areas and target groups.

#### Let's be more concrete – let's look at the Middle East.

In the Middle East our target groups differ for the different platforms. For the web site our main target group are young people and highly educated people. For the radio it is a broader audience but mainly through partner stations, not short wave.

Television we have chosen not to do. We know that TV is an important platform in the Middle East but at the moment, looking at the substantial investment needed and also at who is already there offering TV from an international perspective, we can't see our added value. What content are we going to produce in Arabic? We feel that it is important that we can somehow form a bridge between the Netherlands and the Arab world. We will always look for dialogue.

For example, there are a large number of labour immigrants originally from Morocco living in the Netherlands, there are also thousands of Iraqi refugees. It is

important for us to bring stories that are related to these existing links. We can of course add pan-Arabic stories and developments.

Our ambition there is to give access to thought-provoking stories about delicate subjects – at least considered delicate in the Middle East – such as international law, human rights, but also sexuality.

The Netherlands are known for a lively debate on these issues, and we want to be the broadcaster that deals with those subjects – not in a provocative but a thought-provoking way.

#### What about delivery?

Like everybody else we are looking at new, efficient and effective platforms to share our content on, including mobile and video. We were already producing video but we have increased it rather drastically.

This does not work for all areas: in some countries and regions the broadband width makes it rather difficult to watch those videos. We have just carried out research in 36 countries on distribution platforms – what is available and what is not, what the developments are.

Regarding delivery platforms, we try to look at: which target area are we talking about, who are the groups that we would like to reach, what is their media behaviour, how can we make innovative use of the platforms they use to reach them. Of course the answer is different for different countries.

#### The world economy is in bad shape – how does that affect RNW?

We are funded through public money and it is a political choice whether, as a country or a government, you want to spend your money on something like an international broadcaster. In the Netherlands there is a continued debate – is it necessary, is it still necessary? – we appreciate this process as it is very important to challenge ourselves.

We have not received any signals that we have to expect further large budget cuts. Of course if your



**“We have moved from a supply-driven information world to a demand-driven communication world”**

partner stations are hit by financial problems that could affect our collaboration.

**Some time ago, when people talked about “international broadcasting” they could mention only a few stations – now the audiences’ choices are enormous. Are there too many broadcasters now?**

I think it is a reality that we have gone from a supply-driven information world to a demand-driven communication world. The number of providers/producers has increased considerably – people who used to be consumers can easily be media producers themselves. I think it will go even further than this. The whole social networking that is going on has also an enormous potential when it comes to communication and information.

So it sharpens our focus on what we can offer that is relevant and important to people and we can no longer assume that since you are there you are important. If you look back at old predictions that were made 5 or 10 years ago about communication and media, I think we can all have a good laugh! So I'm not making any predictions...

**Lem van Eupen, thank you. ■**