

Media work to bring Cup to Africans

It's a four-and-a-half-hour flight or a three-day drive to get from Uganda to the World Cup in South Africa. Combine that with ticket prices of US\$80 (€65) apiece for the cheap seats, and the first World Cup on African soil is beyond reach for almost all Ugandans, whose average income is just over one dollar a day.



The same is true for most of the continent, where long trips and steep prices have limited people's access to the tournament.

Jane Kasumba is one of the journalists working to fix that.

"We've tried to go the distance to ensure that everybody watches the World Cup that's being held in Africa for the first time," said Kasumba, a journalist with Uganda's UBC TV.

"Never has an event of this magnitude been held here in Africa, so it has been nice, and everybody I think on the African continent is embracing it. They're able to have a feeling of belonging."

Kasumba is in South Africa covering the World Cup for the African Union of Broadcasters (AUB), a group of television and radio networks from 41 African countries that pooled their resources to buy the rights to the tournament and set up a studio in Johannesburg.

The AUB and FIFA brought 19 journalists from 15 countries to South Africa to cover the matches in English, French and Portuguese and produce a half-hour daily show on the tournament.

The group is broadcasting the matches to 41 countries, whose national networks would not have been likely to splurge on expensive World Cup rights on their own.

Djibril Traore, a TV journalist from Mali covering the tournament for the AUB, said seeing Africa host the World Cup has been a point of pride for Malians, even though their capital lies 5,800 kilometres from Pretoria.

"They're very proud. There were a lot of European journalists who said Africa couldn't do it, that there was too much insecurity. But now we've shown that Africa can do it. So we're very proud," he said.

African journalists have helped balance the media coverage of South Africa, which has at times taken a beating in the international press over high crime and poor public transport.

But only a handful of African media groups have been able to send correspondents to the tournament.

According to FIFA, of the roughly 18 000 journalists accredited for the World Cup, only about 250 were from the rest of Africa.

And the number is dwindling as African countries get eliminated from the tournament.

In one of the great disappointments of the World Cup, Ghana was the only one of a record six participating African teams to make it through to the second round.

Correspondents from other countries have been called home as their national sides have been knocked out.

Some media companies have resorted to simply stealing or pirating their coverage.

State-owned broadcaster Cameroon Radio Television, the only network in the country that holds the rights to the World Cup, resorted to scrambling its signal after other networks pirated its match broadcasts.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, public broadcaster RTNC is a member of the AUB and the only one of the country's 50-odd stations that holds the rights to the tournament.

Other networks have pirated the matches, adding their own pre- and post-match commentary.

The country's written press has relied mainly on news agency articles and photos lifted from the internet.

Elsewhere, companies have been more creative.

In Kenya, one popular FM radio station has run live match commentaries from its Nairobi studios, where the commentators watch the matches live on TV and entertain their listeners with their own views.

"This particular World Cup has received much more local coverage than any other World Cup," said veteran Kenyan football journalist and columnist Hezekiah Wepukhulu. "All the local media have given it prominence."

Source: AFP