
In any case, improvement of the situation for the media will be hampered by the extreme poverty in the country. Burundi ranks last in terms of income per capita according to the World Bank. The economy of Burundi is predominantly based on agriculture and stockbreeding. Agricultural production is divided between export-destined products, such as coffee, tea, and cotton, and food production.



BURUNDI

A turning point in Burundi's recent history is the civil war that broke out on October 21, 1993, after the assassination of Melchior Ndadaye, Burundi's first democratically elected president. More than 200,000 Burundians, mostly Tutsi, were killed. The conflict ended in September 2000 with a peace agreement signed in Tanzania, and a transitional process began with a rotating presidency between the government and the rebels. At the end of the transitional period, former rebel Pierre Nkurunziza was elected president in 2005.

The promise of this "Burundi miracle," often cited as a model for African countries in conflict, diminished in August 2006, when President Nkurunziza became convinced of a plot against him and instituted an authoritarian regime that restricted public liberties. Death threats, imprisonment and police questioning were regular occurrences, with journalists and the media bearing the brunt. When civil society and the media protested, President Nkurunziza warned, "Some radio stations and journalists have set themselves up as tribunals and judges, and that must end." During 2006, 42 cases of infringement of freedom of the press were recorded by local organizations, compared to 12 in 2005 and 0 in 2004.

However, some positive signs developed in 2007. In February, President Nkurunziza pledged, after visiting several newsrooms, the government's financial support to develop the media in Burundi, ending the tense relations between the public authorities and the media.

A few weeks earlier on January 3, the court of first instance of Bujumbura acquitted journalists Serges Nibizi, Domitille Kiramvu, and Matthias Manirakiza, who had been charged with "broadcasting information which could disturb public and security order" after reporting on a coup plot allegedly involving the police. Another journalist, Corneille Nibaruta, manager of Radio Bonesha FM, had similar charges thrown out by the court, allowing him to return after living in exile abroad for more than a month.

Improvement of the situation for the media will be hampered by the country's extreme poverty. Burundi ranks last in income per capita according to the World Bank. Its economy is based predominantly on stockbreeding and agriculture, which is divided between food production and export-destined products, such as coffee, tea, and cotton.

Overall, the results of the MSI panel showed a media sector in the early stages of "near sustainability." The Burundi panelists admitted that the score for Objective 1, "Freedom of Speech," was fragile, though currently equal to the overall score of 2.13. Objective 4, "Business Management," was by far the lowest score, and Objective 5, "Supporting Institutions," came in relatively strong. Panelists felt that although Objective 2 was only slightly higher than the overall score, its foundations were solid, and they were hopeful for improvement in the future.

BURUNDI AT A GLANCE

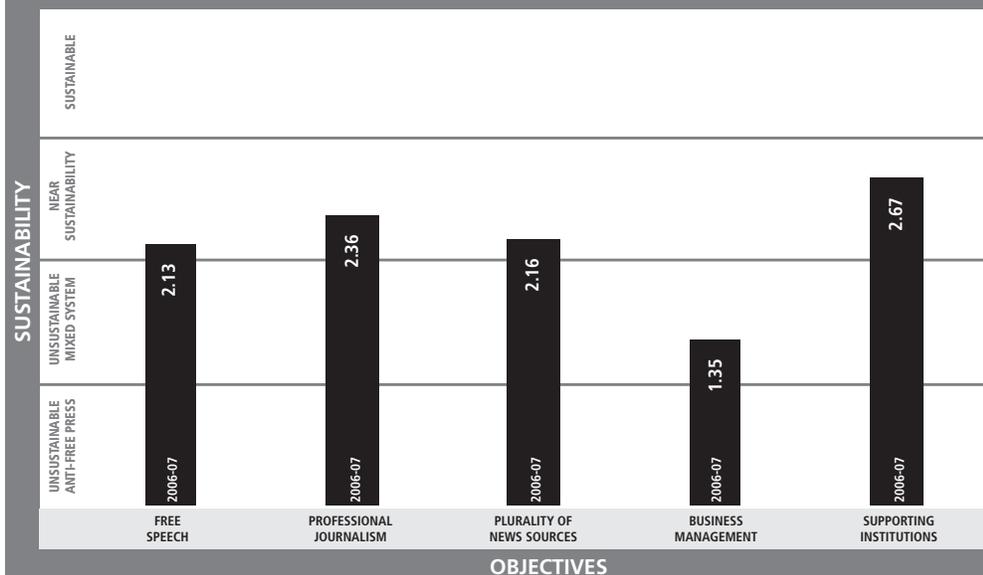
GENERAL

- > **Population:** 8,390,505 (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Capital city:** Bujumbura
- > **Ethnic groups (% of population):** Hutu (Bantu) 85%, Tutsi (Hamitic) 14%, Twa (Pygmy) 1% (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Religions (% of population):** Christian 67% (Roman Catholic 62%, Protestant 5%), indigenous beliefs 23%, Muslim 10% (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Languages (% of population):** Kirundi (official), French (official), Swahili (along Lake Tanganyika and in the Bujumbura area) (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **GNI (2006-Atlas):** \$794 million (World Bank Development Indicators, 2007)
- > **GNI per capita (2006-PPP):** \$710 (World Bank Development Indicators, 2007)
- > **Literacy rate:** 59.3% (male 67.3%, female 52.2%) (2000 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **President or top authority:** President Pierre Nkurunziza (since August 26, 2005)

MEDIA-SPECIFIC

- > **Number of active print outlets, radio stations, television stations:**
Print: 4 regular newspapers (*Le Renouveau du Burundi* (state owned), *L'Avenir* (private), *Ubumwe* (state-owned), *Ndongozi y'Uburundi* (Catholic church owned bi-monthly)); Radio: 7 main stations including Radio-Culture, Radio-Umwizero or Radio de l'Espoir, Radio-CCIB FM+, and African Public Radio; 1 TV station: NRTB (National Radio Television of Burundi)
- > **Newspaper circulation statistics:** N/A
- > **Broadcast ratings:** N/A
- > **News agencies:** Burundi Press Agency (public), Net Press Agency, Infop Agency, Espresso Agency
- > **Annual advertising revenue in media sector:** N/A
- > **Internet usage:** 60,000 (2006 est., *CIA World Factbook*)

MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX: BURUNDI



Unsustainable, Anti-Free Press (0-1):

Country does not meet or only minimally meets objectives. Government and laws actively hinder free media development, professionalism is low, and media-industry activity is minimal.

Unsustainable Mixed System (1-2):

Country minimally meets objectives, with segments of the legal system and government opposed to a free media system. Evident progress in free-press advocacy, increased professionalism, and new media businesses may be too recent to judge sustainability.

Near Sustainability (2-3):

Country has progressed in meeting multiple objectives, with legal norms, professionalism, and the business environment supportive of independent media. Advances have survived changes in government and have been codified in law and practice. However, more time may be needed to ensure that change is enduring and that increased professionalism and the media business environment are sustainable.

Sustainable (3-4):

Country has media that are considered generally professional, free, and sustainable, or to be approaching these objectives. Systems supporting independent media have survived multiple governments, economic fluctuations, and changes in public opinion or social conventions.

OBJECTIVE 1: FREEDOM OF SPEECH

Burundi Objective Score: 2.13

The score for this objective is an average of several low-scoring indicators and a few high-scoring ones. Only Indicator 5, state media receiving preferential treatment, scored close to the average. Of concern to panelists, Indicators 1 through 4 and 6 all scored below 2, with Indicator 4, crimes against journalists, scoring 1.5 points lower. Indicators on accessing public information, media access to international news, and restrictions on entry into journalism scored well above the average—the last well above 3.

The Constitution of Burundi recognizes freedom of the press through an amendment passed on February 28, 2005 (article 30) and Law no. 1/025, which passed on November 27, 2003. These laws conform to international standards, but the panelists agreed that enforcement is problematic. The issue is more visible in the provinces, where local authorities (political, military, police) frequently and deliberately violate the laws that established freedom of speech.

Some participants wished to note that violation of the law has been on a downward trend since the elections, and particularly since the beginning of 2007. One example occurred during the political tensions of late 2006. The president convened a meeting with public and private media directors on October 18, 2006 in Citega. Two main decisions were made. First, a committee was established consisting of a group of journalists who could meet at any time, upon request, with the president whenever a situation arises that requires consultation between the government and the media. Second, the president created a fund consisting of almost €20,000 for training journalists in Burundi to cover the forthcoming Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which will study crimes committed in Burundi since its independence in 1962.

The panelists, however, decried the dependency of the courts and tribunals on political and law enforcement agencies. This dependency explains why journalists are often arrested in total disregard of procedures and are ill treated while in detention.

Broadcast licenses are granted on a legally fair and competitive basis. The NCC (National Communication Council) is the institution authorizing the establishment and use of radio and television stations, strictly respecting the principle of equality between the operators under the provisions of the law. But the composition of the NCC, whose members are appointed by the president at the recommendation of the minister of information, calls into question its independence

with respect to the government. One panelist said, "There is an informal marginalization of those media whose editorial policy is not to the liking of the regime."

The market access and the tax regime for press institutions is the same as for all other companies. Articles 13 and 14 of the 2003 law of the press exempted public and private media organizations from the transfer tax and instituted a promotion trust fund for press institutions. But this exemption is still not applied, and to this day, no media body has benefited from the promotion trust funds. The president's promises have not materialized yet and look more like a generous gesture than a legal obligation, the panelists lamented.

According to statistics of press defense organizations, including the Congolese Journalists in Danger (JED), at least 42 cases of various infringements of freedom of the press, including imprisonment, threats, and cases of censorship, were recorded in 2006. These infringements were perpetrated by state services (e.g., the police, judges, etc.). But in 2007, a downward trend was noted, as only five cases of violations of freedom of the press were recorded in the first half of the year. The perpetrators of these violations have never been prosecuted or otherwise held to account, not even when identified.

In principle, public and private media are equal under the law. In practice, the public media has been given preferential treatment for a long period of time, particularly

LEGAL AND SOCIAL NORMS PROTECT AND PROMOTE FREE SPEECH AND ACCESS TO PUBLIC INFORMATION.

FREE-SPEECH INDICATORS:

- > Legal and social protections of free speech exist and are enforced.
- > Licensing of broadcast media is fair, competitive, and apolitical.
- > Market entry and tax structure for media are fair and comparable to other industries.
- > Crimes against journalists or media outlets are prosecuted vigorously, but occurrences of such crimes are rare.
- > State or public media do not receive preferential legal treatment, and law guarantees editorial independence.
- > Libel is a civil law issue; public officials are held to higher standards, and offended parties must prove falsity and malice.
- > Public information is easily accessible; right of access to information is equally enforced for all media and journalists.
- > Media outlets have unrestricted access to information; this is equally enforced for all media and journalists.
- > Entry into the journalism profession is free, and government imposes no licensing, restrictions, or special rights for journalists.

Broadcast licenses are granted on a legally fair and competitive basis. But the composition of the NCC whose members are appointed by the president at the recommendation of the minister of information calls into question its independence with respect to the government. One panelist said that: "there is an informal marginalization of those media whose editorial policy is not to the liking of the regime."

during the years when the National Radio-Television of Burundi (NRTB) and the Burundi Press Agency (BPA) had a monopoly. Today, private media are more and more associated with the actions of the government and other public institutions, MSI participants admitted. However, very often it is the state-run media that suffers from censorship enforced by the ministry of communication; no information published by the state-run media can be unfavorable to a member of the government as long as he/she is in office. The panelists noted that the public media receive state subsidies, while the private media do not.

In Burundi, slander is considered a criminal offense. However, the participants were not able to point out the procedures and facts of the criminal jurisdiction.

Article 3 of the press law stipulates that in order to exercise the profession, a journalist has the right to access information sources, investigate, and comment freely on the facts of public life. However, in reality, journalists encounter numerous difficulties when they try to approach certain political leaders for interviews or reports. Financial difficulties also prevent serious and objective investigations.

Press organizations have free access to international information broadcast by foreign networks, such as Voice of America, BBC, and RFI. There is also the Internet, but unfortunately access is available only in urban areas (e.g., Bujumbura, Gitega) and is quite expensive, averaging \$1 per hour.

Regarding access to the profession of journalism, the panelists stated that it is neither restricted nor regulated by any law of the press or the Ethics and Deontology Code. Any person who wishes may become a journalist, even in the absence of appropriate training.

OBJECTIVE 2: PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM

Burundi Objective Score: 2.36

Individual indicator scores were quite varied in this objective. Indicator 1, fair reporting, scored well above the average; while Indicators 3 and 5, self-censorship and pay levels for journalists, scored well below.

The discussions among the MSI participants emphasized that, for some of them, the practice of the profession is satisfactory, whereas others lamented the perpetuation of many cases of questionable professional practice. Ethical and deontological standards are present, but media professionals often mention practical or political difficulties (low incomes, difficulty in accessing information sources, self-censorship within both the public and private sectors, outdated equipment, corruption, etc.) that prevent these standards from always being met.

Despite these difficulties, some media organizations manage to produce objective and well-researched reports. For example, in August 2006, when the government accused former president Domitien Ndayizeye of an attempted coup against the institutions, the private radio stations RPA, Isanganiro, and Bonesha FM investigated and proved that the coup had been in fact plotted by the authorities in order to muzzle the opposition. The managers of these stations were sent to prison as a result of the exposés. In January 2007, the Supreme Court of Justice of Burundi confirmed the facts and analyses made by these radio stations and acquitted the former president of all the charges against him.

JOURNALISM MEETS PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS OF QUALITY.

PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM INDICATORS:

- > Reporting is fair, objective, and well sourced.
- > Journalists follow recognized and accepted ethical standards.
- > Journalists and editors do not practice self-censorship.
- > Journalists cover key events and issues.
- > Pay levels for journalists and other media professionals are sufficiently high to discourage corruption.
- > Entertainment programming does not eclipse news and information programming.
- > Technical facilities and equipment for gathering, producing, and distributing news are modern and efficient.
- > Quality niche reporting and programming exists (investigative, economics/business, local, political).

The Burundi press is subject to an ethics and deontology code, overseen by the Burundi Press Association (BPA). All media professionals accept its rules. The BPO (Burundi Press Observatory) was created on April 8, 2004 to oversee the preservation of all the journalistic rules and fight against media corruption. During the MSI discussion, a participant confessed to having received a sack of sugar from the Sugar Company of Burundi during a visit organized by the managers of the company for several press organizations. Despite having noticed the flawed functioning of the company, all the journalists praised its work quality.

All the MSI participants deplored the widespread practice of self-censorship in Burundi. Not only does self-censorship occur in the public media, where no article against the government can be published, but the managers of private media refuse to address information that is unfavorable to their financial partners or local interests considered as backers.

Regarding coverage of key events, journalists enjoy a sort of “monitored” freedom—they do not have the authority to cover just any event. Some events are restricted either by public authorities (by means of injunctions) or by managers of press organizations (self-censorship). For instance, the panelists noticed that during 2006, any press organization that dared to criticize the ruling party’s former strong man, Hussein Radjabu (today in disfavor with the government), was harassed by security services. Thus, Corneille Nibaruta, manager of Bonesha FM radio, was forced to exile himself between November 2006 and February 2007 after broadcasting the information that Radjabu had the idea of the coup for which the opposition was subsequently blamed.

With a minimum monthly salary of \$50 to \$100, journalists in Burundi are apparently exposed to all sorts of solicitations, sometimes contrary to their ethics and deontology, in their struggle to make ends meet. This permanent fight for survival has repercussions on media content. A large percentage of content is allotted to political news, but generally, entertainment programming (e.g., music, films) outweighs the news. News accounts for 30 percent, entertainment about 60 percent, and cultural and educational programs about 10 percent.

Press facilities and equipment are outdated, but manage to fulfill their functions. This must be regarded in a relative perspective, given that conditions vary from one sector to another. Print press technology seems to lag behind the audio-visual. Print journalists even complain that they lack tape recorders. Private radio stations often work with only one computer and a few pieces of secondhand equipment, acquired through outside financing. RPA, for instance, produces all of its shows in only one studio.

All the MSI participants deplored the widespread practice of self-censorship in Burundi. Not only does it happen in the public media, where no article against the government can be published, but also the managers of the private media refuse to address information that is unfavorable to their financial partners or local interests considered as backers.

In addition to political news, media quite often address economics, social issues, education, and sports from the national and international level.

OBJECTIVE 3: PLURALITY OF NEWS

Burundi Objective Score: 2.16

Objective 3 also had a wide range in indicator scores. Indicator 3, state media reflecting the views of the political spectrum, scored by far the worst; while Indicators 4 and 5, news agencies and private broadcasters producing their own news content, scored about a full point higher than the average.

Burundi media have multiple private and public news sources. Previously subject to a longstanding state monopoly, the Burundi media now features multiple private outlets,

MULTIPLE NEWS SOURCES PROVIDE CITIZENS WITH RELIABLE AND OBJECTIVE NEWS.

PLURALITY OF NEWS SOURCES INDICATORS:

- > A plurality of affordable public and private news sources (e.g., print, broadcast, Internet) exists.
- > Citizens’ access to domestic or international media is not restricted.
- > State or public media reflect the views of the entire political spectrum, are nonpartisan, and serve the public interest.
- > Independent news agencies gather and distribute news for print and broadcast media.
- > Independent broadcast media produce their own news programs.
- > Transparency of media ownership allows consumers to judge objectivity of news; media ownership is not concentrated in a few conglomerates.
- > A broad spectrum of social interests are reflected and represented in the media, including minority-language information sources.

Citizen access to national as well as international media is only restricted by the low purchasing power of the population, as well as the high cost of some sources. Only the members of the richest social category can afford to buy newspapers, whereas the Internet is not available outside urban areas.

including one public television station, one public radio station (NRTB), 10 private radio stations, 10 newspapers, and four press agencies. Burundi has no community radio stations. Currently, four Internet providers (Cbinet, Usan, Onatel, and Matatro) serve Burundi.

The fact that these media are concentrated in the urban centers, and that access to sources of information is limited for those with very low income, were seen by the panelists as negatives. These sources are usually cost prohibitive, due to the low earnings of the population—particularly in rural areas, where radio is only available in households that can afford radios. In urban areas, nearly all households have a television set or radio.

Citizen access to national and international media is only restricted by the low purchasing power of the population and the high cost of some sources. Only the members of the richest social category can afford to buy newspapers, and the Internet is not available outside urban areas. This context explains the scarceness of foreign newspapers in Burundi and the irregular publication of the national newspapers. The international radio stations (e.g., RFI, BBC, VOA) broadcast in the FM band, either through a transmitter installed in the country's territory or in partnership with local radio stations, using their frequencies.

As in many other African countries, in Burundi the public media act as the government's mouthpiece and do not serve the interests of the public. More than 90 percent of the news on television and radio is dedicated to the activities of the president and the government. The opposition is rarely granted access to public media.

In many cases, press organizations work with press agencies for news supply, but unfortunately, these agencies do not always quote the sources of their news. Burundi has four press agencies: the BPA (Burundi Press Agency), which is a public agency; and Net Press Agency, Infop Agency, and Expresso Agency, which have private owners. BPA sells its

news per use, whereas the others distribute news freely to their subscribers.

Most private media outlets are created as a result of partnerships with foreign investors or backers, whose identity is not always known by the public at large.

OBJECTIVE 4: BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Burundi Objective Score 1.35

This objective scored by far the lowest of the five, and all but two indicators scored near or below a 1. Only the indicators on receiving revenue from multiple sources and private media not receiving government subsidies scored above 2.

According to MSI panel participants, media outlets in Burundi are not structured as commercial companies. Private media are managed without regard for accounting or other commercial standards. They have no balance sheets for their finances. Journalists' salaries are entirely at the discretion of radio and television station managers. Overall, media outlets support themselves, but do not turn a profit. The only revenue for private media comes from commercials and donations from international organizations. Public media, however, are managed better. They receive subsidies from the government as well as revenue from advertisements.

Burundi has no advertising market, as the few advertising agencies that exist are not sufficiently developed. Clients often set the advertising rates and the media outlets must accept the terms, as they have virtually no choice. The media must look for external financing and more subscriptions to make up for the deficiency.

INDEPENDENT MEDIA ARE WELL-MANAGED BUSINESSES, ALLOWING EDITORIAL INDEPENDENCE.

- BUSINESS MANAGEMENT INDICATORS:**
- > Media outlets and supporting firms operate as efficient, professional, and profit-generating businesses.
 - > Media receive revenue from a multitude of sources.
 - > Advertising agencies and related industries support an advertising market.
 - > Advertising revenue as a percentage of total revenue is in line with accepted standards at commercial outlets.
 - > Independent media do not receive government subsidies.
 - > Market research is used to formulate strategic plans, enhance advertising revenue, and tailor products to the needs and interests of audiences.
 - > Broadcast ratings and circulation figures are reliably and independently produced.

Independent media receive no subsidies from the public authorities, even though the law of the press set up a promotion trust fund financed by annual donations from the state budget.

No market research, ratings system, circulation figures, or current Internet statistics are available. The available figures for the Internet are from 2000 and show that at that time, approximately 2,000 Burundians out of an estimated population of 6,223,897 were using the Internet.

OBJECTIVE 5: SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS

Burundi Objective Score: 2.67

Although the panelists rated this objective positively overall, one notable exception was the low score for journalism education, which was below a 1.

Burundi has support associations that, with the help of international bodies, defend the interests of the journalists by pressuring public authorities. The associations in Burundi (House of the Press, the Journalists Association of Burundi, the Radio Broadcasters Association of Burundi, and the Women Journalists Association of Burundi) work hard to protect journalists. The MOCA (Media Organization of Central Africa) is also based in Burundi. NGOs often apply pressure to the government for support of legislative reforms favoring the press, but when the government actually undertakes the reform process, they do not seek NGOs' opinions or considerations.

The education level in Burundi has dropped a great deal in the recent years, negatively impacting the performance of the young graduates. Since Burundi has no school of journalism,

SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS FUNCTION IN THE PROFESSIONAL INTERESTS OF INDEPENDENT MEDIA.

SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS INDICATORS:

- > Trade associations represent the interests of private media owners and provide member services.
- > Professional associations work to protect journalists' rights.
- > NGOs support free speech and independent media.
- > Quality journalism degree programs that provide substantial practical experience exist.
- > Short-term training and in-service training programs allow journalists to upgrade skills or acquire new skills.
- > Sources of newsprint and printing facilities are in private hands, apolitical, and unrestricted.
- > Channels of media distribution (kiosks, transmitters, Internet) are private, apolitical, and unrestricted.

the ranks of media professionals are populated by graduates of communication schools or other disciplines. Panelists felt that the skill levels of most graduates are below average.

Short-term training programs are available, allowing journalists to retrain and catch up with journalists in other countries. Organizations such as the Panos Paris Institute offer journalists specialized courses in various fields (peace, fighting violence against women, fighting HIV, etc.). Nevertheless, the outdated equipment available and the low income of journalists trained under these circumstances nullify training efforts.

The state once owned the National Printing House of Burundi in Bujumbura, but that printing house is no longer active. Instead, 10 private printing firms are in operation.

Media distribution networks exist and belong to the private sector. They are not restricted and are typically apolitical. Their number could not be determined, but a few examples include Arib Info, Abarundi, Burundi Reality, and Burundi News.

List of Panel Participants

Linette Sindimwo, journalist, Bonesha Radio, Bujumbura

Augustin Kabayabaya, independent consultant, Bujumbura

Ruston Uwimana, journalist, *Ndongozi*, Ngozi

Félie Nzorubonanya, journalist, Africa Public Radio, Bururi

Méthode Tutuza, journalist, Net Press, Bujumbura

Adélaïde Ndabambarine, journalist, Burundi Press Agency, Bubanza

Spès-Caritas Kabanyana, journalist, Isanganiro Radio, Bubanza

Désiré Ndzanza, secretary, Association of Women Journalists, Bujumbura

Moderator

Alain Gashaka, correspondent, Journaliste en Danger, Bujumbura

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