MAPPING DIGITAL MEDIA:
NEWS AND NEW MEDIA IN CENTRAL AFRICA.
CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

By Marie-Soleil Frère

OPEN SOCIETY
FOUNDATIONS

News and New Media in Central Africa. Challenges and Opportunities

WRITTEN BY

Marie-Soleil Frère[1]

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is the largest country in sub-Saharan Africa. Rwanda and Burundi are among the continent's smallest states. More than just neighbors, these three countries are locked together by overlapping histories and by extreme political and economic challenges.

They all score very low on the United Nations' human development index, with DRC and Burundi among the half-dozen poorest and most corrupt countries in the world. They are all recovering uncertainly from conflicts that involved violence on an immense scale, devastating communities and destroying infrastructure. Their populations are overwhelmingly rural and young.

In terms of media, radio is by far the most popular source of news. Levels of state capture are high, and media quality is generally poor. Professional journalists face daunting obstacles. The threadbare markets can hardly sustain independent outlets. Amid continuing communal and political tensions, the legacy of "hate media" is insidious, and upholding journalism ethics is not easy when salaries are low. Ownership is non-transparent. Telecoms overheads are exorbitantly high.

In these conditions, new and digital media—which flourish on consumers' disposable income, strategic investment, and vibrant markets—have made a very slow start. Crucially, connectivity remains low. But change is afoot, led by the growth of mobile internet access.


In this report, Marie-Soleil Frère surveys the news landscapes of DRC, Burundi and Rwanda. Marshaling an impressive range of data, she examines patterns of production and consumption, the often grim realities of law and regulation, the embryonic state of media policy, the role of donors, and the positive impact of online platforms.

Most media outlets now have an online presence. SMS has become a basic tool for reporters. Interactivity gives voice to increasing numbers of listeners. The ease of digital archiving makes it possible to create a collective media "memory" for the first time. Chinese businesses are winning tenders for infrastructure projects.

Above all, the unstoppable flow of digitized information enables ever more people to learn about current events and available services. "The average news consumer in Central Africa will soon leap to new opportunities," Frère predicts, "without having to pass through the intermediate stages of a personal computer and a fixed telephone line."

The report ends with a set of practical recommendations relating to infrastructure, strategies to reduce access costs for journalists and the public, education and professionalization, donor activity, governance, regulation, and media management.

Figure 1.
Central Africa
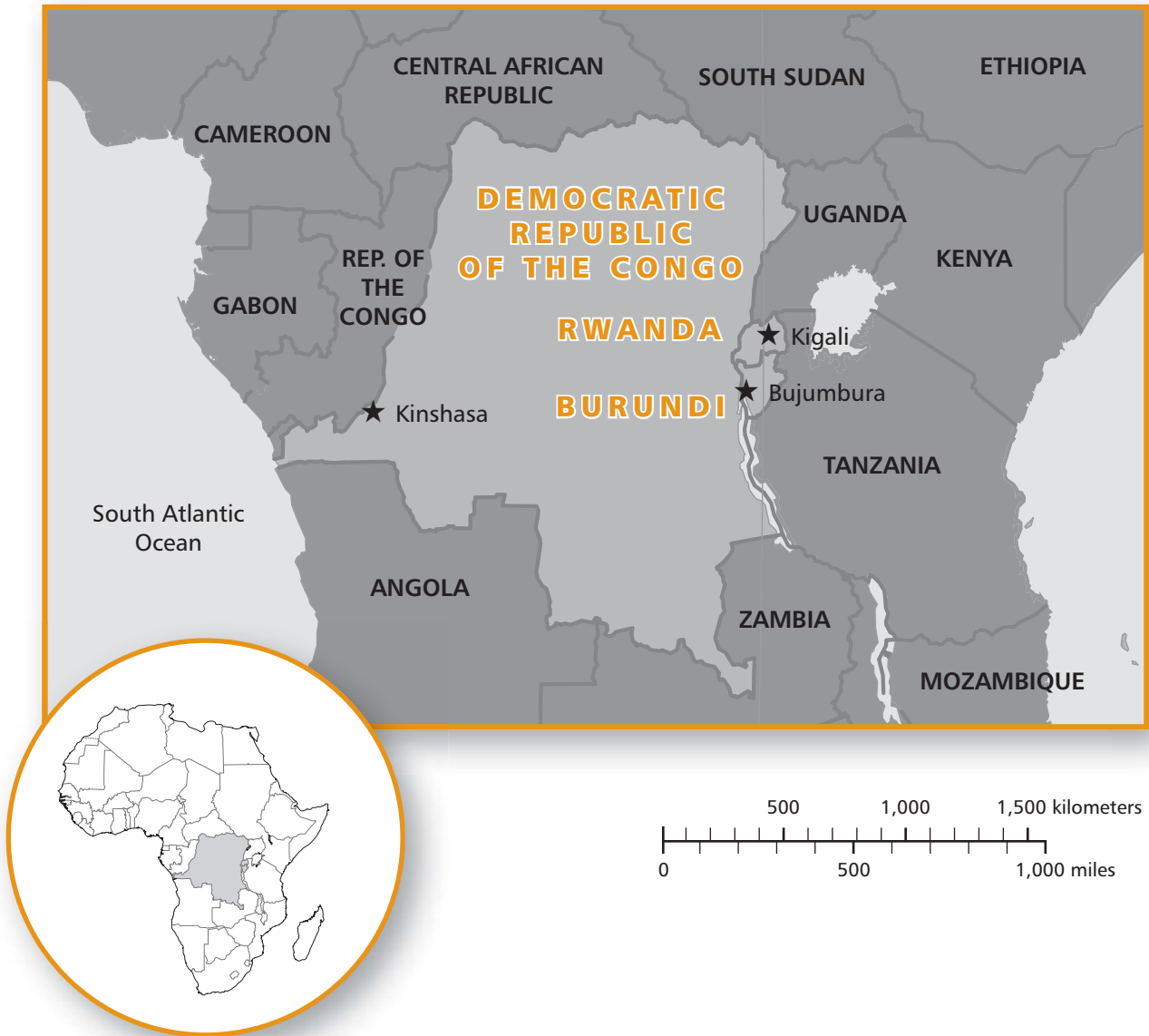
Mapping Digital Media

The values that underpin good journalism, the need of citizens for reliable and abundant information, and the importance of such information for a healthy society and a robust democracy: these are perennial, and provide compass-bearings for anyone trying to make sense of current changes across the media landscape.

The standards in the profession are in the process of being set. Most of the effects on journalism imposed by new technology are shaped in the most developed societies, but these changes are equally influencing the media in less developed societies.

The Media Program of the Open Society Foundations has seen how changes and continuity affect the media in different places, redefining the way they can operate sustainably while staying true to values of pluralism and diversity, transparency and accountability, editorial independence, freedom of expression and information, public service, and high professional standards.

The **Mapping Digital Media** project, which examines these changes in-depth, aims to build bridges between researchers and policy-makers, activists, academics and standard-setters across the world.

The project assesses, in the light of these values, the global opportunities and risks that are created for media by the following developments:

- the switchover from analog broadcasting to digital broadcasting
- growth of new media platforms as sources of news
- convergence of traditional broadcasting with telecommunications.

As part of this endeavor, the Open Society Media Program has commissioned introductory papers on a range of issues, topics, policies and technologies that are important for understanding these processes. Each paper in the **Reference Series** is authored by a recognised expert, academic or experienced activist, and is written with as little jargon as the subject permits.

The reference series accompanies reports into the impact of digitization in 60 countries across the world. Produced by local researchers and partner organizations in each country, these reports examine how these changes affect the core democratic service that any media system should provide – news about political, economic and social affairs. Cumulatively, these reports will provide a much-needed resource on the democratic role of digital media.

The **Mapping Digital Media** project builds policy capacity in countries where this is less developed, encouraging stakeholders to participate and influence change. At the same time, this research creates a knowledge base, laying foundations for advocacy work, building capacity and enhancing debate.

The **Mapping Digital Media** is a project of the Open Society Media Program, in collaboration with the Open Society Information Program.

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I. Introduction

This report focusses on the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Rwanda, and Burundi, three countries in Central Africa where the media face daunting economic and infrastructural challenges, including the limited penetration and costly use of information and communication technologies (ICTs).[2]

All three countries suffered violent armed conflicts during the 1990s. After peace processes, multiparty elections, and the establishment of elected governments heavily dependent on foreign donors to implement development policies, DRC, Rwanda, and Burundi are recovering from war at varying speeds,[3] and tackling similar challenges in different ways.

I.1   Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

DRC is the second-largest country in Africa in terms of population and surface area,[4] with 73.6 million inhabitants living in 2.35 million square km. An estimated 35 percent of the population lives in urban centers, and 44.4 percent of Congolese are under the age of 15. The capital, Kinshasa, has more than 8 million inhabitants.[5]

Economically, the country is immensely rich in natural and mining resources (e.g., diamonds, gold, copper, cobalt, coltan, zinc, and iron) and includes the second-biggest rainforest in the world. But years of mismanagement and conflict have led to a degradation of infrastructure and a collapse in production. The economy is recovering slowly after 32 years of dictatorship under President Mobutu's rule, followed by five years of brutal conflict between 1998 and 2003, which led directly and indirectly to the deaths of 3.5 million

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2.   The author wishes to thank the following individuals for their help in preparing this report: Pascal Kambale, deputy director of AfriMAP and former (2011–2012) DRC country director for the Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa (OSISA); Willy Nindorera, media expert and consultant; and Privat Rutazibwa, journalist and consultant. The author herself remains responsible for any errors in the report.

3.   By the time this report was completed, in early December 2011, eastern Congo was facing a new outburst of violence, with the emergence of a rebellion called M23; rebel groups were also threatening peace in Burundi, and the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (*Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda*, FDLR) recently launched an attack against Rwandan territory.

4.   The country was third in size on the continent until the Sudan split into two separate states in 2011.

5.   Data from CIA, "World Factbook 2011," at https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/2011.html (hereafter CIA, "World Factbook 2011").

people. In 2011, agriculture represented 37.5 percent of the country's GDP, manufacturing 27.6 percent, and services 35 percent.[6]

Ranking 168th out of 183 on Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (2011), DRC is among the most corrupt countries in the world.[7] GDP per head in 2011 stood at US$290, one of the lowest worldwide, and 59.2 percent of the population lives below the poverty line (fixed at US$1.25 per day).[8] The literacy rate in French (the official language) or in one of the four national languages (Kikongo, Lingala, Kiswahili, and Tshiluba) is 66.8 percent; life expectancy stands at 48.4 years,[9] and 85 percent of the population has no access to electricity.[10] DRC ranked last out of 187 countries in the United Nations Development Program's (UNDP) 2011 International Human Development Index.[11]

Regarding telecommunications, this huge country has only around 42,000 fixed phone lines, but there were around 11.8 million mobile phone users in 2010.[12] A 2008 survey in the main cities showed that 72 percent of interviewees (over the age of 15) had access to a mobile in Lubumbashi, 68 percent in Kinshasa, 70 percent in Mbuji Mayi, 68 percent in Matadi, 53 percent in Bukavu, 54 percent in Goma, and 45 percent in Kisangani.[13] Since 2007, the number of internet subscribers has overtaken the number of fixed-line subscribers, reaching an estimated 75,707 in 2010.[14] There were an estimated 915,400 internet users by 31 December 2011 (representing penetration of 1.3 percent), and Facebook claimed 808,340 account holders in the DRC in June 2012.[15]

I.2   Rwanda

Contrasting with the DRC, Rwanda is a tiny country of 26,338 square km and 11.7 million inhabitants, which makes it the most densely populated country on the continent. Life expectancy at birth is 58.44 years, and 42.9 percent of the population is under 15. The capital, Kigali, has 1 million inhabitants and only 19 percent of the population lives in urban areas.[16]

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6.   CIA, "World Factbook 2011."

7.   See Country Report on http://www.transparency.org/country#COD.

8.   See http://hdr.undp.org/en/data/trends.

9.   See http://hdr.undp.org/en/data/trends.

10.   CIA, "World Factbook 2011."

11.   See http://hdr.undp.org/en/data/trends.

12.   International Telecommunication Union (ITU), "Measuring the Information Society," 2012, at http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/ict/statistics/index. html. The source of the data is the Agency for the Regulation of Post, Telephone and Communications (ARPTC) (the public agency that regulates the telecoms sector in DRC). ITU provides statistics regarding the number of fixed lines and mobile subscriptions per 100 inhabitants, but the data lack reliability, given that there has not been any census of the population in DRC for decades and the total number of inhabitants is unknown.

13.   IMMAR, *Etude Médias: L'Information citoyenne* (Media Study: Citizen-centered Information), Panos Paris Institute (IPP), Bujumbura, July 2008.

14.   ITU, at http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/ict/statistics/index.html.

15.   Internet World Stats, at http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats1.htm.

16.   CIA, "World Factbook 2011."

Rwanda is poor, rural, and landlocked, with 90 percent of the population living from agriculture. After 32 years of successive authoritarian regimes, the 1994 war and genocide left the country's economy in ruins, its people traumatized, and more than 1 million dead.

Tourism, minerals, coffee, and tea are the main sources of foreign currency revenue. The Government has initiated the establishment of a Special Economic Zone (SEZ) in Kigali, where it seeks to attract investors from all sectors but especially from ICTs, a field in which Rwanda hopes to become a regional leader.[17]

Rwanda also wants to show its commitment to fighting corruption, and was ranked 49th out of 183 countries in Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (2011).[18] In 2010, GDP per head was estimated at US$540, and 76.8 percent of the population lived below the poverty line, even though the National Institute of Statistics (NISR) recently indicated that more than one million people were lifted out of poverty since 2005.[19] The official languages are Kinyarwanda, French, and English, as provided in Art. 5 of the 2003 constitution.[20] Since 2008, however, English has been given the priority in public administration as well as in primary, secondary, and higher education in the public as well as the private sectors. The Government justified this choice on the grounds that English was the leading language in East Africa (for commerce and science as well as development), and that economic growth would improve if future generations were educated in English rather than French.[21] The literacy rate stood at 70.7 percent in 2011 and the country was ranked 166th by the UNDP's International Human Development Indicators.[22] Rwanda is also heavily dependent on foreign aid: funds from donor countries accounted for 40 percent of the 2011–2012 national budget.[23]

As far as telecommunications are concerned, Rwanda has a total of 39,700 fixed phone lines (0.37 per 100 inhabitants), but one third of the population is now equipped with mobile phones (3.5 million subscribers).[24] There were 16,731 internet subscribers in 2010 (0.16 per 100 inhabitants), and an estimated 818,048 users at the end of 2011 (representing a penetration of 7.2 percent).[25] Facebook claims 144,120 affiliates in Rwanda.

17. CIA, "World Factbook 2011."

18. See http://www.transparency.org/country#RWA.

19. See http://hdr.undp.org/en/data/trends.

20. "The national language is Kinyarwanda. The official languages are Kinyarwanda, French and English." (Art. 5)

21. See P. Munyankesha, "Quel avenir pour le français dans la nouvelle politique linguistique du Rwanda?" (What future for the French language in Rwanda's new language policy?), *Les Cahiers du GRELCEF* 2 (May 2011), pp. 135–143; B.L. Samuelson and S.W. Freedman, "Language policy, multilingual education and power in Rwanda," *Language Policy* 9(3) (August 2010), pp. 191–215.

22. See http://hdr.undp.org/en/data/trends.

23. CIA, "World Factbook 2011."

24. ITU Statistics, at http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/ict/statistics/index.html. The source mentioned by ITU for this information is the Rwanda Utilities Regulation Agency (RURA), the public agency that regulates telecoms in Rwanda.

25. Internet World Stats, at http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats1.htm.

I.3   Burundi

Burundi is known as the false twin of Rwanda, as it is approximately the same size (27,834 square km) and population (8 million according to the last national census in 2008),[26] with almost the same density. It also shares with its neighbor a colonial legacy (under German and then Belgian rule) and a history of civil war and ethnic massacres with acts of genocide, principally in 1972 and 1993. Life expectancy is 59.24 years at birth, and 46 percent of the population is under the age of 15.[27] Only 11 percent of the population lives in urban areas. The capital, Bujumbura, has less than half a million inhabitants. The official languages are French and Kirundi, and 66.6 percent of the population over the age of 15 is literate.[28]

Like Rwanda, Burundi is a poor, landlocked rural country with underdeveloped industry. More than 90 percent of the population is involved in agriculture. Coffee and tea are the primary source of income, accounting for 90 percent of exports.[29] Coming out of a 10-year-long civil war (1993–2003) and still unstable in many regions, Burundi is heavily dependent on foreign support (from both bilateral and multilateral donors), which represents more than 42 percent of its national income.[30]

Corruption is widespread among officials, and the country was ranked 172nd out of 183 countries in Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (2011).[31] The GDP per head is US$356, and 81.3 percent of the population lives below the poverty level. The country ranked 185th out of 187 countries in the UNDP's Human Development Index in 2011.[32]

Burundi has 32,600 fixed phone lines (0.39 per 100 inhabitants), and about one in 10 Burundians (1.15 million people) owned a mobile phone in 2010.[33] The number of internet users stood at 176,040 (just over one in 10 people) at the end of 2011 (representing a penetration of 1.7 percent).[34]

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26. République du Burundi, *Troisième recensement général de la population et de l'habitat de 2008* (*2008 General Census of the Population and Housing*), Bujumbra, 2008. The CIA *World Factbook 2011* estimates the population at 10.5 million in 2010.

27. CIA, "World Factbook 2011."

28. See http://hdr.undp.org/en/data/trends.

29. CIA, "World Factbook 2011."

30. CIA, "World Factbook 2011."

31. http://www.transparency.org/country#BDI.

32. See http://hdr.undp.org/en/data/trends.

33. ITU, at http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/ict/statistics/index.html. The source mentioned by ITU for these data is Agency for the Regulation and Control of Telecommunications (ARCT) (the public agency that regulates telecoms in Burundi).

34. Internet World Stats, at http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats1.htm.

II. News Production

The three countries share a number of common trends in their media landscapes.

Press freedom is formally provided by their respective constitutions[35] and by quite liberal press laws adopted over the last two decades. But political criticism is not welcome and journalists are kept under pressure by the political authorities and ruling parties. During politically unstable periods in recent years, when violence has been widespread, journalists have been jailed, murdered, and attacked in various ways. Consequently, all three countries were ranked as "not free" by Freedom House's Freedom of the Press Index in 2011, even though Burundi scored slightly higher than the other two countries.[36]

According to the classification of Reporters Without Borders, Burundi ranks 130th out of 179 countries (with DRC as 145th and Rwanda as 156th).[37] In the IREX Media Sustainability Index (MSI), which analyzes conditions for independent media, each of the three countries had an "unsustainable mixed system" in 2010.[38] Although their overall scores were similar—with Burundi at 1.97, Rwanda at 1.81, and the DRC at 1.80—the results were based on both similarities and differences following the various criteria.[39]

In general, media companies in all three countries find it extremely difficult to achieve a sustainable advertising base in their poorly performing economies. With so much of the population living below the poverty line, the number of potential customers is limited and therefore advertising is scarce.

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35. Art. 24 of the 2005 DRC Constitution; Art. 31 of the 2005 Constitution of Burundi; Art. 34 of the 2003 Constitution of Rwanda.

36. See global and national reports for 2011 at http://www.freedomhouse.org/report-types/freedom-press.

37. See http://en.rsf.org/press-freedom-index-2011-2012,1043.html.

38. According to the IREX criteria, this means that the "country minimally meets objectives with segments of the legal system and government opposed to a free media system." See http://www.irex.org/resource/media-sustainability-index-msi-methodology.

39. IREX uses scores on five different categories: freedom of speech (1), professional journalism (2), plurality of news (3), business management (4), and supporting institutions (5). Burundi scored 1.85 (1), 2.17 (2), 2.10 (3), 1.57 (4), and 2.17 (5). Rwanda scored 1.88 (1), 1.70 (2), 1.99 (3), 1.60 (4), and 1.87 (5). DRC scored 1.84 (1), 1.62 (2), 2.09 (3), 1.32 (4), and 2.12 (5). The fact that the scores are given by a local focus group make the comparison problematic and the it seems more appropriate to make the classification when assessing the evolution in one country, year after year, than to make cross-country comparisons.

After decades of mismanagement during the 1970s and 1980s, and with a legacy of conflict, the infrastructural environment is also very problematic for the media. There is a general lack of electricity outside the main cities (and frequent power cuts even in the capitals), no proper roads, and expensive and sometimes unreliable telecommunications. Rwanda has nevertheless started to implement a very pro-active policy aimed at improving the infrastructure and developing the capacities of secondary towns.

Lack of professionalism is another common concern regarding media across the region. The three countries experienced "hate media" during the conflicts: the case of Rwanda's RTLM (*Radio Télévision Mille Collines*) is notorious, although the "hate newspapers" that appeared in Burundi from 1993 onwards are less well known. In 1998, limited hate campaigns also appeared in the DRC media, targeting people of Rwandan origin and accusing the Congolese from the east, mainly the Kinyarwanda-speaking communities established in the Congo for decades, of being traitors to the country (reviving a debate over "nationality" and fueling xenophobia).[40]

In Rwanda, the experience of "hate media" has strongly reduced wider public and administrative trust in the media. In Burundi, even though the hate campaigns were channeled by a few small newspapers with little impact, and the media landscape has now developed with new responsible and more professional private radio stations, the fear that the media may contribute to political intolerance resurfaces before every election. In the DRC, professional standards also remain an issue for other reasons, especially as most journalists are poorly paid, which makes them more likely to seek bribes in exchange for favorable coverage.

A final common trend in the three countries is the fact that international donors and other non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have been very involved in the media sector. They have implemented programs to train journalists, encouraged the establishment of independent outlets, given budgetary support to existing media, supported the production of "independent and professional" media content, and backed other actors in the media environment such as regulatory agencies, journalists' associations, and self-regulatory bodies such as press councils. This support affects the domestic media landscape, and some significant outlets would not survive without foreign funding.[41] Of course, the overall impact of foreign support is stronger for the limited media landscape of Burundi than for the numerous and scattered media outlets in the DRC.[42]

Besides these common trends, very different patterns emerge from one country to the next due to several factors, including demographic distribution, the ability of the political regimes to control the countries and implement policies, and the impact of distinct political and social legacies of the past on the media landscape.

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40. M.-S. Frère, "After the Hate Media: Regulation in the DRC, Burundi and Rwanda," in *Global Media and Communications* 5(3) (December 2009), pp. 327–352 (hereafter Frère, "After the Hate Media").

41. M.-S. Frère, "Media Sustainability in a Post-Conflict Environment: Broadcasting in the DRC, Burundi and Rwanda," in K. Omeje and T. Redeker Hepner (eds), *Conflicts and Peacebuilding in the African Great Lakes Region*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, IN (in press) (hereafter Frère, "Media Sustainability in a Post-Conflict Environment").

42. For the specific case of the DRC, see M.S. Frère, "The Democratic Republic of the Congo. Case Study on Donor Support to Independent Media (1990-2010)," Media Map Project, Internews/World Bank Institute/Annenberg School of Communication, 2012, p. 15, at www.mediamapresources.org (hereafter Frère, "DRC. Case Study on Donor Support").

II.1   Media Landscape in DRC

In August 2011, there were more than 250 registered newspapers, out of which only a dozen are published regularly, and these mostly in the capital. *Le Potentiel*, *L'Avenir*, *Le Phare*, *La Référence Plus*, *Le Soft*, *Uhuru*, *La Tempête des Tropiques*, *L'Observateur*, *Le Palmarès*, and *Le Forum des As* are among the main Kinshasa newspapers, all very politically oriented and overwhelmingly pro-regime.[43]

The DRC is the African champion of broadcasting, with more than 400 radio stations (mushrooming before each electoral process in 2006 and 2011).[44] They are community stations, commercial for-profit, or denominational (religious in identity but not necessarily in content). International broadcasters are also active, either through their own transmitters (Radio France Internationale, RFI, has nine in the main cities), or through partnerships with domestic stations which broadcast parts of their programs (this applies to the BBC, Deutsche Welle, Voice of America-VOA, and Radio Vatican). There are also close to 200 private television stations, including more than 50 in Kinshasa, often associated with a twin radio station. Most radio and television broadcasters' signals only transmit between 50 and 100 km. Besides the Congo Press Agency (*Agence Congolaise de Presse*, ACP), a few private press agencies have also developed: APA Kinshasa, ICM (InterCongo Media), and DIA (related to the Catholic Church).

The national public broadcaster, Congolese National Radio and Television (*Radio Télévision nationale congolaise*, RTNC) focuses on official information. It faces huge resource problems in terms of staff, funding, and equipment. As a result, it has not been able to broadcast nationwide for decades. Even though it has more than 1,500 employees and operates 10 local production centers in the provinces, the RTNC has a limited capacity to produce original programs. If the public broadcaster is supposed to receive a sufficient annual budget from the government, not even 20 percent of the amount provided in the budget law ends up in the coffers of the RTNC.[45] Meager salaries hinder the staff's motivation, most of the employees having to do other jobs in order to survive. Due to tight government control, it also lacks pluralism and credibility.

Radio Okapi is the only national broadcaster with a signal that covers the whole country.[46] Established in 2002, during the peace process, it is a joint project of the UN peace mission in DRC and the Fondation Hirondelle.[47] Prohibited from airing commercial advertisements, Radio Okapi is totally dependent on

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43. For a general overview of the DRC media landscape, see M.-S. Frère, "Le paysage médiatique congolais. État des lieux, enjeux et défis" (The Congo Media Landscape. Current situation, stakes and challenges), FCI, Kinshasa, 2009, at http://francecooperationinternationale.fr/IMG/pdf/Paysage_mediatique_congolais.pdf (hereafter Frère, "Le paysage médiatique congolais").

44. Data provided by the Ministry of Information on 31 August 2011 mentioned 148 declared newspapers, 456 radio stations, and 140 television stations. Data from the regulatory authority CSAC (*Conseil supérieur de l'Audiovisuel et de la Communication*) are slightly different. The fact that there is no centralized process for authorization and that several institutions grant licenses makes it difficult to get a complete picture and contributes to the uncontrolled multiplication of outlets.

45. I. Kabongo Kalala, *Transformer la radio et la télévision d'Etat en des services d'intérêt public, Audit de la RTNC* (Transforming State Radio and Television into Public Service Outlets. Assessment of the RTNC), JED, Kinshasa, January 2006.

46. Only four television stations, including the national RTNC, can broadcast on satellite and be received in the capital of each province.

47. Fondation Hirondelle is a Swiss NGO that sets up independent and professional media in conflict zones. See http://www.hirondelle.org.

support by the UN peace mission and foreign donors. It employs 200 journalists and has production centers in eight of the country's 11 provinces. Thus, the DRC is in the bizarre situation where the only broadcaster which can be considered as a public service is totally foreign-funded and has no local legal status.

The Congolese media landscape is very politicized, as the following sayings in Kinshasa illustrate: "One minister, one paper," and "One member of parliament, one radio station." Except for Radio Okapi and a few community radio stations supported by foreign NGOs, religious networks, and international donors, most media are close to individuals who are politically active. The positive consequence of these political affiliations is the resulting diversity of contents and plurality of views. Reading a variety of newspapers in Kinshasa and listening to several radio stations, the audience has access to an overview of different positions in the political landscape.

Congolese media are also plagued by widespread corruption. The French word "*coupage*" (cutting) refers to the common practice by which a journalist is paid for his/her coverage by the entity that is organizing the event. Be it for a conference, the opening of a building, a field visit on a project organized by an NGO, or an interview with a political figure, journalists are usually transported to the event and even paid by the organizers, often in the form of "per diems" (daily allowances). Corruption also exists on a larger scale, and there are numerous anecdotes about publishers and journalists getting involved in blackmailing, especially of political figures or businessmen. The insecurity in which journalists operate is both a cause and a consequence of these practices, as accepting bribes from political stakeholders can protect journalists from some threats while it exposes them to others.

Even though there are several professional organizations, including one self-regulating body, the Congo Media Observatory (*Observatoire des Médias Congolais*, OMEC), established in 2004, and one main union, the Congo National Press Union (*Union Nationale de la Presse du Congo*, UNPC),[48] journalists struggle to act collectively due both to their differing political affiliations and the disconnection between media groups spread throughout the country. Regarding journalists' training, besides the former national journalism school established in 1973 (Faculty Institute of Information Science and Communication, *Institut facultaire des sciences de l'information et de la communication*, IFASIC, formerly ISTI), new training institutions have mushroomed over the last decade in private and public universities, or as stand-alone private colleges, but the quality of journalism education remains low.

II.2   Media Landscape in Rwanda

Recovering from a totally devastated media environment (half of the country's professional journalists were murdered during the 1994 genocide and massacres), Rwanda has a growing number of media outlets. There are 32 registered newspapers, including two government-owned titles (*Imvaho Nshya* and *La Nouvelle Relève*),

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48.   The UNPC replaced, in 2004 the previous Congo Press Union, dating back to the Mobutu regime.

and several private ones, only a handful of which dare to criticize the regime. The three best-known privately owned titles are the English-language daily *New Times*, the Kinyarwanda *Kinyamateka* (established in 1933) belonging to the Catholic Church, and the weekly *Umuseso*, which had very difficult relations with the public authorities until it ceased publication in 2012, following a six-month suspension. There is also one private press agency, the Rwanda News Agency. Recently, the news website Igihe.com—initially created in 2009 by university students—has gained a lot of attention and started to publish a paper version in 2012.

The radio landscape was liberalized in 2003 after almost 10 years of state monopoly on broadcasting due to the trauma of the genocide, and 18 radio stations are now on air, private for-profit, community-based, denominational, or local (with public funding).[49] Outside the capital, there are two private community radio stations (Radio Izuba in Kibungo and Radio Huguka in Muhanga), one radio belonging to the National University in Butare (Radio Salus), and several denominational stations. The remaining local stations, also called "community", are under the control of the Rwanda Information Office (*Office Rwandais d'Information*, ORINFOR), which is Rwanda's state-controlled media house. The ORINFOR controls Radio Rwanda, TV Rwanda (which is the only available television station, no private TV existing at this point), and the government newspapers, and is still in a dominant position. Four international radio stations broadcast on FM in Kigali (VOA, BBC, RFI, and Deutsche Welle), although RFI's license has been suspended several times (mainly between 2006 and 2010) in line with the ups and downs of bilateral relations.[50] The BBC and VOA broadcast one-hour programs daily in Kinyarwanda and Kirundi (which are mutually intelligible languages).

Even though there are many media outlets in Rwanda, there is a lack of diversity of views aired. As an IREX panel underlined in 2010, "Most media outlets are owned by ruling party members or sympathizers. *Umuseso* and *Umuvigizi,* considered opposition outlets, are no exception, except that they represent a dissident faction of the ruling party."[51] The result is a rather monotonous media scene.

The landscape is characterized by an extremely high level of self-censorship, due to both the legacy of the past and to pressure from public authorities: the current government is reluctant to accept criticism, and many journalists have fled the country having been threatened. Unfortunately, the lack of professionalism also provides the regime with many opportunities to call journalists to order, as cases of libel are quite common, especially in the Kinyarwanda press. Even though a school of journalism and communications was established in 1996 in the National University of Rwanda in Butare, and later at the Catholic University of Kabgayi, most of the graduates avoid joining a newsroom when they complete their studies and turn to public relations and corporate communications, where jobs are better paid, less stressful, and free from

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49. Media High Council (MHC), *Media Development Index for Rwanda (MDI): Research Tools*, MHC, Kigali, 2011.

50. Apart from RFI, the BBC program in Kinyarwanda, "*Imvo n'Imvano*" (The Roots of the Problem) was also suspended for two months in 2009, when it was accused by the Rwandan regime of being too close to the political opposition in exile, and of constantly undermining the Government's policies.

51. IREX, Media Sustainability Index 2010, DRC, Burundi, Rwanda, 2010, p. 321. Both newspapers mentioned here (*Umuseso* and *Umuvigizi*) have disappeared from the market: their editors have left the country.

political pressure. Nevertheless, when the media legal framework was updated in 2009, pressure was put on media owners to hire and promote professional journalists with the required level of education, and the situation has improved since then.

To provide additional training for professional journalists, the Great Lakes Media Centre (GLMC) was set up in Kigali in 2008.[52] A press house was also established with the support of UNESCO in 1998, but even though it was supported by foreign partners, it never managed to become a significant actor in the media sector.

Journalists have adopted a code of ethics and established a self-regulatory body, the Rwanda Media Ethics Commission (RMEC), which does not really function.[53] The Association of Rwandan Journalists (ARJ) is also lethargic and has never stood up for journalists experiencing problems with local authorities or the judiciary. Journalists mostly work under difficult conditions, and self-censorship is also a consequence of the fear of losing jobs in circumstances where employment is scarce.

Just as the country has adopted a linguistic policy that favors English and distances itself from the Francophone sphere, the media landscape also has a growing tendency to turn to an Anglo-American model of development that is more business-oriented and less dependent on public funding (be it from the state or from international donors). The media outlets reflect a trend in line with the East African Community,[54] inspired by the changes and evolutions in neighboring Uganda, and under the driving force of Kenya and its powerful media empires (such as the Nation Media Group, which has already invested in the media sectors of Tanzania, Uganda, and recently established a radio station in Rwanda). The only private daily in the country, the pro-governmental *New Times,* is published in English, and media outlets in French have become scarce.

II.3   Media Landscape in Burundi

Burundi has a very limited but lively media landscape with eight regular newspapers, published in either French or Kirundi: one government-owned daily (*Le Renouveau)* and its Kirundi weekly counterpart (*Ubumwe*); a Catholic publication, *Ndongozi*; four private papers, including the private weekly *Iwacu*, which has French and Kirundi editions, and is the most neutral and professional of them all. In a difficult economic context, *Iwacu* has been largely funded by the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs since its launch in 2008.[55] Several private press agencies have been created alongside the public Burundi Press Agency (*Agence Burundaise de Presse*, ABP), including Net Press (which launched a newspaper in October 2012), Arib.info, Burundi Réalités (www.burundirealite.org), www.burundi-info.org, and Abarundi.org (which turned into Abarundi.bi).

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52.   See http://www.greatlakesmedia.org.

53.   J.P. Kayihura, *Media Ethics and Legislation in Rwanda*, Paris, IPP, 2009 (hereafter Kayihura, *Media Ethics and Legislation in Rwanda*).

54.   The East African Community is the "regional intergovernmental organization of the Republics of Kenya, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania, Republic of Rwanda and Republic of Burundi with its headquarters in Arusha, Tanzania." See http://www.eac.int.

55.   The IWACU Group currently publishes a weekly in French, another one in Kirundi, a daily newsletter and a monthly magazine. See http://www.iwacu-burundi.org.

Fourteen private radio stations have been established in Bujumbura since 1996, including five (Radio Isanganiro, Radio Publique Africaine, Radio Bonesha, Radio Renaissance, and Rema FM) that produce information programs: the first three are the largest and are supported by foreign donors for up to 85 percent of their budgets. Three international broadcasters are also established in the country (RFI with three transmitters, the BBC, and VOA). Five community stations have been created in secondary towns, most of them facing major sustainability problems. Two independent studios (Ijambo and Tubane) are producing and offering progams to all these local broadcasters. There are also four private TV channels in Bujumbura with very small operating budgets.

Besides these private initiatives, the public broadcaster, Burundi National Radio and Television (*Radio Télévision nationale du Burundi*, RTNB) offers two radio channels and one television station. They are mainly dedicated to promoting the Government's activities. The RTNB received a substantial grant from the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (€3 million for 2005–2008) to support the conversion to digital equipment for production and broadcasting, but the project failed to transform the RTNB from a government mouthpiece into a public service broadcaster. The national television channel is especially focusing on the presidential agenda, the policies of the executive, and the activities of the ruling party, the National Council for the Defense of Democracy-Force for the Defense of Democracy (*Conseil national pour la défense de la démocratie-Force de défense de la démocratie*, CNDD-FDD).

The relationships between the main private radio stations and the Government are extremely turbulent, except for Rema FM and Salama TV, as well as the community stations Umuco FM and Star FM, which are very close to the ruling party. Private media outlets are constantly accused of being the voice of the political opposition or even "accomplices" of the rebels to whom they offer a platform.

According to the Final Report of the National Media Convention, organized in 2011, there are about 500 journalists in Burundi. Leaving aside RTNB, where journalists are numerous and have the status of civil servants, the private stations mostly work with limited teams of between 10 and 30 journalists and presenters.[56]

Burundian journalists have also set up a self-regulatory body in 2004, the Burundi Press Observatory (*Observatoire de la Presse Burundaise*, OPB), but it does not function properly. The status of journalists is fragile as there is no official press card; nor is there a specific law regarding their status as media workers. There is a journalists' union (*Union Burundaise des Journalistes*, UBJ), but it was not able to negotiate a collective agreement to ensure minimal rights for employees vis-à-vis media owners and managers. A press house was established in 1998, with the support of UNESCO, and now provides facilities and equipment for professional training. These include a training center—the Media Training Center (*Centre de formation des médias du Burundi*, CFM)—as well as a radio and television studio.

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56.   Radio Isanganiro, for instance, employs 15 journalists, 14 producers and presenters, and 11 correspondents in the various provinces.

After the national school of journalism was closed in 1991,[57] there was no journalism curriculum in the country for almost two decades (even though two private universities developed communications courses at the beginning of the 2000s). A new master's course in journalism was created in the National University of Bujumbura in 2010, and so far around 30 students have graduated with this degree.

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57. A. Ntiyanogeye. *Le paysage médiatique du Burundi* (The Media Landscape of Burundi), Bujumbura, 2008.

III. News Consumption

Media groups and advertising companies do not spend money on audience surveys in Central Africa, so data about audiences and media consumption are scarce. This is another reason why potential advertisers are reluctant to invest much in buying space and airtime on media outlets—both printed and electronic—whose scope and influence are unknown.

Figures about press circulation are considered by publishers as almost a commercial secret. Information gathered from the printing industry suggests that the major daily in Kinshasa, *Le Potentiel*, has a circulation of around 1,500 copies, the most popular private paper in Rwanda, the Kinyarwanda-language *Umuseso*, had not more than 5,000 (when *New Times* prints 2,000 copies), and the main private paper in Bujumbura, *Iwacu*, circulates around 2,000 copies.[58] Even assuming multiple readers per copy sold, these figures are very low.

Circulation figures are, moreover, difficult to check. The press only circulates in the capital and a couple of major cities: it does not reach the wide majority of the population. Even though the major newspapers now all have a website, the low level of internet access outside the capital limits the readership reachable through the web. If a couple of years ago most consumers reading the press online were members of the diaspora, local web use has been increasing and most web-readers are now to be found within the country.

Radio remains the most consumed medium in the three countries, even though listening habits are changing, especially in the urban environments, as consumers develop a more individual relationship to radio, which they can access on their mobile phones, in their cars, or online. A recent qualitative analysis of radio audiences in five cities across the three countries showed that radio remains the most popular medium, not necessarily because the audience likes it more, but because it is the most affordable, accessible even without mains electricity, and indeed is often the only medium locally available for many citizens which are not reached by the press and cannot afford television.[59]

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58. There is no government-owned newspaper in DRC. In Rwanda the weekly *Imvaho Nshya* and in Burundi the daily *Le Renouveau* are both government-owned and probably have the largest circulations in their respective countries. But that is mainly due to the fact that they are distributed automatically in all public offices. Therefore, the circulation figures do not necessarily imply that they are read or appreciated. Purchasing by individuals is extremely low for both papers.

59. M.-S. Frère, "Une approche qualitative des auditoires des radios dans la région des Grands Lacs" (A Qualitative Approach to Radio Audiences in the Great Lakes Region), IPP – Project Ondes des Grands Lacs (to be published March 2013) (hereafter Frère, "Une approche qualitative des auditoires des radios").

Television remains an urban and elite medium, as equipment is expensive and, in areas lacking electricity, requires a generator. It is greatly appreciated for providing images from the country and the world, but also for its entertainment potential. Unlike radio, television consumption remains a collective activity, mainly within the family.

Regarding the internet, none of the three countries restricts access to the web, but a lack of infrastructure (electricity) and equipment (computers)—as well as the high cost of access through cyber-cafés—all hamper the rate of growth. Rwanda has nevertheless experienced a significant growth of access over recent years. The latest ITU data, using figures provided by the local telecommunications regulators, states that 1.1 percent of Burundians, 1.2 percent of Congolese, and 7 percent of Rwandans use the internet, while less than 2 percent have a connection at home[60] (the average for Africa being 12.8 percent of internet users, with 5.7 percent having a connection only at home).[61] Contradictions between different sources, and data gaps,[62] show how difficult it is to get a detailed and reliable picture when statistics (including basic demographic data) are lacking.

III.1   News Consumption in DRC

In DRC, broadcast audience surveys have been conducted almost every year for the past five years, mainly on behalf of Radio Okapi and RFI, both aimed at showing donors that they have a wide listenership and therefore merit continued support. These surveys are carried out by foreign companies (the French companies IMMAR or TNS Sofres)[63] because the local polling companies do not appear to be completely reliable.[64] The findings are not usually made public, as surveys are expensive and confidential. The most recent publicly available data are already elderly: from a 2008 survey by IMMAR, on behalf of the UK's Department for International Development (DfID), covering six cities and four minor towns, and from 2010 in Kinshasa.[65]

Data from Kinshasa in 2010 showed that 95 percent of respondents had access to radio, and 98 percent to television. Modes of access are changing, however: 41 percent say they listen to the radio on their mobile phones, and 13 percent claim to watch television on their mobiles, although such figures were much lower only two years earlier. New cheap devices with greater technical capacities, mainly from China, are spreading and allow new forms of mobile consumption. Some 34 percent of the respondents say they are internet

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60. "Key ICT indicators 2011" (data published in June 2012), accessed at http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/ict/statistics/index.html on 10 October 2012

61. "Key ICT indicators for developed and developing countries and the world (totals and penetration rates)," accessed at http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/ict/statistics/at_glance/keytelecom.html on 10 October 2012.

62. For instance, there are no figures at all for Burundi in the recent ITU report released in June 2012: *Measuring the Information Society* (downloadable at http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/ict/publications/idi/index.html, accessed October 9 2012.

63. See http://www.immar-intl.fr/ and http://www.tns-sofres.com.

64. The local company Experts Sprl provides regular media audience surveys for Kinshasa, but advertisers and local media have little trust in the findings.

65. Frère, "Le paysage médiatique congolais;" IMMAR 2010.

users,[66] 13 percent say they listen to the radio via the internet, and 11 percent watch television on the internet.[67] The audience listens to radio mainly in the morning, for news or later for music, while they watch television in the evenings, mainly for news and entertainment. Radio Okapi is widely popular, as are music stations (Jo DaCosta FM, Mirador FM), and a large part of the audience still tunes in to RTNC as well.

Outside Kinshasa, radio remains the most accessible medium, reaching more than 90 percent in all main cities.[68] But in rural areas, equipment is often more scarce. For example, in Bundu, in the Oriental Province, radio only reached 64 percent of the population in 2008. At that time, television viewership was getting closer to radio in all main cities, reaching 90 percent of the people surveyed in Lubumbashi, 92 percent in Matadi, 82 percent in Mbuji Mayi, 69 percent in Bukavu, 65 percent in Goma, and 61 percent in Kisangani. Nevertheless, regular access to television is limited by the frequent power cuts in many of those towns, and the total lack of electricity in smaller towns and rural areas, making it necessary to have a generator in order to watch television.

One major point should be underlined about DRC: even though there is a plethora of media outlets in Kinshasa—and more than a dozen private broadcasters in other main towns, such as Lubumbashi, Mbuji Mayi and Bukavu—most local audiences have access to only very few stations, as transmitters broadcast on a limited wavelength with a range of 50–100 km.

The government-owned national broadcaster RTNC has a subsidiary broadcasting studio and newsroom in each province, but it fails to provide national coverage due to a lack of resources to support the cost of satellite transmission. The subsidiary studios are supposed to receive and broadcast the programs from Kinshasa and complement broadcasting schedules with local productions, but most of them experience major technical problems. Radio Okapi covers 85 percent of the territory, and has therefore become the nation's most widely received station.

The development of the broadcasting sector and the internet has also brought new audiences to the press, as many broadcasters carry very popular press reviews, presenting—often in local languages—the content of the Kinshasa newspapers. This helps to give the press an impact far beyond its circulation. Beyond this, other mechanisms (such as public reading[69] and photocopies) also contribute to the dissemination of press content. This explains why in Kinshasa in 2010, up to 32 percent of people surveyed by the French research institute IMMAR said they read a paper "at least once a week," which is not reflected in the circulation figures. The results were nevertheless much lower elsewhere in the country.[70]

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66. This proportion is much higher than in other cities: in 2008, around 20 percent of people polled in the main cities said they used the internet at least once a month.

67. IMMAR, *Etude Médias en RDC 2010. Synthèse des résultats pour la ville de Kinshasa* (Media Study in DRC, 2010. Synthesis of results for the city of Kinshasa), FEI, Kinshasa, 2010 (hereafter IMMAR 2010).

68. Frère, "Le paysage médiatique congolais."

69. In Kinshasa, interested readers gather on the pavements where the newspapers are sold and discuss the headlines. These informal meetings are called "Standing parliaments" (*parlements debout*).

70. IMMAR 2010.

III.2　News Consumption in Rwanda

In Rwanda, radio is also the most popular medium, used by more than 91.5 percent of the population nationwide. A survey ordered by the Media High Council (MHC) and conducted in 2010 by a Kenya-based research organization, Incisive, indicated that radio was much more commonly used than mobile phones (which 31.4 percent of respondents use on a daily basis), Rwanda TV (13.3 percent),[71] newspapers (3.8 percent), or the internet (2.1 percent).[72] Only 14.2 percent of respondents said that they read a paper at least once a week. While 12.2 percent of households owned a television set, 74.7 percent owned a radio set. The survey showed that listeners tuned in for news (77.5 percent), then for theater and radio soaps (69.7 percent), followed by music (67.2 percent), while 36.7 percent of respondents said they listened to radio request shows,[73] 36.1 percent to sports news, and 26.7 percent to farming news.

The survey also rated the local stations as follows: Radio Rwanda, which has superior geographical coverage, was ranked first with 40.53 percent, followed by Contact FM (17.50 percent) and Radio Salus, the radio station of the National University of Rwanda in Butare (10.39 percent), which is especially popular in the rural areas. Then comes the private Radio 10 in Kigali (9.08 percent), and the Catholic station Radio Maria, popular mainly in rural areas (3.95 percent).[74] However, the methodology of this survey has been widely criticized by Rwandan media, especially the way the questions were formulated. Indeed, the survey did not allow respondents to mention several media outlets, although the present author's work in progress makes it clear that most listeners switch from one station to another and listen to several different broadcasts on any given day.[75] A significant majority of radio listeners also tune in to programs in the principal national language, Kinyarwanda. The debate program carried by the BBC on Saturday morning in Kinyarwanda, "*Imvo n'imvano,*" is especially popular.

Regarding print media, the survey highlighted that the best-known paper was the official *Imvaho Nshya* (accounting for 31.7 percent of the total readership), but it is the only one freely distributed to all public offices, even at local level, as it includes all government announcements. It was followed by *Umuseso* (17.7 percent), *Hobe* (16 percent), and *Kinyamateka* (9.4 percent), which circulates through the Catholic parishes. Finally, *Ingabo* (8.31 percent), an army paper which has now ceased publishing on paper,[76] was distributed to all army units in the country. The government and army papers have a wider (and free) circulation due to their networks, but we do not know whether readers actually appreciate the content and find it useful.

71.　The 2002 National Census stated that 46.7 percent of the population had access to radio and only 0.1 percent to a television set, which indicates a huge increase.

72.　The survey achieved a sample of 2,000 respondents, with 962 males (359 urban, 603 rural) and 1,038 women (401 urban, 637 rural).

73.　These popular programs, known as "greetings programs," offer more than telephone requests for music: callers can talk on air to relatives, friends or neighbors.

74.　MHC/Incisive, *Rwanda All Media Survey (RAMS), 2009 Report*, Kigali, March 2010.

75.　M.-S. Frère, "Une approche qualitative des auditoires des radios dans la région des Grands Lacs" (A Qualitative Approach to Radio Audiences in the Great Lakes Region), IPP – Project Ondes des Grands Lacs (to be published March 2013) (hereafter Frère, "Une approche qualitative des auditoires des radios").

76.　The online version is still available at http://ingabomagazine.com/

Only 23 percent of all readers say they purchase their own copy; the others access papers through friends, colleagues, or relatives. It should be noted that the five top papers are in Kinyarwanda.

As in the two other countries, newspapers and television remain more of an urban and elite media that can be used to target decision-makers but not to reach the wide rural or semi-urban population.

Only 1.6 percent of respondents to the MHC survey had internet access, even though 9.3 percent said they used it "at least once a month."

III.3   News Consumption in Burundi

In Burundi, as in Rwanda, broadcasters easily cover a large proportion of the territory, even though the hilly topography deprives some areas from receiving any signal, because it is a small country. Nevertheless, the national RTNB is the only radio station able to cover the entire territory, and most private stations have a much more limited footprint. Audience data are not produced regularly, but IMMAR did conduct a 2008 survey for the Panos Paris Institute (IPP).[77] According to IMMAR, 88.6 percent of people (from both urban and rural areas) had access to radio, 23 percent to television, with a huge difference between urban (51.1 percent) and rural (0.3 percent) households.

Access to foreign television channels through satellite reception was much lower (3.3 percent, including 8 percent in urban areas). The internet was used by 6.1 percent of respondents (15.5 percent in urban areas), principally in cyber-cafés (4.7 percent). Only 2.7 percent of respondents said they had already listened to the radio online, while 1.6 percent said they had watched television online.

A baseline study in 2010 by two international NGOs (INGOs) involved in producing media programs, La Benevolencija (a Dutch organization providing reconciliation programs) and Search for Common Ground (SFCG), showed that Burundians mostly listen to the public broadcaster RTNB (88 percent), especially people over the age of 40.[78] Next was Radio Isanganiro (66 percent of respondents), followed by African Public Radio (Radio Publique Africaine, RPA) (55 percent). Only 5 percent of people surveyed said they did not listen to any radio station. Radio newscasts are listened to at three important times of day (early morning, noon, and early evening), and television is watched only in the evening. With regard to TV, 43 percent of respondents said they watched national television (RTNB) "from time to time," followed by the private station Télé Renaissance (13 percent).

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77.   IMMAR 2008.

78.   La Benevolencija Grands Lacs and Search for Common Ground, *Rapport de recherche. "Baseline des activités de production médiatique et de la synergie"* (Research Report. "Baseline Study of Media Production and Synergy"), Bujumbura, April 2010.

The print media scored very low in the survey: 88 percent of people said they never read a newspaper. Only in Bujumbura is this proportion a little lower. The most widely read paper is the government-owned *Le Renouveau* (cited by 6 percent of respondents), which is received by all public offices, followed by the private papers *Arc-en-Ciel* (5 percent), *Iwacu* (3 percent), and *Ndongozi* (3 percent).

The several online news websites that have emerged in recent years have even lower ratings: Burundi News is mentioned by 1.8 percent of survey respondents, Abarundi.org by 1.6 percent, and Net Press (Netpress.bi) by 1.2 percent. These websites probably secure a larger audience among the Burundian diaspora.

As far as news consumption is concerned in the three countries, the most significant change in the near future will be the mode of access to media content, as mobile phone penetration is increasing rapidly and a growing number of people use it to access news. Since mobile penetration is already between 15 and 50 percent (according to the area), and because broadband connections should become soon a reality, the average news consumer in Central Africa will soon leap to new opportunities without having to pass through the intermediate stages of a personal computer and a fixed telephone line. SMS has already become a major tool to circulate inter-personal information in the region.[79] More general and organized use of SMS is still limited, and exploited mainly for commercial purposes by telecom companies. In time, however, this could become an important means of improving the delivery of local, national, and regional information.

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79. In December 2011, following the presidential elections, the Congolese government suspended all SMS services in the territory for a period of three weeks, alleging "security reasons." This reaction demonstrated that the authorities were convinced of the potential of this tool for fueling the dispute over the final results of the election.

IV. The Relationship between News Media and Politics

Relations between government and private media are problematic in many post-conflict countries, and tensions usually increase around elections, whether these have produced a change of regime (as in 2005 in Burundi) or not (in Rwanda and DRC). These tensions have worsened in these three countries as a consequence of the lack of transparency of the latest general elections: 2010 in Burundi, 2011 in the DRC, and 2008 (parliamentary) and 2010 (presidential) in Rwanda.[80]

The political authorities' total control over public media[81] and the co-opting of a portion of private media outlets—as well as the fact that the state proves more of a threat to, than a guarantor of, press freedom and journalists' safety—aggravate those tensions. Difficulties over the legal and institutional media framework, access to information, and communications policies reflect these uneasy relationships. Moreover, away from the capital cities, the media (mainly local radio stations) are subject to constant pressure from local authorities.

IV.1 Media and Political Opposition

In the three countries, the latest elections put the political opposition in a very uncomfortable position.

In DRC, the main challenger to President Joseph Kabila in the 2006 election, Jean-Pierre Bemba Gombo, was arrested in 2008 to face trial at the International Criminal Court (ICC). His media outlets (CKTV – Canal Kin TV, CCTV – Canal Congo TV, and Radio Liberté) continued to broadcast but faced many financial and political problems. Throughout the 2011 electoral campaign, media outlets close to the opposition and to Joseph Kabila's main challenger, Etienne Tshisekedi, were harassed, and several of them—such as Radio

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80. For a full picture of the political context of these elections, see the International Crisis Group reports at http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/africa/central-africa. For a deeper view on issues of human rights, see Human Rights Watch reports at http://www.hrw.org/africa.

81. See M.-S. Frère, *Elections and the Media in Central Africa. Votes and Voices for Peace?*, London, Zed Books, 2011.

Lisanga Television (RLTV) or Canal Futur—were suspended.[82] The 2011 election was generally seen as flawed,[83] and, after Mr Tshisekedi asked his party's members of parliament not to take their seats, only a limited number of media remained able to play their part in providing a public space for criticism. Journalist in Danger (*Journaliste en danger*, JED), the Kinshasa-based organization which defends press freedom in DRC and Central Africa, has denounced the "escalation of repression," as one journalist has been murdered, 42 arrested and 57 threatened or physically attacked in 2012, in particular during protests by the opposition.[84]

In Rwanda, the political opposition has for many years been active mainly outside the country (in Belgium, Canada, and France), and does not generate regular criticism or debate inside the country. Following the trauma of the genocide and the complicity of the media (as acknowledged by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, ICTR), the political authorities are very sensitive and inclined to accuse the press (as well as the political opposition) of "divisionism" and "sectarianism."[85] Before the 2010 presidential election, the main potential competitor to President Paul Kagame, Victoire Ingabire, who had lived in exile since 1994, returned to Rwanda to launch her campaign. But after she made highly provocative statements, she was prevented from contesting the election and eventually arrested.[86] A few months earlier, the newspapers *Umuseso* and *Umuvugizi* were suspended for six months. The deputy editor of *Umuvugizi* was shot dead outside his home in Kigali six weeks before the election and Didas Gasana, editor-in-chief of *Umuseso*, left the country. Now more than ever, critical voices, often adopting a very radical tone, circulate mostly through extraterritorial websites and forums.

In Burundi, after the communal elections of 24 May 2010, which kicked off an electoral cycle with five stages, most major opposition parties withdrew from the process, accusing the ruling party of stealing victory. Many of these opponents were then threatened and went into exile.[87] Therefore, the political opposition is extremely weakened inside the country. Apart from the ADC-Ikibiri coalition, the major voices critical of the Government belong to private radio stations, relaying the concerns of several civil society organizations. The major stations, which have always been accused of being too quick to give the microphone to any rebel movement or opposition leader, are accused of systematically undermining government policies and development efforts. In June 2012, Hassan Ruvakuki, a reporter at Bonesha FM and correspondent of RFI's Swahili service, was sentenced to life imprisonment for "participating in acts of terrorism," after he released an interview with a Burundian citizen who identified himself as the commander of a new rebel group.

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82. RLTV, which belonged to the opposition deputy Roger Lumbala, is now closed; its owner has been prosecuted for threatening the security of the state and gone into exile.

83. See the reports of the Carter Center (http://www.cartercenter.org/news/pr/drc-022312.html) as well as the European Union Observatory Mission (http://eeas.europa.eu/eueom/missions/2011/congo/index_en.html).

84. Reporters sans Frontières, XIVe Sommet de la Francophonie, Report, October 2012, p. 5, at http://fr.rsf.org/a-kinshasa-rsf-et-jed-denoncent-la-11-10-2012,43524.html. On JED, see http://www.jed-afrique.org/fr.

85. Amnesty International, "Safer to stay silent: The chilling effect of Rwanda's laws on 'genocide ideology' and 'sectarianism,'" 2010, at http://www.amnesty.org/fr/library/info/AFR47/005/2010/en.

86. Subsequent investigations by the Rwandan police, confirmed by other inquiries conducted by the United States and the Netherlands, showed that Victoire Ingabire had been in contact with the FDLR, an armed movement located in Eastern Congo and threatening Rwandan territory.

87. Human Rights Watch, "*You Will Not Have Peace While You Are Living*." *The Escalation of Political Violence in Burundi*, Report, May 2012, at http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/burundi0512ForUpload_1.pdf

In Rwanda and DRC, the international media, mainly RFI and the BBC (as well as the UN-supported Radio Okapi in DRC) have been accused regularly by the Government and the ruling party of unfairness and "negative" bias against the regime, especially when they give air-time to the opposition. RFI has been prevented from broadcasting for more than a year in Rwanda as well as the DRC. On 1 December 2012, as the M23 armed movement occupied Goma, Radio Okapi's signal was interrupted by the Higher Council for Broadcasting and Communication (*Conseil supérieur de l'Audiovisuel et de la Communication*, CSAC) for four days, officially because the radio had not submitted its schedule to the regulator. Meanwhile, the CSAC accused RFI of having given publicity to "a negative force…illegally occupying a portion of the DRC." The broadcasting regulator addressed a formal notice to RFI for having broadcast "interviews that are unfair to the Congolese authorities and institutions."[88]

The lack of space granted to the political opposition in the public or state media—and also in the private pro-government outlets—adds to the burden of responsibility on the politically non-partisan outlets. By providing a space for criticism of existing policies, and a voice for political opponents and civil society organizations, these outlets end up being identified by the governments and their supporters with the "negative forces" that threaten the countries' fragile stability.

IV.2   Press Laws: Freedoms and Limitations

All three countries have adopted laws that guarantee freedom of the press, after decades of state monopoly in the media (roughly from independence to the early 1990s). In DRC, the press law dates back to 1996; it was adopted during Mobutu's last months in power. Although it was a liberalizing measure at the time, it should be updated and adapted to current needs, and also extended to reflect ongoing changes. For instance, the law provides no clear conditions for the establishment of private broadcasting outlets and still allows possible jail sentences for journalists in case of press offenses. This incomplete legal framework encourages anarchy in the media sector, where outlets are created and operate without any real regulation. Moreover, some articles of the 1996 law have been used regularly to threaten media that were accused of inciting people to seditious behavior or lowering military morale in times of war (Art. 76).[89]

In Rwanda, a new law on the media, adopted in 2009, was highly criticized by the media for requiring all journalists to have a university degree.[90] Media owners also did not appreciate the new financial and management requirements. The law also obliges journalists to reveal their sources whenever asked by the government during criminal proceedings (which is also the case in DRC).[91] And it refers explicitly to the offense of "divisionism," on the basis of which many Rwandese journalists have been prosecuted and

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88.   Journaliste en danger, communiqué, 3 December 2012.

89.   See the case of RLTV, suspended on 8 September 2012 (in JED, *Plume et Liberté*, 16, October 2012, p. 13, at http://www.jed-afrique.org/fr/index.php?option=com_docman&task=cat_view&gid=32&Itemid=46.

90.   Journalists who are already working in the profession will have a five-year grace period to satisfy this requirement.

91.   Kayihura, *Media Ethics and Legislation in Rwanda*.

convicted since the adoption in 2001 of a law "instituting punishment for offenses of discrimination and sectarianism."[92] This law provides, for penalties to be imposed on people who make "use of any speech, written statement, or action that divides people, that is likely to spark conflicts among people, or that causes an uprising that might degenerate into strife among people based on discrimination." (Art.1).

The current press law in Burundi was adopted in 2003, during the postwar transition. Although it is the most liberal in the country's history, heavy prison sentences are still imposed for disseminating information that incites civil disobedience, supporting propaganda for enemies of the state, or insulting or defaming the president or other officials.[93] Also, just as in DRC, the liberalizing elements of the law are not enforced in practice. In the event of legal action, the courts are often under pressure and manipulated by the political authorities, against a background of widespread corruption in the judiciary.

Thus, the interpretation of the law by the judge is always unfavorable to the media. For instance, making comments about national security or giving a voice to the rebels has systematically been interpreted as amounting to treason or a threat to national security. Such was the case of the journalist Jean-Claude Kavumbagu, who spent 10 months in prison in 2010–2011 for questioning in his news website Netpress.bi the capacities of the Burundian armed forces to counter a terrorist attack such as the one that had just happened in Uganda.[94]

A new press law has been drafted in 2012: when the content was made public in August, journalists immediately protested. The draft law makes it compulsory for media professionals to reveal their sources of information and provides for heavy fines (80 times higher than in the Penal Code) if the press breaks this law. It also provides the National Council for Communication (*Conseil national de la communication*, CNC) with jurisdictional powers, enabling the institution to suspend or fine media outlets.

Libel is the other offense for which journalists are often prosecuted, but full respect for ethical practices is not always a reality, and some private media have probably been manipulated as part of settling scores between senior officials, pushing journalists into publishing information to tarnish individuals, with no proof of their allegations. For instance, when the MHC of Rwanda suspended *Umuseso* and *Umuvugizi* for six months in April 2010, there was plenty of evidence that the papers had transgressed the code of ethics; the sanction was therefore not a surprise, but it appeared disproportionate. The same conclusion was drawn in 2011 when Agnes Uwimana Nkusi, editor of *Umurabyo*, was sentenced to 17 years in prison (subsequently reduced to four years).

In the three countries, the lack of independence of the judiciary—over which the government, the president, and/or his party all exert tight control—is a major issue during any procedure against a media professional

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92. Law No. 47/2001 OF 18/12/2001 Instituting Punishment for Offences of Discrimination and Sectarianism, at http://www.grandslacs.net/doc/4040.pdf.

93. See G. Ntahe, *Textes juridiques et déontologiques régissant les médias au Burundi* (Legal and Ethical Framework for the Media in Burundi), IPP, Paris, 2009 (hereafter Ntahe, *Textes juridiques et déontologiques*).

94. See "Prosecutor requests life imprisonment for online newspaper editor," Reporters Without Borders, 13 April 2011, at http://en.rsf.org/burundi-call-for-the-release-of-jean-29-12-2010,39190.html.

or outlet. Apart from political control, the judiciary is also among the most corrupt institutions in DRC, Burundi, and Rwanda. Journalists' associations in the three countries are calling for the decriminalization of press offenses such as libel.[95] But they remain realistic as similar changes adopted in other African countries have not put an end to prison terms for journalists who are now being convicted on the basis of other charges.

IV.3   Regulatory Bodies

All three countries have established public regulatory bodies: the Higher Council for Broadcasting and Communication (*Conseil supérieur de l'Audiovisuel et de la Communication*, CSAC) in DRC was established in 2011 to replace the High Authority of the Media (*Haute Autorité des Médias*, HAM), which had existed since 2004, during the transition; the MHC was set up in Rwanda in 2003;[96] and the CNC was created in Burundi as early as 1992. These institutions are newcomers in the state apparatus and have had complicated relationships with other stakeholders, such as the ministries of communication, which used to manage media issues for decades.

The main challenge for these institutions has been to try to organize the media landscape by adopting appropriate regulations, especially to guarantee equal access to public media and balanced coverage of electoral campaigns. They also have the capacity to discipline or suspend any media outlet that neglects its duties or breaches its legal commitments. Furthermore, these institutions also play a part in licensing new outlets, generally alongside the telecommunications regulators: the Authority for the Regulation of Post and Telecommunications in the Congo (*Autorité de Régulation de la Poste et des Télécommunications du Congo*, ARPTC) in DRC, created in 2003; RURA in Rwanda, created in 2001; and the Agency for the Regulation and Control of Telecommunications (*Agence de Régulation et de Contrôle des Télécommunications*, ARCT) in Burundi, created in 1997. Where there has been a tendency to allocate competences regarding telecoms and access to spectrum for the media to a single institution in English-speaking Africa,[97] French-speaking countries have kept two different regulatory authorities, the media regulators being involved in technical as well as content issues.[98]

The CNC, CSAC, and MHC initially lacked resources and equipment, but the three institutions gradually gained some permanent staff, established specialist legal departments to address complaints, and created media monitoring centers.[99] All three have received support from foreign donors to consolidate their independence and skills.

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95.   See the campaign launched by the World Association of Nespapers and News publishers, through the Declaration of Table-Mountain, at http://www.wan-ifra.org/articles/2011/02/16/the-declaration-of-table-mountain.

96.   Until 2009, it was called the High Council of the Press (HCP).

97.   For instance, ICASA (Independent Communications Authority of South Africa), CCK (Communications Commission of Kenya) and TCRA (Tanzania Communications Regulatory Authority) are competent both for telecoms and media licensing.

98.   See R. De la Brosse and M.-S. Frère, "Media regulation in sub-Saharan Africa: Trends and stakes in French-speaking countries," *Ecquid Novi: African Journalism Studies* 33(3) (October 2012), pp. 73–92.

99.   The MHC is currently undergoing a major transformation into an institution with no regulatory power and strictly devoted to supporting "media development." As an African country evolving within the Anglo-American paradigm, the regulation of media content will be left to the self-regulatory body, while technical matters related to licensing will be handled by RURA. A new draft law, reorganizing the MHC, is currently on the desk of President Kagame.

Established as supposedly "independent" institutions, media regulators are accused of being a politicized tool manipulated by the government. The behavior of the CSAC and the CNC was heavily criticized during the 2010 and 2011 elections in DRC and Burundi as the regulators obviously supported the presidential party and the incumbent president. In DRC, the CSAC has been unable to apply any pressure on the public service RTNC, which was wholly biased in favor of the incumbent Kabila, and only took measures against outlets which were close to the opposition. In Burundi, the president of the regulatory body was herself a candidate of the ruling party CNDD-FDD, running for a senator's seat and campaigning while remaining at the head of the CNC.

In Rwanda, the MHC has been accused of hampering press freedom, as it has acted to suspend several papers, even though most sanctions targeting the media were not adopted by the regulatory authority itself but by the Ministry of Information. It was due to disagreements between the regulator and the ministry that the first president of the HCP resigned in 2005. In Rwanda, too, the HCP-MHC was unable to make the ORINFOR outlets more aware of the obligations of "public service" and pluralism.

Relationships between the regulators and private media are therefore very difficult, as the former are seen as interfering (in a biased manner) in professional matters; meanwhile, the national broadcasters are generally indifferent to, and untroubled by, their decisions. Far from being perceived as independent referees supervising the competition between media outlets, the regulatory bodies are accused of contributing to distorting the media landscape.

IV.4   Access to Official Information

This remains a major issue in the three countries, as there is little tradition of political authorities sharing information with the media. Even if media services are now established and press conferences regularly organized by the major public institutions, access to information is often mixed with propaganda and the promotion of these institutions' activities.

Public media and media close to the ruling parties get privileged access to public information. For instance, in Rwanda, correspondents of international broadcasters (VOA and the BBC) as well as newspapers (*Umuvuzigi* and *Umuseso*) considered as "opposition", complained that they had been denied access to some government events to which "friendly" media were invited.[100] The same applies in Burundi[101] and DRC, where some media outlets are refused access to official celebrations or decision-makers. When trips are organized inside the country or abroad, and the press is invited to follow, pro-government outlets are taken while critical outlets are not invited.

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100. IREX, Media Sustainability Index 2010, Rwanda, p. 318, available at http://www.irex.org/resource/rwanda-media-sustainability-index-msi.

101. IREX, Media Sustainability Index 2010, Burundi, p.38, available at http://www.irex.org/resource/burundi-media-sustainability-index-msi.

In Rwanda, where a draft law on access to information was produced in 2011 and is now being studied in Parliament, the MHC had underlined the negative consequences of such behavior for media outlets deprived of access to information: "these media outlets have for a long time been publishing unverified, sensational, biased and unfair stories about the Government and some of its senior officials, [but] denying them access to information is likely to aggravate their unprofessional practices. They may now claim legitimacy for publishing rumors."[102] In order to demonstrate their will to promote access to information, President Kagame himself holds a press conference every month and journalists are also invited once a week to the Prime Minister's office for a briefing.

Local journalists have also regularly complained that foreign reporters and media outlets get easier access to senior officials and even to public data. While President Kabila has given lengthy interviews to the Belgian newspaper *Le Soir* or the Paris-based weekly *Jeune Afrique*, it is not clear how often he has met Congolese journalists to take their questions. During a conference in Kigali in November 2012, the Rwandan Minister of Foreign Affairs, Louise Mushikiwabo, recognize that trend. "If, regarding a national event, I receive two calls at the same time, from the BBC and Huguka community radio, I am wondering: who do I take first?"[103]

ICTs could greatly facilitate access to information. In DRC, Belgian foreign aid supports the establishment of a government e-portal which should provide online data about government activity. As most public services still lack computers, another project, with Korean support, aims to computerize the administration, allowing for better circulation of data and, eventually, better information for journalists about public service issues.

IV.5   Media Policy

In DRC, a national plan for the development of the media sector was elaborated in 2005 but never implemented. Media policy has been non-existent for the past five years: during President Kabila's first term, not a single text was adopted to fill the legal void in the media landscape, except for the one to establish the CSAC. A general law on broadcasting and special regulations for the different types of broadcasters (*cahiers de charges*) were drafted but have not yet been adopted. In April 2012, a forum was organized with the CSAC and the media sector, supposedly to discuss how the regulator and the journalists had behaved during the 2011 elections, but no clear plan emerged from that meeting.

In Rwanda, the authorities have stated in several strategic documents their commitment "to promote information in order to facilitate the achievement of social welfare and to foster national reconciliation and unity," claiming that "As part of this commitment, the Government will pursue a policy of diversifying and improving the quality of information, increasing accessibility to ranges of information and content within and outside the country, and creating a supportive environment for the development of the private press."[104]

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102. MHC, "State of the Media Report," Kigali, 2008.

103. Fourth National Dialogue on Media Development, Kigali, 27–28 November 2012.

104. Government of Rwanda, NICI-2010 Plan, Kigali, Rwanda Information Technology Authority (RITA), 2006, p. 115.

The authorities have recently planned a series of reforms (encompassed in a new media policy, adopted in June 2011). These measures include restructuring the MHC (which will transfer its regulatory power to a self-regulatory body and focus on media development and journalists' training); continuing support for training institutions (merging the School of Journalism and Communications of the National University of Rwanda in Butare and the GLMC; transforming the state media entity (ORINFOR) into a public service broadcaster, the Rwanda Broadcasting Agency (RBA); and adopting the Law on Access to Information.

In November 2011, these reforms were presented during the "Third National Dialogue on the Media," organized by the MHC.[105] As the Rwandan paper *Chronicles* argued: "While some journalists, diplomats and government officials welcome the shift in policy as positive and timely, there remain some unanswered questions. For instance, what are the nature, extent and practical implications of the reform? … Ultimately, what does this reform mean in practice particularly with regard to how the government relates to the media and journalists on a day-to-day-basis?"[106] By the time of the "Fourth National Dialogue," in November 2012, the new detailed policies were not yet passed and these shifts had not yet been implemented.

In Burundi, there is no real long-term (or even mid-term) policy for the media. From 2001 to 2010, six different ministers were in charge of the sector, making a consistent approach hard to achieve. A national plan for the development of information and communications technologies (*Politique nationale pour le développement des TIC*) was adopted in 2007,[107] but it is not linked to media concerns and does not address the issue of convergence.

In March 2011, a media and communication convention (*Etats généraux des médias et de la communication*) was organized, gathering all the actors in Burundi's media sector to discuss the major issues.[107] Many subjects were debated, such as community radio, journalists' training, reforms of the legal framework, self-regulation and regulation, copyright, regulation of infrastructures and ICTs, management and sustainability of media companies, media support through a special public fund, opinion polls and audience surveys, social responsibility of the media, and the promotion of Burundian culture. Unfortunately, no real policy came out of that meeting, which took place in a climate of overriding mutual suspicion between the Government and most of the private media.

IV.6 Public Support for Private Media

In many French-speaking countries, there is a tradition of acknowledging the fact that private media do contribute to a public service mission through providing independent news useful to all citizens. Therefore,

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105. Ministry in Charge of Cabinet Affairs (Rwanda) (MINICAAF) and MHC, Third Annual National Dialogue on Media, Concept Paper, Kigali, 2011, p. 4.

106. *Chronicles*, 1, 13–20 October 2011, p. 1.

107. See http://www.ist-africa.org/home/files/Burundi_NationalPolicytoDevelopICT.pdf.

108. The previous (and first) meeting of the kind was held in 2001 and was instrumental in the elaboration of the 2003 press law. The final report of the meeting is available on the Government's website, at http://www.burundi-gov.bi.

mechanisms have been set up by governments in order to support private media, either directly (granting money or helping to access equipment), or indirectly (relieving media businesses from a range of taxes, or allowing them access to some public services at a reduced rate). Journalists and media owners in French-speaking African countries have been claiming for such support, actually implemented for more than 10 years in some of them.[109]

In DRC and Burundi, the press laws provide for a mechanism through which public funds can be mobilized to support private media. This has to be organized by the institutions in charge of the media sector (Ministry of Communications or regulatory body). Nevertheless, this support has never been forthcoming.

Under Art. 12 of the 2003 Press Law in Burundi, "The State helps the press and communication outlets that contribute to implement the right to information."[110] This help is twofold. On the one hand, "Private and public media are exonerated from import taxes" (Art.13). On the other hand, "a Fund is created to promote Burundian media, with resources coming from an annual donation from the State, as well as donations from the foreign donors (Art.14)." Even though the Burundian professional associations have been demanding this legislation to be applied for years, it has not yet become a reality. The government of Burundi announced in 2012 that a sum of 100 million Burundian francs (US$72,000) was available to establish the fund, but, after the amount was reduced to half, the media refused to attend the meeting organized for the validation of the distribution criteria among the beneficiaries.

The 1996 Press Law in DRC also provides for this possibility.[111] Art. 17 states: "The State *may* give indirect support to private media, including privileged tax rates for the import of raw material necessary to produce and disseminate news, notably paper, technical equipment and films." Art. 18 adds: "Public authorities may allow financial donations under the form of indirect support to the companies which ask for it, provided that they devote at least 50 percent of their programs to cultural, educational and social matters." Art. 12 provides that journalists can benefit from discounted rates for transport and telecoms. In fact, only once, in 1998, did a few selected newspapers actually receive a US$1 million allocation, granted by President Laurent-Désiré Kabila (father of Joseph), which was handed over in a very opaque manner, creating clashes between media owners. It was probably just to ensure support at a time when the Government was at war. Since 2006, a special amount of US$2 million has been planned in the national yearly budget, raising much hope in the media sector, but it has never been allocated. On the contrary, media complain about the current increase in taxes that they face.

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109. In other countries of Africa, such support is considered as tying the media to the government. In a more market-oriented approach, the state should merely provide for an enabling market environment where advertisers will be able to identify the media outlets with the biggest audience, and negotiate with them.

110. Press Law No. 1/025 of 27 November 2003, available in Ntahe, *Textes juridiques et déontologiques*.

111. Press Law No. 96-002 of 22 June 1996, available in D. Mbaya and C. Mushizi, *Comprendre les textes juridiques et déontologiques régissant la presse en RDC* (Understanding the legal and ethical framework of the Press in the DRC), IPP, Kinshasa, 2006.

By contrast, the 2009 Press Law in Rwanda does not mention such a duty or possibility for the state. But the current national policy plans to set up a "media development fund" that will be managed by the MHC. The modalities of such a fund, which were discussed during the Third and Fourth National Dialogues on the Media, are still not definitely fixed.

IV.7   Communications and ICT Policies

While media policy remains unclear and largely unformulated in the three countries, the concerns of the public authorities about ICTs are in general more explicit, even though they do not necessarily translate into concrete acts. In 2007, Gado Alzouma, a university professor in Nigeria, noticing the low level of African governments' interest in ICTs, emphasized that "for most African governments, priorities lie elsewhere: in eradicating endemic diseases, illiteracy, and poverty. The huge investments needed for research and development are seen to be out of reach, and ICT policies are limited to improving access, which means, in the best case, providing computers for schools and administration and creating an 'attractive' environment for investments by and establishment of the major foreign telecom companies now operating all over Africa."[112] This assessment applies to all three countries considered in this paper, albeit in different ways.

Rwanda has developed a very proactive approach to ICTs. President Kagame declared in 2006: "Africa missed both the agricultural and industrial revolutions, and Rwanda is determined to take full advantage of the digital revolution. This revolution is summed up by the fact that it is no longer of utmost importance where you are but rather what you can do—this is of great benefit to traditionally marginalized regions and geographically isolated populations."[113] According to the state's "Vision 2020" plan,[114] ICTs are to be mobilized in order to achieve economic and social development, especially for specific applications in the fields of training and health.

Thanks to its connection to the East African Submarine Cable System (EASSy) in the Indian Ocean (through Uganda and Tanzania),[115] Rwanda aspires to become the high-tech hub of the region, some kind of local Singapore. For the Rwandan authorities, the first step in this process consisted of promoting an enabling environment for companies willing to set up in Rwanda. The second step was building the necessary infrastructure including fiber-optic cables. Next, the Government plans to use these high-tech capacities to

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112. Gado Alzouma, "Téléphone mobile, Internet et développement: L'Afrique dans la société de l'information?" (Mobile telephony, internet and development: Africa in the information society?), *Tic & Société* 2(2), 2008, at http://ticetsociete.revues.org/488.

113. Paul Kagame, "Foreword," in Government of Rwanda (ed.), "An Integrated ICT-led socio-economic Development Plan for Rwanda, 2006–2010" (NICI-2010 Plan), Kigali, 2006.

114. This document, published in 2010, presents the objectives that the Rwandan government has planned to reach within two decades, at http://www.gesci.org/assets/files/Rwanda_Vision_2020.pdf.

115. EASSy is a 10,000-km submarine fiber-optic cable laid along the east and south coast of Africa, from South Africa to the Sudan. The landing points in Mozambique, Madagascar, the Comoros, Tanzania, Kenya, Somalia, and Djibouti give these countries access to the high-speed global telecoms network. EASSy is owned and operated by a conglomerate of telecoms operators and service providers from Africa (92 percent) and elsewhere (8 percent). See http://www.eassy.org.

provide profitable services.[116] The Rwanda Information Technology Authority (RITA) is the public institution devoted to implementing that plan. After Rwanda was connected to the submarine cable by fiber-optic cable in 2011, connections became faster and cheaper than in any other country in the region.[117] All the 30 districts and many public and private institutions are now connected to the fiber-optic network, even though access costs are still high outside Kigali.

Progress has been slower in Burundi, where in 2008 the government established the Executive Secretariat for Information Technologies (STIC) to oversee the implementation of the national strategy for ICTs, primarily focussed on a broadband infrastructural project. The World Bank has promised support of up to US$10.5 million to roll out broadband.[118] A Chinese company, ZTE Corporation, was selected for the infrastructural work, and a Burundian company, BBS Burundi Backbone Systems Company (BBS), won the bid to manage the process. In August 2012, the infrastructural work was launched in several provinces by the Government, which has announced its likely completion by the end of 2012. Nevertheless, the Government recently acknowledged that it would probably be at the end of 2013.

Even if the policies and strategies of Rwanda and Burundi (including the ones for ICTs) have so far mostly been elaborated and implemented at the national level, these national policies should increasingly be discussed and shared at a regional level, especially within the East African Community, jointly with Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda. Fiber-optic technology has necessitated engaging in regional debates about technical, commercial, and access issues, which should contribute to regional integration.

In DRC, internet policy also lags behind. An NGO 2007 report concluded: "At all levels, the DRC is currently a 'black hole' at the heart of Africa and therefore constitutes a burden and even a drag to the development of the whole continent."[119] Not much progress has been made since then, even though the Ministry of Post and Telecoms adopted a "Strategy for the Development of ICTs in the DRC" back in July 2009,[120] which aimed to ensure "universal access to ICTs across the whole territory" by 2015. Three years later, and after the Government announced in February 2011 that the connection of Kinshasa to the Atlantic fiber-optic system (the West African Cable System, WACS, project)[121] through Moanda (650 km) had been completed by the

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116. Masimba Tafirenyika, "Information technology super-charging Rwanda's economy. Country aspires to become a regional high-tech hub," *Africa Renewal*, April 2011, p. 18.

117. Rwanda was pinpointed by the last MSI report as "the only least developed country (LDC) to be among the most dynamic ICT Developement Index (IDI) countries. It achieved one of the highest improvements in ranking," even though it is still low (ITU, *Measuring the Information Society 2012*, Geneva, 2012, p. 28).

118. Observatoire de l'Action Gouvernementale (Observatory of the Government's Actions), "Le Burundi chemine vers une certaine révolution dans le secteur des TIC,"(Burundi's path to ICT revolution) 8 March 2012, at http://www.oag.bi/spip.php?article1455.

119. Alternatives, "Etude de faisabilité pour une dorsale Internet ouverte en République démocratique du Congo" (Feasibility study for an open Internet backbone in DR), June 2007, p. 143.

120. Ministère des Postes et Télécommunications du Congo, "Document de politique sectorielle. Stratégie de Développement du Secteur des telecommunications et des technologies de l'information et de la communication en RDC" (Sectoral Policy Document. Strategy for the Development of the telecom and ICTs sectors in DRC) July 2009.

121. WACS is a 14,000-km submarine cable linking the UK to South Africa, along the west coast of the continent. The project is funded by 14 public and private companies (mainly South African). It became operational on 12 May 2012.

China International Telecommunication Construction Corporation (CITCC), the connection is still not operational.[122]

As the work had to be completed before the forthcoming summit of the International Organization of Francophone Countries (*Organisation internationale de la Francophonie*, OIF), to be hosted by Kinshasa in October 2012, the minister in charge of ICTs had to explain this failure to Parliament at the beginning of June 2012.[123] The delay in the work, he admitted, was very simply due to the misappropriation of funds: more than US$3 million were embezzled by the SCPT (*Société commerciale des Postes et Télécommunications*), the Congolese company in charge of follow-up.[124]

Just as the future development of roads, airlines, and power-producing infrastructures in that giant country with ample resources will be crucial for the economic and social evolution of millions of people in Central Africa, a consistent strategy for ICTs and telecoms could leverage the economy and help improve living and working conditions.

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122. Given its huge dimensions, the eastern part of the country should be connected to broadband through the Indian Ocean cable (like Burundi and Rwanda), while the south-east would be connected through Southern Africa.

123. See the review of the Parliament Assembly on http://radiookapi.net/actualite/2012/06/07.

124. See the interview with the Minister of Posts and Telecommunications, Tryphon Kin Kiey Mulumba, on http://radiookapi.net/actualite/2012/06/10.

V. The Economics of News Production

Besides this difficult political and infrastructural environment, media development is hampered by the poor economic context. Most private media outlets in the region operate with very limited teams, with newsrooms comprising from two to 25 journalists. They are managed as individual businesses, but with a lack of accounting and planning skills. The accounting departments of media companies often have limited capacities for adequate book-keeping. Media ownership is not transparent, and even if the owner is known, the origins of the resources are often unclear, even for some of the outlets that are supported by foreign entities. Very few media companies have real business models, many are vehicles for individuals or political parties, and many more face survival problems due to management shortcomings and the weaknesses of the local advertising market.

V.1   Media Operating Budgets

Information about media budgets remains quite sensitive, and companies have no obligation to share their annual balance sheets. The identity of their shareholders is not always publicly declared.[125] The following data have been collected mainly through interviews with media managers in the different countries and as such are based solely on their declarations.

In DRC, media outlets have annual budgets that range from a few thousand US dollars (the community radio Sauti Ya Mkaji in Kasongo, Maniema, survives on US$10,000) to US$10 million (for Radio Okapi). In between, there is a range of different models and contexts. For instance, the daily *Le Potentiel* has a yearly budget of approximately US$480,000, which includes expenses pertaining to the radio station and television channel operated by the same group. Radio Maendeleo, one of the main community stations in eastern DRC, has an annual budget of around US$300,000, while Radio Television Mwangaza, in Lubumbashi, supports both broadcasting platforms with a similar budget.[126] At the other extreme, some newspapers

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125. In Rwanda, private media outlets have to register with RDB (Rwanda Developement Board), where they provide information about shareholders. In Burundi and DRC, licence applications are supposed to require a declaration of ownership. But doubts are often expressed about the authenticity of the information provided.

126. Frère, "Le paysage médiatique congolais."

survive on US$200 a month, which covers their printing costs, which are irregular. Radio Okapi and some of the major community radio stations (Radio Maendeleo in Bukavu, Radio Communautaire du Katanga in Lubumbashi) depend on foreign aid for survival.

In Rwanda, only community media such as Radio Izuba are dependent on foreign support: some US$ 50,000 of its annual budget of some US$167,000 are provided by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and other donations and partnerships. Sponsored programs, advertisements, and communiqués only bring in around US$17,000 per year. Other private broadcasters mainly live on commercials and sponsored programs. Contact FM, a private radio station in Kigali which broadcasts across a large part of the country, has a yearly budget of around US$580,000.

In Burundi, the picture is totally different: a 2011 study showed that the annual budgets of Radio Isanganiro (around US$500,000), RPA (US$450,000), and Radio Bonesha (US$200,000) were provided for by up to 85 percent foreign aid.[127] This support is either directly supplied to the budget or spent on buying air-time to broadcast programs to facilitate reconciliation and reconstruction. This is probably why Burundian media are very much involved in "peace journalism," a practice encouraged by many foreign NGOs. Most of their programs are sponsored by donors on specific themes (e.g., disarmament and reintegration of former rebels; violence towards women, refugees and returnees; and transitional justice). During listeners' focus groups organized in Bujumbura in May 2011, September 2011, and February 2012, some participants complained that journalists were constantly lecturing them, and so they tended to turn to more music and entertaining stations or to political debates.[128] Some stations are indeed aware of the risk of being boring, but they have to keep lecturing because this is how they get their money and preserve a measure of political independence.

The major expenses in media budgets are often concentrated on salaries, rent (very few media actually own their premises), energy (in the towns where power cuts are daily, broadcasters need to own and fuel their own generator), and telecoms. The absence of any motorized means of transport often confines journalists to the newsroom or to the boundaries of the city where their outlet is located.[129]

The high cost of telecoms is a burden for media outlets in Burundi. RPA in Bujumbura pays US$400 as a monthly subscription that allows only five computers to be connected, and with a very slow connection. As the station has started to broadcast online (streaming) in May 2012, the connection had to be upgraded, raising the bill to US$700. The weekly *Iwacu*, in Burundi, also used to pay US$400 per month for its connection, but was able to negotiate a partnership with the provider, trading advertising space for a good connection and a mobile phone network. Radio Maendeleo in Bukavu (eastern Congo) pays an internet subscription of US$1,200 a month, plus around US$350 in mobile phone bills. These are huge sums in a fragile media economy, although they may fall when the connection to the BBS has been completed.

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127. Sunzu Didace, "*Problématique de la survie des radios privées en période post-conflit au Burundi*" (The Problem of the Survival of Private Radio Stations in Post-conflict Burundi), master's thesis (master's in journalism), National University of Burundi, 2011.

128. Frère, "Une approche qualitative des auditoires des radios."

129. Frère, "Media Sustainability in a Post-Conflict Environment."

In Kigali, the cost of connection is much lower (Contact FM pays US$50 monthly for a high-speed connection), but it is more complicated in smaller towns. For instance, Radio Izuba in Kibungo has a US $670 monthly bill for the internet and cannot afford a fiber-optic connection.

During a conference on "Media and New Media," organized in Bujumbura by the IPP in May 2012,[130] most media owners from the region appeared to be very poorly informed about the rates and technical services provided, with the result that they are often ripped off by telecoms companies and providers. Most media managers are helpless in the face of rapid changes in the technologies on which they depend, do not understand their pricing, and are largely unable to cross-check information.

V.2   Unfavorable Conditions for Advertising

Advertising revenue is very limited in post-conflict countries, and the media face obstacles to finding the resources they need if they are to operate without foreign donors. One positive consequence of the growing telecoms market in the region is that most outlets (TV, radio, and press) get advertising revenue from mobile phone companies (led by MTN, Vodacom, and Airtel). Nevertheless, if telecoms and breweries are among the major advertisers in DRC, Rwanda, and Burundi,[131] the criteria they use to select outlets and negotiate contracts are often politically oriented.

In DRC, for instance, major advertisers direct their budgets not to the most popular outlets but to those that are politically close to the Government. The high number of outlets contributes to the precariousness of the sector, as the narrow advertising market is pressured by a plethora of competing companies. Against a backdrop of unregulated competition and an opaque contracting system, advertising revenue very often ends in the pockets of the owner or the staff members who negotiated the contract, rather than invested in the outlet itself.

In Rwanda too, the advertising market is under the influence of politics. Companies do not dare advertise in media outlets that criticize the regime. In a 2008 report, the MHC noted how unbalanced the advertising market was towards different outlets, and the sustainability problems that stemmed from that imbalance. Nevertheless, the rapid economic changes and the Government's proactive attitude to facilitating private business have helped to create a friendlier market for investors, including those in the media and telecoms sectors. Rwanda was ranked "number one reformer" in the World Bank's *Doing Business* report in 2010,[132] and ranked 45th (out of 183 countries) in 2011, while Burundi was ranked 169th, and DRC 178th. Reflecting this business-friendly atmosphere, media companies in Rwanda can get bank loans, which is not the case for companies in DRC and Burundi.

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130. See http://bujumburamediastic2012.org.

131. A 2008 study showed that telecoms companies (4) and breweries (2) constituted almost 76 percent of the advertisement revenue available for the DRC media. IMMAR, *Le marché publicitaire congolais* (*The Congolese advertising market*), unpublished report, Kinshasa, 2008.

132. *Doing Business* is an annual report produced by a project funded by the World Bank. It provides "provides objective measures of business regulations for local firms in 183 economies and selected cities at the subnational level." See http://www.doingbusiness.org/reports.

Moreover, potential advertisers are hampered by the lack of regular and reliable data about audiences. As explained above, very little market research exists to identify the real circulation of the newspapers or to get a clear picture of radio and TV audience profiles. Local companies feel often unconcerned about advertising in a context where most sectors were managed for decades by a single state-owned company enjoying a monopoly. Major international companies are reluctant to negotiate advertising contracts with so many local media unable to provide any data about their audience shares.[133]

V.3   Low Salaries and Precarious Working Conditions

Even if conditions might be better from a business point of view in Rwanda, journalists have low salaries at RwF 15,000–300,000 (US$25–500) and are often paid late. The average is around US$100 a month, although in a main newsroom like the *New Times*, editors can get up to US$1,000–1,200 a month. In DRC, journalists make US$50–150 a month, except for those working at Radio Okapi (who start at US$800–1,000). In Burundi, US$150 per month is also an average salary. Such low wages have an adverse effect on the quality of news productions and open the door to corruption and paid-for reporting.

In some media outlets in the three countries, journalists are not paid at all but can make a living out of the space and air-time they have access to in the media and try to find ways to profit from it. This is why the practice of paid-for reporting is so widespread. The French word "*coupage*" (cutting) in DRC, "*giti*" (tree) in Rwanda, and "*per diem*" or "*prise en charge totale*" (total support) in Burundi (where it is less practiced) designate the practice whereby journalists give coverage to those who wish to be quoted or be visible in the media in exchange for payment. In DRC, this practice is so widespread that standard rates are more or less established. Many journalists also compensate for their poor wages by doing something else outside the newsroom: they are employed as teachers, hired as consultants by NGOs, or become communications advisers to senior officials.

Most journalists in the three countries complain that their employers do not respect their legal obligations (no contract, no insurance, no contribution to health or pension fund…) and keep them in an informal economy. They also complain about having to spend their own money to do their job properly, for instance for transport and telecoms. Many journalists, especially in DRC, having limited internet access in their own newsrooms, have to use cyber-cafés to search for information or data, often paying out of their own pocket. While internet café fees are low in Rwanda (RwF 200 or US$0.33 per hour),[134] they are much higher in DRC (reaching US$2.50 per hour in Bukavu). Very few outlets provide credits for their journalists' mobile phones, and journalists complain that their professional calls are not refunded by the media manager, or when they are, the amount remains too low (US$10–20 a month).

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133. Frère, *Le paysage médiatique congolais.*"

134. Journalists with their own laptop can also subscribe to a mobile modem (US$35 monthly).

V.4 Donor Activity

Several categories of international actors have supported the media sectors in DRC, Rwanda, and Burundi over the past 15 years. In DRC, the only media outlet with national scope, Radio Okapi, is totally foreign-funded. In Burundi, most private outlets dealing with news and information depend heavily on donors for their survival.

This situation raises questions about sustainability, ownership, the coordination of donor strategies, and the local authorities' policies.

The same bodies are involved in media support in all three countries:

■ INGOs and foundations, including SFCG, Internews, La Benevolencija, Panos Paris Institute (*Institut Paris Panos*, IPP), Group for Research and Technological Exchanges (GRET), the Open Society Foundations, IREX, Development and Peace, and Syfia International.

■ Bilateral donors, including the Department for International Development (DfID) (UK), French and Belgian ministries of foreign affairs, USAID, Swedish International Development Aid (SIDA), the SDC, and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) especially in DRC and Rwanda.

■ Multilateral donors, including the European Union (EU), the OIF, and the various United Nations agencies (UNDP, UNESCO, etc.), which implement their own programs or entrust their funds to private or public implementing agencies.

In countries recovering from armed conflict, donors' activities have focussed on strengthening the capacities of the media to contribute to peace- and democracy-building. Several projects have been designed around the concept of peace journalism or conflict-sensitive media coverage, aiming at making the media contribute to peace-building.[135] Other initiatives addressed other stakeholders in the media landscape. Five types of activities have been implemented:[136]

■ Direct support to existing media, in the form of budgetary support to media outlets, supplying equipment, or supporting the production or dissemination of targeted programs.

■ Creating neutral and non-political media and content, a frequent strategy in post-conflict countries, especially to accompany UN peacekeeping missions; includes the production of needs-based and behavior-change programming for the education, health, agricultural sectors, and development in general.

■ Media staff training, often adopted by donors who are reluctant to support one specific outlet and therefore support short-term sessions or local training institutions.

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135. This approach has been widely used in training sessions or as an underlying principle to support media production. See, for instance, R. Howard, "Conflict Censitive Journalism," International Media Support, Copenhagen, 2003, at http:// www.i-m-s.dk/files/publications/IMS_CSJ_ Handbook.pdf; R. Howard, F. Rolt, H. van de Veen and J. Verhoeven (eds), *The Power of the Media. A Handbook for Peacebuilders*, European Center for Conflict Prevention, Amsterdam, 2003.

136. For a detailed account of DRC, see Frère, "DRC. Case Study on Donor Support."

- Support to professional organizations and associations: journalists' unions, self-regulatory bodies, press centers.

- Information and consolidation of public institutions in charge of organizing the media sector: professionalization of regulatory authorities, lobbying members of parliament to promote legal reform.

Most of these donors and NGOs have been involved in all three countries, where these strategies were implemented with different budgets and priorities. Initially, most of those interventions took place with very little consultation or cooperation between the operators, resulting in initiatives that were sometimes complementary and sometimes conflicting or redundant. In DRC and Burundi, groups of donors have been established to improve information exchange.

Because the wars in the region have affected neighboring countries and instability does not respect borders, many donors and operators have developed regional programs, targeting the three countries together. SFCG, IPP, GRET, Syfia International, and Eirene Suisse are five international NGOs with these kinds of programs: trying to improve connections, collaboration, and information circulation between the media of DRC, Rwanda, and Burundi. For instance, SFCG has launched a weekly youth radio program ("Generation Great Lakes"), broadcast on radio stations in the three countries, aiming at gathering the youth audience around common concerns. IPP has developed a network of 12 radio stations in the region which share an online platform where they can post and exchange recorded material about regional issues (http://www.echos-grandslacs.info).[137] Syfia Grands Lacs (http://www.syfia-grands-lacs.info) is producing features available on their website and published in locally in paper format.

Several support programs have been designed to help media make more efficient use of ICTs: provision of digital equipment, internet connection via satellite receivers, technical support to develop online services, digitization of analog archives, and training. For instance, five community radios from DRC benefitted from the Catalysing Access to Information Technologies in Africa project (CATIA),[138] funded by DfID from 2004 to 2006.

These projects faced problems, however, related to the lack of infrastructure (electricity, fixed phone lines) and of the skills needed to maintain equipment. Equipment of different origins was provided with no concern for compatibility with the existing systems. Many media outlets ended up with ICT equipment that they could not easily manipulate, use or repair.

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137. Frère, "Media Sustainability in a Post-Conflict Environment."

138. CATIA was a £9 million (around US$15 million) program from 2003 to 2007, aimed at helping 80 African community radios to get online. In DRC, five stations were supposed to become regional hubs, but infrastructural problems (lack of electricity, absence of maintenance for satellite dishes, etc.) slowed down the process. See http://www.apc.org/en/projects/accessibility/africa/catalysing-access-icts-africa-catia. See also Mary Myers, *Radio and Development in Africa. A Concept Paper*, International Development Research Center, Ottawa, August 2008.

DRC

Donor support to media in DRC between 2001 and 2011 was substantial, amounting to some US$80 million, with DfID and USAID as the main contributors.[139] More than half of these funds were spent on Radio Okapi. The second-biggest project was Centre Lokolé, established in 2001 by SFCG as a production center to provide local radio and television stations with programs on peace-building and reconciliation, and tackle all issues of a post-conflict environment. Centre Lokolé employs 85 people and has opened offices in six towns, mainly in eastern Congo, with an annual operating budget of more than US$4 million.

A Multi-Donor Group for the Media (*Groupe Inter-Bailleurs Médias*, GIBM) was established in 2005, to improve coordination before the elections. From this initiative, a joint program emerged in 2008 funded by the UK, Sweden, and France, managed by a French organization, France Expertise International (FEI), and operating through tenders open to local and international applicants. Between 2008 and 2012, this basket fund spent some €12 million on media projects and organizations.[140]

In January 2011, Internews also began to implement a project mainly focussed on supporting 50 radio stations in four provinces, in collaboration with Foundation Hirondelle. Funded by USAID, the program is supported by up to US$15 million in 2011–2016.[141]

Many other specialized NGOs are bringing support to community radio in the countryside: the IPP; RNTC (Radio Nederland Training Center, which became Free Press Unlimited in 2010); Development and Peace (a Canadian Catholic organization); and La Benevolencija, which is mainly active in eastern Congo.

An assessment made by the present author in 2011 showed that these interventions had negative as well as positive consequences, and raised several issues about media support in a country like DRC.[142]

Rwanda

While many INGOs have also been involved in Rwanda, supporting media development in the post-conflict context, total donations seem to have been smaller than in neighboring countries. A first assessment by Jean-Paul Kimonyo in 2004, covering the 1992–2003 period,[143] found that the main support had been provided for the rehabilitation of the state media (€6.3 million funded by the German organization, GTZ); this project started before the war and the genocide, with a contribution from France, but Paris did not resume cooperation with the new regime after the RPF came to power.

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139. Frère, "DRC. Case Study on Donor Support," p. 15.

140. For more information, see http://www.fei.gouv.fr/fr/nos-projets/focus-sur/projet-a.htm.l

141. See http://www.internews.org/where-we-work/sub-saharan-africa/democratic-republic-congo.

142. Frère, "DRC. Case Study on Donor Support," p. 15.

143. J.-P. Kimonyo, N. Twagiramungu, and C. Kayumba, *Supporting the Post-Genocide Transition in Rwanda. The Role of the International Community*, Netherlands Institute of International Relations "Clingendael," December 2004 (hereafter Kimonyo et al., *Supporting the Post-Genocide Transition in Rwanda*).

After the war,[144] support was provided:

- to establish a School of Journalism and Communication at the National University of Rwanda

- to create collective organizations of journalists (such as the Rwanda Press House created in 1998 with the support of UNESCO and the Association of Rwanda Journalists)

- to update and liberalize the legal framework (necessary to open up the airwaves to private operators)

- to sustain selected private media outlets, such as the newspaper *Umuseso*

The UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office and DfID also provided support to the Press House and several private newspapers. According to Mr Kimonyo, not only did this support allow those papers to survive, but also the relations with foreign donors prevented the staff from being jailed several times.

Many occasional training sessions were also organized to consolidate the skills of journalists who were new on the job (half of Rwanda's journalists having been killed in the genocide).[145]

Internews (mainly supported by USAID), La Benevolencija (with initial funding from the Netherlands) and the IPP (implementing an EU-funded program) became involved in Rwanda at the beginning of the 2000s. These organizations were faced at some point by problems with the Rwandan authorities, which have often accused INGOs of imposing their views and projects on weak local organizations and circumventing government policies. Many local organizations have also denounced the "tyranny of international assistance," where they must comply with donors' strategies—even if they disagree with them—because they need the money.[146] On the other hand, INGOs have had problems with the Government's desire to control all their activities and those of their partners in civil society. Some of these INGOs, feeling that they were not getting the autonomy they required to operate, suspended their programs.

Burundi

International support for the media has been very substantial in Burundi as well, especially considering the small size of the country.

After the 1994 genocide in neighboring Rwanda, Burundi turned into a kind of laboratory for peace journalism practitioners. Studio Ijambo was established by SFCG in Bujumbura in 1995, and strongly influenced all the significant radio stations that were created subsequently. Radio Bonesha, RPA, and Radio Isanganiro were all

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144. Two emergency and humanitarian projects were implemented in 1994 after the genocide. Radio Agatashya was established by the Fondation Hirondelle in the refugee camps of eastern Congo in order to counter the propaganda from the defeated government that was circulating among Hutu refugees. It closed down in 1996 when the refugee camps were dispersed by the Army for the Liberation of Rwanda (*Armée pour la Libération du Rwanda*, ALiR). The second one was Radio UNAMIR (from the UN Assistance Mission to Rwanda), which broadcast until the mission closed down in 1996.

145. For an anthropological perspective on the peace journalism issues in Rwanda, see A. Laliberté, *Le journalisme entre guerre et paix au Rwanda* (Journalism between war and peace in Rwanda), Presse de l'Université Laval, Québec, 2012.

146. Kimonyo et al., *Supporting the Post-Genocide Transition in Rwanda.*

created with foreign support and the aim of contributing to peace-building. In contrast to what happened in DRC, the national RTNB also received substantial support (€3 million in 2005–2008, from Belgium), in order to update its equipment and attempt conversion into a public service broadcaster.

The main INGOs active in media assistance are, again, the IPP, La Benevolencija, SFCG, and the Syfia International network, while other organizations support the private radio stations (GRET for a couple of years, then Eirene Suisse).

Here also, the main donors (UK, Sweden, Belgium, France, Netherlands) have formed a group and established a basket fund: the Common Action Plan for Support to the Media during the Elections (*Plan d'Action Commun d'Appui aux Médias*, PACAM), created in 2009, which aimed to foster greater coordination between programs among donors and implementing agencies before the 2010 elections.

PACAM's budget amounted to US$2 million in 2009–2010,[147] mainly provided by UNDP (electoral basket fund), the EU, France (which provided an expatriate for the coordination), DfID (UK)/ASDI (Sweden),[148] Switzerland, USAID, and the OIF.[149] A new program, PACAM2, is presently starting (with an expected budget of €3.5 million for the next two years), but the local media are very critical of the system. Indeed, the private media managers believe the program corresponds much more to the aims and needs of INGOs than to those of the local media, which need financial and technical resources much more than training. They therefore perceive INGOs as costly go-betweens that benefit from the funds that should go to the local media.

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147. These funds were split into: support for regulation, training and production of electoral programs (US$1,009,230), media synergy (joint coverage of polling day) of radio, TV, and press (US$651,366, including US$335,305 of air-time paid to media outlets to broadcast the programs), and equipment (US$182,765).

148. These two donors work jointly in Burundi with a single person in charge of monitoring support both to media and to civil society.

149. L. Toussaint and D. Kasmi, "Evaluation PACAM Burundi Elections 2010" (Assessment of the Joint Action Plan for Media Support Elections 2010), PACAM, Bujumbura, December 2010.

VI. Potential of New Media for Improving the Scope and Quality of Information

Connectivity is still pretty low in all three countries, even though progress is being made (see section *I.1*). The development of the internet and mobile telephony has nevertheless brought major changes in the information sector, in a region where the lack of freely and widely circulating information has probably fueled mass violence.[150]

Six recent improvements in media operations and journalistic practices in Central Africa, linked to the growing use of ICTs, should be underlined. News collection, production, distribution, and archiving have been greatly facilitated by the internet, mobile phones, and other digital equipment. These technologies have also allowed progress in the field of journalists' protection and training opportunities.[151]

VI.1 Changing Professional Practice

The internet and mobile phones have given Congolese, Rwandan, and Burundian journalists an unprecedented opportunity to access multiple sources of information about what is going on in their own countries. Reports from INGOs and international organizations, as well as foreign media content, are now widely accessible, in a situation where media companies could not even afford a single subscription to a press agency. In March 2012, when the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights issued her report on the violation of human

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150. A Belgian reporter, who specializes in the Great Lakes region, has argued that the 1994 genocide in Rwanda might not have happened if the country had not been totally landlocked (telephone fixed lines were interrupted at the start of the massacre), and that the peace process in DRC has been facilitated by the improvement of communications in this huge country thanks to ICTs. This is Colette Braeckman of *Le Soir* (The Evening), cited in M.-S. Frère, "News Media Use of ICTs amidst War, Violence and Political Turmoil in the Central African Great Lakes," in F.O. Muddhai and F. Banda (eds), *Africa and the Digital Public Sphere*, Palgrave MacMillan, Basingstoke, 2009, p.225 (hereafter Frère, "News Media Use of ICTs").

151. Frère, "News Media Use of ICTs," pp.223–238.

rights during the most recent elections in DRC, the report was immediately available and discussed in the Kinshasa press the following day.[152] The same happened with the "Report of the Mapping Exercise" about human rights violations, issued by the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) in 2010.[153] In Burundi, in May 2012, the presentation by Human Rights Watch of its most recent report about the political situation was banned by the Government, but all the media could get access to the report online anyway.[154]

By multiplying the sources available for journalists, ICTs have enabled media professionals in the region to verify and check information and thereby provide more balanced, reliable, and rigorous news. Since 2000, most media in DRC, Rwanda, and Burundi have gone online. Even if their sites are probably not widely accessed from the neighboring countries, due to low connectivity and a lack of habit, they have increased global visibility and allowed journalists in one country to know what colleagues in neighboring countries write about an event. As shown above, some projects are devoted to facilitating the online circulation of information among media in the region, such as the "Echos des Grands Lacs" (Great Lakes' Echoes) radio news agency, promoted by IPP, or Syfia Grands Lacs, a regional press agency.[155] Many journalists also declare that they listen to foreign and international radio stations on the web.[156]

Newly available software has strengthened newsrooms' capacity in several ways, with cost-free monitoring of specific issues on the web; searching and sorting relevant information; and the easy translation of relevant documents.[157]

Mobile phones have also transformed journalists' practices, filling the gaps created by poor communications infrastructure. For instance, the important part played by the Burundian radio stations which let rebel leaders explain their claims to the audience was greatly facilitated by the mobile phone. SMS has also become an easy and efficient way to alert journalists about any event or organized press conferences.[158] Journalists in the region can now more easily get directly in touch with senior officials, without having to wait for hours at their office or being constantly turned away by their secretariat.

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152. "Report of the United Nations Joint Human Rights Office on Serious Human Rights Violations Committed by Members of the Congolese Defense and Security Forces in Kinshasa in the Democratic Republic of the Congo between 26 November and 25 December 2011," at http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/ZR/ReportDRC_26Nov_25Dec2011_en.pdf.

153. "Report of the Mapping Exercise documenting the most serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law committed within the territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo between March 1993 and June 2003," United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNOHCHR), Geneva, August 2010, at http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/ZR/DRC_MAPPING_REPORT_FINAL_EN.pdf.

154. See http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/burundi0512frForUpload_0.pdf.

155. See http://www.echos-grandslacs.info and http://www.syfia-grands-lacs.info.

156. E. Damome, "Radios africaines et Internet: usages, fonctions et défis" (African radio and the internet: uses, functions and challenges), in A. Lenoble-Bart and A. Cheneau-Loquay, *Les médias africains à l'heure du numérique* (African media in the digital era), *Netsuds* 5 (September 2010), pp. 69–88.

157. It should be noted that if English is spreading among young people in the capital cities of Burundi and DRC, many journalists from the two countries have a limited knowledge of this language, especially in community stations inside the country.

158. N. Ouendji, "Médias et TIC. Les SMS au coeur de la pratique journalistique" (Media and ICTs; SMS at the heart of journalistic practice), in A. Lenoble-Bart and A. Cheneau-Loquay, *Les médias africains à l'heure du numérique* (African media inbthe digital era), *Netsuds* 5 (September 2010), pp. 101–123 (hereafter Ouendji, "Médias et TIC").

In newsrooms, mobile phones have also compensated for shortages of other equipment: journalists use them to take pictures for their newspapers (or radio websites), to record interviews, or even to shoot video for broadcasting. Norbert Ouendji has shown that some newspapers decided to stop employing photographers, as so many journalists were equipped with mobile phones.[159]

Moreover, digital technologies have been able to increase the "memory" of the media, which lack the equipment and resources to keep track of their output in an easy, cheap, and more sustainable format. Archiving has been greatly improved by digitization, for newsrooms as well as outside observers and monitors.[160] While the process is too recent to conclude that this "memory" will change journalists' working methods, it has already increased the sense of social responsibility of many journalists. Indeed, the fact that evidence from broadcasting can be more easily kept encourages the media to be more cautious. It also prevents undue prosecution when media are accused of having broadcast libelous or unfair information but are now able to demonstrate that they did not.

VI.2   Increasing the Potential for Participation

Digital technologies have greatly increased audience participation. Participatory talk shows have benefitted from the availability of mobile phones and provide opportunities for a much wider portion of the audience to make their voices heard, be it by political leaders or other members of the community. During listeners' panels organized in the three countries in May 2011, many participants said their favorite program was "any program that allows us to participate," stating that "radios are there to give us a voice."[161] This is why, besides participatory debates on current events, "greetings" programs are also hugely popular.

Talk shows have paved the way for the popularity of private radio stations in Burundi, and are also very much appreciated in DRC and Rwanda.[162] Tough presenters have not always been able to control listeners, who express themselves without restraint. Such mishaps have led the regulatory bodies to suspend (or intervene in) some of these shows. In April 2006, in the course of a live program by Radio Contact FM in Rwanda, devoted to the commemoration of the 1994 genocide, an anonymous listener stated that he was one of those ready to "finish the work" (i.e., to complete the genocide of the Tutsi people). The broadcast was interrupted at once, and the caller was traced and arrested. The regulator considered whether live phone-in programs

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159. N. Ouendji, "Téléphonie mobile et médias en Afrique: l'avènement des reporters mobiphotographes au Cameroun" (Mobile Phones and Media in Africa: the Emergence of Mobile Photo-reporters in Cameroon), in A.C. Pangop Kameni (ed.), *Transferts médiatiques entre l'Europe et l'Afrique francophone : Approches théoriques, Regards croisés, Dynamiques d'appropriation* (Media transfers between Europe and French-speaking Africa: Theoretical approaches, crossed views, ownership dynamics), *Lendemains* 138/139, Saarbrücken (September 2010), pp. 46–68.

160. In Burundi, the monitoring center of the Central African Media Organization (*Organisation des médias d'Afrique central*, OMAC) is equipped with digital tools that allow recording of all the daily newscasts by local radio stations in order to summarize and analyse them. In Rwanda, the MHC is equipped with similar technology, as is the CSAC in DRC.

161. Frère, "Une approche qualitative des auditoires des radios."

162. In Burundi, the participatory talk show "*Kabizi*" (on the private station RPA) is hugely popular, as is, for instance, "*Dialogue entre Congolais*" (Dialogue between Congolese) from Radio Okapi in Bukavu and Goma. In Rwanda, the very popular BBC program "*Imvo n'Imvano*" is also participatory.

should be banned, but decided instead to issue specific guidelines for this kind of program.[163] In DRC, following many complaints from public authorities and individuals about abuses during call-in programs, the regulator ruled that such programs must be presented by professional journalists.[164]

SMS have also encouraged audience participation, as they provide a cheap way to channel opinions or information to the newsrooms. They are widely used for participatory programs on radio and TV, allowing the presenter to better control and sometimes filter the content.[165] Thanks to email and mobile phones, journalists are easily reachable, and many reporters testify how much the audience members have become news providers.[166]

Comments posted on forums and online debates are another new way of participating. Nevertheless, participation remains limited due to the low level of internet access in these countries. In Burundi, the most popular news website (belonging to *Iwacu* newspaper), with 6,000 visitors daily,[167] receives some 200 comments a day.[168] In DRC, Radiookapi.net receives around 33,000 visits daily (around 1 million a month, most from within DRC), and 3,500–4,000 comments monthly.[169] In Rwanda, the most popular website, Igihe.com, receives relatively few comments. Online debates allow real discussion among web users, and therefore among audience members, whereas phone-in programs or letters to the editor do not establish a dialog.

VI.3   Consolidating Professional Status

By allowing instant and worldwide information circulation, the internet and mobile phones have also helped to connect local journalists to the outside world and raise awareness of their situations and problems.

Thanks to ICTs, the organization *Journaliste en danger* has built a network in DRC to defend press freedom, becoming a key player in the media landscape and one of the most recognized media organizations in the region. Established in 1997, it could only fulfill its mission from 1999 onward after the internet and mobile phones came into play, according to its president Donat M'Baya. Mobile phones allow JED to be informed quickly of anything happening to a media professional, even in the most remote parts of the country, where there are no fixed lines. The internet makes it possible for JED to circulate information instantly to thousands of partners abroad (including IFEX, Reporters without Borders, and the Committee to Protect Journalists, CPJ), and engage in lobbying.

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163. Frère, "After the Hate Media," pp. 327–352.

164. High Authority of the Media, *Report of Activities,* August–September 2005, p. 5.

165. Norbert Ouendji argues that SMS are sometimes prefered to open calls because they allow a form of censorship by the presenter: Ouendji, "Médias et TIC," pp. 101–123.

166. A. Cheneau-Loquay, *Modes d'appropriation innovants du telephone mobile en Afrique* (Innovative uses of the mobile phone in Africa), ITU/French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Geneva, 2010 (hereafter Cheneau-Loquay, *Modes d'appropriation innovants du telephone mobile en Afrique*).

167. See http://www.iwacu-burundi.org/spip.php?article2989.

168. See http://www.iwacu-burundi.org/spip.php?article3359.

169. Data provided by Nicolas Boissez, Fondation Hirondelle, Lausanne, 22 October 2012.

ICTs have certainly helped Congolese, Rwandan, and Burundian journalists to engage in issues at the continental level, such as lobbying for laws on access to information or reforms to put an end to prison sentences for press offenses.

Internet access also provides local journalists with new opportunities for training, in a context of generally poor or non-existent journalism education. For instance, the Toute l'Offre de Formation pour les Radios Africaines Associatives, Communautaires et Educatives (TOFRRAACE) website provides online training, mainly for community radio staff in Africa.[170] IPP has published and circulated training material by CD-ROM and many journalism handbooks can be downloaded from the internet. No fewer than six recent handbooks are available online advising African journalists how to produce good-quality electoral coverage.

VI.4   Towards a More Powerful Fourth Estate

Since Senegal's presidential election in 2000, African media and journalists have seen the new communications technologies as tools of empowerment, which strengthen their capacity to influence public policy issues and events. In that campaign, for the first time on the continent, the joint organization of journalists equipped with mobile phones and distributed around the polling stations allowed a mechanism of supervision that increased electoral transparency and limited the extent of fraud.[171]

The same strategies and devices were used later with elections in Burundi and DRC, where the media assembled teams of journalists deployed all over the country, equipped with mobile phones. In Burundi in 2005, journalists sometimes had to climb trees to get a better connection to the network, but they sent word to the capital of the results from each local polling station as soon as they were announced. A collaborative newsroom in Bujumbura could check later if these results tallied with those published by the electoral commission. Mobile phones have allowed the circulation of other data than those made available by the National Electoral Commission, enabling the latter to be cross-checked.[172]

This alternative circulation of information, beyond the state's control, has sometimes put the authorities in an uncomfortable position. In DRC, following the 2011 flawed elections, the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications suspended all SMS services for three weeks, arguing that these messages could have a negative impact on security in a very tense period. Organizations defending human rights and press freedom immediately stood up to underline the importance of these services for channeling opinions and information in DRC, including views that contradicted the government.[173]

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170. See http://tofrraace.mediafrica.net.

171. Cheneau-Loquay, *Modes d'appropriation innovants du telephone mobile en Afrique*.

172. Frère, *Elections and the Media in Post-Conflict Countries*.

173. Statement of National Network of Congolese Human Rights NGO (Réseau National des ONGs des Droits de l'Homme, RENADHOC) on the suspension of SMS communications in the DRC, at http://en.rsf.org/spip.php?page=article&id_article=41597.

VI.5   New Challenges, New Stakes

ICTs bring new challenges as well as new opportunities. Increasing the access to information without improving education on how to use and verify the authenticity of online data can aggravate the risk of manipulation, and cut-and-paste journalism, with no concern for copyright, has become common in the press.

The internet also, of course, allows people to access partisan content (sometimes verging on hate speech) that circulates on the internet, mainly from the exiled diaspora. In 2004, the Burundian press agency Net Press was convicted for having provided a link to a foreign website considered to be channeling hate speech.[174] Another Burundian website (http://nyabusorongo.org) is fanning the embers of ethnic feelings that led to the civil war by identifying and publishing details of Hutu and Tutsi individuals who belong to civil society organizations or work for international organizations, and identifying in this way many of them by ethnicity.[175]

It has been publicly suggested that the Burundian regulator, the CNC, should and could intervene against websites involved with stoking ethnic hatred online. For its part, the CNC has said that it is powerless in the face of proliferating websites that are not officially registered, are hosted on foreign servers, and have no clearly identifiable owner.[176]

The enabling power of ICTs should not be underestimated, but the challenge of an emerging citizen journalism, practiced by non-professionals who may not even be aware of professional ethics and may themselves be politically manipulated, is present in Central Africa—as elsewhere.

Moreover, ICTs may be enabling for journalists, but they do not solve the problem of the lack of ethics or the widespread practice of paid-for journalism. While the opportunities for audience participation are multiplying, they can still be monopolized and exploited by a small, well-organized minority to make its voice heard more loudly. ICTs cannot guarantee that other voices will not continue to go unheard.

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174. Frère, "After the Hate Media," pp. 327–352.

175. See http://nyabusorongo.org.

176. See http://www.iwacu-burundi.org/spip.php?article3884.

VII. An Agenda of Feasible Reforms

The contribution of ICTs to improving the quality of media in Central Africa and empowering journalists is undeniable. Yet huge constraints on ownership remain, both for newsrooms and for the audience. Prospects for implementing feasible reforms depend on government policy and commitment, as much as on the evolution of the media and telecoms landscape, the organization of newsrooms, and the training of journalists.

VII.1 Infrastructural Challenges

The World Summits on the Information Society (WSIS), organized in 2003 in Geneva and 2005 in Tunis, have underlined the importance of ensuring universal access to ICTs, respecting the three dimensions of availability, accessibility, and affordability.[177]

A major prerequisite deserves to be pinpointed concerning availability. The provision and stability of electricity nationwide, particularly in rural areas where most people live, remains a huge challenge in the three Great Lakes countries. Indeed, access to electricity is limited to 14 percent of the population in Rwanda, 11.1 percent in DRC (which has the third-greatest hydroelectricity potential in the world), and 2.5 percent in Burundi.[178] Especially in the countryside, people may have to travel several kilometers to find a generator that they can use to charge their mobile phone battery.

Public investment is needed to develop broadband access. Rwanda has completed the provision of broadband to 30 districts directly connected to the EASSy. Burundi lags behind but has committed itself to undertaking the necessary infrastructural work before the end of 2013. The challenge for DRC is as huge as the country itself, and bids have ranged from US$250 million to US$1 billion for projects to connect the country to broadband. The state will not be able to support the full cost, because the burden of investment is too heavy

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177. ITU/InfoDev, *Accès et Service Universels* (Universal Access and Services), Module 4, Toolkit on the regulation of ICT, available at www.ictregu-lationtoolkit.org/en/Section.3126.html.

178. See http://www.newtimes.co.rw/news/index.php?i=14969&a=52742.

for cash-strapped governments, making it difficult to cope with constant and fast changes in technologies. The capacity of the private sector to step in is uncertain.

The private sector invested heavily to ensure extensive mobile coverage of the various countries, as soon as it appeared that they could increase profits if they extended geographical reach and provided innovative services.[179] In Rwanda, MTN claims to cover 97.9 percent of the territory (and 97.73 percent of the population), Tigo covers 74.37 percent of the country (and 90.90 percent of the people), and Airtel Rwanda only 3 percent of the territory (9 percent of the population).[180] Once again, good-quality national coverage is especially challenging for DRC, given the size of the country, which inhibits accessing remote places in cost-effective ways. A 2011 report concluded that "up to 80 percent of the population could be reached on a commercially viable basis, but the remaining 20 percent are dispersed across remote areas that cannot be covered without some degree of public subsidy."[181] Moreover, each of the mobile companies has a different area of coverage: connectivity problems between the several networks and coverage limitations also prompt mobile phone users to use multiple devices or multiple SIM cards to switch between operators.[182]

VII.2 Access Costs

Affordability is also an issue in the Great Lakes region. Infrastructural shortcomings mean that the cost of access remains high, even if it is falling steadily. In 2007, 24-hour internet access cost US$85.95 monthly in Burundi and US$79.74 in Rwanda.[183] It is now down to US$36 in Burundi and US$27 in Rwanda. A monthly subscription via mobile modem still costs US$120 in the DRC. The size of the market remains limited because the poor and mainly rural population cannot yet participate as viable ICT consumers. Mobile devices have become relatively cheap, thanks to the booming retail and second-hand markets, and the numerous mobile-phone crafters who can fix damaged devices. By June 2012, mobile teledensity in Rwanda had reached 44.4 percent (against 0.41 percent for fixed lines).[184]

Therefore, increasing access to the internet will depend on growth in the telecoms market: given the limited number of computers, smart phones and tablets will probably compensate, if they become available in cheaper formats. The private sector will need to design some appropriate strategies, taking into account the fact that most people live on less than US$1.25 per day. For instance, pre-paid mobile phone top-ups are already designed for the local context, allowing users to top up for as little as US$1 at a time. A huge majority

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179. Profits in the telecoms sector grew from US$10 million in 2001 to US$74 million in 2010.

180. RURA, *Statistics and Tariff Information in Telecom Sector as of June 2012*, Kigali, p. 6 (hereafter RURA, *Statistics and Tariff Information*).

181. V. Foster and D. Alberto Benitez, "The Democratic Republic of Congo's Infrastructure. A Continental Perspective," World Bank, Africa Region, Policy Research Working Paper 5602, March 2011, p.17.

182. African Mobile Observatory, "Driving Economic and Social Development through Mobile Services," London, December 2011, p. 12 (hereafter African Mobile Laboratory, "Development through Mobile Services"), at http://www.mobileactive.org/research.

183. ITU, *African Telecommunication/ICT Indicators 2008: At a Crossroads*, ITU, Geneva, 2008. No data were available for DRC after 2004. During the same period, in 2006, 24 hours of internet connection in developed countries (which have a level of revenue much higher than the Great Lakes countries) cost per month US$31.29 in France, US$29.02 in the UK, and US$14.95 in the United States.

184. RURA, *Statistics and Tariff Information*.

of the consumers are pre-paid subscribers (almost 5 million of the Rwandan mobile subscribers are pre-paid, compared with only around 17,000 post-paid); 99.5 percent of Congolese mobile phone users also use pre-paid services.[185]

Regarding information content on mobiles, collaborations between content producers (media newsrooms) and content transmitters (mobile networks) could be of major importance in the future in order to disseminate public information widely. Already, even the most basic mobile phones allow the reception of radio broadcasting on FM, but media have to be creative and think of other ways to reach the audience on diverse platforms, and at a cost that suits local capacities.

VII.3 Commitment of All Stakeholders to Improve Accessibility

In the current context, the government and the public institutions responsible for telecoms, computers, internet, and media should commit to an appropriate policy for improving accessibility. Numerous experiments in collective access to both telephone and internet services (community multimedia centers, cyber-cafés, and so forth) have been carried out in the three countries, facilitated by private or public funding, local NGOs or international donors. In DRC, some radio stations have been equipped by the IPP so that they can be turned into cyber-cafés. These collective access opportunities have encouraged the consumption of media online (especially foreign television), but they remain limited outside of the major towns.

The issue of access to computers and internet connections is relevant for the journalists as well as the audience. As shown above, most journalists have very limited access to the web within the newsrooms. The conclusion drawn by Guy Berger years ago for Southern Africa still applies to Central Africa up to now: "It is necessary to go beyond establishing the actual existence of computers in southern African newsrooms. In many cases these devices do not work, and a great many more are not even connected to the Internet. This is not even to investigate the models and performance of those devices that are wired. Even as regards unwired computers, in many cases journalists queue to share these rather than have personal workstations."[186] Media companies should develop strategies so that journalists do not have to use cyber-cafés and pay from their pocket to get connected.

The issue of access is also on the agenda for the final switch to digital broadcasting planned by the ITU for 2015 for television[187] and 2020 for radio broadcasting. The most vulnerable community media have not yet solved the problem of investment costs related to radio switch-over, and no one knows how the most impoverished members of the audience will be able to afford to equip themselves with new digital receivers.

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185. African Mobile Laboratory, "Development through Mobile Services."

186. G. Berger (ed.), *Doing Digital Journalism. How Southern Africa newsgatheres are using ICTs*, Highway Africa-Rhodes University, Grahamstown, 2005, p. 9.

187. The 13th Forum on Telecommunication/ICT Regulation and Partnership in Africa (FTRA-2012), held in June 2012 in Gabon, was devoted to "Analogue to digital television migration: sharing experiences, migration, strategies and digital divide." It appeared clearly in the debates that the majority of the African countries were not at all ready to meet the deadline imposed by the ITU: see http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/afr/events/FTRA/2012/index.html.

All stakeholders, both public and private, should have regular opportunities to meet, discuss, and reach decisions on the issues raised by digital switch-over and convergence, in countries where radio remains the most accessible medium.

Last but not least, accessibility is also linked to stability in a region where conflicts continue. Insecurity still prevails in eastern DRC as well as in some parts of Burundi, and this slows down the outlook for ICT penetration which should target universal access, as both infrastructural work and free circulation of the population are difficult where living conditions are unsafe.

VII.4 Upgrading Skills of Media Professionals

The increase of media capacity as a result of ICTs depends also on the availability of enough skilled professionals to maintain the equipment, and also to give advice from a legal, engineering or computer science point of view. Special skills also have to be spread among media professionals, as ICTs are not yet fully utilized to improve the quality and dissemination of the news produced: expertise in digital editing, for online research, and for online publishing is much needed.[188] Skills are not only technical but also ethical, as new challenges arise from the wide availability of data from unknown sources—and of hate speech. Journalists must stand by their professional codes of conduct and be aware of these new challenges.

Training in this field has been so far either an individual initiative (self-training, mainly through resources found on the web, or peer-to-peer training in newsrooms), or an organized collective offer from donors or international NGOs. Media companies themselves have very seldom had the capacity to invest in ICT training for their staff, except for major foreign-funded media such as Radio Okapi in DRC. A positive point is that professional institutions have been established in the three countries that can now provide training on ICTs for journalists and technical staff. In Burundi, the Press House is conducting or hosting several projects that can provide such assistance: an equipped newsroom is available for training, and a fully digital radio and television studio was established by the Burundian Association of Broadcasters (*Association Burundaise des Radiodiffuseurs*, ABR). In Rwanda, the GLMC can also assist the local media staff willing to learn how to make better use of ICTs.

At the level of basic journalism education—a master's degree in Journalism at the National University of Burundi, the Journalism and Communication School of the National University of Rwanda, or the Faculty Institute of Information Science and Communication (*Institut facultaire des sciences de l'information et de la communication*, IFASIC) in DRC—curricula need to be adapted to meet the new challenges of both practice and ethics. New curricula also have to be designed for technical roles in media production. Educational institutions, even those established recently, still lack the ICT resources (both skills and technical) needed to provide adequate up-to-date training.

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188. These priorities were already identified in 2003 in one of the first reports on the subject by R. Stanbridge and M. Ljunggren (eds), *African Media and ICT4D: Documentary Evidence: a Baseline Study on the State of Media Reporting on ICT and Information Society Issues in Africa*, Addis Ababa, United Nations, Economic Commission for Africa, Addis Ababa, 2003.

While training material has multiplied over the past decade, most of the available tools are in English, some are in French,[189] and no material is available in any Central African language, even though the overwhelming number of radio programs use national languages, Kirundi and Kinyarwanda, and some of the four principal or 250 secondary languages in DRC.

VII.5   Governance and Regulatory Challenges

Obviously, progress needs to be made with the legal and institutional frameworks, which not only have to be completed and adapted to current needs and problems (such as convergence), but also have to be integrated into a wider regional perspective.[190] Telecoms regulators (ARPTC, RURA, and ARCT) and media regulators (CSAC, MHC, and CNC) should collaborate and perhaps move in the Anglophone direction of full convergence.

Regulators have to monitor the actors, make regulations, and check if the new regulations are enforced (for instance, that only the appropriate equipment, conforming to the required standards, is sold on the market). In French-speaking Africa, where many media regulators monitor media content, including ethical issues, debate continues about the control of contents circulating on the web. Regulations should be adopted to clarify legal responsibilities and procedures.

Regarding licensing and registration, regulatory authorities also should ensure that fees are kept affordable and that procedures are respected. Questions of coverage, economic regulation (tariffs), and sound competition should be addressed.

Consumers also need protection because new devices will bring new forms of manipulation and new risks of over-concentration.

VII.6 Awareness and Engagement of the Media Owners and Managers

Last but not least, the media should engage more willingly in these transformations if they do not want to be left behind. In the three countries, appropriation of ICTs by journalists still relies more on individual skills and investments than on a planned and consistent strategy by media companies. Individually, staff members do use ICTs to collect, cross-check, circulate, and archive information, as well as for building professional networks and consolidating their own capacities through self-training. Very seldom, however, are managers and owners aware of the professional issues at stake and engage the staff in working out how to better integrate ICTs into present routines and future expectations. Most owners and managers have simply

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189. The IPP and UNESCO have developed training resources in French, but these remain limited.

190. On ICT regulation, see http://www.ictregulationtoolkit.org/en/Sections.html#3096.

acknowledged that the transition to digital production and broadcasting will require investment that not all media houses can support. But this is not just an issue of money and equipment.

Collective creativity is needed, as the media will have to invent new methods of publishing information, and adapt to the global circulation of information, user-generated content (UGC), and their audience's new ways of consumption.

Media outlets have to plan the following:

- The creation of new media services

- Cross-media operations and convergence

- Better adaptation to new modes of consumption (e.g. via mobile phone)

- Dealing with UGC (links, creative participation, feedback)

- Training newsroom staff in using digital data, and dealing with the possibility of manipulation

- Using social networks and multimedia platforms

- New business models

More generally, media outlets in DRC, Rwanda, and Burundi have to consider how these new opportunities can be used to serve the roles that they want to play in their environment. As Bruce Girard noted in a book about the importance of ICTs for community radio, "while technology is important, escaping from poverty requires knowledge, and knowledge does not come from technology but from experience and relevant and meaningful content, digital or not."[191] How to provide the audience with such content, useful for daily life and for citizen participation, remains the major concern of information media; a concern that ICTs can help to address if journalists are engaged and supported to do so.

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191. B. Girard (ed.), *The One to Watch: Radio, New ICTs, and Interactivity*, Friedrich Ebert Foundation/Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Rome, 2003, p. 6.

VIII.   Conclusion

Media and journalism face unprecedented challenges all over the world, and Central Africa is no exception. Changes related to the digitization of production and dissemination, convergence of formats, interactivity and non-professional UGC are becoming a reality in the Great Lakes countries as well, even though the limited access to technology has probably slowed the process.

Some specific local parameters are also having an impact on the challenges faced by media in DRC, Rwanda, and Burundi. This study has shown how media development in these countries has been hampered by the post-conflict situation, the poor capacities for state investment, the narrowness of the market for private investors and advertisers, the lack of access to energy, the poverty of the audience, the weaknesses of media management, and the shortage of sufficient, adequate, and organized training for journalists.

African media and journalists might take advantage of this turbulent era (which brings questions that remain unsolved for news producers worldwide) to interrogate their professional identities, inherited from the past. What, for instance, is the role of public service broadcasting in this context, and how can ICTs help public media to play their part? How can African journalists make a difference and value their particular input to the ever-expanding quantity of data and content that their usual audiences can access? Can ICTs contribute to the recasting of journalists as information professionals where they have a growing tendency to practice "paid-for coverage"? How can they become real sense-makers in contexts where democracy and peace are still under construction? How should media regulators, self-regulatory organizations, and professional associations protect the interests of the audience, as content production and dissemination undergo transformative change? How are ICTs to be used in an efficient but also inclusive manner, to avoid widening the gap between the "info-rich" and "info-poor", connected and unconnected, digital and non-digital users?

In the new context created by ICTs, and affected by their own political and economic situation marked with the legacy of the past, media and journalists in Central Africa can invent their own path and find their own way to navigate between the local and the global, as some of them are already doing with success.

Websites of Media Outlets Mentioned in the Report

DRC

Agence congolaise de presse	http://www.acpcongo.com
Digital Congo (Radio/Television)	http://www.digitalcongo.net
La Conscience	http://www.laconscience.com
La Prospérité	http://www.laprosperiteonline.net
La Référence Plus	http:// http://groupelareference.cd
L'Avenir/RTGA (Radio Television)	http://www.groupelavenir.cd
Le Forum des As	http://www.forumdesas.com
Le journal du Citoyen/Le Rendez-Vous du Citoyen	http://www.lesmediasducitoyen.cd
Le Potentiel	http://www.lepotentielonline.com
Le Soft	http://www.lesoftonline.net
L'Observateur	http://www.lobservateur.cd
Le Phare	http://www.lephareonline.net
Nyota Radio Television	http://www.nyota.net
Radio Maendeleo	http://www.radiomaendeleo.net
Radio Okapi	http://radiookapi.net
Radio Television Mwangaza	http://www.rtmwangaza.net
Les Médias du Citoyen	http://www.lesmediasducitoyen.cd/
Congo Forum	http://www.congoforum.be

Rwanda

Contact FM	http://tunein.com/radio/Contact-FM-897-s96922
Imvaho Nshya, *La Nouvelle Relève*	http://www.orinfor.gov.rw
Ingabo	http://ingabomagazine.com

Kinyamateka	http://www.kinyamateka.org.rw
New Times	http://www.newtimes.co.rw/news
Radio 10	http://www.radio10.rw
Radio Flash	http://www.radioflashonline.com
Radio Izuba	http://izubaradio.com
Radio Maria	http://www.radiomaria.rw
Radio Salus	http://www.salus.nur.ac.rw
Radiyo Rwanda/Rwanda TV (ORINFOR)	http://www.orinfor.gov.rw
Rwanda Focus	http://focus.rw/wp
Umuvigizi	http://www.umuvugizi.com
Igihe	http://igihe.com/
Rwanda News Agency	http://www.rnanews.com/

Burundi

Agence ARIB	http://www.arib.info
Agence Burundi-Information	http://www.burundi-info.com
CNC	http://www.cnc-burundi.org
Iwacu	http://www.iwacu-burundi.org
Le Renouveau Ubumwe	http://www.ppbdi.com
Net Press	http://www.netpress.bi
Nyabusorongo	http://nyabusorongo.org
Radio Isanganiro	http://www.isanganiro.org
Radio Sans Frontières Bonesha FM	http://www.bonesha.bi
RPA	http://www.rpa-radiyoyacu.org
RTNB	http://www.rtnb.bi
Agence Burundaise de Presse	http://www.abp.info.bi/
Studio Ijambo	http://www.studioijambo.org/
Studio Tubane	http://www.tubane.bi/
Syfia Grands Lacs	http://www.syfia-grands-lacs.info/
Burundi réalités	http://www.burundirealite.org

List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

ABP   Burundi Press Agency (*Agence Burundaise de Presse*)

ABR   Burundian Association of Broadcasters (*Association Burundaise des Radiodiffuseurs*)

ACP   Congo Press Agency (*Agence Congolaise de Presse*)

ADC-Ikibiri   Alliance of Democrats for Change (Burundi)

ALiR   Army for the Liberation of Rwanda (*Armée pour la Libération du Rwanda*)

APA   Agence Presse Associée (DRC)

ARJ   Association of Rwandan Journalists

ARCT   Agency for the Regulation and Control of Telecommunications (*Agence de Régulation et de Contrôle des Télécommunications,* Burundi)

ARPTC   Agency for the Regulation of Post, Telephone and Communications (*Autorité de Régulation de la Poste et des Télécommunications du Congo*, DRC)

BBC   British Broadcasting Corporation

BBS   Burundi Backbone System Company

CIDA   Canadian International Development Agency

CITCC   China International Telecommunication Construction Corporation

CATIA   Catalysing Access to Information Technologies in Africa

CFM   Media Development Center (*Centre de formation des médias du Burundi*)

CNC   National Council for Communication (Burundi) (*Conseil national de la communication*)

CNDD-FDD   National Council for the Defence of Democracy-Force for the Defence of Democracy (*Conseil national pour la défense de la démocratie-Force de défense de la démocratie*)

CPJ   Committee to Protect Journalists

CSAC   Higher Council for Broadcasting and Communication (*Conseil supérieur de l'Audiovisuel et de la Communication*) (DRC)

DfID   Department for International Development (UK)

DIA   African Documentation and Information (*Documentation et Information pour l'Afrique*)

DRC   Democratic Republic of Congo

EASSy   East African Submarine Cable System

EU   European Union

FEI   France Expertise Internationale

GIBM	Multi-Donor Group for the Media (*Groupe Inter-Bailleurs Médias*)
GLMC	Great Lakes Media Center (Rwanda)
GRET	Group for Research and Technological Exchanges
HAM	High Authority of the Media (*Haute Autorité des Médias*) (DRC)
ICC	International Criminal Court
ICM	InterCongo Media
ICT	information and communication technology
ICTR	International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda
IFASIC	Faculty Institute of Information Science and Communication (*Institut facultaire des sciences de l'information et de la communication*) (DRC)
INGO	International non-governmental organization
IPP	Panos Paris Institute (*Institut Panos Paris*)
ITU	International Telecommunication Union
JED	Journalist in Danger (*Journaliste en danger*) (DRC)
MHC	Media High Council (Rwanda)
MINICAAF	Ministry in Charge of Cabinet Affairs (Rwanda)
MSI	Media Sustainability Index
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NISR	National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda
OIF	International Organization of Francophone Countries (*Organisation internationale de la Francophonie*)
OMAC	Central African Media Organization (*Organisation des médias d'Afrique central*)
OMEC	Congo Media Observatory (*Observatoire des Médias Congolais*)
OPB	Burundi Press Observatory (*Observatoire de la Presse Burundaise*)
ORINFOR	Rwanda Information Office (*Office Rwandais d'Information*)
PACAM	Common Action Plan for Support to the Media (*Plan d'Action Commun d'Appui aux Medias* (Burundi)
RBA	Rwanda Broadcasting Agency
RDB	Rwanda Development Board
RENADHOC	National Network of Congolese Human Rights (*Réseau National des ONGs des Droits de l'Homme*) (DRC)
RFI	Radio France Internationale
RITA	Rwanda Information Technology Authority
RMEC	Rwanda Media Ethics Commission
RPA	African Public Radio (*Radio Publique Africaine* (Burundi)
RTLM	*Radio Télévision Mille Collines* (Rwanda)
RTNB	Burundi National Radio and Television (*Radio Télévision nationale du Burundi*)
RTNC	Congolese National Radio and Television (*Radio Télévision nationale congolaise*)
RURA	Rwanda Utilities Regulation Agency
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SEZ	Special Economic Zone

SFCG	Search for Common Ground
SIDA	Swedish International Development Aid
SMS	Short text messages
STIC	Executive Secretariat for Information Technologies (Burundi)
TOFRRAACE	Toute l'Offre de Formation pour les Radios Africaines Associatives, Communautaires et Educatives
UBJ	Burundian Union of Journalists (*Union Burundaise des Journalistes*)
UGC	user-generated content
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNHRC	United Nations Human Rights Council
UNPC	Congo National Press Union (*Union Nationale de la Presse du Congo*)
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VOA	Voice of America
WACS	West African Cable System
WSIS	World Summit on the Information Society

The MDM Reference Series papers published so far, and available on **www.mediapolicy.org** and **www.soros.org**, are:

1. *Online Media and Defamation*—Toby Mendel

2. *Digital Media and Investigative Reporting*—Mark Lee Hunter

3. *Mobile TV: Challenges and Opportunities Beyond 2011*—Ronan de Renesse

4. *Citizen Journalism and the Internet*—Nadine Jurrat

5. *Digitization and Media Business Models*—Robert Picard

6. *Freedom of Expression Rights in the Digital Age*—Andrew Puddephatt

7. *Net Neutrality and the Media*—Stefaan Verhulst

8. *Gatekeeping in the Digital Age*—Peter Looms

9. *Technical Standards in Terrestrial Television*—David Wood

10. *The Digital Dividend*—Gérard Pogorel

11. *How Television Went Digital in the Netherlands*—Nico van Eijk and Bart van der Sloot

12. *The Media and Liability for Content on the Internet*—Cynthia Wong and James X. Dempsey

13. *Case Study: German Public Service Broadcasting and Online Activity*—Johannes Weberling

14. *Online Advertising: Origins, Evolution, and Impact on Privacy*—Fernando Bermejo

15. *Social Media and News*—Paul Bradshaw

16. *Digital Media, Conflict and Diasporas in the Horn of Africa*—Iginio Gagliardone and Nicole Stremlau

17. *Digital Television, the Public Interest, and European Regulation*—Petros Iosifidis

18. *On Demand Services and Media Diversity*—Laura Kaltenbach and Alexandre Joux

Mapping Digital Media is a project of the **Open Society Media Program** and the **Open Society Information Program.**

Open Society Media Program

The Media Program works globally to support independent and professional media as crucial players for informing citizens and allowing for their democratic participation in debate. The program provides operational and developmental support to independent media outlets and networks around the world, proposes engaging media policies, and engages in efforts towards improving media laws and creating an enabling legal environment for good, brave and enterprising journalism to flourish. In order to promote transparency and accountability, and tackle issues of organized crime and corruption the Program also fosters quality investigative journalism.

Open Society Information Program

The Open Society Information Program works to increase public access to knowledge, facilitate civil society communication, and protect civil liberties and the freedom to communicate in the digital environment. The Program pays particular attention to the information needs of disadvantaged groups and people in less developed parts of the world. The Program also uses new tools and techniques to empower civil society groups in their various international, national, and local efforts to promote open society.

Open Society Foundations

The Open Society Foundations work to build vibrant and tolerant democracies whose governments are accountable to their citizens. Working with local communities in more than 70 countries, the Open Society Foundations support justice and human rights, freedom of expression, and access to public health and education.

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