

Media and journalism in Peace Work

Editors: Christiane Kayser and Flaubert Djateng



Building Peace



Civil Peace Service (CPS) / BfdW –
Mano River Region, Great Lakes of Africa
and Cameroon

Building Peace

Brot für die Welt – Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst (BfdW)

Bread for the World – Protestant Development Service

Financed by the BMZ (Bundesministerium

für Wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit – German Federal
Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development)

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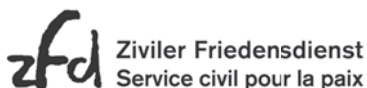
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Introduction

Events in the African countries in which the Civil Peace Service (CPS) networks are active have speeded up recently with the emergence of terrorist threats in Cameroon, the Ebola epidemic in Liberia and Sierra Leone, prolonged, violent conflicts in the Great Lakes region, presidents trying to hang onto power, the irresponsible behaviour of the political classes, severe repression of all forms of opposition and human rights violations. All this, against a background of the pauperisation of large portions of the population despite the growth of African economies. In parallel, we are also observing the emergence of movements of young people who see themselves as embodying positive political change, and accept the inherent risks. Their links with youth in other countries around the world also helps reduce the prejudice, racism and complexes they have against one another. So all is not lost...

Today the media—radio stations especially—play a critical role in the information of the urban and rural population, and some local radio stations also see themselves as outlets for the expression of the grassroots population. There is also considerable complementarity with the international radio stations (RFI, BBC, VOA)¹ which still have a lot of listeners in all the countries, but which now very often have local correspondents.

Another essential factor is no doubt that the media and the social networks allow young people from all over the world to have direct contact with each other, express themselves and learn from each other, with Africans being no exception.

¹ RFI = Radio France Internationale; BBC = British Broadcasting Company; VOA = Voice of America

It is therefore not surprising that after the publications on advocacy, youth and action research we have decided, in this publication, to share the experiences of working with the media in our networks and beyond.

As always, we have tried to reproduce some keys to the theory behind journalism and the media in a crisis situation without forgetting the internet and the social networks. We do not recommend a single approach but try to provide you with the major principles of responsible and professional work in this domain. The discussions remain open on what is appropriate to the situation in your zone and your country.

In the second part, we share the experiences of our African and peace worker colleagues in the Great Lakes region, Cameroon and Sierra Leone. We would like to thank them warmly for their contributions. Their articles and interviews allow everyone to familiarise themselves with the local and regional work done in the different countries, but especially we hope that they will incite more readers to share their experiences in this domain.

As events in Rwanda, Burundi, DRC, Burkina Faso and even Senegal have shown, the media are capable of triggering both the best and the worst. Continuous efforts are therefore required to achieve responsible behaviour as professionals and as citizens active on the internet. The questions we must ask ourselves include:

What is an information service that is responsible and supports peace work in your concrete context?

How can people be well-informed about conflicts and threats without creating hysteria, exclusion and aggravating the situation?

What are the roles of the media professionals on the one hand and of the activists in the social networks on the other?

We are ready to publish the best contributions on our website www.peaceworkafrica.net.

We hope you enjoy reading this publication!

Christiane Kayser, Flaubert Djabateng
September 2015

Crisis journalism, proactive journalism and peace journalism

Some theoretical basics

*By Christiane Kayser**

In the Civil Peace Service (CPS) networks, we have become aware over the past few years that communication and information are becoming increasingly important in all peace work. Disinformation, rumours, ignorance and prejudice are the sworn enemies of sustainable peace. Be that as it may, the journalists in the countries we work in are faced with difficult situations: little or no possibility of vocational training, no fees or salary, rather some funding for advertising work for organisations, associations, politicians and other people on the occasion of public events, very few opportunities to do investigative journalism, a high risk of being harassed, arrested or even assassinated.

At the same time, radio stations and the social networks are gaining enormously in importance. To the extent that governments who feel threatened by popular movements block the internet and the social networks and intimidate or ban the radio stations, as shown by the recent examples at the beginning of 2015 in DRC and very recently in Burundi.

The professionalization of journalism has long been a part of the work of the CPS: in the past, through the work of Hans Jörg Enz for Eirene in Bukavu, today Johanna Wild from GIZ in Kigali, Judith Raupp in Goma and Alexander Vojvoda in Buea — both for Bread for the World — are but a few examples of peace workers active in this domain.

* CPS mobile team Bread for the World

Their work and that of their local colleagues is essential. The work of Radio Okapi, but also of the radio stations Tayna, Pole FM, Maendeleo and others is equally important as the efforts of the numerous community radio stations which have a different focus. The sad example of hate radio RTLHC in Rwanda shows that the field of radio must be occupied by people acting responsibly in favor of peace.

In the social networks it is critical to carry out citizen watch and to avoid falling into the trap of populism and the dissemination of rumours. Alongside context analysis and action research, information and communication are important tools in all peace work.

Having said that, there are a number of theoretical basics for journalism in and around crisis situations. We would like to present some of them here, with emphasis on the fact that we are not recommending a single approach but consider that a professional job of informing and communicating, including analyses, can be done in different ways but must necessarily preclude rumours, prejudice and exclusions. We are therefore presenting you with various approaches.

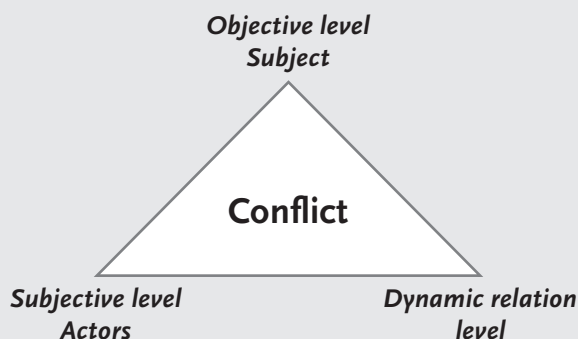
We speak of Peace journalism, Conflict sensitive journalism and Proactive journalism. Let us first of all clarify a few concepts.

Understanding the concepts

1) Conflict, Peace

Conflict

- ◆ A divergence of interests,
- ◆ Between two or more people;
- ◆ Around a subject/cause
- ◆ With visible signs (e.g. fatalities, material damage, injuries, insults, etc.)



Distinguish between a conflict and a problem (Hec Montreal, 2005)

PROBLEM	CONFLICT
◆ Measurable ◆ Observable ◆ Variance between an existing situation and a desired situation ◆ Generates acceptable dissatisfaction	◆ Not measurable ◆ Observable ◆ Opposition, confrontation, shock ◆ Flares up when there is an accumulation of dissatisfaction resulting from one or more unresolved problems

Peace

“Peace is not only the absence of violent conflict, but also requires a positive process favouring dialogue and enabling the resolution of conflicts in a spirit of mutual understanding and cooperation”

Source : United Nations, 1999

2) Hate journalism, Conflict sensitive journalism, Peace journalism

Hate journalism

What is the aim of this “journalism”?

- ◆ To stir up conflict
- ◆ Destroy others
- ◆ Propaganda!

The alternative?

Peace journalism!

- ◆ Helps to maintain peace/resolve conflicts
- ◆ Understand others
- ◆ Understand conflict

Peace journalism = Conflict sensitive journalism

= Proactive journalism

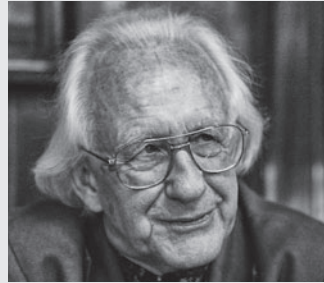
The “good” journalists?

- ◆ Have mastered their jobs (the facts: true, well researched, checked, the sources reliable, balanced)
- ◆ Know their audience and listeners
- ◆ “Neutral” – objective
- ◆ Independent (employee?)
- ◆ Self-aware
- ◆ Aware of their role

Johan Galtung *1930

Born on 24 October 1930 in Oslo, is a Norwegian political scientist known as the founder of irenology, or peace studies.

He produced a positive definition of peace which includes the search for social justice and the combat against



all forms of “structural violence” which result from the exercise of state power. He is the founder and director of “Transcend”, a network for conflict transformation by peaceful means.

He speaks of the 4 principles of conflict sensitive journalism:

- ◆ **Principle 1** : understand the conflict
- ◆ **Principle 2** : find the truth of both sides
- ◆ **Principle 3** : do not be elitist (preferential)
- ◆ **Principle 4** : seek a solution

The roles of journalists

Weischenberg 1993/2005, D Marr et al. 2001 CH

1 Facilitator	Organises dialogue in the society. Offers a forum for the different groups in the society
2 Lawyer, defender	Commits in favour of the voiceless in the society. Defends human rights
3 Reporter	Reports the facts, the data in a neutral, accurate manner
4 Explanatory	Explains, simplifies complex subjects to make them understandable

5 Mediator	Serves as mediator between the different parties
6 Watchdog (4th power)	Observes and criticises the personalities in power and the defects of society
7 Entertainer	Entertains the listeners
8 Descriptive	Describes reality as it is
9 Educator	Helps people to understand the events in the society

Canadians Jake Lynch and Annabel McGoldrick have gone into the notion of peace journalism in depth.

Handbook of Peace and Conflict Studies

Ed. Charles Webel, Johan Galtung

Peace Journalism (Excerpts)

Jake Lynch and Annabel McGoldrick

– Galtung's table –

Peace/Conflict Journalism	War/Violence Journalism
I. Peace/conflict-oriented	I. War/violence-oriented
Explore conflict formation, x parties, y goals, z issues	Focus on conflict arena, 2 parties, 1 goal (win), war
General 'win, win' orientation	General zero-sum orientation
Open space, open time; causes and outcomes anywhere, also in history/culture	Closed space, closed time; causes and exits in arena, who threw the first stone
Making conflicts transparent	Making wars opaque/secret
Giving voice to all parties; empathy, understanding	'Us-them' journalism, propaganda, voice, for 'us'
See conflict/war as problem, focus on conflict creativity	See 'them' as the problem, focus on who prevails in war
Humanization of all sides; more so the worse the weapons	Dehumanization of 'them'; more so the worse the weapon
Proactive: prevention before any violence/war occurs	Reactive: waiting for violence before reporting
Focus only on visible effect of violence (killed, wounded and material damage)	Focus on invisible effects of violence (trauma and glory, damage to structure/culture)

Peace/Conflict Journalism	War/Violence Journalism
II. Truth-oriented	II. Propaganda-oriented
Expose untruths on all sides / uncover all cover-ups	Expose 'their' untruths / help 'our' cover-ups/lies
III. People-oriented	III. Elite-oriented
Focus on suffering all over; on women, The aged, children, giving voice to voiceless	Focus on 'our' suffering; on able-bodied elite males, being their mouth-piece
Give name to all evil-doers	Give name to their evil-doers
Focus on people peacemakers	Focus on elite peacemakers
IV. Solution-oriented	IV. Victory-oriented
Peace = nonviolence + creativity	Peace = victory + ceasefire
Highlight peace initiatives, also to prevent more war	Conceal peace initiative, before victory is at hand
Focus on structure, culture, the peaceful society	Focus on treaty, institution, the controlled society
Aftermath: resolution, reconstruction, reconciliation	Leaving for another war, return if the old flares up again
...	
Peace Journalism more responsible	
<i>Definitions</i>	
Peace Journalism is when editors and reporters make choices—of what stories to report and about how to report them—that create opportunities for society at large to consider and value nonviolent responses to conflict.	

Peace Journalism:

- ◆ Uses the insights of conflict analysis and transformation to update the concepts of balance, fairness and accuracy in reporting.
- ◆ Provides a new route map tracing the connections between journalists, their sources, the stories they cover and the consequences of their journalism—the ethics of journalistic intervention.
- ◆ Builds an awareness of nonviolence and creativity into the practical job of everyday editing and reporting. (Lynch and McGoldrick 2005: 5)

With more Peace Journalism, according to Galtung, ‘the conflict in and over Northern Ireland [for example] would have entered a more peaceful phase long ago ... focus on non-violent outcomes, empathy with all parties and creativity is more likely to bring peace’ (Galtung 1998). Large claims, which raise a further set of questions—how do opportunities arise, for society at large to consider and value nonviolent responses, as a result of ‘journalistic intervention’? Do War Journalism and Peace Journalism affect the course of events in a conflict, and, if so, how?

Further, what ethical implications follow from these questions and any answers we may propose? A publicity leaflet for an early Peace Journalism event in the UK promised to discuss ‘what difference journalism can make. And if it can [make a difference], should it?’

Most discussion about the effect in conflict of news representations, or patterns of news representation, has focused on source behaviour—the actions and motivations of parties to conflict. Journalists in most places go through their working life with a rough-and-ready assumption that ‘we just report the facts’. But facts, in this highly mediated world, are ever more likely to have been presented, assembled or even created—at least partly—in order to be reported.

How can sources know what facts to create, and how to present them, to be reported so as to lead readers and audiences—they suppose—to respond in a way that will help their cause? Only on the basis of their experience of previous reporting (or the experience of expert advisers—as in the old gag, politicians don't watch television, they hire people to watch it for them).

It's a feedback loop of cause and effect, and it means the facts of tomorrow bear a slight residue, or imprint, of the reporting of today. It may be impossible to separate out 'media strategy' and quantify it as a proportion of motivation for parties to conflict to speak and act as they do. This is, after all, complex social behaviour. But, like one of the original colours in a tin of mixed paints, it is clearly visible, in countless cases—and it brings journalists a new ethical dilemma, one that can be seen as an artefact of a media-savvy age.

The challenge is to devise a workable teleological ethic, from the Greek *telos*, meaning goal or outcome. Traditionally, in British and other Western media, journalistic ethics are deontological, from *deon*, meaning duty. Reporters are not generally supposed to consider the consequences of reporting before or as they do it—merely to 'report the facts without fear or favour'. But this becomes harder to sustain as the consequences become more foreseeable. Hence the widely observed exceptions to the rule—don't report suicides or bomb scares. It is not difficult to guess the likely consequences if these were routinely publicized.

An awareness of conflict dynamics, attentive to the insights of Peace and Conflict Studies, cannot help but set the bar higher. 'Report incidents of political violence without context, for example, and you are likely to incentivize a "crackdown" in response.'

How so? By omitting context, War Journalism renders conflicts 'opaque', as the Galtung table says. In a feedback loop, the way a problem is diagnosed, in news reports about a conflict, conditions

what is likely to be presented—to the same reporters from the same news organizations—as an appropriate remedy. If the original reports do not show anything that could be set right, in order to remove the causes of violence, all that is left is more violence—to punish or corral the perpetrators. If parties to conflict wish to be reported as ‘getting to grips with the problem’ then they may feel they have to be seen to ‘crack down’.

...

The article by Kirthi Jayakumar in this publication illustrates the use of such an approach in relation to the phenomenon of Boko Haram.

But this approach is also the subject of severe criticism, which often comes from professional journalists on the basis of their experience of working in crisis zones. Here is a piece written by British journalist David Loyn, for instance.

Good journalism or peace journalism?

David Loyn

conflict & communication online, Vol. 6, No. 2, 2007

Abstract: This paper argues against the prescriptive notions of peace journalism, and in particular its exclusive nature and attempt to define itself as a new orthodoxy. Most of the paper is a critique of the work of Jake Lynch and Annabel McGoldrick, in a book published in 2005, as well as their earlier Reporting the World series. They condemn all other ways of reporting as 'War Journalism, biased in favour of war.' I argue instead that the opposite of peace journalism is good journalism.

Much of this peace journalism argument is derived from the work of Johan Galtung, who accuses 'war journalists' of reporting war in an enclosed space and time, with no context, concealing peace initiatives and making wars 'opaque/secret.' Galtung specifically calls on journalists as part of their mission to search out peace proposals which might begin as something small and beneath notice, but which might then be picked up and owned by politicians as their own. My response is clear and simple: creating peacemaking politicians is not the business of a reporter.

I examine the traditional journalistic methods of using objectivity to get at a version of the truth. I concede that perfect truth is unattainable, (and paradoxically the tool of objectivity we use to get there is slippery too.) I conclude that a more quotidian truth, or 'truthfulness' is though a manageable goal. I engage with philosophers who examine objectivity, concluding with the assistance of Thomas Nagel that it does still have a value. Nagel's account also has the merit of explaining how practices such as peace-reporting are bound to be less objective than alternatives, 'since they commit themselves to the

adoption of particular perspectives, in effect giving up on the ideal of stripping away as much...as possible.'

I examine the responses of the so-called 'journalism of attachment' framed as a desire of journalists faced by the horrors of Bosnia to cast off impartiality and emotional detachment and take sides in their reporting. I argue that holding onto objectivity could be a useful vaccine against the relativism of 'attached journalists'.

I conclude with a detailed examination of two case studies, Kosovo, and Northern Ireland, arguing that in these complex visceral conflicts, the solution to known problems is better application of old tools, not a new toolbox. In the twenty-first century the world has moved on from the classic Clausewitzian vision of war as a continuation of politics 'by other means', to a situation where threats of asymmetric conflicts will continually wrong-foot diplomatic solutions, as they are normally constructed, as well as conventional armies—'war amongst the people' in the new jargon. The tools of the reporter need to be sharpened not altered.

On the author: David Loyn has been a foreign correspondent for more than 25 years, mostly with the BBC. He is one of only two journalists to win both of Britain's leading awards in television and radio news – Sony Radio Reporter of the Year and Royal Television Society Journalist of the Year. He has considerable experience of conflicts including Angola, Kashmir, Afghanistan, Kosovo, Bosnia and Iraq. After a period as Delhi Correspondent in the mid-90's he was appointed the BBC's Developing World Correspondent based in London. His book *Frontline* – the true story of the British mavericks who changed the face of war reporting was short-listed for the 2006 Orwell Prize. He is currently writing a history of foreign engagement in Afghanistan.

eMail: David.loyn@bbc.co.uk

We feel the main thing is not to restrict ourselves to a single approach but to use the principles and methods proposed in concrete situations which, ultimately, only the actual communicator on the ground is able to assess in depth. There are also different players who intervene: local journalists, citizens, but also the international media correspondents and international media coverage in general. The book entitled *Médias et Conflicts*, which is unfortunately only available in French, gives a good illustration of the various angles.

The media and conflicts – vectors of war or actors for peace?

*To combine reflections on the role of the media in conflicts and the peace process with case studies taken from the recent experience of nine Central African countries, such is the ambitious challenge that was successfully met by GRIP (group for research and information on peace and security, Brussels) and IPP (Institut Panos, Paris) in “**Afrique centrale – Médias et conflits. Vecteurs de guerre ou acteurs de paix**”, editor Marie-Soleil Frère (published by Complexe, 2005).*

Structured in three parts, the work proposes numerous tracks for reflection on the media, instruments of destructive or, on the contrary, constructive strategies, that largely exceed the African framework. The first part, written by Canadian journalist Ross Haward, outlines the founding concepts and documents that, since the beginning of the 1990s, have guided attempts at systematising and modelling around the role of the media in conflicts and peace processes. This part gives an echo to the debate on the possible compatibility between professional journalism and peace journalism, which is still topical.

In the second part, researchers Pamphile Sebahara and Marie-Soleil Frère present, respectively, a brief analysis of the conflict-proneness of countries such as Burundi, DRC, Rwanda, Congo-Brazzaville, the Central African Republic, Chad, Cameroon, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, and a description of the positioning of the local media through the troubled experiences of these different States. The third part is a reflection from journalist Jean-Paul Marthoz on the manner in which the media in the North cover crises on the African continent. Several mechanisms for the selection and treatment of

global news in a context of illusory globalisation of news, which is really only that of multiple shady areas that are brought to light.

The western press swinging between indifference and emphasising “*negative events*”; the need to stick to a story line (an interpretation framework—ethnic war, ancestral traditions—into which to insert scattered, complex elements) simplifying the issues at stake or the emotional flood of “*humanitarian pornography*” (R. Debray)... provide elements for reflection on the “war vector” media of the North.

The originality and extraordinary utility of this work for any civil society actor wishing not only to understand the existing abuses of the media system (which have been denounced with much success), but also to procure the means of action on and with the media that can also be considered partners in the building and/or consolidation of peace, reside in its force of proposal. Far from being content to draw up a sombre diagnostic of the media-conflict pair, in particular in the treatment of the African continent, the researchers from GRIP and IPP, drawing on positive initiatives, forcefully show that Africa and the world at large could be covered differently.

They also show that there is no incompatibility between the liberty of the journalist, i.e. their impartiality in the treatment of a conflict, and their contribution to managing this same conflict. And this holds in the global context of the “*criminalisation*” of the modes of political action, “the media can constitute an ultimate place of expression and visibility for neglected social players, silent, voiceless civil victims of the wars of the continent, but also for alternative actions to manage the life of society”.

Source: http://www.irenees.net/bdf_fiche-documentation-131_fr.html



As recent technological advances have created a whole generation of “amateur journalists” through the social networks, new opportunities present themselves but the danger of causing harm through these channels has also become much greater. We still need and will always need responsible professionals. At the same time, citizens have more opportunities but also more responsibilities. We must therefore all familiarise ourselves with the basics of communication and information that foster progress towards sustainable peace.

Peace journalism and Boko Haram

by Kirthi Jayakumar

Posted by insight on conflict on June 4, 2014 at 5:53 am*

Kirthi Jayakumar talks about the differences between Peace Journalism and War Journalism, and how each approach affects the issues surrounding Boko Haram.

This article was originally published on Insight on Conflict. Insight on Conflict is Peace Direct's online resource for local peacebuilding and human rights in conflict areas.

When beginning writing this article, I ran a simple search on Google's news panel with the words "Boko Haram." In all the results that ensued, I found three common elements: propaganda, us-versus-them, and a conspicuous absence of peace efforts — three factors that feed into the very quintessence of war journalism.

War journalism is exactly what keeps war alive. It is the frontrunner element that campaigns for the prolonged *business of war*. For the uninitiated, as the name suggests, War Journalism refers to journalism that is focused on war, and encourages a presentation that¹:

- ♦ is heavily oriented towards violence and in projecting the conflict arena in a two-party and one-goal deal, confines itself to closed spaces and time, and studies the cause and effect only in the arena.

¹ See Lynch, J. & Galtung, J. (2010). Reporting Conflict: The Low Road and High Road.

* <http://www.internationalpeaceandconflict.org/profiles/blog/show?id=780588%3ABlogPost%3A939535#.VecdibSvLds>

- ◆ concerns itself only with the visible or tangible effects of violence, making the conflict opaque. The focus is on an ‘us-and-them’ rhetoric while seeing the enemy ‘them’ as the problem and dehumanising them.
- ◆ is heavily reactive in that it waits for violence to start before it does or says anything.
- ◆ is heavily propaganda-oriented, seeking only to expose ‘their’ untruths while helping to cover up ‘our’ own flaws.
- ◆ tends towards the Elite, by focusing on ‘their’ violence and ‘our’ suffering, calling ‘them’ evildoers and focusing only on the elite segments of society — spokespersons and peacemakers.
- ◆ is skewed towards victory, in that it considers peace and ceasefire as victory while concealing peace initiatives even before victory is at hand.
- ◆ gives up on a war once it is through — not looking at the root of the issue that needs solving — and returns only if the war flares up again.

In sum, what War Journalism does is create a hype that gets everyone to say “Never Again” and employ powerful sounding hashtags — but it stops with that. Once the conflict is resolved or becomes old news, there is a massive decline regarding concern over the issue, yet nothing was done to understand the root of the problem in the first place. This leaves a sort of Band-Aid on the sore, without any concern for preventing the conflict from happening again.

On the contrary, Peace Journalism doesn’t concern itself with the winner-versus-loser rhetoric, but rather zooms right into the root of the issue. It portrays conflicts in realistic terms and encourages the exploration of backgrounds and contexts of conflict formation. It presents the causes and options of every side involved, without introducing the ‘us’ versus ‘them’ perspective. It effectively serves the purpose by²:

2 Lynch, J. & McGoldrick, A. (2010) “A Global Standard for Reporting Conflict and Peace” in R.L. Keeble, J. Tulloch & F. Zollmann (eds.) *Peace Journalism, War and Conflict Resolution*. (Peter Lang: New York)

- ◆ being transparent in the representation of the causes, background and issues concerning a conflict;
- ◆ giving a voice to the rival parties involved and their views;
- ◆ offering creative ideas that can culminate in conflict resolution, development, peacemaking and peacekeeping;
- ◆ exposing lies, cover-ups and attempts to cover-up as well as culprits on all sides unequivocally;
- ◆ revealing the suffering inflicted on people of all parties involved in the conflict;
- ◆ paying attention to peace stories and efforts for peace;
- ◆ providing information on post-war developments.

Peace Journalism is about transparent journalism that relies on facts and explores the reality of the situation. In any of the reports I've read so far, I haven't found a background on the Boko Haram or any description of its activities, its rationale or its motivations. In the process, I am—and I am joined by a majority of the world's laypeople in this—only a jingoistic crusader, happily brandishing the #BringBackOurGirls tag without understanding the simmering elements to the conflict. I want a solution, but I have no idea what the solution can be. I don't know anything beyond the fact that these girls were kidnapped from a school and that the Boko Haram is a group of terrorists that are pivoted against Western Education. There are undoubtedly scores of efforts being made globally to tackle the issue—but the mainstream media doesn't tell me about any.

Had the narrative advanced itself from a Peace Journalism perspective, we would have been able to divert our attention to realistic and valuable solutions. We would be able to work strategies that are capable of addressing the undercurrents that motivate the Boko Haram in their activities. Proving my point there is an article from The Guardian,

which focuses on the coming together of Nigeria's two main religious groups in an attempt to respond to militancy and terror. It is immaterial what their religious faiths are, as it appears, for they seem to recognise that it is the people that suffered – irrespective of their faith.

This is precisely the problem with the way the world tackles conflict. Peacebuilding is a process that starts from knowledge. First and foremost, we need an understanding of what has happened and why. Next, we need to identify the kinds of solutions that are practicable given a particular framework concerning the groups involved. The third rung in the ladder is to understand the social ethos in which the actors are operating so that the best suited solution can be identified. An external solution often times remains a mere imposition that doesn't succeed simply because the local community neither owns it, nor identifies with it. There is no use for Band-Aids as in War Journalism — what is necessary, is a look at the very root of the conflict in order to address it comprehensively.

The internet is afropolitan

An interview with Achille Mbembe

Achille Mbembe discusses the history and horizon of digital communication and identity in the African continent with Bregtje van der Haak. Mbembe suggests that what some regard as the explosion of the Internet is really just the continuation of the age old cultures in the new age of the Afropolitan.

Bregtje van der Haak: The introduction of the mobile phone has caused huge changes, especially in Africa. Do you think the convergence of phones with internet connectivity will produce a similar kind of shift?

Achille Mbembe: Definitely! The introduction of the mobile phone in the continent has been a revolution in the ways in which people relate to themselves. The way they treat them, the way they take care of them, signals a shift in the modalities through which contemporary Africans understand themselves, how they relate to each other and more importantly to the world, in the sense that hardly any African today can be considered to not be connected to the rest of the world, the rest of the continent. The internet will play exactly the same role. It helps Africa to leapfrog the kind of technological evolution other continents and societies have undergone.

BvdH: Do you think the techno-utopian vision of bringing all knowledge to everyone is possible?

AM: Technology is nothing without the capacity to make people dream. That is where the power of technology resides. It is embraced insofar as people believe in the promise of inheriting it, of improving their own lives, making it better and freeing themselves of structural constraints.

The internet intensifies that capacity to dream and that narrative of liberation, which was invested earlier on in other kinds of utopias—revolutionary and progressive. Narratives of liberation, the promise of total liberation is now residing in two things: On the one hand in the religious and on the other hand in the commodity and in technology. Commodity, technology and religion are being fused in a new manner. The internet itself has become an electronic religion in the service of the ideology of consumption. That is the importance of the key role played by multinationals and other big companies. The danger of this is that the political, as we understood it earlier on, is almost emptied out now. As a friend of mine was putting it recently: “The political is becoming a business for the losers.”

BvdH: Could Internet also reinvigorate the public sphere, the political?

AM: Intermittently. It is a powerful tool for mobilisation, for speedy circulation of all kinds of messages, not all of them progressive. It can serve whatever purpose, but it is not enough to create a public sphere. It is very evanescent, ephemeral, in the sense that, there is no way in which we can do without the face-to-face encounter. This is absolutely central to the political. Internet is a means, it is not the end. But we live in a conjuncture in which we are made to believe that it is the end. There is no longer any distinction. I think that that is not sustainable for those who would like to change the current social world order. This confusion of means and ends is extremely dangerous and it serves the interests of the powerful. But the culture of our times puts us in a situation in which we have to believe the distinction between means and ends doesn't mean anything any longer. A political critique of the internet has to start from there.

BvdH: This is what has been completely eliminated in the promotional clips made by Google and Facebook. They simply say: we want to bring the Internet to everyone, so the world will be a better place. It's a very simple, one dimensional message.

AM: The Internet has become a religion. Internet pretends that it is salvation. You own salvation if only you get hooked on Internet, because then Internet will bring all that is needed for you to be happy.

BvdH: *Facebook and Google both have devised strategies for global expansion. Do you think there is a parallel with the times of imperialism? Now Google and Facebook are competing for the parts of the world that are not yet connected to their networks.*

AM: Yes, it is more or less the logic of dominion. It is part of the planetaryisation of capital, but this doesn't operate in the same way in every single space. One of the major spatial forms that is typical of the geography of our time is the enclave, the offshore, the zone. It is not a flat globe. It is a globe that is segmented, so people are hopping and jumping over large chunks of territory that are not at all connected. One sees it very vividly in Africa. We have an extractive economy that is connected to a very abstract and financial economy in this huge space, which is unequally connected first of all among itself, and then with the rest of the world. It seems to me that this geography anticipates what the globe is becoming.

BvdH: *You have referred to Africa as the last frontier. What do you mean by that?*

AM: It is the last territory on earth that has not yet been entirely subjected to the rule of capital. Its mineral resources have hardly been exploited. It is the last major chunk of the universe which has not yet been entirely related to its many different parts. Just imagine that to go from Casablanca to Cape Town you spend almost the entire day in a plane. It's a huge continent. But we don't have any railway from Casablanca to Cape Town or from Cape Town to Cairo. We don't have the kind of inter-American highways.

...

BvdH: Many people surveyed in Asia and Africa say Facebook is so important to them that the rest of the Internet doesn't exist. Are we living in a Facebook world?

AM: Yes, definitely. The phantasm of living on many different planes at the same time. It seems to me that the capacity of Google, Facebook lies in tapping into deep and hidden fantasies of the human being and turning them into products that are then sold and bought on a market that is global and that triggers new forms of interactions we have not seen before.

BvdH: But it is also a way to publish and to disseminate ideas.

AM: Yes, definitely. But I was more interested in the kind of self that emerges in the crucible of these new technologies, and how these technologies become an extension of ourselves and erase the distance between the human and the object. Human beings are no longer satisfied to simply be human beings. They want to add to who they are attributes of the thing and of the object.

I'm referring to the extent to which our own relationship to ourselves and what surrounds us changes, because of the kinds of technologies we practise or exchange; this capacity for multiplication and reproduction changes something in our mind set. This communion and fusion between the living human being and the object or the technology is at the source of new forms of being we have not seen before. They have serious implications for those who are interested in the question of the political and of liberation. The task earlier on was to make sure that the human being is not an object. Emancipation meant I cannot be treated as an object. Whether I'm a rational being, a woman, or a worker, I want to be treated as a human being. Now, if the human begins to desire to have some of the attributes of the object, then what is emancipation all about?

BvdH: Is there a specific African turn in all of this?

AM: That's where Africa becomes really interesting because in Africa cosmologies, African systems of thought before the colonial era, and

even now, a human person could metamorphose into something else. He or she could become a lion and then a horse or a tree. And that capacity for conversion into something else was also applied to economic transactions. You were always transacting with some other force or some other entity. And you were always busy trying to capture some of the power invested in those entities to add them to your own powers. So, if one wants to think in those rather essentialist terms, Africa is a fertile ground for the new digital technologies, because the philosophy of those technologies is more or less exactly the same as ancient African philosophies. This archive of permanent transformation, mutation, conversion and circulation is an essential dimension of what we can call African culture. The Internet responds directly to that drive and its cultural success can be explained by the fact that it meets at a very deep level with what has always been the way in which Africans transact with themselves and with the world. And that, in fact, Africans have been postmodern before postmodernism. If you want to have any idea of the world that is coming, the world ahead of us, look at Africa! You'll see the symptoms and the expressions of that world that is ahead of us. And most readings of the continent have not been able to highlight that because they are looking backward rather than in a future-orientated manner.

BvdH: So, in a way, you're saying that the digital world is an African world?

AM: Absolutely. In fact the world of Africa, the pre-colonial world, as well as the world of now, has always been somewhat digital. And what we see now is the reconciliation of that culture and a form that is coming from outside. But where are the forces that will help to domesticate this form and orientate it toward social ends, of justice of equality, of freedom, and of democracy, rather than toward further aggravation of inequalities, predation and looting?

The idea is that Africa was digital before the digital. And when you study the cultural history of the continent carefully, a number of things

come to the fore in terms of how African societies have constituted themselves and how they operated. First, they constituted themselves through circulation and mobility. When you look at African myths of origin, migration occupies a central role in all of them. There is not one single ethnic group in Africa that can seriously claim to have never moved. Their histories are always histories of migration, meaning people going from one place to the other, and in the process amalgamating with many other people. So circulation and amalgamation, you compile the gods, you conquer one ethnic group, you defeat them militarily, and you take their gods as yours, or you take their women as your wives, and therefore they become your parents.

Then, second, extraordinary plasticity—the capacity to embrace what is new, what is novel. Plasticity and the eagerness to experiment with the new was seen everywhere in the continent. People will not believe in the God of Muslims in the same way as people in Saudi Arabia. Senegalese Islam is very different from Islam in Iran or Saudi Arabia. Take forms of currency, in West Africa for centuries you had all the moneys, all the currencies were used. You go to Zimbabwe right now, you can use the dollar, the rand, the pound, the yen, that multiplicity of things. You keep changing one thing into another. This flexibility and this capacity for constant innovation, extension of the possible, that is also the spirit of the Internet, it is the spirit of the digital, and it is the same spirit you will find in pre-colonial and contemporary Africa. And what needs to be done is to construct the encounter, the reconciliation between those forms and the cultural archive that is still part of everyday life, with the purpose of building a society that is Afropolitan, and that is committed to ideals of freedom and liberty.

BvdH: How do you reconcile the idea you just elaborated on, the digital world as an African world, with the limited success of African apps and technological innovation?

AM: It seems to me that there is no other part of the world where people are forced by bad circumstances to innovate as much as in this con-

tinent. It's a constant, permanent innovation. If you do not innovate in ways of thinking, in ways of making things, you won't be able to survive. But how do we make sure that this inexhaustible capacity for innovation is at the service of a bigger kind of creation that can propel the continent, can help it to stand up on its own feet and to become its proper centre?

How do we make sure that institutions do not hinder that capacity for innovation? The possibility that the Internet might help to solve that institutional dilemma is something we have to think about creatively. It might very well be the wedge that helps to cut the Gordian knot of suppression between institutions and innovations.

BvdH: The Chinese and the Indians are coming here to get something from Africa, but the Americans and Europeans are still stuck with the idea they need to bring it something...

AM: Yes, that is the big divide. The divide of the early 21st century is exactly between those who think that this is a land of charity, where you bring something to these poor people who hardly manage to live, and those who come here because they know that it's the laboratory of the future and that there are things here that can be harvested. The West, of course, is still an important player, but new players are coming in, new connections are being made for those of us who live in a place like Johannesburg for instance. It's easy to see that. Just catch a flight going to Shanghai or to Mumbai or to Sao Paulo, and compare it to a flight going to New York or to London. These are two entirely different worlds. On the one hand the world of the future and on the other the world of the past. Where is it that the continent wants to go, with whom? And what are the forces that have to be mobilised to make a difference?

BvdH: Do you think increased internet connectivity will dissolve the boundaries between countryside and cities, or will the city belong to the connected people and the countryside to the disconnected?

AM: First of all, we are noticing a reduction of the distance between cities and rural areas, an intensification of the circulations and transactions between these two. People are moving constantly back and forth, to the point where it is becoming a bit difficult to say what is urban and what is rural. In a place like Kinshasa for instance, according to those who are studying the city, you see a ruralisation of the city and an urbanization of the rural.

This is the trend that will intensify in the coming years. In a number of countries, we have seen an increase in the electrification of rural areas. In southern Cameroon for instance, most of the villages are now electrified. And with electricity comes all what we were talking about: television, internet access, mobile phones and so on. What we will see is the densification of all kinds of networks, both human and technological, which will reshape the entire African spatial map.

BvdH: Do you think that with increased connectivity, internal African borders will tend to dissolve?

AM: What we will see is a pluralization of borders, in the sense that we will still have these physical borders, colonial borders. But then these physical border will be superseded by all kinds of interactions, most of them virtual. This is already happening, so gradually the idea of physical borders will be delegitimised because of the intensity of virtual traffic which may lead to the reshaping of national entities. I think the future is wide open, but the contestation of borders will increase, even more so because Europe is now out of reach for many Africans. You will have an increase of urbanization. If you travel today from Lagos to Accra, it's like one big coastal city. In 50 years nobody will know the borders of Lagos, because it will expand physically from Lagos to Accra. So the question is political: do we anticipate this? Or do we wait for it to happen chaotically and in a disorganised manner?

BvdH: But culturally and psychologically, will this contribute to a new kind of pan-African mindset and identity?

AM: It will contribute to the emergence of something I call the Afropolitan mindset, in the sense that there would be more circulations within this incredibly huge continent. I told you about the 1 million Chinese. In Angola and Mozambique, over the last five years, we have witnessed the return of 18,000 Portuguese some of whom had left during the colonisation, others just coming in. You have people coming in from South Asia. Moroccans coming from the north and establishing themselves in major cities in South Africa. So Afropolitanism is the cultural movement that accompanies these historical processes, some of which are totally new. It's more than pan-Africanism, it's something that makes Africa the point of encounter of different migratory movements.

BvdH: In some places, we see new borders being established with the use of technology, for example here in South Africa.

AM: That is typical of the era of globalisation the world is undergoing. It is also typical of the era of financial capital which for its reproduction constantly needs to exempt itself from any obligations to a specific location, thus increasing the importance of the offshore for instance.

BvdH: Do you think totalitarian regimes in Africa could turn into technologically assisted totalitarian regimes?

AM: If totalitarian regimes in Africa want to become more sophisticated in their control of the people they could do it, but I'm not sure they have the means or the intelligence. Sometimes, totalitarian regimes are quite stupid.

BvdH: In the best case scenario, five to 10 years from now, where will we be?

AM: In 15 years we'll have an entirely different continent. You will have populations that will be moving around at a faster pace than now: You will have more physical connections between the different parts of the continent; you will have a larger middle class; you'll have enclaves of poverty, unemployment, even warfare; you will have many more peo-

ple coming and settling in the continent, especially people coming from Asia; and you will have, since it is the topic of our conversation, millions of people who will be even more connected to the new technologies.

Incidentally, the very poor will benefit from those developments. The biggest challenge will of course still be how to put people to work. Internet alone will not solve political issues. We have to reinvest in the political, meaning in forms of struggles, social and political struggles aiming at, and creating better just societies.

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Media and responsibility

By Flaubert Djabateng*

Nowadays the media – including the so-called social media – constitute powerful sources of leverage. However, when used in the wrong way, they can wreak havoc.

Who doesn't remember in recent years the role played by the media during the "Arab spring", the dreams it evoked in the minds of the people for shaking off the yoke of the dictators and other despots? Or the giant cocktail parties organised in European towns and maintained through the social media? On the other hand, we can all also still recall the genocide perpetrated in Rwanda with the aid of the dark and tragically infamous "Thousand Hills Radio".

After the radio, television and the internet, we now have Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and the like. Facebook in conjunction with the mobile phone, for example, has become a tool which absorbs great amounts of energy. 1.25 billion Facebook accounts! 6 billion phone subscribers, 51% of emails are read on phones. The explosion of the mobile phone in Africa and especially of the services it offers is an asset that should not be forgotten when we speak of social transformation. With the competition waged by the phone operators, in the urban areas of Africa the average is two mobile phones per adult. Young people are not left out and are the ones who connect most often to the social networks. Today, the social media have become highly developed modes of communication in the digital domain and allow people to hook up around common interests. Facebook, Twitter, Dailymotion, Flickr, YouTube and Tumbler are the most often used and the most common.

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The sites are free and easy to use, there are automatic correction options, it is easy to find friends or publicise your events, the messages and information act as incentives and there is real time interaction, and a wide range of apps available: with no learning curve and often no code of conduct, you can produce videos and other messages and broadcast them widely. Today, the smartphone is a tool that can be used very effectively in the struggle for the peaceful cohabitation of peoples, but it can also be used as a tool for manipulation, and instigating hatred and exclusion.

However, training for social transformation and peace building often treat the question of the media as a minor aspect of the work without giving it the place it deserves. The development of communication technology has placed the media of today at the heart of the life of humanity. Observing the growing addiction to tools such as the mobile phone, the tablet computer, the internet and others, we wonder how people managed to live just 50 years ago.

Observing what happened in Senegal and Burkina Faso with the protest movements “Y'en a Marre (Fed up)” and “Citizen's Broom” and the reaction of the Congolese authorities at the conference organised by the young people of DRC together with similar movements, are so many text book cases for drawing lessons about responsibility. The fact that the media can rally people should encourage us to give more thought to our communication actions. The actions that led to “negative” or “positive” changes are those that created a movement, mobilisation, alliances, or strengthened the collaboration between the people.

Any movement carried by an ideology of exclusion, hatred or division leads to crises and even disaster. Even when the population is driven by questions of common interest, the risks of excess exist and can be exploited by opportunists and other people with unscrupulous intentions.

In many countries, we observe movements (democratisation, decentralisation, etc.) that open up new opportunities for the local civil society and in parallel, in many places, civil society organisations see their

leeway reduced by state intervention. Youth is always presented as the vector of existing change that must be rallied. However, the young generation is also used as “fuel” when the troublemakers kick into action. The social media are the quickest way to reach young people. Demanding more accountability for peace building and working for more social harmony in the communities means requiring of civil society that it appropriate the following criteria in its work: professional skills, sound institutions, alliances and networking.

“Peace building” is essential work that people should all seek out in their communities. If civil society would like to accompany such a search, it should comply with the requirements to do so effectively and skilfully. The skill of its employees and volunteers, the quality of the approaches to intervention and the knowledge of the context are so many essential assets for promoting real change.

Working with the media also requires control of the stakes and the risks inherent to their use, understanding and being familiar with the insight necessary for quality. Sound institutions are also a success factor. To be able to organise operational and strategic schedules with institutional anchorage that allow you to rally your allies and block your adversaries offers the conditions for success in advocacy actions in favour of peace.

Let us make responsible use of the opportunity the social media provide to be able to constitute a critical mass that can carry forward our ideals of peace.

The challenge of journalistic professionalism in the Great Lakes region

By Johanna Wild*

The media have the ability to determine the topics people are preoccupied with in their daily lives. But they should not try to impose a particular point of view on people. Trusting the audience to be capable of arriving at their own opinion is an integral part of a peace process that will be crowned with success.

Conflict-sensitive journalism makes sure people have access to all the information necessary for building their own opinion. There are often lots of rumours circulating in war regions and crisis areas and in countries emerging from a conflict. It is up to the journalists to verify them before conveying to their audience which ones are true and which ones cannot be confirmed. But many journalists, also in the Great Lakes region, have not had the opportunity to learn proper verification techniques. In the Democratic Republic of Congo at the beginning of 2014, it was rumoured that the Rwandan President, Paul Kagame, was dead. Due to a lack of journalists capable of calling the rumour into question and investigating its degree of veracity, the population continued to believe it and were celebrating in the streets until the Rwandan Presidency tweeted a photo of Kagame very much alive and welcoming a delegation of American students. In the Great Lakes region, where the majority of the conflicts are interconnected, there is so much mistrust that a rumour concerning the death of the President of a neighbouring country enables the emergence of an unrealistic hope of an immediate

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improvement in one's personal situation. The motto of conflict sensitive journalism is therefore: check all information using several independent sources before publishing.

But this is not all: journalists working in a way that is sensitive to conflicts investigate the causes of a conflict instead of just describing the violent acts that are visible at first sight. They go further and explain the background to the conflict while including the perspectives of all the groups of stakeholders in their media coverage. They do not leave out those who are less expert in expressing themselves than others. And they avoid favouring one party to the conflict because they feel closer to them personally.

All the same, conflict sensitive journalism is not actually a new concept that revolutionises the work of 'ordinary' journalism. Basically, working in a way that is conflict sensitive simply means good quality journalism that endows journalists with the requisite skills and allows them adequate time to produce work that is well-documented and balanced. Creating the essential conditions to make such a job possible is already by far a sufficient challenge.

Many international organisations prefer to speak of 'journalism for peace' to describe their media projects. They understand by this term a sort of media coverage that does not focus on investigating the causes of conflict but which encourages journalists to actively find possibilities for transforming conflicts and publicising the efforts of the peace initiatives. Such initiatives doubtless deserve to be promoted and they need specialists in public relations.

But it is not up to journalists to take responsibility for this job because this would mean they would lose their independence as journalists, which is one of the cornerstones of their profession.

Remaining or becoming independent is a major challenge for journalists in the Great Lakes. In all the countries in the region, the radio is the principal source of information. In Burundi, a large part of the population was completely cut off from the news during the attempted *coup d'état* in May 2015 only because the stations were forced to stop working.

The radio stations play a key role in the region but many of them encounter considerable difficulties in earning enough money to be able to carry out in-depth research and to pay their journalists decent salaries. For them, it is a good thing that businesses, political parties and other organisations pay them to broadcast programmes whose contents depend on the sponsors' wishes. A similar phenomenon can be observed in press conferences. When the journalists arrive they sign an attendance list and receive a sum of money in return, that they call 'transport' but which should be understood as a pressing request to provide enthusiastic coverage of the event. Those who inform the public in a critical manner are not invited to future conferences and lose this source of income. Under such conditions, the journalists who are willing and dare to provide independent coverage can be counted on the fingers of one hand.

Consequently, the media in the Great Lakes region communicate the points of view of the powerful and neglect those of other groups. Apart from the monetary aspect there is also the question of loyalty towards the authorities which we don't want to threaten through a programme calling their work into question.

For the journalists concerned, it is not at all easy to escape this system. But supporting independent journalism is cruelly necessary to ensure that the most vulnerable in society find their place in the media coverage in the region. In Rwanda for example, it is above all people of a high social position who dominate the media rhetoric while the most underprivileged population outside the capital Kigali does not yet participate to the same extent in the radio broadcasts.

This does not mean that these people are the only ones the journalists should interview. The professional journalist's job is to include in their broadcasts the opinions of all the individuals and groups in the society and thereby facilitate communication between them that would not have taken place in the same way without the work of the journalists. By giving a voice to everyone, the journalists can assume the role of mediator and help the listeners to find out about and understand the points of view and needs of other groups with whom they have few exchanges

in their daily lives. In this way, radio broadcasts can contribute to overcoming the cleavages that often begin with rumours and prejudice in people's minds. And only if the images of the "other" are not steeped in total incomprehension, it is in the interests of the population to seek concrete proposals for solutions to conflicts in their surrounding areas and perhaps themselves become militant pacifists.

Journalists, on the other hand, do not have the right to align with one or other "side"; they must investigate all the aspects related to a conflict. In Rwanda, the "work of journalism" before and during the genocide of 1994 is a good illustration of what can happen in the worst case scenario when journalists do not insist on their independence. In blind obedience towards those who were whipping up ethnic hatred, they broadcast inflammatory speeches against the Tutsi minority.

Ross Howard, a Canadian expert in conflict-sensitive journalism, summarises the role of the journalists in a few words: "the mission of the professional journalist is not to attenuate conflicts. Their mission is to broadcast accurate and unbiased information. But good practices in journalism can often lead to a reduction in a conflict."

By supporting journalists to become more professional and work in an independent manner, the Civil Peace Service contributes actively to the peace process in the Great Lakes region, which has known and is still experiencing various conflict situations.

Reporters against fear: a cross-border project in the Great Lakes

By Judith Raupp*

"I was so scared" she confessed; she is a young Rwandan journalist. Before she arrived for the first time in Goma, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, her friends had warned her: *"They're going to kill you, the Congolese!"*. Today, this journalist from Kigali comes to Goma regularly. She has made friends with some of the Congolese journalists. She is no longer afraid of the citizens in this neighbouring country.

The young woman is part of the media project of the Civil Peace Service (CPS) in the Great Lakes region. Learning the profession of journalist together and respecting others are the main goals of the activity.

The project involves around twenty journalists from the Congo and Rwanda. They meet in workshops to discuss concepts and subjects for cross-border radio programs. These programmes are broadcast in French, Kishwahili and Kinyarwanda by Congolese and Rwandan radio stations and even through Voice of America in Rwanda. The programmes and written publications around the project deal with topics from the daily lives of the young people in the region, such as for example inter-cultural marriages, dowries, unemployment or the gastronomy of each country. Sometimes the journalists even choose slightly difficult subjects such as abortion. They learn to broach the taboos in their society to provoke a frank and democratic discussion of existing problems in order to find non-violent solutions.

The project, supported by Bread for the World and German development cooperation (GIZ), is focussing for the moment on DR Congo

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and Rwanda. These two countries have a long history of hatred, racism and violence. Prejudice and suspicion continue to block the peace process in the region of the Great Lakes. Personal meetings between the young reporters and visits to the respective neighbouring country can help to remove this block.

The journalists often do research together in the Congo and Rwanda. They even attend week-long training courses with their neighbours. Radio Tayna in Goma and the media organisation Ejo! Youth Echo in Kigali regularly welcomes trainees from the other country.

Apart from the social cohesion aspect, the project focuses on training in journalism. In workshops and tutorials the young people learn the different facets of journalism, for example how to carry out a proper investigation, how to do features, interviews, portraits or how to report the news.

We firmly insist on capacity building in finding reliable information and recognising the difference between information and rumour. It is very important that the journalists understand their role and their responsibility working in situations where conflicts can easily flare up. In the project, the journalists learn to anticipate the consequences a programme or an article could have and avoid being manipulated or instrumentalised by certain people in bad faith. The security of the journalists themselves and the principle of respecting social cohesion are the priorities. It is also important to impress upon journalists the importance of remaining independent. This means that they must respect the code of conduct, reject corruption and make the distinction between advertising and journalism. Because journalists are poor and the media lacking in resources, too many journalists in the Congo and Rwanda are tempted to publish information in favour of someone who pays for the “service”.

Beyond this, our project encounters another challenge. Freedom of expression is written into the law but does not exist in reality. The journalists face threats and attempts at intimidation. The pressure on journalists increases in (pre-)electoral periods which are approaching in the

Congo and Rwanda. Consequently, many journalists prefer self-censorship out of a fear of serious reprisals for reporting independent information. But on the basis of reliable information and professional, independent work the young journalists in the project continue to engage in favour of the democratisation of their country and the pacification of the Great Lakes region.

No longer being afraid of your neighbours—as experienced by the young journalist from Kigali—is a good foundation from which to achieve these objectives.

Thoughts and desiderata regarding conflict sensitive journalism

We teach Rwandan and Congolese journalists to always give voice to the population, the real players in an event. And we would like you, too, to read what the Rwandan and Congolese journalists in our project think about conflict-sensitive journalism. Here are some quotes from them:

Magguv Kakule, programme director at Virunga Business Radio, Goma:

“Training courses in the field of conflict sensitive journalism very often take place in major towns such as Goma, Bukavu or Beni. But our colleagues in the interior of the country, for example those in the territories of Rutshuru and Masisi or even Beni, are forgotten about. Knowing that they work in places where there can be several kinds of conflicts, including over land, between ethnic groups or created by armed groups. These hinterland journalists have almost no opportunity to follow training courses on conflict sensitive journalism. As a consequence, we observe a serious lack of professionalism. Some journalists do not even know how to ask questions, they don’t know how to stay safe in conflict zones. I talked a little with some of them, and they showed me they need help.”

Franck Assani, reporter at Virunga Business Radio, Goma:

“The profession of journalist must take into account an assessment of the risks in the field, measure probability, identify the factors

and manage the effects. At a time when microphones and cameras draw fire from the warring factions, the dilemma between the risky duty of informing in a conflict and the choice of no longer going there is posed acutely.

The first thing is that the journalist must be familiar with the concepts of international humanitarian law which is legislation that has emerged from armed conflicts. Like the military who wage war, the journalists who report it do so in peril of their lives. In addition, the way journalism and the media have evolved, marked by the technological revolution and commercial constraints, has led to abuses that weigh on the principles of media information. The problem of the relations between journalism and risk was grasped through all the undesirable effects produced by the hazards of war and by the excesses in the field of journalism as well as the deliberate threats on the part of the actors in the conflicts.

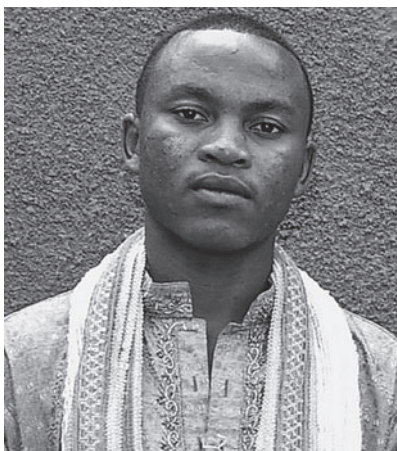
The impact of conflict sensitive journalism on society was to bring it closer to the population, for each time there is a conflict between communities, they complain to the journalist to give voice to those who feel neglected.”

Reagan Mwanaweka, journalist at Radio Tayna, Goma:

“In the conflict zone a journalist must always be neutral and impartial. They must be guided by the principles of ethical journalism. They may not trust the parties to the conflicts, the opposing parties in the conflict. They must always be careful and protect themselves. This is what I learnt about conflict sensitive journalism.”

Valéry Mukosasenge, programme head at radio Tayna, Goma:

“Training in conflict sensitive journalism is useful for journalists in the province of North Kivu in general and in the capital, Goma, in particular. All the problems that beset this part of the country in



Chrispin Mizero



Reagan Mwanaweka



Aallyah Teta Gwiza

© with the respective journalists



Maurice Shyaka



Betty Ndayisaba



Valéry Mukosasenge

the eastern Congo carry the seed of conflicts, either among ethnic groups or over land ownership. This requires sufficient baggage regarding conflict management to inform from the perspective of eradicating such scourges. In my opinion, it is also important to learn techniques for gathering data in the midst of a conflict. In concrete terms how can we do our job in this milieu without taking sides or leaning towards one side.”

Betty Ndayisaba, *journalist from the organisation Ejo Youth Echo in Kigali:*

“I see that for the moment the situation in which we live is still very difficult in our region. But in the future things should improve. As journalists, we shall work together and travel through all the countries in the region to discover good things we won’t know beforehand. I think the journalists must overcome their fear and go to their neighbouring country, even if there are conflicts. We must look the realities in the face rather than broadcasting things in our programmes that are not true. And we must communicate these realities to our listeners so that we can start doing things together. We must say: together, it’s possible!”

Maurice Shyaka, *journalist from the organisation Ejo Youth Echo in Kigali:*

“I hope conflict sensitive journalism can unite the people in our different countries. My mission as a journalist is to inform listeners about minor conflicts in our region so that they can find strategies to prevent these conflicts from escalating. I also hope the rebels in the army of the former Rwandan President Juvenal Habyarimana, who fled to the Congo after the genocide, shall get together with other people in the region to find a solution for the current situation which matches the needs on all sides.”

Chrispin Mizero, *journalist from the organisation Ejo Youth Echo in Kigali:*

“I think conflict sensitive journalism is a chain of communication which gives everyone the chance to express their ideas. It helps the listeners to receive information about what the people in the region think. If they know what the neighbours are thinking then it’s easy for them to find a solution to the conflicts. At this moment, in Burundi for example, the young people are being used to disturb the peace in their country. They are paid by the politicians to scare the population. Sometimes the young people are manipulated into doing things without thinking about what they mean. The government may tell them to do things that are only good for them. I think we could make a programme about this problem and then the listeners could be encouraged to think about it before doing something bad.”

Aallyah Teta Gwiza, *journalist from the organisation Ejo Youth Echo in Kigali:*

“First of all, as a journalist, I must be hopeful of being able to contribute to building peace in the region. I can also raise the awareness of my colleagues. Journalism is very important because people have faith in journalists. They are the ones who convey, for example, the message: ‘Tomorrow you shall all have a day off work.’ And the people believe this is really the case and they stay at home. As a journalist everyone trusts me, this is why it is my responsibility to make efforts to contribute to building peace through my broadcasts.”

My first stay in the neighbouring country

By Maxime Rindiro

I am a member of the Ejo! Youth Echo organisation in Kigali. I did a seven day training course at Community Radio and Television Tayna (RTCT) in Goma. It was the first time I had crossed the border to go to a foreign country.



*Maxime from Ejo! Youth Echo
with Lydia and Reagan,
two journalists from the RTCT
(Photo: Maxime Rindiro)*

During my stay in Goma there were several surprises for me. I had set foot in the Congo and straight away I felt changed. There was so much going on in my head. I wondered if the Congolese really did have a negative opinion of the Rwandans like they say back home. My main concern was the fate of the Rwandans who were in the Congo during the period of the M23. From what I learnt from the media, the Congolese threatened the Rwandans and accused them of spying. And I found it worrying that some Congolese had celebrated following a false rumour that our President Paul Kagame was dead.

Faced with all this, I was a little afraid. I wondered how I was going to be able to live in a country where the people accused me of being their enemy and I also felt guilty about the situation. But on the other hand, I just wanted to know the truth about all that and I said to myself “I’ll be able to adapt, all the same”.

My colleague Valéry Mukosasenge, head of the RTCT programme, wanted to meet me at the border. I crossed the small barrier and waited for his call. I took advantage of the opportunity to observe how the Congolese behaved towards the other Rwandans who were coming into the Congo. In our country, lots of Congolese merchants cross the border to go and sell their wares in Rwanda. That day, I saw that the Rwandans do the same thing in Goma and I could see that they do it all calmly.

While I was observing the situation, I received a call. It was Valéry. He was waiting for me at the big barrier, whereas I had crossed the border at the small barrier. The two places are three kilometres apart. So I set off to meet him. And I had to cross back over the border.



The movements between the Rwandans and the Congolese at the small barrier
(Photo: Maxime Rindiro)

We went by motorcycle to Tayna station and I could see the blue helmets of the United Nations all over the town. Their vehicles were circulating all over the place. I also noticed a lot of advertising displays for the telecommunications companies Airtel and Vodacom that said: “*smartphonisez-vous!*”. I liked the slogan.

Once at the station, I had some good times with the journalists of RTCT. With journalist Christian Kambale I went to a port to check whether a boat accident the journalists had heard about had actually taken place.

Afterwards, we did a street-mic (asking questions of the locals) to find out what people thought of a quotation from Dufina Tabu, the President of the Congo Volunteers association (ASVOCO). He had just said: “I declare legal war on red tape and the penalisation of the torture



*The boat – Emmanuel 2 –
in question*
(Photo: Christian Kambale)



*Dufina Tabu,
president of ASVOCO*
(Photo: Maxime Rindiro)

imposed by the courts in order to demand that justice be done in the legal system, and if I die, it will be for this cause”.

When I was gathering the ideas of the young people, I felt at home. There was no difference between the work of journalism in Rwanda and in Goma. Some people agreed, others were against the quote. And though I introduced myself as a Rwandan journalist, no-one hurt me.

I also had the opportunity to visit the “Birere” neighbourhood. It is a neighbourhood that resembles a working class neighbourhood in Kigali called “Biryogogo” and I liked it a lot. Everyone was busy and the people were chanting the word “Bunga! Bunga!”. In Swahili that means “manioc flour” and represents the same thing as the word “Ubugali” for us at home in Kinyarwanda: the slogan means “looking for money”.

Because I had been asking myself this question for a few days without finding an answer, I asked my Congolese colleagues what they thought of me as a Rwandan journalist. The answer was simple: “Morphologically you are a Tutsi.” I was not happy with this answer. I explained to them that I was simply Rwandan and that the distinction between Hutus, Tutsis and Twa was not determined by morphology but by social class. I explained that in the past, people could change social class and



*My dear colleague Christian Kambale,
sports journalist at RTCT,
and me at the Maison de BDGL
(Great Lakes Region Development Bank)*

I told them the story of a Rwandan who was a member of the class of the Busyete family of the Twa at the time. For he had saved the life of the king during Rwanda's expansionist conquests, he became Tutsi and the king gave him livestock. I tried to convince one of my Congolese colleagues that there was nothing more than social class, but it was not easy because they said they had been taught another story at school.

Then I had an idea: there should be a new form of education in our region that teaches fact and contradicts the lies spread by the colonisers. I think they knew we would never live together in peace if they made up a story about the differences that separate us.

In fact, there are lots of points Rwandans and the Congolese have in common and that unite us. During my internship, for example, I met my Congolese brother Fiston Muhindo and we realised we shared a lot of the same interests. We are both musicians, he sings and I rap and compose revolutionary songs.

Having had the opportunity to work with the team at RTCT all this time, I thank them from the bottom of my heart for everything I was able to learn from them. In a radio broadcast I produced with my Congolese colleagues Jeremie Kihambu, Valery Mukosasenge, Reagan Mwanweka and the others, I summarised everything I had learned in a single phrase: "We should not allow ourselves to be played by politics, we are the ones who should be playing the political."

Our supposed enemies have become my friends

*By Reagan Mwanaweka**

In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) there is a lot of prejudice. There are people who even say that the Rwandans are the eternal enemies of the Congolese. “They are bad”, they repeat over and over.

I grew up in the Congo with all this prejudice. I wanted to see for myself whether or not it was true. I spent seven days in Kigali, the capital of Rwanda. Seven days with the Rwandans, eating their food, living with them and talking to them. With my supposed enemies.

My experience: I was surprised to note that everything we say about them here does not correspond to how they actually are.

Before I went to Rwanda, obviously I was beset by prejudice as well. I was wondering whether the Rwandans would find me different from them and then exclude me? Or would they hurt me as revenge for the accusations we hold against them in DRC?

When I arrived in Rwanda, I found the people to be very welcoming and they like to laugh. All the horrible stories told about them in DRC by certain instigators couldn’t have been further from what I actually observed. In the Congo, they say the Rwandans are wicked, that they can’t be trusted and even worse things than that. But on the contrary!

I only spent seven days in Rwanda. Needless to say in one week you can enter a country on the basis of prejudice, a continent, but also in seven days you can make friends if you like. I realised that the problems of the prejudice of the Congolese towards the Rwandans are related to

* Journalist, Goma.

the fact that these two peoples have few occasions to meet and are not motivated to get to know one another.

I met Rwandans who were open, intense, keen to discuss things and pleasant. For example, with Nadine Uwamahoro, a journalist there, we did some research in a village near Kigali. I was slightly worried, how would the population there welcome me? As I am recognisably Congolese in appearance, would they be hostile? But everything was fine and I was even able to speak openly with my colleague Nadine. We spent quite some time sharing our different experiences with broad smiles all round. The same thing happened with Maxime Rindiro, who is also a Rwandan journalist. I discovered that, like me, he is keen on philosophy.

I'm convinced that the two peoples have good bases for reconciling because they have much in common. Not only do our lives depend on this, but so, too, do those of future generations.

The role of the press in the run-up to the elections in the current context of South-Kivu

*By Franck Zongwe, Anja Vollendorf, Libwe Mufumbe, Odile Bulabula**

1. Introduction

“Journalism provides a platform for informed discussion across a wide range of development issues—from environmental challenges and scientific progress to gender equality, youth engagement and peacebuilding. Only when journalists are at liberty to monitor, investigate and criticize policies and actions can good governance exist...” Such is the joint message from the Secretary general of the United Nations, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, and the Director-General of UNESCO, Mrs Irina Bokova, on the occasion of the celebration of World Press Freedom Day 2014.

Every year, May 3rd is a date which celebrates the fundamental principles of press freedom; to evaluate press freedom around the world, to defend the media from attacks on their independence and to pay tribute to journalists who have lost their lives in the exercise of their profession.

The theme chosen by UNESCO for 2015 is: “Let journalism thrive! Towards Better Reporting, Gender Equality, & Media Safety in the Digital Age”.

This message is particularly appropriate at a time when the province of South-Kivu and the DRC in general are in full preparation for provincial, municipal and local elections prior to the senatorial and urban

* colleagues collaborating for peace in RIO (Réseau d’Innovation Institutionnelle), Bukavu, DRC

ones. This great contest involving politicians of diverging views must not constitute an opportunity to divide the components of a nation which is more than ever in need of peace and cohesion. However, the current context shows that the kind of messages conveyed by the press are liable to exacerbate hatred between ethnic groups and tribes and fracture Congolese society.

2. Contents of press freedom, what does it mean, what are the indicators of a free press

Egide Kitumaini, provincial commissioner of South Kivu scouts and journalist with the “Le Souverain” newspaper, described the newspaper publishers of South-Kivu as belonging to 5 categories, to wit:

- ◆ *politicised media*: this is the case of the Congolese national radio-television channel, RTNC, which is under the direct management of the authorities in power. It has no degree of autonomy whatsoever. It receives orders from the capital, Kinshasa and only works within this framework. It has no liberty to take initiatives. The channel, and all its relay stations, from national to local level, is under the direct control of the government.
- ◆ *denominational media*: these are channels initiated by the Churches for evangelical purposes. Everything is based on faith. Any vague attempts at liberty the journalists dare initiate are quickly stamped out by the demands of the faith.
- ◆ *highly politicised media*: these are channels which grew up in the specific contexts of electoral propaganda in 2006 and 2011. Set up by ambitious politicians who found the means to address the population through the press in order to win the elections. The owners have total control and dictate the editorial line of their channel. They do not hes-

itate to threaten the staff, the journalists they employ, thereby infringing the labour legislation. Journalists, the majority young graduates seeking employment, in most cases with no training in journalism, are bribed for reasons of survival. They have no fixed salary and do not dare complain, for they are constantly being threatened with revocation. These channels are mistakenly taken for community radio stations when in fact they are instruments that serve the interests of these politicians. They organise certain attractive programmes to capture their audiences.

- ◆ *Community or association channels:* an indispensable tool in the development of the communities, community radio is controlled by the community which owns it. It is characterised by the community's participation in its creation, development and management. According to UNESCO, the aim of community radio is to give a voice to those who are deprived of one, to serve as spokesperson for marginalised population groups; it is located at the heart of the communication process and social democratisation. Community radio allows citizens to air their opinions about the decisions that concern them. Within these structures, the notions of transparency and good governance take on a new dimension and contribute to reinforcing democracy. Community radio amplifies the development efforts of the rural population and underprivileged layers in the cities, because of its exceptional capacity to share in real time the essential information concerning development, future prospects, experiences, practical knowledge and questions of public interest. For South Kivu, this is particularly the case of Radio ISDR (of l'Institut Supérieur de Développement Rural), Radio Maendeleo, and many other radio stations working in the eight territories of South-Kivu province,
- FIZI: radio Kaboke Mboko; Mutambala: Radio Baraka, radio Umoja, radio Amani, radio Ngoma ya Fizi, Radio Lwenge, Tuungane,Fm; Radio Muungano, Radio Ateka, Umoja community radio; Nombi of the patriots, radio Tuungane Fm, etc.

- UVIRA: Radiotélévision Lukula, Radiotélé du Peuple , Radio Impact, Radio Mitumba, Radio ONDES (Kiliba), Radio Sange, Radio Kamanyola
 - MWENGA: Radio PIL, radio Mutanga, radio Liberté, Radio APIDE,
 - IDJWI: Radio Mugote, Radio Edjwi Lino
 - KALEHE: Kalehe community radio (RCK), Nyabibwe community radio (RCN), Bubandano community radio
 - WALUNGU: Radio Mulangane, Radio Umoja, Sauti ya Wamama
 - KABARE: Eka Fm, Kabare community radio
 - SHABUNDA: Radio Mutanga.
- ♦ *the written press*: is not highly developed in South Kivu. The newspaper publishing houses have no allegiances, are not very productive and have little influence in the province. They remain the prerogative of certain individuals.

3. The current context of South-Kivu

Regarding the electoral process, the candidates to become provincial elected representatives are submitting their candidacies to the CENI. There is an atmosphere because the partisans accompany their party's candidates with victory songs to reassure them. On the other hand, internal dissension is felt at the level of the parties around the leadership. Thus, pirate parties grew up allying themselves to the other parties and led by the people in charge of the parties in the provinces. It is possible, for example, to find one person in charge of two political parties.

The RIO has experience in having worked with other civil society organisations in South Kivu in observing the elections and monitoring human rights violations in the electoral process. Awareness-raising tools were also designed and their use spread throughout the province.

The question of the freedom and professionalism of the media remains topical in South Kivu where the journalists from these different

radio stations have not had the requisite training for the job. The muzzle of the press, the arbitrary imprisonment of journalists, censorship, threats and intimidation on the part of the authorities in power, access to the sources of information remain difficult, particularly due to the context of war and permanent insecurity that has rendered well-nigh impossible the advent of a democratic society in DRC.

At the moment, we can see that certain community radio stations are abandoning the code of ethics; some openly support politicians and foster partisan debate. Through lack of financial means and especially through a misunderstanding of their roles, they allow themselves to be manipulated by crooked politicians and openly ally themselves to the support of a political party. As mentioned earlier, the channels of highly politicised radio stations misleadingly call themselves “community radio stations” to muster support from among the donors who are interested in the quality of the information broadcast. The politicians have begun their smear campaigns against each other, and social cohesion is being eroded. In this election period, the impartiality of the denominational media in relation to the political parties is also in doubt.

Concerning the journalists, the question of independence is back on the agenda. They are always looking for money. If they cover an event, in addition to the coverage fee paid by the press house, they demand a small award that is commonly known as ‘transport’ that also orients the quality of the information supplied. Their ability to analyse and interpret is no proof of acquired professionalism, hence the real need to build their capacities so that they can play a positive and constructive role in this election period.

Concerning the written press, certain newspapers appear sporadically after financial blockages. This is the case for ‘Le Souverain (libre)’, ‘Le Point Capital’, ‘Médias Tours’ and ‘Kivu Safari’. They do not have a wide readership. They are placed at the reception desk to decorate certain offices, but they do not attract the attention of readers. How to awaken the population so that it can discover the information contained in the

written press? This undeniably remains a challenge that merits addressing all the social agents to set up the appropriate mechanisms to channel attention to the print media.

Our dream: we are waiting for the moment when free expression of ideas will arrive. We are awaiting the moment that there will be places for discussions without incursions from the National Intelligence Agency. One day the media in South Kivu shall be independent.

Bukavu, May 18th 2015

In North-Kivu the community radio stations play their part in peace building locally and across the region

By Jacques Vagheni*

The people affected by conflicts, the poor, the vulnerable, women and children, villagers and the homeless also have the right to access information and the right to an opinion. Their voice has as much right to be heard as those of the privileged. Through their solidarity materialised in the platform CORACON¹, community radio stations have given themselves a role we can summarise as “the voice of the voiceless”.

I have been working for a community radio since 2004 and I have understood that giving a voice to someone, whatever their rank, raises them up, gives the person confidence, and removes their despair in the sense that it reassures them that their cause is being heard. Mr Albert Itungi tells us, after an interview: *“I am happy, I have just said what they prevented me from saying in front of the police when they stopped me for no valid reason. I feel strong with this radio, now I’ll go home and ask my whole family to follow the programme”*. Radio Tayna, initially established in a rural setting in Kasugho/Lubero before opening its station in the town of Goma, is going through this experience that it places at the service of restoring peace in North Kivu Province and awareness raising for the population on the sustainable use of natural resources.

North-Kivu Province has been victim to violent conflicts since 1994, conflicts which take a variety of forms: rebellions, influx of refugees and

¹ Community Radio and Television Collective of North Kivu-CORACON, member of the Congo-FRPC (*Fédération des Radios de Proximité*).

* journalist, coordinator of CORACON, North Kivu.

displaced persons, the pillaging of goods, massacres, kidnapping, suspicion between neighbouring peoples, etc. People living in rural areas, including women and children, suffer greatly.

CORACON has more than 50 community radio stations scattered throughout the urban and rural areas serving far flung corners where no other radios are received. In this type of environment, there is only one frequency; listeners cannot zap. The radio is perceived there as the voice of truth in the sense that the community takes as true only news that is broadcast on the air.

Wherever they are broadcasting from, these radio stations are spaces for the expression of the basic population. Most are set up to tackle a specific question such as the defence of human rights, environmental education, the promotion of agriculture, etc., but in practice these media cover programmes that touch on all the sectors of life. This is the consequence of taking into account the opinions and expectations of the community served in terms of information in drawing up the programme grids and contents. They are generally apolitical structures and their journalists subscribe to the principles of independent journalism.

The community radio stations have been very useful in rebuilding families separated by violent conflicts through the releases and information they broadcast. They give prime-time voice to people of low rank because of their principle that information must operate from bottom to top, in other words, from the governed to the governing. The journalist Kambale Siku from Radio Evangélique in Butembo expresses his feeling of satisfaction after having handed his microphone to a family in Mugunga camp for displaced persons located in the suburbs of Goma: *"I had the impression I was being of more use to my society when I interviewed this pregnant lady who was head of a family of 8 people in a camp for the displaced for she told me she was sure her voice would be heard"*.

The community radio stations in North Kivu have been working on programmes to support peace building since 2012. These are programmes during which the people affected by the conflicts have a chance to speak. They talk of their efforts in the process of rebuilding. When

these words are broadcast in synergy in all the radio stations of our Collective, the joyous feedback from the listeners proves to them and to everyone else that it is possible to succeed in life even after unfortunate events. Mrs Nyota, working in her field, is interviewed by a journalist from the community radio Lubero Sud (RCLS). Her testimony: *“The authorities have already rejected us, we are forgotten about, thank you for our radio which will allow us to be heard”*.

Since last year, the community radio stations in North Kivu, in partnership with the *Université Libre des Pays des Grands Lacs*, supported by CPS/Bread for the World² and ECHO, the group of young Rwandans supported by German bilateral cooperation GIZ, have been participating in the *rapprochement* of the peoples in the Great Lakes sub-region. Through reciprocal training courses, days of reflection on the prejudices that divide these population groups and the cultural heritage they share, the journalists and audiences of the radio stations gradually change their perception of the conflicts undermining the sub-region.

Journalists Reagan and Maxime took part in the cross-border exchanges. For Reagan Mwanaweke, journalist at Radio Tayna in Goma, his training course in Kigali allowed him to strike up friendships with people belonging to a milieu that some would describe as hostile. Today he advocates for a new way of looking at things in the region. As for Maxime Rindirop of the ECHO group in Kigali, his stay in Goma is an unforgettable memory; he advises young people to break through the cultural barriers and borders to create alliances in favour of peace.

To achieve their goal, that of a local station, the community radio stations broadcast information in the local languages, apart from, of course, Kiswahili and French. There are several in North Kivu and each radio adapts this disposition in their corner. For example, in the territories of Beni and Lubero, the radio stations broadcast in Kinande. In Rutshuru territory it's Kinyarwanda, in Masisi the languages used are Kihunde and Kinyarwanda and in Walikale it is Kinyanga.

2 CPS stands for Civil Peace Service, a German programme that supports development and peace-building efforts throughout the world.

And how can we make sure the community radio matches the expectations of the audience? How can we give more people a chance to be heard? The listeners' clubs are a practical means used by the community radio stations to ensure the combination between those running the radio stations and the population. It is a useful interface for feedback and for propagating messages within the communities.

Not everything is rosy in the job of the journalist in community radio stations, the major challenges remain security and economic independence which is not always guaranteed, given that the resources of these media are limited. The fact that many of them operate in rural areas where armed groups are still entrenched increases the difficulty of the work of gathering, processing and broadcasting information that is neutral, credible and independent. At a time, for example, when Rutshuru territory was occupied by the M23 rebellion, the Community radio Ushirika (Racou FM) closed its news programmes to survive the pressure from the rebels.

In any case, North Kivu media space in particular and DR Congo in general receives radio stations most of which belong to the category of community radios. They make a large scale contribution to the dissemination of information in the areas where no-one listens to the powerful radio stations-referring to the National Radio, the RTNC and Radio Okapi of the United Nations. They shall be even more useful once they have reached a possibility of autonomy of means in order to materialise editorial independence.

Cameroon: community radios and peace building

By Rev Ebai Gustav Tabi & Alexander Vojvoda***

Since the Rwandan genocide in 1994 and the widely discussed involvement of Radio Mille Collines (Radio RTLMC) in the fighting, our Country like most of Africa has gone through the different stages of post disaster experiences, which end in indifference. So today the Rwandan story may be discussed but with indifference as if it was a fluke.

Therefore, the role that Community Radios can play towards peace building or conflict was and is being undermined. The Community Radios that sprang up with the help of UNESCO have died of different causes the main cause being lack of community participation.

As terrorism and other violent conflicts are springing up around the world mainly due to tensions related to ideology, religion, economic and social reasons, the way we communicate and the source of our information has become more and more important.

Cameroon is unique in that there is just the budding of conflict evident. Preventive efforts still have a chance of succeeding. So it is our intention to examine how Community Radios can participate in peace building and upholding justice and development.

* Information officer for the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (PCC)

** CPS peace worker at PCC for Bread for the World

The Community Radio

UNESCO started the creation of community radios in Cameroon with 22 stations of which only two are functional today. After UNESCO, some councils, churches, and NGOs through partners got involved and in 2004 the National Programme for Participative Development (PNDP) began its empowerment of municipal councils with Community Radios being part of the strategy and plan.

Today officially, there are over 100 Community Radios in Cameroon. However this figure doesn't represent the reality as more and more associations or individuals establish radios in their communities. This arbitrary set up of radios also leads to all sorts of managerial systems. The potential of community radios in Cameroon to do good or bad, to participate in peace building or conflict is palpable. The PNDP in the next year will set-up another 25 community radios following the same models that have seen community radios become commercial or propaganda stations under UNESCO leadership.

This article seeks to elaborate on three problems of the Community Radio Movement in Cameroon: ownership, management and programming. Thereafter, the article will work on the potential of the Community Radios Sector in Cameroon and its possible contributions to peace building and conflict transformation.

The Present Context

Ownership

In Cameroon, ownership of a community radio cuts across many community structures. The local councils, Churches, NGOs and Associations run such radios. There are even community radios who on paper are owned by the community but run by one individual. This last part is the main cause of the failure of many early community radios set up by UNESCO; since the communities didn't understand or were not

allowed to assume their ownership role so the radios mostly ran out of funds and had to turn commercial or closed.

Management

As diverse as the ownership of community radios is, so too the management. The typical community management committees have been replaced by other structures depending on the need or structure. In most structures, certain persons have acquired absolute control and manage the radios in a quasi-commercial way.

The exclusion of the community members from the ownership structure and the decision-making processes are not the sole problematic situation in regard of the decline of the Community Radios Sector in Cameroon. In addition, the programmes and broadcasted content does not reflect the situation in the communities as a transformation of the ownership structure to a commercial radio is taking place.

Programming

The programming of most of community radios is limited to their ability to interact with the community they serve. Community Radios that have open relations with the community have members of their communities running various programs on the radio. These programs focus on culture, poverty alleviation, education, information, development, justice, and peace in various degrees of importance. However, the lack of funds, the low participation of the community in some cases and the top – down management format has eroded a lot of the programming and today the focus is on what can bring in sponsors.

The Way forward?

The need of Community Radios in Peace building

In Cameroon, modern technologies spread like bush fires. The adoption of the digital age has never been this easy. A country of less than 25 million inhabitants that already has almost 17 million mobile phone subscribers. There are over 150 newspapers, 40 online publications, 4 Television channels with national and satellite coverage, and one national radio station.

With all of these, it would seem the local radio outlet is not needed. On the contrary, the consumption of these modern medias is highly concentrated in the urban centres. Due to poor rural electrification and literacy levels, the rural population has to rely on the community radios for their news and information on culture, social issues and education. The newspapers hardly reach the rural areas and when they do, they are expensive and difficult to understand for the population. Television signals do not reach the rural areas and when they do, the absence of electricity is a handicap.

On the other hand, radio sets of different sizes and makes are affordable. The batteries are also easily available and can be used for a long period. Consequently, most of our local areas depend on the local community radios, for news and education. The community radios and broadcasters enjoy notoriety in the rural areas. The rural population depends on and trusts these community broadcasters for their information. It makes Community Radios very important in the maintenance of peace, justice and development. Moreover, the local radio station also broadcasts in the local languages of the community, village or neighbourhood and thereby creates relevance and proximity for the local population.

Cameroon and Peace building

Cameroon may not be considered a conflict or war torn zone by many but everyday acts of terrorism and the challenges of a possible political transition create undercurrents of conflict.

A country with as much cultural diversity and religious plurality as Cameroon is in danger of full-blown conflicts. Villages, communities and even neighbourhoods do not necessarily constitute a homogeneous population. Migration to the big cities, urban development, infrastructural improvements and influx of diverse groups may change the shape of a local community drastically in a short period of time. Communicating in Cameroon is a challenge and rural communication is an even greater challenge for one word said with the wrong pronunciation or stereotype could launch a conflict. The diversity of the languages, beliefs, geography, and traditional systems of Cameroon gives it great cultural and touristic richness but also makes it difficult and risky to communicate especially in the local communities.

The development or strengthening of community radios is now more necessary than ever. This strengthening of capacities has to cut across the different sections of the Community radio.

Better Community Radios, better services

The community needs to claim their ownership on three levels: the ownership structure, the decision-making processes and the programmes and content level. This need calls for a shift in how community radios are received in the general context of developmental programmes as only the broadcasting infrastructure guarantees appropriation by, for and from the community.

1 – Ownership and control

The Communities must participate fully in the creation and set up of these radios. This should be accompanied by education of the community on their rights, privileges, and duties. The community in which a community radio is set up has to be brought to comprehend that the radio belongs to the community. Each community has to appropriate the radio, and thus participate in its control.

It is only when the community assumes ownership and participates in the ownership structures, management and decision-making processes that a community can protect and finance the community radio. The main causes of the failures of community radios remain “poor community participation”.

2 – Community Service

Management of the community radio whether financially or editorially has to be based on community development. The two words “Community” and “Radio” have to come together in a synergy and both must take care of each other; the radio must participate in communal well being and the community must participate in the sustenance of the radio.

The every day management of a Community Radio should not be dependent on the goodwill of one person to ensure a sustainable development. Hence, also the personnel and staffing policy should reflect the local community structure with the aim of bringing in marginalised and underrepresented communities into the radio premises and involve them in decision-making.

This can only happen if all are educated on the true purpose of the radio and if the programming of the radio is tailored to educate, inform and entertain the community above all else. To fulfil this definition of Community radio, we need to have the next point.

3 – Community Access and Participation

In Cameroon right now since the ownership is not truly communal, and since the management of the radios is not community-inclusive; the access and participation of the community to and in the station is controlled by and at the discretion of the management.

The stakeholders of the community radio sector must then be educated on the need and advantages of community access and participation, especially how it can help in the programming and financing.

The sustainability of a non-commercial or non-for-profit structure is vital to the diversity in programming in Community Radios. Take the burden of income generating from the programme producers through pro-active interaction with the communities, NGOs and initiatives on the ground; and diversity in the programming can be achieved.

The triangle “Ownership – Management – Programming” of Community Radios has to be set in a dynamic environment where individuals, organisations and initiatives are approaching Community Radios with the intention of producing a show for decades or just co-operate on a certain issue or within a specific project.

This dynamic environment is set to create a network of nodes, contacts and possibilities for the communities to join the radio. The radio station needs open and participatory ownership structures, inclusive and diverse programming and transparent management to be able to empower the local communities to be step up from consumers to producers, from affected persons to agents of their cause within their community.

Conclusion

Community radios in Cameroon are needed. The political and socio-economic situation of Cameroon, and the war with Boko Haram (terrorist group) make media and especially household media very impor-

tant. The strengthening of the role the community radios play in nation and peace building is an investment in peace and human dignity.

The community radios in Cameroon have to be empowered to understand and exploit their full potentials, and in this digital age to harness the benefits of new concepts such as “citizen journalism” and non-profit Business Models. Any plan for peace, justice or development that doesn’t involve the rural community is doomed. It is therefore imperative that we develop and strengthen our community radios.

“The poor and marginalized find themselves without a voice in that monolithic public sphere”

Interview of Prof. Vinod Pavarala

by Alexander Vojvoda*

Prof. Vinod Pavarala is UNESCO Chair on Community Media at University of Hyderabad. For over a decade, he has been one of the leading campaigners for democratization of airwaves in India and the South Asian region. As past President of the Community Radio Forum of India, he has been playing an active role in civil society's engagements with forging alternative media spaces for the marginalized communities. His much-reviewed book, co-authored with Kanchan K. Malik, *Other Voices: the struggle for community radio in India* (Sage, 2007) documents community-based efforts across India to carve out an alternative public sphere. He has addressed international forums such as UNESCO, AMARC (World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters), and CMFE (Community Media Forum of Europe) in the cause of media pluralism and diversity.

When was the UNESCO Chair on Community Media established and what are the main aims of your work?

The UNESCO Chair on Community Media was established in 2011 at University of Hyderabad in India to promote the cause of community-owned, managed and controlled media through research, policy advocacy, capacity building, and knowledge dissemination. The overall goal is to use the intellectual space of the Chair to make a case for democra-

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tization of the media landscape and contribute to media pluralism and diversity.

What are the characteristics of community radios as the third pillar in the media landscape in comparison to the public-service and commercial media?

Community broadcasting is essentially a non-profit service. Unlike the other two types of broadcasting, community radios are characterised by participation of members of a community in production and management and are typically reliant on community's own material and human resources. They tend to focus on local issues and events and showcase local cultures, identities, and languages. The state and commercial stations are used for propaganda and profit, and are not accessible to ordinary citizens, except as passive listeners.

Participatory structures, open-access, diversity in opinions, languages, cultures and persons producing the programmes in general are seen to define community radios. These aspects of community radios also constitute a 'community public sphere' in which citizens are able to take part in democratic processes. How would you describe this arena where citizens are interacting with the society via community radios?

The dominant public sphere constituted by the government, a national market, and the mainstream mass media is exclusionary in nature and privileges the elites. The poor and marginalized find themselves without a voice in that monolithic public sphere and lacking access to it. It is here that community media such as community radios have the potential to forge 'subaltern counter public spheres' (to use Nancy Fraser's concept) where subordinate classes could circulate alternative discourses and articulate their own interests and identities. Such alternative spheres, by shifting control over media technologies to the marginalized, facilitate collective action and offer a realistic potential for emancipation.

How important is the local context community radios are working in?

The local context is extremely important. Against the homogenizing influences of globalized media, community radios could offer a local anchor to reassert the primacy of the village and neighbourhood and encourage a healthy respect for local languages (many of which are marginalized as 'dialects') and local identities. This does not mean that participants in community radio (producers, managers, and listeners) need to be confined to the 'local', but engage critically with the 'national' and the 'global' through uniquely context-specific worldviews.

The term 'community' underwent critical analysis in the recent time and was redefined in new ways. In (post-)conflict situations community radios are regarded as a tool to facilitate reconciliation processes. What are opportunities and limits for community radios during conflicts and in post-conflict situations? How would you see the term 'community' in community radio especially in the context of peace building and conflict resolution?

The notion of 'community' could sometimes work adversely leading to hardening of attitudes towards the 'other', which in turn could result in inter-ethnic violence and conflict. Without romanticizing 'community' and upholding perverse tendencies among local groups, we can retain the idea of community as a peacekeeper and builder of peace that emphasizes a collective, participatory approach to addressing conflict. A community-based approach to peace building is essential in societies ridden with conflicts; it helps guide people towards more sustainable, peaceful relations between different communities. It has been suggested by those with experience in building bridges in post-conflict societies that participatory processes and community-based forums could be mobilized to build social capital by providing secure spaces for interaction, communication and collective decision-making. Such mechanisms could contribute to dispelling mistrust and set the stage for peaceful and constructive management of communal disputes. Community radio stations broadcasting in local languages could offer a vibrant forum for dialogue and

debate on key issues that could be fuelling conflict. Ideas about peaceful reconciliation, respect for human rights, and civic education could be systematically and effectively communicated through community radios. As Clemencia Rodriguez has shown so incisively in the context of armed conflict in Colombia, community media can play a role in reconstructing webs of meaning and strengthening the agency of the community through locally situated knowledges, languages, and aesthetics.

In addition to their local focus community radios are worldwide organised in various interest groups e.g. AMARC (World Association of Community Broadcasters) with regional sub-organisations like AMARC Africa. How important is the exchange between community radios, especially in the context of peace building and conflict resolution?

Community radio stations must take up opportunities for horizontal networking among similarly placed groups around the world. There is huge learning and sharing of valuable experiences that would emerge from such interactions. Organizations such as AMARC provide important platforms for exchange of ideas and practices among community radio stations globally. I can well imagine critical lessons to be learnt through discussions among community radios, say, in Nepal (which, for decades, dealt with a debilitating Maoist conflict), Colombia (which had been a basket case for a variety of violent conflicts involving drug lords, paramilitary groups, and leftist guerrillas), and Central Africa.

The Ogorum Saga.

Engaging the community for peace

By Julius Nzang*

The Peace building and conflict transformation project in the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon has seen glory days in the areas of engaging the community in the thinking process that would hopefully lead to awareness about peace. During trainings of peace builders among youths of the PCC from 2011–2013, cultural evenings were an indelible part which tapped into the cultural banks of the participants.

Participants showcased their culture in unimaginable ways. It could be through music, dance, drama, poetry and more. The Ogorum poem is one of the products of the cultural evenings. This poem was written and presented by one of the youths (Njume Julius Nzang) who at the time was a participant in the trainings. After careful deliberations and assessment of the qualities of the presentation, the idea of a radio play was born. This idea came to life when the first episodes of the play titled *The Ogorum Saga* were recorded in 2013.

What prompted the idea of a radio play? The peace builders needed to engage with their communities in Peace work. The radio is a powerful medium of communication in the Cameroonian communities today which is not expensive and very effective. Therefore, participants after the production of the first season of the radio received per presbytery a copy of the final CD. This, they were to use in radio stations around their localities to spark up discussions on topical issues about peace building and conflict transformation.

So far, the PCC has been able through its radio station (Christian Broadcasting Service CBS radio FM 95.3), to broadcast the radio play in

* Peace programme coordinator at the PCC.

one of their main peace programs titled “EYOLE: The Wind of Peace”. This program is a phone-in Radio program created and presented by the author of the Ogorum radio plays. The program attempts in each edition to spark open discussions about issues concerning peace. The radio play in each edition of the program swallows up the first 15 minutes of the program. It serves as an invitation for the community to get engaged in the program. The play is followed by an introduction of the issues that could be picked out from it and a presentation of the topic of the day. Then, the telephone and text message lines are opened simultaneously with discussions erupting in the studio between the presenter and a guest or the presenter and other participants who are youths trained by the PCC/CPS to be peace builders and multipliers. The presenters are facilitators and moderators during the program, moderating the contributions from the audience in order to keep the program true to the spirit of peace and to the topic of the day. All these are expected to be boosted by the reactions to the day’s episodes of the radio play.

The radio play has two seasons presently: “OGORUM: The Epic Saga Continues” and “OGORUM: The Epic Saga Expands”. The first season is a block buster in the Ogorum series, organized in 4 episodes namely

1. The Epic Saga continues (7 acts)
2. The Coronation (5 acts)
3. Facing the Nightmare (9 acts)
4. The return of the Queen (9 acts)

You will hear the voices of 12 young Cameroonians

- ◆ Julius Nzang, who is the very traditional strongholder Binka,
- ◆ Percy Kuchonde is Epie, also called “Mr.-know-it-all”
- ◆ Lawson Mekumba is Alume, the king chaser
- ◆ Muma Jude Awa is Ogorum, the man in the centre of many storms
- ◆ Mathias Lang is Akame, one of the elders and Clovis the leader of the youths
- ◆ Ntwi Ayuk is Pastor, Theo and King
- ◆ Achmi Samson Esoh is Wey, Thug, Marvin and Nde-de

- ◆ Mbonda Joel is Joe, Pascal and Ambrus
- ◆ Relindis Bengu is Sabina, the Queen-to-be
- ◆ Awa Valette Mangie is Brenda Spears, the White lady
- ◆ Ruth Eyakwe is Daughter, Nabila, Susan, Commissioner, Lutia and Tundia
- ◆ Ruth Ule Itoe is Kabo-Nchu, Mariana and Martina

The Ogorum Saga was recorded at CBS Buea with technical assistance from Chick Walters on 14th July 2013.

The second episode “The Epic Saga Expands” was a workshop that ran from the 11th to the 17th of January 2015. It brought in more actors and facilitators, Alexander Vojvoda and Anurin Nwunembom facilitated the workshop alongside Julius Nzang while actors like German born Lina (Volunteer with the Presbyterian Youth Center Kumba), Aristide Fomuki and Akendum Cynthia joined the crew. Final production of the season is on going and is expected to hit the Airwaves of CBS Radio in a month.

Ever since the first episode, the energy of the actors has formed a network within them such that the social media especially Facebook have been used to disseminate quick information and share experience. But also, the Eyole program has a Facebook page where a lot of information is put up with the intention of engaging those at home and in the diaspora, in Peace building. It is in such ways that the community becomes engaged in the peace awareness process.

The Future

After Julius Nzang and Rev. Thomas Mokoko from the CBS Radio attended a three week training programme from 18th May to 5th July 2015 at the Mindanao Peace Institute (MPI) in Davao City in the Philippines a new light has been cast on the Radio program. The intention now is to build up a theatre troupe that could be in charge of taking the

action live to the communities and involving conflict stricken communities in the Act. This should allow the communities to be their own actors and think out their own solutions to problems affecting them. It is also the intention of the Peace program coordinator Julius Nzang to present some editions of “Eyole” live from the scene in the field. Of course this represents a great challenge but it should help to attain more objectives. The main thing being that we can take peace work to the hearts of the People.

Peace Journalism in crisis situations

Sierra Leone as a case study

By Sheku Kamara* & Julia Krojer**

The media is a very powerful tool for reaching large audiences, especially when it comes to emergency situations such as the Ebola outbreak in West Africa. Like all coins, it has two sides: it has the power to spread rumours, which creates unnecessary fear among the people, which in turn can lead to violent situations, and it also has the power to inform and educate people on the deadly disease to save lives. More knowledge on a particular matter gives confidence. In Sierra Leone, both cases can be witnessed. But which of the media houses, radio stations and newsletters are credible?

For an inside view of what happened in Sierra Leone during the Ebola outbreak which started in May 2014 and what is happening now, SLADEA members Adama Sheriff and Julia Krojer prepared a short questionnaire. It was distributed to their partner organisations in the Civil Peace Service Network, members of SLADEA, market women and students.

Sierra Leone was the first nation in Anglophone West Africa to publish newspapers. But already by the time of independence from the British in 1961, the radio was replacing the print media and this remains true until today; radio is the most important medium for public information, due to the country's high illiteracy rate, among other things. The civil war caused a dramatic change in the media landscape which deteriorated mainly because of the brain drain; about 70 percent of the trained media professionals quit the country, leaving the media industry in the

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** CPS-worker, SLADEA; back in Sierra Leone since April 2015

hands of mostly untrained media practitioners.¹ This also raised doubts among the readership, audience and listeners.

The role of the media in the Ebola outbreak

On the one hand, the media contributed, both locally and internationally, to raising awareness about the outbreak and the devastating effects of the Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) in the West African sub-region. On the other hand, it also helped to breed and spread fear and public hysteria with its accompanying stigmatisation and isolating effects. It is clear that the Ebola outbreak in the West African sub-region is a crisis of monumental proportions threatening the human population and wildlife. And yet the brave and courageous efforts made by ordinary health personnel and the sometimes inexperienced populace who endangered their lives in the service of humanity were less present in the media.

The print media, usually referred to as the “Fourth Estate”, served as an important instrument for delivering Government Press Releases and Statements. The media played a fundamental role in ensuring the dissemination of the government’s press releases such as the report on the audit of the management of Ebola funds released on February 17th 2015 by the Majority leader of Parliament, Ibrahim R. Bundu. The media, both electronic and print, contributed immensely to a better understanding of the disease, the risks and methods of contracting it, the precautions that must be strictly adhered to in order to avoid infection and above all, letting people appreciate that early treatment certainly provides a better chance of surviving the disease.

Bread for the World – Protestant Development Service Partners in Sierra Leone implemented a community-based Ebola project called ‘Save Sierra Leone from Ebola’. One of the partners, Culture Radio, supported by YMCA, promoted the dissemination of Ebola messages as

1 Oatley, Nick/Thapa, Tashim (2012): Media, Youth and Conflict Prevention in Sierra Leone, IFP-EW, funded by the European Union. www.ifp-ew.eu, last accessed: 06.12.2013.

well as public engagement of the masses through electronic media by holding radio discussion programmes at Star Radio and Culture Radio. These programmes gave the opportunity to their wide listening population to ask salient questions and make important contributions and comments.

The extended closure of schools due to the Ebola outbreak led to the use of the electronic media to broadcast academic lessons on TV and radio. This provided a unique opportunity for many pupils around the country to develop their competences in various subjects that were being taught.

Besides the effort of the local media, the international media also drew considerable attention to the Ebola scourge which helped to mobilise and galvanise international support for the fight against this dreadful disease. Images were shown on CNN, BBC, and Aljazeera etc. on a daily basis of how the virus was ravaging Sierra Leone as well as its neighbours, Liberia and Guinea. These broadcasts contributed to mobilising public sympathy and hence more support but also instilled disproportionate fear in people especially outside Sierra Leone.

As a result of this, many investors left the country, most airlines stopped flying to Sierra Leone and the local populace became captives of a natural pandemic of untold proportions. Therefore, the role of the media in the Ebola outbreak is one of mixed messages, helping to bring support on the one hand but also creating hysteria on the other.

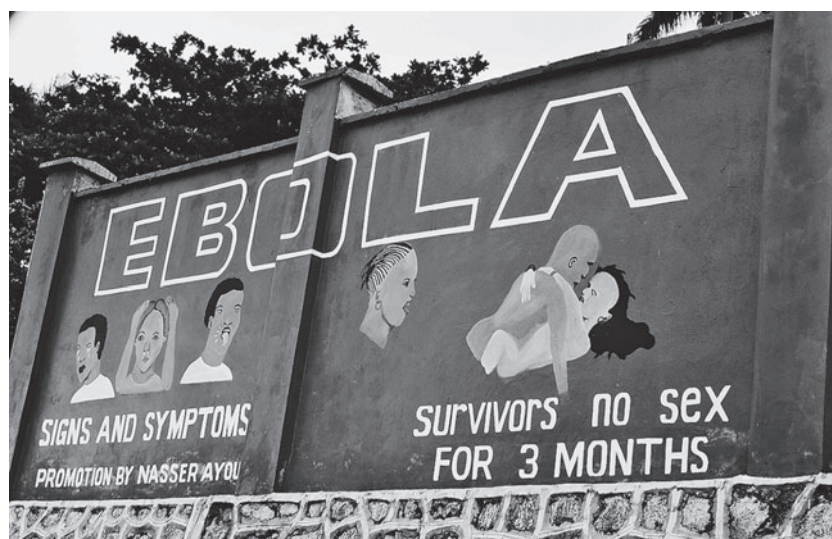
From a peace journalistic approach, what happened in Sierra Leone and around the globe shows that the main aspects of peace journalism such as peace/nonviolent-orientated, truth-orientated, people-orientated and solution-orientated² were not met.

Most of our interviewees got their information about Ebola from the radio or through community sensitization programmes. Just a few of them mentioned newspapers as a source of information, since they are seen as unreliable. As well as in the case of newspapers, the use of

2 Galtung, Johan (2006): Peace journalism as an ethical challenge. Global Media Journal Mediterranean Edition.



© photos: SLADEA (Julia Krojer and Raimi Olamide)



the internet is under-represented. One reason for this is the bad internet coverage in the country and the relatively high cost of accessing it. The total numbers of users reached 92,232 with an annual growth rate of 15 percent out of a population of about 6,200,000³.

Nevertheless, social media had a great impact on the perception of the EVD and West African people outside of Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea, mainly in Europe and America. As already mentioned above, the positive impact was certainly the aid which was and is still provided by the international community. During the peak of the outbreak, EVD dominated most of the headlines in the print, visual and social media all over the world. The unbalanced and exaggerated reporting created fear and panic which led not just to stigma and violence against health workers in the affected countries, but also contributed to the stigmatisation of Africans around the globe:

“The intensified Ebola fear on social media such as twitter, facebook, etc. due to the spread of gross misinformation from non-professionals and unfortunate reports in the region by print media [...], has resulted not only in fanning the flames of Ebola hysteria and untimely deaths, but also led to more harsh treatments of Africans in the diaspora and those travelling. The exponential rising figures of casualties and coverage of the whole scenario in the worst hit countries and their neighbours, has subjected Africans to unnecessary hardships such as fear of sitting beside them in airplane, bus, train after passing through checks at the entry, sacked from working after visiting an Ebola-free country in Africa, hatred and abuse in international football tournaments, refusing Africans entry into some countries or at least subjecting them to tough screening.”⁴

3 source: <http://www.internetlivestats.com/internet-users-by-country/> last accessed: 30.06.2015.

4 Yusuf I, Yahaya S, Qabli S (2015) Role of Media in Portraying Ebola in and outside Africa. J Trop Dis 3: 152. doi: 10.4172/2329-891X.1000152; <http://www.esciencecentral.org/journals/role-of-media-in-portraying-ebola-in-and-outside-africa-2329-891X-1000152.pdf> last accessed: 15.05.2015.

This shows that mainstream journalism is focused on “bad news is good news”, which indeed has nothing in common with peace journalism, which should contribute to a peaceful coexistence.

The unbalanced coverage and broadcast of the epidemic, mainly at the beginning in May 2014, resulted in mistrust among the Sierra Leonean population. Many of our interview-partners complained about contradictions among news channels, poorly trained journalists, creation of panic etc. People started believing that Ebola was real, only when their own reality proved this: “More and more people started dying and then I knew it was real”, recalled one of our interviewees. Emphasis on harmonizing messages and clarification of rumours was made by the Ministry of Health, WHO and other institutions as well as from NGOs and CSOs to avoid further confusion.

As a result of the balanced information and messages now given out by the media, their audience started to appreciate it and the majority changed their behaviour. Some examples such as the following were mentioned: no body contact (especially no handshakes), frequent hand washing, clarifying of wrong information, reporting on sick persons, safe burials, regulation of visitations, no eating of bush meat, emphasis on personal and household hygiene.

Due to the long period of the outbreak and the state of emergency with its strict rules and orders, people are tired of the situation and they just want the virus to go, so that they can go back to their normal lives. As a result of this, desensitization can be noticed. These are areas the media needs to take into consideration in order to fight the disease and prevent another outbreak.

Radio dramas are highly appreciated by listeners. Our interview-partners would like to know more about the following topics: Ebola survivors, the signs and symptoms of Ebola compared to Malaria and other illnesses, stigmatisation, quarantined households, the issue of hiding sick people, bylaws and rules, medication and what happens in treatment centres, post-Ebola and statistics including the number of death cases. In fact, from a peace journalistic approach, this can be seen as a



hidden agenda which should become more transparent for the public. It has not been and is still not a topic on the radio and neither is it in newspapers. Therefore, this raises the question of how the majority of Sierra Leoneans should obtain this information when they do not have direct contacts with the Ministry of Health or the internet.

For peace journalism, it is important to include every voice. According to the response we got to the questionnaires and our observations, we have the impression that now everyone has a voice: health workers, Ebola response teams, NGOs, CSOs, Ministry of Health, politicians, survivors, pupils, students, children, market women, etc. All of them are included in different programmes and formats such as panel discussions, radio drama, storytelling, interviews and others. The wide range of the media provides a good overview of and insight into various experiences from different people and points of view, which can be seen as a positive aspect of the media, but critical voices lambast the media houses saying that only those who are able to pay for the airtime and exposure are given the chance to talk. This is an aspect that should be taken into consideration for further research.

In conclusion, if we look at these different aspects, it is noticeable that the media in Sierra Leone and their coverage of the EVD outbreak have improved with time and currently try to include, up to a certain point, different voices to expose hidden agendas, clarify rumours and provide accurate information to the satisfaction of the majority of the people.

The following questions remain open: Are the media able to repair what they have destroyed especially in the international context? How long will it take for (West) Africans to remove another bad image around the globe? There is definitely a lot of work for peace journalists to do in West Africa and elsewhere.

Culture Radio champions peace journalism in Africa

*By Elijah M. I. Gegra, Theophilus Sahr Gbenda & Aminata Finda Massaquoi**

Established in 2007, Culture Radio FM 104.5, also known as the People's Station, set itself on a mission to seek the common interest of the entire citizenry of the Republic of Sierra Leone in West Africa, especially those hardest hit by years of outright governmental failures and gross human rights abuses.

The strategic mission of Culture Radio is to promote unity in diversity and to uphold this belief by giving all Sierra Leoneans a sense of identity and pride in their own creative talents as well as maintaining a strong sense of patriotism and Pan-Africanism.

Amongst tens of radio stations across the country, Culture Radio stands out to be one of the most people-oriented mediums.

This is especially so because we seek to give voice to the voiceless and serve as an uncompromising whistle blower on matters of corruption, human rights violations and excesses in governance.

The force behind our determination to stay focused is the very realization that for a good eleven years, our country was engulfed in a bloody civil conflict that left over 300,000 Sierra Leoneans and foreigners alike either killed or rendered permanently disabled and that some of the key factors that led to the said conflict remain with us to date, 13 years on. The conflict waged from 23rd March 1991 – 18th January 2002.

* Decision makers and team members of Culture Radio, Freetown, Sierra Leone

Some of these factors include bad governance, endemic poverty, pervasive corruption, lack of employment opportunities, lack of access to basic social services such as electricity, water supply and affordable health services, injustice, lack of access to basic education, political sidelining and intimidation, tribalism and nepotism, economic deprivation and gross human rights violations.

Our perception is that given the above, the country is sitting on a time bomb that could explode at any moment if nothing is done immediately to right the multiple wrongs. This is where we come in; to raise the necessary alarms and to serve our collective conscience as concerned citizens.

We owe our work to our country and our people.

Our work

Our work is to eliminate all threats to the relative peace our country currently enjoys after the bloody civil strife referred to above, and to do so by exposing the problems in society and providing a platform for citizens to voice their views and concerns. To achieve this, we have carefully designed all our programs to be as interactive as possible by way of allotting sufficient time for phone-ins and text messages.

Our belief is that by providing such a platform, aggrieved people will have a suitable option to make their concerns known and therefore reduce their chances of becoming violent as was the case before.

Our flagship programs, Morning Ride, Shekpendeh, Burning Issues, Culture Sports, Women's Corner, Voice of Children, Youth Freedom, Issues not Tissues, Vernacular Hour and Media Watch, are mainly designed to tackle critical governance issues and other specific thematic issues relating to the welfare and empowerment of women, children and youth.

Culture Radio operates as a non-governmental organization and is currently implementing a three-year project titled 'Radio works to

stimulate democracy and human rights', with funds from Bread for the World (bftw) in Germany.

The main thrust of the project is to promote democracy and human rights awareness in the country for the purpose of ensuring a free and just society.

We currently cover 75% of the country and are now working on an expansion plan. With material and technical support from MICT in Germany, fifteen short radius solar-powered transmitters have been secured and are now being strategically deployed in locations across the country. It is hoped that after the installation of the said transmitters, which will serve as backup to our main transmitter in the capital city Freetown, our transmitting scope will spread throughout the four corners of the country.

Because of our Pan-African ideology and culture and in view of the global warning threats which have so far placed our country as the third most vulnerable in the world to the adverse effects of climate change, we have limited our sources of energy to the national grid and solar electrification.

Culture Radio is one among the very few radio stations using solar power in the country, and we are very grateful to the World Association of Christian Communication (WACC) based in Canada, for the material support in this regard.

Culture Radio is represented in the board of the Sierra Leone Network on the Right to Food (SiLNoRF), a civil society consortium advocating against land grabbing in West Africa generally. Because we believe in partnership, Culture Radio is a member of the Civil Peace Service (CPS) partners in the country, and has a memorandum of understanding with the Peace and Conflict Studies Department at Fourah Bay College (FBC), University of Sierra Leone, as well as a working cooperation with the Anti Corruption Commission (ACC), the Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone (HRCSL) and the Legal Aid Board (LAB).

Culture Radio has dedicated a considerable amount time to the promotion of gender equality, and happens to be one of the very few radio

stations in the country that has as its station manager a lady in the person of Aminata Finda Massaquoi (Mrs.).

The former Chairman of the Independent Media Commission (IMC) Rod-Mac Johnson (Mr.) on a working visit to our studio facility said: “Culture Radio is in competition with no other radio station in the country, because you have a unique style”. The IMC is a statutory body set up to monitor and regulate the local media, both print and electronics.

The assertion by the former IMC chairman not only serves as an endorsement of the work we are doing, but also as a motivation to do even more.

Our style is deemed to be unique mainly because of our fearlessness and uncompromising stance on issues of national interest and also in view of the fact that we do not restrict our work to behind the mike.

As part of the implementation of the bftw sponsored project mentioned above, Culture Radio has organized workshops for targeted groups across the country on issues relating to youth against violence, women’s empowerment and fair or peace reporting. The target beneficiaries included youth from 40 youth organizations in the Western Area Urban District, women in the provinces and journalists in the western and northern parts of the country. Plans are now underway to embark on the second phase of our outreach engagements.

On the Ebola front

When the deadly Ebola virus struck in May 2014, the whole population of the country suffered an unprecedented shock. This was mainly because of the very unusual nature of the virus and the fact that it is not counted among the common or natural sicknesses such as malaria, tuberculosis, diarrhea, cancer, blood pressure, headache to name but a few. Also worthy of note is that Ebola placed the whole country under a simultaneous attack or siege, unlike the rebel war which was for the

most part confined in small catchment areas in the countryside before it eventually spread across the country into Freetown.

We blamed the rapid spread of the virus across the country to the snail's pace response to the outbreak by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the international community generally.

To date, the virus has claimed a total of 11,284 lives in the three affected countries mentioned above, with Sierra Leone accounting for 3,949. More people stand the risk of dying as the virus is still around, though at a minimal level now.

Following the deadly outbreak, we at Culture Radio changed our entire program design to incorporate sustained Ebola sensitization by way of highlighting health warnings from the Ministry of Health and Sanitation on preventive means and also cooperating with other stakeholders in the fight against the pandemic.

Apart from the Ministry of Health and Sanitation, we also fully cooperated and still cooperate with the National Ebola Response Center (NERC), WHO, UNICEF and the World Food Program (WFP) on issues relating to the welfare of quarantined homes and treatment of Ebola cases.

We were also part of the organized media response spearheaded by the Sierra Leone Association of Journalists (SLAJ), the Independent Radio Network and the BBC Media Action. Culture Radio was fully involved in the bftw funded project 'SAVING SALONE FROM EBOLA' which was implemented by ten partners as a way of contributing in the eradication of the virus.

Culture Radio with support from MICT, is presently implementing a one-year project called 'Bye Bye Ebola'. It is this project that has seen the ongoing deployment of the solar-powered transmitters referred to above.

In his address to the nation recently, His Excellency the President of the Republic of Sierra Leone Dr. Ernest Bai Koroma heaped praise on the collective efforts by the media in the drastic containment of the virus.

In total, Culture Radio has donated free airtime to Ebola sensitization to the tune of \$12,500, and we are happy to do even more as part

of our contribution to the fight against the killer virus. We are still concerned about what will be the post recovery plans for the thousands of Ebola victims and the country as a whole.

Our glories

Among our glories are the ability to ensure sustainability of broadcast and maintenance of our editorial stance which is people oriented and human rights focused. Other radio stations have come and gone, but Culture Radio remains and is becoming more and more powerful and popular with all age brackets including children, youth and adults. Our listeners cut across all shades of opinions including politicians, academics and professionals, students and foreign nationals as well.

Another significant achievement is the fact that courtesy of the toughness of our programs and distinct style, Culture Radio is presently counted among the top ten radio stations in the country. Sierra Leone has a total of about sixty-five radio stations.

Another remarkable achievement is our ability and robustness in digging up critical issues of public or national interest, especially those dealing with corruption and human rights violations.

In addition to that is our ability to command public respect and the way we have been able to project the image of the station. People respect us for our uncompromising stance and the fact that we always speak their minds. Culture Radio listeners refer to it as the Voice of the Voiceless and the People's Station.

Because many people have lost confidence in the justice and law enforcement sectors, they now look up to Culture Radio as their last resort. In this way, the station has become a kind of complaint center where people flood in daily with complaints associated with domestic violence, mistreatment at the workplace, economic deprivation and political intimidation among others.

Perception of the station is mixed, with government officials and those closely associated with the government referring to the station as anti-government, while the poor and down trodden refer to the station as a saving grace. This is good for us. We don't have to please everyone.

Through advocacy, we have secured the release of a good number of people from unlawful detention, including eight former personnel of the National Revenue Authority (NRA) who were held on corruption charges and subjected to custodian trial for 18 months pending the outcome of the matter. Our intervention enabled their release. The matter is ongoing.

One other achievement is our ability to settle personal disputes among opposing sides off the air, rather than going to press immediately.

As peace journalists we always use mediation as an entering point especially in matters of personal disputes. What we don't compromise on is human rights violations.

Our challenges

Our major challenge is the political and economic environment under which we operate. Alas we also lost a senior colleague of ours two years ago. He is named Chief Obai Wurie, and used to be our Production Manager and Presenter of two of our flagship programs Shekpendeh and Our Story. Since his death, we have not had a suitable replacement of him.

In just one year, another senior staff Theophilus Sahr Gbenda who happens to be the Project Coordinator and Presenter of one of the popular programs Burning Issues as well as Media Watch, was arrested and detained twice on orders from above.

Recently, we had to temporarily suspend the Burning Issues program just so as to avoid a direct confrontation with the authorities over the content of the program. We've had open threats of physical attacks and

threats to close down our radio station on grounds that we are anti-government.

Another challenge is the attempt to neutralize us or force us to change our stance. Our Executive Director Elijah Gegra and Station Manager Aminata Finda Massaquoi have been put under undue pressure severally in this vein. So far, we still stand strong and our stance remains intact despite all odds.

Our immediate dream is to operate a television station to be named Culture TV. It is a major challenge though.

Our team

Our team is what makes us strong and vibrant. We are young and dynamic. We cut across tribe and region. Above all, we see each other as useful partners and therefore seek each other's interest. We are disciplined and focused.

