

# 50 Years of Journalism

African media  
since Ghana's  
independence

Edited by Elizabeth Barratt  
and Guy Berger

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was made  
possible by



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# Sharing words: A pan-African approach

Over the past decade, independent African journalism has started to make its mark more widely on the international stage. One of the reasons is the growing movement towards taking a pan-African approach to media.

Besides the improved communication between individual editors, journalists and media activists on this vast continent, helped by the widening of internet access and the extension of cellular networks, we have seen the successful formation of pan-African players like Riarc (African Communication Regulation Authorities Network), the African Union of Broadcasting (previously Urtna) and The African Editors' Forum (Taef).

These are new-generation journalists and communicators who see the space opened up by the democratic movement across the continent, and are making their own inputs to strengthen democracy.

A result of the formation of Taef, for example, has been the increasing exchange of information and dialogue amongst African editors at conferences and individually, thus helping to tell African stories in a way that is not mediated by foreign and ex-colonial agencies.

But the present and the future can only be built on a sound knowledge of our past challenges and victories. Hence this book. While it is not the definitive work on



Mathatha Tsedu

African journalism over the past 50 years, it is part of the documentation of our history. It is a start that must spur us all to more relevant, regular and easily managed media in the future.

This book has been enriched by the characters of Taef, Highway Africa and the Media Foundation of West Africa. These influential organisations have called on their members to give freely of their wide experience by writing about particular characters, cases and causes of the continent. These stories

and photographs uniquely add to the in-depth analyses provided by a range of academics on the continent.

*50 years of Journalism* is a timely and influential summation of what can be learnt from history. It provides a valuable intellectual resource for African journalists – but also for all those who wish to know more about African journalism, such as teachers and students, members of the public, governments and international media.

Mathatha Tsedu

Chairperson of The African Editors' Forum (Taef)

# Time for progress: A need for conscious champions

**T**he right to freedom of expression and information is one of the fundamental rights guaranteed by the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. In October 2002, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, the body established by the Charter to promote and protect human rights on the African continent, adopted the Declaration on Principles of Freedom of Expression in Africa in Banjul, The Gambia.

This document, built on the 1991 Windhoek Declaration (later endorsed by Unesco), declares unequivocally that freedom of expression and information "is a fundamental and inalienable human right and an indispensable component of democracy".

In addition to prohibiting arbitrary or illegitimate suppression of free speech by state parties to the Charter, the Declaration also enjoins authorities to take positive measures to promote diversity in information and opinion.

As regards journalists, the Declaration says that effective self-regulation is the best system for promoting high standards in the media.

Attacks on media practitioners are described as undermining independent journalism, freedom of expression and the free flow of information to the public. Highly significant is the clause: "States are under an obligation to take effective measures to prevent such attacks and, when they do occur, to investigate them, to punish perpetrators and to ensure that victims have access to effective remedies."

The Declaration concludes by saying that state parties to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights



**Pansy Tlakula**

should make every effort to give practical effect to the principles on freedom of expression elaborated in the statement.

The Declaration is hailed as one of the world's most advanced commitments to freedom of expression. Yet, incidents of murder with impunity, harassment, intimidation, unlawful detention of media practitioners, undue political interference with the media, seizure of publications, destruction of equipment and closure of private media establishments seem to be on the increase in the continent.

The African Commission has done its best to promote and protect the right to freedom of expression and other rights in the Charter.

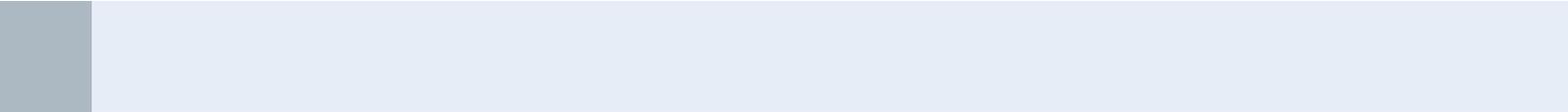
However, its efforts have to be reinforced. It is my hope that the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights will ensure that state parties live up to the ideals, aspirations and obligations of the Charter and the Declaration.

If in the next 50 years of African journalism, all peoples of Africa can become conscious champions of the Declaration, then progress in this part of the world will be assured.

I, for one, as the African Commission's Special Rapporteur on the Right to Freedom of Expression, am amongst the existing champions of the Declaration.

**Pansy Tlakula**

*Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression*



SECTION ONE

# Overview



# African media since Ghana's independence

By Kwame Karikari

## 1. Introduction:

The mass media in Africa, as is well known, was a product of colonialism. As with everywhere else, the media in Africa is a product of the political developments and histories of the continent. The ownership systems, their character, strengths and weaknesses, their political and social outlooks, and above all their outputs and impacts are all the products of the societies that have formed and shaped them.

This introduction provides a broad, panoramic outline of the development of the media across the continent since Ghana's independence in the late 1950s. Thus, it attempts to place the growth and development of the media within the historical and political-economic circumstances or developments in the continent during these post-colonial decades. The article limits itself to the traditional mass media, namely radio and television broadcasting and newspapers.

## 2. The political historical context

When Ghana gained independence in March 1957, only seven countries, besides South Africa which did not recognise the majority African people as full citizens with equal rights, were independent. Four of them were the Arab countries of Egypt, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia in the north, all except Egypt becoming independent in the 1950s too. Ethiopia, Libya and Morocco were monarchies. Egypt had declared only five years before a republic after the military ousted the monarchy, and was still panting for breath from having repelled the joint British-French-Israeli invasion of the Suez only some months earlier. Sudan's inde-

pendence was barely a year old, and rebellion for separation was boiling in the south. Liberia, with over a century of self-rule behind it, hardly had much to show its colonised brethren by way of economic and social progress or in political management.

In Algeria and Kenya, nationalist forces were locked in violent conflict for independence. The two wars of independence exemplified the fact that the anti-colonial strivings elicited more violent repression in countries with communities of European settlers. The entire continent, however, was rumbling in political agitation through peasant revolts, workers strikes, protests by World War 2 ex-servicemen, and general mass agitation. The typically violent repression of these mass unrests by the colonial forces was usually dutifully reported by the nationalist presses serving the popular movement.

Ghana's independence was part of this continental, indeed global, upheaval of colonised peoples for freedom.

Ghana's independence, however, was more significant for Africa than the simple reference to it as the "first country in Africa south of the Sahara ...". That statement, of course, rejects the "independence" of the racist state of South Africa. But implicitly it also discounts the 1847 declaration of the Liberian republic of repatriated freed slaves, and excludes Sudan's 1956 assertion from Britain. Its real importance is to be found in the practical manifestation of the new state's pan-African agenda – summed up in Kwame Nkrumah's independence declaration speech at midnight on March 5 1957: "The independence of Ghana is meaningless unless it is linked up with the total liberation of Africa."

Two events initiated by the new government in the first year of independence would be the most critical pan-African initiatives that accelerated the anti-colonial nation-

alist movement, and propelled continent-wide solidarity and support against apartheid. These were: the Conference of Independent African States in April 1958 and the All African Peoples' Conference in December the same year, both in Accra.

The Conference of Independent African States assembled the heads of independent states then existing, excluding apartheid South Africa. They were: Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Liberia, Libya, Morocco, Sudan, and Tunisia. The conference may be said to have sown in practical terms the seeds for the founding of the Organisation of African Unity five years later. Its objectives were to: "(1) discuss questions of mutual interest, (2) explore ways and means of consolidating and safeguarding independence, (3) strengthen the economic and cultural ties between the independent states, and (4) find ways of helping Africans still oppressed under colonial rule."<sup>1</sup>

The All African Peoples' Conference, which attracted delegates from 28 African countries representing 64 organisations and movements, including political parties and trade unions from all regions of the continent, was the first such "gathering of African freedom fighters to assemble in a free independent African state for the purpose of planning for a final assault upon imperialism and colonialism".<sup>2</sup>

Thereafter, in the short space of three years to 1960, more than 20 countries wrestled independence from the colonial rulers. The imperial order did not, naturally, welcome with warm embrace what British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan acknowledged before the racist South African Parliament in Cape Town that year as the "wind of

**Two events initiated by the new government in the first year of independence would be the most critical pan-African initiatives**



**Kwame Karikari** is currently Executive Director of the press freedom and freedom of expression promoting organisation, the Media Foundation for West Africa based in Accra, Ghana. He retired in 2005 from the School of Communication Studies, University of Ghana, where he had taught as professor in Mass Communication since 1979. In the early 1980s he served as director general of the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation

change”. In the majority of cases the demand for independence was by peaceful, civil means. But by and large, it was principally the desperate resistance of a dying imperialism that heightened the political turbulence of the 1960s. Where the people took up arms it was in resistance to the violent repression of colonialism.

Within a few weeks of Macmillan’s statement, the apartheid state gave a bloody notice of its response to the African awakening by the Sharpeville massacre of peaceful protestors. This particular act of brutality outraged African solidarity against racialism as never before. Sharpeville made the most impact on mass African consciousness regarding apartheid. This was due primarily to the massive coverage of both the event and the reactions of the new governments by the African mass media, especially radio which was now under the control of the nationalist governments in the new independent states.

**This particular act of brutality outraged African solidarity against racialism as never before**

The blatant subversion of Congo’s independence about the same time by Belgium, almost instantly following the declaration of it, and leading to the assassination of its leader Patrice Lumumba, signalled the fragility of the new states and the suspicions of the African

nationalists that the Western powers had intentions to derail the independence movement.

That year 16 newly independent African countries joined the United Nations as members. Five years before in 1955, some – notably Egypt and Ghana – had been part of a conference of leaders from emerging states in Bandung, Indonesia, to form the new bloc of the so-called Non-Aligned Movement. On December 14, the now enlarged number of Afro-Asian members in the UN tabled at the General Assembly resolution (1514) – the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. Britain, Belgium, France, Portugal, South Africa, Spain and the US refused to vote for it. Though passed by the majority, this position of the Western powers added to the suspicions of many of the new governments.<sup>3</sup>

By the time the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) was

founded in 1963, and to the end of the 1960s – that is within the first decade of Ghana’s independence – most of the countries on the continent were independent. But both the stability and the existence of the new states were coming under various threats. War was raging in the remaining enclaves of Portuguese and settler colonies, now mostly in the south. Everywhere else, however, there were political tensions and crises in independent countries. The new states confronted various forms and sources of instability. By the end of the 1960s many countries, including Ghana, were under military dictatorships.<sup>4</sup> The trend would characterise political developments in most countries well into the last years of the 20th century when the African Union would decree non-recognition for any government established through a coup d’etat.

Besides the military disruptions and accompanying violence, a number of the countries would in the 1960s be plunged into worse political commotion: civil war. Biafra’s war of secession, lasting some four years, not only caught the most headlines internationally for the humanitarian crises it wrought. For Africa it symbolised most dramatically the fragility of the political-geographical states created by colonialism. Nigeria succeeded in restoring peace and rebuilding a government uniting the country all over again. Civil wars and other violent divisive conflicts from the 1960s would leave some countries politically destabilised and socially anarchic for decades. Chad and Congo exemplified this, and neither state has gained any measure of political stability since.

The conflicts were primarily born out of political and socio-economic contradictions internal to the countries, including problems arising from relations among ethnic communities in the new states. But in the most critical cases, those which had sub-regional or continental ramifications, external interests encouraged, supported, or fanned them. Quite often, and well into the 1980s, the continent’s problems became fodder for big power contestations in the so-called “Cold War”, a political-ideological conflict disguising a fierce combat for the control of Africa’s very same natural wealth that had brought in colonialism to begin with. Angola and the Congo (Zaire) epitomised this scramble for control and influence.

### 3. The media at and after independence

Whereas the African newspaper had varied origins and traditions, broadcasting was directly inherited from the colonial authorities. Though in some places private commercial interests had taken the initial steps in radio broadcasting,<sup>5</sup> in the majority of cases it was introduced as a direct political and ideological instrument of the colonial state. By the time of independence when the new national governments inherited the system, broadcasting was everywhere a government monopoly.

Thus, until independence Africans could have control only of the newspaper, which was used to effect as the sole mass medium of resistance, agitation, mobilisation and organisation and for attaining independence. Even then, the development of the newspaper varied from region to region and according to the specific colonial experiences. And these broad traditions would influence in some ways the post-colonial development of the medium.

There were four main sources of the origins of the newspaper in Africa: the colonial state; the European settler colonists; the Christian missionary institutions; and the early African elite or the so-called intelligentsia.

In Egypt, Napoleonic colonisers introduced the newspaper in the 1790s, followed by the Turkish colonisers. However, as in the Maghreb, local initiatives soon followed the foreign introduction. It was, for instance, introduced by European settlers where such communities were established (Algeria, Angola, Kenya, Mozambique, Rhodesia and South Africa). Generally it was introduced late in the French territories, and by French entrepreneurs. When the first African-owned newspaper in the French colonies appeared in Cote d’Ivoire in 1935, Africans in neighbouring English colonies had run papers for over 80 years already.

In Anglophone Africa, Cape Town led the history with the *Cape Town Gazette* in 1800, and was quickly followed in Sierra Leone by the *Royal Gazette* in 1801, set up by the British colonial governor, Charles Macarthy, the same man who first introduced the newspaper in Ghana (then Gold Coast). More than anywhere else besides north



Africa, in Anglophone West Africa, Africans soon took over the newspaper and published it for African readers. Thus in Ghana, the Gambia, Liberia, Nigeria or Sierra Leone, there was no foreign investment in the newspaper until in the 1950s. When Ghana became independent in 1957 it was exactly 100 years from when the first African-owned newspaper was set up in what was then the Gold Coast.

At independence, the structure of ownership and operation of the newspaper was largely the same as it had been under colonialism. The newspaper industry in East and Southern Africa was dominated by big companies owned by

European settlers. In Anglophone West Africa, where Africans had owned the press throughout the colonial period, the first major foreign investment entered the scene in 1950 as the Mirror Newspaper Group of London set up papers in Ghana, Sierra Leone and Nigeria. Thus in these places, the press was a mixture of many small politicised publications operated by the nationalist political organisations and members of the elite on one hand, and big circulating newspapers owned by big foreign business on the other.<sup>6</sup>

In a number of countries, especially in the Francophone area such as Rwanda, Burundi, the Congo (Brazzaville), Chad, Benin (then Dahomey), Burkina Faso (then Upper Volta), Central Africa Republic and Mauritania, there were no daily newspapers under colonialism. Daily newspapers emerged after independence even in countries like Togo and Mali. For the most part in this zone, French entrepreneurs controlled the newspaper business. Indigenous publishing efforts were new, quite young and small, though there were initiatives in Senegal and Cote d'Ivoire coming in the 1930s.

Therefore the overall picture of the newspaper scene on the continent at independence was one in which foreign or European settler capital controlled the large circulating papers and Africans, where they operated any, held on to small papers of limited circulation but with tremendous cumulative influence as political organs. Thus newspaper publishing as an industrial tradition, and its reading as a social cultural practice, were for the most part new or quite young in Africa at the end of colonial rule. The tradition of African-controlled newspaper most familiar to the literate population was that of agitation, the same universal partisan adversarial, crusading journalism that characterised the history of the press in Europe and America. On the other hand, the tradition of the foreign European or settler press Africans were familiar with was one that represented colonial interests and opposed African freedom.

One impact of both traditions was that professional journalistic skills were weak, and nearly every country had a very limited cadre of trained journalists to meet the new challenges demanded by independence. The high demand for journalists arose also out of the rapid expansion in mass media outlets as governments set up national news agencies

and information service departments and expanded broadcasting services. Much of this need was met by training programmes sponsored by the former colonial states both in the country and in the colonial metropolises.

Within a few years of independence, however, foreign or settler-owned newspaper establishments existed in very few places: Kenya and South Africa, notably. They had all or mostly left – forced out – or been nationalised to serve as state-owned organs. All over, with the isolated exception of places like Nigeria – besides Kenya and South Africa – the new environment of the press from north to south was made up of state or government monopoly. The main or dominant newspapers in a country were now ruling party organs and/or the nationalised publications. This press regime usually accompanied the imposition of one-party political regimes. Though, again Kenya, which decreed a one-party system early after independence, permitted private capital side by side with the party and state establishments.

This reality of the press signified government monopoly of the space for free expression, an indication of a generalised silencing of contrary viewpoints and of dissent. Even in a country like Liberia which neither decreed a one-party state nor set up a dominant ruling party press, a long tradition of silencing throttled the development of a pluralistic press.<sup>7</sup> Very few governments would decree an absolute banishment of private press. But wherever they prevailed, the private press survived precariously in the face of incessant state interference and outright repression.

In the independence decade of the late 1950s-60s, all

## CLIPS

It is in the post-colonial period that a so-called free press emerges. But it is a contradiction to maintain the notion of a free press when it is exclusionary. The press cannot be free if it excludes the expression, the experience, and the opinion of women.

– Patricia McFadden, *journalist, 1998*

broadcasting was state-owned, having been inherited as such from the colonial administrations that had set them up primarily as extensions of imperial political and ideological control, or as direct propaganda tools in times of the inter-imperialist world wars. Under colonialism, radio was a monopoly of the state, and so it remained after independence. In that period, it was not accessible to the people, and opposing or contrary viewpoints were not contested even by the opposition forces. Dissent, therefore, was inconceivable on radio, at least. It proved therefore a useful and an effective instrument in the hands of the post-colonial governments of all forms, and easily lent itself to shutting out viewpoints other than those of officialdom. In many instances, thereby, broadcasting became easily usable as the exclusive organ of the invariably sole ruling party, and ultimately in the service of the leader of the party and nation.

The organisation was usually directly under a Ministry of Information and Broadcasting and therefore headed by the minister thereof. The administrative head was likely to be a director or director general usually appointed by the country's president, the entire staff belonging therefore to the civil service.

Broadly, broadcasting policy was based on what the governments considered to be critical national objectives. These included: forging national unity and national identity; development, however it was defined; and, additionally for the more radical pan-African states, supporting the anti-colonial struggles elsewhere. Generally it was a policy that placed politics at the head of broadcasting practice.

Everywhere, rapid expansion in broadcasting followed independence. The technology was characterised by wide-spread transmission on shortwave, and extensions of the wired rediffusion services before the transistorised radio receiver became most common and relatively affordable. These plans enhanced the reach of radio over wide territory to cover entire or most of the populations in a country, thus helping to develop a new consciousness of belonging to the "nation". The object of inclusiveness and some sense of cultural integration dictated expansion in the use of as

**The use of the radio to promote public health causes, such as immunisation campaigns, and the fight against endemic health problems like river blindness, was remarkably effective**

many languages as possible. Though broadcasting establishments were concentrated in the capital, nearly every post-colonial government made it a priority plan to expand the reach of broadcasting and access by the populations.

New transmitters and equipment were installed, new studios built and large numbers of staff employed and trained, usually with technical assistance from the public service organisations of the former colonial power, as well as from countries such as

Canada and the Netherlands.

In practice though, the post-colonial broadcasting in the early years of independence served a variety of public service uses that would make contributions to development objectives. Nearly everywhere, educational broadcasting was considered important and radio was used for mass literacy courses, and as supplementary support or distance classes for primary and secondary school programmes. These latter uses, as well as their support for agricultural extension work and rural development generally, borrowed from earlier or even contemporary formats in Europe, Canada and elsewhere. Similarly, the use of the radio to promote public health causes, such as immunisation campaigns, and the fight against endemic health problems like river blindness, was remarkably effective.

The political objects of broadcasting found expression in the establishment of external services. Egypt's Radio Cairo was a pioneer in this as far as Africa is concerned, starting with its services in the 1950s. The principal purpose of the external services, utilising powerful shortwave transmitters with long distance reaches, was to promote anti-colonial or anti-imperialist movements. And many governments financed these channels as a duty in the anti-colonial or anti-apartheid struggles. Thus the broadcasts from these services targeted the Portuguese colonies and apartheid South Africa. Egypt radio initially served Arab fighters against colonialism, such as the Algerians against France, but extended the service southward for anti-colonial missions on the continent. Another good example was Radio Tanzania Dar es Salaam which gave free air time

to the southern African liberation movements, all of them with military training facilities in the country to broadcast to listeners in their home countries. The beneficiaries were Frelimo (Mozambique), the ANC and PAC (South Africa), Swapo (Namibia), and Zanu and Zapu (Zimbabwe).

Commercial services on these state-owned systems were nearly unheard of before the 1970s. Before then the isolated cases included initiatives by stations owned by regional governments of the Nigerian federation. Even then, the federal authority barred those stations run by the federal corporation from advertising. By the middle 1970s, when television broadcasting had been introduced and financing broadcasting was becoming strenuous for the economies, many stations were authorised to resort to commercial services.

#### 4. The post-independence crises

Into the 70s, the promises of independence for peace, freedom, justice and social progress – the very foundations of the struggle against colonialism – were everywhere being subverted by political and socio-economic reversals. Constructing the post-colonial state on the foundations laid by colonialism seemed an impossible task. Among the important factors, we may also consider the sheer weight of inexperience in managing the institutions of state, plus governance structured on the colonial examples. The reflexive response of the new governments to dissent and opposition, or to the demands of citizens in supposed independent sovereign states, was to resort to those same repressive methods of the colonial state.

The common forms of state and governance from the 60s were one-party or military dictatorships. The one-party form was adopted by both conservative capitalist-oriented regimes like Houphouët Boigny's in Cote d'Ivoire, Kamuzu Banda's in Malawi and Jomo Kenyatta's in Kenya, or by left socialist-oriented ones like Kwame Nkrumah's in Ghana, Julius Nyerere's in Tanzania and Samora Machel's in Mozambique. The exceptions included the monarchies in

#### Constructing the post-colonial state on the foundations laid by colonialism seemed an impossible task

Morocco and Swaziland or Ethiopia's centuries-old imperial feudal order, all of which kept some kind of controlled parliament or another. Even then, Ethiopia was plunged into an explosion of civil wars and strife ignited by the 1975 overthrow of Emperor Haile Selassie by a self-

proclaimed socialist military junta.

It did not matter what ideological precept or political-economic worldview a government proclaimed. Nor did it make a difference which side of the international political-ideological camp it leaned toward. Governments abhorred dissent, proscribed organised opposition or alternative expressions in political and economic management of society. In short, political pluralism was at best discouraged. Though disregard for, or abuses and violations of, rights dominated the relations between the state and citizens generally, it is fair to recognise a difference between the horrific mass murdering criminality of regimes such as Idi Amin's in Uganda and Mengistu Haile Mariam's in Ethiopia on one extreme, and the humane, enlightened authoritarianism of Zambia's Kenneth Kaunda or Tanzania's Julius Nyerere on the other end.

By the end of the 1970s and into the rest of the century, the remaining Portuguese colonies had won independence, and the long struggle for colonial freedom was concluded with the defeat of apartheid in 1994. But, especially from the 1980s, violent conflicts, exemplified by civil wars, raged with such ferocity that it appeared the entire continent would be consumed by them. Though mostly prevalent in the western and central parts, not one region was excluded. This wave of wars was characterised by, among other effects, their brutishness; their sectarian orientation and the emergence of warlords as the political organisational form; the employment of children as soldiers; and the widespread, unprecedented targeting of women as victims. Above all, one of the most important features was the "collapse" of the post-colonial state as distinctly represented by the case of Somalia.

Underlying, but also affected by, the political conflicts were social and economic crises that rendered Africa as a hapless and destitute continent needing the mercy and sym-

pathy of the world.

The economic crises manifested in the massive poverty were the cumulative result of a complex of factors, including the persistence of the colonial-type economic structures and relations which Kwame Nkrumah had popularised right from 1964 as "neocolonialism". Nkrumah's thesis may be summed up thus:

"The essence of neo-colonialism is that the state which is subject to is, in theory, independent and has all the outward trappings of international sovereignty. In reality its economic system and thus its political policy is directed from outside."<sup>8</sup>

The economies remained dependent peripheral appendices of the global economic system in which their sole role was that of raw material extraction and dependency on one crop or mineral for export. The global depression in prices of these raw materials in the 1970s and 1980s was aggravated by the global petroleum price hikes and crises in the mid-1970s. From Ethiopia in the east, to Senegal and Mauritania in the west, devastating droughts and other disasters (such as locust invasions) blighted whatever little there was remaining of the economies of the new independent states. Famine stalked many countries, wiping out communities. For most people hunger was the daily bread. All of these were further worsened by enormous debts to international financial conglomerates and Western governments.

The external conditions, meanwhile, fed on internal factors of misjudged or misdirected policies, and mismanagement including corruption and other crimes that also became part of the features of governance.

By the end of the 1980s, Africa's condition was desperate in all senses and ways. The image of the continent outside,<sup>9</sup> as projected by the international media, was that of a hungry, needy people, who cannot manage their affairs, who are not in control of their lives, and who must be helped. Dependence on foreign food aid has since the 1970s become a critical source for feeding large populations in many countries up to the 21st century.

The overall result, unlike Asia, is that not one country has since independence made a success of exiting from the

underdevelopment cycle and cauldron, to stand on its own feet and determine its own development policies and programmes. By the early years of the 21st century, for example, most governments on the continent depended on substantial subsidies from international aid to finance their annual fiscal budgets, for recurrent expenditure and for development programmes.

Obviously what little progress was made in the early years of independence, such as increases in literacy, was virtually wiped clean by all the factors and forces that obstructed or militated against progress. With a picture like this, it is tempting to see only gloom in Africa and to declare the continent, as the *Economist* magazine has for one: "Hopeless".

The principal responses to this predicament, coming in the mid-to-late 1980s, were both internal and external. The response of the international financial and economic powers was the introduction and imposition of the neo-liberal Structural Adjustment Policies spearheaded by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. The Structural Adjustment policies, simply put, prescribed wholesale market economic relations and structures in which state and public roles were discouraged and withdrawn. It was a reinvigoration of capitalism as the paradigm for development. Henceforth, its prescriptions became the conditions for aid and the bedrock of all economic policies.

The political component of the neo-liberal paradigm by which African economies would become more open to the penetration of foreign capital, was the prescription. It was also made into a condition for aid – as was the demand on governments for political institutional reforms and the adoption of liberal democratic forms of governance. A central component was the demand for press freedom. All of these political demands – for political reforms, human rights and related values such as freedom of expression – were already demands on the agenda of a growing social movement of the popular social forces for democratisation across the continent.

Throughout the years since independence, there has never been a lack of or an end to popular protests against, and opposition or resistance to, undemocratic rule and or economic injustice or hardships. The student movement was a

major expression of civil disobedience to undemocratic rule throughout the 1970s. Labour unrest never ceased, though it was never as militant as it had been during the anti-colonial struggles, many unions having been co-opted by the one-party state systems or enfeebled by weak economic conditions.

By the late 1980s, again within a global movement for popular democratic reforms – though not necessarily as a result of the movements that rocked the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe – broad coalitions of forces were demanding democratisation across the continent, challenging entrenched military dictatorships and harshly authoritarian or dictatorial one-party dictatorships.

Constitutional reforms, electoral processes and multi-party arrangements and parliamentary structures were contemplated, designed, debated and adopted with widely varying results. The popular movements manifested varieties of political expressions. But in Francophone West Africa, for example, they manifested perhaps the nearest examples of national popular assemblies which brought down dictatorships (Benin and Mali) or greatly weakened – of course for a time – entrenched autocracies (Cote d’Ivoire and Burkina Faso) and tyrannies (Togo) to make important concessions.

Almost across the board in all but the countries of North Africa and the Maghreb, the most visible expression and outcome of the popular demands for democracy from the late 1980s into the 1990s, were the emergence of the private media. This was actually the wresting away of the state’s monopoly of the media and the popular imposition of media pluralism. And the most significant political, social and cultural outcome of this development was the emergence of private ownership and operation of broadcasting. By the time the UN through Unesco<sup>10</sup> endorsed this historic development for democracy, it was an accepted order of things. All or nearly all constitutions where the new media situation prevailed, adopted articles and clauses variously guaranteeing press freedom and freedom of expression. The popular assemblies of the Francophone countries most prominently made much of the entrenchment of these freedoms in the constitutions.<sup>11</sup>

Looking back, a combination of factors and developments had produced the tamed atmosphere that marked the

media landscape on the continent for the three decades following independence. Based on assumptions that national unity and development required the full and uniform agreement of the populations, post-independent governments proposed that a pluralistic media, like a pluralistic political situation including opposition and dissenting voices, would impede progress and actually invite rancour and disunity. The logic was to have one voice. To compel compliance, the new governments had ready-made legal resources of colonial legislation to fall back on to.

While this rationale applied to all political ideological tendencies, for those states that adopted “socialism” as the political and economic framework for social organisation and economic development the example of media uniformity prevalent in the Soviet or other socialist systems was a source of inspiration and emulation. Besides this, however, a more insidious rationale characteristic of the military dictatorships was a no-nonsense attitude and equally nervous suspicion towards free speech. Whatever the political form of the state, the post-colonial media landscape, generally defined as an “authoritarian” type, was the logical institutional product of the political conditions of the continent.

## 5. By way of conclusion: the new challenges

The legacies of the colonial era, as well as the post-colonial developments sketched above, combined to impose on the emergent media pluralism several important opportunities as well as numerous limitations and threats. To start with, the sheer force of technical innovations in communications technologies, gradually and then rapidly during the period under discussion, made reforms in ownership and access an imperative that a state resisted without hope in the end. Politically, the social developments locally and global trends meant that a state only monopolised speech and the public space with enormous risks in the short or medium term. The reforms that swept much of Africa therefore could not be totally contained for much longer than when they came.

Political questions continue to confront the challenges

of media development today. But, as well, several other critical questions remain for society, comprising economic, technical and cultural fundamentals. Still large areas of the continent remain aloof from the forward movement of media pluralism. North Africa generally is late, as a region, in this development of progress. It is to be noted that those countries that maintain a lid on media pluralism are also among the lot where free speech and uninhibited public spaces for political and cultural expression are still severely constrained or repressed.

Besides, in most places there remains to be concluded legal frameworks for further development on the progress gained to remove or prevent constraints with inimical effects on the development of the media and on free expression.

The decades of state controls and monopoly of media critically stifled development of the human resources for managing media. The emergent private media confronted a severe demand for personnel in all sections of media work and management. As with the immediate post-independence period, the rescue operation was initiated by government and donor agencies which mounted training programmes for the new cadre of journalists. Even then the growth of that new media seems to be too fast for the reach of this response from the donor community. The result is that the new private media have had a longer time overcoming severe problems of professional quality and management capacity. The implications of the professional challenges have ramifications, the immediate one of which is a propensity to fall foul of the law, as exemplified in the spate of defamation litigation all over.

Some of the most critical and intractable problems inherited from the past and or stemming from present policy frameworks which obstruct media development, are of an economic character. An important near-universal characteristic of the private media as they emerged from the late 1980s was that they were set up on small capital. Once again, Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa remained among the very few examples of media environments with substan-

**The sources of such threats to the development of independent media and journalism in many parts of the continent today appear to include politicians, religious organisations and possibly commercial interests of dubious origin**

tially big business ventures behind the press enterprise. Again, as with the mission of the press during the colonial period, now the new private press was mostly set up to promote the agitation for democratisation or political reforms. The slight difference though is that this time round they were not invariably dominated by political parties.

The weak economic base of the new media reflected the general failure of the economies to develop, since independence, social classes with capital significant enough to make investments in any aspect of industry capable of contributing to critical social change. This weak economic environment has had several implications all round. Low

incomes and the wholesale mass poverty have translated into limited access. The weak commercial and advertising market is an index of low industrial and commercial development that limits media growth. In such an atmosphere, competition is fierce and a matter of near-instant life-and-death.

Combined with poor infrastructural facilities such as acute energy (electricity) problems, poor telecommunications systems and poor road networks, the economic factors of media production turn out as burdens that undermine the sustenance of media pluralism and viability. Obviously, competition in a market system impels the “survival of the fittest” and produces among the lot, however weak the general conditions, individual enterprises that are capable of continuing production and developing monopolies or semblances of them. But the critical economic conditions confronting media development in most of the economies in Africa today tend to provide grounds for the intervention of forces that have a potential to distort the independence of the media owners and of journalism in the political and cultural space. The sources of such threats to the development of independent media and journalism in many parts of the continent today appear to include politicians, religious organisations and possibly commercial interests of dubious origin.

It is important to observe also that the new media atmosphere has been a strong condition for the wider pen-

etration into Africa of foreign media outlets. Indeed the singular dominant media available and accessible to large African audiences across frontiers are the giant global media from the former colonial capitals, and especially the state-supported public service systems such as the BBC, RFI, Voice of America, Deutsche Welle and others. The SABC reaches many African homes beyond South Africa, but its influence is still nowhere near that wielded by any of the rest.

It is not foreseeable to expect an African, private-owned

media with the reach across countries as any of these. Given that the economic conditions of the private media establishments at the national level raise critical questions of survival and sustainability for supporting democratic culture and social and cultural advancements, it is pertinent to wonder if the Africa media industry will not present itself as another new frontier for external control. The cultural implications of such a development could be complex and politically onerous.

## Endnotes

- 1 Armah (2004:58)
- 2 Armah (2004). The participants included many nationalists who would soon become leaders in their countries' governments, such as Malawi's Kamuzu Banda, Kenya's Tom Mboya, Congo's Patrice Lumumba or prominent intellectuals in the African liberation movement such as Frantz Fanon representing the Algerian National Liberation Front (FLN).
- 3 The suspicions of collective Western complicity in frustrating the independence movement would be further strengthened later when in 1965 the US used its veto power in the UN Security Council, for only the second time, regarding Rhodesia's illegal independence declaration.
- 4 Kwame Nkrumah's government was overthrown in February 1966, less than a decade from the country's independence. It followed by one month another bloody putsch in Nigeria. But the first military intervention in politics to unseat a government a year after Ghana's independence was in Sudan, and two years after that country's own independence. After this, the succession of military rule from the 1960s was started in Algeria in 1965. For contemporary studies on the phenomenon of military intervention see, for example, Welch (1970) and First (1970).
- 5 This was the case in places like Algeria, Egypt, Kenya and Morocco. See for example Head (1974).
- 6 The Mirror Group set up the *Daily Graphic* in Accra, *Daily Mail* in Freetown, and bought the Lagos *Daily Times*. The entry of the British company in the West African market provoked strong opposition on accusations that the papers were set up to serve "imperialist interests". The most sustained opposition was a boycott campaign in Ghana, for which see Karikari (1992).
- 7 For a good account of media development in Liberia see Burrowes (2004) and Hachten (1971).
- 8 See Nkrumah (1965). Nkrumah's thesis was that Africa's poverty and predicament were perpetuated by the control of the economies of the former colonies by a web of global monopoly capitalist interests, and that the solution for Africa lay in the continent's unity and control of its resources. It was summed up thus: when the book first came out, it so outraged the US State Department that the US government under Lyndon Johnson protested and promptly withheld \$35 million of aid.
- 9 The image of Africa as portrayed by the international (particularly Euro-American) media is a reality constructed through a complex of ideological, political, historical and cultural foundations as old as the history of the relations between the continent and the external world. A useful study of the US media's coverage of African subjects in the period under discussion is Hawk (1992).
- 10 The Unesco Conference on the Promotion of Media Pluralism in Africa, held in Windhoek, Namibia, in May 1991, produced a Declaration that supported the movement for press freedom and press pluralism.
- 11 For an assessment of the development of the private media in Francophone West Africa during this period, see Campbell (1998).

# 2

SECTION TWO

## West Africa – Anglophone



## CHARACTERS, CASES AND CAUSES

## Journalist with a mission: Kenneth Best of Liberia

By **JEDDI MOWBRAY ARMAH**

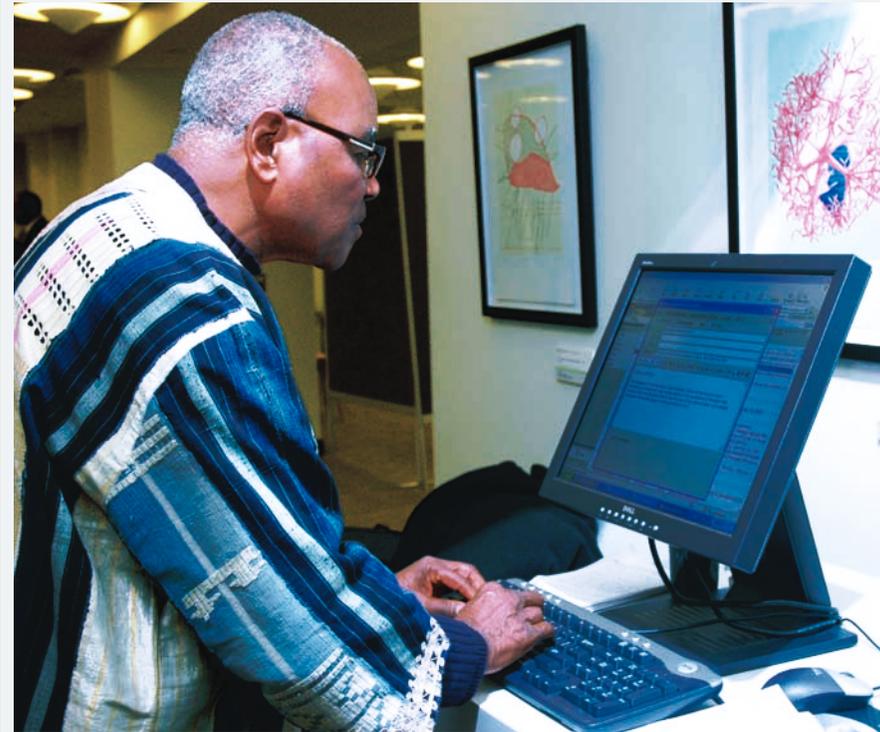
At 68, the diminutive figure of Kenneth Yarkpawolo Best is still seen passionately working as a journalist for a minimum of 10 hours a day.

This venerated journalist – a graduate of the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism – still heavily involves himself with editorial work at the *Daily Observer*, the newspaper he established 26 years ago as Liberia’s first independent daily.

Best sees his work as a mandate “to make ever-present an independent voice that serves as a rampart against the evils that destroy society”. He has not come thus far in the absence of adversity.

Best launched the *Daily Observer* on February 19 1981, barely a year following a bloody military coup that witnessed the slaying of President William R Tolbert and summary executions of 13 members of the cabinet. This was a period of heightened political tension in the country. The junta showed no tolerance of the newspaper’s critical posture. Best, as publisher, soon began feeling the

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SANDO MOORE

**Kenneth Best files a report from the Liberia Partners’ Forum at the World Bank in Washington DC on February 13 2007**

unsavoury grip of the dictatorship. Four times he was thrown behind bars and subjected to degenerate conditions. Each time, closure of the newspaper followed. His wife, Mae-Gene Best, shared her husband’s quandary on some of those occasions, undergoing detention in separate locations herself.

On two occasions, arsonists, found to be of the military, destroyed the paper’s facilities.

In a pre-emptive move, Best

recalls, the government specifically ordered the *Daily Observer* closed for two years from 1984 to keep it from reporting on the elections that followed in the ensuing year. As feared, the elections were reportedly massively rigged, retaining coup leader Samuel Doe in power as the first true indigenous leader following the Americo-Liberian stock.

On counsel, Best did not return to the country when he made a business trip to the United States in



**Kenneth Best**

... an independent voice that serves as a rampart against the evils that destroy society

1990. This was at the beginning of the armed rebellion which saw over a quarter of million Liberians killed. He became a wanted man as the *Daily Observer* fearlessly captured the systematic secret killings of individuals suspected as rebel collaborators.

Best eventually moved the newspaper to the West African state of The Gambia and launched it as that country’s first independent daily on May 11 1992. The Gambian government under Sir Dauda Jawara welcomed the development as such a need existed in the country. The seemingly media-friendly environment was not to last.

For one whole week, the *Daily Observer* reprinted and sold each copy of the edition which carried the banner headline “Army coup in

Gambia”. Almost every Gambian wanted a copy of that edition, which carried interviews with the coup leaders. The junta read this as a rousing welcome. They were wrong.

Sooner rather than later, the paper started to reflect the people’s sentiments for a return to democratic civilian rule. The military would not take it. It declared Best unwanted in the country and sent him away.

Albert Porte, a famed rights activist, inspired Best. He was Best’s maternal uncle, who suffered persecution during the 27-year rule of President William VS Tubman.

## CHARACTERS, CASES AND CAUSES

Telling stories from the inside: **Sorious Samura**

By ELIZABETH BARRATT

He can say things that the Western media can't. So says Sorious Samura, the Sierra Leonean journalist and film-maker who now lives in the United Kingdom.

"There are honest things that the Western media ought and need to say about Africa but political correctness has prevented them.

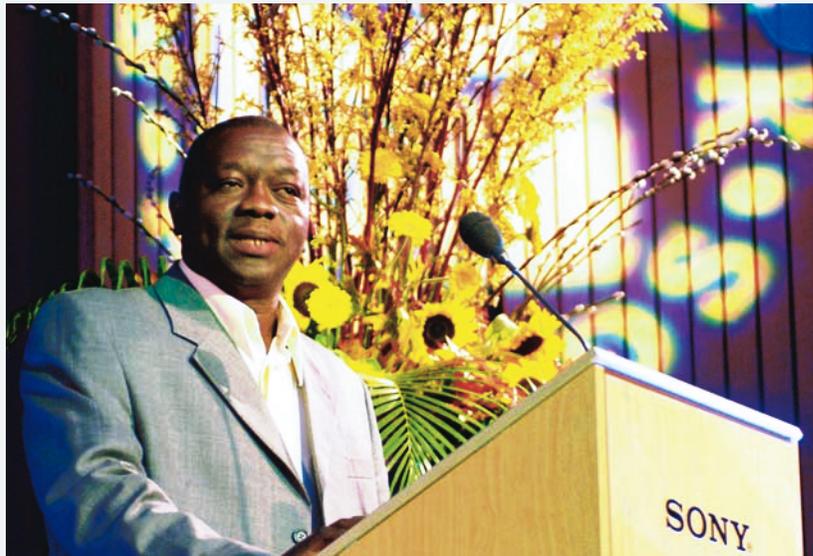
"If you're black and you're wrong, it should be said. That's the advantage that I have, because now I can say things that they can't because they don't want to be labelled racist or have people saying: who the hell are they?" Samura told *The Observer* (UK) last year.

This was why, he went on to say, he could probe the controversial issue of whether male sexual promiscuity was causing Africa's HIV epidemic, in his documentary *Living with Aids* (2005).

Samura was born in Freetown, Sierra Leone, in 1964. He started working in theatre, but soon learnt video filming and began to work as a journalist.

He is best known for the documentaries *Cry Freetown* (1999) –

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RORY PECK TRUST

**Sorious Samura**

which provoked international horror about the brutality of the civil war in his home country and the child fighters who were enlisted – and *Exodus from Africa* (2001).

More recently, he was a consultant for the film *Blood Diamond*, made after he produced *Blood on the Stone* in which he returned to Sierra Leone to document the conflict diamond trade.

Talking to CNN about *Exodus from Africa*, Samura explained why he crosses the boundary of objective reporting by getting involved as a character in his own documentaries, and what he achieves by filming "from the inside": "I have always believed that in order to

get people to understand and get a feel of what it is, it's better to go through it.

"And while we were there, in the desert, I just couldn't believe that, you know, anything should push any human being to want to go through that journey. It was ... it was just unbelievable."

Similarly, in *Living with Illegals*, Samura travelled thousands of kilometres with aspirant migrants who wanted to get jobs in Europe. Starting in northern Morocco, he went through Spain and France and across the English Channel. This film was screened on CNN in August 2006.

In an interview with open-

**I get away with it because I'm an African**

Democracy.net (in 2004), he spoke about the motivation for his work: "I was always full of stories about the continent – who, what, why, how.

"I grew up in Sierra Leone. There was no proper local media. We were entirely dependent on international media like the BBC and CNN; I never saw the full picture, or the proper context, in stories about Africa. I wanted to tell the African story *from within* to the world beyond."

But he also tells Africans their own stories: "When I was working on *Return to Freetown*, I went to Kono in Sierra Leone, which was controlled by the rebels.

"They had all already seen *Cry Freetown*. They had no shoes but they had satellite. It is appearing on CNN – this so-called western media – that actually brought me on TV in Africa, and gained me the respect of Africans," he says.

"In Africa I can point fingers, I can blame the Africans who are responsible; I can condemn people like Yoweri Museveni. I get away with it because I'm an African, and I can do likewise with the West."

## CHARACTERS, CASES AND CAUSES

Media Resistance in Nigeria: *The News and Tempo*

By ROTIMI SANKORE

Successive military regimes in Nigeria shared a common characteristic of repressing the media. During 15 years of military rule beginning in 1984, the independent media suffered serious casualties but none suffered as much as the so-called “guerrilla press” – as some news weeklies were described. This label was especially given to *The News* and *Tempo*, magazines which had the most number of staff jailed, murdered or forced into exile.

Of all the sectors of Nigerian society that campaigned for an end to military rule, the media – after political and pro-democracy activists, human rights organisations, trade

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unions and student unions – paid the highest price. This is because the media reflected the voice of dissent in a country without the usual outlets of a democratic society such as parliament or opposition parties. Because the media became a key arena for debate and reflected the views of pro-democracy voices, the military naively concluded that by smashing the independent media, it could eliminate dissent, criticism or opposition.

The various regimes employed different tactics to no avail. When carrots failed, batons, bullets and dungeons were employed.

On seizing power in 1985 in a palace coup, General Ibrahim Babangida endeared himself to many Nigerians by initially striking a media-friendly posture. One of his first acts was to repeal the notorious 1984 Decree number 4 which had been used by the previous regime led by Generals Mohamed Buhari and Tunde Idiagbon to imprison two *Guardian* journalists, Tunde Thompson and Nduka Irabor, for publishing government documents in the public interest and for refusing to disclose their sources. Babangida also granted them an official pardon.

**The various regimes employed different tactics to no avail. When carrots failed, batons, bullets and dungeons were employed**

This and seemingly unimportant things such as striking up first-name friendships with journalists and sending them birthday gifts, suggested that he was a likeable and benevolent dictator, if such a thing ever existed.

However by 1990 – after twice extending his own transition timetable to hand over power to a civilian government – he had become public enemy number one and this was reflected in relentless criticism by the media.

Prior to that, the October 1987 death by a letter bomb of Dele Giwa, editor-in-chief of one of Nigeria’s pioneer newsweeklies, *NewsWatch*, signalled the official beginning of hostilities between the media and Babangida’s regime. The regime had falsely accused him of “blackmail and gun running” shortly before his death.

In April 1992, the *African Concord* weekly magazine delivered a devastating blow to the Babangida junta through a “special report” cataloguing the political and economic policies of the regime and their tragic consequences for the country. Alerted by its agents, the regime seized the first print run of 80 000 copies. 200 policemen led by sol-

diers and military officers attacked the premises of the Concord Group of newspapers, throwing out 300 members of staff at gunpoint and sealing off the premises.

To avoid permanent closure of his publications and government hostility to his other business interests, the late Chief MKO Abiola, owner of the group, asked editor Bayo Onanuga to issue a public apology. Onanuga refused and preferred to resign. Four other *African Concord* journalists – Dapo Olorunyomi, Babafemi Ojudu, Kunle Ajibade and Seye Kehinde – resigned with him.

These five constituted the founding members of *The News* weekly magazine. *The News* was the first publication of the stable which expanded to include *Tempo*; *PM News*, an evening paper; *Tempo Football*; and *AM News*, a national newspaper.

*The News* was founded in February 1993, based on the philosophy summarised by the phrase: “Publish the truth and be damned.” This is considered risky even at the best of times. Under a dictatorship, it was considered suicidal.

In the first month of publication, three of the founding editors of *The News* and a reporter were imprisoned for a week by a Lagos high court judge over a report that was critical of him.

Instead of being intimidated, the

journalists seized the opportunity of their imprisonment to scoop a prison interview with radical musician Fela Anku-lakpo Kuti, at that time Africa’s biggest recording artist, who was held in the same

prison. Between the public’s love for Fela and appreciation of their courage, the publication endeared itself to many Nigerians.

In June 1993 after only four months of publishing, *The News* was banned by a government pronouncement. When the ban was ignored and the magazine continued publishing, a formal decree banning it was issued and its offices were sealed off by the military.

Without losing stride, the publishers of *The News* were soon back on the streets under the title of *Tempo* (this time), published by *Bookmate Publications*. The military, anxious not to be embarrassed by mere journalists, responded by tracking down and seizing the first print run of 50 000 copies of *Tempo*.

Determined not to be overrun, *Tempo* went underground and issued a reprint. The public rewarded *Tempo*’s courage by buying even more copies.

For the first time in the history of Nigeria, a mainstream publication

**Determined not to be overrun, Tempo went underground and issued a reprint. The public rewarded Tempo’s courage by buying even more copies**

was breaking even on the basis of sales alone, without any advertising.

The annulment of the June 12 1993 elections by Babangida gave impetus to the Nigerian opposition. *Tempo* specialised in covering the activities of and inter-

views with opposition leaders and activists, and by doing so provided coverage that most other publications dared not publish.

The government’s agents targeted distributors and vendors handling the publication by beating and arresting them, yet the editors and journalists of *Tempo* persisted. By the time the decree banning *The News* expired, the regime did not even bother renewing it.

The experience of *The News* magazine showed other journalists that it was possible to publish without having permanent offices that were targets for raids and a plethora of publications sprang up to challenge the military. One was even called *June 12* in defiance of the military’s annulment of the elections won by Abiola, Babangida’s erstwhile friend, who was later to die in prison for persisting in claiming his electoral victory.

In the six months of turbulence and unending protests that followed the annulment of the elections,

## CHARACTERS, CASES AND CAUSES

*The News* and *Tempo* grew from strength to strength. Alongside a few other courageous publications, especially *Tell Magazine*, they gave a voice to the opposition and refuted the lies of the government media.

Soon after its resurrection, a print run of 100 000 copies of *The News* was intercepted and seized.

At the same time *Tempo* was seized twice in one month. Yet the demand for the publications was so high that reprints on cheap paper were still able to sell at the price of the glossy originals and help cover losses.

During this period, several publications were banned, including all titles from the Abiola-owned Concord Press, Punch Newspapers and, astonishingly, two government-owned media that had carried so-called balanced news. Some programmes on two government-owned radio stations that reflected “opposition views” were also suspended.

The military government soon tired of chasing after the elusive publications and resorted to printing fake editions in a bid to undermine the demand for them. After some initial confusion, the public was soon able to identify the fakes from the originals and the government’s plans collapsed.

In August 1993, Babangida was forced from power by mass protests and handed over control to an

unelected civilian government headed by businessman and military apologist Earnest Shonekan.

By November 1993, when it became clear another round of protests led by the powerful oil workers’ unions was going to bring down the imposed regime, Babangida’s former Chief of Army Staff, General Sani Abacha, promoted to Shonekan’s Minister of Defence, seized power and proclaimed himself head of state.

Like Babangida before him, Abacha lifted the bans and suspensions on publications and radio stations. However, this time around no one was fooled.

If Babangida was vicious to the media, Abacha was a nightmare. Several publications, including the unbanned ones and four major national papers, were banned in mid-1994 and over a thousand journalists became unemployed. In response, Bayo Onanuga and his colleagues defied the regime’s action and launched *AM News* – but it was a step too far and soon collapsed under sustained assault.

Under Abacha, the

media were treated like an enemy army. No longer were arbitrary arrests, detentions and seizure of publications considered enough. Abacha’s henchmen introduced tactics that even during war are considered extreme. Families of wanted journalists were routinely taken hostage, arson attacks were carried out, there were commando-style stakeouts and abductions, journalists were arrested at airports and border posts. All these became regular occurrences. When they did not work, trumped-up charges, treason trials and assassinations were introduced.

By 1995, after dozens of raids and tens of thousands of copies seized, the regime decided to eliminate or permanently neutralise those it considered “enemy journalists”.

The editor of *The News*, Kunle Ajibade, found himself facing a military court martial for supposedly aiding and abetting an alleged military coup against the regime. Three other journalists – Geroge Mbah, Ben Charles Obi and Christine Anyawu from *Tell*, *TSM* and *Classique* magazines

respectively – met with the same fate. It was the first time the so-called “accessory after the fact of treason” crime was heard of.

The arrests followed stories in the magazines which exposed the arrest and trial of several army officers over an alleged coup as a frame-up.

The trials of Ajibade and others lasted only a few minutes per person and life sentences were imposed. In prison, Ajibade and the others saw hell. To avoid a similar fate, editor-in-chief Onanuga and other editors went permanently underground or “retreated” to other countries for safety, while the staff continued “the battle”.

Journalists from “enemy publications” began to avoid government establishments after correspondents were arrested on state premises. Simultaneously, accreditation for the State House, Ministry of Defence, the stock exchange and other places was withdrawn and several commercial printers were warned to desist from publishing *The News* and *Tempo* as well as *Tell* magazine or face severe punishment.

Unable to understand how the publications and their journalists could continue to absorb heavy persecution and commercial losses, the regime declared that hostile foreign governments were funding them and even running printing presses in

their basements.

In 1997, the regime secretly drafted an anti-terrorism decree, aimed at publications that portrayed opposition figures in a positive light. So many publications defied it that it was never used.

In addition, staffs of government offices were banned from reading all “enemy publications”, and all government ministries, parastatals and private companies dependent on the government were instructed not to advertise in them.

The first casualty of this policy was *AM News*, which was forced into bankruptcy after about one-and-a-half years of publication. The Minister of Information announced: “We killed *AM News*... and *The News* will soon follow it to its grave.”

The government, and even some well-meaning critics of *The News* and *Tempo*, sometimes accused them of publishing sensational stories and not checking their facts with the government before going to press. Their response was to point out the impossibility of confirming facts with a regime that treated the media like an enemy.

From 1997 to 1998, the period in which Abacha openly began trying to

**Unable to understand how the publications and their journalists could continue to absorb heavy persecution and commercial losses, the regime declared that hostile foreign governments were funding them**

transform himself into a civilian ruler, 94 journalists and media workers were individually attacked at various times. 32 were from *The News*, *Tempo* and *PM News*.

At the height of the crackdown, 14 out of the 26 journalists and media workers in prison were from *The News*, *Tempo* and *PM*

*News* publications. They also had the highest number of journalists underground or in exile. Overall, the group also had more editions of publications seized than any other publishers in the history of Nigerian journalism.

Of the four journalists who were killed under circumstances that pointed to the hand of the regime, one of them, Baguada Kaltho, was a correspondent of *The News*. Of the 23 decrees aimed at curtailing press freedom and freedom of expression, provisions of at least half of them were at some point used against *The News*, *Tempo* and their sister publications.

The death of Abacha in June 1998 in mysterious circumstances led to jubilation across the country. For most people, it marked a sort of uneasy peace. But for *The News*, *Tempo* and *PM News* it was only

## CHARACTERS, CASES AND CAUSES

another stage in the nightmare.

While professing to democratise the country for a handover in May 1999, General Abdulsalam Abubakar, Abacha's successor, still kept a lid on the media.

On August 18 1998, the head of the Task force on Terrorist activities, Assistant Police Commissioner Zakari Biu, announced that Bagauda Kaltho, *The News'* Kaduna correspondent who had been declared missing in February 1996, had died planting a bomb that went off in Kaduna in January 1996. He added that the publishers of Kaltho's magazine were involved in the bombing. Biu's claims were shown to be false, and this aborted what seemed like a move to arrest the publishers of the magazines for terrorism and silence them permanently.

In response to a question by this writer in July 1999 on whether the editorial policy of his publications would change following the emergence of a civilian government, the editor-in-chief of *The News*, *Tempo* and *PM News* group, Onanuga, responded: "Our principles

**Biu's claims were shown to be false, and this aborted what seemed like a move to arrest the publishers of the magazines for terrorism and silence them permanently**

remain the same ... we have to report our environment as truthfully as possible... civilians can make mistakes, they can stumble... but they will continue to learn... we shall do everything possible with other Niger-

ian media to nurture democracy so that it can be a very enduring one, and so that no military junta will come again."

## CHARACTERS, CASES AND CAUSES

## William Dixon Colley: Gambia's journalism hero

By MUSA SAIDYKHAN

As the saying goes, "freedom is never achieved on a silver plate". The Gambia is no exception. And brave people who pave the way for their societies to enjoy freedom never die. William Dixon Colley – a renowned newspaper editor and freedom fighter – fits into this class of heroes.

He died six years ago at the age of 87, but Colley will forever be respected by Gambians for trekking along bumpy or potholed roads to set the stage for their country's journalistic and other freedoms. Undoubtedly, he was among the founding fathers of modern-day journalism in The Gambia.

Dixon was also a pioneer founder of the Gambia Press Union, and served as the body's scribe for 10 years. He even provided shelter for the union at no cost for several years.

He dedicated his invaluable time

Musa Saidu Khan, a Gambian journalist, wrote for and edited several publications before becoming the editor of the bi-weekly popular newspaper, *The Independent*, in April 2005. He is the first vice president of Gambia Press Union and founder of the Deyda Hydera Foundation for Freedom of Press and Expression. He fled with his family to exile after threats

to train and instill the spirit of journalism into young people at a time when little or almost nothing was known about the value of journalism in the former British colony. Almost all the print media in the country at one time or the other enjoyed the fruits of Colley's labour. Without his story, Gambia's journalistic history is incomplete.

Born in the capital Banjul, Dixon's writing skills were discovered while still at high

school: he was an active contributor to the school magazine. And after teaching for some years in his alma mater – Wesley Boys' High School in Banjul – Dixon travelled to Sierra Leone, Nigeria and later Europe in 1939. This period opened the gate to his journalism career, as he wrote for the *Sunday Observer* in Port Harcourt, Nigeria.

While in the United Kingdom, Dixon connived with some right-conscious Africans to establish *The African Outlook*, an independent quarterly forum for Africans. In addition to editing this magazine, Colley was also filing contributions for other publications in the UK.



**If what one is saying is right and one strongly believes it is, one should go on saying it up to one's grave.**

– William Dixon Colley

Having galvanized a wealth of experience abroad, Colley returned home in 1962 – principally to join the struggle for independence as well as to foster a well-informed and media-friendly society.

He thereby became a living legend who exclusively dedicated his time to giving a voice to voiceless Gambians;

a duty he did without compromising the sanctity and ethics of journalism.

Colley founded and edited *Africa Nyaato* (Africa Forward) and *The Nation* newspapers, in 1962 and 1963 respectively.

Like most brave journalists, Dixon had his share of state-sponsored harassment in the form of arrests, detentions and court charges for merely authoring articles deemed critical of the government.

One such article, titled "Gambia's democracy at stake", was published by *The Nation* in 1971. He won his case against sedition

charges by the government, which bolstered his zeal to take Gambian stories abroad by corresponding for the BBC, Reuters and Britain's *Sunday Express*, among others.

Unfortunately, sickness forced the veteran journalist to throw in the editorial towel in 1993.

However, he asked a local journalist, Fabakary Taal, who was among the horde of journalists to benefit from Colley's wide knowledge, to maintain *The Nation* from extinction. He also asked for the paper's premises to be used to house The Gambia's first-ever library of old and new publications, where research can be conducted.

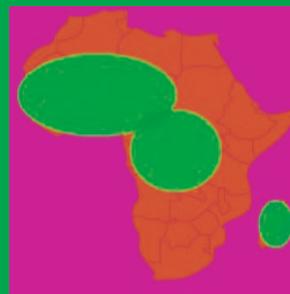
The resurrection of *The Nation* in 2004 was celebrated by its wide readership. Unfortunately, due to many reasons, The Gambia's oldest paper has since been thrown out of the newspaper market.

Dixon was feted with national and international accolades for standing firm on his belief that Gambians from all walks of life must be fed with objective and quality news, no matter whose ox is gored.

# 3

SECTION THREE

# Francophone Africa



# Francophone Africa: 50 years of media

By Marie-Soleil Frère

## 1. Introduction

Fifty years ago, in 1957, Ghana gained its independence. What was happening in francophone Africa at that time? France was preparing to organise a referendum in her colonies through which a large majority of her overseas territories, with the notable exception of Guinea, would decide to remain attached to the “motherland”. Belgium, administering the vast Congo, as well as Rwanda and Burundi, did not seem aware either that inevitable change was well on the way. Two years later, in 1960 for the French colonies, in 1960 and 1962 for the Belgian colonies, independence – described as “granted” and not gained after a hard-fought struggle – was to come and deliver the francophone colonies from European domination.

Is there a link between these contrasting histories and the striking difference that hits the media observer who, in 2007, goes from Burundi to Tanzania, from Niger to Nigeria, from Rwanda to Uganda, from Togo to Ghana and compares the headlines found on either side of the borders? Why is it that, to date, the media of francophone Africa appears to be less developed than that of anglophone countries? At a time when large press groups, like the Nation Media Group in Kenya, are expanding at regional level, the francophone written and audio-visual press is struggling to take off, multimedia groups remain rare and cross-border ambitions are virtually non-existent.

The influence of history undoubtedly plays a part in these widely differing developments. This article attempts to put forward the specific characteristics of the past and present of francophone African media, showing its evolution, its present difficulties and the reasons for this inertia. After nearly 50 years of national independence, 17 years of private press and, almost everywhere, close on ten years of audio-visual liberalisation, the notion of “independent”



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media (that is to say free of any pressure from an individual or a structure) still sparks off debate in many francophone African countries. Admittedly private media does exist, but it is often still under some influence.

## 2. Colonial Period: a late start

The very first printed newspaper on the African continent was in French: *La Décade Égyptienne* was born in 1797, within the French garrisons based in Egypt. But after that it was the anglophone press that developed in South Africa, in Sierra Leone and in Liberia during the first decades of the 19th century. On the francophone side, the press appeared nearly a century later, initially in the hands of the colonists and missionaries.<sup>1</sup>

The first papers printed in French West Africa and French Equatorial Africa (FWA and FEA) were the various *Government Gazettes* in the hands of the colonial authorities. They were soon joined by a few private press titles in the hands of white colonists, the principal actors of a new political, economic and social order.

*Le Réveil du Sénégalais*, launched in Dakar in 1885, soon followed by *Le Petit Sénégalais* in Saint-Louis and by *L'Union Africaine*, were all controlled by Frenchmen and were aimed at their compatriots settled on African soil. For the expatriate community it was all about combating homesickness, staying up to date with news of Metropolitan France and circulating information useful to the colonists. That was also the purpose of *L'Echo du Dahomey* published in Dahomey (now Benin) from 1905 and of *L'Indépendant* created in 1910 in Côte d'Ivoire.

In the Belgian Congo too, some official publications (*Le Recueil mensuel des Ordonnances, arrêtés, circulaires, instructions, ordres de service*, published from 1895) ran alongside newspapers in the hands of colonists, for the most part edited in Katanga (*L'Etoile du Congo* and *Le Journal du Katanga* from 1911). To these were added some denominational titles, published in local languages by generally protestant missionaries, such as *Minsamu Miayenge* (The Good News) edited in Matadi from 1891.

This situation, in sharp contrast with that in the British

colonies where a dynamic press, in the hands of Africans, was already present, can be explained by two factors. On the one hand, there were considerable legal restrictions. In the French colonies, legislation on the press was defined by the law of 1881 (made applicable to the colonies by its clause 69) stipulating that only publications edited by “respectable French citizens” were authorised. A few well-educated Africans could thus hold junior posts in the editorial offices, but they could not edit a newspaper as they did not benefit from French “citizenship”. On the other hand, colonial policies had generated poor schooling at secondary level and had therefore produced few educated people. French policy in Africa was based on the principle of assimilation, founded on the French belief in their cultural superiority. This strategy was reflected in the secular and exclusively francophone school system that did not aim to produce many intellectuals out of the colonial system, but rather an elite, totally converted to the French language and to French values – and bound to be few in number. In the Congo, publication of newspapers was subject to the control of the authorities and secondary schooling was even more limited, making potential Congolese readers and writers even more unlikely.

It was only after the 1920's that the first newspapers run by “autochthones” appeared in francophone Africa – they were started mainly in Dahomey (now Benin), Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal. These publications, on which the first educated elite in French West Africa (made up of those called the “enlightened ones”) prided themselves, while occasionally attacking the colonial administration, its violent and repressive practices and its injustices, never threw doubt on the validity of the ties kept with France. The “enlightened ones” were dreaming not of independence, but of fully recognised French citizenship. Their real frustration lay in the fact that their level of training led them to aspire to a higher degree of recognition than they had.

In the Belgian colonies (Rwanda and Burundi having

**In the French colonies, press legislation was defined by the 1881 law: only publications edited by ‘respectable French citizens’ were authorised**

joined the Congo after the German defeat in World War 1), the indigenous population still remained silent, deprived of a voice in the newspapers in the hands of “whites” who, resolutely paternalistic, supported the point of view of large companies or of small private enterprises that kept the expatriates going. The idea of a press existing in the hands of Africans did not even occur to the catholic missionaries who used their few bulletins to support a rapidly progressing evangelisation. *Le Courrier d’Afrique*, launched in 1930 in Leopoldville, or *Kinyamateka*, created in 1933 by the White Fathers of Kigali, while sometimes aimed at the locals, did it with a pedagogical goal, aimed at uplifting the population.

### Over fourteen years, 170 publications were started in Senegal

After World War 2, political and trade union freedom was granted to the colonies by the new French Constitution of 1946, which brought about rapid development of the local press. Over fourteen years, 170 publications were started in Senegal. This press was above all partisan, carrying the political ambitions of a few pioneers and concentrating its comment on the participation of local representatives in the institutions of the new Union. Once again, the main preoccupation of the local elite was to establish its position in the new institutions, not to call for new ones. The idea of independence, already widespread and called for in most of the British colonies, still did not seem to be possible to the intellectuals of francophone Africa, even if they criticised the unequal relations between the colonies and Metropolitan France. A few rudimentary publications, edited by Congolese, also started to circulate in the Belgian colony: by 1948 there were 58 titles in the hands of locals, compared to 64 controlled by Europeans.

The European press strengthened in the 1950’s. It was during this period that the first-ever known attempt at a cross-border press group appeared in francophone Africa. Charles de Bréteuil, who in 1933 had created the *Dakar Matin* in Senegal, then *France-Afrique* (that became *Abidjan Matin* in 1954) in Côte d’Ivoire, launched *La Presse de Guinée* (1954) and *La Presse au Cameroun* (1955). On the part of the Catholic Church, *Afrique Nouvelle*, created in 1947 in Dakar, was distributed throughout FWA and left

its mark on entire generations of young Christian-educated Africans.

Broadcasting developed slowly under colonial control. To Radio Dakar (inaugurated in 1938) and Radio Brazzaville (that defended the voice of “France libre” during World War 2), covering respectively French West Africa and French Equatorial Africa, were added Radio Dahomey and Radio Lomé in 1953, Radio Fort-Lamy (now N’Djamena, in Chad) in 1955, Radio Sudan (now Mali) in 1957, Radio Niger and Radio Upper Volta (now Burkina Faso) in 1959. Thus, convinced that radio was an instrument of government policy, the French established broadcasting stations in all the capitals of their colonies. In the same way, the Belgians launched Radio Belgian Congo in Leopoldville from 1940, proposing programmes in local languages intended for the Congolese from 1949. In 1959, they established Radio Usumbura in Bujumbura, which also broadcast to Rwanda, before creating a station in Kigali in 1960.

In 1958, when France organised a referendum on independence in her colonies, newspapers overwhelmingly opted for “yes” to the French Community, thus following the politicians. Only Sékou Touré in Guinea (supported by his party paper *La Liberté*) and, to a lesser degree, Djibo Bakary in Niger (and his bulletin *Talaka*) managed to rally a considerable number of partisans to the “no” vote behind themselves and behind their press organs. Except in the case of Cameroon, the independence of French and Belgian colonies in Africa was thus “granted” more than “gained” and the francophone press in Africa did not play a fundamentally emancipating role. Only published in French, it remained at the service of a politicised city elite, and if it reflected a certain amount of political pluralism, it relied more heavily on individual personalities than on genuine parties for the masses or constituted groups.

### 3. Confiscation of freedom by one-party regimes

From the outset, the new African leaders proved to be very restrictive as far as the press was concerned. Far from wanting to strengthen freedom of expression, now that they were

free of colonial constraint, most wasted no time in muzzling the opposition organs. Many of the new leaders knew the press well, having been associated with it or used it during their political struggle before independence, and they were all the more distrustful of it. Often a single newspaper survived, linked to the government or to the sole party, while radio was set up as a state monopoly. The “European” press disappeared progressively – in Côte d’Ivoire, the authorities took over the paper of Bréteuil’s group and launched *Fraternité Matin* in 1964; in Senegal, *Dakar Matin* became the very official *Le Soleil* in 1970; *La Presse au Cameroun* changed into the government paper, *Cameroon Tribune*, in 1974. A range of coercive measures, from authorisation prior to censure, through to threats to journalists, were worked out in order to ensure state control of the media.

The abolition of press freedom was often justified firstly by the necessity to work towards “national unity” – in still fragile nations, with arbitrarily drawn borders uniting people who were not used to living together, the media had to consolidate the community. To do this, it had to speak with a single voice, support government strategies and projects and avoid criticism that could bring division.

Any attempt at divergent discourse was banned and the existence of dissident newspapers was perceived as a luxury African nations could ill afford. Thus the illusion was perpetuated that national integration would come about through negation, non-expression and conflict, rather than by their concerted resolution. The journalists working to build “national unity” were civil servants, paid by the departments of information.

From the end of the 1960’s, civil regimes progressively made way for military regimes, with few exceptions (Senegal, Côte d’Ivoire). To the concept of national unity was added or was substituted that of “development media”. The rural press in national languages, often supported by Unesco, and radio (which was beginning to be established as a mass media, overcoming geographical distance and illiteracy) were the pre-

ferred mouthpieces.

The General Policy declaration of the Revolutionary Military Government of Dahomey, made in 1973, fully reflected this approach: “*In a country such as ours, where the literacy rate is quite low, information can enable the popular masses to participate in decisions relating to development by giving them the means of effectively taking part in reforms decided upon, of speeding them up and facilitating them.*”

Under the pretext of letting the national media take part in government policies relating to health, agriculture and education, they were deprived of all freedom of choice of subjects for discussion and were changed into communication channels for the government to spread its information. In concrete terms, this approach translated in the first place into glorification of government initiatives, or even a personal cult of the president. In many countries, every achievement of the authorities was seen as a generous gift, given by a loving father-leader to his nation. *Elima* in Kinshasa, *Togo-Presse* in Lomé, *L’Essor* in Bamako, *Imvaho-La Relève* in Kigali,



*Le Renouveau* in Bujumbura, *Le Sahel* in Niamey, *Horoya* in Guinea – all these state newspapers were first and foremost propaganda organs that presented development as a precondition for any democratic openness, a project requiring order and justifying centralisation and control.

Even more in the service of this personality cult, television was progressively introduced into francophone Africa from the end of the 1970's. Considered a tool and a symbol of national sovereignty, television was established thanks to the financial and technical support of the former colonial capitals that also provided programmes for the new stations.

Criticism soon began, accusing African television that broadcast up to 80% of programmes from the West, of being above all instruments of ideological domination. A big debate on the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) was started at Unesco – its supporters denounced the submission of African media to the information content of the big Western agencies; the economic and informational “dependence” that prevailed in the field of information.

A document published by the Department of Information in Niger in 1980 proclaimed:

*“The danger for us is all this foreign press, be it African, European or any other, that is attacking our readership, distorting our customs and introducing generations to tortuous and pernicious roads. (...) It imposes on the majority of readers, news that does not correspond in any way to their expectations but whose main goal is to succeed in shaping mentalities, perverting them and engaging them in narrow and harmful prisms of judgment and lack of initiative.”*<sup>2</sup>

Again, this type of argument was exploited above all by African heads of state to strengthen their control of national media, this time in defence of their identity and

their national uniqueness. The “authenticity” policies pursued at this time were significant: in Togo and in Zaïre, people changed their names and were given names in local languages. In Zaïre, towns, rivers and currency were renamed in order to be anchored in “authentic” roots. In the 1980's, revolutionary Burkina Faso (1983-1987) also followed this route.

This denunciation by African leaders of Western cultural imperialism also enabled them to take it out on international radio stations – that from the capitals of northern countries and often in African languages, addressed their people through shortwave, enabling them to bypass the monolithic nature of the national media. In several francophone countries, RFI (Radio France Internationale) and the BBC's French service were tuned into with great attention by the urban elite in search of information that would enable them to break free from the yoke of the one-party system.

Besides the variety offered by international radio stations, an underground press was also maintained in a few countries – like in revolutionary Benin where anonymous pamphlets continued to circulate illicitly. However, the underground press remained underdeveloped given the risk run by any person found in possession of this type of document. More often, protest was expressed in a veiled manner, by irony and by deliberate distortion of national slogans<sup>3</sup>, or by “radio-trottoir” or “pavement radio” which means word-of-mouth or the informal circulation of information.

A few rare exceptions punctuated this monolithic media landscape in francophone Africa. Senegal, retaining a certain political pluralism (limited to three authorised parties), allowed the spread of a free and often critical press. From the 1970's to the beginning of the 1983 revolution, Upper Volta had a private news press. Cameroon had a few free press organs, but their freedom was far from absolute. The difference is again striking in comparison to the press in anglophone countries such as Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya or even Uganda. Even if the situation of journalists, particularly those critical of governments, was not always favourable in those countries, it was far removed from the thirty-year total state monopoly over the media experienced in so many francophone countries.

#### 4. Liberalisation: the (re)birth of the private press

From the end of the 1980's, a ripple hit the press of francophone Africa. Titles with a new tone appeared: *Wal Fad-jiri* (1984) followed by *Sud Magazine* (1988) in Senegal, *La Gazette du Golfe* in Benin (1987), *Les Echos* in Mali (1988), *Haské* in Niger (1990); while the tone of *Messenger*, created in 1979 in Cameroon, hardened. At the beginning of the 1990's, democratisation processes lead to great upheaval in the political as well as media landscape and a mass of new papers appeared. At odds with government press, the new private press devoted itself to open protest and denunciation of the evils brought by the rapidly declining or defunct authoritarian regimes. It broke the illusion of consensus that government media kept alive, often in the aftermath of national conferences that freed speech.

A mass of newspapers was born, generally at irregular intervals and with a short-lived existence. In the space of a few months of transition, 80 new publications were registered in Benin; more than 200 in Zaïre. Initially of general interest, then more specialised, first weekly and later daily, the written press developed in lightning fashion.

From the outset, the new private press established itself as an opposition force, a potential critic of political authority, breaking with the traditional “griot” nature of state media. It launched into denunciation of all malfunctions: violations of human rights, abuse of authority, political manipulation and the misappropriation of funds. This critical function of the press contributed to a radical change in the perception of power. On the one hand, it destroyed the sacred aura surrounding leaders who had used the media to further personality cults. Widely using caricature or animal metaphors, irony, derision or insult, the papers reduced the leaders to their most human dimensions. On the other hand, the press highlighted the relative nature of all political discourse, showing that truth presented as inviolable and fundamental one day could be questioned the next. The political discourse reflected in the papers was as diverse as the number of actors and ambitions present in the liberalised arena.

However, sometimes the press proved to be too imper-

tent. From the start of the 1990's court cases against the press increased, sometimes leading to heavy financial losses for the newspapers, forcing them to close down, or to prison sentences for the editorial directors.

In spite of these excesses, the new private press participated in creating a new “public space” by opening its pages from the start to contributions from readers or from outside resource persons, a fringe of the population silent until then. However, while columns, “readers' views” and “non-editorial comment” increased in the papers, it must be recognised that the fringe population that expressed itself in these private press pages remained sociologically very characteristic: mainly teachers, students and civil servants, still a limited educated and urban section of the population. In fact, the new private press provided a vehicle of expression for this demanding urban elite, frustrated at being excluded from the power play.

It is only the development, from the middle of the 1990's, of local private radio stations, broadcasting in national languages and overcoming the barrier of illiteracy, which increasingly popularised entry into the debate. With the notable exception of Mali, which from 1992/93 had dozens of private radio stations spread over its territory, the audio-visual sector was liberalised well after the written press. Not being able to obtain frequencies as easily as receipts for registration of press titles, the blooming of private radio stations had to wait for the adoption of new laws and the establishment of appropriate regulatory authorities. The new private commercial, denominational, association or community radio stations soon acted as intermediaries for civil society, often all the more dynamic as the state failed to fulfil its duties. Unions, professional associations, churches, NGO's: all those entities were a (more or less active) counterbalance to political power, acquiring greater visibility and efficiency thanks to the liberalisation of the media sector.

Today, on the FM frequency in capitals, provincial towns and small localities, and operating side by side, are commercial private stations (often mainly musical, but launching more and more into newscasts), denominational radio stations (catholic, protestant and to a lesser extent muslim), community and association radio stations

**The press destroyed the sacred aura surrounding leaders who had used the media to further personality cults. Widely using caricature or animal metaphors, irony, derision or insult, the papers reduced the leaders to their most human dimensions**

(intended to promote development, these are especially frequent in rural areas) and international radio stations (RFI, Africa no.1 and the BBC having been established on FM frequencies in all major African cities).

Private television, for its part, only really developed from the beginning of 2000, with the notable exception of the Democratic Republic of Congo that experienced unprecedented expansion in television channels from the beginning of the 1990's with the creation of Antenne A (1991), Télé Kin Malebo (1992), Canal Kin (1993) and Raga TV (1996). Created in 1997 in Benin, LC2 was a true pioneer in West Africa and acted as an example for the development of similar installations in Burkina Faso (Canal 3, SmTV), Niger (Télé Ténéré) and Sénégal (2STV, Canal Info and RDV).

These initiatives, with commercial or confessional intent, were established with more or less success within a relatively difficult context: television production is expensive and the number of potential consumers remains relatively small, television remaining an urban and elitist media with collective consumption (as opposed to radio where listening has been individualised thanks to the transistor). From then on, most private channels broadcast in unprofessional format, according to unpredictable programming and without any quality control. In addition, the television landscape was enriched by the installation of parabolic antennae, making international channels available, and by the emergence of private networks for pick-up and redistribution by cable.

Finally, the press agency sector also diversified. In most countries, the government agency was previously the only possible (and controlled) means of access to productions from the big international agencies and the only voice heard outside (Pana – the Pan-African Press Agency – acting as intermediary for national agencies). The appearance of private, sometimes very competitive agencies, is today changing this monopoly. In the DRC, there are three agencies that compete with the ACP (Congolese Press Agency) which has become sluggish. In Benin, the agency Proximités provides feature articles that the local press takes up with interest. However, the market remains difficult, with little chance of expansion for agencies that do not have access to

advertisement. As for access to international news, the internet makes the monopolies formerly held by national agencies obsolete.

## 5. The achievements of 17 years of liberalisation

Seventeen years after the liberalisation of the media sector and the explosion of private initiatives, an assessment must be done. The diversity of situations and contexts is such that it is difficult to generalise about the evolution of the media in all francophone sub-Saharan African countries. However, some general trends and common problems seem to emerge.<sup>4</sup>

### Anchoring freedom of expression

Today, the private media has without doubt contributed to lessening the fear of free expression, anchoring in the minds of many citizens that it is legitimate to hold personal opinions. It has laid the foundation for a true public arena whose eradication is hardly imaginable. No achievement can be considered as irreversible: even in countries that have gone through an authoritarian restoration or a coup d'État (Burundi, Niger and Côte d'Ivoire), freedom of the press remained a reality, even when political party activity was suspended.

But for all that, has the press truly become an opposition force? Fear of seeing their politicking, their deals and their malpractices brought out into the open, has certainly changed the behaviour of the political class. However, denunciations by the free press alone are generally not sufficient, as was underlined in 1995 by the editor of the Nigerian paper, *Le Démocrate*: “The press is not strong enough to prevent the rulers from misappropriating funds. The authorities do not fear us. The power of the press is linked to the capacity of civil society to take charge of the problems denounced by the press. If that capacity is non-existent, the press has little effect.”

Denunciations by the African press have been strengthened by repercussions at an international level. Many inter-

national organisations and associations have paid much attention to the development of the new African media. Structures for the protection of press freedom (Reporters without borders, Index on Censorship, Article 19, Committee to Protect Journalists), associations for journalists (International Federation of Journalists, Association of West-African Journalists), for editors (WAN-AMJ) and for the protection of human rights (Human Rights Watch) have been the intermediaries for international organisations and bilateral partners for news relating to attacks on the rights and freedoms of citizens circulated by the local press. This support has been and remains critical for strengthening the press in countries confronted with repressive strategies on the part of the rulers in power.

### Legal guarantees and a regulatory framework

Another important achievement of the liberalisation period lies in the adjustment of the legislative and regulatory environment to the new pluralistic media landscape. Former laws relating to the press, often inherited at independence, have been replaced by new ones that have set out to define freedom of the press in general and its conditions of practice, as well as to organise the audio-visual landscape and set up a regulatory authority for communications.

In general, the new laws are liberal (and to a large extent follow the example of French legislation of 1881), although some traces of authoritarianism remain. Certain laws thus set weighty conditions for newspaper publication. In Mauritania, until the adoption of the new law in 2006, a newspaper had to receive a receipt authorising the publication of every issue and the Minister of the Interior had the power to sanction, seize or suspend an edition without giving explicit reasons. In Togo, a law of 2002 (repealed in 2004 by a new, more liberal one) gave public authorities the power to seize newspaper vendors if they did not succeed in finding the publisher responsible.

In cases of press offence, repressive measures are often very severe, sanctioned by prison sentences without any remission even in the most advanced countries. In Benin, the journalist Edgar Kaho, editor-in-chief of *Soleil*, served ten months in prison for having published articles accusing the

wife of President Nicéphore Soglo of corruption. In Cameroon, Pius Njawé, head of *Messageur*, was held in detention for a year for publishing an article implying that President Biya was ill. The very many press court cases have often ended in sentences of this kind, and numerous African journalists have been imprisoned during the last ten years. The frequent conviction of the private press, which is often in disagreement with the authorities, also gives rise to questions about the independence of the courts and the effective application of laws by the states that have adopted them. A very liberal law does not prevent an authority from undermining the practice of press freedom if it sees fit.

In many countries, professional associations have embarked on a crusade to change press cases into minor offences in order to prevent imprisonment. This crusade, supported by international partners, has already shown positive results in some countries (Togo, Central African Republic and Mauritania) where jail sentences have been abolished.

Finally, the presence of an independent regulatory authority guarantees the existence, in principle, of media pluralism within the public media. Following the example of Benin – that was the first to set up a body to organise and supervise the audio-visual sector and, as a matter of top priority, the allocation of airtime to various political parties during the elections held at the end of the transition period – communication regulation authorities have been established in all countries: HAAC in Bénin; CSC in Burkina Faso, Niger and Mali; CNC in Burundi, Guinea and Gabon; CNCA in Côte d'Ivoire; HCP in Rwanda; and HCC in Central African Republic. These authorities enjoy very diverse degrees of autonomy from government and differ in legal status, mission, powers (consultative and decision making) and in competence (some cover the written press, others not). While most claim to be instruments for protecting freedom of expression and

**Today, the private media has without doubt contributed to lessening the fear of free expression, anchoring in the minds of many citizens that it is legitimate to hold personal opinions**

for ensuring media access to all political groups or currents of opinion, some have specific responsibilities: such as granting frequencies to private radio and television stations, working out regulations for the audio-visual arena, controlling respect for professional ethics, working out regulations for advertising, managing state aid to the private press and appointing officials in the public media.

The existence of these authorities is an undeniable democratic success, as they anchor the principle of freedom of expression while symbolising the need for basing the exercise of this freedom on certain rules that ensure its lawful practice and respect for the rights of every citizen. However, the actual efficiency of these structures depends on the extent of their competence, their degree of independence in relation to political power and the financial means at their disposal. In reality, many of them are deprived of any real effectiveness as the government does not grant them sufficient subsidies; others are heavily subjected to state pressure. Thus the CNC in Burundi has trivial funds at its disposal that do not permit it to function, and the same body in Cameroon has neither adequate means nor offices. The CNC in Gabon is considered as the active arm of the political power, whereas the HCP in Rwanda is a purely consultative authority.

### Reorganisation of the profession and self-regulation

Alongside the legal and institutional organisation of the media playing field, the proliferation of private media has also brought about revitalisation of the debate within professional associations and, very often, an increase in their number. Before 1990, professional structures were in



Newspapers from Senegal

the West African Journalists' Association (UJAO - WAJA), was established in 1986, leading to the creation in 2001 of OMAC (Organisation of Central African Media).

These organisations and associations are important as they enable the development of a common feeling of professional identity and solidarity between journalists who are then more likely to collectively demand improvement of their status, defence of their rights and protection of their interests. Professional solidarity is also essential in countries where journalists are particularly harassed or threatened. As for employers' associations, they can add a certain weight to the sector in confronting policies and curbing measures taken, in order to supervise and support press enterprises.

Professional groupings have given rise to two specific types of structure that are increasing in number today in francophone African countries: press houses and ethics watchdogs.

Press houses are centres for meetings, documentation, information and training for all professionals in the media.

general limited to a single association uniting journalists who were employees of the state media. For 17 years, new associations have been emerging: private press journalists' associations (UJPB in Bénin), organisations for publishers in the private press (AEPT in Chad), organisations for protection of press freedom (Journalists in danger in the DRC), sectoral associations (sports journalists, women communicators, journalists specialising in environmental issues). In West Africa, a regional association,

They attempt to unite journalists in the written press as well as those in audio-visual, just as much in the private as the public media. They have come into being either as a result of the effort of a single journalists' association (such as the *Maison du Journalisme* in Togo), or of several associations (in Burkina Faso, the Norbert Zongo National Press Centre was established through the joint effort of the AJB, SYNATIC and the SEP). Others have been set up thanks to external partners: thus the Rwanda and Burundi press houses were initiated by Unesco to promote the advancement of more professional media as well as peace in the region.

Initially supported by donors, these press houses and centres try to become financially self sufficient by offering services likely to generate income: letting out rooms, organising press conferences, training for the PAO and the NTIC, offering secretarial services and even refreshments. In Congo-Brazzaville, the Resource Centre for the Press (CRP) offers IT services to professionals in the sector. The Press House in Mali and the Norbert Zongo National Press Centre in Burkina Faso have set up popular cyber cafés and resource centres. They also generate income by organising adult continuing education courses for media professionals.

The desire of the profession to structure itself, led to the adoption of new codes of ethics for professional conduct and gave rise to a second type of institution: press watchdogs and advisers, and self regulatory bodies. Generally set up by journalists themselves, helped by representatives of civil society (magistrates, officials from human rights associations), their aim is to control media respect for ethical principles and professional conduct. They therefore aim at supporting the development of the profession towards greater responsibility in the treatment of information, as well as fighting against government interference and pressure on the media.

The watchdog for press freedom, ethics and professional conduct (OLPED) established in Côte d'Ivoire in 1995, played a pioneering role in the whole of francophone Africa. It was followed by the creation of ODEM in Benin in 1998, (Watchdog for professional conduct and ethics in the media), of CRED in Senegal (Council for respect of ethics and professional conduct), of ONAP in Burkina Faso

(National Press Watchdog), of ODEP in Mali, OMEC in the Democratic Republic of Congo, OPB in Burundi, OCM in Congo, OTM in Togo, ODEMET in Chad and OGUIDEM in Guinea.

The watchdogs receive complaints from the public and can also submit matters to court in cases where professional codes of conduct have been violated. Being consultative bodies, their statements are not backed by sanction and have no legal status – they can, however, offer an alternative to a long and expensive judicial procedure. To date, the running of these structures remains difficult. On one hand, the division of competence between watchdogs and regulatory authorities, some of which also have competence in regard to ethics, has not always been clear. Sometimes self regulation and regulation from the regulatory authority can become contradictory. On the other hand, watchdogs have often lost credibility when a journalist whose professional profile was not beyond reproach was put in charge. In addition, in countries subjected to severe political upheaval, press councils have had difficulty resisting the excessive politicisation of their members. Finally, they are threatened by the problem of survival – in countries where the media lacks funds, large press groups do not exist and the prospect of seeing companies contributing financially to the running of self-regulation remains in jeopardy.

To escape from this precarious situation, press associations, watchdogs and councils, even regulatory authorities, have turned in great numbers towards foreign donors. Many of the latter have supported the new media, often in a disorderly and sometimes redundant manner, while facilitators (NGO's in the north and south specialising in support to the media) have increased in number. Alongside the former donors who have been present in the sector for a long time (French Cooperation, GTZ, Swiss Cooperation and Unesco), new partners have appeared on the scene since 1990, considering the private media as a critical instrument

**Initially supported by donors, these press houses and centres try to become financially self sufficient by offering services likely to generate income**

of the democratic process.

Aid to the media in francophone Africa has undergone progressive redefining, influenced by taking the private press into account (it is believed to contribute to democratic consolidation), then by the desire to mobilise the media in certain directions: such as promoting peace in countries in conflict, good governance and the fight against corruption, and the promotion of women. Foreign aid has consisted of diverse contributions: direct support to the media, aid in structuring the press sector, training information professionals, institutional allocations, improvement of access to sources of information, and protection of freedom of the press and journalists. These interventions, huge in some countries, have sometimes brought about pernicious consequences: the spread of demands motivated by personal concerns, requests for “per diem” and the dependence of certain media unable to survive by counting on resources from the local market.

## 6. Persistent difficulties

It is thus evident that the liberalised media in francophone Africa has taken tremendous strides during the last two decades. However, difficulties that undermine its development persist.

The unfavourable economic climate and lack of training for young journalists who have entered the profession by chance, have brought about a slide in professional practice. In addition, political powers do not always abandon their traditional vague desire for control. Very rare are the democratisation processes that have been able to take place without experiencing the death throes of the old order before peaceful change of power (Mali, Senegal, Bénin). Most countries experienced a coup d’État (Niger, Mauritania), control of democratic openness to avoid change of power (Togo, Guinea, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Gabon), or even war (Rwanda, Côte d’Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi, Congo, Central African Republic, Chad). These situations of instability or political deadlock have had serious consequences in the media sector.

### Weak structuring of enterprises

Private written press, radio and television companies coming out of democratic transitions are still suffering from a general lack of organisation and often from a lack of transparent management. Usually established through the personal initiative of a businessman, professional journalist, group of teachers or politician, many of them continue, after several years, to function in a makeshift and random way, with derisory financial means and practically non-existent working capital, no investment planning and without projected budgets.

Different enterprises present very diverse profiles: one cannot compare the Sud Communications Group in Senegal (that publishes a daily paper, owns several private radio stations and has established a school of journalism) with the bi-monthly *La Roue*, in Mali: a paper depending on a single individual who took it virtually entirely upon himself not only to collect information and edit his paper, but also to distribute it. The paper died with its founder.<sup>5</sup>

Generally, true press groups controlling a variety of titles and media and run according to a clearly defined editorial and commercial project are rare. At the same time, foreign groups are practically absent from the francophone media landscape, except in Gabon where investors from the north contribute to the capital of Africa no.1 and Télé Africa and in countries where the radio network Nostalgie has been established (Côte d’Ivoire and Togo).

African media companies are generally under centralised and personalised management: the editor-publisher or the head of a station often holds total decision-making power and controls all financial aspects, leaving the staff in the dark about circulation and revenue from the publication or the station. Within companies, specialised tasks hardly exist and editing depends on the flexibility of the staff. In Benin, the Central African Republic and Mali, the publisher is sometimes all at once journalist, administrator and manager, giving him multiple tasks to fulfil. In radio stations, presenters are at the same time technicians, advertising agents and messengers. Financial and accounting services are rarely undertaken by adequately trained people.

In addition, media enterprises are often managed in tra-

ditional fashion, without concern for social legislation, code of conduct or fiscal obligations. In the DRC, many private press organisations are veritable “outlaws” that do not even respect the formal deposit of their written material. In Burkina Faso, even the big private daily papers are signed up with neither social security nor with revenue services, and estimate that if they were to operate in accordance with the law, they would simply not be able to survive.

Running costs remain high. Whether print press or audio-visual, production costs are prohibitive given the need to import the technical means and the resources required. Very few states have adopted simplified customs measures or a system of indirect aid enabling media structures to benefit from reduced tariffs (telephone, post, electricity). In some countries, professional associations have tried to set up central purchasing agencies for the collective buying of raw materials or of equipment that requires investment (computers, tape recorders). However, this type of initiative is often undermined by fierce competition between entrepreneurs and lack of knowledge about running businesses.

Competition is ruthless. Private media concerns are generally the result of personal, extremely individualised initiatives and are rarely politically neutral. It is thus difficult to form an association and work together to rationalise a sector that is too widely dispersed. More than thirty daily papers are published in Cotonou, in a country with barely six million inhabitants, of whom nearly 80% are illiterate. 44 television channels broadcast in the city of Kinshasa – this disperses the possible benefits from advertisers and from negotiating discounts for advertising space.

The first to suffer as a result of the low income from their activities and centralised and non-transparent management are the journalists, who in general earn a poor living – this leaves them susceptible to a whole range of reprehensible practices. In the DRC, some journalists do not earn more than \$30 a month, sometimes nothing at all. “But people stay on because the mere fact of having ones signature appearing in a paper, opens the door to other means,” explains a journalist. In Burkina Faso, salaries vary between 70.000f.CFA and 120.000f.CFA for journalists in the written press, and radio station presenters hardly ever earn

more than 10.000f.CFA a week. In many countries, the poor salaries have given rise to the systematic practice of reporting “on demand” where the journalist is paid by the organiser of the event he is going to cover. In West Africa this “compensation” offered to a journalist in exchange for his work is called “gombo”, in the DRC “coupage” and in Congo-Brazzaville “camora”. A consequence of the spread of this practice is that news carried by the media is often reduced to a series of accounts of opening and closing sessions of seminars, the laying of cornerstones and laudatory presentations of achievements in development structures.

The financial difficulties of media enterprises are also reflected in the level of their equipment. In the print press, only the few big daily and weekly newspapers have computerised editorial offices and have access to fax or internet facilities. For many weeklies (that appear sporadically), the publisher goes around with his editing “in a briefcase”. The growth in the print press has benefited from the arrival of desktop publishing on the African continent (PAO); however, dependence on external desktop publishers carries high costs for newspapers (and there are still many of them) that do not have their own equipment. The latest technological innovation, cellular telephones, has radically revolutionised the organisation of work in most of the African media, enabling rapid and easy access to resource people, even if they are far away... and even if the cost of such communication is prohibitive.

Given these financial difficulties, many francophone African press enterprises only survive thanks to the underlying support of politicians or of businessmen wanting at their disposal an organisation that can serve their interests. As for the audio-visual media (private and public), they survive by systematically having their services paid by event organisers: renting shooting material, editing costs and purchase of airtime for broadcast. In Burkina Faso, national television only travels to do reporting to the equivalent value of

**In West Africa this ‘compensation’ offered to a journalist in exchange for his work is called ‘gombo’, in the DRC ‘coupage’ and in Congo-Brazzaville ‘camora’**

150.000f.CFA. Televised news is therefore often limited to a long succession of accounts of ceremonies (opening and closure of seminars, laying cornerstones, handing over charitable gifts) all of which are actually only disguised editorial advertisements.

### A market without customers

Admittedly one cannot compare the dynamic economic environment of the Cameroonian or Ivorian press (before the war) with the gloom surrounding the Nigerian, Malian or Togolese press. However, there is no choice but to admit that most of the African media survives in a context of great insecurity, characterised by economies that have run out of steam and in which informal trade largely predominates.

The initial following of the new private press was made up of civil servants who were passionate about the political debate surrounding democratic transition. After the devaluation of the CFA franc in 1994, the means of subsistence of those civil servants were lessened, while the price of newspapers was increasing (given the doubling of prices for imported materials). The cost of a newspaper is at present higher than that of a meal, while in many countries civil servants are becoming paupers – in Niger, in Togo, in the Central African Republic. Where arrears in monthly salaries are on the increase and where student grants are a long time in coming, it is the potential readership of the press that has been hardest hit by the crisis. Sales have badly slipped. Radio stations are also subjected to the ambient economic gloom. As the head of a private radio station in Burkina Faso pointed out, “listeners cannot even pay the tariffs for obituary notices. However, we can hardly refuse to broadcast them; so, we



Newspapers from Mali

negotiate...”.<sup>6</sup> The pauperisation of this embryonic “middle class” also brings about a loss of interest on the part of advertisers in the news media, unlikely to bring them new customers sufficiently well off to consume their products. The number of business operators often remains small in environments dominated by state enterprises for a long time and the new private entrepreneurs, emerging from economic liberalisation, are often reticent about investing in advertisements, especially with media carrying material critical of the political power whose favours must be carefully dealt with. In this kind of insecure context, the press is often forced to take steps simply “to make a living”, at the mercy of occasional backers and political operators. In Togo, politicians buy entire editions in exchange for the publication of an interview when the need arises. In the DRC, publishers prepare press packs containing “revelations”, often entirely invented, that they then wave in front of politicians or businessmen so they can buy their silence. This situation has seriously marred the credibility of the press, giving rise to disinterest among readers who are less and less prepared to invest in information that is not credible. A vicious circle has been created: the decreased readership leads journalists into an increasing number of compromising deals to make up for the lack of financial gain, which in turn alienates readers even more<sup>7</sup>. As Diana Senghor emphasises: “If four or five regular titles survive today in countries that previously had 20 or 30, it is less because of legal sanction than that of the public”.<sup>8</sup> If the Cameroon-

ian legal system has sometimes come down hard, those convictions are not enough to explain why a newspaper like *Le Messager*, with a circulation of 75 000 copies at the beginning of the 1990’s, now barely reaches 5 000.

In the Central African Republic, the main press titles have a circulation not exceeding 500 copies. In the DRC, journalists working in a press organisation that claims to print 1 000 copies, admit that the actual print run does not exceed 150 and that it is unusual to sell more than 50! Newspapers often hide their actual circulation, that generally is well below the declared figures. A new consumer practice has been invented that does not favour circulation: in Kinshasa, one can “rent” a paper (costing 500f.C.) at 5f.C. for a few minutes’ reading, followed by the possibility of photocopying an interesting article (at 50f.C. a photocopy, the saving is considerable).

Newspapers are also very badly distributed outside the capitals, where they are sold in traditional fashion by children, auction-style. Most countries do not have a distribution service that would allow for good newspaper circulation in the provinces and those that do have one, like Cameroon, deplore its inefficiency. Therefore distribution is left to the initiative of the publisher who negotiates directly with public transport drivers so that batches of his paper can reach newsagents in the large towns. The collection of income from sales is such a headache that many publications even abandon distribution in the provinces. Very little contact exists between the press in the capital and that in the provinces. Underdeveloped, the rural press centres on farmers’ interests and has limited distribution areas in a significant multilingual context. In some countries (Central African Republic, DRC, Mali, Niger), newspaper distribution is hampered by the state of communication networks, given the lack of tarred roads and the infrequency of transport.

It must be recognised, however, that the number of people reached by a press publication is nowhere near the figures relating to its circulation numbers<sup>9</sup>. One copy can pass through a score of hands in a day. In Burkina Faso, on the day following the assassination on December 13 1998 of the journalist Norbert Zongo, whose paper *L’Indépendant* had a circulation of 20 000 copies, more than 40 000 people

demonstrated in the streets of Ouagadougou and several thousands in provincial towns, showing that the journalist’s fame was much more widespread than the circulation of his newspaper would have led one to believe.

### Shortcomings in training

In addition to poor income, a great many backward slides in professional practice come from a lack of appropriate training for journalists. Unlike the state press where professionals are often well-trained but dulled by years of self-censorship and propaganda, the private press has an abundance of young recruits, who join the profession as they feel a need for self-expression or are in search employment. Dozens of young university graduates, deprived of jobs (formerly assured) in the civil service, have found the means to survival in the private press.

The lack of professionalism of these young self-taught and former state journalists with their outdated knowledge, has serious consequences. During the press cases that have punctuated the continent over the last ten years, journalists accused of libel have often explained their mistakes as resulting from “ignorance of the laws”. The quality of production, be it of the written press, radio or television, is poor and the lack of diversity is striking.

However, training institutions for journalism do exist in francophone Africa. The regional higher education institutions created in the 1970’s (CESTI in Dakar, ESSTIC in Yaoundé, CIERRO in Ouagadougou, IFASIC in Kinshasa), have in general experienced a decline following the withdrawal of structural support by their traditional donors (Unesco, French Cooperation) at the beginning of the 1990’s. Several countries have national professional schools to train state press journalists: IFTIC in Niamey, CFPI in Ouagadougou, Centre for Professional Training of the CRTV in Cameroun, ICA in DRC, and ISTC in Côte d’Ivoire. For years their role was to award diplomas to ensure the progress of employees within the civil service. Today these schools are battling to find their place in the new liberalised context. For their part, universities have invested in the field of communications by creating departments in this field (in 1992 in the University of Ouagadougou, 1996 in the University

of Butare, 1998 in the University of Kinshasa, 2001 in the University of Brazzaville). Held in high esteem by young holders of the degree (often fascinated by professions in communications and public relations) these areas of university training are often criticised for being very theoretical and not providing skills that can be directly used in the job market. Finally, private schools have recently been established – if some enjoy a certain respect (ISSIC, linked to the group Sud-Communication in Dakar), most are makeshift creations that claim to offer training in journalism alongside many other sectors considered to be expanding (information science, marketing and management, public relations).

Whatever the case, most professionals working today in the private press did not follow any of these courses of study. At best, they attended one of the many training courses or seminars organised on the continent over the last 10 years by different development groups. Indeed, many often redundant and limited courses have been held to introduce journalists to ethics, to the new ICT, to investigative journalism, to coverage of electoral or environmental news, or to train editors and senior journalists in management.

In spite of their good intentions, these courses and seminars nevertheless pose a series of problems. On the one hand, the selection of participants is not always well targeted. An African press “jet set” has gradually been developing; the same journalists travel across the continent or in Europe from one training seminar to the next, no longer even having the time to return to their writing to put their knowledge into practice. On the other hand, participants’ motivation sometimes lies less in the acquisition of relevant knowledge than in the financial gain. Indeed, most of these training courses provide remuneration to participants (supposedly to cover travelling costs, meals and, why not, the “gombo” that might have been picked up on the day). Finally, the acquisition of knowledge that is often out of step with the realities of professional practice remains problematic.

It must be emphasised that most media directors and press entrepreneurs are not prepared to invest in employee training (neither by a financial contribution, nor even by giving the employee the necessary time off), either because

they do not wish to do without their services during the time of the training, or because they fear a substantial increase in their employees’ skills might lead them to ask for salary increases... or turn to another employer.

### Approximate professional practice

In such a context, influenced by the weak structure of enterprises, market limits and shortcomings in training, professional errors are recurrent. An observer in the African press asks: “How many publishers and journalists look for and tell the truth? How many give their readers the means of carrying out their role as a citizen? How many explain to readers the principles guiding the choice of information and the values that the media upholds?”<sup>10</sup> In many francophone African countries, the media practices freedom more than responsibility. Confusion between the private life and public life of public personalities, violation of individual rights, plagiarism, confusion between business journalism and advertisement, between editorial space and advertorial, omnipresence of “rewarded” journalism, partisan practices, lack of distinction between news and commentary, are some of the many professional ethical violations of which African journalists are guilty.

Rumour is also often found in the media: in Burkina Faso, the dailies devote specific columns to it (“A letter for Laye” in *L’Observateur Paalga*, “There are rumours” in

### CLIPS

“The flowering of independent newspapers in Cote d’Ivoire in 1990-1991 was followed by a swift contraction. By one count, the 60 or so titles appearing in mid-1991 had dwindled to about 10 at the end of 1992. Still, new titles kept emerging. By the mid-1990s about 30 newspapers, of the 175 that had been registered, were still appearing on the news-stands.”

– *W Joseph Campbell, journalist, 1998*

*Sidwaya*, “Cocktail Flash” in *San Finna* and “Weekend secrets” in *Le Pays*.). These are often the offending columns in defamation suits. There is also a profusion of eye-catching and exaggerated headlines having little in common with the facts contained in the corresponding article in the inside pages. In Abidjan, the term “titrologie” is given to this new science, that consists of being able to present on the front page a headline that will sell a publication that in its inside pages is actually empty of any noteworthy news.

When codes of ethics, press watchdogs and councils are powerless to eliminate such practices, the authorities sometimes intervene. But it is always a delicate matter, in a context of recently acquired freedom, to limit the exercise of that freedom. Thus in Burkina Faso, the CSI (High Council for Information, the audio-visual regulatory authority, today the CSC) had to take the decision in 1997 to suspend live broadcasts where often anonymous listeners would call in to contribute to a debate. The input bordered on the unacceptable (calls for hatred between religious or ethnic communities, personal insults) and presenters were not always able to channel such over-the-board comments. The CSI’s decision caused an outcry from press organisations that considered it an attack on freedom of expression.

In addition to these excesses of free speech, the francophone African press is also still influenced by a congenital defect: political commitment. The appearance of the private press coincided with that of multiparty systems and in several countries newspapers naturally found themselves to be close to certain parties or political personalities in opposition to the established power (in Benin, Côte d’Ivoire and Cameroon). Sometimes, as happened in Chad, the press became involved at a moment when remaining neutral would have been interpreted as tacit agreement with the rapidly declining powers. 17 years after this relationship between a multiparty system and media pluralism began, many newspapers keep a committed tone and become opinion rather than news organisations. Several publications remain more or less openly linked to parties or to politicians, in a difficult economic context where politics, allowing access to state resources, is a strategic means to enrich-

ment. In several countries, this complicity led to a veritable declaration of war by certain newspapers at the eruption of violent conflict. In Côte d’Ivoire, the newspapers close to Laurent Gbagbo (*Notre Voie*, *Le Courrier d’Abidjan*, *Fraternité Matin*), those close to the PDCI of former President Houphouët-Boigny (*Le Nouveau Réveil*) and those close to the RDR of Alassane Ouattara and the New Forces (*Le Patriote*, *Nord-Sud*), have been tearing each other apart for years.

### Authoritarian reaction by certain powers

The final difficulty facing the francophone African media are the obstacles set up by political powers confronting journalists in their work. The first of these is withholding information. In countries where there is no tradition of public information and where the least administrative fact is considered to be a state secret, the practice remains widespread, especially in regimes under pressure (Guinea, Togo, Côte d’Ivoire). The withholding of information is generally selective and private press journalists complain they are neglected by state structures favouring the public media.

But state intervention is often more direct. In several countries, the state continues to impose censorship on the media: in Mauritania, up until the recent change of regime, a series of suspensions caused the demise of *Mauritanie Nouvelles*, the only private daily paper in the country, and regularly hit *Le Calame*. Elsewhere, the executive puts heavy pressure on the judicial system during press cases, in order to obtain heavy sentences or to push legal procedures into violation.

Finally, other pressures are felt besides legal judicial procedures. Thus, in the Central African Republic, journalists are sometimes arrested and tortured by the presidential guard. In the DRC, 160 journalists were imprisoned during the three years in power of Laurent-Désiré

**In Abidjan, the term ‘titrologie’ is given to this new science, that consists of being able to present on the front page a headline that will sell a publication that in its inside pages is actually empty of any noteworthy news**

Kabila. In Burkina Faso, in December 1998, Norbert Zongo, the publisher of *L'Indépendant*, was assassinated by members of the presidential guard – in August 2006, the case against them was dismissed.

Even in the state media, numerous sanctions, which do not respect legal procedures, affect journalists. Government leaders continue to consider the state media as their mouthpiece and rebukes are frequent when state-employed journalists take their duty to give balanced information too seriously. The attitude of the RTNC (Congoese National Radio and Television) during the recent elections in the Democratic Republic of Congo was a glaring example of this. The public broadcaster led a committed campaign in favour of presidential candidate Joseph Kabila and hardly gave his challengers the chance to come to the party.

In a few exceptional cases (Senegal, Burkina Faso, Mali), the proliferation of private media caused the former state media, confronted with competition and a multiplicity of voices and approaches, to make some changes: on one hand by opening up to all the various voices (political, unionist and social) and, on the other, by moving towards structural transformation. Thus the government media, that in general fell directly under the control of a ministry of information, moved without consultation towards the statutes of the EPA (public establishment with an administrative function) giving them financial and administrative autonomy.<sup>11</sup>

While these new positions free the media from strong state domination (even if only in theory), they also give them the obligation of financial profitability. This requires a change of attitude among employees often used to a civil service environment and not one needing to generate income. They also need to develop a public service spirit, which not only means opening up to all points of view, balance in electoral campaigns and acceptance of minorities, but also taking charge of all information needs felt by the population, to which private structures are not prepared to respond. Major transformation is needed, in a context where the authorities themselves find it difficult to break from their habit of considering the national media (especially television) as their “thing”.

This transformation is all the more problematic as the

public media often see their most competent staffers (in particular audio-visual technicians) fleeing to the private sector where remuneration is more substantial. Their infrastructure, inherited from the 1970's and 1980's, is generally outdated or badly used, compared to new private enterprises opting from the outset for lighter, more efficient digital technology. In spite of their change in status, many ministers continue to consider the state media as a tool in their service, demanding that it covers a certain ceremony, demanding airtime to justify or to explain themselves at appropriate moments, calling on editors to ban the handling of sensitive information. The era of state monopolies sometimes seems not so long ago.

## 7. Conclusion

At the beginning of the 1990's, after the forced silence of the colonial period, the transgressions of journalism in favour of national unity and development, the perversion of the debate on NWICO by authoritarian heads of state in search of support, francophone African journalists experienced the fervour of their new-found freedom of expression. Together with political pluralism, the private media enabled divergent and deeper discourse to take place.

First private newspapers, then increasingly radio and television, have been strongly contributing to the redesign of the political and public landscape. Media “in transition”, following the example of the regimes into which it fits, reflects the social and political changes of the various francophone African states.

However, while the phenomenon of “private” media undeniably exists in francophone Africa today, it would be improper to continue using, as at the start of the 1990's, the description “independent”. In fact, all media, private and public, form part of the political, social and financial networks which continue to influence its news content and editorial position. If African countries have had nearly 50 years of independence, francophone African journalists have only enjoyed 17 years of freedom and are still trying to consolidate the fragile media arena in which they practice their profession.

## Endnotes

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- 5 See Fra, Daniel and Nangué, Eyoum. *Créer, gérer et animer une publication*, Paris, G.R.E.T., 1997, p. 50-51.
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- 7 Fra, Daniel and Nangué, Eyoum. *Créer, gérer et animer une publication*, Paris, G.R.E.T., 1997.
- 8 in Institut Panos (éd.), *Ne tirez pas sur les médias*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 1996, p. 18.
- 9 See Tudesq, André-Jean. *Les Médias en Afrique*, Paris, Ellipses, 1999.
- 10 Institut Panos Paris (éd.), *Afrique Centrale. Des médias pour la démocratie*, Paris, Karthala, 2000, p.33.
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## CHARACTERS, CASES AND CAUSES

**‘Le Che’** tackles the issue of slavery in Niger

By LIESL LOUW

Journalists in Niger face a challenge similar to those in other Sahel-countries: a declining private sector which is reluctant to advertise; a limited readership and too many titles for any one of them to be sustainable; and finally pressure from a government notorious for putting journalists behind bars just for reporting on any “sensitive issue”.

I first met Mahamane Souleymane Cissé during a trip to Niger to celebrate the wedding of one of his friends, Sedik Abba, another well-known journalist from this country.

It was during leisurely discussions that the story of Cissé, better known as “Le Che”, unfolded.

He was one of a group of brave journalists who soldiered on with very little means, working for the newspaper *Alternative* and at the same time running a talk-show on the radio station of the same name.

His focus, however, was reporting on an issue few journalists from inside or outside the country dared to touch: the ongoing practice of slavery amongst certain tribes in the

**Liesl Louw** is the Africa Editor for Media24 newspapers in Johannesburg, South Africa. She started work as a freelance correspondent in various African countries in 1995 and lived in Dakar, Senegal, for several years



LIESL LOUW

**Mahamane Souleymane Cissé of Niger, better known as ‘Le Che’**

north of the country.

Cissé hails from Agadez, the historic trade centre in the Sahara, where he first witnessed the practice whereby young girls were sold to rich merchants, some sent away as far as Kano in northern Nigeria where this practice also still existed, according to Cissé.

“Some of it has to do with social relations which date back to the ancient times when nomadic tribes were used to taking black slaves from the south,” he said in an interview.

Slavery in all its various manifestations was only formally outlawed in Niger in 2003.

Cissé did a Masters thesis on the subject at university and was an active member of the organisation “Timidria”, which aimed at combating slavery.

He also represented the independent media in Niger on the national human rights commission.

For writing about slavery and other subjects deemed “sensitive” or “disloyal” by the government, Cissé “spent a lot of time at police

**He was one of a group of brave journalists who soldiered on with very little means, working for the newspaper *Alternative* and at the same time running a talk-show on the radio station of the same name**

stations”, his friend, Abba, recounted.

Before becoming a journalist, Cissé was an active member of the student movement.

He was also later expelled from neighbouring Burkina Faso because of an investigation into the death of that country’s former president, Thomas Sankara, in 1987.

Cissé died after a short illness in August 2005. He is sadly missed.

## CHARACTERS, CASES AND CAUSES

## Norbert Zongo: Investigating the dark side of Burkina Faso

By **CHERIFF MOUMINA SY**

Norbert Zongo was born on July 31 1949 in Koudougou, a town about 100km west of the capital, Ouagadougou. After working as a teacher from 1969 to 1978, he found his true calling in journalism.

Having been accepted by the Institut Supérieur du Conseil de l'Entente in Lomé, Togo, he went on to complete his studies at the Ecole Supérieure de Journalisme in Yaoundé, Cameroon.

His first job was at the government-owned daily, *Sidwaya*, where he started in the second half of 1980. Then the liberalisation of the media prompted him to start his own newspaper, *L'Indépendant*.

*L'Indépendant*, edited by Zongo, quickly became one of the most widely read newspapers in Burkina Faso.

Zongo decided to devote himself to investigative journalism, and started to publish his revelations under the name of Henri Segbo.

Because he was convinced that democracy was impossible without a free press, Zongo made this his main

**Cheriff Sy** is a journalist, analyst and editor of the Burkinabé weekly magazine of information and reflection, *Bendré*. He is also chairperson of the National Press Centre-Norbert Zongo in Ouagadougou

focus. Through his newspaper, he became a tireless advocate of freedom of expression and of thought. He vigorously defended these principles, exemplified by the phrase: "The freedom to inform, the right to free thinking."

In one revealing investigation after another, he ceaselessly used his writing to expose corruption and fraud in the ruling political elite.

Zongo concerned himself with the weakest in society; defending the widow and the orphan while attacking the most sensitive dossiers. From May 1993, the date his newspaper first appeared, to his assassination in 1998, Zongo related the unfolding saga of the "dark side of the leaders of the IV Republic".

Over the years, his writing increasingly became a source of irritation to those in power.

Yet his rigour and professional

integrity earned him the admiration and loyalty of the public.

"The worst thing isn't the evil of bad people, but the silence of good people," Zongo was known to say. He refused to be silenced: "Since 1983, it is the Presidency which kills us. It is the Presidency which always surrounds itself with questionable people."

His investigations finally led him to look into the imprisonment and murder of the chauffeur of Francois Compaoré, brother of Blaise Compaoré, the President of Burkina Faso.

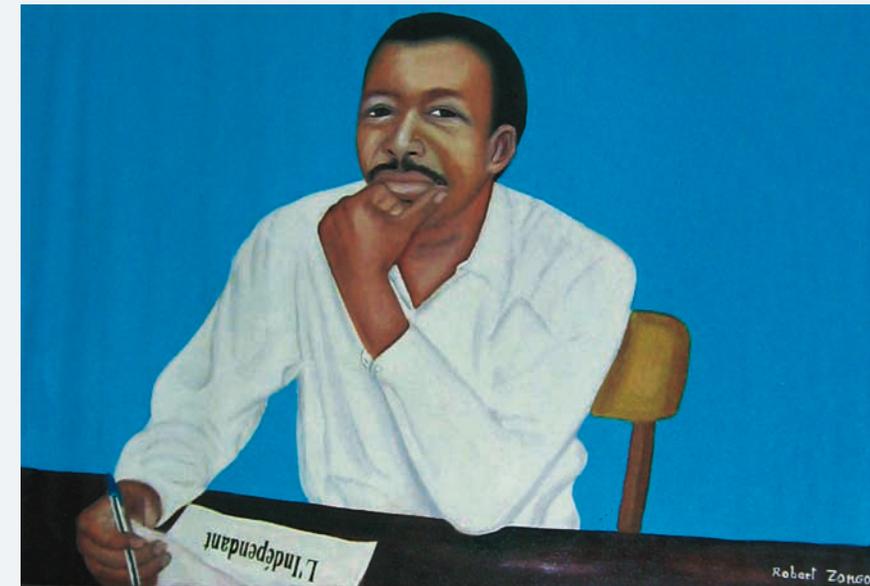
It was this investigation, which came too close to comfort for those in the highest positions of power, which eventually stopped Zongo in his tracks.

The independent commission put in place after his assassination will conclude: "Norbert Zongo was assassinated purely for political reasons, because he practiced committed

**Norbert Zongo's grave in Ouagadougou is visited by journalists from all over Africa in April 2007 (right)**

**The lamp burning at the Centre National de Presse-Norbert Zongo in Ouagadougou, with its promise that the journalists will pursue justice on the assassination (middle)**

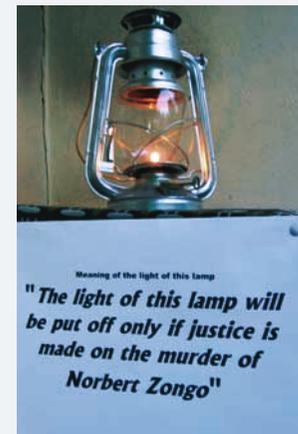
**Hundreds of journalists march to Norbert Zongo's grave in April 2007 (far right)**



**A painting of Norbert Zongo stands on a bookcase in the Centre National de Presse-Norbert Zongo in Ouagadougou**

investigative journalism. He defended a democratic ideal and was committed, through his newspaper, to fight for the

respect of human rights and justice, against bad governance of the public goods and against impunity."



ELIZABETH BARRATT

## CHARACTERS, CASES AND CAUSES

## Ibrahim Kalil Diaré: Guinea's master of the written word

By **IBRAHIMA CISSÉ**

Few journalists in Guinea have produced such a vast body of work as did Ibrahima Kalil Diaré.

Born in 1935, this master of the written word devoted his life to journalism, art and literature. Only those who saw him at work could gauge the true nature of his personality and the depth of his conviction.

Assessing his life's work, one understands the journalism profession is one of dedication; journalism is also a tool to educate, to inform and to entertain.

Today, in 2007, Ibrahima Kalil Diaré still occupies a cherished position amongst the men and women in the media who believe the foundation and *raison d'être* of our work is intimately linked to precise social and cultural realities.

It is not his fault if these realities change haphazardly with time and that ultimately the arrogance of a certain historical logic excludes the smaller details, so all that remains are the "big events" and the headlines on the front pages of the

**Ibrahima Cissé** is a professional, retired journalist who knew Diaré well. He was editor and later director of the Guinea government newspaper, *Horoya*. He held various important positions in the ministry of communication. Today, he is a columnist for *Horoya*

newspapers.

What is one to do if only pamphlets and slogans – the abbreviated reality of the moment, boldly considered as the final totality of it all – are consumed by the listeners, television audiences, readers and students in our journalism schools? One thing is sure: if he was still alive, he would have been a staunch critic of the electronic media.

For Diaré, the task of the journalist should coincide with the will of the people. It must express it and focus on society: its needs, its hopes and fears. It should also denounce its imperfections. Without fear.

The social responsibility of the journalist was, in Diaré's view, fundamental, especially in a developing country where the level of illiteracy is extremely high. He was convinced the message of the journalist should be a tool used to unite the society. Journalism: the art of the possible.

Diaré passionately loved his job; the task of seeking the truth.

In a society at the time dominated by the language of Marxist revolution, he tried to impose his own way of writing and speaking. But while trying to exercise his profession freely, he was constantly confronted by the stereotypes everyone was obliged to comply with.

This arrogance – one has to call it that – was often to his own detriment, but he never shied away from

speaking the truth, wherever and whenever it was necessary.

Diaré was non-conformist and tried his hand at everything. As an art critic, he spoke about the values and of the wrongs in Guinean society.

In the theatre he also found inspiration. His philosophy – and he defended it with vigour – was that art was the only true source for an accomplished and fulfilled human being.

Thus the cultural and theatrical events of the time became his second home. He always emerged from these with an impressive number of lessons to share with his small circle of friends.

As a poet and short-story writer, he was one of the founding fathers of the Association of Guinean Writers in 1985, but soon after led a breakaway faction of the association.

It's not that he was an iconoclast, someone ready to get his hands on everything within reach, even that which did not suit him, but he was motivated by the desire to move fast and to go far.

Because of this aggressive attitude which manifested itself throughout his career, he made several enemies – also from within the circles of power.

It's true that it was his competence which earned him the job of correspondent for Guinean Radio in Moscow, but it was easy to see that



**Ibrahim Kalil Diaré of Guinea Conakry**

this promotion was also a method to move him out of the way.

Diaré returned to Conakry to the enviable position of director of the Guinean Radio: sweet revenge for someone who, throughout his life, fought for the triumph of excellence.

However, one day in September 1990, he passed away in almost total anonymity, weighed down by misery and having received no recognition for his contribution to an emerging free and responsible media. Is this not the destiny of all those non-conformists who dare to confront established norms?

## CHARACTERS, CASES AND CAUSES

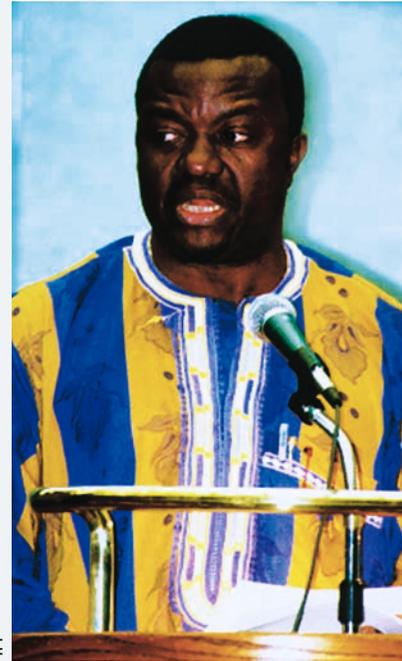
## Pius Njawe: Refusing to be silenced in Cameroon

Pius Njawe launched his own paper, *Le Messenger*, at age 22 and organised Cameroonian journalists by founding the Cameroon Organisation of Press Freedom. He still publishes, despite previous exile and several arrests.

Editor-in-chief (now publisher) of the independent newspaper *Le Messenger*, he is Cameroon's most beleaguered journalist and one of Africa's most courageous fighters for press freedom.

Since 1990, he has been arrested more than 30 times and has faced legal action on charges ranging from defaming the head of state to publishing false information. Copies of his publications, the weekly *Le Messenger* and the satirical biweekly magazine *Le Messenger Popoli*, have been banned and seized on numerous occasions. *Le Messenger* has been censored and closed down, its office equipment confiscated and its young and dedicated staff arrested, fined or tortured in an effort by President Paul Biya to silence the critical voice

From IPI's "50 World Press Freedom Heroes Report" written by **Michael Kudlak**. On May 3 2000, IPI named 50 press freedom heroes to commemorate its 50th anniversary. The collection is available on the IPI website: [www.freemedia.at](http://www.freemedia.at)



Pius Njawe

of the country's few independent papers.

Njawe was born on March 4, 1957. He worked for *La Gazette* and the *Douala Express* before founding *Le Messenger* in 1979. At just 22 years of age, he was the youngest newspaper owner in Cameroon.

In November 1992, following the banning of *Le Messenger* by the government and after receiving threats to his life, he was forced into exile. He launched a substitute paper, *La Messagère*, in Benin. Although unofficially accused of various crimes,

Njawe returned to Cameroon in February 1993 and promptly founded the Cameroon Organisation for Press Freedom (Ocalip) the next month.

Njawe, who presided over the Central Africa Press Editors' Union and was a member of the Unesco Consultative Group on Press Freedom, has been imprisoned on three occasions. He was jailed for two months in 1995 for "abuse and slander" of the chief of police, and in 1996 he was sentenced to six months in jail for publishing an article and two cartoons in *Le Messenger Popoli* insulting the president of the republic. After serving one month of his sentence, he was granted a provisional release.

"This is part of the permanent harassment ... part of the pressure they have been attempting to exert on us since the foundation of *Le Messenger*, to silence us," Njawe told reporters at the time. "However, as we have always said, a thousand trials will not silence us."

Njawe was arrested again on December 24 1997, and sentenced to two years in prison and a fine of 500 000 Central African francs (US\$1 000), this time for "spreading false news" in an article entitled "Is the President ill?" The article reported that Biya might have suffered a heart attack while watching a football match. Njawe's sentence was



Njawe receives his World Press Freedom Hero award from IPI chairperson Moegsien Williams on May 3 2000 at the IPI World Congress in Boston

later reduced on appeal to one year in prison and a 300 000 CFA franc fine. He was pardoned by presidential decree and released on October 12 1998, following months of pressure from local and international press freedom organisations.

During his 10-month imprisonment, Njawe shared a dungeon-like cell with more than 100 other prisoners, most of them convicted of robbery, murder and other felonies. His wife, who was late into pregnancy, was physically abused by a

prison administrator on the occasions when she brought Njawe food and linen. She subsequently suffered a miscarriage.

Writing by flashlight from Cell No. 15 in Douala State Prison, Njawe said: "I know I am paying for my stubbornness in my struggle for the past 18 years in *Le Messenger* and [other] organisations to broaden democratic freedom in Cameroon and Africa. I'm paying for having preferred my independence to compromise."

### Update since 2000 by XAVIER DEUTCHOUA

Njawe is now the publisher of *Le Messenger* – no longer editor-in-chief.

He also fought for democracy in Cameroon. In 1992, for instance, he campaigned for the election opponent to Biya. With civil society and other parts of the press also in the campaign, reliable sources said afterwards that the opposition candidate won – however Biya refused to give up power. Threats then forced Njawe to go into exile.

*Le Messenger Popoli* is no longer part of the Free Media Group created by Njawe. In 2003, he abandoned the satirical bi-weekly to one of his close collaborators.

At the time, his ambition was to build up a huge multimedia group, with a radio station in Douala and then a television station. But he could not achieve his goal. His radio, named Freedom FM, has been banned since 2003 when the Minister of Communication sent the police to seal the building. Four years later, the seals are still there and Njawe cannot even access the expensive technical and office equipment, which he says cost about US\$1 000 and has now deteriorated.

## CHARACTERS, CASES AND CAUSES

## The *Crocodile*: Survival through professionalism

By ELIZABETH BARRATT

“We chose a name which inspires fear: if you are not careful, *Crocodile* will bite you!” says Pedro Amuzun.

The weekly Togolese newspaper, *Crocodile*, stands out in an environment in which most other newspapers are named for French counterparts.

The red masthead and crocodile logo were chosen 13 years ago for this African watchdog newspaper. The motivation for their choice is more easily understood if given the context: a political dictatorship and the existence of real and dangerous crocodiles.

“We were in a dictatorship. We had all been working on national television and started the paper under difficult conditions, with few resources. Many publications come and go in Togo, and we needed something that would show we are different,” says Amuzun, one of the founders who is still fully involved with the paper.

It is the only independent newspaper in Togo which has published without interruption for 13 years.

The reason it has never been

Elizabeth Barratt is an executive editor at *The Star* newspaper in Johannesburg, South Africa, and secretary-general of The African Editors’ Forum

banned or shut down? Strict professionalism and objectivity, believe its founders.

“We take the time to do the work professionally,” says Amuzun.

“The paper has never been banned, and no *Crocodile* editor has ever been arrested or even taken to court. This is because it is difficult to contradict what the paper says: it publishes facts.

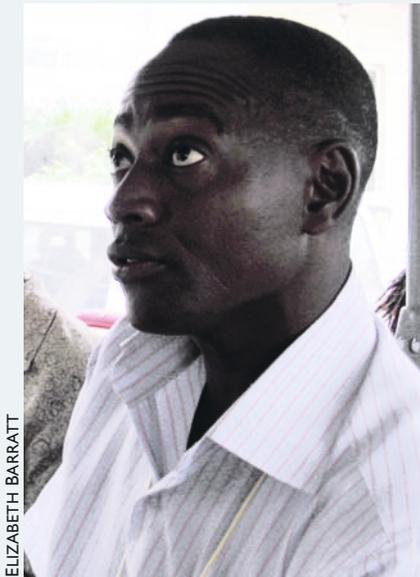
“We are very careful with the principles of checking our stories; even triple checking, as even one small mistake can get you in big trouble.

“It’s not that it is easy for us as journalists in Togo – we still receive threats and are harassed.”

The 12-page, two-colour tabloid *Crocodile* was founded on July 22 1993, in a volatile political situation determined by the struggle for the democratisation of institutions in Togo.

The editorial policy of the newspaper was led by the concern to objectively inform the citizens in their fight for democracy, press freedom, civic awareness, the right to access public information and human rights.

Since its creation the paper has



ELIZABETH BARRATT

Pedro Amuzun, one of the founders of *Crocodile* newspaper

been independent of all political and economic interests. The paper is a co-operative.

“It is not a business,” says Amuzun. “We knew from the start that almost no one would advertise with us.

“The paper has become a kind of commitment: the people work there without salary when need be. From the beginning we knew it would be challenging, so each person has another job to support themselves.”

Copies of the Togolese weekly newspaper, *Crocodile*

‘The paper has never been banned, and no *Crocodile* editor has ever been arrested or even taken to court. This is because it is difficult to contradict what the paper says: it publishes facts.’

He says *Crocodile* has published more than 764 issues due to the quality of its equipment and its team. It currently has seven journalists, including one woman, and three freelancers.

The paper has 150 subscribers and an average circulation of 3 500 copies. It is distributed in the capital, Lomé, the main towns and 22 out of the 30 districts in Togo.



# 4

SECTION FOUR

# North Africa



# North Africa: 50 years of media

By Laid Zaghلامي

## 1. Introduction

In general, when dealing with issues of the African continent, Western media tend to present the North African region as a part of the Middle East. Certainly, language, religion, culture, geography factors and proximity are behind this image. In fact, however, there are many links between North Africa and other regions in the continent, and some common experiences, values, principles and policies.

Thus, during the last century, the whole African continent was under western European occupation: Britain, France, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Italy and Belgium. North Africa, notably the Maghreb region, was occupied by the French. As such, Algeria went through a tough and cruel colonial presence compared with neighbouring countries which benefited from a protectorate status. France invaded Algeria in 1830 and remained until 1962 – agreeing to independence after seven years of fighting and a deadly struggle against the colonisers. The French experience means that the region is sometimes treated as an homogenous bloc, but there are significant differences within its countries as regards media history over the past 50 years.



**Laid Zaghلامي** is a journalist and academic in Algiers. He has wide experience in print and broadcast media in Algeria, with a special interest in digital developments and the information society. He is chief of training at Algerian broadcasting and an Associate Professor in the department of information and communication at Algiers University

## 2. The press under colonial rule

The very first paper in the region was a Spanish one called *African Liberal*, published in Morocco in 1820, followed by a French newspaper published in Algeria in 1830, called *l'Estafette de Sidi Ferrudj*. The *Al Moubashir* paper was introduced in North Africa in 1847.<sup>1</sup> The press in the region was therefore first brought by the colonisers in the early part of the 19th century. Thus, during early years of occupation, the French colonisers extended their rule by publish-

ing numerous papers in the region that were owned and controlled by them. Only a few papers belonged to the indigenous people, though they were also used to convince more indigenous people to explicitly admit the usefulness of the French presence. This press was dedicated to attracting sympathy and support from the local population, and *de facto* acceptance of the French as the new rightful occupiers of the land. Further, the press served the colonial presence by praising the French “positive contribution” to solving the local population’s problems and concerns.

Considered as an instrument to introduce civilisation, culture, education and development to the “illiterate and poor indigenous population”, the colonial press tried to forcefully maintain and perpetuate the French occupation. However, there was a series of acts of violence, uprisings, upheavals and ultimately a revolution in 1954 in Algeria. It is necessary to recall that in 1881, the colonisers adopted a press law which considered the Arabic language of the indigenous population as a foreign language in the French colonies. Printing in Arabic and importing Arabic papers were perceived as serious violations of the law and therefore were not allowed. But in order to contain and embrace more indigenous people into the French citizenship, the law enabled those who enjoyed civil rights to have their own publications. Muslims strongly react by rejecting this law.<sup>2</sup> So from the 1930s, there was the rise of the Muslim and nationalist press advocating reforms, democratic rights and independence, but it was met with repression and severe measures like banning journalists and papers closures.<sup>3</sup> Consequently many of them went underground until the 1950s, when a strong and deeply rooted movement of liberation began to fight for the advance of the cause of independence and the recovery of the national sovereignty.

## 3. Militant journalists and nationalistic media

The nationalist press in North Africa emerged in the 20th century as an alternative to defy and challenge the repressive rule of colonialism. In Morocco for instance, in 1944, two papers – *Al Alam* (The World) and *l'Opinion* – started

publishing anti-colonial articles, advocating for the right to independence which was obtained in 1956. Tunisia also was involved. *Al Raid Al Tunisia* was one of the few Arabic-language papers that aimed to communicate with local populations and inform them about the hardships of the French presence even under protectorate status.

In Algeria, however, 1954 marked the ignition of the revolution and two years later Free Radio Algeria under the supervision of director Mohamed Salah Soufi was broadcast secretly from Moroccan territory in Nadhor. In the same year, there was the launch of the first Algerian nationalist newspaper, *Al Moudjahid* (The Fighter) which openly and sharply supported the national liberation front in its struggle for independence from France. Another paper, *Alger Republican* – under Abdelhamid Benzine’s editorship and with a handful of French journalists – which represented the Algerian communist party also became directly involved in the liberation process and published articles denouncing French violation of human rights and the denial of Algerians’ rights to recover their dignity and freedom. Further, some European and French journalists publicly expressed their outcry and wrote about the atrocities of the French soldiers in Algeria in their press, and that helped to evoke much public support from parts of Europe and particularly France.

The French occupation ended in Morocco in 1956 and then two years later in Tunisia. These events nurtured and boosted the morale of Algerians to strengthen and enlarge their revolution. The winds of African independence blew in other parts of the continent, and Ghana became the next country to recover its independence. That period highlighted the key role played by political heroes like Moroccan King Mohamed V and Ghanaian leader Kwame Nkrumah who were sources of inspiration and examples

**Considered as an instrument to introduce civilisation, culture, education and development to the ‘illiterate and poor indigenous population’, the colonial press tried to forcefully maintain and perpetuate the French occupation**

to follow for many African leaders, journalists, writers and lawyers. Psychiatrist and writer Frantz Fanon was one of the emblematic figures to support and defend the Algerian revolution against French occupation. It was clear, particularly in the case of Algeria, that the journalists considered themselves as “pen” and “voice” fighters for freedom and independence.

Many papers were published to defend those principles and values. *Algérie Libre* was the organ of the Algerian Movement for the Triumph of Democratic Liberties (MTLD), *la République Algérienne* was the voice of the Democratic Union for Algerian Truth and *Al Bacair* was published by the Algerian Muslim Ulama Association. In the mid 1950s, Redha Malek, Mustapha Lachref, Chawki Mostefai, Mabrouk Belhocine and Mohamed El Mili, to cite just few of them, were the first team of journalists to conceive and publish the first editions of *Al Moudjahid* in both languages (Arabic and French) which explicitly represented the Algerian National Liberal Front position. Those journalists felt morally, personally and ethically engaged in the revolution through their work. This earned them a wide international support and sympathy. Further, the Algerian cause gained worldwide media coverage and a better understanding of the real situation.

#### 4. From militancy to development

It may be noted that in the 1960s each country in the region adopted its own political system. In Algeria, it was a one-party socialist regime; in Tunisia it was more liberal on economics but very tight on political grounds and centred around the charisma of the Tunisian leader, Habib Bourguiba. Morocco remains a kingdom regime. So, analysing the media in the post-independence era in North Africa region requires one to consider the social and cultural particularities of each country, as well as the political and economic system in which the media operate.

Further to their African identity and relationship with sub-Saharan countries like Mali and Niger, the Northern African countries share also cultural and social values with the Arab, Islamic world and Mediterranean sea area. Nev-

ertheless, it is noticeable that after recovering their independence from France, the media in this region shifted from a militancy and independence advocacy role to national, social and economic development duties. By decrees, laws and instructions from official authorities, the media was assigned to participate in the national development process and became the instrument for legitimatisation of new political systems, strengthening the fragile independence through the actions of education and mobilisation of the population.

The euphoria and enthusiasm of the independence of the region enabled the press to be an intrinsic part of the political power if not power by itself. It was also committed to promoting, explaining, developing and defending social, cultural, economic and education activities and projects. Also, in the press literature, mobilisation, sensitisation, awareness, security and defence of the independence were the catch words to describe and define its role and duties during that period.

#### 5. Ruling Party and Elite

However, the “developmental role” of the media did not last. It was undermined as it became ultimately the mouthpiece of the ruling party in regard to the National Liberation Front in Algeria, the ruling elite in Tunisia and the king of Morocco.<sup>4</sup> In detail, the mobilising system in Algeria brought about a high degree of party and government control over the press. The Tunisian loyalist system put the press at the service of the government in spite of being privately owned. In Morocco, although the press owed respect and submission to the king, it was still diverse and enjoyed some degree of editorial autonomy from government control and censorship. But the general trend was that under national sovereignty principles and for security reasons, the media had to abide by the strict rules of the country or face closure and censorship. That period characterised years of self-censorship, “unanimism” and state ownership.

It was in fact a situation where, in Algeria for instance, the ruling party conceived, developed, implemented and supervised the information and communications policies

through national committee structures and resolutions. The government was in charge of implementing them without any objection. In practice, the media was considered as the means and tool of the party to spread out ideologies to the population. As a consequence, the media became completely centralised and no private press was allowed. The post-independence years in Algeria saw the creation of many daily papers, the nationalisation of the colonial press and the strict control of privately owned ones. From 1964 to 1976, there was a sharp increase in circulation. This was partly due to the government developing infrastructures for the diffusion of the press, which illustrated the important role that the institution played in implementing the ruling party’s ideologies and policies.

However, the post-independence experience of the press in Morocco is slightly different. A great number of newspapers appeared and reflected diverse opinions and political affiliations. Apparently, Moroccan authorities did not interfere to stop diversity and plurality, although in practice local media also operated within the framework of political considerations of the monarchy system.<sup>5</sup>

In Tunisia, the print media was loyal to President Habib Bourguiba (1956-1987) and expressed support of the government in spite of being privately owned. As the analyst Professor Azzi has noted, the press was passive in its language, sensitive to the political environment and did not criticise national policy and personalities of the Tunisian government, although the *Es Sabbah* paper was the most critical paper in the country before 1971.<sup>6</sup> In 1987 when Tunisian president Ben Ali came to power, the press went through some relaxation, but since then the political environment has been gradually restricted. A lot of criticisms and challenges have arisen because of his tough grip on the political and media arenas. The ideology and practices of the one-party system still prevail in spite of what Tunisian media based abroad calls “cosmetic changes and *démocratie de façade*”. Bad records on human rights violations are denounced by local and international non-governmental organisations. Local journalists have told the international media that the political climate is under the strict control and dominance of the ruling party. Media freedom is often threatened and on many occasions journalists are arrested and jailed.

#### 6. Post-independence period: media as state monopoly

Electronic media was introduced into the region during French rule. Radio broadcasting began in the 1920s in Morocco and Algeria, whereas television appeared in 1950s. In Algeria, there were local radio stations based in the cities of Algiers, Oran, Souk Ahras and Tizi Ouzou under the French organ of radio and television (ORTF) and serving French communities. The first transmission of a television signal was in 1957. In Morocco, broadcasting appeared in 1962, when three radio stations were launched: Radio Tangier International, Radio Africa Maghreb in Tangier and Radio Dersa in Tetwan. Television was also launched then, and in 1966 in Tunisia.

After independence, governments in the region wholly owned and controlled the electronic media, except in Morocco where Radio Médi 1 station is a French and Saudi partnership. Thus, the Algerian Radio and Television company (RTA) emerged as sole electronic media enterprise in charge of advocating party/government policies, social integration and economic development. The same picture applied to Tunisian electronic media which appeared in 1966 and operated under undisputed public ownership and government control.<sup>7</sup>

However, on an international level North African countries were very active in calling for a new order of information and communication in the world. The idea was born during the Non-Aligned Movement summit in 1973 in Algeria.

What should not be underestimated is the major work done by Tunisian scholar and diplomat Mustapha Mas-moudi in 1970s and late 1980s at Unesco on this issue. He should also be remembered for his academic contribution and publications on this sensitive issue, which still have

**In practice, the media was considered as the means and tool of the party to spread out ideologies to the population. As a consequence, the media became completely centralised and no private press was allowed**

effects on scholars and theorists in many developing countries including North African ones. But in practice, those rightful claims were denied by United States, Great Britain and Singapore arguing that the package was too politicised and restricted the freedom of press and opinion. As a consequence, they withdrew from Unesco and ceased financial contributions. Also, North/South dialogue as an alternative failed to meet expectations for justice and media freedom. Meanwhile, the United States developed new communications policies and strategies to wipe out hopes of setting up new order of information and communication

**The process of globalisation and international communication networks are reconfiguring the world media, and North African media in the short term will be affected through their nature, content and approaches**

in the world. It was noticed that American media influence had overwhelmingly taken over in that period and North African countries can only admit what Masmoudi has termed the “legacy of US media imperialism and hegemony”.<sup>8</sup> Further East-West tensions affected the international political climate and media were also under their influences and pressures.

In the late 1980s, and as a partial consequence of the US communications strategy, came the collapse of the communist bloc and the downfall of the Berlin Wall. It is evident that the American media network (radio, television, newspapers and news agencies) played a key role in “overthrowing socialist regimes” in the 1980s.

In a global climate of political challenge and change, riots in Algeria in 1988 revealed the great anger of the population against one-party socialist policies. In 1989, the Algerian government adopted a new constitution that put an end to political monopoly and in 1990, a new bill of information was approved which protected freedom of expression and citizens’ right of information and communication. In Morocco, King Hassan II decided to allow the launch of a private radio station, Medi1, which enjoys a certain amount of freedom in its treatment of foreign affairs.<sup>9</sup> Tunisia, however, under President Habib Bourguiba remained opposed

to reforms in the electronic media.

Nevertheless, the 1990s sparked off political and economic reforms in the world and North African countries were obviously affected. As mentioned, each country tried to adopt its own policies to fit into the new political context. The private sector was encouraged and the formation of political parties and civil society promoted. The media is seen as part of the changes, and is solicited to implement the new package. It contributed to the introduction of democratic values and ideas. The proliferation of satellite dishes on the roofs of millions of buildings in Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco and Egypt illustrate the new spirit of press freedom and democracy. North African audiences have access to several hundred satellite TV channels as a reaction to present unsatisfactory national public media performance.<sup>10</sup>

The process of globalisation and international communication networks are reconfiguring the world media, and North African media in the short term will be affected through their nature, content and approaches. In this transitional period, the public broadcasting service which is under pressure will have to adapt itself to survive in an environment of fiercer competition. The retention of state control over the media, and the public media’s subordination of their functions to political power, should end and be replaced by more pluralism and independence. It is clear that the “wind of democratic changes” will ultimately blow away all old practices which do not fit into the new world political and media environment. However, arrogant attitudes in the US media about maintaining a world hegemony have contributed to scepticism, reluctance and lack of enthusiasm to more openness in the North African electronic media space.<sup>11</sup>

Nevertheless it is pitiful to notice that compared to Gulf states, the Arabic parts of the African continent, with the exception of Egypt, have done nothing substantial to develop a pluralist electronic media by approving private news TV channels. On the contrary, the region is still lagging behind in media development. As an alternative, TV satellite channels like Al Jazeera, Al Arabiya, MBC, Dubai and Abu Dhabi have popular impact on North African audiences. Conspicuous is the lack of a news TV channel and this illustrates how politicians in North African countries are

exerting pressure, monopoly and control on the news media. Private TV initiatives have not been encouraged, which again reflects a clear opposition of the present political system towards more openness and democracy.<sup>12</sup>

Indeed, as the state media monopoly is still maintained notably in Algeria, Algerian Berber TV broadcasts programmes to the Berber community from France. The other private Algerian TV channel is Algérie Première, dedicated to youngsters, broadcast from Luxemburg. The Maghreb-vision TV project for the region has never got off the ground. Observers noted that political differences and a leadership struggle obstructed its launch.

Professor Mostafa Kraiem from Tunis University has clearly put it: “It can be observed that political decision makers in this region are still unaware of the necessity to introduce genuine audiovisual media pluralism.” He asked: “Do they consider the situation is not ripe enough or are they not too confident to embrace a new adventure and admit private TV and radio stations in the public sphere?” The scholar further posed the question: “Are still socialist, nationalist and avant guardist ideas and movements too strong and well-rooted to oppose or refuse any democratic political and media move?”<sup>13</sup>

**CLIPS**

“A story banned in the Egyptian national press may still turn up in the opposition press or in other Arabic and English papers and magazines that make their way into the country. If it is important enough, it will be aired on foreign radio and televisions broadcasts, which, unlike foreign print media, cannot be stopped at the border. Options for the future require that the government abandon the idea that it has the power to control the public by controlling the press, and that a free press will invariably work against its interests. — James Napoli and Hussein Amin, academics, 1997”

**7. Present media status in North Africa**

**Libya: Strict public media ownership** – Libyan Jamahiria constitutes a unique exception among the North African countries, where media private ownership does not exist yet, and neither does any political party. Accordingly, the Libyan press and broadcast media remain the singular voice of the authorities. Thus, for instance, the political system is under the unchallenged leadership of Colonel Gadhafi and the media is self-proclaimed the sole mouthpiece of the system. Libya has one single television channel and just a few public radio stations, while newspapers – also still in public hands – are limited in number. Libyan media promotes the “Green Book” of the “popular democracy” concept and broadcasts radio and television programmes on this basis. Further, they contribute to the export of their revolution to local communities in Africa by broadcasting in local African dialects in addition to Arabic, French and English. Denouncing foreign interference and media imperialism threats, Libya says it is now setting up its own international television and radio network.

**Egypt: Powerful public media** – This is one of the first countries in the Arab world that has enjoyed a long tradition and experience of the press. Many of the papers are owned either by the state or by political parties; a private press is strictly controlled. Although officially censorship was banned in 1980, in practice newspapers still face libel laws and harsh sentences. They are registered abroad to avoid censorship and closures. However while state-owned publications like *Al Ahram* and *Al Gomhuriya* have their editors appointed by the government, there is still a fair amount of freedom and latitude in commentary.

Publications that are owned by political parties like *Al Shaab*, *Al Wafd* or *Al Watan Al Arabi* are not subject to direct censorship but the party leaderships exercise different degrees of control over editorial policies. The main challenge for Egypt comes from the press that has links with the Islamic movement. It is rarely feasible that the Supreme Press Council allows an independent publication to register inside of Egypt, like *Al Osboa* and *Al Naba*, unless they are cleared by Egypt’s major security and intel-

ligence agencies.<sup>14</sup>

With regard to audiovisual media, although Egypt has authorised one private initiative for television, the Dream TV channel, it has a powerful network of TV and radio stations with several plants for audiovisual production. The city of 6th October or the “media city” is a good example of fruitful investment in audiovisual equipment and facilities to produce news, sitcoms, documentaries, reportage, cultural programmes and movies. Most Arab TVs can hardly escape Egyptian audiovisual production. Besides numerous and various public TV channels, Egypt launched (in the 1990s) its satellite (NileSat) to carry its programmes and rent out transponders for other TV channels. Presently, the Achilles heel of Egypt in the media area is the lack of a democratic, genuine and pluralistic system. Private initiative is limited to music and culture, whereas viewers prefer news, current affairs and talk shows. In the 1960s and 70s, under President Gamel Abdel Nasser, Egypt played a leading role in promoting pan-Arabism. Since the 1980s after the assassination of President Anwar Sadat, the country has been under siege. As a consequence, the political system has exerted its power to keep a hold on the audiovisual media.

**Tunisia: Cosmetic Changes** – In Tunisia, since president Zine El Abidine Ben Ali took office in 1987, much criticism and challenges have arisen because of his tough grip on the political and media arena. The media and policies in this country are still under monopolistic status and arguments outside this logic are denied and rejected.<sup>15</sup> In spite of this, it is noticed that some political and media initiatives are taken to improve the image of this country. In the audio-visual field, for instance, Tunisia has one public terrestrial TV channel and one satellite channel 7, in addition to a network of local public radio stations. The country has innovated by approving the launch of two private radio stations – Mosaic and Jawhara – although critics argue that they are “remote controlled” by authorities.

Hannibal TV in Tunisia is another example of encouraging private initiatives, but it is compelled to produce only culture and arts programmes. Nessma TV is the latest private TV, launched in March 2007 to cover only culture and entertainment programmes. News and current affairs are excluded from their agenda. This illustrates the strength of

existing political pressures to prevent the creation of private TV channels with independent editorial policies. Indeed, news and current affairs programmes are the character and the personality of TV channels, and news is at the core of the political battle in Tunisia because of the lack of a genuine pluralism in politics and media.

Almost 20 years since he seized the power, President Ben Ali has not yet shown any signs of political flexibility towards his opponents, neither has he encouraged the emergence of valuable pluralistic audiovisual media or observed the basic principles of press freedom. On the new media and internet in particular, press reports put the blame on Tunisian authorities for restrictive measures imposed on users of information and communication technology.

**Morocco: Substantial political and media changes** – Officials in Morocco have affirmed “the country is committed to implementing new democratic political and social package reforms of the society”. “Printing and electronic media are top priorities.” Bills on the freedom of audiovisual communication, creation of an independent authority and liberalisation of the media are three official documents adopted for the purpose of democratising the political system and promoting the country’s image.

Morocco King Mohamed VI has engaged his country in a dynamic democratisation process that culminated with the launch of several public TV and private radio channels. It is noticeable that the Moroccan king has introduced substantial political improvements. Printing and electronic media have also been opened up to private and international initiatives. The Moroccan press has flourished and many titles are published, expressing wide ranges of views and opinions within the society. All Islamists, socialists, democrats and independent tendencies have their own traditional press. There is also an electronic paper – called Moroccan.times.

Up to 90 private radio and television projects were submitted in 2005 to the independent High Audio-Visual Authority. At present, the audiovisual spectrum is enriched with six public and thematic terrestrial and satellite TV channels: 2M, Maghribia, Knowledge TV (Rabiah), Quran TV (Essadissa), Riyadhia (sports channel) and TVM Intern+ (Local Moroccan TV). Seven other private TV

channels were authorised and will be launched soon. A joint-venture French-Moroccan TV channel Medi1 Sat has been on the air since February 2007. In addition to the present public radio national and local network and Medi1 private radio station, up to 30 other private radio channels with rural, community and thematic status have applied for licences and are awaiting High Audio-Visual Authority approval.

**Algeria: One step forward and two steps back** – As already mentioned, the communication policies of Algeria are regulated through a number of decrees and information laws. After adopting the 1990 bill of information, the printed press enjoyed relative freedom and this is perceptible in the current press content and diversity in spite of harassment and political and economic pressures. Over 18 daily newspapers, most of them private, are published today. This bill was considered as a turning point in Algerian media history, doctrine and policy, and ignited the first “intellectual adventure” of Algerian media professionals. Before that, the media was owned exclusively by the party-state; it was dictated to and inspired by single-party ideology. Socialist and nationalist values were promoted and opponents denied access or simply silenced. Further, the media was the vehicle and vacuum of anti-imperialism and anti-colonialism ideas, whereas media professionals were assigned to militancy duties. This situation did not last. The collapse of socialist regimes and the 1989 revolution in Eastern Europe had their effects on the future of the Algerian political system. One year before, riots and acts of violence took place in many cities, that sped up political and economic reforms and sparked off a shift to more openness and democracy.<sup>16</sup>

Considered as a front-runner in the region, Algeria was in the 1990s poised to initiate an innovative, pluralistic political and media system. Thus, the establishment of many independent authorities and structures such as the High Council for Information, AudioVisual council and council for culture, the removal of the information and communication ministry and the adoption of an independent legal status for radio and television, were the main ingredients to guarantee media pluralism, impartiality and independence. In fact, in the case of High Council for

Information, it was not independent as the president and some of his aides were nominated by the head of state whereas the rest of the members was elected by journalists representing the written press, news agency, radio and television. This procedure brought about tensions and disagreements because the president, in the last resort, had the right to exercise his veto. For the audiovisual council, it was a mixture of designated and elected members working as journalists, producers and technicians from television and cinema. The council of culture was composed of authors, writers and artists well known for their opposition to the unique political system. Although the experience was too short, these councils managed to produce some interesting and useful reports.

For the first time in post-independence history, Algerians enjoyed watching their local television programmes and listening to radio. The new tone, style and frankness in news and current affairs programmes gave more appetite to national and regional audiences in Tunisia and Morocco to stick to Algerian audiovisual programs.<sup>17</sup> However, the good news did not last long and, as one newspaper put it, “the break is over”. Authorities decided to freeze the activities of independent bodies by re-establishing the ministry of information and communication in 1995. The bad news increased when Algeria embarked on long-term cycle of disorder, anarchy, violence and terrorism after the annulment of the election results of December 26 1991. The press was severely affected: over 65 journalists were killed, hundreds were forced into exile and those who remained kept a low profile to secure their lives.

At present, the urgent goals of the authorities are to re-establish peace, stability and security in Algeria by offering institutional news that seems to them crucial and funda-

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mental, before opening up for more news on TV and radio and encouraging private TV and radio channels. On several occasions, Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika has said he is utterly and unequivocally opposed to the idea of launching private TV and radio stations. He argues that peace, security and stability are still precarious and fragile, that Algerians have not yet recovered their confidence and strength, and that a reconciliation process is underway and it would be risky to allow discordant voices. So, electronic media pluralism is at present restricted to state ownership. But in the long run, Algerian electronic media will be compelled to open up to private and foreign initiatives, as already being implemented in the information and communication technologies areas.

## 8. Conclusion

The enthusiasm and the euphoria that characterised the first years of independence faded and were replaced by feelings of deception and disappointment. The nature of the political systems dictated the direction media had to follow. It was crystal clear in Algeria in the 1960s that media freedom was not on the agenda, as the socialist regime considered the media a legitimate tool to promote its principles and values. In Morocco and Tunisia, individuals could have their own publications but with limitations on news content. The audiovisual sector, however, was under public ownership. The Egyptian press has a long experience of pluralism and diversity compared with other north African countries, although when a state of emergency was declared in 1981 it went through a tough time with restrictions on human rights, freedom of opinion and expression for “security reasons”.

The 1990s marked a new era in global media and politics, with direct effects on the North Africa region which was compelled to introduce reforms to adapt itself to the new international climate. Each country is carrying out a policy

### **The 1990s marked a new era in global media and politics, with direct effects on the North Africa region which was compelled to introduce reforms to adapt itself to the new international climate**

that enables the political system to meet citizens’ rights and equally to perpetuate its dominance. In sum, the pace to achieve the goals of democracy and freedom is much slower; it depends on the political will of decision makers and pressure from outside and within their respective societies because the media is simply an intrinsic part of the political system.

What should be noted is substantial gender progress in North Africa media over the years. This can be observed in the printing and electronic media newsrooms as well as in the field. Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt have achieved high scores. For instance, in Algeria, director Hazem Hadda is the first woman in charge of a private paper, *El Fajr*. The general trend there is that women are outnumbering men, especially in the audiovisual media. The same picture applies in the other countries, where women are newscasters and TV programme presenters, technicians in production and postproduction, producers and camerawomen.

A final dimension that merits discussion is the impact of trans-national Arab media in Africa. Owners of the Medi1Sat TV project which broadcasts in French and Arabic, state that the main goals of their newly born channel are to contain the huge influence of Gulf States satellite TV channels – especially Al Jazeera, Al Arabiya and MBC – on North African audiences. Further, programmes of Medi1Sat are well suited to serve French-speaking audiences in this region. France will also launch its 24 News international channel to compete for audience and market in a crowded broadcasting North African milieu. On the other hand, Morocco is already the host of two main news TV stations bureaux: Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya.

It will be necessary to see whether this new transnational satellite broadcasting Arab media will have an impact on political changes in North Africa. Will it revive and reinforce ideas of African, Arabic and Islamic identity in the region by raising self consciousness, democratic awareness, and a sense of family and feeling of solidarity? On this question, scholars have different views. Some are optimistic and consider that trans-national Arab media would

encourage democratic ideals and pluralism, and provide a long-term basis for political reforms, nationalist and democratic awareness. Others are disillusioned. They perceive that many of satellite Arab TV channels are state-owned or owned by people with close ties to the state and therefore are not truly independent, neither are they effective tools for

serious and meaningful debates and reforms. It is observed that most satellite Arab TV advocates Pan-Arabism and Islamic values; little of the content is dedicated to African concerns, although Al Jazeera has opened an office in Zimbabwe to cover the southern African region.

## Endnotes

- 1 Azzi 1989
- 2 Azzi 1989
- 3 Ihaddadene 1983
- 4 Azzi, 1989
- 5 Azzi 1989
- 6 Azzi 1989
- 7 Bedjaoui 2006
- 8 Masmoudi 1998
- 9 Bedjaoui 2006
- 10 Brahimi 1990
- 11 Mostefaoui 1995
- 12 Chalabi 1992
- 13 Kraiem nd
- 14 Sources: Cairo Times online, Reporters Sans Frontiers report 1995, Amnesty International Report 1998
- 15 Kraiem nd
- 16 Brahimi 1990
- 17 Bensalah 2006

## CHARACTERS, CASES AND CAUSES

## Omar Belhouchet: Walking a thin line in Algeria

As editor of *El Watan*, Omar Belhouchet has faced more than 100 threats and a machine-gun attack from terrorists, as well as censorship from his government. He formed the Algerian Committee for the Defence of Press Freedom.

Belhouchet's story is emblematic of the horrendous conditions under which Algeria's journalists have been operating during his country's bloody civil war. Since the conflict's beginning in 1992, Belhouchet, who directs the daily *El Watan* (The Nation), has faced the wrath of both the government and militant Islamic fundamentalists.

He has been repeatedly harassed by authorities who have attempted to silence his paper's independent reporting. He narrowly escaped assassination by religious extremists. His paper has been deprived of official advertising, censored and closed down on several occasions under a state of emergency decree that allows authorities to suspend or close any institution whose

From IPI's "50 World Press Freedom Heroes Report" written by **Michael Kudlak**. On May 3 2000, IPI named 50 press freedom heroes to commemorate its 50th anniversary. The collection is available on the IPI website: [www.freemedia.at](http://www.freemedia.at)



Omar Belhouchet (right) accepts his IPI World Press Freedom Hero award at the IPI World Congress in Boston, USA, on May 3 2000

"activities endanger public order and security".

Belhouchet was born on February 9 1954, in Sétif, Algeria. After studying economics at the University of Algiers, he began his journalism career with the regional daily *La République* in Oran and worked successively for the news agency Algérie Presse Service, the weekly *Unité* and the government journal *El Moudjahid*. In 1990 he co-founded the independent French-language daily *El Watan*.

Belhouchet's ordeal began in January 1993, shortly after the army cancelled parliamentary elections to prevent a victory by the ultra-conservative Islamic Salvation Front. *El Watan* was suspended, and Belhouchet was detained for a week for

"publishing false information that harms the security of the state and the unity of the country".

The charges stemmed from *El Watan's* publication of a report about the murder of five policemen at a police station by Islamic fundamentalists. An Algerian court later passed a suspended six-month jail sentence on Belhouchet for "prematurely" reporting the killing of the five gendarmes.

Since then, Belhouchet has been fined, arrested, jailed and forbidden to leave the country by government authorities. He has received more than 100 death threats from militant fundamentalists. He estimates that between 1993 and 1997, the authorities initiated 30 prosecutions against him. Several pending cases force him

to appear in court two to three times a week.

In April 1993 proceedings were brought against Belhouchet for "harming national unity, inciting violence and conspiring against the security of the state". He had published an interview with the secretary general of the leftist Ettahaddi movement that was harshly critical of the Algerian government and judiciary. In May an Algiers court banned Belhouchet from "exercising any journalistic activity or making statements to other press organs" due to pending charges against him. The ban was lifted in June, and he received a two-month suspended sentence for "insulting the judiciary and attacking a state institution".

On May 17 1993, armed fundamentalist groups fighting the secular regime began to deliberately target journalists because of their profession, killing nine journalists between May and December 1993 alone. Belhouchet narrowly escaped death when unidentified assailants machine-gunned his car as he was driving his children to school. Islamic fundamentalists were the suspected attackers.

Belhouchet was sentenced to one year in prison in October 1993

**Belhouchet narrowly escaped death when unidentified assailants machine-gunned his car as he was driving his children to school**

for defaming the judiciary in an article in *El Watan* about public reaction to the acquittal of a suspected terrorist. His sentence was suspended pending appeal.

In 1996, the state-run printing press refused to print the April 24 and May 7 editions of *El Watan*. No explanations were given, but Belhouchet attributed the censorship to his paper's coverage of government counterinsurgency operations.

State-owned printers forced the month-long closure of *El Watan* in October 1998 under the pretext of outstanding debts after the paper published articles critical of both a former adviser to President Liamine Zeroual and the former minister of justice. It had accused them of corruption and abuse of power. The printer's action came despite a verbal agreement reached in August for staggered payment of the debts.

Today, the assassination campaign against Algeria's journalists, which claimed the lives of 60 between 1993 and 1996, has apparently ceased. No members of the media have been murdered since August 1996, but the country remains one of the most isolated and difficult environments for journalists.

Belhouchet and his colleagues

still live in constant fear for their lives and are forced to walk a thin line between the wrath of militant Islamic groups and persecution by the state. Although he could have joined the more than 200 journalists who have fled Algeria since the civil war began, Belhouchet decided to remain in his country to fight for press freedom. To this end, Belhouchet founded the Algerian Committee for the Defence of Press Freedom in 1997. He remains president of the group.

**Update since 2000 by LAID ZAGHLAMI**

Omar Belhouchet remains the editor-in-chief of *El Watan* newspaper, one of the most prominent and leading papers among the Algerian press.

Since the launch of *El Watan* in 1990, he has managed it and been a key figure in the national press. He has received the respect and admiration of his colleagues in the Algerian media. His talents as a professional journalist and an outstanding manager have contributed to building up an influential newspaper of good quality. In addition to being listed as the 50th paper in the world, *El Watan* under Belhouchet's editorship is a pertinent example of professionalism playing an important role in advancing press freedom in Algeria.



# 5

SECTION FIVE

# Central Africa



# Central Africa: 50 years of media

By Fackson Banda



Professor **Fackson Banda** holds the SAB LTD Chair in Media and Democracy as well as the pan-African Unesco Chair in Communication in the School of Journalism and Media Studies at Rhodes University, South Africa. He worked as executive director of the Panos Institute Southern Africa, in Zambia. Before joining Panos, he was a broadcast journalist. He taught at the University of Zambia's Department of Mass Communication and currently teaches at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, focusing on media policy and institutions as well as mass media theory and society

## 1. Introduction

Malawi and Zambia are bound up in so many ways – and their media has had many similarities over the past five decades. They both became independent of British colonialism in 1964. They are both landlocked, making them dependent on their neighbouring countries for some of their exports and imports. They are linguistically tied, making communication easy between their peoples. These linguistic ties are, in fact, related to the two countries' ethno-historical interconnectedness.

It can also be argued that the political histories of both countries became intricately bound up in the declaration of the federation of Nyasaland (now Malawi), Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia) and Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). Both countries opposed the federation on grounds that it would water down their nationalist designs for total liberation from imperial Britain.

The two countries' media systems seem to mirror each other. The media systems lend themselves to the following four categories: the colonial media system, the post-colonial media system, the media in the age of globalisation and the communitarian media system.

This article seeks to analyse Malawi's and Zambia's media systems in the light of the points made above.

## 2. The colonial media system

Two key points can be made here. Firstly, the media in both Malawi and Zambia, like in other African countries, are a legacy of the countries' colonial past. Secondly, many colonial laws controlling media were retained after independence, and used – ironically – by the erstwhile victims of

the same legislation in the interests of the new governments which they constituted.

On the first point, the development of the media was directly or indirectly linked to the colonial objectives of the British Empire. As Mytton observes:

Africa's modern print and electronic media developed as the direct or indirect result of contact with Europe. Few African societies had a written language, and in those that did, printing was either unknown or underdeveloped. Arab traders brought literacy to West and East Africa, but the technology of printing came from Europe and the United States.<sup>1</sup>

During the 1940s, the white settler community, led in Zambia by Roy Welensky, was engaged in campaigning for the establishment of a federation of the British protectorates of Northern Rhodesia (Zambia), Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) and Nyasaland (Malawi). This, in the view of most nationalists, was meant to strengthen and entrench colonial rule.<sup>2</sup> In fact, it was during this time that the Central African Broadcasting Services (CABS) was set up to administer the planned political integration of Nyasaland, Northern Rhodesia and Southern Rhodesia.<sup>3</sup>

The colonial media were to metamorphosise into post-colonial media. For example, as early as 1895, there existed in Malawi the *Central African Times*. This newspaper was to become the present-day *Daily Times* under Dr Hastings Kamuzu Banda, the first President of Malawi. The Blantyre Printing & Publishing Company, incorporated in 1927, was also to change hands in the postcolonial era.

As for Zambia, broadcasting can be traced to the period between the 1950s and the 1960s. Harry Franklin, Director of Information in the colonial administration, set up a radio station in Lusaka in 1941 and ran it in his own spare time. The station was useful in galvanising moral support for the war effort during the Second World War from both the settler and indigenous communities. In fact, it was during this period that an agreement was made with the administrations of Southern Rhodesia and Nyasaland that Lusaka was to be the centre for broadcasting to Africans in the three territories under the proposed federation referred to above. This was to result in the renaming of the station to the Cen-

tral African Broadcasting Services (CABS).<sup>4</sup>

While television was introduced in Zambia in 1961 by a private firm, the London Rhodesia Company (Lonrho), it was only in the late 1990s that it came to be contemplated in Malawi.

On the second point, concerning how the colonial constitutional and legal regime was "imported" into the post-colonial environment, this development implicated the modus operandi of the media in the cold grip of colonial authoritarian legality.<sup>5</sup>

To demonstrate how archaic some of these laws are, one can cite Section 71 of the Penal Code which makes it actionable to refer to "Foreign Princes" in false terms. In fact, Article 67 of the Penal Code refers to the publication of "false news" and makes it an offence to publish any statement, rumour or report that is likely to cause fear and alarm to the public. It is no defence for the publisher to claim that he did not know or that he had no reason to believe that the material was false unless the publisher can show that he took reasonable measures to verify the information before it was published.<sup>6</sup>

**Few African societies had a written language, and in those that did, printing was either unknown or underdeveloped**

## 3. The post-colonial media system

Upon the liberation of both countries from British colonialism, the structure of media ownership changed. Hitherto privately owned media became "nationalised", which meant that they became the property of the state. To extend this point: it meant that the ruling parties became key players in the ownership of the media. This is particularly evident in the Malawian case, with the *Central African Times* renamed as the present-day *Daily Times* under the late Dr Banda. The Blantyre Printing & Publishing Company also came under the control of Dr Banda.<sup>7</sup> In other words, as was the case in Zambia, the stage had been set for state ownership and control of the media industry.

Indeed, this integration of the media into the structure

of the then-ruling Malawi Congress Party (MCP) degenerated into a media legacy that has come to be described as follows:

- Complete control of the media by the political elite (recruitment, editorial content, etc.).
- Stifled independent media.
- Monopolisation and control of the Blantyre Print & Publishing Company and the Malawi Broadcasting Corporation by the Government.
- Insufficient funding to stimulate establishment of more printing and publishing houses and electronic media.<sup>8</sup>

In Zambia, three inter-related processes are discernible in the postcolonial era. Firstly, the period was characterised by the entrenchment of the new nationalist government formed by the United National Independence Party (Unip) through a series of heavy “regulatory” activities. The declaration of the One-Party State in 1973, rationalised by the philosophy of humanism, set the scene for this regulation of the media industry. Although most of the documents about this were the preserve of the “Party and its Government”, they still amounted to a regulatory framework within which the media were “nationalised”. It is to this period that one can trace the genesis of media regulation in Zambia.

Secondly, with the media thus integrated into the “party and government” structure, this period marked the beginning of the repression and suppression of dissent in the media in an effort to bring them into line. In part, this was reinforced by repressive laws inherited from the colonial past and left mostly intact by the nationalist government, such as the State Security Act (replacing the Official Secrets Act of 1911, 1920 and 1939 of the United Kingdom); the state of emergency then in force; and the Penal Code Act, resulting in some kind of “legal” dictatorship.<sup>9</sup>

Lastly, this period was characterised by a lack of a consistent, coherent and comprehensive policy on the media. As Moore observes: “Issues regarding dissemination of information, service to rural areas, availability of equipment, education of the masses,

development considerations, budget allocations to accomplish media goals, establishment of regular avenues of communication are vague and not contained in any unified statement of policy”.<sup>10</sup> The closest the government came to enunciating a legal framework for the media during this period was when it passed the ZNBC Act of 1987 to transform the ZBS into a corporation that would seek to generate its own revenue and depend less on state funding.<sup>11</sup>

#### 4. The media in the age of globalisation

The 1990s were a defining period in each country, with the advent of multiparty politics. For example, contesting the political power of the MCP, Malawi witnessed a mushrooming of newspaper titles, most of them owned by journalists or printers.<sup>12</sup> The same was true of Zambia, when Unip lost to the Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD) in 1991. For example, the emergence of the privately owned *Post* newspaper provided an opportunity for opposition political parties to challenge the hegemony of state media. As a result, the *Post* was sometimes seen as the “voice” of opposition groups. In Malawi, the privately owned *Nation* was perceived as having expanded the political public sphere in which multiparty politics can flourish.

However, in either case, problems abound; not least the following:

- The over-commercialisation of private newspapers, with ever fewer pages devoted to serious political content; and
- Aligning with political interests, though not necessarily party-political interests. *The Post* has been known to “campaign” against some opposition candidates, such as Michael Sata of the Patriotic Front.

This period of intense globalisation was largely defined in terms of (i) the democratisation of the body politic; (ii) the liberalisation and privatisation of the media and communications landscape; (iii) com-

mercialisation of the state (broadcast) media; (iv) media policy elaboration; and (v) the evolution of communication. These are discussed in the following sections.

#### 5. Democratisation

In terms of the democratisation of the body politic, both countries voted into power opposition political parties, set up at the height of political liberalisation. Civil society bodies emerged, also reflecting the general trans-nationalisation of civil society in the sense of much stimulus and resource for local civil society came from international experience and Western donor organisations. Although the process of democratisation was more at the level of liberal electoral politics, it also signalled the emergence of more pluralistic and citizen-based processes of political engagement. The discourse of democratisation also served as justification for calling upon political elites to allow for greater freedom of conscience, freedom of expression and freedom of the press.

As part of that process, the constitutions of both countries were aligned to reflect the plural political dispensation. Article 36 of the Malawian Constitution, for example, states that “the press shall have the right to report and publish freely, within Malawi and abroad, and to be accorded the fullest possible facilities for access to public information”.<sup>13</sup> In Zambia, the One-Party State Constitution was altered to reflect the plural nature of politics. The Zambian Constitution, amended in 1991, recognises freedom of the press although it subjects it to such exceptions as public health and morality.

Apart from claw-back clauses within the two Constitutions, there are many statutory instruments, notably the Official Secrets Act in Malawi, that serve to muzzle the media in their work. In a sense, the state still heavily “regulates” the media. In both countries, there are professed policy aspirations to scrap such laws. For example, the Malawian Ministry of Information sums up government policy on media in terms of the following propositions: (i) scrapping repressive laws; (ii) liberalising the airwaves; and (iii) grad-

ually improving the flow of information.<sup>14</sup>

Aside from the Constitution in Malawi, there are other pieces of legislation that make up the regulatory regime for the broadcasting industry. These generally seem to hinder the enjoyment of freedom of the press. Among the salient ones are the following: (i) the Malawi Broadcasting Corporation (MBC) Act (which has not been repealed in many years); (ii) the Communications Act (which has not affected the legal standing of the MBC, nor insulated from the “power” of the Malawi Communications Regulatory Authority (MACRA); and (iii) the Censorship and Control of Entertainment Act of 1968 (whose emphasis on morality interferes and negates the fundamental rights of freedom of expression, to receive and impart).

In Zambia, the 1996 Information and Media Policy document affirms the need to repeal laws unfriendly to the media.<sup>15</sup> This policy was a product of years of advocacy by media activists to get the government to recognise the necessity for media law reform. The policy undertook to review many of the archaic laws inherited from the colonial era. One particularly nasty application of these anachronistic colonial laws concerned the invocation in 1996 of the State Security Act in relation to a report published in the February 5 edition of *The Post* revealing the government’s plans to hold a referendum on the adoption of a new constitution. The state ordered the semi-private Internet service provider, Zamnet, to remove the online version of this particular edition. The police raided *The Post*’s offices, and subsequently arrested and charged Editor-in-Chief Fred M’embe, Managing Editor Bright Mwape and Special Projects Editor Matsautso Phiri with contravening the State Security Act. This was to give further ammunition to the campaign to formulate a media-friendly policy.

As it turned out, some progress was made as a result of the 1996 policy. This included the enactment of the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) Act and the ZNBC (Amendment) Act in 2002. However, due to lack of political will, these have not been wholly implemented. Things got worse with a Supreme Court ruling in 2007 that the government was empowered by both pieces of legislation to appoint the governing boards for the IBA and the ZNBC. To that extent, it could be argued that the policy

**With the media thus integrated into the ‘party and government’ structure, this period marked the beginning of the repression and suppression of dissent in the media in an effort to bring them into line**

has lost its sense of urgency and is no longer the state's guiding principle for most of its legislative and political attitude towards the media.

## 6. Liberalisation and privatisation

In terms of the liberalisation and privatisation of the media landscape, it can be argued that the two countries have exhibited different levels of media development.

In Malawi, for example, unlike the print media, the broadcasting sector has been developing at a slower pace, not least because the policy-cum-legislative landscape has itself been almost static. It was in 1998 that the greatest number of broadcasting licences was given out to privately owned radio stations. The first such licence had been given to the Lilongwe-based African Bible College Radio in 1995. The new stations launched in 1998 were the community-based Dzimwe Community Radio Station for local women in the lakeshore district of Mangochi, FM Power 101 and Capital FM Radio. Since then, there has been an upsurge in the establishment of privately owned FM radio stations. For instance, 1999 saw the setting up of Trans World Radio.<sup>16</sup>

Alongside the emergence of private radio stations was the setting up in 2000 of Television Malawi (TVM), which is the sole public service free-to-air television service. Prior to TVM, Malawians accessed subscription digital satellite television services offered by the multinational M-Net in such urban centres as Blantyre, Lilongwe, Mzuzu and Zomba.

In Zambia, the enactment of the Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation (ZNBC) Act of 1987 provided the basis upon which to fashion subsequent broadcast laws and policies. The new regime of Frederick Chiluba had come into power on the basis of a party manifesto committed to the liberalisation of the economy, in keeping with the dictates of "market forces". However, the MMD government also proceeded to enact statutory instrument number 178 of 1993 referred to as the ZNBC (Licensing) Regulations Act of 1994. This legislation requires those who apply for a radio or television licence to approach the licensing technical committee of the Ministry of Information and Broad-

casting Services (MIBS). ZNBC is part of this committee, which means in effect that only ZNBC retains national licences and that the corporation also enjoys protection in the form of potentially exercising unfair competition in regard to possible rivals. Thus the ZNBC has remained as the sole "dominant" player in broadcasting. Although not a public broadcaster par excellence, the ZNBC could still command a greater share of the audience market. This was to remain so even in the face of a multiplicity of broadcasting channels.

The enactment of the ZNBC (Licensing) Regulations Act set the stage for the emergence of private, commercial and religious radio stations. Indeed, radio, maintaining its history as pacesetter in Zambian broadcasting, was the first to receive a bolt of life in the newly liberalised industry. Radio Christian Voice, owned by British evangelist-cum-businessman Bob Edmonton, was the first privately owned radio station to be set up in 1994. Broadcasting 24 hours, the station is financed by money raised from various businesses run by Christian Vision International.<sup>17</sup>

The second radio station to receive a broadcasting licence in 1995 was Radio Phoenix. Although it is a largely entertainment-based radio station, it became politically renowned as a result of its "Let the people talk" radio programme which asked listeners to call in with comments on the issues under discussion. This genre has continued to this day, and has succeeded in getting a share of the ZNBC radio audience.

## 7. Commercialisation of state (broadcast) media

A key issue in African media debates concerns the restructuring of state broadcasting systems to serve public mandates. In this regard, two options have presented themselves: privatisation and/or commercialisation. Most countries preferred the latter to the former. And despite election pledges, the Zambian government has failed to privatise its major print assets – the *Times* and the *Daily Mail*. The Zambia Information and News Services news agency remains a state body. The rationale for retaining these is not that a public

service media is needed, but that government as ruling party deserves its own mouthpiece in the face of criticisms carried in the private media which generally supports opposition parties. A vicious circle arises, with each side becoming ever more politically biased and polarised.

In broadcasting, Zambia opted to commercialise its state media system. Privatising the Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation (ZNBC) would entail a loss of political control over the airwaves. Ruling political elites have generally not favoured "privatising" their state broadcast media for fear of ceding more communicative ground to alternative voices, represented by the opposition political parties and critical civil-society groups. This is true of the Malawi Broadcasting Corporation (MBC) as well as Television Malawi (TVM).

In addition to this, another commercial trend was detectable across the sub-region. In Zambia, for instance, television partnerships between the state-owned ZNBC and global media are evident (eg ZNBC has 30% shareholding in Multichoice Zambia). While the "strategic" partnership between Multichoice Zambia and ZNBC has provided a gateway for the Zambian television consumers to "choose" from a menu of international broadcasters, such as Bloomberg, CNN, BBC World, CNBC and others, it has also opened up the Zambian borders to a lot of South Africa's satellite television and free-to-air productions, such as SABC Africa, SABC 1, 2 and 3, and e.tv. This was

the case until M-Net removed all of them but SABC Africa from the subscription bouquet, saying that there was no agreement between M-Net and the programme suppliers to air them in Zambia. In itself, this has raised concerns about the rise of a form of regional imperialism emanating from the South African interplay between media and commerce.

## 8. Media policy

The development of media policy in both countries has been driven by several factors, such as:

- The pragmatic imperative by governments to retain or realign old colonial laws and policies with new developments in the media landscape.
- The need for governments to react to mounting domestic and international political pressure to elaborate pro-democracy media policies.
- The advances in new media technology, as well as the related issue of technological convergence.

With regard to policy realignment and responding to political pressure, the liberal-democratic mantra focused on "independent" regulation or "self-regulation" of the media, especially the broadcasting sector. In this regard, the Malawi Communications Regulatory Authority (MACRA) and the Zambian Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) were set up. However, the "independence" of these bodies has remained a contested issue.

In the case of Malawi, the presidency has continued to exercise control over MACRA through appointment of board members. In Zambia, the situation is worse. The IBA has not been operational since the IBA Act was enacted in 2002, because the state had not been willing to endorse the persons appointed by a multi-stakeholder committee to

**In broadcasting, Zambia opted to commercialise its state media system. Privatising the Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation would entail a loss of political control over the airwaves**

### CLIPS

It is my view that a newspaper owned and run by the State for the sole purpose of spreading Government propaganda is valueless. A newspaper must have freedom to disagree – sometimes quite violently – with Government policy. It has been said that controversy is the lifeblood of a newspaper. I thoroughly support this view.

– *Zambian editor Kelvin Mlenga, 1965*  
(quoted by Potter, 1966:16)

constitute the board of the IBA. Although appointed by government, this committee had included representatives of legal bodies and several media NGOs. As a result of government's position, a protracted court case has ensued, brought against the state by a group of media organisations including the Media Institute of Southern Africa (Misa) Zambia and the Press Association of Zambia (Paza). This resulted in a high court decision in favour of the media groups, challenging the Minister of Information and Broadcasting Services to table for parliamentary ratification the names selected by the ad hoc appointments committee provided for under the IBA Act. The state appealed to the Supreme Court, whereupon in March 2007 this final court of appeal ruled in favour of the state. This seems to have revived fears that state hegemony had once again become a key factor in regulating the broadcast media sector.

In terms of technological convergence, there is evidence to suggest a policy awareness of the problem. For example, MACRA was established under the Malawi Communications Act, passed into law by Parliament in November 1998, which puts in place a legal framework for the regulation and provision of services in the communications sector. This sector essentially comprises telecommunications, broadcasting and postal services,<sup>18</sup> implying a converged regulatory regime.

Zambia's broadcasting and telecommunications regulatory regimes have largely developed "un-converged". However, the 2005 National Information and Communication Technology Policy document seeks to fix this "problem". In particular, the policy proposes the restructuring and transforming of the existing regulatory agencies into an independent and autonomous converged regulatory agency for the ICT sector, with clear specifications of responsibilities and powers, taking into account the relevance and functions of existing regulatory agencies (where applicable) in sub-sectors including telecommunications, information technology, broadcasting and postal services, to ensure a

smooth transition to full convergence. The policy proposes that due care should be taken to ensure minimal disruption and policy conflicts.

In proposing the transformation of the existing regulatory agencies in the communications sector into a "converged regulatory agency", the policy recommends repealing and/or amending of the following pieces of legislation: (i) the Telecommunications Act 1994; (ii) the Radio Communications Act 1994; and (iii) the IBA Act 2002.<sup>19</sup>

**Community radio, in particular, was susceptible to many problems: little funding, too few volunteers, lack of training, etc. After all, most such community radio initiatives were set up with the promise of donor funding in mind**

## 9. The communitarian media system

Communitarian forms of globalisation emphasise globalisation's Utopian social potential. As an element of globalisation, the popularity of the ideal of communitarian communication in Africa occurred at the height of the trans-nationalisation of civil

society in the 1990s. For example, the international broadcasting policy campaign of the World Association for Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC), headquartered in Montréal, legitimated community radio broadcasting as an alternative media distinct from state and commercial broadcasting in Africa. It was such trans-national networks that carried forth the ideology and practice of communitarian communication.<sup>20</sup> Another factor driving community radio was the global evolution of development communication thinking, promoting democratic, bottom-up and lateral communications and agenda-setting by grassroots communities themselves.

However, the emergence of both private commercial and community radio was not without its problems. Such services were concentrated in urban areas, excluding the majority of the rural poor. The programming was more entertainment-based than developmental. Community radio, in particular, was susceptible to many problems: little funding, too few volunteers, lack of training, etc. After all, most such community radio initiatives were set up with

the promise of donor funding in mind.<sup>21</sup>

In both countries, there seemed to be little or no recognition of community broadcasting. Malawi's Communications Act, for example, does not seem to recognise community broadcasting. Although Zambia's IBA Act mentions community broadcasting, it does not provide any definitive principles to govern the administration of the community radio broadcasting sector, which is mostly bunched together with private, commercial radio stations. Nor has either of the two countries elaborated a policy on community broadcasting as such.

In both countries, the development of community radio broadcasting has largely been a consequence of donor funding. For example, Unesco was involved in setting up Dzimwe Community Radio Station in Mangochi and also Mazabuka Community Radio Station. The problem with this was that the communities got "involved" because they hoped for financial benefits from Unesco's support. As soon as donor funding dried up, reality set in and conflicts emerged over governance. In fact, in Malawi, the situation was such that the community successfully sued the Malawi Media Women's Association (Mamwa), initiators of Dzimwe Community Radio Station, with the result that the Malawi Communications Regulatory Authority (MACRA) gave full ownership of the radio station to the community. The station now operates under the control of community members.

In addition, the Roman Catholic Church and other Christian faiths have helped in the development of the community radio broadcasting sector through the creation, for example, of Radio Maria. It is perhaps this vibrancy outside of the state that may explain the existence of some community radio stations in Malawi and Zambia. It is important to underscore this point because the issue of donor funding for community radio broadcasting needs to become a matter for policy consideration. The role of donors in Zambia's media led the late Professor Francis Kasoma to devise a theory of "donor-driven role of the media". Indeed donor influence has also been a factor in regard to changes in state-owned broadcasting responding to broadcast competition and the need for self-income generation.

Thus, a welcome spin-off of the competition engen-

dered by the introduction of new types of broadcasting, such as community broadcasting, is that state broadcasters in both countries have been forced to change their programming tactics. For example, the MBC has introduced more community-based programming. This gave rise, for example, to the Development Broadcasting Unit within MBC, which served as a community radio initiative in partnership with the UK Department for International Development (DFID), with technical-cum-management support from the UK-based Radio for Development (RFD). This involved producing programmes on a range of topics with the participation of rural communities across the country, an example of localised communication. An amount of health programming that might otherwise not have been run came to be broadcast because of donor sponsorship.

Also, influenced largely by the need to live up to its public service mandate, MBC entered into an alliance with the Panos Institute Southern Africa, in which Panos liaised with Mamwa to train women in Mangochi district in the basics of radio production, whereupon MBC would transmit the women's own programmes dealing with community developmental issues. This is also true of the Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation which has similar programmes, including the Development-through-Radio (DTR) project in partnership with the Panos Institute. This general feature has however been controversial, with NGO's having not only to fund programme production costs, but also pay the public broadcaster to carry content that ought to be part of the institution's core business. Donor-funding of media, and of media development agencies in civil society, has been a mixed bag in Central African countries.

## 10. Conclusion

Malawi and Zambia clearly mirror each other's media systems. This is partly because of their shared political histories, which include a long period of British colonialism. In each country, the genesis of the media is linked to the imperial designs of colonialist Britain, including the political ambitions of the settler community.

The end of colonialism in 1964 ushered in nationalist

regimes that carried on most of the colonial power's legal and constitutional order. This meant that the postcolonial state was not significantly different from the colonial state. However, this is not to suggest that there were no qualitative changes in the structure and modus operandi of the media. Indeed, the state broadcasting systems in both countries became more focused on the discourse of national development, unity and reconstruction, in itself a positive thing.

It was in the 1990s that both countries experienced cataclysmic changes in their political as well as media and communications environments, with the introduction of multi-party politics. Related to this process of globalisation were such sub-processes as liberalisation, privatisation, commercialisation, technological convergence and communitarianism.

In many ways, these processes reconfigured the nature and practice of media in both countries, in some cases resulting in new policies, such as those focusing on technological convergence. The liberalisation of the media industry created more opportunities for private capital to be

injected into media businesses. The privatisation of parastatal companies signalled the possibility of transforming state media companies, but this has not materialised, largely because the state in both countries has opted to commercialise, rather than privatise, its media outlets.

The emergence of communitarian communication, as a Utopian aspect of globalisation, has contributed towards changing the face of the media in the postcolonial period, accounting for the emergence of community radio initiatives in both countries. Donor funding has promoted aspects of media development, but also created dependencies and unsustainability, and in some cases let governments off the hook of their own responsibilities. On the other hand, much media – some that today is even commercially viable – and much that is positive in the media environment, would be less advanced if it were not for external resources. A case here is Mike Daka's rural Breeze FM radio station.

The media look set to reconfigure even further, as new forces of global and local pressures are being brought to bear upon the media and communication landscapes in Malawi and Zambia.

## Endnotes

- |                                |                             |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1 Mytton 1983                  | 12 Chimombo & Chimombo 1996 |
| 2 Mwanakatwe 1994              | 13 Banda 2003               |
| 3 Moyo 2006                    | 14 Banda 2003               |
| 4 Banda 2003                   | 15 Mhango 1998              |
| 5 Banda 1997                   | 16 Mhango 1998              |
| 6 Mochaba, K et al 2004        | 17 Banda 2006               |
| 7 Media Council of Malawi 2001 | 18 Mhango 1998              |
| 8 Media Council of Malawi 2001 | 19 Mhango 1998              |
| 9 Banda 1997.                  | 20 Mhango 1998              |
| 10 Moore 1991                  | 21 Banda 2003. op cit       |
| 11 Banda 2003                  |                             |

## CHARACTERS, CASES AND CAUSES

### Media in conflict: Experiences in Central Africa

By **MARIE-SOLEIL FRÈRE**

Six Central African countries have been through dramatic changes during the past 15 years, linked to the liberalisation of both media landscape and political field. They are Burundi, Rwanda, Democratic Republic of Congo, Chad and Central African Republic.

At the beginning of the 1990s, private news media appeared along with new political parties, new institutions and electoral processes, in a context where information had been under state monopoly for a long time.

While those changes opened the way to freedom of expression and the emergence of civil society organisations, the early euphoria has been followed by explosions of conflicts, both internal and external, and the resurgence of

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old quarrels leading into extreme violence.

These include:

- Rwanda – the genocide of the Tutsi people in 1994.
- DRC – two wars (1996-1997, 1998-2003) that killed directly and indirectly more than 3.5-million Congolese people.
- Burundi – years of civil war and massacres (1993-2005).
- Then there have also been civil wars in the Congo, Central African Republic and Chad.

Both state media and some of the newly freed media often played a part in those conflicts. If some of the private media made efforts to remain neutral, most of them chose one side or even fell into a maelstrom of hatred, calling for acts of violence and the stigmatisation of certain communities.

In Rwanda, Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines (RTLM) prepared and supported the genocide of Tutsi people and the massacres of the Hutu opposition political leaders. On the other hand, in Burundi after 1996 the private radio stations played a major role in trying to establish a dialogue between government and rebels, supporting the peace process and showing that Hutu and Tutsi could live together without trouble.

Along with RTLM and the

newspaper *Kangura* in Rwanda in 1994, and the “hate press” in Burundi from 1993 to 1996, there have also been papers like *L’Avenir* in DRC, and *Le Choc* in Congo. The media that played a negative part in those conflicts constantly violated the rules of professional journalism.

They promoted stereotyped and extreme analyses of the situation, not distinguishing between political actors said to be “representative” of the enemy community and the members of this community for whom the leader claims to speak and act. They often deliberately distorted facts to suit particular interests.

Some media also proposed a debatable presentation of history, in particular the history of conflicts in the country. Journalists were often inclined to sensationalism and the dramatisation of events by publishing erroneous counts of victims, and reports of inflammatory speeches of public figures. They sometimes did not hesitate to publish confidential information which could jeopardise peace negotiations.

The preponderance of commentary over information was widespread in almost all media in war zones as, for example, in the written press, radio and TV in Kinshasa. In the field of radio, these

## CHARACTERS, CASES AND CAUSES

distortions, lapses and adoptions of a partisan attitude affected not only the news broadcasts, but often the whole programming strategy. In Rwanda, hatred was essentially communicated through songs that were broadcast as entertainment.

There were, however, some media who tried to resist being partisan towards particular warring interests. Examples are Radio Maendeleo in Bukavu (DRC), the papers *N'Djamena Hebdo*, *L'Observateur* and *Le Temps* in Chad, and *La Semaine africaine* in the Republic of Congo.

Along with new media created by foreign NGOs or the United Nations (Radio Okapi in RDC, Radio Ndeke Luka in CAR and Studio Ijambo in Burundi), they tried to uphold media ethics in the most difficult contexts. They sought to build confidence between the communities, and they monitored the authorities and opposing parties by playing a watchdog role. They further analysed and presented the hidden reasons for the conflict and made considerable efforts to give a voice to all the protagonists. In this way, they tried to remain “neutral” and promote peace efforts. Sometimes they had to resort to publishing clandestinely to try to ensure the circulation of news (and took great risks in doing so).

It is difficult to explain why some media retain a certain professional-

ism or indulge in serious abuses when faced with conflict, but some factors seem to strongly influence how media players position themselves.

First is the situation of training. Four of those six Central African countries have no journalism school worthy of the name.

Secondly, it should be emphasised that the first privately owned media of the region emerged at the beginning of the 1990s, along with multi-party democracy. They were in the bosom of the new political parties, some of which became engaged in the wars. This was obvious, for example, in Congo-Brazzaville in 1998, where various papers close to the political parties each had their headquarters in the zone controlled by their patron and his militia. The rare paper which tried to remain neutral, like *La Semaine africaine*, found itself without protection at the heart of the storm.

Thirdly, an obvious factor is financial resources. War often means higher costs for the media that want to report on it and cover war zones. Travel is often difficult for impoverished media which scarcely have the capacity to leave the capital city and go to where battles are taking place.

### They sought to build confidence between the communities, and they monitored the authorities and opposing parties by playing a watchdog role

In Chad, it is practically impossible for journalists at private media in N'Djamena to travel to the areas of confrontations between government forces and rebels, which are several thousand kilometres away in the north of the country. The lack

of transportation and other equipment makes it difficult to collect, produce and distribute news, and can explain the sometimes unbalanced reporting even though it does not justify it.

Another finance-related problem is the level of journalists' salaries. In much of the region's media, journalists are poorly paid, if at all. Whether in the private or public sector, their struggle for survival makes them vulnerable to pecuniary gestures.

War, moreover, is often a time when all the media face economic crises. It is difficult to obtain primary materials, as was the case for the Burundian media under the embargo, as well as for the ones of landlocked countries such as DRC, Chad and CAR during the war.

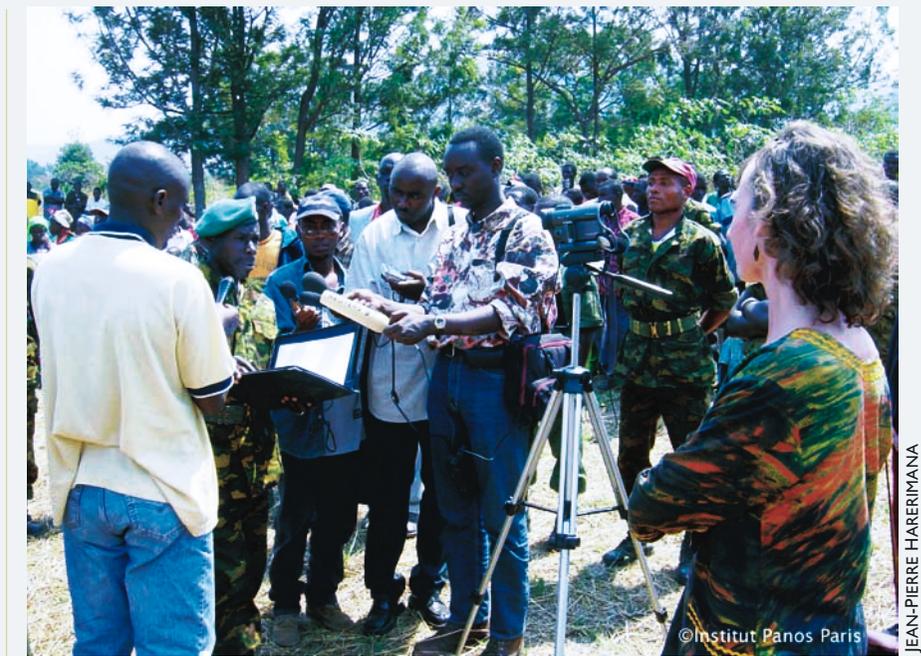
The media also see the impoverishment of their public in war time, the disappearance of their advertisers and sometimes direct losses due to the pillaging of their offices by

belligerents. For example, repeated pillaging has resulted in the departure of most of Bangui's businesses, which were former advertisers in the media and a pool of buyers for the written press. Today in Bangui only 16 large private companies remain, compared to before the pillaging when they numbered more than a hundred. The war is now over, but the press is still badly affected by a depressed economic environment.

The point is that the media's economic independence is very difficult to ensure in time of war. Submission to the state or one or other of the rebel factions often seems to be the only route to survival.

If some media managed to carry out their work in a rigorous and honest way, it was often thanks to the help of foreign development agencies. Interventions by northern financial partners in support of local media can help local journalists make a positive contribution, if not to the resolution of conflict at least to the development of reconciliation initiatives or reconstruction of the social fabric. This is crucial even if the frequently one-off and limited nature of these interventions does not resolve the issue of the survival of a truly independent, balanced and financially self-supporting media in the weakened economic context at the end of the conflict.

Technology, however, has helped



Journalists from several private Burundi radio stations interview, for the first time, a spokesperson from one of the rebel movements. It was an important step in the way radio stations in Burundi tried to balance information during the war

the more professional media cover conflict better than previously. In a vast country like the DRC, mobile telephones have been of capital importance for the coverage of conflict. From the beginning of the 2000s, satellite telephone technology allowed journalists in Kinshasa to rapidly get news of events taking place in Bukavu or Kisangani, which was not possible, for example, during the first war of 1996-1997.

The Internet has also helped to

change the working context by allowing easier access to foreign sources including the international media.

The conduct of authorities is, of course, a critical factor in the media's deviation from rigour, balance and honesty. The media behave differently according to whether they are faced with a democratic or an authoritarian state, and according to the existence of judiciary that is independent or manipulated by the executive.

## CHARACTERS, CASES AND CAUSES

Impunity can frequently be observed as a factor that encourages violence, not only for the armed groups and the militias who call for murder, attack civilians and commit serious human rights violations, but also for journalists.

The majority of Central African countries adopted liberal legislation that recognised pluralism in the media at the beginning of the 1990s. But periods of conflict were a time for the re-establishment of censorship and a resurgence of self-censorship, as well as the making of sudden appointments to certain key positions in the sector (as, for example, at the head of the Ministry of Communication).

Generally, the dominant powers

did not tolerate balanced information and refused to allow contesting voices to be heard. In Burundian radio, for example, the simple act of passing a microphone to representatives of the rebel forces initially seemed intolerable to the regime in power during the war.

In all countries, the state tried to keep a monopoly on what it called “correct” information and the privately owned media sometimes had a difficult time getting access to other sources, which then made them “unbalanced”.

Authorities’ control of the public media is also a determining factor as, when the state media is completely under the control of the authorities, the privately owned press tends to

confuse “criticism of the government” and “independence”. Therefore, the more implicated and partial the public media, the more some private media can become extreme and partisan. And all media which are critical of the state are then accused of being close to the opposition or the rebels.

Aside from the government authorities, political and military forces put a lot of pressure on media during wars and directly threatened the freedom of the press. There is greater risk that journalists will be mistreated in conflict situations as the number of repressive forces increases (the government, opposition, army, rebels, militias...). In the DRC, journalists have experi-

enced hundreds of cases of violations of their rights including threats, kidnappings, assassination and other aggressions. In 1994 in Rwanda, journalists were among the first targets of the extermination. In Congo-Brazzaville, journalists who were

at the service of a rebel faction were better protected than the “neutral” journalists, “neutrality” being interpreted as treason and sympathy with the enemy.

Finally, beyond the media’s internal constraints and their relations with authorities, the professional environment is also an important influence on the media’s behaviour.

In a country where the media is organised and united, as with the written press in Chad for example, it is easier to resist the pressures of the state and the rebels. On the other hand, in contexts with unbridgeable enmities between owners and managers of the media, belonging to different political parties, it is difficult to maintain a sense of unity and the profession becomes fragmented.

A code of professional conduct can help in structuring and unifying the pro-

**In a country where the media is organised and united, as with the written press in Chad for example, it is easier to resist the pressures of the state and the rebels**

fession during peacetime, but it can become a dead letter during war when other priorities take precedence over those of the profession. If the media and journalists organisations allow identity politics to override their professional identities, they

cannot unite their members.

Today, the end of most of the armed crises in Central Africa has brought some relief for the media.

Material burdens are lightened, press freedom is better respected, the public regains an appetite for

balanced news and there is less self-censorship.

But the state’s reaction may vary: it can become again more open and conciliatory (as is the contemporary case in DRC), or it can show a complete distrust for the media which leads to greater state control of the sector (as in Rwanda for the past ten years). New press laws have been adopted in some countries (Burundi, Rwanda and CAR). New media have seen the light of day (mainly within the electoral process in DRC). And the interest of donors to help in strengthening the media sector has risen (mostly in the Great Lakes countries).

But to rebuild the audience’s confidence, the professionalism of the media and a vital economy will take longer than it took to fall into violent conflict and destruction.

If the war is now over in five out of those six countries, and the last step of a transition (the organisation of a pluralist election) was taken in most of them, the real empowerment of local journalists is still far from achieved.

Also, many traumatised populations that have been long silent, still need to understand that they have the right to express themselves and have valuable contributions to make to the national debate.

## UN resolution on the safety of journalists, 2006

The United Nations Security Council on December 23 2006 unanimously agreed on a resolution demanding that journalists in conflict zones be protected.

Resolution 1738 stresses that journalists and media professionals are civilians and must be protected as such “provided that they take no action adversely affecting their status as civilians”.

In the resolution, attacks on journalists are described as a

violation of international law. Anyone inciting violence against any civilians, including journalists, should be brought to justice.

The statement also commits the UN “when authorizing missions, to consider, where appropriate, steps in response to media broadcast inciting genocide, crimes against humanity and serious violations of international humanitarian law”.

The resolution demands that

“all parties to an armed conflict comply fully with the obligations applicable to them under international law related to the protection of civilians in armed conflict, including journalists, media professionals and associated personnel”.

Warring parties should “do their utmost to prevent violations of international humanitarian law against civilians, including journalists, media professionals and associated personnel”.



## CHARACTERS, CASES AND CAUSES

## Fred M'membe: Founder and fighter in Zambia

As a political activist, Fred M'membe never gave up his fight for press freedom in Zambia. Even after being arrested for his criticisms of President Frederick Chiluba's regime, he wrote editorials challenging him and the army.

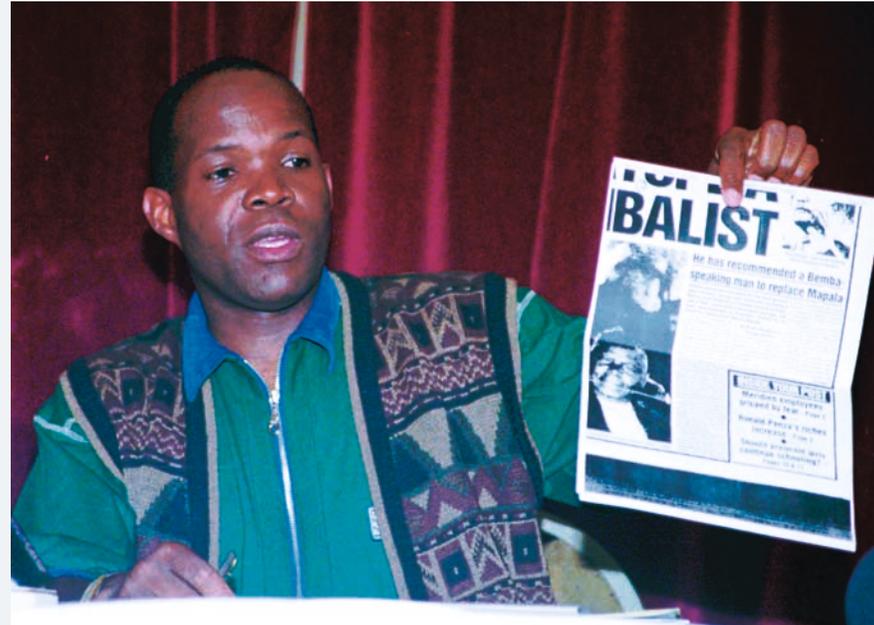
As editor-in-chief of *The Post*, Zambia's leading independent daily, the outspoken M'membe has incurred the wrath of Zambia's former President Chiluba's ruling Movement for Multi-Party Democracy (MMD) for his newspaper's exposés of government corruption and abuses of power.

*The Post's* staff has been frequently harassed, threatened and even detained in overcrowded cells where malaria and tuberculosis are common. M'membe himself has been the target of more than 50 lawsuits and has faced more than 100 years in jail.

Issues of the paper have been banned or confiscated and, in the first act of censorship on the internet in Africa, ordered removed from

From IPI's "50 World Press Freedom Heroes Report" written by Michael

Kudlak. On May 3 2000, IPI named 50 press freedom heroes to commemorate its 50th anniversary. The collection is available on the IPI website: [www.freemedia.at](http://www.freemedia.at)



Editor-in-chief of *The Post*, Fred M'membe

*The Post's* web site. The paper's printing press has been stopped and its editorial office raided by the police and pro-MMD gangs.

Ironically, M'membe was an active player in the founding of the MMD in July 1990. His paper helped to oust the country's independence leader, President Kenneth Kaunda, after 27 years of one-party rule. Chiluba's election as President in 1991 was the second time multi-party elections were held, following the 1968 general election.

M'membe was born on March 11 1959, in Mongu, Zambia. After study-

ing and working as an accountant, he joined Mike Hall, Masautso Phiri and John Mukela to become the fourth member of the quartet that in 1991 founded Post Newspapers Limited, the publishing company that launched *The Weekly Post*. That same year, Independent Printers Limited was also established to print *The Post*. *The Weekly Post* – now *The Post* – quickly took the lead among Zambia's independent media in criticising Chiluba as he reneged on his election campaign promises for reform.

The newspaper's critical report-

ing soon brought M'membe into conflict with Chiluba and the MMD government.

Through the years, M'membe and his staff have been charged with criminal defamation, criminally defaming the president, contempt of parliament, possessing and publishing classified documents, publishing false information, treason, sedition and inciting the army to revolt.

During the presidential election year of 1996, Chiluba escalated his efforts to silence Zambia's independent media in general and *The Post* in particular. The February 5 edition of the paper, which revealed government plans to hold a referendum on proposed constitutional changes, was banned while M'membe, managing editor Bright Mwape and special projects editor Masautso Phiri were charged with possession of a banned publication and state secrets.

Two weeks later, M'membe, Mwape and columnist Lucy Sichone went into hiding to avoid imprisonment on charges of contempt of parliament under the Protection of Parliamentary Privileges Act, legislation dating back to British colonial rule. The charges stemmed from articles in which *The Post* criticised a speech by the vice president. In March M'membe and Mwape surrendered and were held in separate maximum security prisons for 24 days under grim conditions.

In the biggest crackdown on the paper to date, police set out on the night of March 9 1999 to arrest journalists from *The Post* after an order for them to arrest the paper's entire staff before dawn. By morning police had arrested six reporters, who were released on March 12 following a *habeas corpus* application. They were formally charged with espionage on March 17.

The arrests followed an uproar in the National Assembly over a lead story in *The Post*, entitled "Angola worries Zambia army", which questioned the military capacity of the country to withstand an invasion from neighbouring Angola. The National Assembly deputy speaker directed the defence minister to immediately take action against the paper for "putting the country's security under threat".

Parallel to the arrests, police also laid siege to the paper's editorial office and printing press and, for the first time in the seven-year history of *The Post*, the newspaper failed to appear on the streets of Lusaka on March 11. Before the end of the month, 12 *Post* journalists, including M'membe, had been arrested and charged with espionage. All were released on bail pending trial.

Despite this unprecedented attempt by the Chiluba government to permanently silence *The Post*, M'membe remains undaunted.

A founding member of the Media Institute of Southern Africa, which seeks to foster free, independent and diverse media throughout southern Africa, he is firmly committed to uphold the principle of press freedom in Zambia, to uncover the truth and to report the facts, earning him worldwide recognition and admiration.

#### Update since 2000 by JOHN MUKELA

With the departure of Chiluba's government, *The Post* has continued with its investigative reporting.

President Levy Mwanawasa, the country's current leader, has on various occasions clashed with the paper, but compared to the past Chiluba regime, Mwanawasa's government is less virulently opposed to the independent media in Zambia. In recent years, several independent publications and radio stations have been established.

## CHARACTERS, CASES AND CAUSES

## The vital, but unfulfilled, role of news agencies in Africa

By **MARK VAN DER VELDEN**

After so much African hard work to get the Democratic Republic of Congo finally on track to peaceful democracy, it was hugely disappointing to hear, late in March 2007 after the elections, how Kinshasa politics were falling back into deadly street-fighting.

But, as bullet-riddled ambulances and concerned diplomats scurried about, it was also a sufficiently pulse-quickening news story to catch attention around the world.

In my case (as a wire-service editor who learnt to dodge a township half-brick in South Africa's rough 1980's, but now deskbound and wading through the basic "who, what, where..." of news reports), the "why?" question of the latest "DR Congo" story kept coming back.

And, without the in-depth reports that an African news agency might have provided, I found myself asking the deeper "Why?". The one behind the first, obvious, answer to why presidential hopeful Jean-Pierre Bemba's bodyguards and the army were killing again: the authorities said he refused to disband his men, which he had promised to do; and he

**Mark van der Velden** has been Editor of the South African Press Association (Sapa) since 1992. He has worked in wire agencies since 1983, after a short time in newspapers

said he didn't feel safe, which they had promised he would.

This deeper question was: Why did it happen that the gunmen and their leaders, on both sides, got to the point that whatever trust remained between them dissolved into gunfire? No reports I read from my desk in South Africa gave me that answer.

And one of the clear factors had to have been, simply, information.

In an ideal world, information is taken as truthful and reliable. But in the tense streets of Kinshasa, it would have been overwhelmed by cancerous variations of the facts. Disinformation, misinformation, lack of information, bad information, late information, speculation, selective information, half-baked information, blacked-out information and straight-faced lies – all of these, and more, would have added poison to the process leading up to the first shot.

Reports I have read show myriad versions, twisted facts: the stuff of fairy tales where there are only good guys and bad guys – nothing in-between. Meanwhile the damage is done and the blood spilt. Yet another African gut-punch, making us look bad.

Which leads up to the next question: If "bad" information always seems a factor when things break, what about helping to prevent

breakage with a continuous stream of "good" information?

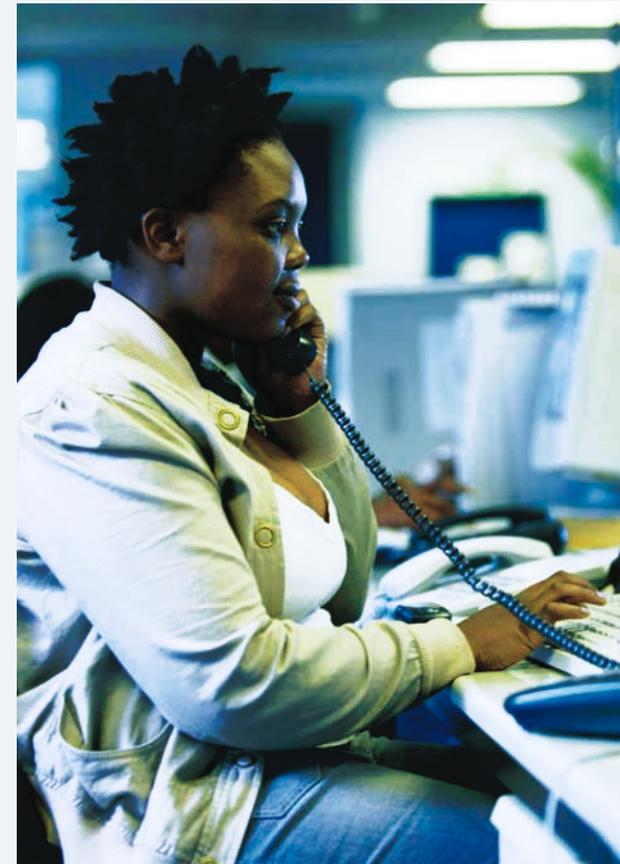
No – not the kind of "good" information frustrated politicians and ideologues mean when they complain about Western media portraying Africa as a bottomless pit of misery and death.

No – by "good" news I mean a solid, no-frills, comprehensive supply of reputable, reliably neutral, factual, universally trusted news: the stuff that no-nonsense wire agencies at their best produce in thousands of words daily.

Basic information, shared and accepted by all players: who said or did what, where and when, even if it's not liked or agreed with. Or, as lawyers refer to information not in dispute, the "common cause" news. This is what is lacking out of Africa.

Consider for a moment whether this Kinshasa fighting would have broken out if all protagonists – from bodyguard to soldier to politician – had received, through radio, television and newspapers, a straight-up-and-down factual account of what was being said, done and promised. How many lives would have been saved if jittery shooters and commanders were reliably aware that the last words of moderation had not yet been exchanged, and that a "hold fire" was still be in order? Did any of us get that story?

I have focused on Kinshasa. But



**'Supporting the growth, one might even say rebirth, of news agencies will be the single most effective way of giving Africans the national media they deserve'**

At work in the Sapa newsroom in Johannesburg, South Africa: reporter Phumza Sokana

rather "go wide", as news photographers say: zoom out of the DRC; get the whole of Africa in sight.

It's frightening to realise that, with a few exceptions, no national news agencies churn out that reliable stream of neutral "he-said, she-said, this-happened-here", independent-minded news for all to see and work forward with.

Of greater concern is that there's no inter-African exchange of such basic news streams from one country, or region, to the next.

Indeed, there have been various attempts to create this over the years, from the early days of the Organisation of African Unity and its Pana news service and, since then, some regional efforts. Most of these

efforts have been doomed by ideologues who want the news flow to right wrongs. They have put an agenda behind the news, rather than simply acknowledging that it's in the interests of the public – and democracy – to ensure a basic "raw material" flow of facts.

As a result, African news media still rely heavily on the much-maligned but well-run Western news agencies to hear what's happening – not only in the country next door but sometimes right at home.

And many editors choose to overlook the uncomfortable fact that "foreign" agencies gather, write and package news about Africa for audiences in London, New York and Paris. Not for Africa. We get copies of what they say to others about us Africans. Obviously, this is far from ideal.

We take it because we don't have anything to match it for price, speed, comprehensiveness and all the other aspects of a good wire service.

Yet we seldom acknowledge that there's a deep well of international support for the notion of an efficient, reputable, inter-African news network. Of course, there is also scepticism that Africa has the political will and sufficient citizens' demand to make it happen.

It must be kept in mind that Africa is a difficult and expensive terrain for outside agencies to cover.

Their African operations are probably cross-subsidised by profits from other world regions. The international news agencies would queue up with their dollars and euros to subscribe to a reputable African agency network telling the continental story factually and untainted by any agenda. At the same time, Africans could share and work with a home-grown, trusted flow of information.

The advantages were set out succinctly by Reuters chairperson Niall Fitzgerald in June 2005 at Oxford University: “Supporting the growth, one might even say rebirth, of news agencies will be the single most effective way of giving Africans the national media they deserve – and international media the access to independent and objective reporting from the front line.”

Fitzgerald went on to note that, due to government budget starvation (and political reasons?) “most African countries are now bereft of a functioning and competent national news agency”.

The consequences, he pointed out, were what could be expected “when the media (is) deprived of the solid platform, the even and well-built foundation that effective national agencies provide all over the world”.

“A media sector without at

least one strong agency is like a national health service with plenty of specialists but with no general practitioners or nurses – the delivery of core services just isn’t there.

“It’s bad enough when they are absent from the media landscape in peaceful countries.

“But in countries at war and in times of great political conflict and change, the consequences can be fatal when honest and reliable information, produced by properly trained local journalists, is nowhere to be found,” Fitzgerald warned.

This can be as fatal as on the streets of Kinshasa in March 2007.

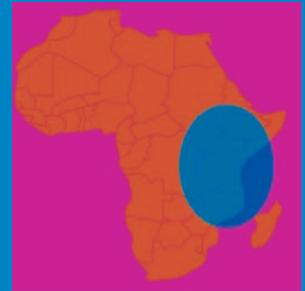
And those of us in other African countries suffer too: we have no answers to the bigger question of why this happened.

So, how’s about it, Africa? Are we ready to find our own solution?

# 6

SECTION SIX

# East Africa



# East Africa: 50 years of media

By **Peter G Mwesige**  
and **Daniel K Kalinaki**

## I. Introduction

Although the news media, especially African-owned newspapers, played a major role in the anti-colonial struggle in parts of East Africa, they became a central tool of the new authoritarianism of the post-colonial state. Successive governments continued to use the draconian colonial laws on the press, exercising complete control over radio and television and in some cases banning private newspapers. Public media was used to legitimise what were often ruthless dictatorships.

As the “new winds of democracy” began blowing in the 1990s, the fortunes of the media began to change as they took centre stage in the struggle for opening up political space. However, in Rwanda some media were involved in attempts to close the political space, actively inciting the killing spree and eventual genocide of 1994. In Uganda and Kenya, and to a lesser extent Tanzania, which have all experimented with different versions of the one-party state, the independent media variously served as platforms for political competition when political party activity was banned.

The new wave of democracy and the liberalisation and privatisation movement of the 1990s undermined the dominance of public or state-owned media, as new private newspapers, radio and television stations quickly became the major sources of information for most people after word of mouth, which remains formidable in this region. While the crusading newspapers that agitated for independence were rarely successful business enterprises, the media has become big business that is even listed on stock exchanges. The Nairobi-based Nation Media Group now has both print and broadcast outlets in Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania. In Tanzania, the IPP Group dominates the

media landscape.

Despite these economic advances, and the improvements in freedom of expression guarantees across the region, the media still has to surmount officialdom’s ingrained habit of stifling criticism and dissent, draconian media laws as well as arbitrary rules of political engagement in order to operate. However, it would be foolhardy to look at the political and legal strictures as the major threats to the survival and democratic contribution of the region’s media. Economic factors pose problems as much. 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. On the other hand, with the exception of a few newspapers and a handful of radio and television stations in each country, many of the region’s media outlets remain shaky business enterprises. In several countries, for instance, only about four newspapers sell more than 10 000 copies a day.

Massive competition for audiences has seen business judgments increasingly assuming a greater role in shaping journalism. In many cases the time-tested journalistic standards of the newsroom now have to compromise with the economic values of the business side of the media house. In the end, what we have is too much pandering to the market and to advertisers. Many news media organisations have allowed the big advertisers to degrade journalistic integrity at the altar of profitability. You now have business promotions for the big advertisers masquerading as news. The pressure to remain profitable in some cases has engendered a disturbing reluctance to annoy big advertisers, who are rarely subjected to any meaningful journalistic scrutiny.

In the name of giving the market what it wants, stories on fashion, local and international celebrities, company promotions and society parties now compete with serious journalism in newspapers, while radio is content with talk shows and news flashes to spice up its music. Important subjects that are not interesting are often ignored, while journalists come under more pressure to cover interesting

but not necessarily important subjects.

The challenge of professionalism also remains. Although the region’s journalists are more trained than ever before, there are still concerns over professionalism and ethical standards in many newsrooms. Innocent and glaring inaccuracies as well as cases of cash-for-publication undermine the credibility of media institutions.

The following sections take a closer look at the media landscape in the East African countries of Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania and Rwanda.

## 2. Uganda

A decade ago, Uganda was often cited – especially by outsiders – as the most exciting example of the emerging free press in East Africa. But Ugandan journalists and media watchers were more cautious. The previous 10 years had seen the proliferation of freewheeling private newspapers and FM radio stations following Yoweri Museveni’s rise to power. Full of no-holds-barred commentary and irreverent challenges on prevailing orthodoxy, papers such as *The Monitor*, *The Crusader*, *Uganda Confidential* and the *Shariat* appeared to have shattered “the myth of political infallibility surrounding the presidency and cabinet”.<sup>1</sup>

Even the government-owned *The New Vision* was markedly ahead of its predecessors such as *Uganda Times* and *Voice of Uganda*, routinely publishing articles very critical of the administration. Moreover, by the mid 1990s, private radio had seen the emergence of call-in talk shows. These populist programmes often directed citizen anger at ruling establishments or their political opposition.

Ugandan journalists remained cautious because despite the advances they had made, they were still operating under a legal regime dotted with several draconian media laws and they were dealing with a political leadership that was hostile to criticism and dissent. Moreover, journalists were still poorly paid, very many had few opportunities for fur-

**Many news media organisations have allowed the big advertisers to degrade journalistic integrity at the altar of profitability**



Dr **Peter G Mwesige** is Head of the Department of Mass Communication at Makerere University. He holds a PhD in Mass Communication from Indiana University. He was until March 2006 executive editor of Monitor Publications Ltd. He is a member of Uganda’s Media Council and has worked as a consultant for UNDP, World Bank, Danida and Norad



**Daniel K Kalinaki** is the Uganda Bureau Chief of *The East African*, a regional newspaper published by the Nation Media Group in Kenya which also covers neighbouring Tanzania, Rwanda and Burundi. He previously worked at the *Daily Monitor* as associate editor, and has experience in television and radio

ther training, and few media houses could be cited as viable economic enterprises. In many respects, therefore, Ugandan journalists were operating under conditions that were admittedly an improvement on what was possible in the past, but short of the ideal that they cherished.

But these journalists, media watchers and citizens alike recognise that the Ugandan media has come a long way since the country's first newspaper, *Mengo Notes*, started in 1900. By the time the country attained independence in 1962, African-owned newspapers had evolved as decidedly political instruments, which had played a role in the struggle for independence. Newspapers such as *Uganda Eyogera*, established in 1956, had become the campaigning voice of the Uganda National Congress, ancestor of the Uganda Peoples Congress, which led the country to independence. *Munno* also played a leading role in political agitation and soon became known as the campaigning voice of the Democratic Party.

Although Uganda's post-independence press continued operating under the draconian laws created by the colonial administration, a vibrant press existed in Uganda at independence in 1962. It was no more a decade later.

The first decade after independence saw the extinction of the dominant section of the African press that had bared its teeth in the last days of the colonial regime. Newspapers such as *Uganda Express*, *Munnansi* and *Emmamba Esaze* went out of circulation. After Idi Amin took power in 1971 the condition of the media worsened. Several newspapers went under during Amin's reign of terror. Among them were *The Uganda Star* and *The People*. *The Uganda Argus* was taken over by the government and changed to *Voice of Uganda*. Among the victims of Amin's brutality was Father Clement Kiggundu, editor of *Munno*, who was killed in 1973.

The press enjoyed some relative freedom after the fall of Amin in 1979, but this was short-lived. In 1980, Paulo Muwanga, then minister of internal affairs, banned three critical newspapers, *The Citizen*, *The Economy*, and *Ngabo*. Other papers banned between 1980 and 1981 included *Mulengera*, *Weekly Topic*, *Saba Saba* and *The Champion*.

As elsewhere in Africa, the post-independence period saw a clamour for news media subservient to the goals of

national governments. Uganda's subsequent unpopular regimes justified iron-clad control of the media on grounds that they were important for political integration, mobilisation, national unity and economic development. Government officials repeatedly called on journalists to disregard critical, bold reporting that democracy demands of the news media. Some courageous journalists working with private newspapers such as *Munnansi* (The Citizen) withstood the government harassment and exposed human rights abuses, but many censored themselves in order to survive.

From its inception in 1954, radio in Uganda, as in most parts of Africa, was a government monopoly. Radio Uganda was directly under the Ministry of Information, which employed broadcasters as civil servants. Although the station had run commercial advertisements since its infancy, a big part of its budget was met by the central government.

Radio Uganda remained more of a government mouthpiece than an independent channel of information. It carried mostly official news that focused uncritically on the activities and pronouncements of government leaders. The philosophy of public service broadcasting that the British had toyed with in the infant days of radio proved difficult to work in Uganda because broadcasters were not protected by law and they were not free from official coercion. In two military takeovers, Radio Uganda was the first institution to be captured by the new rulers. The airwaves would soon be filled with news and songs praising the new government. Uganda Television, which started in 1963, did not fare any better. It remained a bulletin board for official pronouncements and reported mainly on the activities of government officials.

By the time President Yoweri Museveni took power in 1986, the media landscape was dotted by official news media and browbeaten private newspapers. They could neither offer a complete picture of public affairs, nor play a watchdog role or provide a forum of citizen discourse and public debate.

Soon, the many private newspapers that started after Museveni's ascendancy became quite outspoken and bold. Improvements in the observance of press freedom were evident, but also intriguing given that Museveni's NRM government had not allowed wider civil liberties and polit-

ical rights, such as freedom of association for political parties. Commentators have argued that having come to power on a popular platform, the NRM took a relatively more relaxed approach on the news media in order to carve out the image of a more open and progressive government than its predecessors.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, following the end of the Cold War, Western governments put increased pressure on Third World countries to liberalise their political systems, including allowing open media systems. Above all, the NRM government seems to have used a relatively free press as a safety valve for the suppression of other civil liberties and political rights. With freedom of expression through political party platforms stifled, the press remained the major legal channel through which the opposition and civil society could express dissent.

Allowing outspoken newspapers on the streets gave the semblance of real opposition and political competition, particularly to the external donors on whom government relied for the bulk of its budget. In any case, because of high levels of illiteracy and low purchasing power, many Ugandans do not read newspapers. It appears the NRM was aware that the newspapers were an elite medium that could not play a major political mobilising role for the opposition.

Perhaps not surprisingly, given radio's wider reach, and, therefore, potential for mobilising opposition, it took longer for the NRM government to allow private broadcasting. It has been argued that the privatisation and liberalisation movement that broke government monopoly over the airwaves in most parts of Africa in the 1990s was inspired largely by two major post Cold-War developments: economic reforms pushed by the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and Western donor countries, as well as the "winds of democracy" that resulted from both internal and external pressures. At the same time, the end of Cold War signalled the end of most of the continent's single party and military dictatorships and heralded what some have called a new wave of democratisation. Indeed, state broadcasting monopolies were among the first targets of the opposition in several African countries that adopted multiparty democracy in the 1990s.

Yet, Uganda opened up the airwaves in 1992, although the country only returned to multiparty rule in 2006, fol-

lowing 20 years of Museveni's so-called "no-party democracy" which critics said was a euphemism for one-party rule. The more plausible explanation is that the NRM government generally responded to the appeals of private entrepreneurs with connections to the ruling elite than to political opposition pressure.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, the first private broadcasters in Uganda were entrepreneurs with close ties to Museveni's administration. Private broadcasting was a virgin investment area. They were interested mostly in establishing entertainment-based stations that would capture the large audiences that attract advertisers. They saw non-controversial entertainment formats as the answer.

The first private radio station owners did not pose any direct political threat to the NRM's hold on power. In any case, by the time private broadcasting was allowed, the NRM had become sufficiently secure and firmly entrenched as the dominant political group. When new FM stations started more critical and hostile programming such as talk shows, Museveni's administration used this to showcase its "tolerance" of open media systems to western donors. In fact, by the end of the 1990s, the NRM government was using the fact that opposition politicians appeared on news and public affairs programming on both private and public radio to justify its suppression of the political rights of association and others freedoms associated with political competition. In 2003, Museveni justified the ban on political party activity partly on the pretext that the opposition had been allowed to "propagate whatever ideas they have through radios and TV".<sup>4</sup>

With time, private radio stations changed the local definition of news. Where state electronic media reeled off protocol news, the new stations devoted a good amount of their news flashes to politics, including the activities of the opposition, and to reports of public concerns such as crime

**Allowing outspoken newspapers on the streets gave the semblance of real opposition and political competition, particularly to the external donors on whom government relied for the bulk of its budget**

and other social undercurrents. Perhaps the biggest programming format that the competition over the airwaves has engendered is the talk show phenomenon. Almost every one of the country's radio stations now hosts a public affairs talk show.

The cell phone revolution has contributed in great measure to the popularity of talk shows. As with the other so-called new media, the interactivity and spontaneous feedback afforded by this new technology is associated with talk show popularity.

Some of the most popular notable talk shows include Capital FM's *Capital Gang*, CBS's *Palimenti Yaffe* and *Kiriza Oba Gaana*, Radio One's *Spectrum*, KFM's *Andrew Mwenda Live* (now the *Hot Seat*) and Radio Simba's *Olutindo*. A host of indigenous language shows in the countryside, such as VOT's *Nokireb'ota*, Radio West's *Katuhurane* and Mega FM's *Mega Forum*, have made political talk shows a nationwide phenomenon.

Open-air talk shows popularly known as *ebimeeza* (roundtables) also remain very popular. It is a unique talk show format that brings together diverse groups of people who gather at public venues every weekend and debate major issues of the day live on air. The *bimeeza* deserve particular attention because they appear to afford more ordinary people opportunities to participate in public discourse. Among the notable ones are Radio One's *Ekimeeza* and CBS's *Gakyali Mabaga*, Simba FM's *Simbawo Akati* and Radio Two's *Saba Saba*.

By and large, the names of Ugandan political talk shows suggest that the radio stations market them as forums for citizen opinion expression, deliberation and public debate.

While overt political controls on the media have shrunk, media-government relations are still characterised by much tension. For instance, the NRM government has on occasion employed punitive economic measures such as depriving critical private newspapers of government advertisements. In 1993, government departments were banned from advertising with *The Monitor* newspaper. The ban was justified on the grounds that the paper was leaking government secrets. Since at that time the economy was still largely state-controlled, government remained the biggest advertiser.

Therefore, *The Monitor* lost about 70% of its advertising revenue. The ban was lifted gradually.

Moreover, the press and broadcasting still have to surmount often-draconian legislation in order to operate. More than three dozen journalists have been arraigned before courts of law on criminal publication offences since 1986. In spite of constitutional provisions providing for freedom of expression, the old repressive media laws still remain in the statute books, while some new laws also contain obnoxious provisions. For instance, the Press and Journalists' Statute of 1995, among other things, requires journalists to be issued with practicing certificates that can be removed from them if they contravene any of its provisions. The Penal Code Act still carries sections such as those on criminal libel and sedition that criminalise publication offences.

Article 29 (a) of Uganda's Constitution says: "Every person shall have the right to freedom of speech and expression which shall include freedom of the press and other media." Licensing of journalists has mostly been carried out in the case of foreign correspondents. In 2006, a foreign correspondent for the *Economist* magazine considered too critical by government was forced to leave the country after efforts to discipline him through the Media Council failed. The council has still failed to enforce licensing requirements for local journalists.

In recent years, the government appears to have resorted to more draconian measures to rein in the media. For instance, in October 2002 police shut down *The Monitor* for a week after the paper published a story in which it was alleged that rebels had shot down an army helicopter in northern Uganda. Then in June 2003, the government closed Radio Veritas FM in Soroti for close to two months after it defied a cabinet minister's directive not to broadcast news about rebel attacks in the area. In August 2005, the government shut down KFM radio station for several days after talk show host Andrew Mwenda accused Uganda of responsibility in the death of Sudanese President Vice President John Garang in an air crash.

In short, although the media has enjoyed a relative degree of freedom under Museveni's NRM, the condition of media freedom continues to be fragile. Journalists and

other media practitioners continue to operate under the mercy of those in power.

However, recent court rulings have appeared to portend well for the future of the media. For instance, in February 2004 the Supreme Court unanimously declared as unconstitutional a section of the Penal Code that criminalised the publication of "false news". In the lead judgment, Justice Joseph Mulenga said "protection of the right to freedom of expression is ...the bedrock of democratic governance." He added:

Meaningful participation of the governed in their governance, which is the hallmark of democracy, is only assured through optimal exercise of the freedom of expression. This is as true in the new democracies as it is in the old ones.

...It is evident that the right to freedom of expression extends to holding, receiving and imparting all forms of opinions, ideas and information. It is not confined to categories, such as correct opinions, sound ideas or truthful information. Subject to the limitation under Article 43 (not prejudicing human rights and freedoms of others or the public interest), a person's expression or statement is not precluded from the constitutional protection simply because it is thought by another or others to be false, erroneous, controversial or unpleasant. Everyone is free to express his or her views. Indeed, the protection is most relevant and required where a person's views are opposed or objected to by society or any part thereof, as 'false' or 'wrong'.

#### CLIPS

For the first five months after coming to power in 1971, 101 pictures of Idi Amin appeared in the main Ugandan paper, the *Argus*. For same period by 1976, the figure was 215 images. It was not unusual for his picture to appear a dozen times in a single issue.

– Frank Barton, author, 1979

But it is not as if Uganda's vibrant media of recent years is an angel fighting the devil. Many outlets, especially FM radio stations, remain entertainment-based stations whose owners are more interested in capturing the large audiences that attract advertisers than in providing a platform for information and public debate. While talk shows afford more time to the discussion of politics and public affairs, they have their own set of problems. Many of these programmes often peddle misinformation and distortions. They also invite adulterated debate that excites and inflames rather than informs, and give the public the illusion of influence, which can arguably lead to political inertia.

The appalling human resource condition across the country's newsrooms also emasculates the media's contribution to democracy. While a few media houses can now afford to pay celebrity salaries for a few top editors, the rank and file – the troops that report and write the news – is still poorly paid. The majority of Ugandan journalists are freelancers who are paid less than Shs10 000 (about US \$6) per story in the case of newspapers, and about half of that in the case of radio. Many are also woefully ill-informed and poorly trained.

Given this situation, one would expect news organisations to invest meaningful resources in training their journalists. Unfortunately, there is little such investment area. In some organisations that remember to budget for training, it is the first area to suffer when annual cost-cutting programmes are introduced in the middle of the year as the bottom line looks threatened. In short, there is little investment in the kind of journalists who can penetrate the complex issues of our times. Not surprisingly, therefore, many newsrooms are mired in mediocrity. Writing about the Ugandan media last year, Daniel Kalinaki, one of this chapter's authors and now the Kampala Bureau Chief of *The EastAfrican*, lamented "the lack of depth in our journalism", adding that "some of it is so shallow, if it were a

**There is little investment in the kind of journalists who can penetrate the complex issues of our times. Not surprisingly, therefore, many newsrooms are mired in mediocrity**

grave, it wouldn't hold a dog's carcass".<sup>5</sup>

Of course many newsrooms still have some great journalists who transcend the appalling conditions within which they work, to do some enterprising journalism. But there are simply not too many of these types around, and others often end up getting out of journalism. In fact, the rate of occupational mobility in Ugandan journalism is worrying. For instance by March 2006 *The Monitor* had only three journalists who had worked at the paper for 10 years.<sup>6</sup> Writing last year, Kalinaki observed, "Ugandan journalism has suffered a serious brain drain over the last 10 years that has left it almost brain-dead." Indeed, such haemorrhage weakens institutional memory and diminishes the intellectual capital and credibility of news organisations.

### 3. Kenya

Kenya has had a vibrant media industry for over a century. The media has, by and large, reflected the wider changes in the country both during colonialism, and after independence. In 1902, the first newspaper, the *Standard*, started. Renamed *The East African Standard* two years later, it would go on to become one of the most influential colonial-era newspapers in the region, catering mainly for the interests of the immigrant European settler community.

But as the clamour for self-rule grew in Kenya and across the continent, several media outlets emerged to give vent to the outpourings of nationalism. By 1952, according to one count, Kenya had almost 50 newspapers, most of them essay-driven newsletters published and written



by nationalist politicians making the case for independence. Most of these folded when Kenya attained independence. When Kenya got independence from Britain in 1963, most of the media was private and foreign-owned and it catered to the diverse interests of the country's publics: the white settler communities, the Asian business and merchant business class, and the African politicians and masses.

*The Nation*, registered in 1959

by two Englishmen and bought a year later by HRH the Aga Khan, the spiritual leader of the Ismaili Muslim community, was the first media house to adopt a policy of Africanisation.

In the years that immediately followed independence, the media in Kenya enjoyed relative freedom. The country's first African President, Mzee Jomo Kenyatta, was more wont to persuade media executives to be balanced in their journalism, than to clamp down on them. He gave his assurance that "Kenya's press need have no fears regarding curtailment of its freedom..." as long as the media exercised this freedom responsibly.<sup>7</sup>

However, as the ruling Kenya African National Union began to turn the country into a one-party state, restrictions on the media, both overt and covert, increased. Vice President Daniel arap Moi, later President after Kenyatta's death, started calling newspaper editors frequently to complain about the critical contents of their publications.

In 1982, the government under Moi purchased the then-*Nairobi Times* and christened it *Kenya Times*, to be managed by Kenya Times Media Trust (KTMT). The *Kenya Times*' edito-

rial policy reflected official government positions.

With the opening up of the political space to multiparty politics in the early 1990s, Kenya saw the birth of several activist publications, such as politician Kenneth Matiba's *The People*, and the slow death of those, like the *Kenya Times*, that remained stuck in blind support of the government. Today Kenya has a very diverse and vibrant media landscape. There are four daily national newspapers in English and one in Kiswahili, all published in Nairobi with a combined daily circulation of almost 400 000. *Daily Nation* has the highest daily circulation of more than 150 000 a day and also publishes a Sunday edition. *The Standard* sells over 50 000 copies every day.

A few titles are published in Mombasa to cater for coastal communities while the country also has a vibrant "gutter press" of scandal sheets, most having no fixed address and, in most cases, here today; gone tomorrow. Most newspaper titles are private and foreign-owned. The Nation Media Group (NMG), which publishes the *Daily Nation* and a host of other local and regional titles, and which has acquired print and broadcast interests in Uganda and Tanzania, is listed on the Nairobi Stock Exchange although the Aga Khan is still a principal shareholder.

The broadcast industry is also very diverse, with more than a dozen private radio stations and at least half-a-dozen private television stations. There is a lot of convergence in the industry; both NMG and the Standard Group, which publishes *The Standard*, own radio and television stations alongside their newspapers.

For a long time the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC) dominated Kenya's electronic media scene. Formerly the Voice of Kenya, the station, founded in 1927, runs a nation-wide television service, two radio channels broadcasting throughout the country in English and Kiswahili, and 16 regional ethnic language stations. The KBC is a public broadcaster funded by the state treasury.



Although it also receives substantial income from advertising, government's footprint on the editorial policy is exercised through its powers to appoint management. Through its regional stations, KBC also broadcasts in about a dozen other regional languages across the country.

Press freedom in Kenya is loosely granted in section 79 of the Constitution, which states:

Except with his own consent, no person shall be hindered in the enjoyment of his freedom of expression, that is to say, freedom to hold opinions without interference, freedom to receive ideas and information without interference, freedom to communicate ideas without interference (whether the communication be to the public generally or to any person or class of persons) and freedom from interference with his correspondence.

These freedoms have not always been granted. For

instance, *The Nation* was barred from covering Parliament in 1989 amid accusations that it was “disloyal to the country”, while a handful of titles were banned or forced to close for being too critical of the government. Although the media has enjoyed a more relaxed environment in the early days of President Mwai Kibaki’s government, the raiding of *The Standard’s* office in March 2006 by armed commandos on the instructions of the government security minister shows the precariousness of those freedoms.

The media in Kenya, nevertheless, has carried out some stellar journalism, particularly in exposing corruption in government, under both the Moi and the Kibaki administrations.

#### 4. Rwanda

When the Rwandese Patriotic Army/Front led by Major General Paul Kagame took power in 1994, they found a country shattered by war and a society fragmented by the ethnic fissures of the genocide that had claimed more than 800 000 lives. More than a decade later, Rwanda is slowly rising to its feet: economic growth is up; multiparty elections, although disputed by losing contestants for not being entirely free or fair, have been held at the local, parliamentary and presidential level; and the government has

earned praise for its apparent zero-tolerance stand against corruption.

But the shadow of the genocide still looms large in Rwanda’s public sphere and continues to provide the confines of the operational framework for political, social and civil society organisations, including the media. Several institutions, particularly the churches and the media, found themselves stained by the crimson tide of the genocide that seeped across the entire strata of society. The media took on an activist posture by, in the best of cases, failing to denounce the ethnic

cleansing and, at worst, by encouraging it.

At the heart of what would eventually be known as the “hate-media” was Radio Television Libre des Mille Collines (RTLM), a private radio station started in 1993 by supporters of Hutu President Juvenal Habyarimana’s government and opposed the peace talks happening at the time with the Tutsi-led Rwandese Patriotic Front. When Habyarimana’s plane was shot down over the Rwandese capital, Kigali, RTLM declared a “final war” to “exterminate the cockroaches”. In the bloodshed that followed, the radio broadcast lists of people, usually Tutsis and moderate Hutus, to be killed and instructions on where to find them.

Several pictures from the genocide actually show members of the Interahamwe militia hunting for their victims, holding portable radios to the ear with one hand and carrying bloodstained machetes in the other. In December 2003, after a three-year trial, the United Nations Tribunal in Arusha convicted three former media executives, two from RTLM and another from the extremist magazine, *Kangura*, of being key figures in the media campaign to incite ethnic Hutus to kill Tutsis in Rwanda in 1994.

Today, the government of Rwanda has used anti-genocide sentiments and laws to restrict the re-emergence of political parties organised along ethnic lines. The government has used the same tools to keep a tight rein on the media. With high illiteracy rates and a common language (Kinyarwanda) spoken across the country, radio is the most powerful medium in Rwanda. The broadcast media industry is dominated by the state radio and television broadcaster, Office Rwandais D’Information (ORINFOR), which also publishes two newspapers, *Nouvelle Releve’* (in French) and *Imvaho’* (in Kinyarwanda).

Rwanda’s only daily newspaper, *The New Times* (in English), is on paper a private publication but is widely believed to serve the government’s interests, certainly in its editorial policy. A few private newspapers in French, English and Kinyarwanda are periodically published in the country, most of them critical of the government’s human rights record, especially on the rights of political opponents. Journalists from the most prominent of these private newspapers, *Umuseso* (Kinyarwanda), have been arrested several times for publishing articles critical of the govern-

ment. In at least one previous incident, copies of the paper, which is printed in neighbouring Uganda and transported by road to Rwanda, were seized at the border. A journalist at a local private newspaper was recently beaten by unknown assailants in Kigali. He had previously written a series of articles critical of the government and the military. A few foreign newspapers, mainly from Kenya and Uganda, are available on the news-stands in the capital Kigali but government officials are quick to clamp down on criticism. *The Red Pepper*, a tabloid published in Kampala, Uganda, was banned after carrying articles critical of President Kagame and his government. Newspaper circulation is still very low and many small newspapers collapse in less than six months. Others are published infrequently and cannot sustain debate on key issues in the country.

The quality of the journalism is generally poor and many of the journalists in the country are poorly trained and/or inexperienced.

The government has in the last couple of years liberalised the broadcast sector and there are about half a dozen private/commercial radio stations. Programming is mainly a mix of pop music and a few talk shows, many of them used by government officials to explain their policies. Critical talk shows are uncommon.

#### 5. Tanzania

In a continent of enormous linguistic diversity, Tanzania stands out as a country bound together by Kiswahili and the egalitarian socialism of post-independence leaders, particularly the late Mwalimu Julius Nyerere. While it is widely acknowledged that socialism was a failed economic experiment, it left its imprint in the social and linguistic cohesion of the country, and on its media.

Radio is the most popular and influential medium, partly because of the presence of a common language, Kiswahili, and partly because of cheaper access to it; about 60% of all households have a radio set while the literacy rate

**The quality of the journalism is generally poor and many of the journalists in the country are poorly trained and/or inexperienced**

is over 85%. The government-owned Radio Tanzania broadcasts in Swahili and English while Radio Tanzania Zanzibar broadcasts in Swahili. By 1999 there were 12 AM and 4 FM radio stations. A year later the number of licensed radio stations had risen to 14, and by 2006 it had shot up to 47 stations. Radio Tanzania (RTD), the public service broadcaster, covers more than 85% of the country but has been forced to adapt to an

increasingly competitive industry.

However, the proliferation of private radio has not led to any tangible increase in public affairs programming and investigative journalism. Radio stations remain largely entertainment-based, offering superficial news in hourly seven to 10-minute news bulletins.

The state television is only a few years old but the first television station in the country, opened in Zanzibar in 1972, was the first colour television broadcaster in Africa south of the Sahara. There has been a growth of private television stations in the country, particularly in urban areas. By 2006, the number of television stations had also risen to about 15, although only four had close to a national reach. Their content is a mixture of local programmes but many relay international broadcasts from terrestrial broadcasters like CNN, BBC World and Deutsche Welle.

The Tanzania Broadcasting Services Act (1993) stipulates how broadcasting services should be diffused across the country. However, the state broadcaster cannot compete against the commercial broadcasters. The influence of big advertisers, including media owners with other diverse economic interests, is significant in editorial content of most commercial broadcasters.

Until the establishment of multi-party politics in 1992, the press was largely government-controlled. The largest dailies, both published in Dar es Salaam, are the government-owned *Daily News* (in English), with a circulation of about 50 000, and *Uhuru* (in Swahili) published by the ruling party, with a circulation of 100 000. *Kipanga* (in Swahili) is published on the island of Zanzibar by the government. However, several newspapers, mostly private, have sprung up in the last five years. The IPP media group, owned by busi-

**Several pictures from the genocide actually show members of the Interahamwe militia hunting for their victims, holding portable radios to the ear with one hand and carrying bloodstained machetes in the other**

nessman Reginald Mengi, alone publishes nine newspapers. As many as 350 newspapers, magazines, periodicals and newsletters have been registered although less than 15% are published.

Article 18 of Tanzania's Constitution provides for freedom of speech and the press. It notes:

(1) Without prejudice to the laws of the land every person has the right to freedom of opinion and expression, and to seek, receive and impart or disseminate information and ideas through any media regardless of national frontiers, and also has the right to freedom from the interference with his communication.

(2) Every citizen has the right to be informed at all times of various events in the country and in the world at large which are of importance to the lives and activities of the people and also of issues of importance to society.

However, the Newspaper Act of 1976 allows authorities within the government, including the President, the power to prohibit publications that might be deemed to not be in the nation's best interests. Additionally, the 1993 Broadcasting Services Act provides that private broadcasters are only allowed to send their signals to 25% of the country.

Freedom House ranks the media in Tanzania as only "partly free". Despite the guarantee of free speech in the

Constitution, there are examples of the government repressing information. Self-censorship is often practiced as a result of the state's intimidation of reporters.

## 6. Conclusion

The media in East Africa has largely mirrored the socio-political developments in the region. From agitating for independence and participatory politics, helping direct the building blocks of nationalism in the post-colonial period, fanning ethnic or tribal strife as in Rwanda, to offering avenues for alternative viewpoints where few or none existed, East Africa's media has remained important in the region's national politics.

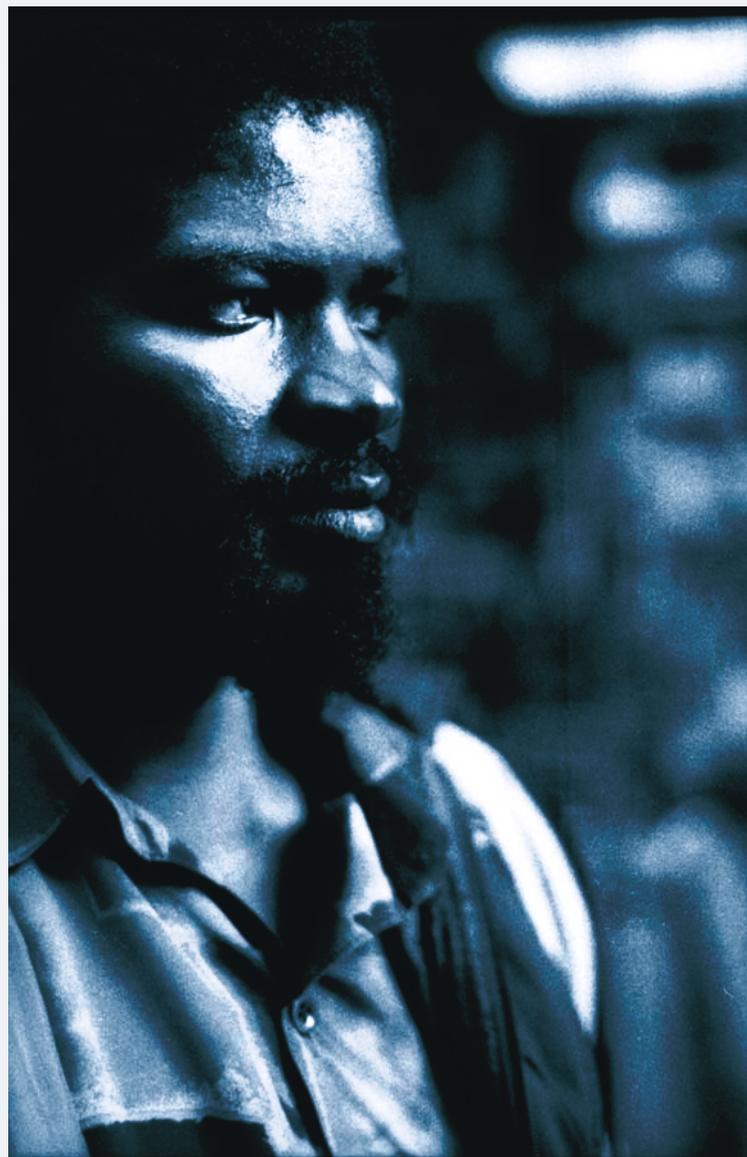
With multiparty politics now entrenched in the region, and free market economies flourishing, the media faces the challenge of defining its role in deepening democratic practice in the region while seeking economic benefits for its owners. A few external threats, in the form of restless governments, oppressive laws and unguided media policies, remain – but it is clear that half a century after the winds of independence swept across Africa, a big enemy to media efficacy and relevance in East Africa also lies within.

## Endnotes

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- 5 Kalinaki, D.K. (2005, March 24). "Uganda Journalists: Unwanted bastard or unlucky orphans?" *Weekly Observer* (Kampala)
- 6 Of the 20 journalists in permanent employment with whom chapter author Dr Peter Mwesige worked at the beginning of his journalism career 14 years ago, only two are still in active journalism
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## CHARACTERS, CASES AND CAUSES

## André Sibomana: Outspoken critic in Rwanda



André Sibomana

As one of the only journalists who remained in the country during the genocide of 1994, André Sibomana used this forum to denounce the grotesque human rights violations taking place there. He died in 1998 after the government prohibited him from travelling to Europe for medical treatment.

Sibomana was editor of Rwanda's oldest newspaper, *Kinyamateka*, and a leading human rights activist. As chairperson of both the Association of Rwandan Journalists and the Association for the Defence of Human Rights and Public Freedoms, he chose to remain in Rwanda during the genocide despite many death threats and assassination attempts, strongly condemning the systematic murder of more than half a million ethnic Tutsis and moderate Hutus by the Hutu majority.

He later became an outspoken critic of human rights abuses by the new Tutsi-led government, which remained intolerant of dissent or critical reporting.

From IPI's "50 World Press Freedom Heroes Report" written by **Michael Kudlak**. On May 3 2000, IPI named 50 press freedom heroes to commemorate its 50th anniversary. The collection is available on the IPI website: [www.freemedia.at](http://www.freemedia.at)



Sibomana was born on July 21 1954 in Masango, central Rwanda. After a journalism course at the Catholic University of Lyon, France, he became the director and editor of the bi-weekly Roman Catholic publication, *Kinyamateka*, in 1988.

Sibomana, who became "the father of journalism" to many of his colleagues, was among the few journalists to remain in Rwanda for the duration of the 1994 genocide, which broke out on April 6 after President Juvénal Habyarimana, a Hutu, was killed in an attack on the presidential aircraft. During the first few days of retributive violence, most critical journalists were either killed or fled the country in fear for their lives.

*Kinyamateka* was forced to stop publishing in April 1994 after a journalist and several employees were killed during the atrocities and the offices badly damaged in fighting. It resumed publication in December 1994 and managed to come out regularly, despite various forms of direct and indirect pressure on the staff.

Sibomana, of Hutu ethnic origin, publicly denounced the "hate media", including Radio-Télévision Libre des Milles Collines (RTLM), for misinforming the public and inciting Hutus to slaughter the minority Tutsis. His writings resulted in numerous death threats and several jailings.

In May 1995, Sibomana received

threats from the head of intelligence for the ruling Rwandan Patriotic Front in Gitarama prefecture.

Accused of refusing to disclose the identity of one of his sources, allegedly a witness to the killings of three bishops during the genocide, he was forced into hiding and emerged three days later after international lobbying on his behalf persuaded the authorities to lift the pressure on him.

On September 20 1995, he narrowly escaped a murder attempt after receiving a warning of an ambush at the last minute. He was also the victim of a smear campaign in the September, October and November editions of the extremist newspapers *Imboni* and *Umusemburo*, and his name was reported to be on a list of suspects in a secret report issued by the department of military intelligence.

Sibomana resigned as editor of *Kinyamateka* in October 1997 and died on March 9 1998, in Kabgayi, after the government refused to let him travel to Europe for medical treatment. He was 43 years old.

In a letter dated March 4, which reached Europe only after his death, he issued a final denunciation of the violence and human rights violations in his country, promising that if he survived, he would "call to account those who have refused to respect fundamental human rights".

## CHARACTERS, CASES AND CAUSES

## Lewis Odhiambo: Fighter for professionalism in Kenya

By **ROSEMARY OKELLO-ORLALE**

Here they learn to fear; to do as they are told; to be partisan in their reporting; and above all, to leave the truth alone! Editors become de-educators for their own survival and in some cases, the survival of their papers. The public often underestimate the pressures journalists work under. You take it from me: the kitchen can be hot.

– Henry Muradzkiwa, Editor-in-Chief, Zimbabwe News Agency (Ziana), 2001.

The “kitchen” referred to by Muradzkiwa is the government-owned newsroom: a place where journalists and editors encounter many obstacles to professionalism.

The late Dr Lewis Odhiambo, former deputy Director of the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC) and Director of the School of Journalism at Nairobi University, often stressed that there were two key constraints to professional

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excellence in journalism – and that these were serious invisible threats to the ethical practice of journalism not only in Kenya but also in other sub-Saharan countries.

In Kenya, media regulation has not altered much since pre-independence days and the law governing the industry has been slow to change. However, and not unlike in other countries in Africa, the Kenyan government every now and then appoints a commission to probe the affairs of the news media and give some guidelines.

Other than the two major indicators that have characterised the growth of the media industry in Kenya – technology and democracy – there are two other developments that have dominated media operations.

First is the ever-present threat and desire of government to stifle media operations through extra-persistent complaints by public officials and others about what they consider to be the unethical conduct of journalists and media houses.

The second issue is the one Odhiambo is known for tackling.

As a man in touch with professionalism, Odhiambo is on record about the need to professionalise the media industry through self-regulation. He also wrote papers on objectivity in journalism and responsible journalism.

Both in public discourse and in academic literature, Odhiambo stressed “responsibility” in reference to the professional conduct of journalists. This thinking came to signify the need to have a minimum set of criteria or a standard of behaviour and conduct for those who have made it their task to gather and disseminate mass media information, be they individual journalists, their occupational groups or the new media institutions for which they work or who sell their material.

It is in this light that Odhiambo led an industry process whose outcome was a code of conduct for journalists and was the basis for a self-regulated industry: hence the establishment of the Media Council of Kenya in June 2002, which became operational in 2003.

During the launch of the council, Odhiambo said: “The events leading to the adaptation and launching of this ‘Code of Conduct and Practice of Journalism in Kenya’ represent some of the most critical developments in Kenya’s political liberalisation process.”

Such standards, according to Odhiambo, are best developed and applied by the media fraternity itself.

Odhiambo made a significant contribution to the history of journalism in Kenya. He demonstrated consistency and dedication in championing for professionalism and

ethics. He saw these as a path towards achieving a standards-driven profession that was not in conflict with the values of freedom that underpin the expectations of an emergent democratic political system in the sub-Saharan, as well as the generally accepted social and cultural tradition of the majority

of humankind.

The Late Dr Lewis Odhiambo (PhD) was Deputy Director of the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation and a senior lecturer and Director of the School of Journalism at the University of Nairobi.

He died in October 2003.



## CHARACTERS, CASES AND CAUSES

## Ellene Mocrai: Pioneer of Ethiopian television

By **EMRAKEB ASSEFA**

Ethiopians were introduced to television when the late Emperor Haile Selassie, one of the forefathers of the African Renaissance, proudly televised the historic opening of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in 1963.

African leaders met in Addis Ababa as a testimony to breaking free from the yoke of colonialism, and that historic congregation was one of the first programmes aired.

It was Ellene Mocrai, a journalist whose vivacious, intelligent voice had informed and entertained Ethiopians through the medium of radio since 1962, who announced that televised programme. Hers was the first captivating voice and sparkling face seen on the Ethiopian Television (ETV).

Mocrai recalls with a smile her experience as an announcer of the ceremonial programme hosted for the African leaders attending the first OAU summit at the Haile Selassie I Theatre (now National Theatre).

“I proudly watched and told my

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audience about the summit and performance of the likes of Miriam Makeba and Harry Belafonte,” she remembers.

Indeed, most people associate Ethiopian TV and Ethiopian Radio with Mocrai. She is viewed by many as a pioneer and a role model, particularly for women journalists who found the media industry in Ethiopia a difficult nut to crack. Following in the footsteps of media giants like Romanworq Kassahun, who opened the field to women in the 1940s, Mocrai made the rarefied world of media, dominated and controlled by men, a glamorous and rewarding experience.

Mocrai's path through a successful profession in journalism, however, was not an easy one. Born on October 20 1940 in Addis Ababa, she began her journalism career on September 2 1962 as radio librarian and announcer.

When the Derg regime took power in 1974, she resigned in protest from her producer position at Ethiopian Radio because of the regime's atrocious practice of announcing the names of people it had killed. The Dergs (this is the Amharic word for “council” or “committee”) were a military group that controlled Ethiopia until 1987.

It was only in the early 1990s that she went back to the world of radio journalism to produce popular



**A young Ellene Mocrai at work in the television studio (top) and receiving a best employee of the year award**

programs like *Kaleidoscope* and *Let's Talk About It*.

Then she experienced a shock when her immediate supervisor told her, on February 14 1997, that she would not go on air again.

Mocrai remembers with a bitter-sweet smile: “On February 13 1997 I produced and announced *Kaleidoscope* No. 622 which was the first part of an item about the Ethiopian Film Centre. The next day, I was told by my boss that my voice will not go on air again!

“It was so sudden that I was



**Ellene Mocrai today**

given no opportunity to tell my listeners that I won't be on air anymore.” She added: “I still don't know their reason to date.”

One week later, she was appointed as the head of Audience Relations to the External Service of Ethiopian Radio, a position she held till she retired on reaching 50 years of age (the now-repealed civil service law stipulated the age of retirement as 50).

Ellene Mocrai is known for establishing the libraries of Ethiopian Radio and ETV as well as her voluntary work that created the YWCA in the mid-1970s.

She is a founder of the Ethiopian

Media Women's Association (EMWA) where she served as the vice president between 1998 and 2002.

Currently, she works as a BBC World correspondent in addition to undertaking media consultancy tasks for many local and international organisations.

## CHARACTERS, CASES AND CAUSES

## Moving the world: photographer Mohamed Amin

By **EMRAKEB ASSEFA**

Mohamed Amin captured his images of the Ethiopian famine in 1984 with a portable half-inch videotape recorder, an achievement that led him to become known as “the man who moved the world”.

“No news cameraman in recent history has had a greater impact than Mohamed Amin. His pictures from Ethiopia ... moved the world,” said Tony Hall, Head of News of the British Broadcasting Corporation.

Mohamed – or Mo as he was known to everyone – was one of the most famous news cameramen in the world before his tragic death in 1996.

Born in Nairobi, Kenya, in 1943, of Punjabi descent, Amin grew up during the time when the colonial powers were in retreat across Africa, and was faced with immense prejudice because he was neither white nor black.

His son, Salim Amin, remembers: “He was refused entry everywhere he went, and this made him that much more determined to succeed.” Salim adds however: “He never gave up on anything and never took ‘no’

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for an answer. This was one of the greatest secrets of his success as a journalist.”

Mohamed Amin was a self-taught man. His love for photography and journalism came not from any formal education or training. “He neither had any formal education nor indeed any money to start his career, yet he became the best in the world at what he did,” his son explains.

In 1962, Mohamed set up the now legendary Camerapix photo agency.

Saying that there are a number of things he loved about his father, Salim Amin stresses: “I admired his courage the most. He was not scared of anything. Even after he lost his arm he came back to work on the frontlines of Africa.” Amin lost his arm in Ethiopia in 1991, while covering a huge explosion at an arms depot following the demise of Mengistu’s regime.

According to Salim, his father’s greatest contribution to African journalism was showing the world that an African journalist could tell Africa’s stories better than a Western journalist.

“The reason he was so successful was because he was an African and he had an empathy towards the stories he was telling that could not come from an outsider,” Salim says.

Mohamed was also known for his unmatched contacts book which

covered the continent: he could get in where every other journalist could not.

Mo Amin brought to the world pictures of Idi Amin’s assumption of power in Uganda and later the man in exile. This was in addition to photos of Ethiopia’s dictator, Mengistu Hailemariam. He gave the world an insider’s look into how leaders of repressive regimes behaved and survived in the 70s and 80s.

Asked how he thought his father had managed to do this, his son has this to say: “Being able to reassure despots and dictators that he was to tell their story from an African perspective, that he was ‘on their side’, was a huge advantage he had ... And being able to ‘bully’ petty officials and bureaucrats to get his way around the continent was another huge strength of his. Plus he had no fear.”

As African media celebrates 50 years since Ghana’s independence, Salim says its two major challenges are training and opportunity.

“Without training, African journalists cannot compete on an international stage; and often those who are trained do not have a platform on which to practice their skills and talent. Many countries in Africa still have state-owned or state-controlled media, and this does not allow journalists to practice their trade.”

Salim Amin set up the Mohamed



**Mo Amin was well-known for his images of the Ethiopian famine in 1984. He lost his arm while working in the same country in 1991 – but continued to cover major events across Africa**

Amin Foundation in 1998 to train young African broadcast journalists. To date, it has graduated 58 journalists. He is also in the process of establishing Africa 24 (A24), the pan-African 24-hour News Channel that aims to give African journalists an independent platform to tell their stories. A24 is expected to be broadcasting online by early in 2008.

Salim does not forget to mention the huge challenge African journalists

face from Western broadcasters. “They are telling our stories and this should not be the case. Only Africans can tell Africa’s stories,” he explains.

Mo Amin died on Ethiopian Airlines Flight ET961 on November 23 1996, when the plane crashed into the sea just off the coast of the Comoros Islands.

Asked if his father had given him any advice to assist him in his



journalistic work, Salim says: “Unfortunately my father didn’t get the time to advise me. But I learnt from watching him and learnt that the only way to succeed in this (or any) profession is to work hard, keep believing in what you are doing and never, ever, give up.”



# 7

SECTION SEVEN

# Lusophone Africa



# Lusophone Africa: 50 years of media

By Helge Rønning

## I. Introduction

Portuguese colonialism depended on force rather than persuasion, and media had a relatively small role as a tool in Lisbon's control of its colonies. Likewise, guerrilla warfare against foreign domination depended more on word-of-mouth and cultural mobilisation than on the use of mass media. However, both press and radio were important as organs of information for the settler population, and to a limited degree as a critical voice – often between the lines – for those in opposition to the fascist Portuguese state in both Angola and Mozambique. One should not also underestimate the role played by small magazines that expressed the emotions and views of different opposition groups. Nonetheless, the real history of modern media in Lusophone Africa thus dates from the post-independence phase.

This article concentrates on Mozambique, and it is worth remembering that Lourenço Marques (now Maputo) was regarded as the most liberal city of the Portuguese empire. The Mozambican post-colonial experience raises wider issues about media's role in exposing corruption and about investigative journalism, and these are discussed in depth below.

From independence in June 1975, but particularly after Frelimo's third congress had declared itself a Marxist-Leninist party, the media in the country was to a large degree run by the party and regarded as propaganda instruments for its views and programmes. However, there were certain "free spaces" where critical opinion and proper reporting could be found. One was the popular youth magazine *Tempo*. Another was the reporting conducted by journalists in the national news agency AIM (Agência de

Informação de Moçambique).

During the 1980s many journalists became frustrated with the restrictions on what the media and journalists were allowed to report about the situation in the country. There was a civil war going on, everywhere in the country people were speaking about it, but this was not reflected in the media, which downplayed the seriousness of the situation. There was social unrest, with strikes, and there were strong rumours of increasing corruption. There were also intense debates in the ruling party over whether it should scrap Marxism-Leninism as an ideology and embrace a multi-party political system. Practically all of this was kept away from the public. And the reporting in the country's main daily, the state-owned *Noticias*, on the mass protests in Eastern Europe was characterised by the Minister of Information as anti-communism. This situation, as well as the fact that the new draft constitution for the country did not mention freedom of the media, led to a group of media-workers – journalists and photographers – meeting in the late 1980s to discuss what could and should be done.

In 1989, they drew up a petition with the title "O Direito do Povo à Informação" (The Right of the People to Information). The main aim of the document was to demand that the new Constitution include provisions for citizens' access to free information and for their right to express themselves freely in the media of their choice. It furthermore drew attention to the limitation that existed in Mozambique in relation to journalistic practice and the role of the media as lacking a critical perspective and only serving government bodies. This was the case in spite of the fact that there was no official censorship but, as the document pointed out, "a climate of intimidation that leads to frequent self-censorship".

The intimidations had, according to the authors, among others taken the form of:

(...) unjustified detentions of journalists; journalists have been threatened with detention, expulsion and punishment, often by those who have no legal power to interfere in the media; journalists' work has been banned, or there have been attempted bans, sometimes by those who have no legal power to intervene in the media;

there have been cases where leaders have publicly humiliated journalists.

Recently there has been a worsening trend to blame the media for events caused by objective and well-known social phenomena. Worse than this, media officials and journalists have been summoned to hear gratuitous accusations of subversion, agitation, promotion of instability and even banditry.<sup>1</sup>

One of the most important points in the petition was that it constituted more than a critique of the state. It also pointed out that the lack of press freedom resulted in an opportunity for self-enrichment and corruption as well the cover-up of incompetence and abuse of power. In this way the petition, which in the end was signed by 162 Mozambican media practitioners, outlined the ideals of a free press in a free society.

The petition had an important impact and, as journalist Paul Fauvet has pointed out, was in line with what many in Frelimo thought. When the Constitution was passed in November 1990, it included the principles the petitioners had asked for.<sup>2</sup>

Uniquely in Africa, Article (74) (3) of the Constitution of Mozambique also states that "freedom of the press shall include (...) protection of professional independence and confidentiality". Article 30 of the subsequent Press Law passed in July the following year, elaborates:

Journalists shall enjoy the right to professional secrecy concerning the origins of the information they publish or transmit, and their silence may not lead to any form of punishment.

The law has correctly been described as one of the most liberal media laws in Africa. There can be little doubt that the free media climate in Mozambique is a tribute to the work of those journalists who in 1989 drew up the petition demanding press freedom. In the 2005 Worldwide Press Freedom Index published by Reporters sans Frontiers, Mozambique holds 44th place out of 167 countries.

The law states that journalists have a right to freedom of expression, to have access to sources of information, and to protect their sources, and that the media shall be free from outside interference. The law also emphasised



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that anyone had the right to set up a newspaper, though in practice a media company still has to register with the Cabinet of Information in the Prime Minister's Office (Gabinfo).

While the law is not clear as regards the right to set up broadcasting media, in practice there exist both private commercial and community broadcasters in the country – and in both TV and radio. Nevertheless it is a very long, cumbersome and far-from-transparent process to obtain a licence to run a broadcaster.

This has become particularly evident in relation to how to establish community radios, for which there exist neither real legislation nor proper procedures. This is a problem that has been highlighted by the growth of community broadcasting in Mozambique over the past decade. To put it a bit crudely, there exist three forms of community broadcasters in the country. One is the network of broadcasters run under the auspices of Instituto d'Comunicação Social (ICS), which is parastatal department. Some of these radios are well-established with sound roots in their communities. Others are less the expression of their communities and may be regarded more as government voices at community level. Then there are the radios established through the work of, among others, the Unesco Media Project in the country, where a lot of emphasis has been put on rooting the radios in strong organisational local structures. And there are a number of other radio and communication initiatives set up through the assistance of different international organisations. One is the under-funded Unesco project on Community Multi-Media Centres.

The last two forms of community radios, those outside ICS, have established a national organisation of community radios. There is no doubt that independent community radios have an important role to play as the voice of the grassroots in the communities. The situation is, however, that it is often difficult to obtain a licence for setting one up, and that there often is interference from local administrators in the running of the radios. They are also reluctant to report on election campaigns, and in general do not do this.

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In November 2006, the government proposed amendments to the 1991 press law, one of which will, in addition to the licensing of media by Gabinfo, strengthen government influence. The proposal includes the introduction of an accreditation system for journalists: "The exercise of the profession of journalism requires the prior obtaining of the professional licence, in terms of the regulations to be approved by the government, on the proposal of the socio-professional bodies in the mass media area."<sup>3</sup>

This is a clause that contradicts the principle upheld by press freedom organisations, that there should be no official licensing of journalists.

It should also be mentioned that there is a campaign in the country to have a law which secures the citizens' rights to information.

## 2. Emergence of an independent press

The passing of the new law in 1991 made several journalists who were working for the state or official media start thinking about trying to set up independent media or papers. A group of them decided to form a cooperative with the intention of publishing a new weekly newspaper. The cooperative came to consist of 14 members and was formally registered in February 1992.

However, to set up a new weekly proved both more costly and difficult than the members had envisaged. They had found a name for the paper – *Savana* – but they did not have the \$200 000 that a feasibility study estimated was necessary to start publishing. Instead of going for the full weekly, they decided to start a small publication. By chance they thought to use what was, at that time, a relatively new communication technology, namely the fax machine. There are several versions as to where the idea of a fax paper came from. Fauvet has indicated that one of the members of the cooperative had seen a Brazilian fax paper.

Others have said the inspiration came from the Soviet Union and the "news agency" Interfax.

Be that as it may, the Norwegian Development Agency (Norad) provided money for the fax machine and on May 25 1992 the first independent press publication in independent Mozambique was faxed to everyone that the editor of the paper had found who possessed a fax machine.

There were no more than some hundred machines in all of Mozambique. Those who received the fax were asked to subscribe. Soon *Mediafax*, as the paper was called, had a sufficient number of subscribers to survive. Copies were sent to fax machines mostly located in businesses, public offices, embassies, international NGOs, etc. That implied centres of influence – and the President's office was the sixth subscriber.

By the end of 1966 *Mediafax* had 350 subscribers – but a conservative estimate is that there were 20 copies made of each single issue, which means the readership was considerable. Together with the income from subscriptions, the paper had advertisements and it was a commercial success. Another Mozambican journalist soon took up the model of the fax paper: Miguéis Lopes Jr<sup>4</sup>, who a little later started publishing his paper, *Imparcial*, as a more or less one-man undertaking.

Then on January 21 1994, Mediacoop started publishing *Savana* with a print run of 15 000 copies. To run a weekly was of course a much more extensive technical, administrative and financial undertaking than publishing a fax paper. In addition, the launching of the paper had been "(...) delayed due to a long struggle for exemption from or lessening of the onerous customs duties so that it would not have to pay for imported paper and printing equipment".<sup>5</sup> In the first years, it was *Mediafax* that was the financial backbone of the cooperative's activities. *Savana*, as well as a small fortnightly English language news-sheet, *Mozambique Inview*, ran at a loss.

There are many reasons for the economic problems suffered by *Savana* and the other weekly independent newspaper, *Demos*, launched in October 1994.<sup>6</sup> Distribution networks were poor. Most copies were actually sold in Maputo by street vendors. Although economic liberalisation had resulted in the growth of some entrepreneurship and new

private businesses in the early 1990s, the advertisement revenue was not sufficient to serve as a stable base for a profitable independent press. In addition, they had to compete with the established official press (formally owned by an independent company whose major shareholder is The Central Bank), which had close to a monopoly for advertising.

Since then, both the economic conditions conducive to starting new media enterprises and the media situation in Mozambique have changed considerably. The model of the fax paper has been developed. Now they are distributed through the Internet, but the journalistic idea behind them is the same: focused investigative journalism. The most important new "faxpapers" being published via email in 2007 are *Mediafax*, *Vertical*, *Canal de Moçambique* and *Correio da Manhã*. And there are three weekly papers that appear steadily and appear to have a sound basis: *Savana*, *Zambeze* (being edited by the first editor of *Savana*) and *O País*. The last is published by the closest thing Mozambique has to a media conglomerate, namely the company SOICO which also runs a successful commercial TV-channel, STV. There are also other weeklies that have yet to be established on a more long-term basis, and which seem to appear and then often fold after some time.

In the run up to the first free elections in Mozambique (October 27 to 29 1994), there is no doubt the influence of *Mediafax*, *Savana* and *Imparcial* on the political debate in the country far outweighed their circulation. In spite of the limited penetration, the existence of an independent press that covered the elections differently put pressure on the official media to give more space to the activities of the opposition parties.<sup>7</sup> In addition the papers were quoted extensively on Radio Moçambique the nearer it got to election time.

In the subsequent Mozambican elections in 1999 and 2004, there were more independent media and they played an even more important part in the debates leading up to the elections. There have been no in-depth studies of the election coverage in the Mozambican media, but two superficial studies<sup>8</sup> reveal that in the 2004 elections there seems to have been a clear favourable coverage of the government in the official media, with the exception of Radio Moçambique, while the independent media have been more even-

handed in their coverage. But as these studies are mainly quantitative it is difficult to say anything definite about the slant of the coverage. It is the impression of this author, however, that the debate in the media around the elections both in 1999 and 2004 was open and multi-faceted.

### 3. Contribution of Carlos Cardoso

The first editor of *Mediafax* was Carlos Cardoso, and from the very beginning there is no doubt that it was his paper. It was he who created its style and image. He edited it based on a formula of critical, independent, investigative journalism, particularly focusing on corruption and the abuse of power, and critical of the IF's and World Bank's restructuring policies in the country. During this period Cardoso made many enemies among the powerful in Mozambique. But he also was highly respected because his stories were well researched and sourced, and he could not be accused of any form of corrupt practices – something that was not uncommon among journalists.

In 1997 there was a serious conflict over principles in Mediacoop and Cardoso left both the cooperative and *Mediafax*. In June 1997 he started a new fax newspaper called *Metical* (the name of the Mozambican currency), specially dedicated to critical economic and political journalism with a particular focus on corruption. In so doing, he attacked very powerful people in Mozambican society including the President's family, ministers, high officials, wealthy businessmen with international connections, and the World Bank.

On November 22 2000, Cardoso was assassinated while he was investigating the theft of \$14-million from Mozambique's largest bank, Banco Comercial de Moçambique (BCM), for his faxpaper *Metical*. The fraud was a result of the privatisation of the banking sector in the country. In 1996 and 1997, the two state-owned commercial banks, BCM and Banco Popular de Desen-

volvimento (BDP – later renamed Banco Austral), were sold to private investors, without any proper due diligence audit undertaken. And the history of the two banks since they were privatised was one long series of events involving fraud, corruption, and murder. The case has many ramifications and is so full of complicated details that this is not the place to go into them. The full story reads like crime fiction, though it is brutal fact.<sup>9</sup>

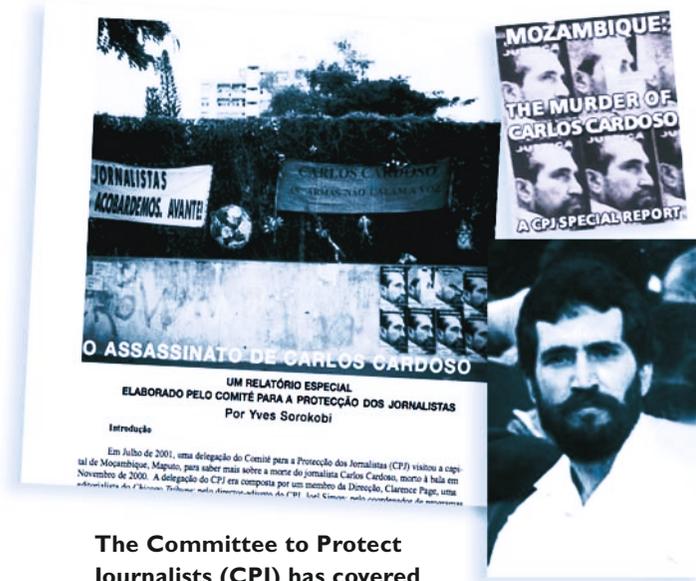
What Cardoso did was to diligently follow up the story of the two banks and try to find out who was responsible for the corruption and the fraud, and put this in the wider context of the politics of structural adjustment. When Cardoso took on the case of BCM, it was consistent with his whole journalistic career. But it is also an exemplary history that can illustrate one side of the relationship between journalism and politics in Africa: the heroic side.

Cardoso became a journalist just after the Mozambican revolution in 1975. He was a strong, but also critical, supporter of the ruling party, Frelimo. He had studied in South Africa and been expelled from the apartheid state, and came back to Mozambique when most Mozambicans of Portuguese descent, including his own family, were leaving the country. He started his journalistic career in the weekly news-magazine *Tempo*, which was the most independent-minded and journalistically alive medium in the early Frelimo years.

From there he moved to the national news agency, where he served as director for a period. He was arrested once during those years – in 1982 – allegedly for having published an article which the government perceived as breaking rules banning any comparison of the situation in Angola and Mozambique. Both countries were involved in civil wars. He was released after a while, but the experience shows that the situation for independent journalists in the 1980s was not easy. There were conflicts between journalists and the party.

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**The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) has covered the murder of Carlos Cardoso, and the subsequent court case, on their website with special reports and news alerts over the past years**

deep understanding of the society that he was part of, and he argued that the importance of critical journalism in society, but particularly in Mozambique, must be based on credibility. That resulted in many whistleblowers turning to him with their stories, and he protected their anonymity and checked and double-checked the stories. Thus he also contributed to breaking to a small degree a culture of secrecy and fears of reprisals. But that also led to his death. When he was killed, ordinary people in the streets of Maputo said: “Who is now going to speak up for us?” His family closed down *Metical* shortly after Cardoso's death.

On January 31 2003, six people who were found guilty of conspiring to murder Cardoso were sentenced to long prison terms. There is little doubt that the accused expected to get away with murder because of being well-connected in Mozambican society. But there was an international campaign and heavy pressure on the authorities to solve the case, and there was also a rift in the party over it. The main culprit known as Anibalzinho had, however, managed to escape from prison before the case, and he was sentenced in absentia. He was arrested in South Africa and extradited to Mozambique, but in May 2004 he once again fled, this time to Canada from where he was extradited in

January 2005. Finally in January 2006 he was sentenced to almost 30 years in prison. Since then he has, however, tried to escape from high security prison twice. In spite of the sentences, the case is not closed and the hunt for others who may be involved in the conspiracy continues. The street in Maputo where Cardoso was gunned down is still marked by flowers.

The story of Carlos Cardoso is an example of how one journalist working with other dedicated people can, at great risk, take on the politically and economically powerful in a society and contribute to a certain degree to more openness and honesty. But it is also a story of the dangers of challenging the political and economic elite in an African country. And even if there is more openness in Mozambique now, the culture of secrecy, corruption and fear is still strong. The relationship between the independent journalists and the government continues to be uneasy.

More than anything, however, the story of Cardoso's contribution to journalism in Mozambique illustrates the importance of a free, courageous and investigative form of journalism in the struggle against corruption. It is therefore appropriate in this context to reflect on the role of the press in covering and uncovering corrupt practices. The focus of the following remarks is based on the situation in Mozambique.

### 4. Corruption and the development industry

What most people come across is what can be called petty corruption. This is an institutionalised form of power abuse centred in law enforcement and the delivery of basic services such as water, electricity and housing. It involves criminal justice personnel, customs, procurement, police and immigration/border control.<sup>10</sup> It is often impossible or difficult to obtain services or results from public organs or government departments without paying for them. Nothing will be done unless one pays routine, hierarchically defined bribes or kickbacks for services rendered. Or it may be that by paying something to an individual official, one avoids paying a fine, customs duties or VAT.

It is this petty corruption that ordinary people encounter in their day-to day lives. For instance it takes the form of paying a traffic cop who stops you and insists your car is not in order; or paying the headmaster of a school to have your child accepted there, or indeed so the child passes her or his exams; or paying extra to have your application for a passport or an ID processed; or paying extra to a nurse to receive the medicine you need; and so on. In his papers, Cardoso often took up such cases. And the independent media in Mozambique continue to do so.

However, there are other dimensions to a discussion of corruption that have a bearing on media's role. In November/December 2005 there was an interesting debate on the

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Mozambican blog [www.ideiasdebate.blogspot.com](http://www.ideiasdebate.blogspot.com) about corruption in Mozambique. Some of the most remarkable contributions were written by respected sociologist Elisio Macamo, who is a professor in Bayreuth in Germany but is also a frequent contributor to discussions about the political and social situation in his home country. The provocative and surprising question he asked was whether there was corruption in Mozambique. This is in spite of the fact that Mozambique is perceived as one of the more corrupt countries

in Africa. It has a corruption perception score of 2,8 and is placed 97th in the overall list from Transparency International, holding 18th place in Africa.

Professor Macamo's argument was centred on three main points. The first was that it is necessary to define what counts as corruption before starting to discuss its existence and ways to combat it. Secondly, such a definition would be impossible without taking into consideration the cultural values of society and the history from which the phenomenon, if it exists, has come. In this context, knowledge of the whole culture of gifts in African societies is a necessary precondition for such an understanding. And thirdly, that much of what is perceived as being corruption is linked to

the internal workings of a group of people who are specialists in rent-extraction from what may be called the development industry.

This last-mentioned case consists of many forms of aid in the form of budget support, projects, investments, conferences, etc – all of which contribute a form of revenue to the social group that interacts with the development system. They include the political class – government and opposition, administration – as well as NGOs, businesses with particular interests in, for instance, construction contracts, etc. It is a relatively small and closed group of people who specialise in extracting a portion from this revenue, some of which goes to conspicuous consumption. Those who form this group interact and do each other favours in order to make the system function smoothly. The basis for their ability to take out money from the development revenue, and to continue its flow into the country, is that the group knows what to say and emphasise in order to please the development system. And right now, in this context, the fight against corruption is a catch phrase (though often not going further than being a phrase).

This does of course not mean that Professor Macamo condones robbery in any form. His argument is that much of what the development system provides for a country like Mozambique, does not really contribute its development but plays into the interests of a particular group of people. This was also one of the main arguments that Carlos Cardoso often used in his discussions of the role of aid in a country like Mozambique.

Now it is not really difficult to define what corruption is, and there are many definitions that are remarkably similar. One example is that put forward by the World Bank:

Corruption involves behaviour on the part of officials in the public and private sectors, in which they improperly and unlawfully enrich themselves and/or those close to them, or induce others to do so, by misusing the position in which they are placed.

But the difficult part, and what Macamo is trying to raise, is in finding out why some societies are more corrupt than others – and what serves as incentives for the practice of corruption. And then one has to try to answer the next questions:

how to combat corruption, and how to create incentives for discouraging corrupt practices?

In one study on corruption in Mozambique, it was found there were two main reasons for corruption in the public sector. The first was that salaries were so low, it was a temptation for those working there to become corrupt in order to gain a decent living. And the second reason was political: namely that there was great confusion between the role of the state and of ruling party Frelimo, to such a degree that all public servants were more or less forced to be members of the party. The implications are that when it comes to really tackling problems of corruption in high places, it is difficult to do so because of patrimonial party links.<sup>11</sup> Results from research conducted in Mozambique indicate there is a more-or-less forced payment to political parties (party), and 15% of those included in a survey confirmed this.<sup>12</sup>

This also implies to a certain degree that there exists a form of understanding and even acceptance among many citizens of the corrupt behaviour of lower-level public officials. Many people are not really averse to such behaviour, and would definitely do the same if they were in a similar position. This does not mean they pay bribes gladly, but that they nevertheless often accept this as an unavoidable practice. Particularly in rural areas, it is often not seen as corruption to bear a gift to someone with influence in order to

obtain a favour. This is part of the cultural context that Macamo highlights. Surveys also indicate that urban areas are perceived as being more corrupt than rural, and traditional leaders as less corrupt than modern officials and leaders. This is in spite of the fact there exist practices in rural and traditional societies that from a modern perspective might be regarded as bordering on nepotism and bribery.

There is yet another related question: how much of what is perceived as corruption is real, and how much is just something one has heard about, read about in newspapers, or is just part of the general rumour mill? Surveys in southern Africa have found for instance that there appears to be a considerable gap between perceived levels of corruption and people's actual experience of it.<sup>13</sup>

There are many explanations for discrepancies between perceived and real experiences of corruption. One is that stories about corruption often make for good entertainment, and furthermore that the press in many African countries are often full of unsubstantiated reports of corrupt practices in the police, customs, etc. Nevertheless the practice is real enough, and it influences the workings of for instance small businesses, making it costly to set up an enterprise and difficult to obtain the necessary documents.

But then what is the relationship between the petty corruption that ordinary people come in contact with, and the form of "extraction of revenue" that takes place in the elite – be it within the development system or outside? While it may be possible to view what goes on within the system as being quietly tolerated by all those implied, it is still the case that many high public officials and politicians have a lifestyle and fortunes they cannot have acquired solely on the basis of their public salaries. There are cases where newspapers have reported on the finances that central politicians control, coupled with demands that all public officials declare their assets, and nothing has come of it.

Public exposure is not enough if it is not followed up by legislation and official practices. In interesting research first publicised in an abbreviated version in the weekly newspaper, *Savana*, Marcello Mosse went through all the assets of the then-presidential candidate for Frelimo, Armando Guebuza, later to be elected president.<sup>14</sup> Much of his wealth had been acquired in the period of the pri-

#### CLIPS

The immediate publication of a criticism by the journalists constitutes, in practice, an attack against the Party and the State. [The journalist] while being above all a citizen and having the same duties as a member of the Party, the most correct procedure is to report errors and skids noted with the relevant structure of the Party or the State. Thus criticism becomes constructive...

(excerpt from report on a government seminar, 1980, in Jones, 2005).

atisation of state enterprises in the early 1990s. One of intentions of the research was, of course, that it should be institutionalised that holders of public office be required to declare their assets. This has not, however, been institutionalised since Guebuza was elected President in December 2004. The Mozambican press, therefore, has had little impact in this regard.

**The only press power seems to be in informing people; and how much of a contribution is this really? The real challenge for an analysis of the role of media in combating corruption is to see it in the context of other social institutions and practices**

Furthermore, the benefits that come with high offices are often totally disproportionate to any real sense of expenses. Particularly in an era when much of the aid for many African countries comes in the form of direct budget support, this is a problem, and there have been cases where the blatant abuse of funds have been discovered without leading to the immediate sacking of the minister involved.<sup>15</sup> The problem in cases such as this is that they are often reported in the local press, the donors try to intervene, but nothing is done at a political level. There is little doubt this form of accessing

public funds in a manner at least partly for private benefit, even if it is not outright illegal, makes public policies ineffective. The behaviour of politicians and high public officials matters, because they install a sense of conduct in society as a whole. Corruption in high places has consequences beyond the harm it does to the economy and principles of good governance: it serves as an example for others lower down to follow.

Surveys from southern Africa show citizens on average feel their governments are not sufficiently committed to combating corruption.<sup>16</sup> The survey from Mozambique listed a number of reasons for not exposing corruption. The one that got the highest score was that “there is no protection” for those who blow the whistle – over 50%. Second came that “it is not worth” to expose corruption. And third, and another point made by Macamo: “It is not considered corruption in our culture”. Furthermore, there was an argu-

ment that corruption was not seen as entirely repulsive: “the economic situation justifies it”. And then three reasons related to legal practices: “cases are not investigated”; or “cannot be proved”; or “do not know the procedure”. All of these were from above 25% of the respondents.<sup>17</sup>

## 5. Journalism and corruption

While most discussions on anti-corruption strategies focus on the important role of the media, it is often difficult to establish how the press can really contribute to combating corruption other than exposing cases of corruption and publicising stories of the abuse of power and influence. The only press power seems to be in informing people; and how much of a contribution is this really? The real challenge for an analysis of the role of media in combating corruption is to see it in the context of other social institutions and practices.

Going through various discussions of the relationship between the media and corruption, there are some topics that seem to come up in almost all contexts.<sup>18</sup> Several aspects deal with the role of journalists individually and as a profession. In general, journalists are seen as active participants in the struggle against corruption. Many examples are given of individual journalists who have worked hard and under difficult and dangerous circumstances to expose the abuse of power and corrupt practices.

However, it is important to place investigative journalism in the framework of the movement to democratise the African continent. While it is true that investigative journalism is an essential tool in the on-going process of democratising African societies, it is also true that investigative journalism can only exist in a society that respects democratic norms. In repressive and blatantly dictatorial societies, investigative journalism cannot thrive. In such societies journalists who pursue the truth can easily lose their jobs, be jailed or killed.<sup>19</sup> The risks involved in writing about corruption for very understandable reasons make journalists shy away from doing so. As the Mozambican survey showed, there is reluctance to expose corruption because there is no protection for those who do so.

More than anything, journalistic standards and ethics are important when it comes to covering corruption. Far too much of what is considered investigative journalism in Africa does not adhere to proper standards. Good investigative journalism does not sensationalise. It is not based on rumours, and it does not consist of rumour-mongering. Much of what is presented as investigative journalism in Africa is based on poorly sourced material: often only one source, which has not been properly checked. Good and thorough research is frequently lacking. Questions such as why this story was leaked to the journalist concerned are not being asked, nor in whose interest it is that this story be published. It is always prudent for the reporter to try get a reaction from the person who is accused in the story. Often sensationalist and accusing language in stories about corruption damage the credibility of the cases reported. The more outrageous the presentation, the easier it is to discredit the stories. Journalism about corruption should not have as its main focus the aim of exposing the personal lives of individuals, if this does not have implications for the wider issues of the systematic abuse of power and what is hindering development.

The media are linked to structures of bureaucracy and governance that also are involved in corrupt practices. There is often a thin line between who is inside and outside the media. Sometimes the owners of the press are also implicated in other forms of business linked to the state and government. Officials, politicians and journalists, not only in Africa but also elsewhere, often belong to the same circles, meet at receptions and drink at the same clubs.

Corruption is not only a phenomenon to be covered by the press, or something that exists merely in the world outside the newsroom. It is also to be found inside the media, both in the ways that media organisations are organised and in how journalists behave. In many media organisations there exists a grace-and-favour mentality that while not necessarily corrupt in itself, contributes to a view of the media as not being objective or above undue influence.

Journalists are subject to the same temptations as other people and professions. In many parts of Africa, their pay is low and their status not high. This makes them susceptible to what has been called “the brown-envelope syn-

drome” where journalists and editors receive envelopes containing not press releases but money for services rendered. This can involve killing damaging stories, writing favourably about certain officials or politicians, or extorting money by threatening to expose details that might be detrimental to those being blackmailed. One case involved a journalist in the Mozambican weekly, *Zambeze*, who in March 2006 was sacked from the paper for being involved in an extortion attempt.<sup>20</sup>

## 6. Conclusion

In discussions on how to combat corruption, there is a general perception that the media are important as an institution. The media in Mozambique is, for instance, currently regarded as the most trustworthy institution in society.<sup>21</sup>

There is no doubt that coverage of corruption contributes to public awareness of the problem, and that the risk of exposure might serve as a deterrent – although this is by no means certain. There is a paradox that widespread coverage, and particularly many unsubstantiated opinion pieces on the prevalence of corruption, also contributes to an impression that corruption is on the rise, even in situations where other indicators point in a different direction. African publics probably imagine there is more official corruption than they encounter in practice. It is likely the general public supposes there is more corruption among top political and economic elites than is the case. This is partly because what happens at high levels in society is hidden from public view, and yet politicians and elites are constantly in the public eye. Thus people generalise on the basis of stories and opinions in the press about a small number of high-profile incidents and prominent public figures. “As evidence, the consumption of all types of news media – notably newspapers, and especially in combina-

**Much of what is presented as investigative journalism in Africa is based on poorly sourced material ... Good and thorough research is frequently lacking. Questions such as why this story was leaked to the journalist concerned are not being asked**

tion with TV and radio – increases the extent to which people perceive corruption.”<sup>22</sup>

Where reliable information is not available, people thrive on unsubstantiated gossip. To be sure, they are often justified in suspecting shady dealings behind the closed doors of the upper levels of African governments. But, by the same token, the possibility exists that popular perceptions of official corruption are somewhat inflated.

This should of course not detract from the importance of addressing the high levels of perceived corruption. Confidence in the transparency of government is of particular importance for any democracy. But it should also lead to some form of caution when it comes to what the press can achieve on its own in combating corruption. First of all, there is every reason to warn about self-inflated views in media circles of how important the press is as a centre for anti-corruption activities. If reports in the media about corruption are not being followed up by the police or public prosecutors, and the government only pays lip-service to the

struggle against corruption, it does not help how much the press writes about it. If anything it may only lead to increased cynicism among the public. Such a culture of impunity sends the message that even if your corrupt dealings are exposed in the media you can still get away with them. The situation in Mozambique may be interpreted as inaction by authorities. Thus the government of former President Joaquim Chissano generally practised what has been called “a política do silêncio” (the politics of silence) on stories in the press about corruption. Nothing was done.

At present in Mozambique there are hopes that the new government of Guebuza is going to change this. In a recent interview he said his government was in the process of bringing in new legislation and tools for combating corruption and that it was absolutely necessary to act against it with force.<sup>23</sup> But it is early yet. And there is a great need for the kind of courageous, principled, investigative journalism that Carlos Cardoso and others introduced in Mozambique in the early 1990s.

long after the abuse was discovered.

16 Zvekcic & Camerer 2002

17 Austral Consultoria e Projectos Ita. (2006), *Governance and Ant-corruption Diagnostic Survey*. Maputo.

18 See for instance the report “Caught in the Act: Corruption and the Media”. Report from a workshop organised by IFJ in Brussels 21/22 September, 1998.

19 I have written about this in de Burgh, H (ed) (2005).

20 See *Zambeze*. N. 182. 16 de Março de 2006.

21 See Austral Consultoria e Projectos Ita. (2006), *Governance and Ant-corruption Diagnostic Survey*. Maputo.

22 Bratton et al 2005:234

23 “Temos que agir com firmeza para que a corrupção não domine o Estado” Entrevista com o Prersidente Armando Guebuza por Osvaldo Júnio e Irene Braz. *Meianoite*. Numero 1. 07 – 13 Março, 2006.

## Endnotes

- 1 The quotes are from Fauvet & Mosse (2003: 219-220). Much of the information in this article builds on the content in this excellent book, which not only tells the story of the life of courageous journalist Carlos Cardoso, but is also an invaluable and personal source about the history of the Mozambican press since independence.
- 2 Constituição da Republica. Capitulo II. “Direitos, deveres e liberdades”. Artigo 48. “Liberdades de expressão e informação.”
- 3 See AIM Newscast Wednesday 1/11/2006. “Amendments to Press Law Go to Public Debate”
- 4 Died in 2006.
- 5 Silva, Aida Gomes da 1996:66
- 6 *Demos* stopped publishing in 2006 after having suffered economic problems for many years.
- 7 See Article XIX (1994) and Namburete, Eduardo (1996)
- 8 Misa. Moçambique. “Monitoria da Cobertura Eleitoral”, *Relatorio 2004. Estado da Liberdade de Imprensa*.

Maputo. And Macuane, José Jaime (2006): “Democracia, eleições e medias: o caso das eleições de 2004” in Mazula, Braçã (ed): *Moçambique. Eleições Gerais 2004*. Maputo.

- 9 For a full account of the case and of the life and role of Carlos Cardoso in Mozambican society, press and politics, see Fauvet & Mosse (2003).
- 10 See Zvekcic & Camerer 2002
- 11 “Corrupção em Moçambique” *MediaFAX*. Quarta-feira 01.03. 2006.
- 12 Austral Consultoria e Projectos Ita. (2006), *Governance and Ant-corruption Diagnostic Survey*. Maputo.
- 13 See Bratton et al 2005:234
- 14 Marcello Mosse (Novembro de 2004), *Corrupção em Moçambique: Alguns elementos para debate*.
- 15 One case involved the previous minister of education in Mozambique who used Swedish budget support funds for his own private interests. The funds were repaid to Sweden, but the minister kept his post in the government

## CHARACTERS, CASES AND CAUSES

## The NSJ: The long road from Harare to Maputo

By **JOHN MUKELA**

The big push for Africa's total liberation was nearing its final climax.

In July 1987, a 61-strong team of South Africans, mainly white Afrikaners, came face to face with a 17-person delegation from South Africa's outlawed African National Congress (ANC). The meeting, hosted by President Abdou Diouf of Senegal, was a historic watershed in the final push to Nelson Mandela's release from prison and the unbanning of the ANC.

If revolution was in the air, it wasn't only confined to big-time political talk. Around the same time, big ideas were also percolating about the need to strengthen African media. Southern Africa had taken the lead, hosting a large gathering of "media experts" from the nine countries of the Southern African Development Community (SADC)!

In all, 48 experts turned up at the Harare Sheraton – including from

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the ANC, Pan Africanist Congress and Namibia's South West African Peoples' Organisation (Swapo). Also attending the Nordic-SADCC media seminar were delegates from the governments of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden, and observers from groups such as the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ).

The seeds were sown at the Harare Sheraton – but it was nearly six years before President Joachim Chissano of Mozambique inaugurated the Nordic-SADC Journalism Centre (NSJ), on September 11 1993.

Today, nearly 20 years since the Sheraton seminar, much has changed. Civil strife, instability, social unrest and war in Angola, Mozambique, Namibia and South Africa gave way to negotiated peace and political pluralism.

An "enabling environment" of greater transparency and political accountability became the yardstick by which success would be measured. A critical player has been the media – along with civil society organisations such as the NSJ whose beginnings lie in the region's transformation.

Since the NSJ's first courses in 1994, a mini-revolution has occurred in Africa's media landscape: more media being established and journalists trained. The terrain is uneven,

with some countries making strides, for instance, towards opening the airwaves (as in Mozambique), and others still bogged down with political dogfights (as in Zimbabwe).

The NSJ's principal founding partners were SADC countries, represented by the Mozambican government, and Nordic countries, represented by the Danish government. The first phase, from 1993 to 1996, was followed by a second phase from 1996 to 1999.

Then, from 2001, the project was transformed into an independent trust governed by four media organisations: the Media Institute of Southern Africa (Misa), the Southern African Broadcasting Association (Saba), the Federation of African Media Women in Southern Africa (FAMW-SA) and the World Association of Community Broadcasters (Amarc).

According to the NSJ's most recent business plan, "no other media organisation in the region has such a broad framework and constituency. Individually, the NSJ's trustee organisations represent some of the most powerful civil society regional organisations in respect to their own core missions..."

Training in the region still falls short of demand. Studies show media practitioners are hungry to upgrade their skills and obtain qualifications. "At the same time, the

industry urgently demands higher quality training as a result of the growing sophistication of regional and international relations, trade, politics, as well as rapid changes in information technology – a key media tool," says the NSJ's strategic partnership programme document.

Many training providers are still inadequately equipped, or run by personnel with limited expertise in modern training and skills upgrading. In addition, most training institutions provide basic journalism courses and cannot promote professional in-service training.

Furthermore, many are "ad-hoc donor-funded activities" run for "only a week or a few days" which, according to a training needs assessment in 2001<sup>2</sup>, "is not sufficient for participants to undertake tasks and practical exercises that are critical to learning".

In addition to these problems, says the NSJ, the region "still has an insufficient number of trained trainers" and "teaching materials, including training manuals, textbooks and audio-visuals, are few and often of limited relevance to the region, outdated or too expensive".



**Getting down to business: participants at work during various NSJ courses and (left) the trust's executive director, John Mukela**

During its project phase, the Danish government, through its development assistance arm, Danida, predominantly funded the NSJ. Now funding involves several partners and is managed through a "strategic partnership" with input from the governments of Denmark, Norway and Sweden. In the 2005-2007 funding cycle, the NSJ attracted almost US\$5-million for its three-year programme.

Training includes scholarships, a tailor-made programme, applied research and information, and networking. In the scholarship programme, courses deal with topical issues such as "reporting Africa" and "reporting poverty". There is "training of trainers", the popular exchange programme and in-house training.

Over the years, thousands of journalists, editors, media managers and trainers have gained from NSJ's



training. Today, it is a success story of the region's media development.

In 1998, Professor Guy Berger of Rhodes University's journalism school wrote that the NSJ was "effectively the only bright light on the mid-career training path in media in southern Africa".<sup>3</sup> Since then other organisations have sprung up, but the NSJ continues to shine its torch of high-value journalism training to counter the dark forces of professional mediocrity.

According to a Malawian journalist quoted in the Berger impact

assessment: “NSJ, more than any other local, regional or international media training institution, has played a very dominant and crucial role in orienting Malawian journalists towards good journalism. To many practising reporters, it is the only journalism training institution they have been to. If there is any semblance of sober journalism in democratic Malawi, more than 60% of that can be attributed to the crusade by the NSJ.”

Undoubtedly, the NSJ faces many challenges in keeping up with the professional needs of journalists. These will require more innovative methods of training and service delivery, as well as increased support from development assistance organisations in Africa and abroad.

### Endnotes

- 1 In those days the SADC was known as the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC).
- 2 Morna, C.L. & Khan, Z., Media training needs assessment for Southern Africa, NIZA, 2001.
- 3 Berger, G., NSJ training impact assessment, NSJ, 1998.

# 8

SECTION EIGHT

# Southern Africa



# Southern Africa: 50 years of media

By Tawana Kupe

## 1. Introduction

This article looks at media in Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe. A useful way to analyse the media in these six countries is to frame an analysis around eight interrelated themes:

- The political, economic and social context
- The role of the media and the extent of its freedoms
- Media systems and structures
- Media ownership and management
- Media financing and funding
- Media content
- Audiences and audiences access to the media
- Technological developments
- Media policy and regulation.

These themes will not be treated separately but rather weaved into each other. A key thread running through the article is an analysis of the effects of stated and unstated media policy and regulatory practices in the six countries. This article will therefore not follow a strict historical periodisation but seeks to explore these themes across the decades since Ghana's independence in 1957 without conflating differences, unique features and developments.

## 2. Colonialism, apartheid and a history of media repression

All six countries attained independence and democratic rule well after the independence of Ghana in 1957. In the case of Zimbabwe and South Africa, independence and democratic majority rule came much later – in 1980 and 1994 respectively. Botswana, which became independent in

1966, is considered to be the country with one of the longest histories of a stable and democratic system because it has held regular multi-party elections which are considered free and fair. Lesotho, which became independent from British colonial rule in 1966, has the dubious distinction among the six countries of having had a military government in the 1980s. Swaziland, which is the only remaining absolute monarchy, was granted independence by Britain in 1968.

The history of colonialism, apartheid and post-independence political developments has influenced media systems and structures in these six countries, and media policy and regulatory practices. Repressive political systems often leave an entrenched culture and practices of media control that are deeply ingrained and difficult to eradicate. In particular, such repressive practices curtail the freedom of the media to be an institution that promotes democracy and which can be an agent of participatory forms of socio-economic development.

The legacy of media repression is represented by a plethora of laws inherited from the colonial era that curb freedom of expression and freedom of the media. Repressive laws in the absence of clearly articulated and written media and communication policies have become the *de facto* media policies and regulatory frameworks in these countries. South Africa is the only exception because it took the radical step of crafting a constitution that has strong protections for media freedom and freedom of expression, and which therefore makes such laws unconstitutional. The strongest motivation for a radical overhaul was to eradicate the legacy of apartheid and implement the lessons learnt from the rest of the region and continent's dismal history of a continuation of a culture of media repression.

## 3. Post-independence and post-apartheid developments

The political culture and trajectories of Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, Swaziland, South Africa and Zimbabwe since independence and democratic rule show differences which cannot be conflated. Botswana and South Africa have a his-

tory of stable multi-party political systems where free and fair elections are held regularly. It is also important to note that one party has ruled both countries since independence or democratic rule.

Zimbabwe is a country which has a mixed, and recently most unfortunate, history in that like South Africa and Botswana it has a history of a multi-party political system and regular elections since independence. However the conduct of elections in the last five to six years has raised serious questions about their freeness and fairness, which has contributed to a major political, economic and social crisis. Namibia has a history of multi-party politics since independence in 1990 but only one party has been in power. Namibia also demonstrated worrying signs of a slide in democratic practice when the first President, Sam Nujoma, changed the constitution so he could have three terms at a time when across Africa the issue of limiting presidents to two terms was on agenda as part of addressing a legacy of eternal rule. Zimbabwe has also had one leader, Robert Mugabe, in the 30 years since independence in 1980. He has become more autocratic and ruthless as challenges to his leadership and grip on power emerge from the opposition and recently from within his own party. In this regard Zimbabwe is not dissimilar from those African countries that had one-party rule and military dictatorships between independence in the 1960s and lacked democratisation until the 1990s.

Swaziland is interesting case in that it is the only remaining absolute monarchy in the region and is a country where the political opposition is outlawed. Civil society organisations, including trade unions and human rights organisations, operate in conditions in which their rights of association and assembly are severely curtailed.

Lesotho has also gone through the unique experience in the region of a having a multi-party political system after independence; military rule in the 1980s and a relatively stable multi-party political system in the early 21st century.

**Repressive political systems often leave an entrenched culture and practices of media control that are deeply ingrained and difficult to eradicate**



Professor **Tawana Kupe** holds a DPhil in Media Studies from the University of Oslo and is currently Dean of the Faculty of Humanities at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa. He has taught Media Studies at the universities of Zimbabwe, Rhodes and Wits, and his research interests are media, democratisation and development, and media policy and regulation

It is pertinent for the purposes of this article to outline the challenges of democratisation and socio-economic development facing all six countries which have a direct relevance to the media. Developing and consolidating participatory democratic systems is a major challenge which among other issues includes reviewing electoral systems to ensure that the best way is found to represent all interests and make lawmakers accountable to the electorate. A system which broadens representation and participation might improve the policy-making processes. Engaging more with organisations in civil society including media advocacy and pressure groups would also deepen the policy-making process by allowing more space for, and broader participation by, different interest groups.

Swaziland and Zimbabwe quite clearly need major political reforms to both restore basic civil and political rights and open up the democratic space necessary for people to be citizens. Botswana and South Africa need to ensure that one-party dominance does not lead to marginalisation of important political and social constituencies and the impossibility of changes of government through the ballot box, and more importantly that the political system is open to policy proposals emanating from outside the ruling party.

All six countries need to be conscious that regular free and fair elections are a necessary but not sufficient condition for democratisation and socio-economic development in the region.

Since independence it also true that levels of socio-economic development are uneven between and within these countries. Economic transformation and socio-economic development to cater for the large majority that was not at the centre of the colonial and apartheid economies are major challenges. The social structure is skewed with a small elite which has access to a lot of resources and which often dominates the political and economic system, and a large majority with low levels of access to resources. Within the six countries, levels of poverty are high and some of these countries are counted by the United Nations as among the poorest in the world.

Low levels of socio-economic development have an impact on media in two major ways. Poor people cannot

be consumers of media products, especially for media that is dependent on commercial sources for its revenue. The media system is consequently under-developed. Second, low access to the media deprives people of the information and symbolic resources they need to be full citizens.

Botswana and South Africa have economic programmes that are considered to be correct in the sense that there is economic stability. Their strategies deliver a degree of economic prosperity and have the respect of international economic partners including investors, bilateral and multilateral partners. Namibia is following a similar trajectory.

On the other extreme, despite a promising start and its position as the bread basket of southern Africa in the first decade of independence, Zimbabwe is in the throes of a deep economic crisis and has the dubious distinction of having the world's largest inflation rate. It has lost its gains and achievements in extending and broadening access to education and health services to the black majority. Swaziland and Lesotho have poorly performing economies and low levels of socio-economic development.

All six countries are also characterised by some of the highest rates of HIV/Aids infection in the world. While Botswana is credited with having an effective HIV/Aids programme, South Africa has until very recently been criticised for a poorly conceived programme and a severe lack of political leadership at the highest levels of government.

#### 4. The freedom and role of media

The issue of media freedom is naturally linked to the long history of struggles for political freedom in southern Africa including in these six countries. During the struggles against colonialism and apartheid, the issue of media freedom was central and in particular in South Africa and Zimbabwe where the struggles took longer. Colonial and apartheid rule came with state ownership and control of the media. The media was used as an instrument of political control and domination by the colonial and apartheid states. Editorial independence was not a reality in state-owned media, particularly in broadcasting. Private owner-

ship of broadcasting stations was not allowed, or when allowed in limited ways as was the case in South Africa it was within a context of control. In short, the role of the media in the colonial and apartheid context was in the service of power and to buttress power that was not democratic.

The media was also an instrument of providing particular images and discourses that served the interests of the colonial and apartheid project of subjugation and domination. It was left to media outside state ownership and control to play a role in criticising state power and providing alternative information and space for voices opposed to undemocratic state power. South Africa had a fairly extensive network of such alternative media.

Alternative and non-state media, however, were often curtailed by draconian laws which impeded their ability to operate. These laws included Official Secrets Acts that were crafted to protect those in power and to prevent them from being accountable for the power they held and the manner in which it was used. There were also criminal defamation and insult laws (though not in South Africa), which were direct clones of laws in pre-democracy Britain and Europe, and security and military laws that prevented journalists from accessing information in the public interest. In periods of political unrest during the struggles for independence and majority rule, emergency laws were often

used to clamp down on journalists and media to prevent them from reporting on political repression. These measures included, in South Africa for example, banning political leaders from being quoted or shown in the media. In short, the colonial and apartheid model is one of control, suppression, silencing and a tradition of propaganda and media in the service of the powerful who should not be made accountable by the media to the public.

#### 5. The role of the media in nation-building and development

“Minister and sunshine journalism”, or investigative journalism? A discussion of the role of the media in these southern African countries needs to be contextualised around the inherited media structures and issues of media freedom.

Post-independence and post-apartheid developments show some continuities and change, and marked differences between the countries. Except for South Africa which formally went the clear route of firmly entrenching media freedom and freedom of expression in its constitution, the other countries demonstrate degrees of continuity rather than radical departures from colonial media practices.

Namibia has maintained the tradition of state ownership and government control of large sections of both the print and electronic media. Namibia actually developed state-owned and government-controlled media after independence by creating a newspaper, the *New Era*, and a news agency. In this regard, the country was going in a direction the continent was questioning. Namibia has tended to increasingly subject the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation to government control instead of enhancing its independence as a public broadcaster. In the case of Zimbabwe, the government still controls large sections of what should be public media and it is the only country in Africa where there are no private or community-owned broadcasting stations. These countries have also maintained most of the repressive colonial laws that they inherited from the colonial governments. Their constitutions often just guarantee freedom of expression and do not explicitly guarantee free-

#### CLIPS

Former *Vrye Weekblad* editor Max du Preez, who made the final submission to South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation hearing, said: “If the mainstream newspapers and the SABC had reflected and followed up on all these confessions and revelations, every single one subsequently proved to have been true, the government would have been forced then to stop, to put a stop to the torture, the assassinations and the dirty tricks. It would have saved many, many lives.”

dom of the media.

While it might appear self-evident that the media is one of the major means of free speech at a society-wide level and is covered by constitutional guarantees of freedom of expression, in African contexts where ordinary legislation conflicts with media freedom it is not always the case that courts, especially when the judiciary are not necessarily independent, will rule in favour of upholding media freedom as an extension of freedom of expression. In Zimbabwe, for example, some judges in recent history have not necessarily upheld media freedom by invoking the Section 20 of the constitution, which protects freedom of expression.

Constitutional reforms which follow the South African practice are therefore necessary and are at the centre of some of the reforms wanted by media advocacy organisations in the region – especially the Media Institute of Southern Africa (Misa) and the Freedom of Expression Institute (FXI) in South Africa, the South Africa National Editor's Forum (Sanef) as well as the regional and continental editors' forums, the Southern African National Editor's Forum (Saef) and The Africa Editor's Forum (Taef). These groups want the media environment transformed so that journalists are not hindered in playing robust roles in providing information, analysis and being investigative watchdogs on behalf of the public. Misa, in particular, has a whole programme on the reform of media laws and the repeal of any legislation that impedes media freedom and freedom of expression.

In addition, it is important to note that journalists and media activists in southern Africa, including journalists in these six countries, were at the forefront of the Windhoek Declaration, formulated in 1991 in Namibia at a Unesco-sponsored conference. The Windhoek Declaration calls for the development of an independent and free press in southern Africa which would play a key role in democratisation and socio-economic development. It is because of the Windhoek Declaration that we have World Press Freedom Day every May 3. The Windhoek Declaration was followed

**Constitutional reforms which follow the South African practice are therefore necessary and are at the centre of some of the reforms wanted by media advocacy organisations**

ten years later, in 2001, by the African Charter on Broadcasting, which seeks to advance the importance of independent broadcasting including, in particular, genuine public service broadcasting which operates in the public interest in contrast to state-owned and government-controlled broadcasting. The Charter also recommends the creation of well-funded independent regulatory bodies for licensing and licensing conditions.

The danger of keeping colonial laws on the statute books has recently been witnessed in Zimbabwe, where the government has actively used them to suppress independent media when it gives a voice to a credible opposition party which threatens its hold on power. In fact, the government there even crafted new and more repressive laws.

## 6. Media and nation-building: contested understandings

In the context of what is largely a state-owned and government-controlled environment in Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, Swaziland and Zimbabwe, the media has been relegated to what is often called, or characterised as, a nation-building and developmental role by governments.

The nation-building role is highly contested because of differing interpretations by governments and media. To governments, the media must prioritise national cohesion, which promotes unity between people who were often divided by colonial and apartheid rule and made to adopt identities that emphasised differences for political reasons. Therefore, according to governments, images and stories demonstrating unity and cohesion are to be prioritised over images and discourses that reflect discord, conflict and differences. To the media, the latter might be interesting to highlight because they might reflect what is happening and what needs to be done to realise genuine national unity.

The meaning of the role of the media in nation-building remains unresolved and a source of tension between media and governments even in South Africa where media is

mostly free from editorial control by the government. The tension over the media's role results in a division between media that is within direct or indirect control of the government tending to highlight things that appear to reflect national unity, and media outside government control highlighting dissent, conflict and tensions within society.

Quite clearly the best way of promoting national cohesion and negotiating identities is to find a balance between an affirmation of positive developments that has a basis in what is actually happening in societies, and highlighting those tensions that signal that all is not well. It is also true some media can play into conflict situations by inflammatory reporting that fuels tensions. One of the solutions to dealing with such unethical practices which undermine media freedom, is through self-regulation by media and professional associations.

The role of media in nation-building is often linked to a role in promoting socio-economic development on the basis that without national unity it is not possible to mobilise a society for national development. Equally the role of the media in development or in a developmental role has a long and contested history, going all the way back to Wilbur Schramm's classic *Mass Media and National Development*, published in 1964. It is not useful to recite the whole argument here, except to say that the practical appropriation of the concept by African governments in their media management bears little resemblance to the idea of media's role in empowering citizens to participate in all the processes of socio-economic development including choices in policy, resource allocation and project prioritisation. In short, the idea of the role of the media in development is not to juxtapose in a simplistic way its role as an agency of accountability, and that of providing information for practical use or recording some achievement.

However, African governments, including those in southern Africa, instead want the media to be a cheerleader for what the late renowned Zimbabwean journalist William Musarurwa called "minister and sunshine journalism". This is a journalism which focuses predominantly on government officials delivering development projects, for example a new road, houses and sanitation facilities, to grateful communities as positive news. Media is considered nega-

tive when reporting that the road was built way out of time-lines, inexplicably over budget, by a crooked contractor with no track record and linked to the Minister or President, and is of poor quality.

The role of media in promoting accountability through investigative and through research, would ironically unveil the complexities of social transformation and promote a more sustainable and thoroughgoing processes of democratisation and socio-economic development as twin and interlinked processes. However it requires particular kinds of media systems and structures which promote diversity and pluralism at the level of ownership, media content and serving diverse audiences as citizens with information and entertainment needs and wants.

## 7. Ownership, content and audiences

A characteristic of the colonial media system and structures in southern Africa was its lack of pluralism and diversity in ownership, content and service to diverse audiences.

At its core was state-controlled broadcasting which abrogated to itself the role of what audiences, especially the African majority, should know and learn, and colonial newspapers – what some writers have called government gazettes. These newspapers tended to be targeted at the colonial elite with news about the colony, the empire and of home in Britain. Africans were either absent or featured as troublemakers of one sort or another.

In South Africa and to some extent in Zimbabwe there was a commercially owned press – some linked to the mining houses, especially the Argus Company which owned papers in both countries as well as in Zambia. In South Africa there was also an Afrikaans press, linked to the National Party government after apartheid became state policy in 1948. There was also a black press – some of which was owned by white publishing companies and targeted at Africans, and some being independent publishing efforts by educated black Africans. The black press existed at the mercy of state power in periods of political upheaval and was often banned. The media system and structures in

South Africa and the then-Rhodesia tended to be dominated especially at the upper echelons by whites, with blacks occupied the lower rungs and not senior editorial and managerial positions.

The broadcasting services of the colonial era were run by government, with appointments to boards and management being done by the government. Licensing was a ministerial prerogative. There was very little, if any, editorial and programming independence. Colonial governments were very conscious of the power of broadcasting because of its ability to transcend the barriers of literacy and reach more people than print media could. Broadcasting services tended to be divided according to languages, and languages in the colonial context tended to be equated with tribes or ethnic groups. Often the intention

was to foster ethnic identities in ways that were intended to divide and rule. In South Africa, once the nominally independent African homelands or Bantustans were created, they were also allowed some broadcasting services. It is important therefore to point out that the colonial legacy is media systems and structures that were constructed in ways that underpinned repressive colonial power.

## 8. Continuity in the post colonial and post apartheid era

The colonial legacy is also one of the state as a major player in the media sector, as both an owner of significant sections of the media and holding a virtual monopoly in broadcasting and as regulator. It is also important to note, as Mytton (1983) has pointed out, that only when African countries were being granted independence did independent public broadcasting become an issue. Usually BBC consultants were asked to assist in structuring services so they could operate outside government control. The his-

tory shows that, with the exception to some extent of South Africa, in the southern African region this advice was not taken and the same logic of control as part of a strategy to maintain power was followed by postcolonial governments. Even in South Africa serious questions are being asked about the independence of recent SABC boards and the role of management in the editorial affairs of the news department. A controversy over blacklisting of commentators who are said to be critical of the government has dented the credibility of the news output and has led to the regulator being asked to investigate.

In Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland the state-dominated and government-controlled media systems were continued. In Namibia state-owned and government-controlled media were created to compete with privately owned media publishing in English, Afrikaans and German. Second, government control of the policy and regulatory framework was also continued with, for example, licensing of broadcasting remaining in government hands. Third, government-controlled media was drafted into largely a role of promoting government-driven development programmes and policies, and not a full spectrum of roles including being an agency of accountability by powerful institutions and empowering of citizens to exercise their newly won democratic rights. Fourth, the Namibian government has a practice of withdrawing government advertising from the privately owned print media, in particular *The Namibian* which has a history of supporting struggles for independence and democracy but has fallen foul of the post-independence government because of its investigative journalism and criticism of the performance of Swapo as a governing party.

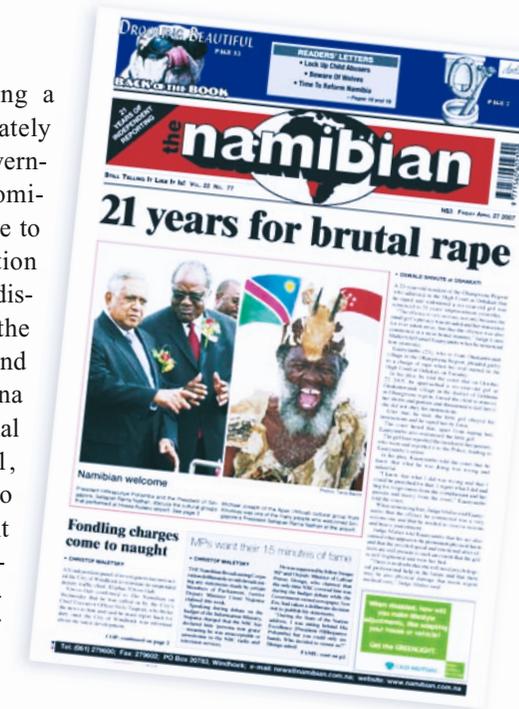
The situation only changed in the 1990s with the democratisation waves across Africa. A key issue in calls for democratisation was media liberalisation in particular, as the Windhoek Declaration demanded the opening of media space to publications independent of government control and “liberalisation of the airwaves”. The response by these governments now under pressure from media freedom and advocacy organisations has been some opening up of media space but in a reluctant manner.

Although Botswana now has a number of privately

owned newspapers (including a daily) as well as two privately owned radio stations, the government-controlled media is dominant and the only media close to having nationwide distribution and reach. The daily paper is distributed freely and run by the Department of Information and Broadcasting. The Botswana government launched a national television channel in 2001, which also operates like Radio Botswana under government control and not as an independent public service broadcaster. The Department of Information and Broadcasting also runs the Botswana News Agency. The country’s media and telecommunications regulation is not yet independent of government control and the government appoints members to the authorities. Recent attempts to pass a Freedom of Information Act and introduce reforms to the Broadcasting Act to create an independent single regulator have stalled in parliament and do not appear to enjoy the support of influential members of the ruling party.

The situation is not any different in Lesotho and in Swaziland, where government is a major player through state ownership in broadcasting and print media with only a few newspapers and FM radio stations that do not have nationwide reach. Again there is no independent regulation of the media sector. In Namibia former President Sam Nujoma appointed himself Minister of information and banned foreign content on television.

To be sure the major difference or change from the colonial era in these three countries is that there is some degree of pluralism and diversity in the media sector. The privately owned media demonstrates varying levels of editorial independence and vigour from the governments and often provides space for organisations in civil society and the political opposition to articulate different political agendas and policies. It often exposes corruption, lack of



accountability and abuse of human rights, and is therefore an agent of democratisation and an alternative development agenda that includes, in the case of community radio, the voices of the people.

However, as pointed out earlier, privately owned media often face harassment by governments using laws inherited from the colonial era. Lawsuits brought by government officials and politicians often undermine the precarious financial base of struggling publications and stations. The regulatory framework for broadcasting, which is government-controlled, causes uncertainty and deters potential investment in broadcasting.

## 9. Zimbabwe: total regression and back to the past?

Zimbabwe has followed much the same route as Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland except for a short period soon after independence when there was a unique experiment to run a newspaper group (bought from Argus of South Africa) through an independent mass media trust. Namibia also experimented with a period of independence for the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation which was eventually eroded and became a casualty of Nujoma’s strategy to perpetuate himself in power. However, when the editors actually exercised their independence and criticised the government’s programmes and policies, the government started influencing the hiring, removal and firing of editors. The papers were soon under government control.

The experiment in independence did not include turning the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC) into a genuine public service broadcaster with full editorial and programming independence and appointments to positions to the board, management and editorial positions on merit, qualifications and experience. The ZBC’s monopoly on broadcasting was maintained until being challenged in the

Supreme Court by a private initiative called Capitol Radio in 2000. The court declared the monopoly unconstitutional and a violation of freedom of expression. Capitol Radio then started broadcasting, but was forcibly closed and emergency powers passed to manage broadcasting while a new Broadcasting Act was formulated and passed in 2001.

On paper, this law (as amended) creates a three-tier broadcasting system made of public-service, commercial and community broadcasting. But a new regulator, the Broadcasting Authority of Zimbabwe, is nothing but an advisory agency to the minister who has final decision-making power on licensing issues. Zimbabwe therefore still has a government-controlled broadcaster as the sole broadcaster. The status quo of the ZBC's monopoly remains and government continues to be the main player in policy-making, an operator through its direct control of the ZBC, and a regulator.

Since 2000 when the ruling Zanu (PF) government faced a serious threat to its power, the media has come under severe controls with the passing of the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA) of 2001 as amended, which requires that all individual journalists and media houses register with a government-appointed agency, the Media and Information Commission (MIC). The MIC has actually used its powers to close newspapers – including *The Daily News*, the only privately owned mass circulation daily ever to publish for more than a year since independence in 1980. The requirement for registration has clearly created an atmosphere where the possibility of self-censorship, for fear of not being registered the next time round, is high. It appears also that the Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO) has gained ownership and control of a once independent and feisty paper that previously high-



### Two independent weekly newspapers published in Harare, Zimbabwe

lighted high-level corruption.

The Zimbabwean situation therefore represents the worst of the continuity of colonial practices and a situation of almost total state ownership and government control of the media, and the near decimation of privately owned media which is editorially independent from the government.

### 10. South Africa: a clean break with the past?

South Africa seems to be the only country that has taken a decisive break with the colonial and apartheid media system and structures, by

not creating a system of state-owned and government-controlled print media. Only in 2005 did government launch a government-owned magazine which seeks to disseminate information on economic opportunities for marginalised communities, ie. it has a development-oriented editorial focus. The print media is dominated by private ownership by both local and foreign companies. South Africa is probably the only African country where the state is not a significant player in the print media sector.

The constraining factor is the effect of competition for advertising which, it could be argued, influences print media to be oriented towards sensationalism, personalisation, infotainment, elite interests, scandal and sport, and does not provide much content that enables readers to be aware and participate in policy debates. Most media companies appear to have adopted the commercial strategies typical of media companies across the world, which often

focus on maximisation of revenue over investment in quality journalism. However, there has been significant deracialisation of management and editorial structures as well as content. The quality papers in both Afrikaans and English tend to target the affluent whites and the emerging black middle class, desired by advertisers. The tabloids, experiencing faster growth than the quality papers, tend to target blacks and lower class readers. There are few significant papers in indigenous African languages.

South Africa also made a decisive break with the practice of state-owned and government-controlled broadcasting, by creating an independent regulatory authority for broadcasting, the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA), in 1993 in the transitional phase. The appointment of its council members remains mainly in the hands of parliament, although government has increased its role over the years. The IBA, today called the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (Icasa), has licensed a number of privately owned regional FM radio stations sold by the SABC, as well as nearly 100 community radio stations. The IBA also licensed the first national free-to-air television channel in 1998-9. As a result, South Africa has more diversity in ownership of broadcasting services than any other southern Africa country. The SABC's radio services cover the full spectrum of 11 official languages and enjoy a large listenership. The SABC is a predominantly commercially funded public broadcaster. Its programme schedules and channel organisation reflects this funding contradiction. As a result, critics often point out how its television schedules are dominated by English-language programming, even though locally produced programming and programmes in African languages and Afrikaans are represented and appear to be on the increase.

South Africa also went for near total sweep of laws inherited from the colonial and apartheid eras, to wipe out a legacy of media repression and open an enabling environment for media freedom. The strong constitutional guarantees of freedom of expression and media freedom render

### The strong constitutional guarantees of freedom of expression and media freedom render many of the remaining old laws and legislation unconstitutional, inasmuch as they contradict the bill of rights in SA

many of the remaining old laws and legislation unconstitutional, inasmuch as they contradict the bill of rights.

Levels of vigilance within the media, civil society and the general public, and an independent judiciary, ensure it is not easy for the government to either turn back the clock or create new laws which might again place the media under strictures that undermine hard-earned freedoms. In fact new legislation, like the Promotion of Access to Information Act, has attempted to create an enabling environment to get information in the public interest.

However, there is criticism of the broadcasting system. First, there are questions over the extent of the SABC's independence from the ruling ANC and the government, although the board is appointed by parliamentary process. There are persistent allegations the SABC is dominated by ANC-linked or ANC members who in turn have appointed other ANC members as senior managers in the news division. Second, the quality of the news output, especially, is said to be a "parade of ministers and officials" who are not questioned and held to account: this is noted as evidence of a lack of editorial independence and instead is deference to the government. The blacklisting of some commentators considered critical of the government, which was confirmed by an SABC-appointed commission in 2006, gave credence to allegations of the loss of editorial independence. Third, the regulator Icasa appears to be overwhelmed by telecommunications work and unable to address issues requiring attention in the broadcasting sector: an example is the review of ownership regulations and licensing of new players in the pay-television sector. It also faces management instability, a skills shortage and inadequate funding.

### 11. Conclusion

Media policy-making and regulation in these six countries has historically been largely driven by the governments, to the exclusion of a broader section of potential actors or

participants in the policy-making process. South Africa has been an exception, but civic participation and opportunities for such have declined over the years although business interests are still actively involved. Such policy-making processes privilege powerful interests – political and commercial – who then make policies that increase their domination.

There is a need, in differing degrees, for radical media reforms in Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, Swaziland, Zimbabwe and South Africa. Such radical reforms should aim to create a media environment which enables the media to play a full role in democratisation and development.

First, governments and ruling parties need to promote processes of policymaking which are inclusive of new and emergent policy actors. These actors include the new opposition political parties and movements that have emerged since the early 1990s, and new organisations in civil society which focus on or include in their advocacy efforts media issues. Multi-party parliaments need to be allowed a greater role in policy-making and not simply be rubber stamps of the executive. In short the media policy-making process needs to be broadened and to be inclusive. Associations of journalists and editors, eg. Saef and Taef, media advocacy groups like Misa, FXI and the Media Monitoring Project in South Africa, must not only be consulted but allowed to participate in policy-making.

Second, the South African practice of public participation through public hearings needs to be strengthened and made a compulsory element of media policy-making in all six countries. Public hearings would serve to provide access for the public in policymaking.

Third, all six countries need to audit their media policies, regulations and laws to ensure they are consistent with the Windhoek Declaration, the African Charter on Broadcasting and the Principles of Freedom of Expression of the African Commission on Human and People's Rights – and any other international treaties and charters that they are signatory to.

Fourth, all six countries need to address the question of funding and financing of media for both existing media and new start ups. It is quite clear that the government-controlled, state-owned broadcasters are underfunded or

inappropriately funded for the public service mandates they have to carry. In particular, local content and African languages mandates require large amounts of production resources. But heavy dependence on commercial advertising disproportionately influences programming and also leads these broadcasters to compete for advertising with privately owned commercial broadcasters. Such a situation is undesirable because it undermines the development of a vibrant and sustainable commercial broadcasting sector. On the other side, governments also use the fact of funding of these broadcasters as a lever of control. Public broadcasters therefore need to be public-funded in a way that is not linked to programming and editorial control by governments – for example, by parliamentary allocation on a multi-year cycle. Such funding should also significantly outweigh commercial funding.

In the print media sector, the government-subsidised newspapers also create unfair competition for privately owned print media. In Botswana, the privately owned newspaper in Setswana, *Mokgosi*, could not survive the competition from the free daily paper, the *Daily News*, published by the government – a vehicle that also takes advertising. Consideration should also be given to resourcing the nascent community broadcasting sector which is critical to fostering community participation in the democratisation and development processes. South Africa has made a good attempt, through the Media Development and Diversity Agency, to provide resources for new media projects.

Fifth, the media, and in particular the news media sector, needs to address the issue of ethics and accountability by creating functional media councils that are effective through peer pressure in ensuring that journalists exercise their independence in an ethical fashion. In the early part of this decade there was a concerted movement led by, among others, Misa, to create non-statutory media councils in response to some governments among the six countries threatening to create statutory media councils that could sanction journalists for ethical violations. Misa and media advocacy organisations and individuals opposed this because – given the poor track record on media freedom issues of most governments in the region – such bodies could become instruments of media control. It also was

clear that most governments had broad and expansive definitions of media ethics, which included criticism that they found inconvenient. But the non-statutory media councils have not functioned well, and a danger exists that governments might still use their legislative clout to go ahead and create statutory councils. Some privately owned media have been guilty of violations of media ethics, often caused by poor training, or a lack of training, and commercial pressures to compete.

The imperatives of democratisation and development require a diverse media system, including diversity of ownership and content. In broadcasting, this means the creation of a genuine, differentiated and complementary broadcasting system – with independent public-service, commercial and community broadcasting. South Africa's broadcasting system comes close to the ideal but falls short because of the unresolved issue of funding the public broadcaster, issues of editorial independence in news and current affairs, and the expansion of programmes in African languages. Zimbabwe has a broadcasting system that is wholly unsuited for the 21st century and requires wholesale reforms, which include licensing new players, freeing the ZBC, and appointing professional journalists and managers and an independent boards of directors. Botswana, Lesotho,

Namibia and Swaziland also need major reforms to create genuine public service broadcasters managed by professionals and lead by independent boards, independent regulators, and the licensing of new commercial and community broadcasters.

All six countries need to take advantage of new developments in technology and digitalisation which have opened up opportunities to license more channels and transcend the constraints of analogue technology and limitations of frequency spectrum. However, such reforms will only be possible if there is, simultaneously, major reform in the telecommunications sector to create independent regulation, allow for more telecommunications players and encourage heavy investment in updating signal transmission by replacing analogue systems with digital networks. The media sector, whether privately or publicly owned, should then develop online publishing/broadcasting strategies which can broaden audiences and enrich their content.

Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, Swaziland and Zimbabwe also need to either sell state-owned newspapers and news agencies to owners who will not create new monopolies, or hand them over to independent boards of directors who should operate them as public media.

## CHARACTERS, CASES AND CAUSES

## Small shifts but significant change: Child-friendly photographers

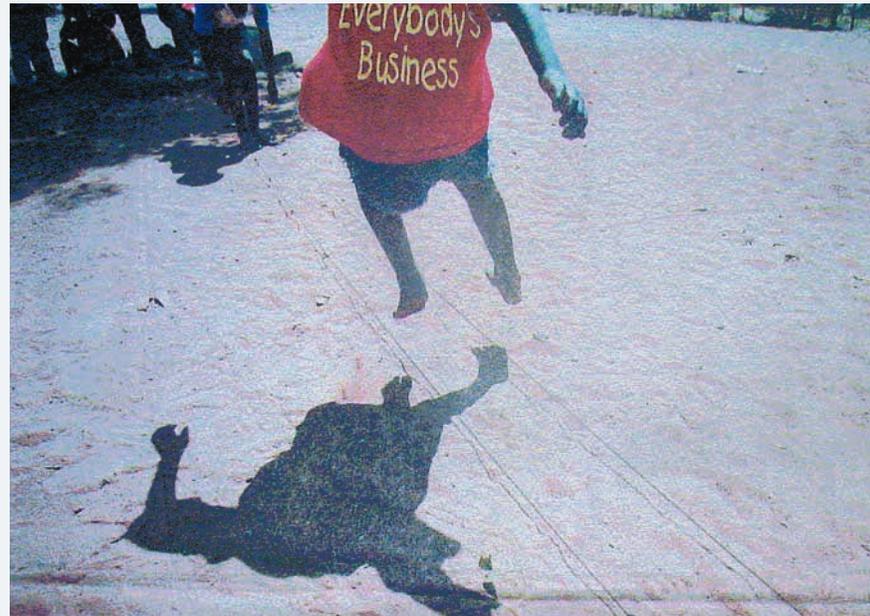
By WILLIAM BIRD

“Why do you never ask children’s permission when you take our pictures?” Bathini Mbatha was taken aback by the question put to him in a training session for journalists. He responded by saying he had never considered this before but, he assured the young child from Wilhemina Hoskins Primary school in South Africa, he would in future always do so. Mbatha was true to his word.

On the last afternoon of the training on reporting children in the media, Mbatha and other journalists were called away to a breaking news story: a horrific bus accident in which 12 out of 23 teachers from one school were killed.

Such accidents are not uncommon in South Africa but the story was fairly widely reported. Many papers carried images. As is also common, children were used to highlight the tragedy and emotion involved (MMP research shows one

**William Bird** is Director of the Media Monitoring Project, based in South Africa and operating since 1993. The MMP is a human rights-driven NGO specialised in media monitoring with the goal of advancing a media culture, in SA and the rest of the continent, that is critical and fair, free, diverse and ethical. See [www.mediamonitoring.org.za](http://www.mediamonitoring.org.za)



**Abused but playing: photographer Thobeka Zazi Ndabula took a child-centred approach and produced a powerful image**

in four children in the media are shown as victims: see “Children, Dying to make the news”, MMP website). There were high-angle images looking down on school children, who all appeared helpless and sad.

Mbatha, however, had different ideas. The story told in *The Star* (a Johannesburg-based newspaper) and the image used was child-focused and did not perpetuate that stereotyped image of children as helpless victims. The photo Mbatha took was from a child’s perspective: it showed a child standing in front of his class, taking an active role in making sense

of the tragedy. The child was at the centre of the image, and the photo was clearly taken at his level. In addition, the child’s name, Tshepo Maphakela, was given in the caption.

When Mbatha met the children again, in subsequent workshops, he showed them this image and others where he had asked each child’s permission. It may not seem a momentous shift, but to the children Mbatha took photographs of, it ensured their dignity and humanity. Through a small action, he not only found more powerful images but also images that respected the rights of children.

## Sad first day at school after death of teachers

BY POLOKO TAU

Tshepo Maphakela has had a very sad school holiday. His mother died in a road accident that also robbed his school of 12 other teachers.

Yesterday morning the 12-year-old pupil from Diphetogo Primary School in Mafikeng, North West, had to walk to school by himself.

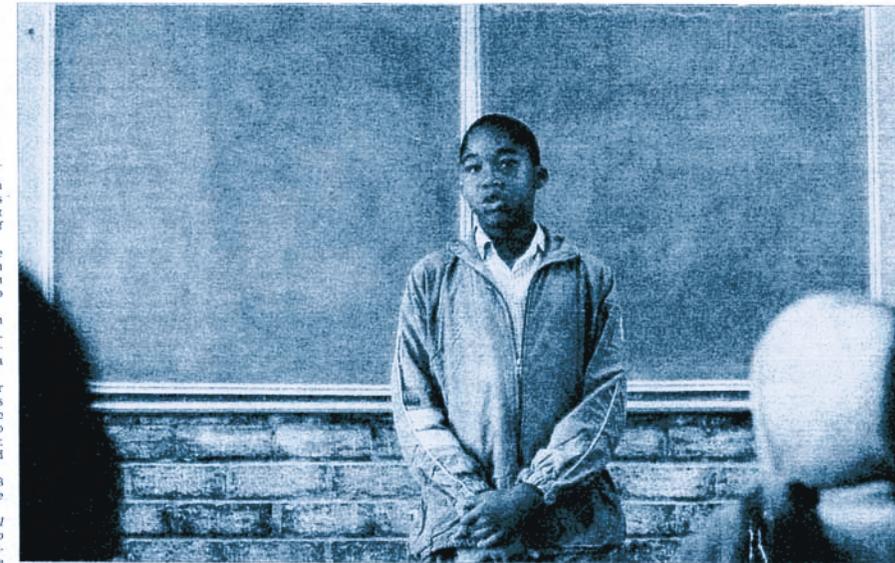
Normally, he walked with his mother, Anna Maphakela, who died last month in a horrific accident together with a dozen colleagues.

About 700 pupils made their way into the school premises yesterday morning just before the siren summoning them to the 7.30am prayer assembly. Only nine familiar faces stood in front.

The school used to have 23 teachers before it was hit by the tragedy.

“Ring, ring the bell again, now it’s time for us to come,” pupils sang their principal, Diguu Mocumi’s favourite song. She, too, died in the accident. They had been singing the song for years on the first day of every term.

Eleven replacement teachers were introduced at the assembly by acting principal Rinkie Mahuma and pupils



**LOST HIS MOTHER:** Tshepo Maphakela tells his class how he spent his holidays during the first day of school yesterday.

PICTURE: BATHINI MBATHA

ile Gopane, also died in the accident.

Their new teachers asked anyone to volunteer and tell the class how they spent their holidays. With the class in stony

and prepared myself for the party in our neighbourhood. I heard something about the accident before I left for the party but no one told me my mother was involved and I

accident and died. Right there I cried a lot during the holidays. My holidays were sad,” he said.

For the acting principal the first day at school went as

cuttings on the funeral and openly spoke to teachers about the tragedy. They’re coping really well.”

Mahuma added that the 12 teachers were carrying

The North West Education Department said that counsellors could be on standby for the next three months to help pupils and teachers to deal with all the difficulties that

A child’s perspective on a bus tragedy: Bathini Mbatha’s photograph in the July 18 2006 edition of *The Star*

He was not the only journalist who shifted the way he worked.

Thobeka Zazi Ndabula, another photographer from the same paper, also demonstrated how a different, child-centred approach could produce powerful images that challenged stereotypes about children and respected their rights at the same time.

In one example, a story about police bungling rape cases was accompanied by an image of an abused child. With the story, the

photo ensured that children’s views on an issue that directly affected them were heard.

Unlike many other images of abused children seen throughout the world in media, instead of further violating the children’s rights by identifying them, or showing them as helpless, Ndabula’s image was taken from behind of an abused girl playing a jumping game with elastic.

She can be seen leaping into the air. She may be abused, but she is active and playing – and her identity

is protected. The image challenges stereotypes about abused children and showed Ndabula’s commitment to promoting and respecting human rights.

Together, Ndabula and Mbatha rallied the senior staff and decision-makers at *The Star*. They organised sessions with other members of the editorial staff and outlined the importance of representing children in ways that were in their best interests.

Through their actions, these two photographers helped ensure that stories about children weren’t done without the children. It was best practice not only in South Africa but in the rest of Africa and the world.

## CHARACTERS, CASES AND CAUSES

## Gwen Lister: Going independent in Namibia

Gwen Lister is co-founder of the Media Institute of Southern Africa. As an editor, Lister exposed atrocities against Namibians by South African security forces and was detained for several days while four months pregnant.

As editor of *The Namibian*, Lister's efforts to support the principle of press freedom in Namibia, both before and after independence, and her determination to defend the public's right to know have never wavered despite concerted efforts to silence her through harassment and intimidation.

Lister is also co-founder and former chairperson of the Media Institute of Southern Africa, which fosters free, independent and diverse media.

She was born in East London, South Africa, on December 5 1953. After graduating from the University

From IPI's "50 World Press Freedom Heroes Report" written by Michael Kudlak. On May 3 2000, IPI named 50 press freedom heroes to commemorate its 50th anniversary. The collection is available on the IPI website: [www.freemedia.at](http://www.freemedia.at)



Gwen Lister receives her World Press Freedom Hero award in 2000 from Moegsien Williams of the IPI

of Cape Town with a bachelor's degree in 1975, she began her journalistic career with the *Windhoek Advertiser* in Windhoek, Namibia.

Together with the former editor of the *Advertiser*, Hannes Smith, she started the *Windhoek Observer*, a weekly newspaper, in 1978. As political editor of the *Observer*, she incurred the wrath of the South African authorities with her critical reporting on South Africa's apartheid policies in Namibia. In the six years she served on the paper, her home was raided by the police and she was tried and acquitted under a host of

South African laws, including the Internal Security Act, the Publications Act and the Customs and Excise Act.

In May 1984, when Lister traveled to Zambia to cover Namibia's independence talks, the South African authorities banned the *Observer*. She challenged the ban before the Publications Appeal Board in Pretoria and succeeded in having it set aside. The newspaper's management, however, blamed her for the banning and demoted her. This led to a walkout of the entire staff – result-

ing in their dismissal and Lister's resignation.

In December 1984 in what was an obvious attempt to stop her from setting up a new paper, she was arrested under the Official Secrets Act after she revealed the contents of a document that authorised the interception of her incoming and outgoing mail "for reasons of state security". For some months after her release, she was confined to the Windhoek district, her passport was confiscated and she had to report to the police three times a week.

The first edition of her new inde-



Gwen Lister

pendent paper, *The Namibian*, was published in August 1985. From the beginning *The Namibian* was the only paper in Namibia to expose ongoing atrocities and human rights violations against Namibians at the hands of South African security forces.

The newspaper helped pave the way for the implementation of the United Nations settlement plan for Namibia, Resolution 435, and was quickly targeted by right-wing ele-

ments and the South African security forces. Many issues of *The Namibian* were confiscated, and an advertising boycott by the white business community was organised by the South African authorities. Shots were regularly fired at the newspaper's building, and tear gas was placed in its air-conditioning system. In October 1988 its offices were burned down by a group called the White Wolves.

In June 1988 Lister, who was four months pregnant, was detained for several days under Proclamation AG 9, which provided for indefinite detentions without trial. The authorities wanted to know the source for a published document that proposed sweeping new powers for police in Namibia.

When Namibia finally became independent in 1990, *The Namibian* continued its watchdog role with the new government of the South West African People's Organization.

Lister's newspaper has successfully made the transition from donor dependency to financial self-sufficiency 10 years after independence from South African rule. The paper continued its fiercely independent editorial stance despite the fact that initial goodwill toward the press was replaced by growing tensions between former President Sam Nujoma's government and the independent media.

#### Update since 2000 by EBERHARD HOFMANN

The Namibian Government has two restrictive and discriminatory measures against private independent media in place.

The ban of government advertisements enforced expressly against the daily *The Namibian* since December 2000 is still upheld today. Government has evaded questions on what criteria are applied when withholding advertising from an independent news medium. The advertising ban has caused no circulation loss to *The Namibian*.

Secondly, in October 2006, government issued a ruling that tender advertisements for the delivery of goods and services to the state are only to be published in the state-funded daily newspaper, *New Era*.

Since September 2006, *The Namibian* is printed on its own printing press, thereby adding more competition to the news print market which up to then was dominated by the media firm Democratic Media Holdings. Lister entered a partnership with private enterprise for the establishment of the printing press.

*The Namibian*, with Gwen Lister as active publisher, annually sponsors a national soccer tournament among the 13 regions of Namibia.

## CHARACTERS, CASES AND CAUSES

## Percy Qoboza: Symbol of resistance in South Africa

Percy Qoboza was best known for his outspoken criticism of South Africa's apartheid government. Under his guidance, *The World* launched fierce attacks on the government's race-based policies. Despite persecution, Qoboza's opinion continued to be heard in various newspapers until his death in 1988.

One of South Africa's most renowned newspaper editors, Qoboza built *The World* into the country's largest-circulation black daily and the voice of black South Africans during the apartheid era. He accomplished this task under an intolerable burden of legislation and ruthless, often racially based, harassment.

Qoboza was best known internationally for his criticism of the South African government in the aftermath of the 1976 Soweto uprising. He was frequently subjected to intimidation, interrogation and jailing, and his defiance under the apartheid regime became a symbol of resistance throughout the world.

From IPI's "50 World Press Freedom Heroes Report" written by **Michael Kudlak**. On May 3 2000, IPI named 50 press freedom heroes to commemorate its 50th anniversary. The collection is available on the IPI website: [www.freemedia.at](http://www.freemedia.at)



Tselito Percy Peter Qoboza was born on January 17 1938 in Sophiatown, Johannesburg. He began his journalistic career in 1963 at *The World*, a newspaper for black South Africans.

He was appointed news editor of *The World* in 1967 and editor-in-chief in 1974. Under his leadership, the daily spoke out on controversial issues and launched fierce attacks on the government and its policy of apartheid, which had as its stated aim the separate development of the country's races through rigorous racial segregation.

In June 1976 violent riots occurred in Soweto, near Johannesburg, and rapidly spread to other black urban areas. Qoboza condemned the suppression of the demonstrations that followed, during which several hundred people died, and was arrested and detained for 18 hours without being charged.

The unrest culminated in September 1977 with the death in detention of the black community leader, Steve Biko. Qoboza condemned the murder in the pages of his paper.

In a month, during a massive government crackdown on black opposition activities, both *The World* and the *Weekend World* were banned. Qoboza was again arrested without charge and freed after six months, in March 1978, following an interna-

tional campaign for his release.

"The 'End of the World' has a special meaning for journalists in South Africa," wrote Harvey Tyson, former editor-in-chief of the Johannesburg daily, *The Star*. "When the paper named *The World* was shut down by the government, press freedom finally died in this country."

Qoboza remained in South Africa for three more years. He worked for the black weekly, *The Voice*, which was later banned, and then as editor of the Transvaal editions of both the daily *Post* and the *Sunday Post*, which had taken over the role and much of the readership of the banned *World*.

Qoboza was seldom free from threats of violence that characterised the regime's vindictiveness toward those who opposed apartheid. The pressures eventually proved too great, and Qoboza went to live in the United States.

Speaking at the IPI's 29th annual General Assembly in Florence, Italy, in May 1980, Qoboza said: "One of the problems of South Africa is that we are a society obsessed by race. With shining consistency, South Africa has condemned journalists; they are all no good, irrespective of their colour. But because of colour, the black journalist is more susceptible to the pressures ... The government started very modestly by refusing black reporters passports. Then there were cases of journalists



**Percy Qoboza**

leaving on travel permits, often for training scholarships, never returning to their native land again."

But in the late 1970s, action against black journalists began to be stepped up. Qoboza said that he would never forget arriving at the office one day and finding nine reporters had disappeared, seemingly "wiped off the face of the earth". Three were later released, but

he never saw the other six again.

In the United States, Qoboza assumed the position of guest editor at the *Washington Star*, where he continued to be an outspoken critic of the apartheid regime as the editor in charge of Third World and UN affairs.

In 1985 Qoboza returned to South Africa, where the *Post* and *Sunday Post* had been closed in his absence, and began working as editor of the weekly *City Press*. Although owned by the pro-government Afrikaans press group, Nasionale Pers, he was allowed complete editorial independence and continued to criticise the apartheid regime in his hard-hitting column, *Percy's Pitch*.

Under Qoboza's editorship, *City Press* quickly became the country's widest-read black-edited publication. Its circulation hit a peak of more than 200 000 shortly before Qoboza died, tragically, on his 50th birthday, after a short illness.

## CHARACTERS, CASES AND CAUSES

## Promoting independent, pluralistic and free press: Misa

By LUCKSON CHIPARE

In December 1989, a group of media practitioners largely drawn from various countries of southern Africa met in Chobe, northern Botswana, to discuss “the right to inform and be informed”.

This sowed the seeds of what was to become the Media Institute of Southern Africa (Misa) which was established in 1992 with a SADC regional mandate of promoting the provisions of the Windhoek Declaration of May 1991 that declared “independent, pluralistic and free press” as essential for democracy and economic development.

Since its founding Misa, based in Windhoek, Namibia, has monitored, investigated and reported on media freedom violations in the 11 countries of the SADC, earning itself a reputation for being a credible source of such information.

By 1994, Misa had joined the then-two-year-old International Freedom of Expression eXchange (IFEX), now a global network of 72 organisations working to defend and promote the right to free expression, making it one of the first members from the global South.

Luckson Chipare is an independent consultant and a former Regional Director of Misa from 2000 to 2006



Participants at the Chobe meeting in December 1989 include a number of people linked with Misa and its activities over the years: Methaetsile Leepile (former Misa regional director), Geoff Nyarota, Bornwell Chakoadza, Raymond Louw, Al Osman, Govin Reddy, Peta Thornycroft, Ndimara Tegambwage, Patrick van Rensburg, Paul Fauvet, Andrew Sesinyi, Ingrid Löfström Berg and others.

Misa has reported on the deaths, assaults, detentions, imprisonment and harassment of journalists, and banning of publications and bombing of presses in the region.

The institute has also gone beyond reporting by providing practical assistance to media practitioners and houses in the form of funds

for legal defence as part of its promotion of media freedom.

It has also campaigned for the repeal of laws that hinder the enjoyment of free expression and media freedom while promoting the enactment of legislation that promotes access to information and the professionalisation of media such as self-

**Misa has reported on the deaths, assaults, detentions, imprisonment and harassment of journalists, and the banning of publications and bombing of presses in the region**

regulation for print media and the establishment of independent broadcasting regulatory authorities for the regulation of broadcast media.

Misa co-organised and co-hosted the May 2001 Windhoek Declaration +10 conference which adopted the African Charter on Broadcasting, most of whose provisions were later incorporated in the African Commission of Human and Peoples’ Rights Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression in Africa of October 2002.

Misa continues to campaign for media independence and pluralism, particularly through the realisation of the provisions of the African Commission Declaration of 2002. These campaigns are necessitated by the slow progress in establishing independent broadcasting regulatory

mechanisms and the freeing of the airwaves to enable the equitable licensing and operation of all forms of broadcast (public, private and community) media in the region.

It rigorously participated in the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) where it joined other free expression groups in campaigning for an enabling environment for media, in all its forms, to play its central role in the information society.

Misa firmly believes a free and pluralistic media is essential for development, as free media contributes to good governance and promotes political transparency and accountability.

The institute bases its work on the principle that free media helps set the agenda and influence public debate. It helps in shaping meaning, forming public opinion, demanding transparency and holding governments accountable. It is an irreplaceable part of public education, facilitates better access to communication for people living in poverty and can help build social cohesion.

## CHARACTERS, CASES AND CAUSES

## Mavis Moyo: Fifty years of lobbying in Zimbabwe

By JOHN MASUKU

When an enterprising Philip Moyo of rural Matabeleland in southern Zimbabwe bought a radio set in the early 1940s, in the middle of the Second World War, relatives and friends marvelled at his “amazing box that talks about world issues”.

That “talking box” was to have a lifetime impact on his niece, young Mavis Moyo, then at school, who became a renowned career radio broadcaster. Her passion and unparalleled professionalism in the audio medium would have an impact on many successful broadcasters – present and departed – who left indelible marks on the Zimbabwean airwaves in the past 50 years.

Moyo began her broadcasting career in 1953 at the age of 24 with the Federal Broadcasting Corporation (FBC), predecessor to the Rhodesia Broadcasting Corporation (RBC) and present-day Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation. For many years she was one of very few women broadcasters, black or white, since professional jobs in colonial Zimbabwe were dominated by men. In 1968 Moyo was the first woman to read the news on the RBC

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African Service.

Born Mavis Zulu on July 17 1929 in Essexvale (now Esigodini) near Bulawayo, Zimbabwe’s second largest city, Moyo received a good education in rural Rhodesia due to her grandparents’ closeness to the missionaries who established many schools. She trained as a teacher and taught for some years.

Her broadcasting talents were discovered when she moved to the capital city, Salisbury (now Harare), during the Federation of the Rhodesias and Nyasaland. She received mostly on-the-job training although she later attended courses in European, Asian and African countries.

Today, the name Mavis Moyo is synonymous with women and community development programmes in Zimbabwe and its neighbours.

In over 50 years in radio she is credited for pioneering women’s programmes like *Radio Homecraft Club (RHC)*, a Shona and Ndebele-language magazine on the RBC African Service.

Said Moyo: “My programmes incorporated topics on cookery, childcare, agriculture, community development and self-help schemes. Most programmes were based on the needs of the people, according to

feedback which we got.”

RHC was the precursor to most of the current, acclaimed gender-and-development programmes across the four radio stations of the state-controlled Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC), which still enjoys a monopoly of the airwaves 26 years after the country gained political independence.

Both rural and urban women, who Moyo and colleagues visited during recording tours, were richly enlightened by the well-packaged, informative and educative discussions and interviews. Educational booklets related to the RHC were distributed.

With more opportunities emerging after independence, Moyo was appointed to spearhead the estab-



A women’s group holds a discussion with Mavis Moyo

lishment, on October 4 1982, of Radio 4. This was a fourth ZBC radio channel, dedicated to education and rural development as the countryside was rehabilitated after almost two decades of the liberation war.

After attending a major conference for women organised by the United Nations in Nairobi, Kenya, in 1985, she formed the dynamic Zimbabwe chapter of the Federation of African Media Women (FAMWZ), bringing together broadcast and print journalists.

In 1988 FAMWZ, with Moyo as chairperson, launched Development Through Radio (DTR), a rural radio listening club project which saw the establishment of 45 clubs in four of nine provinces of Zimbabwe, broadcast in Shona and Ndebele.

Moyo and fellow women journalists trained listening club members with the assistance of ZBC, Unesco and the Freidrich Ebert Stiftung.

The project, now in a lull due to a policy shift by the ZBC, promoted development by rural communities using radio cassette recorders in a 30-minute programme dedicated to them and aired on ZBC’s Radio 4 (now National FM).

The project rapidly increased



Mavis Moyo on radio for the FBC, seen here in an old newspaper cutting

The project nurtured a culture of communicating directly with service providers and saw many listeners being empowered for long-term sustainability, avoiding dependency.

All clubs were given portable recorders, audiocassettes and batteries. On the day RLC programmes were transmitted, members gathered to listen to their show. Afterwards, they discussed the content. Then they recorded their

rural radio access since the receivers were distributed to all clubs. It linked rural folk with their elected representatives, government ministries and non-government organisations – and outstanding outcomes were there for all to see.

“In Matabeleland, children born during internal disturbances easily got birth certificates even in the absence of their fathers who had ‘disappeared’, and forged ahead with their education; in Mashonaland women managed to source funding for income-generating projects like fence-making and poultry keeping and others were able to treat their soil which was no longer yielding any crops,” said Moyo.

responses – and new issues.

The club co-coordinators, on weekly visits, collected cassettes. Back at the studios they listened to them and identified potential resource persons or organisations to approach for responses. It was these inputs, professionally linked to the club recordings, which made members look forward to the next programme.

At a glance, this project was guided by a participatory view of development. It recognised that meaningful solutions to community problems must begin with community members themselves. It encouraged them to identify, prioritise and articulate their problems – because



**Mavis Moyo today**

the way they perceive these is different from how journalists, development workers and donor agencies perceive the same problems.

Said Moyo: “The DTR project was conceived not to satisfy some grand development plan conceived outside of the target audience, but to facilitate development as they themselves saw it. Thus, it was for the DTR members to speak and for others, including experts, to react.”

In its heyday, the DTR project broadened horizons, broke the sense of isolation and empowered women by making them understand their rights. It demystified the media and provided alternative ways of communication.

Many neighbouring countries – like Mozambique, Malawi, Angola, South Africa and Namibia – borrowed a leaf from FAMWZ and established their own radio listening clubs. It is hoped ZBC will in future allow DTR programmes back on the air.

Through FAMWZ, Moyo lobbied aggressively for more educational and journalism training opportunities for many young women, and lamented gender imbalances – especially in top management in newsrooms.

In the late 1980s, Moyo’s radio drama, *Changes*, about the changing lifestyle of African women, came third in a competition organised by the Union of Radio and television Organisations in Africa (Urtna).

More than 50 years on, Mavis Moyo is still actively involved in radio broadcasting and raring to go!

# 9

SECTION NINE

# Looking ahead



# Looking ahead: what next for African media?

By **Guy Berger**

## 1. Introduction

Africans are the least-served people of the world in terms of the circulation of information, for the reason that this continent exhibits a mass media that is everywhere limited in terms of quantity, and also sometimes quality. This is an ever-increasing handicap as the global economy and international cultures evolve from the manufacturing and farming age into the Information Society. Productivity, politics and profit in today's world depend less and less on raw materials, including even oil, and more and more on societies adapting, adopting and applying knowledge that depends in turn on increased information flows. To imagine an Information Society without a major role for a free and fruitful media system is, as one observer has put it, the same as talking of farming without farmers.<sup>1</sup>

What all this means is that increasing “media density” in Africa is key to advancing democracy and development on the continent. But, in turn, this requires the basic precondition of an environment conducive to the expansion of media. The media industry cannot grow when journalists are jailed, publications get banned, broadcasting is a state-monopoly and the same situation in telecommunications results in internet costs way above what most people can afford.

This is not to say that Africa – with its 54 countries – is all the same. For example, research by AMDI has highlighted some of the differences concerning the number of journalists per 1 000 head of national population.<sup>2</sup> This barometer is a bit like measuring how many doctors are available to serve a given number of people, and it reveals significant variations in media health around Africa. For instance, Ethiopia is sparse with only one journalist for every 99 000 inhabitants. The figure for Zimbabwe is 34 000.

Cameroon has just over 18 000, Ghana nearly 11 000. But even a comparatively high performer like South Africa, with one journalist to every 1 300 citizens, still lags way behind many other countries worldwide.

To grow Africa's media entails learning from five decades of experience. By periodising this history into general phases, the lessons become clearer – and future decades can be better predicted. There are five intersecting issues that can be considered in this regard. They cover: 1. the legal environment for media; 2. the importance of enabling regulations; 3. the continental view; 4. technological developments; and 5. capital and skill. Although all are vital contributors to media development, the precondition for success hangs on the state of play with the first-listed one: a conducive legal environment is the most important factor. As a recent study by the UN Economic Commission for Africa has stated: “The need for a critical review and overhaul of the legal and policy environment in which the media operates across Africa cannot be overstated.”<sup>3</sup>

## 2. Legal environment: lifting the lid

One lesson of African history, vividly shown in this book, is that whenever governments have let up, media starts mushrooming. “After the 1990s, what was once a media desert has become a landscape flourishing with newspapers, radio and television stations,” another author has summed up.<sup>4</sup> People take advantage of the possibilities of freedom to produce all kinds of platforms – for reasons of culture, politics, profit-seeking or a mix of all three.

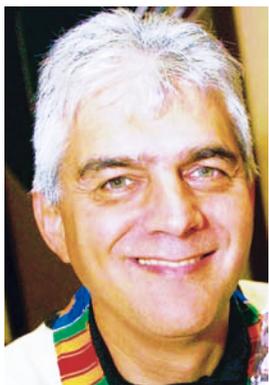
Writing about African media in 1979, veteran journalist Frank Barton began by declaring: “As political freedom came to the continent, so did press freedom disappear. This is the paradox of the press in Africa.”<sup>5</sup> But his sentiment is wrong in that press freedom barely existed before independence, and indeed the continuing legacy of colonial laws attests to this. As another writer correctly observed back in 1991: “African countries have never experienced real press freedom, neither during nor after colonialism.”<sup>6</sup> Today, many countries do have this experience.

However, it is still a paradox that in 50 years during

which Africa should by rights have enjoyed a long-wave post-colonial boom in environments free of restrictions on media, there are still regimes that resist liberalisation. Thus after all this time there are, incredibly, some countries operating systems that are as suffocating as the colonial ones. It is not only cases of stagnation of media among such countries, but even worse – actual cases of reverses – of shrinkage of media. In particular, current governments in Zimbabwe, Eritrea, Ethiopia and Gambia show how in the 21st century, through thoroughly misguided myopia, repressive political authority can be a direct cause of regress in media. Insult laws and criminal defamation laws, inherited from colonialism and which criminalise criticisms of government figures, especially remain an affront to post-independent Africa. Outdoing the colonialists themselves, countries like Zimbabwe have gone further than their inheritance to introduce even more suppressive media laws. In that country, like others, the compulsory registration of journalists (allowing for disqualification as well) is a continuing violation of each individual's right to free speech and a sure recipe for self-censorship that can only pervert the quality of information in circulation. Elsewhere, although registration is often not enforced, or at present is not used for licensing purposes, it remains on the statutes in places like Uganda, Nigeria, Cameroon and Tanzania.

In 1971, a book called *Muffled Drums* predicted that “as Africa modernises, its news media will grow and flourish”.<sup>7</sup> What it did not anticipate was how political controls like those described above would constrain the expansion of media. But African media history from the 1990s shows that where governments have let the sun shine, and the wind blow, space is created in which media flourishes and information is able to flow like agricultural furrows after an African storm.

But there are incomplete developments. Newspapers thrive and are vibrant in democratic Nigeria, yet this is still a country that curtails broadcasting by a de facto policy against the licensing of community radio. In contrast, many of the DRC's formerly info-deprived citizens have access to one of the country's 196 community radio stations – and despite the country's divisions it has not been wracked by war-through-the-airwaves. TV stations proliferate in Ghana



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and Tanzania – a result of a liberalised environment there. Uganda is not far behind. Nollywood products flood Nigeria and beyond. But in places like Zambia, the heavy hand of state ownership and government control still means stagnant print and broadcast assets, and struggling national newsagencies, often protected by licensing or other monopolies. The number of national state radio outlets in 17 countries has been static over the past five years.<sup>8</sup> Yet across the continent, it is private and community media which have shown that it is they who can expand the industry.

The problem is that not all African governments have learnt to put public interest in more media, above their own misperceived interests in having only that media which they can control. There is a reductionist equating of their interests

with the public or national interest. An African government minister once said: “It is necessary that the information we disseminate not only reflects the truth, but reflects a truth that is not contrary to the superior interests of the people of Côte d’Ivoire”.<sup>9</sup> But this kind of perspective means fettering media, and in so doing, governments end up pulling the whole society down.

In more democratic countries, governments have had to learn to

live with a free media – recognising at least that while an independent press may not help them stay in power, it is an essential institution if they hope to make a comeback next time round. Some are also beginning to see the wisdom of modern media relations, and accept their limitations in terms of direct management of the media environment, instead of bludgeoning journalists with crude controls akin to colonialism – a method which as post-colonial Africans they ought to revile and refuse to repeat. Yet, as Kenyan editor George Githii once said: “For governments who fear newspapers there is one consolation. We have known many instances where governments have taken over newspapers, but we have not known a single incident in which a newspaper has taken over a government.”<sup>10</sup>

Change, however, is not something that comes about simply because despots or bureaucrats wake up one day with the scales fallen from their eyes. It has taken extensive advocacy from African civil society, opposition parties – and members of the media itself. It is not just that these organised groups have grasped the specific and general value of a vibrant, free and pluralistic media. More broadly, journalism independent of government has shown the broad citizenry that despite occasional problems of excessive partisanship and/or ethical disgraces, the media can make a really positive difference. This was the case not only during the anti-colonial struggle all over the continent. It continued in cases like the investigative journalism in Mozambique with journalists like Carlos Cardoso, and in many countries today.

All over Africa, a free media plays a credible role in sensitising people about HIV-Aids and in pushing for better government responses to the epidemic. The performance of the media has been the best guarantee of its independence of government control.

US academic Louise Bourgault has argued that Africa’s rural oral tradition is not conducive to individual critical postures (à la Western-style journalism) and instead has been an asset for autocratic regimes.<sup>11</sup> But this analysis underplays the pluralism in the oral tradition as well as the new post-colonial traditions of investigative journalism and media dissent. Cameroonian writer Francis Nyamnjoh has written that African journalists are mistakenly caught up in a Western liberal paradigm of being a fourth estate, when the reality in Africa is one of ethnic politics and patronage which calls out for media recognition of these identities. He suggests, incorrectly, that these are incompatible mindsets – that an independent watchdog role does not square with power realities on the ground. But even if both writers were right, they would also be amongst the first to agree that Africa’s restrictive press laws have to go.

In other words, it is because of history and context, not despite these, that Africans are entitled to the full spectrum of human rights – both individual and institutional.

As African experience shows, as recorded in this book, legislative reform must also go further than repeal of anachronistic and inappropriate laws. In particular, consti-

tutional provisions are needed that expressly recognise media freedom, and not only rights to free speech narrowly conceived on an individual basis. “Claw-back” qualifications to the right to free expression in constitutions should be defined so as to exclude abuse for political reasons. In addition, systems are needed with parliamentary oversight and appointments in regard to public media, and dispensations elaborated so as to ensure that regulatory bodies are independent of government party-political influence. The same principle should apply to Internet-domain name registration bodies – by no means should decisions about who can use, for example, a .zw (Zimbabwe domain name) be the sole prerogative of a national government.

Media freedom is a precondition for pluralism, and pluralism is not just an indicator of the extent of media enterprises in a country, it also has two critical political impacts. First, it allows for (though does not necessarily lead to) a diversity of viewpoints to play in the public sphere – a precondition for citizens to feel united in a common and democratic space. This is a necessary phenomenon if any resort to force is to be redundant or unreasonable. Second, pluralism impacts on state-owned media in terms of competition and pressure for that media to perform with credible impartiality.

One of the most serious shackles on media development has been state monopoly on broadcasting. The reason for such control? “African public cultures at a national level are – not only still but increasingly – radio-driven cultures. This is why such vital interests come into play in the ownership, control and design of what goes out over the airwaves,”<sup>12</sup> it has been written. Again, it is because of this that laws preventing radio pluralism must be scrapped and new enabling legislation introduced.

In sum, one thing is certain: Africa’s media cannot play its full role in democracy and development in a political and legislative environment that erects road-blocks to progress. Unless governments and citizens actually want to see their societies go nowhere, there should be a zero-tolerance approach to laws that prevent African media from flourishing. The lessons of the past five decades on the negative consequences of media control, contrasted with the positives of allowing multiple media to emerge, could hardly be clearer.

### 3. Enabling regulation: part privatising and parameters

Scrapping laws that militate against media freedom is one thing. Africa also needs to re-legislate and re-institutionalise to keep media freedom intact. For example, laws are needed that explicitly protect public media from interference, as Ghana has demonstrated. Further, law can promote media enabling mechanisms, such as the Media Development and Diversity Agency set up by an act of the South African parliament. Freedom of Information laws are new elements that are in various states of play, but still mainly unrealised, around the continent.

Such re-legislating should arise from policy guidelines, and spell out, for example, the legal requirements for state-owned media to incorporate diversity within their content. Such provisions could help end the current situation where such bias is too often justified as giving the government’s side of the story in the face of a hostile independent media. This particular vice causes a vicious cycle, where each pole of the spectrum becomes so partisan that none has credibility with the citizenry. According to Nyamnjoh: “(T)he media have assumed a partisan, highly politicised, militant role in Africa. And have done so by dividing citizens into the righteous and the wicked, depending on their party-political leanings, ideologies and regional, cultural or ethnic belonging.”<sup>13</sup> Explicit law and regulation can help avoid such scenarios – at least as regards the main culprit, i.e. state-owned media.

Advocacy in many cases around Africa has led to media law reform that creates openness, materialises free expression and results both in more media and in a growing media industry. But freeing up the media environment does not mean that an unregulated free-for-all is what’s needed. Another Radio-Milles-Collines is certainly not wanted. Hate-speech (in its genuine form – not when expediently interpreted as such for party-political reasons) needs to be limited. The challenge has been: how do Africans preserve media freedom, without having clear misuses of free expression?

In short, the lesson of Africa over the past 50 years is that a third way must be found between government control and

big-bang liberalisation. The solution has increasingly been recognised as being the creation of independent authorities to regulate communications, especially broadcasting. While governments still have a legitimate role to play in terms of broad policy (and parliaments in terms of law), it is abundantly clear that regulatory bodies should not be akin to an arm of an Information Ministry. Appointments should be via parliament, budgets should be adequate, and there must be no space for political or crony favouritism in licensing. As part of the picture, policy processes should be transparent and inclusive, for example with public hearings being held and taken seriously.

Regulation also needs to be informed by research and conceptual clarity. It does not help, for example, to conflate the terms “government broadcaster” and “state broadcaster” (as Article 19 unfortunately recently does)<sup>14</sup>, when what is meant is state-ownership and government-control (the two do not necessarily go hand in hand; a state-owned broadcaster can – and should – be a public broadcaster in the sense of being accountable to the public, not the government). A tier of local community broadcasting, whether seen as money-making (West Africa) or non-profit (Southern Africa), also needs to be recognised as different from state-owned (usually national media) and big city or provincial commercial broadcasting.<sup>15</sup>

Regulation also needs to address the critical issue of funding public media – else the experience shows that there can be unfair competition with private media (as in the case of Botswana’s press) on the one hand, and over-commercialised programming (as in the case of the SABC) on the other.

African media history records a Beninese government official as saying in 1985: “You are not the first, nor the second nor the third power, not to mention that you will never be the four or fifth power. You are instruments of propaganda.”<sup>16</sup> The instrumentalist mentality here has historically been justified by African governments in terms of the developmentalist and nation-building role of the media.

Kwame Nkrumah famously declared of the “true African journalist” that: “His (sic) newspaper is a collective organiser, a collective instrument of mobilisation and a collective educator – a weapon, first and foremost to over-

throw colonialism and imperialism and to assist total African independence and unity.”<sup>17</sup> This is a perspective that is far from dead, even when it is not hijacked into “sunshine” or pro-government journalism. The role of communication in addressing developmental issues is indeed a central focus for Africa, unlike many other continents. But what is evident is that media role – and its effect on audiences – is not something that is susceptible to social-engineering style of planning. At best, broad direction can be given to the complex production and distribution apparatuses that make up the media – and this is far better achieved by regulation rather than direct control. Thus, for example, local content requirements, as well as policies to promote service in different languages, are very important for broadcast regulation. (Licensing community radio with particular remits is one sure way to promote much needed

#### CLIPS

“AU/Nepad should encourage African governments to eliminate any current restrictions on mass media, promote competitive frameworks that enable investment in diverse broadcasting infrastructure, and develop transparent and flexible regulatory environments and legal frameworks in co-operation with civil society. They should strengthen their relationship with civil society and independent media institutions.

Independent media institutions, public service broadcasters, civil society and the private sector, with support from governments, should form a consortium of partners, in Africa and outside, to provide funds and expertise to create an African media development facility to provide long-term support for the strengthening of media capacity ...

– Tony Blair’s Commission for Africa, 2005

service to language groups). Public-owned media, whether print or broadcast, needs a very specific mandate – for example, about serving rural and poor communities that are structurally not catered for by commercial and urban media, and carrying content on health and children’s issues for instance.

It is against this background that the Sierra Leonean intellectual Cecil Blake was off the mark when – in trying to eliminate government political control of media – he argued in the 1990s for the privatisation of all state-owned media assets in Africa.<sup>18</sup> The answer is not to throw the development baby out with the anti-democratic bathwater. Instead, pragmatic privatisation is called for, and greenfields pluralism permitted – and it should go hand-in-hand with diverse degrees of regulation across the media sector as a whole, such regulation being done by an independent authority.

Looking ahead, a significant dimension of regulation is media self-regulation. Various models have been tried across Africa, between the extremes of ineffectual voluntary bodies on one side, and statutory entities that do government’s bidding on the other. The West African Francophone experience of “observatories” could become a widespread model. Ultimately, what is important is a journalistic mentality that is neither a “civil service” approach and nor that of a “cowboy”. In 1995, the Nigerian media manager Babatunde Jose said: “... at least 10 years after independence, many African journalists still believe that a good press is one that is in a constant state of war with the government; that a progressive journalist is one who writes anti-government articles and a leading journalist is one who is in and out of prison for sedition”.<sup>19</sup> It is the case that journalists should re-assess roles when conditions change, even if there are often times when being critical is the best form of being constructive.

On the whole, and into the future, African journalists with high ethical awareness will mix and match journalistic roles of watchdog, champion, referee, educator, mobiliser, and so on as they see appropriate to the situation. Training has a role to play here, especially in developing judgement on the part of journalists.

#### 4. The wider view: connecting across countries

The pan-African project refuses to die – for good and organic reasons, whether these be Nepad issues and the African Peer Review Mechanism, African peacekeeping, internal immigration and refugees, or ever-growing trade and investment. On the lagging media front, however, these developments encourage – and cry out for – networks of editors, owners, journalists, media NGOs, trainers, regulators and public-service broadcasters.

African media history yields up good and bad experience in this regard. Advocacy groups like Misa, Panos and Media Foundation West Africa have indisputably made real contributions to developing media around the continent. Younger networks like Highway Africa, the Southern African Editors’ Forum and The African Editors’ Forum are making headway. Driving their success to a large extent has been solidarity issues – finding common ground and taking stands on media freedom especially.

On the other hand, the success of the Pan African News Agency has been limited. And alliances of (mainly) state-owned broadcasters like Urtna (now called the African Broadcast Union) and Saba (Southern African Broadcasters Association) have focused on content exchanges without enormous effect. One initiative that may prove more successful is Saba’s interest in a peer-review system akin to the African Peer Review Mechanism of the African Union. This would help each broadcaster assess its progress in transforming to into a public service, and in turn attract resources to that project. As a peer network of proper public broadcasters, the prospects for real co-operation would be much enhanced.

But if there is one imperative for the future, it is that internal content exchange is indispensable for the development of the media industry within and across each country.

**If Drum magazine could famously circulate across the continent in the heady early days of independence, there is no reason why pan-African media products can’t succeed today**

Without this, African content will continue to circulate via London, Paris or New York and be tailored to audiences and interests in those centres. And African audiences will know more about irrelevant news from the US than important news in adjacent countries. The divide between Arab Africa and the rest of the continent will persist, despite geographic and much other proximity.

The lesson of African media history, however, is that there are many obstacles – and not least is the one of many conservative governments who oppose content with which they disagree. This difficulty inhibits the growth of an African Al Jazeera, for instance. Funding of course is another factor, but decreasing costs of making and distributing media may lessen this constraint in the future. Nevertheless, drawing from historical experience, change in this realm will be gradual at best for the next 10 years. However, if *Drum* magazine could famously circulate across the continent in the heady early days of independence, there is no reason why pan-African media products can't succeed today.

Regional bodies such as Ecowas and the SADC have each demonstrated interest in media declarations, training and development, and this could grow. The contacts between The Africa Editors' Forum and the African Union are also politically very important. There are, in short, many pointers towards pan-African media developments, and the future can only enhance these.

## 5. Digital Africa – advances in media technology

Preparing for digital migration in broadcasting, and general media convergence, is what the next decade portends most strongly. The potential is bigger than the immense costs involved for new infrastructure – but the whole issue is being badly neglected by governments. Digital broadcasting will make space for lots more players to enter the field – but this prospect also depends on changes in law and regulation, as well as on financing (see below). The complication lies in replacing old analogue production and transmission equipment, as well as distributing affordable conversion



**Africans make a plan: cellphone booths and an internet cafe in a salon in South Africa are examples of ways found to increase access to digital media**

boxes for all current TV sets in Africa (not to mention the problems of promoting digital radio receivers!). For the transitional years, additional costs will be incurred because broadcasting will have to be in both analogue and digital modes over an average of five years.

A glimpse at how FM radio technology, and later desktop publishing – and in Mozambique the fax newspapers – have impacted on African media in the past decades should suffice to highlight the importance of new means of communication coming onto the scene. Consider today cellphones which are widespread but not yet being used as mass media. It used to be that most cellphones did not have a built-in camera; now it is becoming standard. In a few years time, it is likely the same devices will have MP3 players and be capable of receiving digital audio and video as well. Instead of downloading ringtones, we will get pod-casts. If wireless internet is thrown into the picture, hopefully with much cheaper charges due to telecommunication competition plus new international undersea cables being laid, then the entire African media ecology will alter. New skills will be needed to produce media on these new platforms.

A key problem is electrical power, however. Unless media can lead the charge for governments to sort out the ubiquitous problems of this fundamental economic resource, the new media technologies will remain theoretical from the point of view of using them to circulate mass information.

Part of this scenario depends on developments in government policy and regulation, and in particular the complicated matter of merging broadcast and telecoms regulators. Pan-African sharing through associations of these regulators, such as RIARC-ACRAN and the Telecommunications Regulators of Southern Africa (Trasa), will be important here. Meantime, however, the digital divide between African countries and much of the rest of the world is getting deeper and deeper. In advanced economies, the internal divide is now a question of who has always-on broadband Internet (capable of delivering data-demanding video content without problem), and who has only dial-up access. There, scores of millions of citizens are going online with blogs – complementing the media landscape with billions of views, reports, comments and analyses.

The comparative advantages economically for these regions of the world, vis-à-vis Africa, do not have to be

spelt out. If First World trends are repeated in Africa – though probably with wireless internet on cellphones – we can look forward to a raft of citizen bloggers (some of them doing journalism) around the continent in coming years. All this will help to redress the relative invisibility of an African presence in global cyberspace. More of the continent's mainstream media itself will be online, and sites like AllAfrica.com will aggregate the best in news and information from all African countries.

## 6. Capacity and cash

African media history is a graveyard of many ill-fated ventures. Skills, including business skills, will need boosting if a free African media is to grow as it should do – and as the continent's people need it to do. The AMDI research of 17 African countries' media has observed that there is a gap in strategic vision about African media – and this also needs to be addressed.<sup>20</sup>

When African media get beyond the short-term challenges of fighting off press controls, this longer term challenge will loom ever larger. For example, how can cellular, online and satellite, and their convergence with traditional media forms, be used to grow the industry – and to what extent can the African diaspora be linked into media markets through these media? Further, how can the private media of mainly small-scale enterprises (excepting South Africa, Kenya, Tanzania and Nigeria), develop a scale of operation that will make for better sustainability? Clearly, training to build capacity in all this is vital.

However, it must be said that the history to date also signals cautions about the dangers of excessive commercialisation, especially – but not only – with regard to state-owned media that should be doing public service rather than chasing advertising and sponsorship. There is also another economic problem that needs mentioning. This is institutionalised “brown envelope” or coupage journalism,

which can only devalue the resulting information – discrediting journalism and meaning that a society as a whole is all the poorer.

A clear understanding of the negatives and positives of African media experience can guide the development of viable business models appropriate to the continent. Put together with capital, it is clear that quality and sustainable media enterprises can be developed or expanded so as to deepen their role in African democracy and development. In 1971, William Hachten wrote that the African media could not expand or even hold its own without continued financial assistance from outside, adding: “Sensitive Africans call this assistance ‘neo-colonialism’ and in a way they are right.”<sup>21</sup> The late Francis Kasoma was scathing about donor-driven media in the 1990s.<sup>22</sup>

Yet there is no doubt that overseas funds have helped in many ways – making possible research, training, advocacy and start-ups. Self-sufficiency and expansion has been achieved by successful papers like *The Namibian*, Uganda’s *Monitor*, Zambia’s *Post*, not to mention large conglomerates like the Nation Group and South Africa’s Media24 and MultiChoice. But there is a need for strengthening and replicating dedicated media support funds like the Botswana-based Southern Africa Media Development Fund (Samdef). The Blair Commission recommendation for a global fund for African Media Development needs an additional push. And, if most media growth is advertising-dependent, much still needs to be done to develop effective markets in this regard. The Pan African Media Research Organisation is a start to developing data that helps match audiences to advertisers as an essential part of the expansion of African media.

## 7. Conclusion

The trends and tasks highlighted above all grow directly from experience of African media over the past 50 years. It has been said that literature on African media has been “imbued with a decided sense of pessimism”.<sup>23</sup> But there has indeed been progress over the time since Ghana’s freedom in 1957. From media having been a tool of colonialism,

independent newspapers and underground radio emerged to play a positive role in promoting national self-determination.

Although most media subsequently became corrupted into being a mouthpiece for governments, there were – and still are – many cases of a valuable educational role being played. Promoting pluralism and democracy was a major contribution in the 1980s and 1990s. This was not only in Africa, but in terms of generating through the 1991 Windhoek Declaration, the UN-recognised International Media Freedom Day every May 3.

This democratic service by media that came of age in the 1990s remains a boon to the continent that continues today. Reform of state-owned media into public service media, and institution of independent regulators, is still in early days, but since the 2001 African Charter on Broadcasting, some impetus has been there. The Charter has also contributed to another positive trend in the form of the adoption of the Declaration on Principles of Freedom of Expression by the African Commission on Human and People’s Rights. The likelihood is that this declaration will guide the African Court of Human Rights on deciding media cases. In time, the moves towards an enforceable international treaty among African nations on media freedom may come to fruition.

Progress can also be noted in that, over the whole period, gender imbalances in newsrooms and skewed coverage of women have seen major improvements even if there is still a way to go.<sup>24</sup>

But the pace of advances needs to be quickened and the reach widened, if Africa is not to miss catching the speeding bus into the global information society. The achievements of the past five decades, catalogued in this book, could have been far more had there not been the problems and mistakes also recorded in these pages. After 50 years, African media and indeed all who identify with the people linked to this landmass need to redouble resolve in order to see major media growth in the decades to come. After all, the continent not only has its own needs for more of its own information – it also has a great deal to contribute to global humanity as well. Not least in this contribution is correcting global misperceptions of Africa as being a domain of victims (rather than survivors) and a place that

lacks hope (rather than being a marvel of achievement).

At the founding of The African Editors’ Forum in 2003, South African president Thabo Mbeki remarked that those present were African before they became journalists and that despite their profession, they were still Africans. Interpreting this positively, the words can be read as a commendable injunction to those assembled journalists to remember their context and its history. What needs adding, however, is that there are many ways of being African, and it would be constraining to think that there is only one appropriate way of being an African journalist. Within the range, there is diversity and independence, and a mix of personal, local, gender, national and continental identity

interpretations – sometimes in tension with each other. Overarching all these, however, is that media people working in Africa who keep close to their location in the world, will likely feel a degree of common identity in reflecting on the history recorded in this book.

What then arises is what these media people make of the history in looking ahead. What will be, what should be and what could be, are not the same thing. Indeed, there are often huge discrepancies between them. But one thing is for sure: African journalists can play a proactive role in shaping the answers to all three questions. This book is a valuable resource for that purpose.

## Endnotes

- 1 Media Caucus Report – WSIS Phase 1. [www.un-ngls.org/WSISMediaCreport.doc](http://www.un-ngls.org/WSISMediaCreport.doc)
- 2 AMDI 2007:35-36
- 3 STREAM, 2006:8
- 4 Hyden & Leslie 2002:11
- 5 Barton 1979
- 6 Faringer, 1991:xi, see also Bourgault 1995:177
- 7 Hachten 1971:274
- 8 AMDI 2007:24
- 9 Campbell 1998:77
- 10 In Mytton 1983:61
- 11 Bourgault 1995:255
- 12 Fardon & Furniss 2000:16-17
- 13 Nyamnjoh 2005:231
- 14 Article 19 2006, Broadcasting Pluralism and Diversity. <http://www.article19.org/pdfs/tools/broadcasting-manual.pdf>
- 15 AMDI (2007:5) also confuses the picture by referring to “private, public and state media”.
- 16 Campbell 1998:42
- 17 In Mytton 1983:67
- 18 Blake 1997
- 19 Mytton 1983:61
- 20 AMDI 2007:10
- 21 Hachten 1971:xvi
- 22 Kasoma, F (1999) The neo-multiparty theory of the press. Donor and other influences on the media in Africa. Inaugural lecture, University of Zambia, 26.2.99
- 23 Campbell 1998:116; see also Hyden 2006:359 (Review of Africa’s Media: Democracy and the Politics of Belonging. F Nyamnjoh. *Political Science Quarterly*, 121(2):359.
- 24 See [www.genderlinks.org.za](http://www.genderlinks.org.za)



# 10

SECTION TEN

## Standards, supporters and sources



## From Windhoek to the World – by Alain Modoux

### How it started

In February 1990, a few weeks after the fall of the Berlin Wall, I held a conference of media people from East and West and was challenged by an African diplomat who asked me: “Do you think that democracy is just for the North? Why don’t you organise a conference for the African media?” That is how the Windhoek story started.

### The preparation

United Nations agencies usually consult member states when they invite non-governmental people. This is to make sure that each participant is agreeable to their own government. Instead, the list of journalists to be invited to Windhoek was drawn up with the help of the representatives of international and regional media professional organisations.

The decision to hold the seminar in Windhoek had a symbolic meaning: Namibia was in 1991 a newly independent state born by the UN. At that time, it was constitutionally

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and politically an example of democratic state.

Most of the participants were considered in those days as “public enemies” in their own countries. Some had been jailed several times. For two of them, the Director-General of Unesco had to personally call the presidents concerned to ask them to release the journalists and let them travel to the seminar. He succeeded for one (Cameroon) and failed for the other (Kenya).

Apart from fundraising and organisational tasks, my main role was to make sure that the seminar would be 100% African. That is: for Africans by Africans. And so it was that the famous Windhoek Declaration on Promoting an Independent African Press was born. The document called for, amongst other things, an international day to mark press freedom.

### The Unesco General Conference

A challenge came when we reported back to the Unesco General Conference in October 1991. African governmental delegations could be angry because I had not consulted them before selecting the journalists, and they could be shocked by some critical passages of the Windhoek Declaration. Therefore, the Director-General and I focused instead on the cause of World Press Freedom Day

and the extension of the Windhoek experience to other parts of the world. We thought the adoption of the Windhoek Declaration would be premature then.

Meanwhile, progress also continued with the founding of Misa in 1992, and the momentum contributed to the launch in 1992 of the International Freedom of eXpression Exchange (IFEX) – today an alliance of 72 free speech groups across the world. Also in 1992, Unesco’s International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC) changed its rules to the recommendations in the Windhoek Declaration. Henceforth, projects submitted by non-governmental groups could get funding from it. Today, most projects adopted by the IPDC are non-governmental; before Windhoek all were governmental.

A couple of years later, the prospects for Unesco endorsement had improved. Two additional seminars had taken place in Alma Alta (Kazakhstan) and Santiago (Chile). The declarations adopted there stemmed directly from the Windhoek Declaration – and they endorsed this “mother” declaration. At Unesco, there was a feeling of pride because the organisation had been able to win back its leadership in the field of freedom of expression and press freedom. The problem was how to transform a positive feeling into a



Alain Modoux

resolution. Submitting the text to the member states might open the door to lengthy discussions and possible amendments. It was very risky!

### Without changing a word

I had a good friend among the African ambassadors to Unesco: Niger’s ambassador, Lambert Messan, who chaired the African group. I proposed that his caucus ask the Unesco conference to adopt the Declaration. He was aware that it could be very difficult to convince some of his colleagues, yet he successfully prepared the draft resolu-

tion of endorsement. Thus it was that in 1995 the Unesco General Assembly adopted the Windhoek Resolution without opposition... and without requiring any changes. The same resolution also endorsed the declarations of Alma Alta and Santiago.

Never before in the UN system had member states adopted a declaration drafted by a non-governmental group without amending it. This is another reason why the Windhoek Declaration is unique – not only was its content harshly critical of repressive governments, it was adopted in a novel procedural way. By endorsing the Windhoek Declaration, Unesco member states committed themselves to abiding by its principles.

### Rolling through the international arena

In December 1993, the UN General Assembly in New York took note of the Windhoek Declaration and decided to proclaim May 3 “World Press Freedom Day”. The date is the anniversary of the adoption of the Windhoek Declaration.

The decision followed a recommendation from the UN’s Economic and Social Committee, which recommendation had originally been seconded by the Namibian representative to the UN – following an approach I made to him.

Earlier, the Unesco General Conference in 1991 had agreed to advise the General Assembly that Unesco member states wanted May 3 as the media day.

Yet more mileage unfolded with declarations agreed by media stakeholders at Sana’a, Yemen, in 1996, and Sofia, Bulgaria, in 1997, which in turn endorsed and extended the Windhoek Declaration.

And in 2001, the African Charter on Broadcasting was adopted in Windhoek as an expansion of the original declaration.

Then, in 2002, the Windhoek Declaration exercised a positive influence when the Southern African Development Community adopted a Protocol on Information, Culture and Sport.

The declaration again gave vital impetus to the 2002 Declaration on Principles of Freedom of Expression that was adopted by the African Union’s Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights.

This history explains why media freedom today is celebrated by millions of people internationally every third day in May.

It is a gift that African journalists have given the world.

# Declaration of Windhoek (May 3 1991)

**W**e the participants in the United Nations/ United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation Seminar on Promoting an Independent and Pluralistic African Press, held in Windhoek, Namibia, from April 29 to May 3 1991,

**Recalling** the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,

**Recalling** General Assembly resolution 59(I) of 14 December 1946 stating that freedom of information is a fundamental human right, and General Assembly resolution 45/76 A of 11 December 1990 on information in the service of humanity,

**Recalling** resolution 25C/104 of the General Conference of Unesco of 1989 in which the main focus is the promotion of “the free flow of ideas by word and image at international as well as national levels”,

**Noting with appreciation** the statements made by the United Nations Under-Secretary General for Public Information and the Assistant Director-General for Communication, Information and Informatics of Unesco at the opening of the Seminar,

**Expressing** our sincere appreciation to the United Nations and Unesco for organizing the Seminar,

**Expressing** also our sincere appreciation to all the inter-governmental, governmental and nongovernmental bodies and organizations, in particular the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which contributed to the United Nations/Unesco effort to organize the Seminar,

**Expressing** our gratitude to the Government and people of the Republic of Namibia for their kind hospitality which facilitated the success of the Seminar,

## Declare that:

1. Consistent with article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the establishment, maintenance and fostering of an independent, pluralistic and free press is essential to the development and maintenance of democracy in a nation, and for economic development.
2. By an independent press, we mean a press independent from governmental, political or economic control or from control of materials and infrastructure essential for the production and dissemination of newspapers, magazines and periodicals.
3. By a pluralistic press, we mean the end of monopolies of any kind and the existence of the greatest possible number of newspapers, magazines and periodicals reflecting the widest possible range of opinion within the community.
4. The welcome changes that an increasing number of African States are now undergoing towards multiparty democracies provide the climate in which an independent and pluralistic press can emerge.
5. The worldwide trend towards democracy and freedom of information and expression is a fundamental contribution to the fulfilment of human aspirations.
6. In Africa today, despite the positive developments in some countries, in many countries journalists, editors and publishers are victims of repression—they are murdered, arrested, detained and censored, and are restricted by economic and political pressures such as restrictions

on newsprint, licensing systems which restrict the opportunity to publish, visa restrictions which prevent the free movement of journalists, restrictions on the exchange of news and information, and limitations on the circulation of newspapers within countries and across national borders. In some countries, one party States control the totality of information.

7. Today, at least 17 journalists, editors or publishers are in African prisons, and 48 African journalists were killed in the exercise of their profession between 1969 and 1990.
8. The General Assembly of the United Nations should include in the agenda of its next session an item on the declaration of censorship as a grave violation of human rights falling within the purview of the Commission on Human Rights.
9. African States should be encouraged to provide constitutional guarantees of freedom of the press and freedom of association.
10. To encourage and consolidate the positive changes taking place in Africa, and to counter the negative ones, the international community—specifically, international organizations (governmental as well as non-governmental), development agencies and professional associations—should as a matter of priority direct funding support towards the development and establishment of nongovernmental newspapers, magazines and periodicals that reflect the society as a whole and the different points of view within the communities they serve.
11. All funding should aim to encourage pluralism as well as independence. As a consequence, the public media should be funded only where authorities guarantee a constitutional and effective freedom of information and expression and the independence of the press.
12. To assist in the preservation of the freedoms enumerated above, the establishment of truly independent, representative associations, syndicates or trade unions of journalists, and associations of editors and publishers, is a matter of priority in all the countries of Africa where such bodies do not now exist.
13. The national media and labour relations laws of African countries should be drafted in such a way as to ensure that such representative associations can exist and ful-

fil their important tasks in defence of press freedom.

14. As a sign of good faith, African Governments that have jailed journalists for their professional activities should free them immediately. Journalists who have had to leave their countries should be free to return to resume their professional activities.

15. Cooperation between publishers within Africa, and between publishers of the North and South (for example through the principle of twinning), should be encouraged and supported.
16. As a matter of urgency, the United Nations and UNESCO, and particularly the International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC), should initiate detailed research, in cooperation with governmental (especially UNDP) and non-governmental donor agencies, relevant non-governmental organizations and professional associations, into the following specific areas:

- (i) identification of economic barriers to the establishment of news media outlets, including restrictive import duties, tariffs and quotas for such things as newsprint, printing equipment, and typesetting and word processing machinery, and taxes on the sale of newspapers, as a prelude to their removal;
- (ii) training of journalists and managers and the availability of professional training institutions and courses;
- (iii) legal barriers to the recognition and effective operation of trade unions or associations of journalists, editors and publishers;
- (iv) a register of available funding from development and other agencies, the conditions attaching to the release of such funds, and the methods of applying for them;
- (v) the state of press freedom, country by country, in Africa.

**As a sign of good faith, African Governments that have jailed journalists for their professional activities should free them immediately**

17. In view of the importance of radio and television in the field of news and information, the United Nations and UNESCO are invited to recommend to the General Assembly and the General Conference the convening of a similar seminar of journalists and managers of radio and television services in Africa, to explore the possibility of applying similar concepts of independence and pluralism to those media.
18. The international community should contribute to the achievement and implementation of the initiatives and projects set out in the annex to this Declaration.
19. This Declaration should be presented by the Secretary General of the United Nations to the United Nations General Assembly, and by the Director General of UNESCO to the General Conference of UNESCO.

## ANNEX

### Initiatives and Projects Identified in the Seminar

- I. Development of cooperation between private African newspapers:
  - to aid them in the mutual exchange of their publications;
  - to aid them in the exchange of information;
  - to aid them in sharing their experience by the exchange of journalists;
  - to organize on their behalf training courses and study trips for their journalists, managers and technical personnel.
- II. Creation of separate, independent national unions for publishers, news editors and journalists.
- III. Creation of regional unions for publishers, editors and independent journalists
- IV. Development and promotion of nongovernmental regulations and codes of ethics in each country in order to defend more effectively the profession and ensure its credibility.
- V. Financing of a study on the readership of independent newspapers in order to set up groups of advertising agents.
- VI. Financing of a feasibility study for the establishment of an independent press aid foundation and research into identifying capital funds for the foundation.
- VII. Financing of a feasibility study for the creation of a central board for the purchase of newsprint and the establishment of such a board.
- VIII. Support and creation of regional African press enterprises
- IX. Aid with a view to establishing structures to monitor attacks on freedom of the press and the independence of journalists following the example of the West African Journalists' Association.
- X. Creation of a data bank for the independent African press for the documentation of news items essential to newspapers.

## African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights

### Resolution on the adoption of the Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression in Africa

The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, meeting at its 32nd Ordinary Session, in Banjul, The Gambia, from 17th to 23rd October 2002;

**Reaffirming** the fundamental importance of freedom of expression and information as an individual human right, as a cornerstone of democracy and as a means of ensuring respect for all human rights and freedoms;

**Concerned** at violations of these rights by States Party to the Charter;

**Taking** into consideration the 1991 Windhoek Declaration on Promoting an Independent and Pluralistic African Press, the Final Report of the African Conference of "The Journalist and Human Rights in Africa" held in Tunis, Tunisia from 31st October to 1st November 1992, the Resolution on Freedom of Expression adopted by the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights in Tripoli on 7th May 2001, the Statement of the Seminar on "Freedom of Expression and the African Charter" held from 23rd

to 25th November 2000 in Johannesburg, South Africa, and the first and second meetings of the Commission's Working Group on Freedom of Expression held in Cape town, South Africa, from 10th to 11th February 2002 and in Pretoria, South Africa, on 1st May 2002 respectively;

**Decides** to adopt and to recommend to African States the Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression in Africa annexed hereto;

**Decides** to follow up on the implementation of this Declaration.

## Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression in Africa

**Reaffirming** the fundamental importance of freedom of expression as an individual human right, as a cornerstone of democracy and as a means of ensuring respect for all human rights and freedoms;

**Reaffirming** Article 9 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights;

**Desiring** to promote the free flow of information and ideas and greater respect for freedom of expression;

**Convinced** that respect for freedom of expression, as well as the right of access to information held by public bodies and companies, will lead to greater public transparency and accountability, as well as to good governance and the strengthening of democracy;

**Convinced** that laws and customs that repress freedom of expression are a disservice to society;

**Recalling** that freedom of expression is a fundamental

human right guaranteed by the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, as well as other international documents and national constitutions;

**Considering** the key role of the media and other means of communication in ensuring full respect for freedom of expression, in promoting the free flow of information and ideas, in assisting people to make informed decisions and in facilitating and strengthening democracy;

**Aware** of the particular importance of the broadcast media in Africa, given its capacity to reach a wide audience due to the comparatively low cost of receiving transmissions and its ability to overcome barriers of illiteracy;

**Noting** that oral traditions, which are rooted in African cultures, lend themselves particularly well to radio broadcasting;

**Noting** the important contribution that can be made to the realisation of the right to freedom of expression by new information and communication technologies;

**Mindful** of the evolving human rights and human development environment in Africa, especially in light of the adoption of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights on the establishment of an African Court on Human and Peoples Rights, the principles of the Constitutive Act of the African Union, 2000, as well as the significance of the human rights and good governance provisions in the New Partnership for Africa Development (NEPAD); and

**Recognising** the need to ensure the right to freedom of expression in Africa, the African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights declares that:

## I The Guarantee of Freedom of Expression

1. Freedom of expression and information, including the right to seek, receive and impart information and ideas, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other form of communication, including across frontiers, is a fundamental and inalienable human right and an indispensable component of democracy.
2. Everyone shall have an equal opportunity to exercise the right to freedom of expression and to access information without discrimination.

## II Interference with Freedom of Expression

1. No one shall be subject to arbitrary interference with his or her freedom of expression.
2. Any restrictions on freedom of expression shall be provided by law, serve a legitimate interest and be necessary and in a democratic society.

## III Diversity

Freedom of expression imposes an obligation on the authorities to take positive measures to promote diversity, which include among other things:-

- availability and promotion of a range of information and ideas to the public;
- pluralistic access to the media and other means of communication, including by vulnerable or marginalized groups, such as women, children and refugees, as well as linguistic and cultural groups;
- the promotion and protection of African voices, including through media in local languages; and
- the promotion of the use of local languages in public affairs, including in the courts.

## IV Freedom of Information

1. Public bodies hold information not for themselves but as custodians of the public good and everyone has a right to access this information, subject only to clearly defined rules established by law.
2. The right to information shall be guaranteed by law in accordance with the following principles:
  - everyone has the right to access information held by public bodies;
  - everyone has the right to access information held by private bodies which is necessary for the exercise or protection of any right;
  - any refusal to disclose information shall be subject to appeal to an independent body and/or the courts;
  - public bodies shall be required, even in the absence of a request, actively to publish important information of significant public interest;
  - no one shall be subject to any sanction for releasing in good faith information on wrongdoing, or that which would disclose a serious threat to health, safety or the environment save where the imposition of sanctions serves a legitimate interest and is necessary in a democratic society; and
  - secrecy laws shall be amended as necessary to comply with freedom of information principles.
3. Everyone has the right to access and update or otherwise correct their personal information, whether it is held by public or by private bodies.

## V Private Broadcasting

1. States shall encourage a diverse, independent private broadcasting sector. A State monopoly over broadcasting is not compatible with the right to freedom of expression.
2. The broadcast regulatory system shall encourage private and community broadcasting in accordance with the following principles:
  - there shall be equitable allocation of frequencies between private broadcasting uses, both commer-

cial and community;

- an independent regulatory body shall be responsible for issuing broadcasting licences and for ensuring observance of licence conditions;
- licensing processes shall be fair and transparent, and shall seek to promote diversity in broadcasting; and
- community broadcasting shall be promoted given its potential to broaden access by poor and rural communities to the airwaves.

## VI Public Broadcasting

State and government controlled broadcasters should be transformed into public service broadcasters, accountable to the public through the legislature rather than the government, in accordance with the following principles;

- public broadcasters should be governed by a board which is protected against interference, particularly of a political or economic nature;
- the editorial independence of public service broadcasters should be guaranteed;
- public broadcasters should be adequately funded in a manner that protects them from arbitrary interference with their budgets;
- public broadcasters should strive to ensure that their transmission system covers the whole territory of the country; and
- the public service ambit of public broadcasters should be clearly defined and include an obligation to ensure that the public receive adequate, politically balanced information, particularly during election periods.

## VII Regulatory Bodies for Broadcast and Telecommunications

1. Any public authority that exercises powers in the areas of broadcast or telecommunications regulation should be independent and adequately protected against interference, particularly of a political or economic nature.

2. The appointments process for members of a regulatory body should be open and transparent, involve the participation of civil society, and shall not be controlled by any particular political party.
3. Any public authority that exercises powers in the areas of broadcast or telecommunications should be formally accountable to the public through a multi-party body.

## VIII Print Media

1. Any registration system for the print media shall not impose substantive restrictions on the right to freedom of expression.
2. Any print media published by a public authority should be protected adequately against undue political interference.
3. Efforts should be made to increase the scope of circulation of the print media, particularly to rural communities.
4. Media owners and media professionals shall be encouraged to reach agreements to guarantee editorial independence and to prevent commercial considerations from unduly influencing media content.

## IX Complaints

1. A public complaints system for print or broadcasting should be available in accordance with the following principles:
  - complaints shall be determined in accordance with established rules and codes of conduct agreed between all stakeholders; and
  - the complaints system shall be widely accessible.
2. Any regulatory body established to hear complaints about media content, including media councils, shall be protected against political, economic or any other undue interference. Its powers shall be administrative in nature and it shall not seek to usurp the role of the courts.
3. Effective self-regulation is the best system for promoting high standards in the media.

## X Promoting Professionalism

1. Media practitioners shall be free to organise themselves into unions and associations.
2. The right to express oneself through the media by practising journalism shall not be subject to undue legal restrictions.

## XI Attacks on Media Practitioners

1. Attacks such as the murder, kidnapping, intimidation of and threats to media practitioners and others exercising their right to freedom of expression, as well as the material destruction of communications facilities, undermines independent journalism, freedom of expression and the free flow of information to the public.
2. States are under an obligation to take effective measures to prevent such attacks and, when they do occur, to investigate them, to punish perpetrators and to ensure that victims have access to effective remedies.
3. In times of conflict, States shall respect the status of media practitioners as non-combatants.

## XII Protecting Reputations

1. States should ensure that their laws relating to defamation conform to the following standards:
  - no one shall be found liable for true statements, opinions or statements regarding public figures which it was reasonable to make in the circumstances;
  - public figures shall be required to tolerate a greater degree of criticism; and
  - sanctions shall never be so severe as to inhibit the right to freedom of expression, including by others.
2. Privacy laws shall not inhibit the dissemination of information of public interest.

## XIII Criminal Measures

1. States shall review all criminal restrictions on content to ensure that they serve a legitimate interest in a democratic society.
2. Freedom of expression should not be restricted on public order or national security grounds unless there is a real risk of harm to a legitimate interest and there is a close causal link between the risk of harm and the expression.

## XIV Economic Measures

1. States shall promote a general economic environment in which the media can flourish.
2. States shall not use their power over the placement of public advertising as a means to interfere with media content.
3. States should adopt effective measures to avoid undue concentration of media ownership, although such measures shall not be so stringent that they inhibit the development of the media sector as a whole.

## XV Protection of Sources and other journalistic material

Media practitioners shall not be required to reveal confidential sources of information or to disclose other material held for journalistic purposes except in accordance with the following principles:

- the identity of the source is necessary for the investigation or prosecution of a serious crime, or the defence of a person accused of a criminal offence;
- the information or similar information leading to the same result cannot be obtained elsewhere;
- the public interest in disclosure outweighs the harm to freedom of expression; and
- disclosure has been ordered by a court, after a full hearing.

## XVI Implementation

States Parties to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights should make every effort to give practical effect to these principles.

*Done in Banjul, 23rd October 2002*

# Highway Africa: An Overview



By **Chris Kabwato**,  
Director of Highway Africa

**H**ighway Africa is an initiative of the School of Journalism and Media Studies, Rhodes University, South Africa. It is a conference, a network and a news agency, and its activities include advocacy and training. It also has a history of research into ICT-related issues (thanks to Free Voice, IDRC and Catia).

Highway Africa started off in 1997 as a small conference at Rhodes University in Grahamstown that brought together academics and media trainers interested in what the impact of the internet would be on the practice of journalism and on media institutions.

Highway Africa marked its 10th anniversary in September 2006, and over 530 delegates (largely journalists) from around Africa attended. This makes the Highway Africa Conference the world's largest annual gathering of the continent's media workers.

The main focus is on developing ICT use and understanding in the media, within a broader context of advancing the African Information Society. As such, Highway Africa covers relevant issues such as convergence, intellectual property, internet governance, public broadcasting, web publishing, journalism ethics, digital editing, online research, ICT policy, media freedom and local content.

The achievement of building a decade of Highway Africa has been made possible through a wide range of partners, including the SA Department of Communications, SABC, NiZA, Osis, Telkom, Absa and MTN.

Highway Africa has now evolved into a four-pronged programme covering the following:



**The Highway Africa News Agency (Hana) team in an editorial meeting in 2006**

**Research:** mapping the terrain of the challenges of the interface of technology, journalism and the media

**Education and Training:** responding to the gaps identified in the research this project makes a practical intervention by re-skilling, upskilling, education and training journalists.

**News Agency:** a niche news agency with a network of correspondents across the continent it offers weekly news digest on ICT developments in Africa

**Conference:** the flagship of the programme, it is the forum for critical reflection on journalism, media and technology and a celebration of Africa.

We are proud of the relationship that we have built with the SA National Editors' Forum, the Southern Africa Editors' forum and The African Editors' Forum, and hope to see this grow. This publication is testament to that relationship

# TAEF: The African Editors' Forum



www.theafricaneditorsforum.org

**T**he African Editors' Forum is a growing organisation of African editors, senior editorial staffers and journalism trainers from print, online and broadcast media who interact and co-operate around issues of common concern. These include how to report effectively on their continent; improving the quality of journalism; and reducing legal and other restrictions to professional reporting.

The first All Africa Editors' Conference was held in Johannesburg in April 2003, initiated by the South African National Editors' Forum (Sanef). Editors from more than 30 countries attended. Out of this came a decision to form a continental body, as well as regional bodies for editors made up of representatives from national bodies.

## Regional Forums

In the southern African region, the countries formed national bodies – and met in November 2003 in Johannesburg to initiate the Southern Africa Editors' Forum (Saef). In Western Africa, it was decided to first form the regional body and from there promote the formation of national forums. The West Africa Editors' Forum (Waef) was launched in October 2005. By mid-2007, East and Central had not yet formally launched – but were represented on the Taef Steering Committee and Editors' Council. Taef was still trying to contact editors from the North who were prepared to help initiate and organise editors' structures.

## Reporting Africa

In October 2005, the Founding Conference of The Africa Editors' Forum (Taef) was held. The theme was "Reporting Africa for Africans and the world". A draft constitution for



**Taef members give country reports at the Festival for Freedom of Expression and Media in April 2007**

the continent-wide forum was established.

SA President Thabo Mbeki has spoken at both conferences, and United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan sent a message and a representative to the second one.

All Taef proceedings are conducted in French and English – this dual-language approach has been set as policy. The use of Portuguese and Arabic will be considered later.

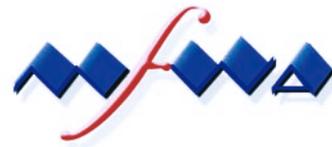
In September 2006, the Editors' Council of Taef – made up of representatives from each of the regional bodies – met for the first time in Grahamstown, South Africa. It meets again in June 2007.

## TAEF Projects

The October 2005 launch conference set the following projects as priority for the continent:

1. Building links between African news agencies or news sources.
2. Developing the Taef website to improve communication between editors.
3. Research on laws restricting media freedom in Africa.
4. Exchange programmes of editors within Africa.
5. Lobbying the African Union on media issues.

# MFWA: Media Foundation for West Africa



The Media Foundation for West Africa is a human rights organisation that promotes and defends press freedom and freedom of expression in West Africa.

It also aims to develop media professionalism by providing training and other support to strengthen the professional capacity, independence and social responsibility of the mass media.

It is an independent, non-profit NGO based in Accra and registered under the laws of Ghana in March 1997.

MFWA supports the development of independent mass media in West Africa, and uses advocacy and networking to foster collaboration with other sectors of society around issues of human rights, democracy, peace, security, and development.

Since it started operation, the MFWA has intervened in numerous cases of abuse and attack on the rights of journalists and media in nearly every country in the region – and elsewhere on the continent – where such violations have occurred.

It also defends journalists, writers, artists, and other communicators against intimidation and other controls that could undermine free expression. It mobilises international and local public

opinion to support democratic laws.

The foundation's methods include publicising abuses, alerting public opinion, mobilising interventions through petitions, protests and appeals (as appropriate), and providing legal defence. Ad hoc task forces are set up to provide advice to media, policy-makers and legislators on these matters.

In addition, MFWA monitors and publicises violations of and attacks on freedom of thought and expression. It conducts research into human and media rights abuses in order to record and publish trends, and propose interventions.

It has collaborated with reputable international and national human rights organisations, and interacts with the African Commission on Human and People's Rights. It co-operates with associations of media owners and professionals, human rights and non-governmental organisations. The foundation's documentation centre maintains a library of books, periodicals, reports and other documents relating to legal issues, media practice, the media industry and political, social and cultural developments regarding freedom of the media and of expression.

[www.mfwaonline.org](http://www.mfwaonline.org)

# Sources: A reading list and references to works cited in this book

Prepared by **Andrew Kanyegirire**, with contributions by **Guy Berger** and **Marie-Soleil Frere**.

Note: this list is not conclusive and/or representative of all key texts and resources concerning the African media landscape over the past 50 years. However, it still provides a valuable snapshot of some of the resources about the post-colonial African media and journalism dynamics.

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*Africa Media Review*: [www.codesria.org/Links/Publications/Journals/africa\\_media\\_review.htm](http://www.codesria.org/Links/Publications/Journals/africa_media_review.htm)

*Arab Media and Society*: <http://www.arabmediasociety.com>  
*Communicatio*: [www.unisa.ac.za/default.asp?Cmd=ViewContent&ContentID=934](http://www.unisa.ac.za/default.asp?Cmd=ViewContent&ContentID=934)

*Critical Arts*: [www.ukzn.ac.za/ccms/publications/criticalarts/criticalarts\\_default.asp](http://www.ukzn.ac.za/ccms/publications/criticalarts/criticalarts_default.asp)

*Ecquid Novi*: <http://academic.sun.ac.za/ecquidnovi/>

MISA's annual: 'So This is Democracy?' [www.misa.org](http://www.misa.org)

*Rhodes Journalism Review*: [www.rjr.ru.ac.za](http://www.rjr.ru.ac.za)

*Transnational Broadcasting Studies*: <http://www.tbsjournal.com>

### Useful Internet sites

African Communication Regulatory Authorities Network, Réseau des Instances Africaines de Régulation de la Communication. <http://www.acran.org/allAfrica.com>

Article 19. Africa reports. <http://www.article19.org/publications/regions/africa/index.html>

Culture, Communication and Media Studies, University of KwaZulu-Natal. <http://www.nu.ac.za/ccms>

Freedom of Expression Institute. [www.fx.org.za](http://www.fx.org.za)

Friedrich Ebert Stiftung. <http://www.fesmedia.org.na/>

Genderlinks. [www.genderlinks.org.za](http://www.genderlinks.org.za)

Institut Panos Afrique de l'Ouest. <http://www.panos-ao.org>

Journalistes en Danger. <http://www.jed-afrique.org/>

Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung. [www.kas.org.za](http://www.kas.org.za)

Maison des Medias Benin. <http://www.mdmbenin.org/>

Makerere University, Department of Mass Communication. <http://www.masscomonline.mak.ac.ug>

Media Development and Diversity Agency (South Africa). [www.mdda.org.za](http://www.mdda.org.za)

Media Rights Agenda. <http://mediarightsagenda.org/index.html>

Network for the Defence of Independent Media in Africa. <http://www.freemediafoundation.org/>

NSJ Media Training Trust. [www.nsjtraining.org](http://www.nsjtraining.org)

Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa. <http://www.osisa.org/taxonomy/term/8>

Panos Institute Southern Africa. <http://www.panos.org.zm/about.htm>

Panos Institute West Africa. [www.panos.sn](http://www.panos.sn)

Reseau Africain de Presse pour le 21ème siècle; African press network for the 21st century. <http://www.rap21.org/>

Rhodes University School of Journalism and Media Studies. <http://jms.ru.ac.za/>

Sites Média Mali. <http://www.mediamali.org/>

South African National Editors Forum. [www.sanef.org.za](http://www.sanef.org.za)

Southern Africa Media Development Fund. [www.samdef.com](http://www.samdef.com)

The African Editors Forum. <http://www.theafricaneditorsforum.org/>

University of the Witwatersrand. <http://www.journalism.co.za>

### Declarations

Guidelines & Principles for Broadcast Coverage of Elections in SADC. [www.saba.co.za/downloads/A6%20booklet%20contents1.pdf](http://www.saba.co.za/downloads/A6%20booklet%20contents1.pdf)

SADC Protocol on Culture, Information and Sport. <http://www.misa.org/broadcasting/resource-sadc/SADC%20protocol.doc>

African Charter on Broadcasting: [www.misa.org/broad-casting/acb.html](http://www.misa.org/broad-casting/acb.html)

[www.unesco.org/webworld/fed/temp/communication\\_democracy/windhoek.htm](http://www.unesco.org/webworld/fed/temp/communication_democracy/windhoek.htm)

Windhoek Declaration: [www.unesco.org/webworld/fed/temp/communication\\_democracy/windhoek.htm](http://www.unesco.org/webworld/fed/temp/communication_democracy/windhoek.htm)

Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression in Africa: [www1.umn.edu/humanrts/achpr/expression-freedomdec.html](http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/achpr/expression-freedomdec.html)

### Reports and documents

Article 19. Training manual for African broadcast regulators: [www.article19.org/advocacy/tools/index.html](http://www.article19.org/advocacy/tools/index.html)

African Media Development Initiative research reports: [www.bbcworldservicetrust.org/amdi](http://www.bbcworldservicetrust.org/amdi)

UN Economic Commission for Africa. Strengthening Africa's Media (STREAM) reports: <http://www.uneca.org/africanmedia/>

International Media Support. 2004. African regional media organisation reference book: <http://www.i-m-s.dk/media/pdf/African%20regional%20media%20org%20ref%20book%20-%20FINAL.pdf>

### Selected online theses

Assefa, Emrakeb (2006) *An investigation into the popularity of American action movies shown in informal video houses in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia*. Masters thesis, Rhodes University.

Da-Wariboko, Biobele (2006) *Investigating the effects of the proliferation of commercial broadcasting on public service broadcasting: the case of Rivers State of Nigeria Broadcasting Corporation*. Masters thesis, Rhodes University.

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Jjuuko, Denis Charles (2006) *Understanding editorial independence and public accountability issues in public broadcasting service : a study of the editorial policies at the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC)*. Masters thesis, Rhodes University.

Kaheru, Hamis (2005) *An analysis of the views of journalists and government officials regarding the impact of New Vision's coverage of the Nakivubo Channel Rehabilitation Project*. Masters thesis, Rhodes University. <http://eprints.ru.ac.za/272/>

Kaija, Barbara Night Mbabazi (2005) *An investigation of how Kampala teenagers who read Straight Talk negotiate HIV/AIDS messages*. Masters thesis, Rhodes University. <http://eprints.ru.ac.za/296/>

Kisuke, Connie Syomiti (2005) *An investigation of the role of news values in the selection of news sources in a contemporary third world newspaper : a case study of the Daily Nation newspaper*. Masters thesis, Rhodes University. <http://eprints.ru.ac.za/197/>

Strelitz, Larry Nathan (2003) *Where the global meets the local : South African youth and their experience of global media*. PhD thesis, Rhodes University. <http://eprints.ru.ac.za/20/>

Venter, Sahm (2005) *The safety of journalists: an assessment of perceptions of the origins and implementation of policy at two international television news agencies*. Masters thesis, Rhodes University. <http://eprints.ru.ac.za/213/>

Folayan, Oluseyi Olukemi (2004) *Interactivity in online journalism : a case study of the interactive nature of Nigeria's online Guardian*. Masters thesis, Rhodes University. <http://eprints.ru.ac.za/59/>

# NiZA: the Netherlands Institute for Southern Africa

This book contains an overview of 50 years of independent journalism and media in Africa. For countries that work hard towards democracy, the publishing of this book is very important. NiZA believes that this book will contribute to the continuing process of professionalizing the media sector, which is an indispensable ingredient for democracy. The media fulfils the vigorous role of defender of the freedoms of speech and expression and in this way helps secure a society in which people can freely and safely participate.

## ABOUT NiZA:

NiZA is a Dutch NGO that works to further democratisation processes in southern Africa. NiZA supports more than 100 civil society organisations that operate to achieve improvements in the areas of freedom of speech, human rights and economic justice on all levels, locally, regionally and even globally. For NiZA a strong civil society is an essential component of true democracy. NiZA will continue to stress this view through wide-ranging campaigning.

For ten years NiZA has been supporting the development and enhancement of excellent media segments in southern Africa by means of projects and advanced media sector programmes. During the seventies, as NiZA's predecessors fought Apartheid, free and strong media were an incessant point of focus to all organisations. A famous Dutch campaign called "Omroep voor Radio Freedom" assisted to create the Radio Freedom Training Institute in Johannesburg. In the foreseeable future NiZA will make more use of the instrument of campaigning in the northern region to encourage efforts in the south and thus make a difference.

Crucial changes in southern Africa are closely connected with decisions made by northern governments and international institutions. This is why NiZA strategically links its activities in southern Africa to lobbying and public campaigns in the northern regions. Using press, publicity, campaigns and policy influencing in Europe and the Netherlands, NiZA keeps southern Africa on the agenda. Also, NiZA has compiled an extensive documentation centre for the region, covering the period from 1970 to the present.

NiZA was created in 1997 when the three largest anti-apartheid organisations in the Netherlands merged. Solidarity with people's struggles was the guiding principle then, as it is today.

■ [www.niza.nl/english](http://www.niza.nl/english)



Netherlands institute for Southern Africa

## UNESCO-SAB Chair of Media and Democracy

Ghana's independence in 1957 signalled an African renaissance. Today, the African landscape has changed dramatically, but the issues have remained largely unchanged – development, poverty reduction, human rights, gender, media freedom, and so on.

This is set against the background of the onslaught of globalisation, with all that it entails in terms of reconfiguring the African development and governance landscape. At the same time, there is a resurgence of African political thought, as it seeks to assume a fresher interpretive framework for the phenomena occasioned by globalisation.

Although discussions about African unity started in the era of Nkrumah and Nyerere, here is an added impetus that should make many scholars reflect on the *new* political, economic and social destiny of the African continent.

Against this background, the School of Journalism & Media Studies at South Africa's Rhodes University established in 2005 the Chair of Media & Democracy, held by Professor Fackson Banda, a renowned Zambian academic. The Chair is proudly sponsored by the South African Breweries (SAB) Ltd.

Since then, the Chair has had the added prestige of being recognised as a Unesco Chair in Media &

Democracy, placing it in a vantage position to make a more recognised scholarly contribution to media-and-democracy debates on the continent, and beyond.

More specifically, the Chair aims to:

- (i) conduct research into media and democracy and relate the findings to journalism and other forms of participatory communication across Africa;
- (ii) publish this research to media academics, practitioners, activists, policy makers, and the general public;
- (iii) stimulate public debate about the role of African media in promoting inclusive citizenship; and
- (iv) feed the outcomes of (i), (ii) and (iii) above into teaching at Rhodes University and elsewhere.

The fruits have begun to show. One example is the successful hosting of an international academic seminar in September 2006, attended by more than 70 delegates representing 25 countries. It centred on African media and the digital public sphere. As a result, work is now underway to publish a book by the same title.

The Chair is also involved in championing continent-wide media development initiatives, co-ordinated by the United Nations



Professor Fackson Banda

Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) World Service Trust.

In addition, the Chair has acted as a public-intellectual resource for the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) on development journalism. As part of this, the Chair is attempting to reconceptualise specific strands of African political thought to assess their analytic viability in the changed African political-economic context.

Scholarly contributions include papers presented at the University of Stellenbosch, the London School of Economics, and the University of Westminster. Other presentations include those delivered at international conferences in Kenya and Mozambique, among other countries.

■ <http://jms.ru.ac.za/sabchair/>

You can read the Chair's weekly column 'Media Discourse', published every Wednesday in *The Post* ([www.postzambia.com](http://www.postzambia.com)).

# South African National Editors' Forum



In 2006, Sanef celebrated its 10th birthday. This organisation of editors, senior journalists and journalism trainers has played an important part in the changes happening in the “new” South Africa – working to both improve the quality of journalism as well as widen and protect the space for media freedom in a new democracy.

The idea for a united South African National Editors' Forum was conceived at a meeting of the Black Editors' Forum, the Conference of Editors and senior journalism educators and trainers, held in Cape Town in October 1996. Delegates decided to come together in a new organisation that recognised past injustices in the media and committed itself to a programme of action to overcome them.

At Sanef's 2004 AGM, the forum adopted the following direction:

**VISION:** To promote the quality and ethics of journalism, to reflect the diversity of South Africa, and to champion freedom of expression.

**MISSION:** To be a resource and catalyst for achievement of its vision through debate and action programmes.

**VALUES:** Integrity, Tolerance, Accountability and Public Interest.

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES:

- To be a representative and credible voice of journalism in society
- To facilitate diversity in newsrooms and reporting
- To enable a culture of real debate
- To promote free and independent journalism of the highest standard
- On media freedom, to campaign for the elimination of legislation and commercial pressures that restrict media
- To support the establishment of, and take part in, editors' fora in the region and the continent.

More recently, Sanef has decided to tackle the issue of gender inequality in the staffing of the media. Its survey revealed that many women still felt that there was a “glass ceiling” preventing their development and promotion within media houses.

The forum has also started a campaign entitled “What you can't see, can hurt you”, to encourage all South African citizens to acknowledge that media freedom is their freedom.

■ Read more about Sanef and its activities at: [www.sanef.org.za](http://www.sanef.org.za)



## Telkom ICT Journalist of the Year

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\*EVOLUTION

Six years ago the Telkom ICT Journalist of the Year Awards was launched to award journalists for excellent reporting on technology and communications.

ICT is an industry which is critical to the functioning of any economy as it impacts on everyday business systems as well as the lives of many ordinary South Africans. ICT journalists are responsible for decoding very technical information to make it accessible to every South African. Through the ICT Journalist of The Year Awards, those who strive to win are encouraged to report with accuracy, balance and demonstrate an understanding of the industry. In this way ICT journalists have been encouraged to improve their knowledge of an industry, which is central to the country's economic development.

[www.telkom.co.za/journalist](http://www.telkom.co.za/journalist)



[www.telkom.co.za](http://www.telkom.co.za)





# OPEN SOCIETY FOUNDATION

## Network Media Program

The Open Society Institute works to build vibrant and to lerant democracies whose governments are accountable to their citizens. To achieve its mission, OSI seeks to shape public policies that assure greater fairness in political, legal and economic systems and safeguard fundamental rights. On a local level, OSI implements a range of initiatives to advance justice, education, public health and independent media. At the same time, OSI builds alliances across borders and continents on issues such as corruption and freedom of information. OSI places a high priority on protecting and improving the lives of marginalized people and communities.

Investor and philanthropist George Soros in 1993 created OSI as a private operating and grantmaking foundation to support his foundations in Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Those foundations were established, starting in 1984, to help countries make the transition from communism. OSI has expanded the activities of the Soros foundations network to encompass the United States and more than 60 countries in Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America. Each Soros foundation relies on the expertise of boards composed of eminent citizens who determine individual agendas based on local priorities.

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## Demystified science and technology lately?

Aiming to promote high standards of technical writing, the Siemens Profile Awards are the only pan-African journalism awards devoted exclusively to science and technology and serve as an incentive to writers, broadcasters and producers to create work that simplifies these often complex subjects.

The Profile Awards are open to all journalists and freelancers from any African country that have had work published in print or electronic format, or broadcast on radio or television. Entries are accepted in English, Arabic, French and Portuguese.

For more information, visit [www.profileawards.com](http://www.profileawards.com)

**SIEMENS**

# About the SABC

The South African Broadcasting Corporation was established in 1936.

The SABC's core business is to deliver a variety of high quality programmes and services through its three free-to-air television and 18 radio station platforms that informs, educates, entertains and supports the public at large.

*Our vision as a corporation is  
'Broadcasting for Total Citizen Empowerment'.*

The concept of citizenship is an acknowledgement of our peoples' stake in the country. Our corporate mission of broadcasting for 'Total Citizen Empowerment' is aimed at refocusing our organisation towards people-centredness; that is being a people-focused public service broadcaster. The guiding principle is that our programming should and must have a positive impact on the citizens of our young democracy – not as consumers, not as customers, but as CITIZENS with an interest in the social and economic value of our programmes and services so that they can more effectively participate in our democracy.

Unlike other media institutions in South Africa, being a public service broadcaster places us in the unique position of serving all South Africans – telling the South African story in its multidimensional context – and therefore making the democratic tradition of diversity within unity a living reality. This creates space for all South Africans to hear themselves and be heard. It provides them with access to information so that they can take part in the never-ending dialogue of nation-building, thus feeling, living and celebrating democracy.

This is consonant with our mandate, which dictates that we strive to provide – in all the official languages – programming that reflects our citizens' opinions, ideas, values and artistic creativity; educates, entertains and showcases our people's talent; captures the wide variety of news, information and analysis in the country; and advances the national interest. We do, however, have to locate all this within the broader African context – a context in which we, as a country, have an ongoing role to play as far as reconstruction and development are concerned.

## The SABC and the public

The SABC is subject to the regulatory framework of the South African broadcasting industry and, in this regard, is accountable to the Independent Communications Authority of SA (ICASA). It is also accountable to the Broadcasting Complaints Commission (BCCSA) with regards to complaints on content in programmes and the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) with regard to complaints on advertisements aired.

As the public broadcaster, the SABC is also accountable to Parliament, through its shareholder, the Department of Communications.

The vision of 'Broadcasting for Total citizenship Empowerment' is what drives the strategies and actions of the SABC as it strives to make a positive difference in the daily lives of all people. We recognise that we have a unique and critical role to play in inspiring and building a winning nation.

*In order to communicate this, we have introduced a new payoff line: Vuka Sizwe.*

These two words drive us as the public broadcaster. They embody the spirit of broadcasting for total citizen empowerment. They are our way of saying: "Come on, South Africa. Let us build a winning nation together."

## Brief History of SABC

SABC Radio was launched in 1936 while SABC TV was officially launched in 1976. It was, however, not until the advent of freedom and democracy in 1994 that the SABC began to distance itself from state propaganda to reflecting a society in social, economic and political transformation – a society where the individual and collective worth and dignity of South Africans was being reclaimed.

Some of the milestones of the corporation's own journey, since 1994, from being His Master's Voice to being the voice of democracy include the introduction of an editorial policy with a strong bias towards ethical norms like honesty and objectivity; the successful broadcast of the first democratic elections; real-time

broadcast of the results of the 2004 elections; and the introduction of the SABC1, SABC2 and SABC3 TV Channels to ensure that all the language groups in the country have access to news, information and entertainment to facilitate their effective participation in our democracy.

The highlight of the corporation's journey towards public service broadcasting, however, is the establishment of XK-FM and the appointment of the world's first San journalists for the radio station. The SABC's broadcasting in the previously marginalised !Xu and Khwe! languages – thus giving even communities of unwritten languages access to all the news and information available to the rest of our society – underscores the organisation's commitment to the social reconstruction of our country and the progressive provision of information to empower virtually all our people to participate fully and effectively in the country's democracy.

It is not on its financial performance alone but on its fulfillment of the totality of its public service broadcasting mandate, as reflected by an intervention such as the establishment of the !Xu and Khwe! radio station, that the SABC would like to measure itself, and to be measured by others, for our ultimate mandate is to make democracy alive by empowering our communities, through information, to participate fully in it.



Broadcasting for Total Citizen Empowerment

Professor Alpha Oumar Konaré, Chairperson of the African Union Commission (left), and Mathatha Tsedu, chair of The African Editors' Forum (Taef). A working meeting of the AU leadership, Taef and the Network of African Freedom of Expression Organisations (Nafeo) was held in Addis Ababa in February 2007. At this meeting, TAEF's proposal to designate a year as the Year of Freedom of Media and Free Expression in Africa, as well as an annual Day of African Media, was accepted by the AU leadership.

