

# Multi-Media Africa: networking you to the people of the DRC

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(Photo from DuckRabbit)

Is journalism simply about reporting the world or do some journalists want to change it? Today I am writing a paper for a conference later this week on 'cosmopolitanism'. It's the idea that the news media can connect different people with the aim of reducing suffering and injustice. Well here's a practical effort by the development media agency [DuckRabbit](#).

DuckRabbit have been training workers from [Medecin Sans Frontiers](#) in The Democratic Republic Of Congo to use news media techniques to report on the conflict and poverty in that country which is still being torn apart by civil wars fueled by the riches of mineral extraction. It's a good example of NGO using media for campaigning but the extra trick is that MSF want you to send a message back to the people in the DRC featured in the videos. Will it make any difference? Is this journalism?

Benjamin Chesterton is a former radio documentary producer and here's his explanation of the project, why he thinks it is different and why it could work:

*It's the world's deadliest conflict since the second world war and yet the majority of people have never heard of it. According to the IRC at least at least 5 million Congolese have died in more than a decade of conflict sparked off by the 1994 genocide in neighboring Rwanda. Most of the deaths are linked to a lack of medical facilities as the ability to access medical care in Eastern Congo has crumbled with the war. The four videos on the [Condition Critical website](#) give voice to the pain and trauma of those caught up in the conflict, bearing witness to their dignity and attempts to survive the conflict.*

*Told only in their own voices all the website asks you to do is send a message of support. At first that might sound a bit daft. I mean why send a message of support to people I know nothing of? Surely what they need is cash, right? Well first off if you watch the videos you can find out a little about their lives, that they're not that much different to you and me except that they've been caught up in an unforgiving conflict. Secondly messages of support do make a difference. I know this because last year I worked in camps in Kenya and the thing that people were most frightened of was being forgotten, the sense that no-one cared. That's what leads to depression and despair. Worse than that, when no-one cares people get away with murder, literally.*

*So the fact that MSF will take these messages and share them in the camps and clinics will make a difference. It will also give a huge morale boost to the MSF staff working in Eastern Congo.*

*[People can do four great things](#):*

- 1. Leave a message of solidarity on the map*
- 2. Twitter about it and link to it on Facebook (for Twitter use #conditioncritical)*
- 3. Embed one of the video's on their blogs.*
- 4. Write something about the project*

*I'm not being paid to write this, my work for [MSF](#) stopped when I delivered the video, but editing these brave peoples voices has made me care and left me feeling a little of the burden of their pain. I also think by doing something people are supporting NGO's to take a more journalistic approach to their work, working with photographers to create great work, rather than just telling the public how great they are as an organisation, how fucked everyone else is, and can I have a fiver a month by direct debit please?*

In the first week it was posted online, 10,000 people watched the initial video, of whom 58% watched to the end. That may look like a small figure in terms of news audiences for mainstream TV but in terms of online attention that is extremely powerful.

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