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BURUNDI

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Burundi's fragile political environment, recovering from civil war between the Hutu and Tutsi ethnic groups, continues to pose many challenges and obstacles to the independent media. Although Burundi's constitution supports freedom of the press, the laws are not enforced. The ruling party, the National Council for the Defense of Democracy-Forces for the Defense of Democracy (known by its French acronym CNDD-FDD), runs the main radio station, and the only regular newspaper, *Le Renouveau*. Journalists working for the few independent voices (such as the private newspaper *La Verité*, published by the minority Tutsi-based National Recovery Party) endure frequent threats and intimidation. Journalists who dare to question the government or stray into sensitive political territory have been subjected to harassment and prison terms, as seen in several cases in 2009.

In addition to the hostile political atmosphere, Burundian journalists face great practical obstacles in their reporting. The advertising industry remains stunted, and most private media outlets are dependent on NGOs and international donors, making slim efforts toward sustainability. Field correspondents suffer from severe equipment shortages, to the extent that many regional broadcast journalists are reduced to producing written reports. In addition, journalists are not trained adequately, as Burundi remains without schools for journalists. The Burundian media need to address these practical constraints in order for journalists to be able to improve the quality of their work.

Burundi has a slowly growing community radio presence, welcomed enthusiastically by the population. But no one has conducted research to determine the impact of these community radio stations on local communities. Awareness of new media is steadily increasing, although few Burundians have access to the Internet—even in the capital, Bujumbura. In some remote areas, few have even heard of the Internet. Although positive signs are emerging that younger generations understand the value of the Internet, the Committee to Protect Journalists commented that the rise of the Internet has fueled a corresponding rise in the number of jailed journalists.

With these serious issues still confronting Burundi's media community, progress in attaining sustainability is slow. Nonetheless there were modest gains in scores compared to last year, as the overall score rose from 1.95 to 2.16. Objective 2 (professional journalism) and Objective 4 (business management) showed improvement of a third of a point each, with the other objective rising slightly, about a tenth of a point each.

BURUNDI

BURUNDI AT A GLANCE

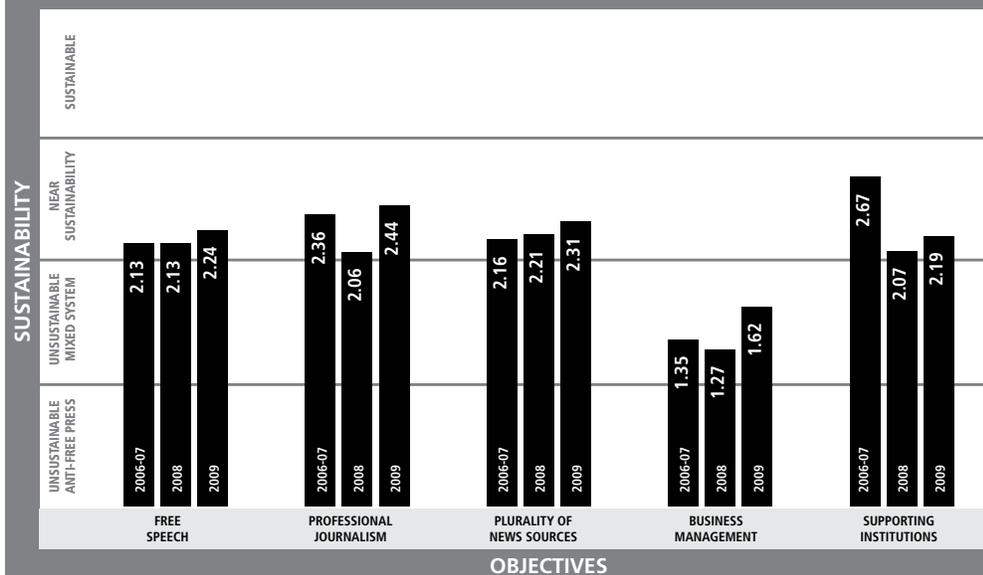
GENERAL

- > **Population:** 9,511,330 (July 2010 est., *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%, 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 (2009-Atlas):** \$1.232 billion (World Bank Development Indicators, 2010)
- > **GNI per capita (2009-PPP):** \$390 (World Bank Development Indicators, 2010)
- > **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: regular newspapers include *Le Renouveau du Burundi* (state-owned), *L'Avenir* (private), *Ubumwe* (state-owned), *Ndongozo y'Uburundi* (Catholic-church owned bi-monthly); Radio Stations: 7 main stations including Radio-Culture, Radio-Umwizero or Radio de l'Espoir, Radio-CCIB FM+, and African Public Radio; Television Stations: 1, 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, Expresso Agency
- > **Annual advertising revenue in media sector:** N/A
- > **Internet usage:** 65,000 (2008 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: 2.24

The panelists agreed that from a theoretical standpoint, Burundi has the necessary legal and social instruments to protect and encourage the freedom of speech and access to information. “Even if legal provisions specifically addressing the freedom of speech are not yet developed, the constitution and the press law of Burundi guarantee this freedom,” said Jocelyne Ininahazwe of the National Communications Council (known by its French acronym CNC), the public media regulating agency.

Putting legal standards into practice is the real problem, said Ernest Nkurunziza, an activist with the Human Rights League (Iteka). Pointing to the press law as an example, he underlined legal provisions that criminalize certain press actions. Media members have responded with a movement requesting the decriminalization of press offenses. “Journalists often go to prison at the whim of politicians or any other powerful individuals,” he said. “Journalists are doing their job, but there are restrictions and...sensitive political topics that the independent media cannot address.”

Regarding broadcast licensing, the panelists had mixed perspectives. Désiré Ndanziza, executive secretary of the Association of Women Journalists (known by its French acronym, AFJO) denounced “...the political exploitation of the license-granting Agency for Regulation and Control of

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.

Le Visionnaire Infos journalist Ambri Majabuko said that while no media workers have been murdered in Burundi, journalists suffer multiple other forms of intimidation. Local correspondents in particular are sent to prison and persecuted with phone threats, and their reporting equipment is seized by the national information service.

Telecommunications, whose members are appointed by the president and chosen from within the ruling party.” Others opposed these views, however; Ruston Uwimana, a journalist for *Ndongezi*, claimed, “The process of granting operating licenses to the broadcast press is just and apolitical, though it is true that some radio stations do enjoy favors.” He mentioned Radio Rema FM, which is obedient to CNDD-FDD, as an exception. But in general, Uwimana concluded, “Any person wishing to start a radio station in Burundi can do so easily and with no political impediments.”

Nkurunziza gave examples of government influence on the media. “Some privileged media are regular beneficiaries of tax relief, and crimes against journalists are not even prosecuted, as most of the perpetrators of such crimes belong to the groups in power,” he said. Fabrice Niyokuru, an agent at a Bujumbura communications agency, concluded that the current legislation is failing to protect journalists.

Le Visionnaire Infos journalist Ambri Majabuko said that while no media workers have been murdered in Burundi, journalists suffer multiple other forms of intimidation. Local correspondents in particular are sent to prison and persecuted with phone threats, and their reporting equipment is seized by the national information service. Ndanziza brought up two specific cases. A union member, Juvénal Rududura, was imprisoned for 10 months after declaring that the justice system is corrupt, while Radio Isanganiro’s Marc Niyonkuru had his life threatened by the chief of the urban planning department over a report accusing the chief of using the taxpayers’ government vehicle for his own political business. Uwimana said that even if no one takes violent actions against journalists, they work in a climate of intimidation.

According to the panelists, Burundi’s public media cannot be considered independent, given that their managers—from the bottom to the top—are devoted stalwarts of the ruling party. Fiona Irakoze, with Lumière University, remarked on the ruling party’s different attitudes toward government-friendly

Ininahazwe said, "Access to public information is difficult, especially for journalists in the private press, as they are disadvantaged to the benefit of the journalists in the public press [the state-run media]."

media versus opposition media. As an example, Irakoze mentioned the "...pro-government newspaper [*Intumwa*], which published subversive allegations and suffered no consequences, whereas any other media would have been drastically punished."

Addressing the treatment of libel in Burundi, Nadège Irambona, with the Media Organization of Central Africa said, "News articles that the authorities do not like are labeled slanderous, and journalists are sent to prison even before their guilt is proven." For example, journalist Jean Claude Kavumbagu was accused of spreading false information and spent several months in prison. He was eventually released without any charges filed against him. A journalist with Radio Publique Africaine (RPA), Félix Nzoroubonanya, said that the legislation (and norms) regulating the Burundi press are problematic because "all of the legislation is developed by the government, without consulting journalists or considering the suggestions made by journalist associations."

Nzoroubonanya shared his view that access to public information is a challenge in Burundi, and that various media receive differential treatment. For example, he said, when Burundian journalists covered the collapse at the CNDD-FDD party headquarters, police blocked their access to the premises. Journalists were also denied access to the hospital where some student scouts were being treated after they were shot by police accompanying the Kayogoro commune administrator. According to the panelists, often public officials obstruct access to public information because either they do not want to communicate with the media or they do not know how. Even the creation of ministry spokesperson positions has not changed the situation. Ininahazwe said, "Access to public information is difficult, especially for journalists in the private press, as they are disadvantaged to the benefit of the journalists in the public press [the state-run media]." Uwimana added, "Sometimes the public officials do not release information very easily, when they feel that they are under scrutiny and particularly when it may compromise them."

Regarding access to international news and news sources, Ininahazwe noted that Internet access is free and the

government does not block or restrict it. Nzoroubonanya said that access to international news is legally unrestricted, although Burundian press organizations face an affordability issue in this respect.

On the topic of entry to the journalistic profession, Kabanyana Spès-Caritas, a journalist with Radio Isanganiro, reflected the majority of panelists' opinions and said that the doors are open to anyone. "The government does not stand in the way of any person wishing to become a journalist," he said. "The media managers alone select the people they wish to hire, just as anyone who wants to attend a school of journalism is free to do so."

OBJECTIVE 2: PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM

Burundi Objective Score: 2.44

The second objective generated much debate. While most of the panelists underlined the low professional quality of the Burundian journalists' work, others agreed tepidly but found justifications for it. Majabuko said that some journalists put all their heart into their work, with objective, balanced, and professional results. Radio professionals appear further along in this regard than the print media. Others, according to the panelists, produce mediocre work for various reasons, including incompetence. Didier Bukuru, a journalist with *Iwacu*, asserted, "Appropriate training is necessary to help journalists meet professional standards of quality." Many journalists attempt to do their job professionally, but they always make mistakes, which the panelists attributed to lack of education, low salaries that invite corruption, the abandonment of the media sector in favor of better paying

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).

jobs, and the lack of proper equipment. Despite these obstacles, many in Burundi's media community are trying to elevate the professional standards, and in that spirit, the panelists mentioned the United Nations Integrated Office in Burundi (known by its French acronym, BINUB) and its efforts to strengthen journalists' capabilities.

Currently, the Burundian Press Observatory (known by its French acronym OPB) acts as a court of peers when cases of breaching professional ethics codes are brought to its attention—with mixed success, according to the panelists. Ininahazwe noted, "Sometimes journalists sidestep [ethical] standards, and the self-regulatory agency [OPB] does not do its job well." Amisi Karihungu, a correspondent for Radio Bonesha in Gitega, noted that "most journalists try their best to write pieces that meet professional ethical standards," but agreed with many other panelists that shortcomings can often be traced to the severe lack of resources and training. While he acknowledged that some quality reporting can be found, Karihugu said that in his view, very few media, including RPA, are capable of meeting high standards consistently.

Ndanziza stressed her belief that journalists try to observe the professional ethics code, but she also conceded that corruption and self-censorship are common. "Politicians pay for full pages in some newspapers, and... self-censorship is alive and well in many media," she said. "Correspondents often receive threats for spreading any piece of news likely to create a political stir, while public media journalists practice self-censorship to avoid spreading news that risks government displeasure." Uwimana argued that some journalists and editors practice self-censorship to uphold the professional ethics code—or to refrain from publishing information that could potentially hurt the country.

Considering whether or not journalists cover key events and issues, the panelists agreed that private media address major issues facing the country. Uwimana explained, "In Burundi, the freedom of speech is significantly more advanced than in neighboring countries. Therefore, journalists are able to cover even sensitive topics, such as the corruption of high government officials. For example, in 2008, the Burundian press addressed the controversial sale of the presidential Falcon 50 aircraft." However, Irambona tempered that view, claiming, "The Burundian media does not address enough major issues. Some media have trouble funding investigations, while others are afraid of reprisals—particularly when the issue involves political actors."

Although last year's panel had an optimistic view of journalists' pay in Burundi, that impression is changing. Uwimana said, and other panelists agreed, that "the salaries of the Burundian journalists are very low, which is why

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some journalists can be corrupted or bribed." Karihungu noted that low salaries drive many to leave the media for better-paying fields, but he noted a positive side effect: Those who decide to stay are guided by passion rather than financial motivation.

Regarding how well the media balances entertainment and news, Irambona said, "In the public as well as private media, entertainment overshadows other programs, while some media—particularly the new ones—are partisan." Nkuruziza disagreed, claiming that most media try to balance entertainment and news.

Equipment shortages persist, seriously constraining the media's ability to produce professional-quality news. "Field correspondents suffer from a painful lack of equipment, including recorders, desks, word processing, and communication tools," Nzoroubonanya said. "For instance, many journalists based in various regions have to produce soundless reports." Private media are also frequently unable to provide transportation for their journalists to cover events.

Quality niche reporting continues to be a rarity in Burundi. With little training in specialized journalism, media workers produce very few reports on diplomacy, trade, or economics, and outlets often resort to using outside experts to cover those areas. Irakoze said, "The new political and security issues take too much space in the newscasts, and without specialized journalists in economics, sports, health, etc., these topics are rarely and only superficially addressed."

OBJECTIVE 3: PLURALITY OF NEWS

Burundi Objective Score: 2.31

News sources in Burundi include radio, television, newspapers, and the Internet, but only radio can claim a wide audience. Ndanziza said that the broadcast media covers 80 percent of the national territory, with seven radio stations (though some private radio stations do not have national coverage).

Spès-Caritas commented, “There are diverse private and public news sources, but they are concentrated in the country’s larger cities—which means that they are not available to all citizens.”

Newspapers are hard to find; they are available mostly in the capital and a few country towns of some provinces. The shortage is due partly to the high cost of distribution and partly to the lack of demand for newspapers, given Burundi’s high illiteracy rate (some estimates put this at 80 percent). According to Ndaniziza, newspaper print runs remain low; the daily *Le Renouveau* comes in first, with 1,500 copies per day. It is written in French, although the population speaks Kirundi and most of them are illiterate. Nkurunziza commented, “In Burundi, there is a large gap between the urban and rural, and the intellectuals and illiterates. Most documents—including legal ones—are drawn up in French, whereas there is a large illiterate population in this country. We have come to realize that neither the public nor the private media reflect the voice of the underprivileged. The RTNB [National Radio-Television of Burundi] serves a commercial purpose, not social welfare.”

Few Burundians have access to the Internet—even in Bujumbura, Nzoroubonanya noted, as online access is quite expensive. Even then only some urban centers have access. The young generation knows how to make the most of the Internet, but the ruling political class and businesspeople do not take advantage of it enough, panelists said.

Community radio is growing slowly, but the extent of its impact on local communities is unknown, given that no one in Burundi has conducted market research on community

media. Nkurunziza said, “The community broadcast media seem to have been created for political purposes. The RPA was not given the freedom to create community media, and we feel that the real issues of society are not a priority for the existing community press. It seems that political issues take precedence over social interests.”

The government does not overtly block access to domestic and international media. However, Spès-Caritas said that access to domestic and international media is limited in effect, because resources are concentrated in urban areas—people living in the most remote areas do not even know that the Internet exists, for example. Nkurunziza further qualified the assessment: “Foreign information is unrestricted as long as it does not address sensitive issues,” noting the case of a Tanzanian journalist who was denied entry into the country and threatened with imprisonment. Poverty is another limiting factor—in terms of Internet access as well as the inability of most people to buy a radio set to follow broadcast news. People living in urban centers do follow international news, but cable or satellite television is available only to the rich.

According to the panelists, the public media are not apolitical or independent; they labor to serve the government that funds them. In public media, censorship of any criticism of the current government is common—and likely to intensify during elections. The public media report on a broad spectrum of political news, with a particular focus on the activities of the ruling party. Even those public media journalists that are true professionals are under enormous pressure from the government. The public interest is not a top priority for these media outlets; only the news (some panelists referred to “propaganda”) in favor of the government is headlined, and the opposition is neglected. Ndaniziza said that public media workers are aware of their public interest service obligations, but their hands are tied because their managers work for politicians.

Burundi has independent press agencies, such as Net Press and Syfia Grands Lacs, that collect and deliver information to print media and radio stations. There is also a public news agency, Agence Burundaise de Presse. Niyokuru said that foreign independent press agencies such as Reuters operate in Burundi, and the government often threatens journalists working for those agencies.

Several panelists attested to the fact that independent broadcast outlets produce original content and programs, often provided in partnership with foreign media. As noted in last year’s report, radio stations such as Isanganiro, RPA, and RSF Bonesha FM produce shows on various current events and broadcast political debates, street interviews, school events,

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.

etc. Their content differs markedly from the content of the state-run public media.

Media ownership in Burundi is not transparent. Most private media outlets are associations, and the public is in the dark regarding management and sources of financial support. Only rarely do media owners declare transparently the sources of the funds that they provide to their outlets. While some media receive funds from abroad, foreign investment in the media sector is considered insignificant. Karihungu also brought up another trend: with the exception of RTNB, most radio stations are associations, and some media have started to align themselves with political parties.

According to the panelists, the media reflect a broad spectrum of social interests, including minority issues. Spès-Caritas noted that the media can broadcast freely in any language they choose, and journalists cannot be prosecuted for writing or reporting on minority issues. Swahili is the main minority language, but Burundi has only one newspaper in Swahili and English, owned by Karenga Ramadan. When CNDD-FDD became the ruling party, the national television station began to broadcast a news program in English and Swahili. Ininahazwe commented, however, that while some social issues are addressed, the media focuses disproportionately on political and economic issues at the expense of agricultural, environmental, or other issues.

OBJECTIVE 4: BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Burundi Objective Score: 1.62

Again this year, the panelists said that Burundian media outlets do not truly operate as businesses; they are not profit-generating. Uwimana took a slightly different view, saying that while not all media outlets are profitable businesses, radio and television stations enjoy some degree of popularity and, by extension, profitability—perhaps because they fit well with Burundi’s oral culture. By contrast, print media are not at all profitable. Production and supply costs are steep and demand is low, as few Burundians like to read—or are able to read.

Irakoze said that the way in which these media are managed shows how little hope managers have in their prospects for sustainability. Sales services are not solid, and outlets have no marketing agents; if there is any marketing work, it is in the form of billing and payments. Accounting and financial practices are not open to the public, which makes it difficult, if not impossible, to know if they meet international standards. However, some panelists said that Burundian media outlets are managed as well as their incomes allow.

As for community media, which is relatively new to Burundi, the panelists said that it is too soon to see whether they will be sustainable.

Although some media partners and sponsors attempt to improve management standards, the decision-makers at media outlets show little desire to establish any degree of independence, panelists said. Some managers do not view their organizations as a business, even if they rely on their own income. Karihungu noted, “Journalists content themselves with gathering, editing, and releasing news, without paying any attention to the press outlet’s fund management.”

While the government subsidizes public media, Ininahazwe said, private media are better characterized as non-profit associations, funded largely by external donors. Apart from a small stream of advertising revenue, most private media outlets live off sponsorships from NGOs and international organizations, and sometimes by forging partnerships with other media and NGOs. Once the subsidies are cut, Bukuru said, the press outlet disappears. The heavy dependency on sponsorships makes it difficult to discount the possibility of editorial influence—a problem felt most keenly in the government-funded public media.

Burundi has an underdeveloped advertising sector, which the panelists consider the root of the media’s financial troubles. Although advertising does provide media outlets with some income, no outlet survives on advertising alone. This fact is partially explained by the weak competition in the market, as well as the media’s apparent unwillingness to believe that advertising is fully justified. As Irakoze explained, “The media companies do not have faith in advertising as a sound income

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.

source—stemming from limited creativity and old-fashioned operations.” She added, though, that she believes that acceptance of advertising is growing. Niyokuru said that even the country’s few existing advertising companies still do not understand the importance of advertising.

Panelists said that the percentage of advertising revenue as income is quite slim for broadcast outlets. “Advertising is barely present and is only seen in the capital,” Nzoroubonanya said. “Commercials take up only about one percent of the designated airspace, which brings in next to nothing in terms of income.”

Although the government subsidizes the public media, Burundi has no law regulating subsidies. Spès-Caritas confirmed that the private media are completely independent financially; he views this as a positive feature, as a state-subsidized private media outlet risks losing its professional independence. Ambri said that CNC announced recently that it will partner with the government to create a media support fund.

Burundi still does not have any polls, market studies, or ratings available, nor any agencies that specialize in measuring ratings, Internet statistics, or print runs. Niyokuru said that radio and other media ratings are unknown, and Nkurunziza said that programming decisions are made without audience research. As a result, news that journalists consider essential is aired and printed, but sometimes the news that is important to the population is addressed only superficially. Nkurunziza also said that Burundi’s lack of independent market studies stands in the way of improving advertising income as well. Ambri added that no agencies in Burundi are capable of conducting market research for advertisers.

OBJECTIVE 5: SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS

Burundi Objective Score: 2.19

Burundi does not have a true, industry-level organization representing publishers or broadcasters. The Radio Broadcasters Association of Burundi (known by its French acronym ABR) is fairly active, but Irakoze said that its effectiveness is questionable. “Considerable efforts have been made to build media-supporting structures—for example, ABR and the Press House, launched in 2004 with support from UNESCO,” he said. “But the media have to rely heavily on external support to make their voices heard from afar. For example, ABR could be viewed as a radio managers’ association and not an association of radio stations themselves.” The panelists said that greater

attention to long-term planning is needed to make these organizations sustainable.

While Burundian media have no commercial associations similar to the associations representing editors, many media professional associations are working to protect the rights of journalists. Some of the more active professional associations include the Association of Burundian Journalists (ABJ); Association of Women Journalists; the Press House; and the journalists’ union, the Burundian National Radio Television Workers’ Union. Spès-Caritas said that these associations do step up to defend journalists; for example, ABJ’s president reacted sharply to death threats against Marc Niyankuru, a journalist working in Makamba, in July 2009. Majabuko noted that ABJ and the Press House also advocate for donors to fund training sessions for journalists.

Karihungu, however, claimed that professional associations have stopped protecting journalists’ interests. He said they do not even get involved in cases of press violations, citing the case of an RPA correspondent who was threatened and roughed up by information service agents.

International NGO involvement in the advancement of Burundian media is undeniable. BINUB, USAID, UNESCO, and the Institut Panos Paris devote significant energy and resources to the media. These NGOs defend and support the freedom of speech and independent media by denouncing abuse against journalists and through legal assistance, such as providing defense lawyers for journalists. Uwimana commented, “There are NGOs that support the media to promote the freedom of the press. They fund the media, help coordinate training programs for journalists, and intercede for journalists in conflicts with the state.” For instance, when

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.

RPA had a conflict with CNC, several organizations lobbied in support of the radio station.

However, Karihungu said that media-protection NGOs have limited power, except for a few contracts with NGO projects. Spès-Caritas shared his view that there are very few media-focused NGOs; he could only point to Kinshasa-based *Journalistes en Danger*, which he said is very active and helps protect the rights of journalists. Majabuko added that the media community itself takes the lead in protecting free speech. But aside from the associations referenced above, panelists highlighted only regional and international NGO involvement, not locally chartered ones.

Burundi still lacks a school for journalists, and many journalists are not qualified—most have received on-the-job training only. Spès-Caritas explained: “In Burundi, the journalism school disappeared many years ago, and those who attended it are no longer working in the media. Most of them migrated to better-paying fields.”

Some private universities have communication departments offering classes that can help graduates obtain jobs as journalists. Nkurunziza commented that the private universities appear more and more interested in offering journalism programs, while the state institutions have shown less interest. However, with funding from the Belgian government, the University of Burundi (a public institution) has started a project to create a master’s degree program in journalism.

Filling professional gaps in the meantime, a limited number of short-term training workshops and seminars are available, panelists said. Often the classes are developed by local organizations and funded by NGOs and international organizations such as BINUB, UNESCO, UNICEF, and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Burundi. In addition, ABJ organizes monthly training sessions for journalists, with funds from donations. Spès-Caritas added that eventually most journalists take advantage of short-term, on-the-job training as well. These trainings emphasize skills (such as how to gather and process news) as well as covering special topics such as security, the environment, and human rights. However, one panelist said that these training sessions are insufficient, and sometimes the per diem is not attractive enough to lure participants. Irakoze also pointed out the growing dependence of media houses: “The press companies do not invest in personnel training, expecting the help of international organizations. This is hurting the quality of the news.”

In Burundi, newspapers do not own their own printing houses, except for the newspaper *Ndongozi*, which is owned by the Catholic Church. The only state-run printing house,

INABU, went bankrupt. All newspaper printing houses are run privately and independently. According to Karihungu, the managers of these companies act out of business interests, and are not very concerned about the welfare of the newspapers. Nkurunziza noted that the public authorities can interfere and stop print runs, including those for newspapers and books.

Burundi has no established media distribution network; most services are apolitical and protective of their own business interests, according to Karihungu. Typically newspapers are sold at various grocery stores and in some offices, or mailed directly to subscribers.

List of Panel Participants

Ambri Majabuko, editor-in-chief, *Le Visionnaire*, Bujumbura

Ernest Nkurunziza, member, Ligue Iteka, Bujumbura

Amisi Karihungu, journalist, correspondent, Radio Bonesha, Gitega

Fabrice Niyokuru, publicity agent, Bujumbura Communications Agency, Bujumbura

Désiré Ndanzi, executive secretary, Association of Women Journalists, Bujumbura

Ruston Uwimana, journalist, *Ndongozi*, Bujumbura

Félix Nzoroubonanya, correspondent, Radio Publique Africaine, Bururi

Kabanyana Spès-Caritas, journalist, Radio Isanganiro, Bubanza Province

Fiona Irakoze, communications instructor, Lumière University, Bujumbura

Didier Bukuru, editorial assistant, *Iwacu*, Bujumbura

Nadège Irambona, analyst, Media Organization of Central Africa, Bujumbura

Jocelyne Ininahazwe, monitor, National Communications Council, Bujumbura

Moderator and Author

Alain Gashaka, correspondent, *Journalist en Danger*, Bujumbura

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