

THE COURIER

SPECIAL ISSUE

The Journal of Africa - Literature - Politics & Culture since independence and education



**MEDIA AND
DEVELOPMENT**
Between democracy
and fragility

THE
East Africa

**Nyachae and Muite
in election alliance**

THE COURIER

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An ill-defined power with ethics as its sole legitimacy



The press (or the media as it is now called) is considered to be the fourth estate of power after the executive, the legislative and the judiciary. Each of the latter three has well-defined responsibilities, owing legitimacy in a democracy directly or indirectly to the choice of the people.

Today, in terms of semantics, the words press and media have become imprecise descriptions of their function. 'Press', a word more widely used in Latin countries, initially referred to print publications, but has come progressively over time to include radio and television as well. However, the word has had its limitations; nobody, for example, has ever thought of including cinema in it - not even documentary films. The word 'media', in comparison, has been used more in Anglo-Saxon countries, especially those that early on popularised the expression 'mass media'. All the same, governments and other state institutions continue to issue 'press cards', seemingly setting to one side all the professionals from other media outlets. Therefore, there is a semantic discrimination, or divide, between journalistic media and all other media. The difference between so-called journalistic media and the rest of the profession (including everything from blogs to company newsletters and government publications) is that the latter are not bound by what one can perhaps describe pompously as press ethics. Ethics of a kind, perhaps best described as being close to those of scientists who in their own professions agree to weigh the facts and opinions both in favour and against their case when seeking out the truth.

But honesty for honesty's sake is not enough; we also need to reduce the risks of error to a minimum. That is where the need for quality comes in. Additionally,

we also need to respect the moral rules that determine the limits of information that is made available to the public at large, allowing them to make up their own minds about issues that affect them.

What makes the difference is that the journalistic press (or media if you prefer) should simply inform, while respecting the rules and ethics it has adopted for itself. It is this balanced information that allows people to educate themselves and acquire the ability to make their own choices. That is the big difference.

Sadly, in the real world, the press can be forced by political or other powers to adopt a less than independent position. Indeed, it sometimes has little choice but to accept to do as it is told. Much of this was debated and discussed in depth at the Media and Development Forum organised recently in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, by the respective Commissions of the European Union and the African Union. Also under the spotlight was how the journalistic media participate in development and perhaps can eventually constitute a fourth estate without real power but with ethics as its sole 'raison d'être'.

But this can only be achieved under the condition that the real powers – the politicians, bankers and businessmen - leave the press to accomplish their task as an independent voice. However, as this issue of *The Courier* explains, this is no easy task for either side to achieve. We also examine the state and progress of the press in the ACP countries and how ways are being found to move forward for future progress.

Hegel Goutier
Editor-in-Chief



Opening



Hegel Goutier

Participants at the Media and Development Forum, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, 11-13 September 2008.
© Forum Media and Development website

OUAGADOUGOU debates

The Media and Development Forum held in Ouagadougou focused on four key themes: the media and good governance; media freedom and differences between the legal framework and the situation in the field; Europe's stereotype image of Africa and vice versa and the role of local media. The conclusions of the Forum on each of these issues were adopted by the European Commission and the Commission of the African Union as the basis for creating a road map for the future.*

► The media and governance

The round-table on media and governance was chaired by Derge Théophile Balima, Director of CERAM (African Centre for Media and Communication Expertise and Research). He stressed that the African media should act as a counterweight, overseeing developments with a critical eye, but this role was today increasingly challenged by the arrival of other information media in the hands of the corporate sector and large multinationals.

He also pointed to the part played by the Internet, as this slips from the control of African legislators. Today, African states are being urged to take legislative steps to guarantee unimpeded access to free information, but, in reality, governments in many countries are keeping hold of information : as in the case

of Senegal, where state agencies investigating malpractices are not required to disclose the information they have collected. Other African media outlets are also reported to do little more than relay or repeat information from foreign media outlets.

Another person taking part in the talks, Louise Mushikiwabo, Rwanda's Information Minister, summed up the conclusions of the debate, by suggesting that the media should make a contribution in four specific ways: circulating information; acting as the proponent of good governance; highlighting worrying developments and ensuring that freedoms are safeguarded.

Ultimately, the recommendations of the 'Media and Governance' panel may go toward creating a suitable legal framework, adopting a Euro-African media support strategy and investing in media-related surveys.

► Media freedom. The legal framework and the situation in the field

The debate on media freedom examined the differences, if not the gap, between the legal framework and day-to-day reality of press freedom in Africa. Chairing the discussion was Abdou Latif Coulibaly, who explained how those in power continued to control the television media, even in the wake of democracy's transitional period. It was suggested that any analysis of press freedom in Africa has to take account of three distinct periods: the time when democracy is in a state of transition; the time when democracy holds sway and the time when democracy is being further developed. These periods of consolidation run parallel with the increase in globalisation, calling for measures that – if not totally world-wide in

their scope - should at least be harmonised in one region of the world. This harmonisation process is something that is sorely missing in Africa.

The round table on this theme reached the same conclusions as the first, stressing the need to set up supranational regulatory authorities to take these issues forward.

> Combating stereotypes

Chairing the round-table on the stereotype image Europe has of Africa and vice versa, Jean-Luc Maertens, head of Euronews, pointed out that it was the media's responsibility for perpetrating these stereotypes. The image of Africa in Europe was that of an irresponsible and incapable continent he suggested. While the latter looks askance at Europe's perceived egotistical and xenophobic attitudes. These images are obviously hard to dispel but measures have to be taken to blunt the overall impact. Examples of what can be done have included putting strong pressure to bear on Internet sites

that convey these negative images and in lending support to initiatives to break down barriers between the media on both sides.

> The role of local media

Chairing the debate on local media, Annie Lenoble-Bart**, professor of information and communications at the University of Bordeaux III, emphasised the key role local radio broadcasters play in the overall development process, primarily because they are more adept at reconciling local, regional and international issues than other media. She also pointed to the limitations of this type of local media, such as their tendency to be caught up in localised, on-the-ground issues that she referred to as dealing with "local folklore."

Aminatou Sar, regional coordinator of 'Media for Children', projects being carried out by the NGO "PLAN", made one of the most memorable speeches during the Forum, examining all the issues addressed from the child's point-of-view. She showed that they, just as much

as adults, are the victims of the restrictions placed on a free press and why, therefore, it was vital to support her organisation's strategy to allow children access to all kinds of media across the continent.

The recommendations in this case primarily involve capacity-building for local media organisers and managers, while paying particular heed to specific groups, such as women and children. ■

* For more information on the 'road map', see article published on Issue 8, page 23.

** 'Connaître les médias d'Afrique subsaharienne' written under the supervision of Annie Lenoble-Bart and André Jean Tudesq.

For details of participants, discussions during the Forum, see <http://www.media-dev.eu/>

Keywords

Media and Development Forum; Ouagadougou; Burkina Faso; Annie Lenoble-Bart; Aminatou Sar; Abdou Latif Coulibaly; Derge Théophile Balima; Louise Mushikiwabo; governance; freedom; democracy.



MEDIA, languages and DEVELOPMENT

After independence and during the period of democratic transition, the question of language was crucial for governments and the media. The work 'Connaître les médias d'Afrique' ('Knowing the African media'), edited by Annie Lenoble-Bart and André-Jean Tudesq, provides an in-depth account of the approach adopted in sub-Saharan Africa, although other ACP countries faced a similar dilemma.*

Across Africa, in the '60s and onwards, most newly independent countries chose to retain the language of the former colonial power as the official language. Their national media did the same. However, it was not long before radio - later followed by television and some newspapers - began to address specific sections of the population in local languages and dialects.

Brice Rambaud** compares the choices made by two countries, Kenya and Tanzania. Kenya's revolutionary leader Jomo Kenyatta felt that English offered more advantages than Swahili that was only spoken in some African

countries and he actively encouraged the press to follow his example and provided it with significant funds to do so. The result? Today, Kenya has a quality press that is actively involved in the nation's development. A different story, but essentially the same result in neighbouring Tanzania, There another revolutionary leader, Julius Nyerere, came to the opposite conclusion and lent significant support to the Swahili press, with the same positive result. The possible conclusion being that good governance and a quality press count for a great deal.

Elsewhere in the ACP, two Creole-speaking countries, the Seychelles and Haiti, have more

than one official language. In Haiti, the draft constitution conferred on Creole the dual status of 'national' and official language. The result of this was seen at election time, with a voter turnout in excess of 80 per cent and a population more involved in the political debate. **H.G.** ■

* Published by Editions Karthala, 2008, 180p

** One of the collaborators of the book cited in the aforementioned work.

Keywords

Media; languages; development; Annie Lenoble-Bart; André-Jean Tudesq; Brice Rambaud, Kenya; Tanzania.

A GLOBAL FORUM for MEDIA DEVELOPMENT

Some 500 media experts from over 100 countries gathered in Athens on December 7-10 to attend the second Global Forum for Media Development (GFMD). Its goal? To develop common strategies for media development and to ensure that free, independent and pluralistic media are at the core of development programs.

Opened by the President of Greece, Dr. Karolos Papoulias, the conference was attended by key speakers, such as Nobel-Prize winner Orhan Pamuk and high-level representatives from the UN, UNESCO, World Bank and other intergovernmental institutions. Senior media executives and key representatives from a wide range of media development organisations presented new and innovative ideas for ensuring sustainability of independent media. The Conference is part of the one year-long United Nations celebration of the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that was launched on the 10th of December 2007 and was to close on

the final day of the Athens conference on the 10th of December 2008.

The Global Forum for Media Development is a network of some 500 media assistance organisations from 100 countries worldwide, set up to highlight the importance of free, independent and viable media to human and economic development. It is the mission of the GFMD, says its director, Bettina Peters, to make media development an integral part of overall development strategies, just like education or health: "Too often, media assistance is relegated to communicating development goals and the GFMD aims to make media assistance a sector in its own right. The GFMD's basic values are free expression,

media freedom and independent journalism as defined by internationally accepted documents such as the UNESCO Windhoek Declaration. The GFMD believes that free, independent, viable and inclusive media are prerequisites for creating and strengthening democratic society and human development". ■

Press freedom was a central topic at the Athens GFMD. Illustration by the artist and cartoonist from Burkina Faso, Hamidou Zoetaba.
Courtesy of the Forum Media and Development

Keywords

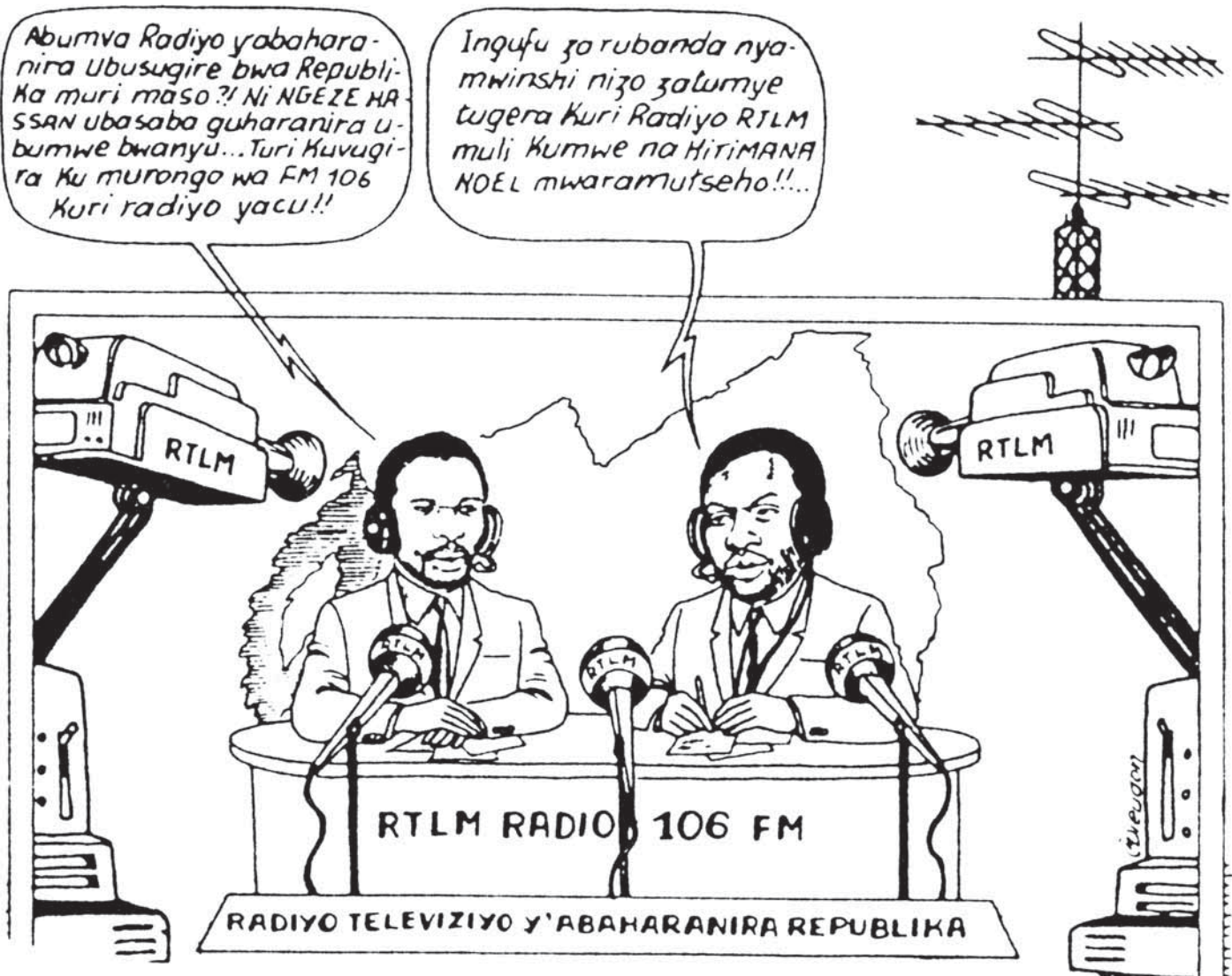
Global Forum for Media Development (GFMD); Athens; Greece; Karolos Papoulias; Orhan Pamuk; UNESCO; Bettina Peters.





PARADOX.

With the advent of **DEMOCRACY** journalism is made more **PRECARIOUS**





With democracy, journalists acquire more freedom of expression. But there are a lot of them out there as well as more media. Struggling for survival, most of them are faced with the harsh reality of a limited market while, at the same time, the State budgets allocated to the press are being reduced. Added to the market competition, new media like company magazines and free sheets have appeared as well as media promoting the interests of factions and religious groups. And then, last but not least, is the Internet.

Putting all that together, journalism has become a more precarious profession, with the associated risk of declining standards and that is not to mention the confusion between ‘media’ produced by professionals fully committed to upholding journalistic ethics and others who don’t or won’t subscribe to the same standards.

When dictatorships were the norm in parts of Africa and other developing regions, every government or ruling party controlled the press, effectively muzzling any attempt at journalistic independence. At that time the transition to democracy was often preceded by the emergence of a courageous (written and audio-visual) press. This was often initially made up of a few mavericks who generally paid dearly for their commitment and audacity: sometimes with their lives. But their very existence was an indicator of the beginning of the end for many autocracies. The transition to democracy was often coupled with an increase in the number of media outlets and this heralded the beginning of competition for an audience and for advertising. It was also a period that brought the emergence of a unipolar world with the collapse of the Soviet bloc, structural adjustments and other budgetary restrictions. The new democratic governments rarely regarded support for the press as a priority – save for the odd exception, like Tanzania; and even there the regime had an objective, that of favouring Swahili as the nation’s first language.

> **Falling standards or lack of resources**

Given these precarious conditions, the journalistic profession has often become a poor man’s career and also linked to falling standards when compared with the earlier period of transition. This is partly because recruitment cannot be selective when wages are so low and partly due to the lack of schools of journalism. Despite this, many journalists in the developing countries have the required qualities and training to follow their profession in the best way possible and in general have a qualification in journalism or some similar diploma.

However, poor pay often puts ethical considerations under extreme pressure. For example a journalist who lives in Ougadougou, Kingston or elsewhere who is without transport, or cannot buy a drink at a hotel where he has to interview a foreign aid partner or principal private secretary, and in order to live, has to be partly in the pay of a lobby group, a politician or a foreign agency, is placed in a vulnerable situation when it comes to the ethics of his or her profession. When fighting for freedom of speech, independent journalists in the developing countries often had to show exemplary courage. But what about afterwards? You can be courageous and make do with next to nothing while fighting for freedom, but it is difficult to show such courage throughout one’s career.

> **The siren song**

Badly paid journalists constitute a ready pool of labour for the communication needs of large companies and organisations as well as government and opposition politicians. They also risk being attracted by religious sects or factions that often have ample financial resources. While most respect the rules of democracy, that cannot be said of all of them. Memories of Rwanda are still very vivid.

> **North-South. Placements are fine, but why not employ their services?**

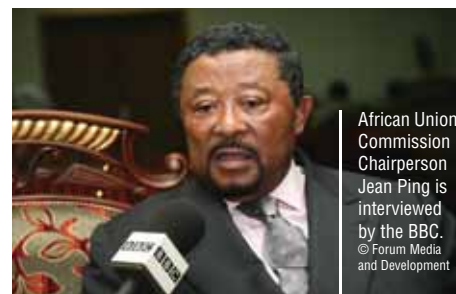
When, in order to survive, a journalist violates the ethical rules of his profession, he is generally well aware of the fact. Indeed, the enemy of press independence in the countries of the South today are not the dictatorships of the past, but the low wages of journalists. Those employed by foreign or local media who pay them a fair wage are increasingly recognised for the quality of their work. Media in the North are increasingly supporting journalists in the South, most often by organising work placements. Another form of support, in this world where distance is no longer a technical problem in circulating and seeking information, could be to employ their services, while of course applying the customary rigour when recruiting them. A growing number of European professionals are aware of this. **H.G.** ■

The media had a devastating role in the Rwandan genocide. This illustration, published in July 1993 in issue 46 of the newspaper, *Kangura*, is a symbol of the alliance between the extremist pro-hutu written press, radio and television. Taken from the book entitled *Rwanda. Les medias de la haine* (by J.-P. Chretien), Ed. Karthala. Courtesy of Karthala

Keywords
Hegel Goutier; factionalism; democratic transition; ethical journalism.



**THE MEDIA AND DEVELOPMENT FORUM
IN OUAGADOUGOU, BURKINA FASO,
11-13 SEPTEMBER 2008 ORGANISED BY
THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION AND THE
COMMISSION OF THE AFRICAN UNION**



The relationship between the **FOURTH ESTATE** and the other **POWERS** has to be fostered

Jean Ping, Chairperson of the African Union Commission

The issue of media and development is neither new nor straightforward. It is still the subject of much debate and involves a host of different players. Its relevance and key role in terms of democratic governance, enshrined in the constitution of the African Union, are no longer in doubt.

There is no question about the role the media has to play in the development efforts of our nations. This is underlined by many examples from everyday life in extremely diverse fields such as education, healthcare, science and technology, the environment, the fight against poverty, promoting the rule of law and the prevention of conflicts. In this respect, I would like to highlight the remarkable contribution, for which I am extremely glad, of the local media (community radio and television), which meets very specific needs. It offers a means of expression to the most disadvantaged groups of the local population and favours a participative approach.

The Commission of the African Union intends to contribute towards increasing the resources of the African press to help it play a full role in the continent's socio-economic development.

This is why we have made the training of African journalists in the fields of science and technology one of our priority programmes for 2009. This programme will consist of awarding 'African Union' scholarships to 106 young African journalists - two from each country - for 24-month periods of training and specialisation at institutions and editorial departments in Africa and abroad. The aim is to overcome the shortcomings established with regard to the specialist press in the key area of science and technology.

I would now like to take the opportunity to pay a well-deserved tribute to those working in the media and communication sector for their invaluable contribution - often operating in difficult conditions and sometimes putting their lives at risk - to the consolidation of the democratic process on the continent of Africa and increasing the transparency of the man-

agement of public affairs. In this respect, the importance of the independence of the media in carrying out its task of conveying information cannot be emphasised enough. Despite significant progress made in recent years, much remains to be done to consolidate the freedom of the press and to make it an irrevocable basis for democratic progress in Africa. Indeed, the relationship between the fourth estate and the other powers must be fostered and consolidated. It is also important that we help the African media to meet the challenge of sustainability. More generally, consideration should be given to the issue of establishing a universal legal framework, which would set out the duties and obligations of all parties concerned and take account of the democratic imperative. Could a pan-African charter on the media be the answer? This issue is certainly worthy of in-depth discussion. ■



THE MEDIA AND DEVELOPMENT FORUM IN OUAGADOUGOU, BURKINA FASO, 11-13 SEPTEMBER 2008 ORGANISED BY THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION AND THE COMMISSION OF THE AFRICAN UNION



Louis Michel at the Opening Plenary Session of the Media and Development Forum.
© Forum Media and Development

DEMOCRACY needs opposing FORCES

Louis Michel, European Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid

I am delighted to be able to express my views today on a subject that lies at the heart of any democracy – the role of the media. The freedom, independence, but not necessarily neutrality, and the objectivity of the media as an information carrier are vital for education, culture and development, as well as being indicators of a mature democracy.

I have always believed that democracy needs opposing forces based on the expression of different opinions. Rhetorical confrontation often speeds up progress in political, human and social terms. It also has another virtue, which is to offer a conciliatory outlet that often ensures the pacification and stability of a particular community. The democratic organisation of a society must allow the government to explain and justify its actions, but should also guarantee the opposition parties the opportunity to challenge, denounce and oppose measures and to propose alternatives. A democracy can only survive if it provides an alternative possibility. It is the legislative, executive and judicial powers that guarantee what we call the civil state. But even the impartial exercise of these powers is not sufficient, in my view, to ensure a healthy modern democracy because it lacks

the challenging, even impertinent, vigilance of civil society, the voice and plurality of which are conveyed by the press. Only a free and independent press can ensure what I call a fair state. An effective press is therefore a necessary element of democracy. A responsible and independent media is a prerequisite for a fair state. It is the guarantor of:

- free elections
- a responsible political, economic and administrative system
- a healthy democracy
- a progressive society

In short, it enables the progress of development. The media is all of the following in one – a pillar of democracy, part of civil society, a conveyor of information. We are not coming here with ready-made solutions. We are not coming with recommendations because we have all the answers. The

issues which we will attempt to resolve apply to Europe in the same way as to Africa. We have to meet the same challenges – financing, independence, ethics, respect for the truth, protection in the courts, protection of sources, press specialised in political analysis and other forms, plurality. We also have to look at the vital role of local media, and the enormous development potential it can generate in terms of support for development projects, social cohesion, and the mobilisation and involvement of citizens. How can the media contribute to the governance and development of a fair state? How can we establish a legal framework to improve the situation of the media and its freedom on the ground? I cannot emphasise enough the importance of this local dimension in development, which is why the European Development Days 2008 have also focused on this theme. ■



Case studies

CAUTIOUS HOPE: Freedom of expression in Southern Africa

by Rashweat Mukundu – MISA *

Media and freedom of expression are increasingly a contentious issue in the Southern Africa region with most countries in the process of discussing new media laws and suppression of media rising in some countries. Southern Africa is still in the throes of developing its media and countries such as Zimbabwe still have a long way to go in this area. To demonstrate the state of media in Southern Africa one needs to look at the political struggles at the South Africa Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) and the closure of a newspaper in Tanzania in October. These two countries are some of the most stable in the region and tremors in these countries will reverberate in the rest of the region. While these new challenges arise, the region still has to contend with some of the worst media laws in countries such as Zimbabwe, Swaziland and Lesotho. Not all is lost as ICT (mobile phone and internet) usage rises in the region, giving hope to millions still without access to information.

The democratisation of Southern Africa, a project of the early 1990's, saw many changes in the region, critically; the independence of Namibia and South Africa and consolidation of political multipartism in Zambia, Malawi, Tanzania, Botswana, Madagascar and Mozambique. At the same time, the region had to deal with the unfolding situations in Lesotho, Zimbabwe and Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). At the centre of these challenges is the place of media and freedom of expression rights in national discourse, especially political transformation, reporting human rights violations and corruption. It is difficult, if not impossible, to score Southern African countries on such a basis but categories can be drawn. South Africa, Botswana, Tanzania, Madagascar, Mauritius, Zambia, Malawi, Namibia, and Mozambique are probably in their own category in which media plurality and diversity can be said to exist, but not without challenges. The media in these countries is fairly diversified, especially since the 1990s. This category has numerous newspapers printed by private players as well as government-owned media broadcasting stations and newspapers. While

most state-owned media has played the role of supporting government projects in what this sector calls 'development journalism', the private or independent media has endeavoured to report critically on issues of bad governance and corruption. This has resulted in the private media being tarred with the same brush as opposition parties.

> Viewed as the opposition

Being seen as part of the opposition comes with its own challenges. In Namibia, for example, the government still maintains a ban on advertising in 'The Namibian' newspaper, which it accuses of writing negatively about the SWAPO-led government. In South Africa, the government threatened to stop advertising in the 'Sunday Times' after critical reporting on an arms purchase scandal that has engulfed the political leadership in that country. The ruling Africa National Congress (ANC) in South Africa has also proposed legislation that would restrict media freedom. The same has happened in Botswana.

Apart from the threats of economic sanctions, all countries in this grouping have proposed

laws to curb media and journalistic freedom under the guise of protecting national interests. At the time of writing (in October 2008), the Zambian government was at the throat of 'The Post' newspaper, threatening to deal with the newspaper should its Presidential candidate and current Acting President, Rupiah Banda, win the Presidential by-election in that country (ed note: Rupiah Banda won the October 2008 presidential election). In Malawi, the state has threatened to shut down private radio stations accused of supporting the opposition. Botswana – once seen as the beacon of hope in the continent – is discussing a Media Practitioners Bill, which critics have likened to the infamous Zimbabwean Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA) under which journalists and newspapers have been harassed. Under the proposed law, the government would register journalists and subject them to a disciplinary code developed by a government-appointed commission. Those critical of Botswana's government especially its handling of the minority San communities – have been bundled out of the country. In Southern Africa, generally all media has a fixation with politics while critical



Case studies

areas of concern to the common citizen have been neglected. These include wider coverage of HIV-AIDS issues and gender-sensitive reporting among others. Where corruption is reported, it is mostly related to politics.

The second grouping of the media in Southern Africa includes Zimbabwe, the DRC, Lesotho and Swaziland. In these countries, the media operates under tight control and threats are put into action. Zimbabwe has in the past few years banned four newspapers, and exiled several journalists. The private media operates in a legal minefield in which literally anything critical of the ruling elite can result in arrest. If one escapes arrest, extra-judicial means have been used including the murder of one independent camera person and beating of journalists. Swaziland is increasingly tightening its control of the media and freedom of expression rights are trampled upon with impunity and increasingly so. The growing demand for political plurality is drawing the worst out of the world's last absolute Monarch as marches, processions and demonstrations are banned. The private media is increasingly being called upon to toe the line. The same happens in Lesotho, where *Harvest FM*, a private radio station, was handed a 12-month ban and private journalists threatened with legal suits and arrests. In the DRC, independent journalism is rarely tolerated and being a critic has dire consequences.

It is important to state that while media and freedom of expression rights are still very much in peril, investment in the region's media is growing, except in a few countries such as Zimbabwe. And even in Zimbabwe, hope has been rekindled that a political settlement between the main political rivals might result in the relaxation of media and freedom of expression laws. Of importance in Southern Africa is the growing use of new technologies in information generation and sharing. It is for this reason that while the Zimbabwe government could afford to ban all foreign media, the story of Zimbabwe remained in the public domain regionally and internationally due to online publishing. Mobile telephone communication has given the common person new power to communicate and share information with few restrictions. A lot, however, still needs to be done as far as repealing undemocratic media laws goes, and encouraging the development of media and telecommunications. Nonetheless, Southern Africa is changing, albeit slowly. ■



Karen Botha (South Africa), *Train*. Published in *Africa Comics*, Lai-momo 2002

Keywords

Media; Southern Africa; democracy; opposition; multipartism.

About MISA*

The Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) is a regional non-governmental organisation with offices in 11 countries in the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) region. MISA was officially launched in September 1992 with the aim of promoting free, independent and pluralistic media, as envisaged in the 1991 Windhoek Declaration. The MISA regional secretariat is based in Windhoek, Namibia and coordinates and capacitates the national chapters in Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Its goal is "a free, independent, pluralistic, sustainable, accountable media environment in Southern Africa in which civil society is empowered to claim information and access to it as unalienable rights and in which the resultant freer information flow strengthens democracy by enabling more informed citizen participation."

For info: <http://www.misa.org/>

Peter G. Mwesige*

EAST AFRICA: Not all that glitters is GOLD

Uganda's newspapers and broadcast stations have been described as a great example of vibrant media in a region where until the 'winds of change' of the 1990's, the media had largely remained either government mouth-pieces or opposition outlets that dared establishments often with bitter consequences. Today, coverage that is critical of the government is almost the norm in independent newspapers while their government-owned counterparts are not just about reproducing official pronouncements as was so often the case in the past. On radio, irreverent political call-in talk shows are the dominant by-product of the liberalisation of the airwaves. But not all that glitters is gold. Ask Belgian journalist and author Els de Temmerman. On 1 December 2006, Ms de Temmerman

biggest newspaper, announcing in her "contract with the public" that she was "not terribly worried about press freedom in Uganda". Admittedly, she also wrote that she had requested for "sufficient guarantees of my editorial independence" and only accepted the job after receiving these guarantees in writing. *The New Vision* started as a government-owned newspaper 22 years ago. Although it is listed on the stock exchange (the government had relinquished 20 per cent of its shares to the public by the time de Temmerman took over, and another 27 per cent more recently), the government appoints the company's board, chief executive, and editor-in-chief, and it is widely believed, meddles in the newspaper's political coverage. However, *The New Vision* has remained a lot more balanced and performed excellently commercially than govern-

ment newspapers elsewhere on the continent. On October 24, just shy of two years on the job, Ms de Temmerman resigned from *The New Vision* because she could "no longer count on the assurances" of "editorial independence" that she had been given when she took on the job. Insiders said de Temmerman had resigned after a heated exchange with the company's chief executive, Robert Kabushenga, over the paper's coverage of President Yoweri Museveni. Apparently, State House expected more prominent displays of pictures and stories about the President. The reaction generated by the resignation would suggest that 'political pressure' from an establishment that wants to get a free pass in the news is the biggest challenge for the country's news media. Indeed, in recent years the biggest local and international news on the Ugandan media has been the reported government pressure on the Aga Khan to rid the independent Monitor newspaper of 'hostile' (read critical of the government) managers and journalists. The Aga Khan's interests in the region include the Nation Media Group (NMG), which owns the majority shares in Monitor Publications Ltd, the publishers of *Daily Monitor* and *Sunday Monitor*, as well as proprietors of KFM radio station and the television station NTV. Early last year, NTV was shut down by the government for nearly two months in what

was widely understood as pressure on NMG to rein in the *Monitor*, which had continued carrying many stories critical of the President and the government. The news media in Uganda, as indeed in the rest of East Africa, continue to face both blatant and subtle political pressure. The region's news media also continue to battle against strict media legislation, such as laws on sedition, which criminalise publication offences. In Kenya, where the bench is notorious for awarding exorbitant damages in defamation cases filed by public officials, civil law also remains a problem, especially when some judges have gone as far as ruling that private-commercial media cannot use 'public interest' in their defence. But these political and legal strictures may not in fact be the biggest threats to the media in East Africa. The proliferation of newspapers and broadcast stations following the liberalisation of the airwaves in the 1990s often obscures the economic challenges and in-house problems that the region's media continue to grapple with. Newspaper circulation remains alarmingly low in countries such as Uganda and Rwanda. For instance, in Uganda, with a population of nearly 30 million, the combined daily newspaper circulation is still estimated at less than 100,000 copies. The story is different in neighbouring Kenya where the leading newspaper, the *Daily Nation*, circulates about 170,000 copies a day. But generally, all over the region only about four newspapers in each country sell more than 10,000 copies a day. In fact, with a few exceptions in each country, many of the region's media outlets remain shaky business enterprises. Moreover, while there appears to be sufficient media diversity in the region, with emerging community media competing for audiences alongside aggressive commercial outlets as well as state-owned media, there are also fears that conglomeration could in future undermine the media pluralism that democracy demands. The challenge of professionalism also remains. Although the region's journalists are better trained than ever before (several universities in the region now offer degrees in journalism and mass communication), there are still concerns over professionalism and ethical standards in many newsrooms. The glaring inaccuracies, lack of context, depth and analytical rigour in the news coverage of many media outlets as well as cases of 'brown envelope' journalism undermine the credibility of media institutions. Moreover, many newsrooms have little 'institutional memory' because many of the region's journalists end up in the more lucrative fields of marketing, public relations, and the NGO sector.



Massive competition for audiences has seen business judgements increasingly assuming a greater role in shaping journalism in East Africa. Many news media organisations have allowed big advertisers to degrade journalistic integrity at the altar of profitability. Not only is there a disturbing reluctance to annoy big advertisers, who are rarely subjected to any meaningful journalistic scrutiny, there also is more willingness to have promotional company stories masquerading as news. Make no mistake, East Africa's journalism has advanced tremendously in the last two decades. The proliferation of media channels and unprecedented competition for audiences has engendered quality. For instance, thanks to competition, and of course to technological developments, East Africa's newspaper

designs are light years ahead of the eyeseer designs of yester years. Competition also has widened the horizons of the subjects that can be covered in the media.

But all that glitters is not gold. ■

* Dr. Mwesige, a journalist and media scholar, is the Group Training Editor at the Nairobi-based Nation Media Group, East Africa's largest multi-media company.

On top: Founded in 1962, the *Daily Nation* (Kenya) is one of the most important newspapers in Eastern and central Africa. © Daily Nation

Keywords

Uganda; media; journalism; New Vision; Eastern Africa; Daily Nation; Nation Media Group (NMG); Daily Monitor; Sunday Monitor; KFM; NTV; Els de Temmerman; Yoweri Museveni.

Mariama Khai Fornah*

“From **FREETOWN** to The **HAGUE**: my coverage of Charles Taylor’s trial”

The on-going trial of the former President of Liberia Charles Taylor has captured the attention of almost everyone in Sierra Leone and Liberia. The trial held by the Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL) is based at the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague, the Netherlands. The war began in Sierra Leone in March 1991 when the Revolutionary United Front of Sierra Leone (RUF) launched its first campaign into Eastern Kailahun (Sierra Leone) from Liberia. Before the outbreak of war, corruption and mismanagement in the diamond sector was one of the main reasons why Sierra Leone became, according to United Nations’ (UN) figures, the poorest country in the world. The RUF rebels demonstrated their brutality by decapitating community leaders and putting their heads on sticks. They were notorious for

committing atrocities such as raping of women and girls, amputation of arms and legs of civilians, the enlisting of child combatants and the burning and looting of houses.

After this decade-long war, Sierra Leone asked for the world to help them bring to justice those people who are alleged to bear the greatest responsibility for crimes that were committed.

The Special Court was created and indicted Liberia’s former President Charles Taylor on eleven counts of crimes against humanity, war crimes, and serious violations of international humanitarian law. He is facing trial for aiding and abating the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) by giving them support in terms of arms and ammunition during the long decade war in Sierra Leone. In April 2006, Charles Taylor was arrested and his trial began in 2007 in The Hague.

As a Sierra Leonean journalist, it’s my job to cover the trial each day, and keep audiences in West Africa informed about what’s happening in the court room.

I work with a journalist from Liberia, and we are the only journalists in the world who are reporting on the trial from the court room and producing daily stories for audiences in both Liberia and Sierra Leone. This puts a lot of responsibility and pressure on us, but for me, it’s this sense of responsibility which has helped me to grow and develop professionally, and become better at what I do.

This is the first time I have left Africa to live and work in Europe. The Netherlands is a very interesting country, where people really take pride in their homes and environment, which is so clean and organised. For now my next challenge will be getting through a cold winter as I’m used to hot December months back home!

Charles Taylor on trial at the Special Court for Sierra Leone, the Hague. © Special Court for Sierra Leone



I cover the court proceedings from Monday to Friday. Each morning, I spend some time in the courtroom to observe proceedings, before leaving the actual court room to watch the hearing from the Press Office. It's from here that I record the audio from the court and turn the day's events into a news bulletin ready for radio stations across Sierra Leone to broadcast later that day.

Many of the witnesses speak Krio which is the local language spoken widely in Sierra Leone. Therefore, I record the proceedings both in English and Krio. This helps to ensure that listeners who don't understand English will still understand what is happening throughout the trial.

What's most challenging is selecting an angle each day to write about. The court is in session from 9.30 am to 4.30 pm most days, and I have to turn several hours of witness testimony, and other court room discussions, into just five minutes' worth of information for a news bulletin in Africa.

My work is all produced digitally, so I use a computer software package to edit the audio material from the court room and email the final version to more than 15 radio stations in Sierra Leone, including radio stations like UN Radio, which broadcast across the entire country.

Many of the radio stations also broadcast local programmes, which cover other aspects of the trial and transitional justice issues affecting their own community. The interviews are also used for their magazine programmes, which provide an opportunity for the listeners to take part in the programme either by phoning or sending in text messages. Radio stations that are based in the provinces read the scripts of my reports in many local languages like Mende and Temne, so that everyone can be informed. When there is also a striking issue in the court, some radio stations will interview me to find out more about what is going on. And it's not just radio stations that are using the material. Newspapers across Sierra Leone and Liberia also publish what I've produced. My relationship with the members of the Bench and the Bar is very cordial. I have never had the opportunity to interview the Judges, but interviewed both heads of the Defence and the Prosecution.

I have conducted a series of interviews with the Lead Defence Lawyer for Charles Taylor, Courtney Griffiths QC and most of the interviews have been published in all of the newspapers back home as well as in Liberia.

I don't have any direct contact with the witnesses as journalists covering the trial are not permitted to conduct their own interviews with them – that's the job of the prosecution



Panel of judges presiding over the Charles Taylor trial. © Special Court for Sierra Leone

and defence teams. The only way I can source information from the witnesses is by recording what they testify in court and then using that audio in my reports.

At the end of a long day, I find it really encouraging to hear from friends, family and former colleagues back home, telling me that they are hearing my reports and keeping up to date with the trial. Many of them have said that the reports have helped them to better understand what caused the war and the events that took place during the war. This is really important to me because it demonstrates that people are really following the trial and are becoming more interested in seeing justice take place. ■

* Sierra Leonean Producer/Reporter actually based in The Hague.



Mariama Khai Fornah inside the International Criminal Court, The Hague. © Special Court for Sierra Leone

Keywords

Charles Taylor; Sierra Leone; Liberia; war crimes; trial; Special Court for Sierra Leone; International Criminal Court (ICC); The Hague; Freetown; Revolutionary United Front of Sierra Leone (RUF).

A tremendous experience

Covering the trial in a balanced, accurate and objective manner is how I've been trained by the **BBC World Service Trust**, who employs me. With funding from the UK Government's Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the BBC is able to facilitate this project and under the Project Management of Claire Ziwa, ensure that listeners in West Africa understand the trial. This opportunity, until the end of December 2008, has also given me lots of training as a journalist. My skills have improved and I know that those skills will last for my whole career, way beyond the trial itself.

One thing that I usually say to myself is that I am not the Judges nor, the Prosecutor, nor the Defence Lawyers. I am only serving as a mediator between the people of Sierra Leone and Liberia and happenings in the court. The reason why I am very conscious of the way in which I file my reports is to avoid passing judgement on the accused Former President of Liberia Charles Taylor because it's the court's job to decide if he is innocent or guilty and not mine.

My experience in covering the trial in The Hague cannot be over emphasised. In fact, it has really changed my life. It has helped to improve my journalistic skills greatly and provided me with a great source of employment and livelihood. It has also helped me to contribute to the development of my country by training other journalists and providing coverage of Charles Taylor's trial from The Hague.

Chris Gollop

Securing DEMOCRACY in the CARIBBEAN

Harold Hoyte is one of the Caribbean's most respected journalists. A Commonwealth Press Union Fellow of 1966, he started his journalism career at the Barbados Advocate in 1959 as a sub-editor. He then worked at three other now defunct newspapers in Barbados before co-founding The Nation newspaper in 1973. He was President and Editor-in-Chief at The Nation between 1975 and 2006 when he retired. After his retirement he was appointed Editor Emeritus of The Nation and is a director of the newly-founded One Caribbean Media (OCM) Limited, an umbrella company that was formed to oversee the 2006 merger of major media houses from Barbados, Trinidad, Jamaica and Grenada. In 2003, he was awarded a Gold Crown of Merit by the Barbados Government for his outstanding contribution to the media.

Chris Gollop, a senior editor at *The Nation*, recently interviewed the now retired Harold Hoyte on the state of the media in the Caribbean.

Let us begin with a look at the growth of the newspaper industry in the English-speaking Caribbean over the past three to four decades. What role if any would you say the industry has played in ensuring there continues to be flourishing democracies across the region?

I think we have to divide the English-speaking Caribbean into two sectors. There is the more established media in the quote/unquote larger islands like Guyana, Jamaica, Trinidad and Barbados that have a long history of journalism and then there are the spectra of journalism in the smaller islands like St Vincent, St Lucia, St Kitts etc. In the larger countries I think we have seen a maturing of journalism in terms of its ability to recognise its role vis-à-vis development of the country and the balance between providing critical support for the Government and recognising the traditional role of being the voice of the ordinary man on the street and to highlight the problems facing the country. I think we've matured in that sense.

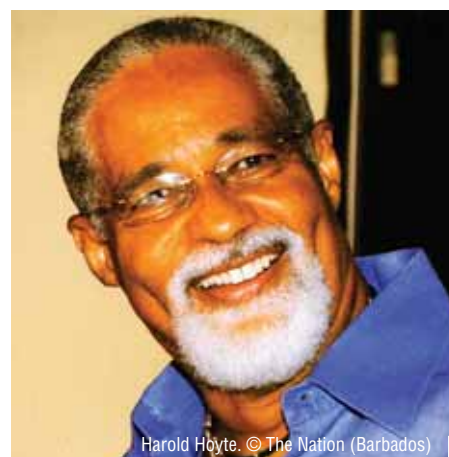
In the case of the smaller islands what we've seen is a tremendous increase in the number of mainly weekly newspapers with some of them having now acquired their own printing presses,

which give them a sense of independence. I think that these newspapers are going to play a significant role in the development of democracies in the Eastern Caribbean in particular in years to come since they can now immediately put issues on the front burner and governments will be able to dialogue with people a lot more, which in my view will help to strengthen democracies of the Eastern Caribbean.

So I think that over the last three or four decades we've seen tremendous growth that will certainly enhance the democracies; and will provide both government and people with a platform for the exchange of news – so I'm very optimistic.

When the Internet burst onto the scene there were concerns among newspaper editors worldwide that this would have a serious impact on the viability of the newspaper industry. In the Caribbean however, the industry continues to flourish. However, do you think that with wider access to the Internet, that we may yet see a decline in the industry, particularly now that blogging has become so popular in recent times?

I don't think the newspaper industry should feel threatened - once it responds in the right way. In many respects editors have to find ways to ensure that newspapers remain an essential commodity. The challenge is to make sure that



Harold Hoyte. © The Nation (Barbados)

the product that we produce responds to the immediacy of every issue, every day and no longer accepts the traditional attitude that we are here mainly to report the events of the day. We have to refashion the newspaper. The problem is the reluctance on the part of the managers and the leaders of newspapers to make that bold decision and refashion and reshape. You would need to throw out the entire concept of how a paper is formulated today and ask yourself: "Is this thing that I'm producing relevant to the key consumers of today and if it isn't how can I change it?" Not only the format, not only what's presented but also the way it is presented. For example, traditionally the front page carries the most important news item of the day, but invariably by the time the readers go to sleep the

night before he or she knows what that news is. So what we need to do is to awaken people the next morning with the answer to the issue. This means that when they are sleeping we have to be finding the answers. And I think any newspaper that therefore seeks to use the concept of blogging, the concept of getting myriad views fed into the system will survive, because people are accustomed to touching, handling and feeling a product and I don't think the screen has replaced that. So that the product which they want to hold is still the newspaper but when they open it, it must speak to what they want, it must answer their questions; it must tell them what others are saying about it. We still believe the foreign page must carry a litany of things that happened in the world yesterday. In my view that is passé. What we have to be dealing with is how are they impacting on us? So I think we have to throw out the old and bring in the new. But if newspaper leaders don't do that, I expect that there is going to be demolition in the readership and the strength and the relevance of the newspaper.

We have observed a trend by media moguls worldwide to consolidate their interest through mergers or buy-outs of competitors. Now, more recently in the Caribbean we have seen the merger of major newspapers and radio and television stations all coming under the single umbrella of the One Caribbean Media (OCM). Do you think this is good for the industry as a whole? Do you think that in the long-term it could see the demise of those newspapers that are not part of the merger?

I think that it is good for the region first of all. Why? I'm satisfied that with the new economic order, established by WTO, where all kinds of borders have been moved and where business access doesn't suffer from the restrictions of the past, that it was quite possible that we could return to the old system where big conglomerates in cosmopolitan countries could come into these parts and buy out the newspapers. The wish of OCM was to provide a buffer against that and to create our own strength, so that we could not be picked off one after another, after another. So that anybody who seeks to come to the Caribbean and seeks to buy the leading newspapers in Barbados, Trinidad and Jamaica or wherever, will find that they have to buy all of them and not pick off one - so it strengthens us. It also puts us in a position where we can go to other parts of the world - which ultimately I believe OCM will do. And become the adventurer who will go out there and perhaps acquire in the northern Caribbean, maybe in The Bahamas or Bermuda and become a force

The Daily Gleaner
 ESTABLISHED 1834 KINGSTON, JAMAICA, FRIDAY, MAY 25, 1981 TWENTY PAGES 50 CENTS

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BOB MARLEY BURIED IN ST. ANN
It was more like a carnival
The day belonged to Bob

IT WAS BOB MARLEY'S DAY ON THE STREET yesterday. Tens of thousands of Jamaicans, leaving behind their duties and obligations, gathered in St. Ann's parish to watch the funeral service for Bob Marley in his final resting place.

At 11:30 p.m. on the official funeral day, the service was held at the St. Ann's parish church, the site of the funeral. The service was held at the St. Ann's parish church, the site of the funeral. The service was held at the St. Ann's parish church, the site of the funeral.

EXCITEMENT
 The excitement gave a feverish glow to the scene as the approach of the funeral procession from the National Stadium to the church in St. Ann's parish was watched by thousands of people. The excitement gave a feverish glow to the scene as the approach of the funeral procession from the National Stadium to the church in St. Ann's parish was watched by thousands of people.

THE THREE MILES SOUND
 ABOUT thousands of people poured into the scene, standing still and keeping police bay by Bay there was a sense of anticipation.

Bob Marley stamps coming?
 Two other projects, in addition to the album 'Jamaica Farewell', which has been announced by the Government, are being considered by the Government as commemorations of the 25th anniversary of the death of the late Bob Marley.

Bob Marley stamps coming?
 Two other projects, in addition to the album 'Jamaica Farewell', which has been announced by the Government, are being considered by the Government as commemorations of the 25th anniversary of the death of the late Bob Marley.

New national shrine soon: Marley statue first
 A statue of Bob Marley, the Jamaican reggae singer, will be the first to be placed in a new national shrine to be built in the heart of the city of Kingston, Jamaica. The statue will be the first to be placed in a new national shrine to be built in the heart of the city of Kingston, Jamaica.

UWI workers stop over police on campus
 Several women gave evidence on Monday in the trial of the UWI workers who were arrested on the campus of the University of the West Indies. Several women gave evidence on Monday in the trial of the UWI workers who were arrested on the campus of the University of the West Indies.

Crown closes case today in treason felony trial
 Several women gave evidence on Monday in the trial of the UWI workers who were arrested on the campus of the University of the West Indies. Several women gave evidence on Monday in the trial of the UWI workers who were arrested on the campus of the University of the West Indies.

Infants drown in a tank
 Two children, a boy and a girl, were found dead in a water tank at the St. Ann's parish church. Two children, a boy and a girl, were found dead in a water tank at the St. Ann's parish church.

What's happening in tourism?
 The Jamaica Hotel and Tourist Association said yesterday that a report which was submitted to the Government by the Jamaica Hotel and Tourist Association said yesterday that a report which was submitted to the Government by the Jamaica Hotel and Tourist Association.

This is ting Country.
 JAMAICA'S GOLD MEDAL GRAPEFRUIT DRINK

like any other media force in Australia, New Zealand or Britain or the United States so that we would compete as equals. We as Caribbean media will be equal to them anywhere in the world and that is what we want to be able to do. So that having secured the Caribbean we don't return to a situation where others dictate to us what should go into the newspaper. In terms of smaller papers yes they will be exposed and it is quite possible that they can be swallowed up. But what may eventually happen is, as has happened in other countries, is that another group will emerge that may perhaps bring together another cluster of newspapers and radio and television stations and so on. ■

For the full version of this interview, see 'The Courier's website: www.aap-eucourier.info

A historic front page of the well-known Jamaican daily newspaper, 'The Daily Gleaner', dedicated to Bob Marley on 23 May 1981 after the funeral of the reggae legend. © The Daily Gleaner

Keywords
 Media; Caribbean; Commonwealth Press Union; Chris Gollop; Harold Hoyte.



East Timor. © Fondation Hironelle

Debbie Singh*

Major reform is needed if media systems in the Pacific are to flourish according to Tongan publisher, Kalafi Moala. What are the bottlenecks to the media's contribution to the region's development?

MEDIA and DEVELOPMENT in the Pacific Islands

“There is an inevitable bias in news coverage because major media operations in the region have been government-owned or controlled leading island journalists to sometimes play servant to corrupt policies developed without public participation”, says Moala. He adds that media business and commercial interests have usurped the traditional role of information. “Globalisation has impacted on media to such an extent that less is being done to make media appropriate for indigenous and local socio-cultural contexts. Instead, the social-cultural contexts are being progressively adapted to fit the ‘one shoe’ of a globalised media”, Moala says. Journalism educator, David Robie, of the Auckland University of Technology (AUT) says that development journalism has a critical role to play in the future of the South Pacific region and a new generation of educated journalists have a responsibility to their people. “Pacific journalists now have a greater task than ever in encouraging democratisation of the region and (providing) informed insights into development issues facing island states. Journalists need to be part of the solution, rather than being part of the problem”, he says.

Indeed, this also applies to the practice of the concept of ‘peace journalism’ by Pacific Island journalists, particularly those working in conflict ‘hot spots’ such as Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands and Fiji. Journalists have often been accused of contributing to tension and aggression via their style of reportage and, using the case of Fiji, of “giving voices to coup makers and leaders” through simply handing them microphones during times of crisis and broadcasting their messages to the nation in their excitement and enthusiasm to get what they see as being a breaking news story.

Journalism lecturer, Evangelia Papoutsaki, Phd, based at AUT in New Zealand, states that taking into account Pacific Countries’ distinctiveness, one should ask what purpose journalism serves in terms of its contribution to the development of Pacific Island societies. Observations on Pacific media covering development issues in the region, she says, point in the direction of superficial, urban and elite based reporting, screened through the eyes of aid donors/agencies and development organisations. She continues that, “in most cases, journalists based in capitals get their material from press conferences and media releases...

and media tend to give little space to the opinion of those affected and reporters seem to bypass the wisdom of local communities in terms of how sustainable development can be achieved from within”. Papoutsaki argues that the root cause of this is the dominance of western values and journalistic principles, a lack of local knowledge and the desire to search for and give such knowledge a voice.

“Very rarely do we see in-depth development reporting based on the principles of development journalism which seeks the voice of local communities and promotes knowledge and solutions to development issues”, she says.

“Learning how to do development research is a way of addressing the gap in reporting effectively on development issues. The journalist needs to become the researcher to better understand reports based on research by international consultants and agencies and better understand their communities by working for them and with them too.” ■

* Fiji-based journalist.

Keywords

Pacific Islands; media; journalism; Kalafi Moala; David Robie; Auckland University of Technology (UNITEC); Evangelia Papoutsaki.

Marco Domeniconi*

FONDATION HIRONDELLE:

media in **CONFLICT ZONES** for millions of listeners

Information: playing a role in fostering peace and civil society

Guns or ballot boxes? Sierra Leone is emerging from a terrible war: 200,000 killed, two million displaced people, thousands of people who had their arms hacked off as an intimidation gesture: is it possible to express one's opinion with a mere free and democratic ballot after emerging from such appalling violence? A few months ago the women in these photos lived in Kabala, a town not far from the border with Guinea. Kabala was the theatre of 17 battles during the 10-year conflict. Two of these women are running in the municipal elections. They are being interviewed by Millicent Massaquoi, a journalist with *Fondation Hironnelle*, an institution that banked on the pacifying and civil society-building potential of information.

This report was broadcast in a programme produced jointly by *Fondation Hironnelle* and Fourah Bay College, in Freetown (Sierra Leone), the oldest university in West Africa. An original idea and a resounding success: six hours of news bulletins, political debates and programmes on society's issues broadcast live by the university's radio station and also by the UN radio and a dozen community partner stations.

For *Fondation Hironnelle* it includes a key element: accurate, credible, independent information meeting the huge needs of this population to see an end to lies, propaganda, rumours and manipulation. An information that encourages a political debate, that forces untouchable leaders to come down from their pedestal, that makes them answerable to simple citizens of

their decisions, management and, frequently, of their abuse of power.

Also, debates on society's problems so as to hand over the right to speak to ordinary men and women, to let them take part in the public dialogue, to allow women to demand peace to enable them to take care of their children, to let the young say they're longing for a future free of poverty. And also to expose both minor violations and daily scandals such as power shortages in operating blocks owing to the authorities' sloppiness, soldiers holding drivers to ransom at roadblocks, or rubbish piling up in the village centre.

Fondation Hironnelle speaks in the languages of its listeners, which nowadays is rarely French or English only. In neighbouring Liberia, *STAR Radio* broadcasts in 16 languages; in the

Central African Republic, another *Fondation Hironnelle* station, *Radio Ndeke Luka*, speaks Sango. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the 20 or so million listeners to *Radio Okapi* are used to listening to its programmes in Swahili, Kikongo, Tshiluba and Lingala, and also obviously in French. *Radio Okapi* is a nationwide radio network jointly managed with the UN Peace-Keeping Department, like *Radio Miraya*, in Sudan, a station that is also popular and has the largest audience.

Fondation Hironnelle set up public *Radio Television East Timor*, it also managed jointly with the *UN Blue Sky Radio* in Kosovo and helped ensure media coverage of the national elections in Nepal. Funded by governments, and in particular by the European Union for many of its projects such as the one in Sierra Leone, *Fondation Hironnelle* is an organisation of journalists which has been running radio stations, setting up media outlets, as well as producing and broadcasting programmes since 1995.

Its staff come overwhelmingly from the countries where it is active. It is on a daily basis, through reports, the choice of topics, the editing of news, difficult interviews, constant questioning that a culture of independent and meticulous journalism is being forged in each and every one of these radio stations. It is a continuous school, a permanent training for a

job that gives both men and women the opportunity to take on and assume responsibilities. Could that be unfair competition for local media? Experience shows this is just the opposite. There's often concern that the *Fondation's* radio station will close, thus removing the protection and model it represents and that allows other media to operate genuinely as they wish. *Fondation Hironnelle* radios have some 50 partner stations.

The *Fondation Hironnelle* media may be owned by the donors or by the *Fondation* itself when it manages them alone, or by the United Nations when they are jointly managed with the UN. However, ultimately they are owned by those for whom they were set up: the listeners. In Isiro, a town in the DRC, a rumour that *Radio Okapi* would close down its local transmitter started spreading in 2005. The town's students gathered and the slogan that could be heard during a large protest demonstration was the one we could only dream of: "*Radio Okapi* belongs to us, not to you!" ■

* Swiss journalist based in Geneva.
For info: www.hironnelle.org

Keywords

Radio; Press agency; *Fondation Hironnelle*; NGO; Sierra Leone; Fourah Bay College; Liberia; Timor Leste; DRC; Kosovo; United Nations.

Promoting justice through the press

Fondation Hironnelle is managing the *Hironnelle* news agency in Arusha, Tanzania. The agency covers the judicial proceedings concerning the Rwandan genocide, in particular the trials at the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, but also those at the *gacaca* (traditional) courts and at Rwanda's tribunals. Thanks to support from the European Union, Norway and Belgium, it is the only news agency that has been covering these proceedings in four languages on a daily basis and without any interruption from day one. It is thus contributing to uphold justice and fight against impunity. www.hirondellenews.org



Project Cotton Tree News, Sierra Leone, 2008 © *Fondation Hironnelle*/Jean-Claude Capt

Marie-Martine Buckens

The key role of the **SATIRICAL PRESS** in the removal of the sacred aura surrounding power in **Africa**

The Lynx in Guinea, the Cafard Libéré in Senegal, the Journal du Jeudi in Burkina Faso, as well as the Gri-Gri International, a “refugee” in France, have all been subject to censorship to various degrees. Satire attracts censorship in countries where democracy is barely established. The sociologist Souleymane Bah looks at this issue in his thesis on the satirical press in French-speaking Africa.*

Denouncing the abuse of power is no small matter. This is something Michel Ongoundou, publication manager at the Gabon weekly satirical magazine *La Griffé*, knows only too well. He is prohibited from working as a journalist in his country, and his publication was withdrawn in February 2001. Exiled in France, together with other journalists he has created *Le Gri-Gri International*, which is now celebrating its sixth anniversary. In Guinea, *Le Lynx* - an independent weekly satirical magazine - is also frequently the target of sanctions imposed by President Lansana Conté's entourage.

The threat of sanctions does not seem to overly concern Mr Ongoundou, the director of *Gri-Gri*. He told Souleymane Bah: “The press is like a drop of water falling on the rocks. It's not like using a pneumatic drill. You make gains bit by bit. We can see that the voice of the ballot box, for example, does not work. So does the opposition really have to be stopped?”

His optimism encourages the sociologist, also a columnist of the Guinean *Lynx* for several years, but also shows that there is still a long way to go. He said: “Seen, on the one hand, as public entertainers whose words are without great consequence, and, on the other, as an alternative to the traditional media with its highbrow content, the African satirical press today plays an important role in removing the sacred aura surrounding power in Africa. But the question is whether its standing as a sacrosanct force, and in particular as one of political legitimisation, contributes to undermining its own efforts to clean up public affairs on the continent. As the popular Guinean saying goes, we end up like a groundnut collector whose work is done going backwards.” ■

* ‘Altérité, hybridité, organinalité. La presse satirique en Afrique francophone,’ Souleymane Bah - published by L'Harmattan

Keywords

Satirical press; Souleymane Bah.



Founded in August 1991, le Journal du Jeudi, popularly known as 'JJ', is considered by the newspaper 'Courrier international' as "probably one of the best satirical newspapers which have appeared on the stands since the 1990s in francophone Africa". Pictured here is a cover sketched by Damien Glez. The cover pictured here celebrates the newspaper's 17 years of existence. Relations between the politicians of Burkina Faso and the newspaper are depicted with an air of irony. A curiosity: Hamidou Zoetaba collaborates with the 'JJ'. Courtesy of the Journal du Jeudi.



Young people

CHILDREN ACTIVE IN THE MEDIA AND THE DEFENCE OF THEIR RIGHTS

AMINATOU SAR, coach for child journalists

She was the darling of the Ougadougou Media and Development Forum: cool, precise and instructive in her message, displaying a combativeness and firmness, but not without a certain elegance. Aminatou Sar is the regional coordinator (West Africa) of the 'Media for children' project launched by PLAN, the international NGO dedicated to defending the rights of children.



Louis Michel is recorded during the Forum Media and Development, in Ouagadougou.
© Forum Media and Development

At the start of the forum, the presence of the group of adolescents she was accompanying brought a breath of fresh air to this rather austere meeting. More than that, as the media professionals spoke with them, they realised that they were dealing with genuine colleagues, knowledgeable and direct. They certainly weren't cheerleaders or boy scouts and most definitely not there for decoration. Indeed, Aminatou Sar was quickly able to leave them to their own devices, certain of their ability to manage their own discussions. Later, we saw Commissioner Louis Michel engage them in a lengthy conversation and invite some of them to visit Brussels. Aminatou Sar seems to be more of a coach rather than just a friendly organiser. She is convinced of one thing: it is vital for young

people to join and progress in the media if their rights are to be respected in a world where communication is increasingly important. And when it comes to a critique of how the press operates today, lessons can certainly be learned by paying heed to the views of children. In an interview with *The Courier*, Aminatou Sar was highly critical of what she sees as collusion between the government and the press in her region and her own country, Senegal. During the interview, she laid bare the various pieces of the mechanism to illustrate how this collusion operates. So, while praising the work of community media, especially radio, she condemned the attitudes of a few small would-be press barons often non-journalists themselves, who pay shameful wages to their staff.

The 'Media for children' project started up in Senegal over a decade ago and is today up and running in a dozen countries in the sub-region. Aminatou considers that "it is a pity that it is an NGO that is doing this work. One could have imagined a local radio doing it." In 2008, almost 4,500 young people in the region participated in programmes on around 450 radio stations. She sees an initial result of involving children in the media as bringing a change in relations between parents and children, the former placing more trust in the latter who in turn acquire more self-confidence when they return to school.

Due often to a lack of professionalism (just

30-40 per cent of journalists have received proper training), low wages (on average less than \$100 a month) or a shortage of information resources (just 5 per cent of professionals have a computer) in the region, children's rights are regularly violated in the media – according to a recent study cited by the PLAN representative at the conference. One example of this violation of rights is the stating of the name of the child victim in a case of sexual abuse.

Children who are present in the media often create a situation - where those who invite them have to acquire the intellectual tools needed to do a better job. PLAN has set up a practical training programme that introduces children to the basics of the journalist's work as well as learning how to defend their rights as children and make those they are involved with – media, politicians or others – more aware of the urgency of the issue. They also learn to prepare items on a range of issues – female circumcision, forced marriage, the right to play and so on – for all kinds of media and submit their ideas to them. These are not confined to the mass media as they also use other outlets such as the production of musical discs and other supporting materials. **H.G. ■**

Keywords

Hegel Goutier; Aminatou Sar; PLAN; child journalists.



Sandra Federici

PLANÈTE JEUNES

information and entertainment

The cover of *Planète Jeunes* looks like that of any other European magazine for young people, featuring pictures of stars of sport and pop and the titles of the articles inside. But this magazine's aim is defined by a project to promote reading and citizenship to allow young Africans (aged 15 to 25) "to access the outside world, to obtain information in order to succeed, to develop, express themselves and communicate." *Planète Jeunes* aims to attract the interest of young Africans by using language that is humorous and current. Articles are short, straightforward, well laid out and accompanied by various explanatory boxes and photographs. The magazine is produced by a team of African staff based in Paris and numerous African countries. There is also *Planète Enfants* for smaller children. Distributed in more than 25 French-speaking countries in Africa, the Indian Ocean and the Caribbean, these titles reach more than a million readers. Let's hear from the editor-in-chief, Eyoum Nangué.

Planète Jeunes features readers' letters and runs an Internet forum. Tell us about the desires, wishes and dreams of young Africans?

It's difficult to give a direct answer to that question because young people have so many and such varied dreams, desires and wishes. A recurrent theme in the mail we receive are calls by the young to build a strong Africa which refuses to accept a fate of poverty. Other letters express the almost existential - in the broader sense - fears of young people about guidance on education, friendship, love, sexuality, self-confidence and fears about the future etc. And we also receive lots of pieces of literature - love letters, poems and songs. Like young people in other parts of the world, they worry about their immediate prospects

(school, work) and an often uncertain future (peace, the environment etc.). One thing we have noticed is that methods of communication have changed. We used to receive lots of our mail by post. Today, most of the letters come in by e-mail. You also see the impact of technological changes on young people who tend to express themselves more through the language of texting, which unfortunately filters through into their letters.

And how is Planète Enfants - the little brother of Planète Jeunes launched in 1998 - performing?

Planète Enfant has caught up with *Planète Jeunes* in terms of circulation. And the number of subscribers is growing. It is used as a teaching aid by teachers in schools and it has entered into partnership with organisations such as Unicef, Plan International, the World Health Organisation and the International Labour Organisation to run campaigns on issues like road safety, child labour and the recording of births etc. The main difference between the two titles is that parents buy *Planète Enfants*, while young people buy *Planète Jeunes* themselves.

What types of young people are you aiming at? Is it young people who love western culture, like football and music?

Thanks to digital technology, young African people receive exactly the same images as young people in the rest of the world. They are connected directly to cable and satellite stations that show clips of American hip-hop throughout the day. They watch football matches from all the big stadiums in Europe and Latin America. However, while they have access to the world, they also keep their feet on the ground. They love the American stars as well as actors in small-budget sitcoms who



A Cover of "Planète jeunes".

speak the language of the African street and deal with social issues. They adore *coupé-décagé*, a type of music performed by young Ivorians based on Congolese rhythms. *Planète Jeunes* has to cover this great range of global and local trends. This is why our magazine may seem like a patchwork of information on American stars, big African names in football and music, social issues, which for example deal with addiction to video games, and current affairs, such as the Chinese presence in Africa or the American elections. Not to mention careers, science, fashion, health, in particular AIDS, humour through sketches and comic strips, and travel. ■

Keywords

Planète Jeunes; Planète Enfants; young Africans; Africa; Eyoum Nangué.



Mike Jensen*

Trends in the DIGITAL DIVIDE in AFRICA

Most countries in Africa have lagged behind in their progress towards an Information Society, largely because of their low-income levels and lack of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) infrastructure. As a result the majority of rural Africans today still do not have access to basic telephony, let alone to Internet - by December 2007, only 5 per cent of the African population had an Internet connection and broadband penetration was below 1 per cent. Nevertheless there have been some significant improvements recently which suggest that the continent is now making significant progress to join the global networked economy.

Mobile telephony is now the primary mode of ICT access in Africa, where mobile phones outnumber fixed lines by almost ten to one. Mobile growth rates are the highest in the world, led by countries with more recent market entrants, more competitive pricing and improving coverage.

While ICT access on the continent is generally very low, the wide variation in income levels, population size and telecommunication infrastructure policies has made uneven levels of uptake. For example, over 75 per cent of fixed lines are found in just 6 of the 53 African nations. Similarly, four out of the 53 countries in Africa account for almost 60 per cent of Internet users in the region, and only 22 of the 53 countries have broadband. Countries with Internet populations over of over 1 million people are located in (in order of size): Nigeria, Morocco, Egypt, South Africa, Sudan, Kenya, Algeria, Tunisia and Zimbabwe.

One of the major reasons for the low levels of ICT access on the continent has been the large rural populations and the limited terrestrial telecommunication infrastructure (satellite links are expensive and relatively slow). The period leading up to the 'dot-com bubble' in 2000 saw billions of dollars of investment in new fibre-optic cable in developed countries, while Africa was left out of this trend due to their smaller markets. Since then demand has grown and there is a major increase in the number of fibre-optic projects. A recent African survey found



Kim Taylor (South Africa), *Deconstructing creativity*. Comic sent for the Africa Comics Award 2002.

the largest build-up of long-distance telecommunication infrastructure recorded to date. By the end of 2007, over \$1bn in contracts had been issued for about 30 000 km of optic fibre in 17 countries, with loans from China Exim Bank for about two-thirds of the value.

At an international level, fibre optic infrastructure is critical to bringing in sufficient bandwidth for a networked economy, and various African agencies have been working to help bring this about. Among the first major international projects to get off the ground was the East African Submarine Cable System (EASSy) which aims to establish a fibre backbone along the world's largest unconnected coast, running between South Africa and the Sudan, with six landing points along the way. In addition, other similar competing private projects have emerged, such as SEACOM, LION and FLAG, and the West African Cable System (WACS). ■

* Mike Jensen is an independent consultant with experience in more than 30 countries in Africa assisting in the establishment of information and communications systems over the last 15 years.

Keywords

Internet; Africa; Information and Communication Technology (ICT); mobile; East African Submarine Cable System (EASSy); fibre-optic.