

DIGITAL



December 2015

A satellite view of the Earth from space, showing the Middle East and Africa. The landmasses are in shades of brown and tan, with blue oceans and white clouds. The Earth's curvature is visible on the left side.

MIDDLE EAST & AFRICA --- UPDATE

News round-up: Wananchi appoints new CEO; Canal+ teams up with iROKO for mobile SVoD; Spacecom confirms loss of Amos-5

News features: NuVu: a new take on African SVoD; Afrostream's ambition

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News round-up

The latest developments in pay TV in MEA

Wananchi Group appoints new CEO

The Wananchi Group has appointed former VimpelCom executive Santiago Benedit as its new CEO, following the end of the contract term of Richard Alden.

Benedit joins from Vimpelcom Group-owned Orascom Telecom Algeria (DJEZZY), where he was chief financial officer.

Prior to that, he was CFO for Avanzit/Ezentis Group, a global technology and infrastructure company with a presence in more than 20 countries.

Benedit, a Spanish national with more than 20 years of telecom experience, started his career with Alcatel-Lucent. He also worked as finance director at Spanish mobile operator Amena prior to its acquisition by Orange.

"The group is delighted to welcome Santiago, a proven leader with an excellent track record of driving business performance to lead the company through the next stage of its development and wishes Richard Alden well in his

Santiago Benedit has been named as Wananchi Group's new CEO.



future endeavours," said Wananchi Group in a statement.

The Wananchi Group is present in East Africa and runs a range of businesses, including its Zuku DTH pay TV service.

Canal+ teams up with iROKO for African mobile SVoD project

Canal+ Group and African OTT TV operator iROKO have teamed up to launch a new Android-based mobile subscription video-on-demand service for Francophone Africa.

The pair have formed a partnership to invest "several million euros" in the project, which will be launched in a few months exclusively for mobile users.

The offering will be based on Canal+'s catalogue of African and African-focused programming, including Nollywood movies, French-language series and shows and South American telenovelas.

The deal between Canal+ and iROKO builds on an existing partnership between the pair for the distribution of the Nollywood TV channel.

Canal+ and iROKO said the mobile SVoD project will target

an extremely promising market of more than 250 million French-speaking Africans across 23 countries where the installed base of smartphones is expected to grow to about 16.5 million by 2020.

"With close to two million African households today receiving Canal+'s pay TV offerings, our ambition is to enlarge our base to include those for whom the smartphone constitutes the sole means of accessing entertainment. The original and unique approach of iROKO, which integrates popular content with a mobile SVoD platform, is perfectly aligned with our group's vision concerning entertainment in Francophone Africa. This will also enable us to make the content we produce and conceive specifically for the African market more accessible

and visible," said Jacques du Puy, president, Canal+ Overseas.

"iROKO is involved in giving viewers access to content that they like and Canal+ Overseas shares our vision. Canal+ has offered quality content to Africans for over 20 years; we ourselves provide an unrivalled catalogue of Nollywood content and have been pioneers in video-on-demand in Africa. Together, we will enable millions of Francophone African fans of Nollywood and telenovelas unprecedented access to content that has previously not been accessible to them. We are convinced that the inhabitants of sub-Saharan Africa aspire to content that is both exciting and affordable. This deal is the perfect illustration of that," said Jason Njoku, CEO of iROKO.

Trace launch first African radio station

Youth-focused media company Trace has launched its first African radio station in Abidjan, the capital city of Côte d'Ivoire. Trace FM, dedicated to Ivorian youth music and culture broadcasts on 95.0 FM.

Initially available in Abidjan, Trace said it plans to progressively extend the reach of Trace FM across the whole Ivorian territory, with the company planning more FM radio station launches for "several major African cities in 2016".

"This launch is a new step in Trace Group's strategy, which aims to build a pan-African network of local FM radios, TV channels, digital platforms and mobile



Laouchez: radio launch is a new step in Trace Group's strategy.

businesses, in collaboration with influential local partners," said Trace CEO and co-founder, Olivier Laouchez.

Trace's chief executive first revealed the company's Côte d'Ivoire radio plans in an interview with DTVE in November.

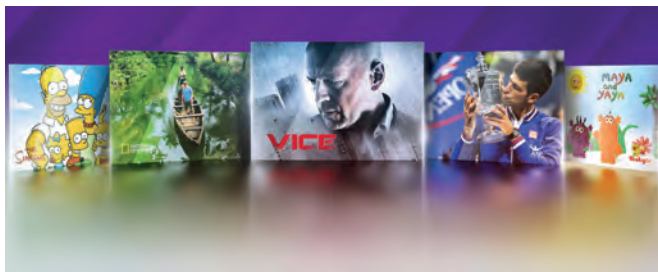
He said that Trace has ambitions to develop more radio services in countries such as Cameroon, where it holds a local licence in Douala, the country's largest city and economic hub.

BeIN Media in 'biggest output deal' with Italia Film

Qatar-based pay TV provider BeIN Media Group has signed a five-year multi-million dollar output deal with Italia Film International, whereby beIN will acquire over 600 movie titles from studios including Disney.

Italia Film International is the exclusive distributor of Disney, Pixar, Marvel and Lucas Films movies in the Middle East, and also has exclusive distribution relationships with Dreamworks, Film Nation, The Weinstein Company, Arclight and Lotus Entertainment. The company has expanded its distribution business to Greece, Cyprus, Turkey, India, Pakistan, Nepal and Bangladesh in recent years.

The deal with beIN, which it describes as the biggest output deal to date in the Middle East, covers movies including *John Wick 2* with Keanu Reeves, *Hologram for a King* with Tom Hanks, *Silent Wife* with Nicole Kidman,



Quentin Tarantino's *Hateful Eight*, *Unlocked* with Michael Douglas, Noomi Rapace and Orlando Bloom, and *The Current War* with Benedict Cumberbatch.

"This is the most significant deal for Italia Films as it positions us as a major force across various content platforms. BeIN is an ideal partner for Italia Films as beIN has proven to be a major force in pay TV industry in MENA. BeIN's entry into entertainment content will create value for its subscribers throughout this region. We are proud to be part of their aggressive expansion drive."

Said Giuseppe Vincenti, CEO and partner, Italia Film International.

"BeIN is committed to bringing the best family entertainment to its subscribers throughout MENA. This deal with Italia Film gives BeIN access to leading Hollywood content. We are aware of Italia Film's ability to secure very prominent Hollywood content assets and hence we are confident that through this deal we will be able to bring major Hollywood blockbusters exclusively to beIN subscribers," said Yousef Al-Obaidly, deputy CEO of beIN Media Group.

OSN hails 'milestone' in antipiracy fight

Middle East pay TV provider OSN has hailed the jailing of a dealer in pirated content via IPTV as "a milestone in the fight against TV piracy" in the region.

A Dubai court has sentenced a provider of illegal IP video services to a three-month jail-term and fined him AED50,000 (€12,400). He will also be deported after the jail-term. The defendant had been illegally selling services from provider IP888 TV.

According to OSN, there has been a proliferation of illegal IPTV services in the UAE. The company has led a campaign against the illegal distribution of Dish TV across the UAE and other Gulf markets, mostly to western expatriates. In a previous case, the

court ruled that a distributor and seller of an illegal IPTV service operating under the name of UKTV Abroad had to pay a fine of AED50,000 after being found guilty of pushing pirated feeds of TV channels from the UK.

David Butorac, CEO of OSN, said: "The conviction is a strong message to all illegal TV service providers that the government and authorities take copyright infringement seriously. Distributing IPTV service in the UAE is illegal and customers must also be vigilant against accessing such services. We will take strong action and work with the concerned authorities to curb all forms of piracy that impact the industry."

Omar Obeidat, partner and



Butorac: conviction sends a strong message to illegal providers.

head of intellectual property at law firm Al Tamimi & Co said: "The UAE is stringent in its IPR laws and the nation is committed to protecting the legal rights of businesses. TV piracy is increasingly becoming a menace that impacts the industry adversely. It is important that every stakeholder realises that TV piracy of any form will not be tolerated and stern action will be meted out to its perpetrators."

SES and Intersat to deliver fast internet to rural East Africa

Satellite operator SES and internet access provider Intersat have teamed up to expand Intersat's internet service offerings in East Africa.

The pair have signed a multi-year agreement that will see Intersat use the Ku-band capacity on SES's NSS-12 satellite via the SES Djibouti teleport. The company will offer shared and dedicated internet services delivered via iDirect VSAT technology, with a capacity of up to 70Mbps. Intersat currently serves over 200 VSAT terminals using the SES service.

"Intersat is in the business of breaking down the price barrier that has held back the majority of Africans from benefiting from the internet. Not only have we connected businesses, government organisations, internet service providers, educational institutions and hospitals, but we have also brought affordable broadband internet via satellite to rural Africa," said Subrata Roy, chief technical officer at Intersat. "The new deal on NSS-12 satellite's Ku-band will allow us to double the number of terminals we serve by 2016."

Ibrahima Guimba-Saidou, senior vice president, commercial, Africa at SES, said: "The agreement with Intersat allows us to better serve customers in the East African market who have little or no access to terrestrial-based connectivity. The combination of premium and high-powered satellite capacity, and the use of the latest iDirect technology and high-grade teleport, will give Intersat an added advantage in the marketplace."

Nigeria's NBC taps Paywizard for digital switchover

Nigeria's National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) and TV technology company Inview have selected Paywizard to support the country's digital TV switchover project.

Paywizard will manage customer data, subscriptions and billing for the switchover - including voucher code and scratchcard transactions - using its AgileXtra subscriber management platform.

The platform will be integrated with Inview's set-top boxes and Nagra's conditional access system. Paywizard will also provide Inview with contact centre support, service automation and "DTT and digital switchover insight".

"While the pay TV market across Africa is growing

rapidly and demand is high, the switchover process is challenging. We were looking to work with proven partners, such as Paywizard and Inview, who have lots of experience and industry knowledge to guide us as we move towards going digital," said Emeka Mba, director general of NBC Nigeria.

Inview chairman, Nick Markham, said that vouchers are the "obvious route of pre-payment" for subscribers to easily pay for the digital access fee that NBC Nigeria plans to introduce.

"We've worked with Paywizard on a number of opportunities across the world, predominantly in the DTT and digital switchover market and with the complexities of a market such

as Nigeria; they were the obvious choice of partner to work with us," said Markham.

Nigeria failed to meet the official deadline for switchover from analogue to digital TV in June - a deadline that was agreed by member states of the ITU (International Telecommunication Union) at the Regional Radiocommunication Conference in 2006.

NBC Nigeria has now agreed a new deadline of June 20, 2017 in coordination with neighbouring states.

In September the broadcast commission granted MTN permission to provide digital-terrestrial pay TV services in Nigeria after the South African telco paid NGN34 billion (€149 million) to secure the licence.

Naspers, Samsung to take on Netflix

Media giant Naspers is going to roll out its Showmax SVoD service in a raft of new territories, according to numerous reports. Naspers, which runs the MultiChoice African pay TV platform, announced its much-anticipated Showmax streaming service in August.

At the launch, Showmax management said it was being unashamedly ambitious, and had big plans for the service. Various reports suggested that Naspers will move beyond its domestic South African market into Europe, the US and parts of Asia. The reports suggested a deal with Samsung is in place to include a Showmax app in its connected TVs.

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More information



Spacecom confirms loss of Amos-5 satellite

Israel-based satellite operator Spacecom has confirmed the loss of its Amos-5 satellite at 17° East, according to local press.

Spacecom reported last month that it had lost contact with Amos-5 and that it was working to re-establish communication with the spacecraft, but that it did not have further information about the cause of the anomaly.

Despite careful study of the telemetry data, the operator failed to find a reason for the failure. Spacecom has been working with its customers to continue to meet their requirements, either via its own capacity or via that of rival operators. According to Israeli reports, Spacecom has insured the satellite for US\$158 million (€144 million).

Launched in 2011, the Amos-5 satellite offered direct-to-home TV, VSAT communications and broadband and other services to Africa. The satellite featured a fixed pan-African C-band beam

and three steerable Ku-band beams – all covering Africa with connectivity to Europe and the Middle East.

Amos-6, equipped with a Ka-band payload is scheduled to be launched next year and will provide coverage of large parts of western, eastern and southern African via high-gain spotbeams. Spacecom recently struck a deal with Eutelsat and Facebook that will see the pair use the entire broadband payload on the satellite to deliver data connectivity to Africa.



SkyVision and ABS launch new African satellite TV platforms

Satellite communications service provider SkyVision Global Networks has partnered with global satellite operator ABS to launch two new video platforms for Africa.

The platforms will launch on the ABS-3A satellite at 3° West and will provide DVB-S and DVB-S2 content across sub-Saharan Africa, including French speaking Africa and South Africa.

“Launching these services on ABS-3A creates a new era of high performance satellite services to customers in Africa,” said SkyVision CEO, Sky Ori Waterman.

ABS CEO Tom Choi added: “Our cooperation with SkyVision will result in a cost-effective solution to expand coverage in remote regions throughout Africa, add viable bandwidth and introduce new services to more customers.”

The new platforms will support both SD and HD channels in MPEG-2 and MPEG-4 encoding and coverage will focus on the free-to-air channels and pay TV markets in Sub-Saharan Africa.

SkyVision said the platforms will “effectively meet the growing demand for content and DTH services using 90cm dishes”.

Nickelodeon Play launches in MENA via OSN



Children’s app Nickelodeon Play is now available in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region to customers of pay TV service OSN.

OSN subscribers will be able to access full episodes of Nickelodeon shows via the mobile service, with content available in both English and Arabic.

The operator said that more than 1,000 pieces of Nickelodeon-themed content will be on offer, alongside exclusive

content for OSN subscribers, original sketches, behind-the-scenes Nickelodeon clips and new games.

Nickelodeon claims its Play app has amassed more than 17 million downloads since launching in the US in 2013 and is now available across the UK, Latin America and, as of last week, Australia.

In the MENA region Nickelodeon Play it is available exclusively via OSN.

Ovum: 1bn mobile broadband subscriptions in Africa in 2020

The number of mobile broadband connections in Africa will climb from 147 million last year to one billion in 2020, according to Ovum. The research firm said that the rollout of 3G W-CDMA and 4G LTE networks and the increasing affordability of smartphones and other devices will drive the “rapid growth” of mobile broadband in Africa over the next few years.

Mobile broadband accounted for 17% of the 884 million total mobile subscriptions in Africa at the end of 2014, but is forecast to account for 76% of a total of 1.32 billion mobile subscriptions at the end of 2020, according to Ovum. The number of mobile subscrip-

tions in Africa is expected to pass the one billion mark during 2016.

“Although the pace of growth in overall connection numbers in Africa has slowed and the regional industry is facing headwinds from rising competition and weaker economic conditions, there are substantial growth opportunities on the continent in data connectivity as well as in digital services that are based on those data connections,” said Matthew Reed, practice leader for Middle East and Africa at Ovum. “The South African market is among the most advanced on the continent, so it is to be expected that it leads in potential for digital media services.”

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With the Netflix model firmly in mind, France-based startup Afrostream is looking to tap into a rich well of under-distributed content with a potential global audience. Founder Tonjé Bakang talks to *DTVE's* Stuart Thomson about his plans.

Afrostream's ambition

Launched in September with the goal of becoming “the Netflix of Afro-American and French films”, Afrostream debuted as a subscription video-on-demand offering in September and in October secured an investment from Orange Digital Ventures on top of the seed funding it received earlier from US outfit Y Combinator and other sources.

Last month the service signed up key partner BET to make its content available on-demand on the platform, coinciding with the launch of the BET linear channel in France.

In France, the service will be available on Orange TV and Bakang says that it will look for other distribution partners.

In Africa, according to Bakang, Afrostream will initially target mobile consumers in Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal and Cameroon. “We're willing to work with any telco that's willing to work with us – we see the future of content consumption as mobile,” says Bakang.

“Getting the payment system right is key in Africa,” he says. Teaming up with mobile operators allows Afrostream to tap into the established means of paying for

The company plans to target its young and female-skewed audience with content that is tailored for personal rather than family viewing. It will also add carefully selected Nollywood content to its line-up, including 2013 romantic comedy feature *Flower Girl* and *Before 30*, a *Sex and the City*-like drama series about four women living in Lagos.

African content

Bakang says that Afrostream is tapping into under-distributed sources of content from Africa. The outfit already has a deal in place with Côte d'Ivoire broadcaster Radiodiffusion Television Ivoirienne (RTI), to distribute its original content. It is also picking up content from non-Francophone countries, including *Windeck*, a telenovela originally aired by Angolan state broadcaster Televisão Pública de Angola. “We have a lot of great content that no one really is distributing,” says Bakang.

While the European market, with its high rates of smartphone penetration and high available bandwidth is a priority, ultimately the aim is to distribute Afrostream across “all of Africa”, says Bakang. “As a startup we need to make our move at the right time – I don't believe in first-mover advantage,” he says. “It is about coming in with the right product at the right time. I also think that you have to build a strong brand, with some clear values, that connects with people.”

Bakang believes Afrostream is well-placed to extend its base and achieve its target of 50,000 subscribers within a year. Data gathered from existing users is helping it to shape the evolution of the offering, and the company is working towards a new financing round next year to take it to the next stage.

“This is a great market and we have a great team. Our subscribers are becoming addicted to Afrostream and they are passionate about it – there is something different about this brand and this service,” says Bakang. ●



“If you have content that is exciting and can make your day better and that people will be talking about, then they will be willing to pay.”

Tonjé Bakang, Afrostream

The Afrostream service, which has hitherto been available on PCs, is also in the process of rolling out to Android devices, with Apple iOS following, and plans are afoot to extend its content offering with selected Nollywood fair.

Tonjé Bakang, the theatre producer and entrepreneur founder of Afrostream, told *DTVE* that the service had signed up 6,000 paying subscribers in the two months following its launch as an SVoD offering – it was previously available as a transactional service, as part of the MYTFiVOD platform – mostly in France and French-speaking Africa.

To increase its distribution further, Bakang is looking to extend Afrostream's reach in Francophone Europe and make further inroads into the African market by targeting mobile phones, something that Orange is well-positioned to help with. Beyond its launch on Android and iOS, Bakang says Afrostream will also look to be available via retail devices such as Roku and Chromecast.

airtime – pre-paid cards. Bakang says that the company will also look to target centres where there is widespread WiFi access, including universities.

Afrostream's standard SVoD offering in France is available for €6.99. Subscribers can also pay €59.99 upfront for 12 months access across two screens simultaneously. Bakang says that the outfit will offer flexible packages, enabling users to sign up without long-term commitments. For African users in particular, he says, offering quality content combined with convenience will be key. “If you have content that is exciting and can make your day better and that people will be talking about, then they will be willing to pay. Our idea is that it will be easier to watch Afrostream than go down to the market and buy a cheap DVD copy of this content,” he says. “Most people like something that is convenient and easy to use and that they can share with family and friends. We are working to make it convenient.”

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NuVu: a new take on African SVoD

Ericsson is partnering with Airtel to launch an ambitious mobile-first VoD service, called NuVu. Ericsson's Thorsten Sauer explains the plans to DTVE's Andy McDonald.

Ericsson is set to embark on a major new subscription video-on-demand offering next year, with the launch of its mobile-first NuVu service in Nigeria. Due to roll out in the first quarter of 2016 in partnership with telco Airtel, the service will initially offer around 3,000 local and international TV and film titles for a small monthly fee – and Ericsson has big plans for the offering.

Discussing the service, Ericsson's head of broadcast and media services, Thorsten Sauer, says that the advent of NuVu follows "one and a half to two years of research that we have made when it comes to video consumption behaviour in different emerging markets."

While Ericsson will jointly launch the service with Airtel – targeting the operator's more than 30 million Nigerian subscribers – it aims to roll out the service elsewhere in collaboration with service providers and to grow the content offering "significantly" in the coming years.

"It [NuVu] is not just a me-too service. It's something that is really targeted for the specific environment in emerging markets, taking a lot of factors into consideration and basically plays to the strengths of our skillset in TV and mobile," says Sauer. "As a company we work in 180 countries from the very rich to the very poor and I think it allows us basically to have specific local insights."

While Ericsson wouldn't reveal which markets it will target after NuVu's initial Nigerian launch, Sauer says the company will aim to maximise the content rights it is buying up for the service and will look at different markets – including those outside of Africa – on a "case-by-case basis".

Sauer says that as one of the largest telecom operators in Africa, and a longstanding and "very good customer to Ericsson", Airtel was a logical launch partner for NuVu. The large, and growing number of Nigerian mobile customers also contributed to the decision to launch there first. "A lot of people have mobile phones and actually the smartphone growth that we see in Nigeria specifically is

double digit," he says.

NuVu will launch initially as an app for smartphones running Android. "We could support iOS, we could support tablets, and we will do that in the next couple of months, but when you look at the penetration and the distribution of... handsets, it is Android that's dominating by far," says Sauer.

The SVoD service is aimed at customers in growth markets who like to access TV and entertainment from their smartphones but are not traditional pay TV customers, claims Sauer. These people may not have the means to take out an expensive subscription TV offer, but they spend money on DVDs or other forms of entertainment and NuVu aims to align itself in this kind of level of affordability – although pricing details are yet to be announced.

Part of the way that Ericsson aims to keep the subscription price low is by offering content on a download, rather than a streaming basis – something that makes NuVu a "unique proposition", according to

The trade-off, however, is that viewers can't watch content instantly. At off-peak hours download times can be fast, says Sauer. "If there are short bursts of off-peak capacity available then it may take a bit longer, but we're not talking about a day or two – we're talking about maybe an hour or so."

While NuVu is an end-to-end service, Sauer says that strategically it makes sense for Ericsson to partner with operators, rather than go direct to consumers. "Ericsson is a business-to-business company, so that is where we see our strengths," he says. Partnering with companies like Airtel gives NuVu a "very large installed base of customers". It also makes it easier to bill customers, as people are "more comfortable with an existing and longstanding provider of services."

Ericsson will provide the technical platform and integrate the customer care and billing systems. It is also taking care of buying and curating NuVu's content offering – mixing international and Hollywood titles with



"NuVu is not just a me-too service, it's something that is really targeted for the specific environment in emerging markets."

Thorsten Sauer, Ericsson

Sauer. He claims that by using its in-depth knowledge of network capacity, Ericsson is able to set a fixed price for its entertainment offering, removing from the end-user the risk of notching up expensive or unpredictable data charges. Offering NuVu's content on a download basis also means that Ericsson can guarantee playback quality, without buffering.

"We can basically make it a very predictable commercial proposition," says Sauer. "It's one subscription fee, which then includes the charges of delivery of the content... we believe that that is very important for customer loyalty."

regional and local content.

"Once we roll out the service, our intention is to use the information that we get back in the consumption behaviour to adjust the content mix. At the moment we started with a mix which is probably a bit more TV-heavy but also contains films, it has children's content and we're looking at music and so forth," says Sauer.

"There are 700 million smartphones [expected] in the Sub-Saharan African market by 2019. If we can address a nice percentage of that we will be very encouraged," he adds. "We see a very large opportunity." ●

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