

## Sudan joins the urban brew

Television production house Urban Brew Studios recently won a multi-million rand contract to build a public broadcaster for the semi-autonomous government of Southern Sudan.



The agreement was signed in the Southern Sudanese capital of Juba on Friday, 17 November 2007. The initial phase of the contract culminates at the end of December 2008.

The public broadcasting solution to be provided by Urban Brew includes the development of the existing Southern Sudan Television (SSTV), which is currently received in Juba only, into a national station with new distribution infra-structure that will include Direct to Home (DTH) technology.

Urban Brew will also develop the existing Radio Southern Sudan into a national station and build 10 other radio stations to cover all of the country's provinces.

In terms of the agreement, Urban Brew will provide training to radio and television personnel from the region. The company will procure, install and commission various types of broadcasting equipment, including studios and transmission equipment.

Zwelakhe Sisulu, who is a shareholder at Urban Brew, said the discussions that have culminated with the signing of this agreement started four years ago when he met Southern Sudan's late president, John Garang, in Kenya.

Garang died a year later in a helicopter crash, but the discussions continued with other officials of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) government, said Sisulu.

"This agreement is an indication of how Urban Brew is branching out into the African continent and exporting its talent in the media production industry," said Sisulu; adding that the winning of the contract represented "watershed point in Urban Brew's efforts to establish an international footprint".

He also indicated that the company has already opened an office in Kenya and has won some production work there. He added: "We are already in discussions with other governments and public broadcasters on the continent who are keen to work with us on a model similar to the one we will be employing in Southern Sudan."

Sisulu said that Urban Brew was involved in the launching of Soweto TV, offering expertise and resources adding that the company had also launched a Gospel Channel on DStv, known as *One Gospel*.

Work in Southern Sudan has already started and teams of experts are being dispatched there, while a group of trainees from that country is expected to arrive in South Africa within the next three weeks," Sisulu

concluded.

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