

CBA General Conference Delhi 15-18 February 2006

International Co-productions

View from Hong Kong

CHU Pui-hing

Director of Broadcasting

Radio Television Hong Kong

16 February 2006

Hong Kong enjoys a unique geographical and political position in the region. We have long been a media hub in Asia and have become a special administrative region of China since 1997. It is therefore natural for us to partner with Asian countries and Mainland China in terms of cross-border co-production.

ABU: our regional partners

As an active member of Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union, RTHK has taken part in quite a few co-productions with fellow ABU members. One of them is the “Children Drama Co-production” which has started three years ago. Member organizations take turn to be the executive producer to liaise with other participating organizations. In the latest effort, 9 TV stations in the region joined the co-production, resulting in a total of 135 minutes of programme output.

Another project started March 2005 was the “Tsunami Documentary Co-Production”. RTHK was invited to be the Executive Producer to assist TV stations in Maldives, Thailand, Indonesia and Sri Lanka to work on the co-produced documentary “Tsunami Aftermath – Road to Recovery”.

Besides supervising the productions among participating organizations, RTHK also contributed in developing technical skills in these tsunami-hit areas by providing training and workshops to local personnel. The programme series was broadcast last December, one year after the tsunami struck. Other than the four countries and Hong Kong, the series was also shown in Japan, Malaysia, Brunei, East Timor and Vietnam.

Mainland China: our cross-border partner

First and foremost, I would like to say that we view our co-production with the mainland as a means to promote Chinese cultural identity and provide a way of communication between people of Hong Kong and the mainland.

When we initiated cross-border partnerships in the early eighties, our co-operation was limited to the exchange of pre-recorded programmes with China Radio International (CRI), the only external broadcasting station in the mainland. Programme topics were restricted, scripts for pre-recorded programmes had to be screened and approved beforehand. Live programmes were unthinkable.

The taboo was broken in 1991 by our efforts to co-produce, with Guangdong Radio, “Guangdong Online”, the first joint phone-in programme. This allowed audiences in Hong Kong and the mainland to discuss various social issues together. It was a ground-breaking effort, a “live” programme with uncensored audience participation. It also set the stage for more such programmes in China.

As a public broadcaster in Hong Kong, we help to raise public knowledge of the mainland by organising a range of community events. We co-organised the “Hong Kong Uniformed Groups 10,000 Miles Friendship Trek”, in which 11 uniformed groups took part. This involved the participation of more than 200 teenagers from Hong Kong, Macau, and the mainland in a series of field trips and cultural exchange activities in different mainland cities. Through this event, participants were encouraged to learn more about China’s infrastructure and history.

Another co-production project worth mentioning is a TV series titled “Under the Same Sky”. 10 topics were initiated by RTHK and we invited Shanghai and Taiwan TV stations to work on these topics in their own city from their own perspectives. So viewers are able to see how these cities interpret a common theme in each episode. The idea of this co-production is that RTHK acted as a bridge between Shanghai and Taiwan, therefore helping to promote collaboration across the straits.

There have been more developments in the recent years. Two years ago, a Pan-Pearl River Delta Regional Co-operation Agreement was signed between major broadcasters of Hong Kong, Macau, and nine provinces. An annual Media Summit is organised and an annual “Pan-Pearl River Delta Project” was produced, focussing on the development in the southern part of China.

This year we expect to complete more TV co-productions with broadcasters in China, such as “One Hundred Years of Overseas Studies”, which depicts a century of success stories of overseas Chinese.

The Future

With our co-productions with mainland China and other Asian countries, we have expanded our audience reach in the region. With the upcoming Beijing 2008 Olympic Games we believe that more opportunities will arise.

Co-productions create public value for RTHK. As China continues to open up, there is bound to be massive development in the country’s media scene. We certainly hope that RTHK’s co-production effort could help build a bridge between the mainland the international community in the future.

In conclusion, I will say this : Triumphs, we had a few; Trials, the real trials, are yet to come.

