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Annual Report 2001

In 2001, MFDI's main activities continued to revolve around Yellow Card. The film premiered in Harare in April 2000, but premiers continued around Africa in 2001 and even 2002. New language versions were made including French, Portuguese, Shona, Ndebele and Swahili, (and Pidgin English in 2002). Also a French sub-titled 35mm print has been made for cinema use in west Africa. Additional accompanying materials now include the Support Manual and 20-minute Support Video in eleven languages (and Pidgin is coming in 2002); a "making of" video entitled Yellow Fever; and there are two music videos, two short trailers for theatrical use (one just for South Africa), a Press Kit, two posters (again one just for South Africa) and a variety of other promotional materials. Grass roots distribution efforts have been carried out in the five target countries (Zimbabwe, Zambia, Tanzania, Kenya, and Uganda), and it was released in 750 cinema-canteens around Mozambique in late 2001. An evaluation study was done in Chitungwiza, Zimbabwe finding that 75% of the 500 interviewed had seen the film. The film won many awards, and was shown on Kenya Airways, and Starz Encore showed it on pay-TV in the USA numerous times in 2001 and 2002.

Besides this project, in 2001, MFDI has worked on a number of other projects:

1. The Peace Film Project is still active. MFDI liaised with Norwegian non-profit Media19, and set up a co-production agreement. In December, 2001, three MFDI staff met with two Media19 staff and Jonny Persey in London, and worked out co-production logistics, and an agreement to share staff between Norway and Zimbabwe, and perhaps Senegal. In 2002, we anticipate placing a Zimbabwean staffer in Norway, and a Norwegian in Zimbabwe, both for a year. The Norwegian in Zimbabwe will focus on development of this project. Possibly a Zimbabwean staff will be stationed in Senegal to focus on sharing Francophone African films with Anglophone Africa. MFDI had no direct costs on this project in 2001.
2. MFDI was able to pay the tuition for Leroy Gopal for acting training in South Africa, covering \$2,291.80 of his tuition costs at the South African Film and Drama School in Johannesburg. He was the male lead actor in Yellow Card. MFDI paid his tuition costs for one year, and his family has been able to cover costs after that.
3. MFDI's Project ARUP was initiated in 2001. This project was the production of a video on solar heating and cooling in Zimbabwean architecture, made for an appropriate technology engineering firm. \$4,527.19 was received, and expenses totaled \$2,202.19 in 2001. The project will be completed in 2002.
4. MFDI has wound down the long-standing CAMP / Access to Credit Media project, spending the last \$7,899.16 of income from this project. The two videos produced were shown on PBS in the USA, and for a couple years, follow through VHS videos

were marketed.

5. MFDI was able to have all four staff attend the bi-annual FESPACO film festival in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, in February / March 2001 where Yellow Card was shown. MFDI has sent staff to this festival for the last five festivals. Costs were \$2,432.77; many costs were prepaid in 2000, or paid from other sources.

6. Two MFDI staff attended a Forum in Lagos, Nigeria about film making in June 2001. Costs were covered by MFD/Zimbabwe and DSR2, Inc. This was very useful for us to learn more about Nigerian film making, as it produces about 600 titles a year – far more than the rest of Africa combined. Also we made contact with Mainframe, a top-quality production and distribution agency there that is now distributing our four feature films and also doing the Pidgin English dub of Yellow Card, and MFD/Zim is distributing their two feature films.

7. In 2001, MFDI made the second and final payment on the Neria soundtrack CD re-mastering. Sales of this CD skyrocketed in late 2001 and 2002, and MFDI is earning royalties. Unfortunately, with the rapid sinking of the Zimbabwean and South African currencies, the income for this project may never cover its costs. As of September 2002 costs have been \$7,670.40 and so far incomes are only \$2,406.90, but many thousands of this CD have been sold – getting the message out, and we hope more will sell and we'll earn a larger share of costs eventually. Also during 2001, the Government of Zimbabwe utilized the Neria character in a nationwide campaign on widow's rights. We provided a couple hundred free posters, and they were distributed with Shona and Ndebele versions of the video and a couple booklets prepared by the project.

8. MFDI undertook to complete the updating of an animated African video entitled Six Methods of Family Planning, adding a section on Norplant contraceptives. MFDI contracted much of the work to David Max Brown the original producer of the video. The video will be finished in late 2002. Income in 2001 was \$1,500 and costs were \$2,590.45, and another \$3,950 in income and \$1,600 in costs happened in 2002 up to September 2002.

9. Project WATSAN was the production of a training documentary made for the Red Cross on their regional Water and Sanitation program, directed by a Norwegian. It was completed in 2001. Income was \$13,344 and costs were the same. Overhead (included in the costs) earned by MFDI on the project was \$2,130.

10. Also MFDI completed a project gathering local Zimbabwean sounds in a very top-quality manner and put them on a CD to be able to use as royalty-free sound effects in future productions. Costs were \$2,715.

11. Ford Foundation provided MFDI \$250,000 towards a television series project. This will cover the cost of developing six one-hour scripts via a unique workshop process that MFDI will video tape and share with others producing social message motion picture projects. Also some pre-production costs are covered. By the end of 2002, MFDI plans to complete the project and develop a proposal to produce the TV series.

12. MFDI has continued operating the African cinema conference (“Afcin”) which is a

4-5 year old email list server, free to about 200 subscribers worldwide. Costs are about \$6-7 a month. This is the most senior list server / email newsletter on the subject and was started (in the early days of email list servers), as a result of a meeting of distributors at a FESPACO hosted by MFDI. We continue to get positive feedback from subscribers.

13. MFDI took over direct control of video distribution and sales from DSR2, Inc in 2001. It purchased the inventory of re-sellable VHS videos at the video duplicating cost price (\$4,542.77), and also received many free VHS videos and materials that aren't easily saleable. It also has been loaned the use of the 200+ video masters that which cost about \$50,000. MFDI will try to purchase these at cost price when it is able. MFDI currently holds inventory of about 1,000 VHS at any time, valued between \$5-7,000. During the year 2001, MFDI grossed \$22,612.43 in income, and had \$15,745.51 in direct costs, and about \$1,000 to \$1,500 in indirect marketing costs. MFDI also received a \$3,602.46 royalty payment from DSR2 for 2000, which represented half the gross profits that DSR2 made on video sales that year.

14. Other than the above costs, MFDI spent \$3,267.88 on phone, office supplies, postage, copying and office costs. This amount includes the \$1,000-\$1,500 in costs printing catalogs and related to video marketing. MFDI initiated a payroll for its four previously volunteer staff (John and Louise Riber, Steve and Sally Smith) in August 2001. They are being paid about half of what is "good salary." In the past all have been volunteers, although the Ribers were paid as consultants on many specific jobs. Office space, furnishings and equipment continues to be donated by Steve and Sally Smith.

In 2002, MFDI expects to complete the Yellow Card film project that begun in 1999. The Pidgin English version should be completed. The dubbing work is being done by Mainframe in Lagos, Nigeria. The South African theatrical launch happened August 29, 2002. All funded activities will end in 2002, of course, we will continue to promote and market it. The Television Trust for the Environment has agreed to produce and distribute a Chinese version of the film at its own expense.

Also in 2002, MFDI will be active in the television series project mentioned above. This activity will continue to be one of the top couple efforts of MFDI for years to come we hope.

In December 2001, Steve and Sally Smith visited Zimbabwe to be involved in the preparation of an extensive bid to the Centers for Disease Control for a two-year, twice weekly, HIV / AIDS radio drama series. The bid was submitted in early 2002, and the \$2.5 million, three-year project finally won in June 2002. Media for Development Trust / Zimbabwe is the prime contractor, and MFDI will handle behind the scenes logistics and financial matters, including a large loan to the project to cover start up costs not covered by the CDC.

Starting in late 2001 and continuing through mid-2002, MFDI initiated a large effort to add titles to its Africa Film and Video catalog, eventually adding 19 new titles. Even with these start up costs, MFDI expects to have 2002 video distribution gross profits of over \$10,000, which is far greater than ever before. Past years of distribution sales had even more start up costs, and much fewer large broadcast sales. Now that our reputation and customer base are even larger, profits are larger. Of course, this still

isn't enough to cover the labor and overhead costs of the video sales, but much of MFDI's distribution is free videos given for promotional purposes, and other activities that focus on building MFDI's profile. Also prices are purposely low to maximize distribution.

MFDI also is making our own web site (www.mfdi.org), with the services of Outdare in Rotterdam, Netherlands, including the full African social message video catalog and facilities for buying on line. This builds on the two previous sequential film-business web-sites provided at no cost from DSR, Inc. This beautiful new web site will be open by the end of 2002. Besides the catalog, it will consist of a sections on recent news, documents and links (so visitors can download MFDI documents and connect to a selection of key African cinema sites), sponsors, and how to contact MFDI.

Financially, MFDI will be challenged to continue its current range of activities and payroll, but the TV and radio drama series projects should provide enough to cover MFDI overhead costs in the long run. The political / economic situation in Zimbabwe, where our colleague Media for Development Trust and most of our operations are based, continues to be unstable and a potential threat, but we carry on, assuming it won't get worse.

MFDI has received \$4,000,000 from about 40 donor agencies, and 100+ individuals since it began in 1990. By the end of 2002, it will have 4 full-time paid staff, and 2 full-time consultants (provided to the CDC-funded radio drama series project), many regular part-time consultants, and a beautiful new web site, and a viable and active distribution business with about 100 titles of top-quality African social message videos. During 2001, we took an active decision to raise the profile of MFDI, so that it is a visible and substantial NGO. We look forward to continued growth and additional successful projects.