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RWANDA

# M

Media development in Rwanda remains haunted by the events of 1994. Government officials frequently argue against giving the media complete freedom, for fear that it may be used irresponsibly and lead to chaos, as when Hutu extremists used *Radio-Television Libre des Mille Collines* to broadcast hate speech. Observers blamed the broadcasts for instigating the genocide 16 years ago in which more than 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus were slaughtered. Therefore, while the authorities have supported new training efforts and improvements in the legal structure underpinning the media, they keep close watch over the media.

Last year's MSI panelists expressed hope that a proposed new media bill would be passed, and in fact, President Paul Kagame signed the bill into law in August 2009. Thanks to participation from journalists, the law includes provisions considered relatively fair compared to its predecessor. The new law amends an article that required journalists to secure official permission prior to publishing government information. Journalists may now collect and disseminate information freely, and need to seek permission only when using copyrighted material. Still, the new law is not without controversy. Some members of the media community argue that the new law has been passed to suppress press freedom and it targets the independent media, which is seen as critical to the government. The state, for its part, rejects these charges.

Many in the Rwanda media community are encouraged by provisions mandating that practicing journalists should possess at least a diploma from a recognized institution. But this also has the effect of stifling citizen journalism and possibly silencing government critics on a technicality. However, the law does put in place a five-year transitional period to allow practicing journalists that do not meet the requirements to upgrade their academic status.

The new law also leaves intact, at least for the time being, the banning of certain media houses from covering state functions. The ban stems from accusations that the outlets in question publish lies and practice irresponsible journalism. The editors of the accused media houses have responded by saying that the only "crime" they have committed is questioning the government and exposing its bad deeds, and they are not willing to compromise on that point.

Another law under consideration is designed to improve journalists' access to public information, and details punishment for government officials that refuse to comply. The panelists hope passage of this law will encourage investigative journalism in the country.

Overall, while the new bill has some positive signs, how the law is enforced remains to be seen. Panelists stressed that total press freedom is a long way from being realized, especially while other laws under the penal code still threaten media freedoms.

# RWANDA AT A GLANCE

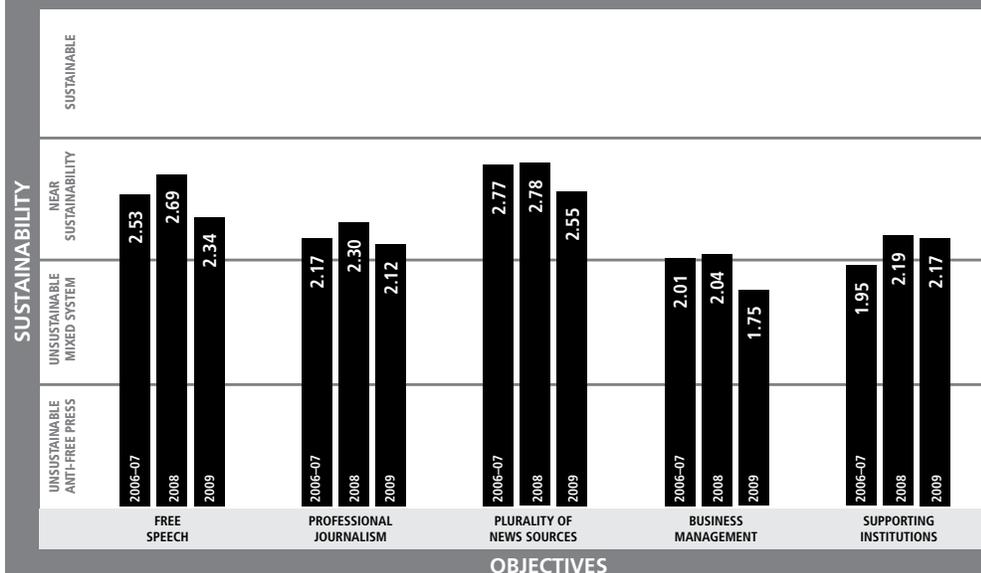
## GENERAL

- > **Population:** 10,746,311 (July 2010 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Capital city:** Kigali
- > **Ethnic groups (% of population):** Hutu (Bantu) 84%, Tutsi (Hamitic) 15%, Twa (Pygmy) 1% (*CIA World Factbook*); however, many scholars believe Hutu and Tutsi to be class distinctions rather than actual ethnic groups
- > **Religions (% of population):** Roman Catholic 56.5%, Protestant 26%, Adventist 11.1%, Muslim 4.6%, indigenous beliefs 0.1%, none 1.7% (2001 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Languages (% of population):** Kinyarwanda (official) universal Bantu vernacular, French (official), English (official), Kiswahili (Swahili) used in commercial centers (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **GNI (2009-Atlas):** \$4.628 billion (World Bank Development Indicators, 2010)
- > **GNI per capita (2009-PPP):** \$1060 (World Bank Development Indicators, 2010)
- > **Literacy rate:** 70.4% (male 76.3%, female 64.7%) (2003 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **President or top authority:** President Paul Kagame (since April 22, 2000)

## MEDIA-SPECIFIC

- > **Number of active print outlets, radio stations, television stations:** Print: 39 newspapers (Ministry of Information); Radio Stations: 17; Television Stations: 1 (state-owned)
- > **Newspaper circulation statistics:** Top three by circulation: *Imvaho Nshya* (state-owned bi-weekly), followed by *The New Times* (private English newspaper and the only daily publication), *Umuseso* (privately owned), and *Kinyamateka* (Catholic Church-owned weekly); none has a circulation in excess of 10,000.
- > **Broadcast ratings:** Top radio stations: Radio Rwanda (state-owned), Contact FM (private), BBC (international)
- > **News agencies:** Rwanda News Agency (private)
- > **Annual advertising revenue in media sector:** N/A
- > **Internet usage:** 300,000 (2008 est., *CIA World Factbook*)

## MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX: RWANDA



### 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

### Rwanda Objective Score: 2.34

Panelists agreed that Rwanda has sound constitutional provisions to guarantee media freedom and freedom of speech, but they live mainly on paper and often the situation on the ground is quite different. Furthermore, other laws remain that contradict the positive constitutional provisions, and state organs continue to use these laws to deprive the media and the general public of their rights to freedom of speech.

As the previous MSI study described, the state continues to oppress some private media. Whenever opposition journalists fight for their freedoms, they are painted as enemies of the government, the panelists noted. “Although the constitutional provisions on freedom of speech cater to all Rwandan citizens, very few Rwandans agitate for their rights when they are violated—mainly because of their natural fears, but also because many of them are not aware of their rights,” noted one panelist.

“There have been several violations of media freedoms recently, and when taken to court, at times they are handled well and independently,” reported one panelist, giving the example of Charles Kabonero, the editor of *Umuseso* (a private newspaper) who was charged of libel and acquitted. However, some panelists said that other court decisions raise questions about the independence of the judiciary. Criminal

#### 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.

*“There have been several violations of media freedoms recently, and when taken to court, at times they are handled well and independently,” reported one panelist, giving the example of Charles Kabonero, the editor of Umuseso (a private newspaper) who was charged of libel and acquitted.*

penalties may also be assessed for media content deemed to promote genocidal ideology. The law signed in August also provides penalties for media that attack the president or promote “divisionism.” Although the judiciary looks to be independent, they charged that government influence cannot be ruled out based on the past decisions of the courts.

Regarding access to Internet, the panelists agreed that the government places no restrictions at all, and users are not required to register to access Internet facilities.

The Rwanda Utility Regulatory Authority and the Media High Council, with the Ministry of Information as the overseer, handle the licensing of broadcast media. The panelists reported some signs of fairness and transparency in the process. However, they expressed concern over applicants that fail to fulfill their obligations after acquiring these licenses. The panelists noted that some radio stations that were granted licenses years back have never taken off, thus preventing productive use of parts of the frequency spectrum. A similar problem occurs with print media; some newspapers that are registered as daily publications publish only intermittently. Out of Rwanda’s 62 registered newspapers, only 10 adhere to a regular publication schedule.

The panelists noted that the process of launching a media house is unproblematic, given the ease entry into the Rwandan market for media business and the tax structure involved. In addition, the government requires just a small tax, five percent, on all newspapers and magazines printed outside Rwanda then imported for sale in-country. In addition, the government has declared tax exempt all materials used in printing newspapers, and in the new media bill under consideration, the government plans to exempt the importation of printing machinery.

The panelists reported that since last year’s MSI study, the country has seen some crime against journalists, though not very much. The panelists agreed that if such cases do occur, the media reports on them. However, according to the U.S. Department of State’s 2009 human rights report

*Libel is a criminal offense in Rwanda, and journalists have been arrested and imprisoned under the code. The panel mentioned specifically Kabonero, the director of Umuseso, who was arrested, charged, and later given a suspended prison sentence of two years.*

on Rwanda, “the government continued to intimidate and arrest independent journalists who expressed views that were deemed critical of the government on sensitive topics or who were believed to have violated law or journalistic standards.”<sup>1</sup>

The laws governing the media in Rwanda are the same for state and private media, but the panel agreed that state/public media are favored over private media in a number of ways, especially in access to public information. When the government needs to publicize a message, it turns to the state media. Similarly, when journalists are seeking state information, public media journalists have a decisive advantage over those employed by private houses.

Panelists noted that the public media are controlled fully by the government and have no editorial independence. Although public media have seen some improvement in this area, more work remains. Furthermore, the state cabinet appoints the public media top management, who in turn appoint the lower cadres—therefore subjecting all to state influence. In addition to this, the ruling party has significant influence over the appointment of leadership at certain pro-government news media, such as *The New Times*.

Panelists added that some private newspapers, such as *Umuseso* and *Umuwugizi*, are referred to as enemies of the government mainly because of the critical stories they publish; as a result, the Media High Council has banned them from covering state functions. However, despite the Media High Council’s power to do this, in these cases it did so in a way that ignored the steps outlined in the law that must be followed to put such a ban in place.

The panelists commented on the marginalization of print media compared to electronic media. For example, often print media receive fewer invitations to cover certain functions or activities. But at times this can be attributed to an individual civil servant’s preference for particular media houses—not

necessarily an overarching government preference, panelists pointed out.

Libel is a criminal offense in Rwanda, and journalists have been arrested and imprisoned under the code. The panel mentioned specifically Kabonero, the director of *Umuseso*, who was arrested, charged, and later given a suspended prison sentence of two years. Jean Bosco Gasasira, editor-in-chief of the Rwandan bimonthly *Umuwugizi*, was also tried in 2009 under the 2002 press law and is facing a term of up to a year on defamation charges. The Committee to Protect Journalists registered its concern that Gasasira’s prosecution was politicized and the outcome of the court case predetermined.<sup>2</sup> But in general, the judiciary and prosecution have not displayed corruption in the handling of such cases, according to the panelists. Unlike other types of cases in which the burden of proof is on the prosecution, libel cases drop the burden of proof on journalists, the panelists added.

The panelists also reported that Internet service providers and website hosts have not faced charges; however, the government is drafting a new law that will monitor all Internet users, possibly changing the climate of liability in the near future. Panelists pointed also to the already-drafted Internet bill; at the time the MSI was prepared, they expected to see it presented to the cabinet soon.

According to the panel, journalists generally do not have easy access to public information, although media houses considered to be friendly to the government find no difficulties. The panelists also reported that currently, Rwanda has no law that provides for access to public information—although efforts are being made to address this. The media have been instrumental in this effort by submitting proposals to the government, and are waiting to see whether their suggestions will be accommodated in the final draft.

The panelists agreed that the government places no restrictions on accessing international news, and media houses are free to reprint or rebroadcast foreign material or programs; however, the source must be credited. Although the government does not restrict access to foreign publications, the cost is prohibitive for some. The panel reported that the Internet is not restricted or controlled, by either government or business conglomerates. However, the 2009 state department report on Rwanda’s human rights states that the government monitors e-mail, but not Internet

<sup>1</sup> 2009 Human Rights Report: Rwanda. U.S. Department of State: Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor. March 11, 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2009/af/135971.htm>

<sup>2</sup> “In Rwanda, defamation case is politicized.” Committee to Protect Journalists; October 6, 2009. <http://www.cpj.org/2009/10/in-rwanda-defamation-case-is-politicized.php>

chat rooms—noting that citizens can engage in the peaceful expression of views via the Internet, including by e-mail.<sup>3</sup>

Currently, becoming a journalist is as easy as applying for journalism job. In the view of the panelists, this ease of entry has damaged the public perception of the journalism profession. However, the panelists said that the new media law will end this practice, as it contains a provision mandating academic qualifications to become a journalist. Proof of qualification will be a certificate from a recognized training institution. The new bill also accommodates those who are currently practicing but have no qualifications, giving them a transition period of five years to upgrade.

According to the panelists, entry into journalism training institutions is free from interference; the government has no hand in it. However, the Media High Council has been given the power to police the media and issue national press cards to join the profession. Journalists are legally free to organize as they see fit to protect their rights, provided that they follow existing laws and regulations.

## OBJECTIVE 2: PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM

### Rwanda Objective Score: 2.12

Professional standards of journalism are declining once again, the panelists reported. A good number of reporters have abandoned ethics, and the profession is losing qualified people as they turn to other sectors for greener pastures. Newer journalists often lack solid qualifications. The panelists drew a connection between this phenomenon and poor reporting, noting that many journalists do not dig deep while sourcing their news because they lack the skills and, in some cases, the resources. Other reasons behind the decline in objective reporting may include poor media house policies that owners craft purposefully to serve their personal interests, and corruption among journalists that take money and gifts from their news sources, resulting in biased reporting.

The panelists agreed that as much as this problem exists, the Rwandan media community still has a few well qualified, skilled journalists that work objectively and consult experts to back up their work. Overall, the panelists agreed, media leaders need to encourage their colleagues to obtain proper training in order to keep the profession alive and improve its image.

<sup>3</sup>2009 Human Rights Report: Rwanda. U.S. Department of State: Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor. March 11, 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2009/af/135971.htm> (Accessed June 4, 2010.)

*Self-censorship continues to present a serious obstacle for journalists in Rwanda, stemming from the country's history, lack of professional confidence in technical skills, safety fears, job insecurity, and business interests. The panelists noted that this problem is more apparent with the public media, which is fully controlled by government.*

A code of ethics developed in 2006 remains in place, but it has not been amended, as many panelists recommend it should be. Journalists continue to violate its principles, despite efforts by several professional bodies and associations to protect and enforce it. The panelists noted that organizations including the Association of Rwanda Journalists (now transforming into a union), the Rwanda Media Ethics Commission, and a local Editors Forum are slowly making efforts to improve the code and its enforcement. They have organized several training sessions on the topic, with unremarkable results. However, panelists said that under the new media bill, they believe that the problem will be addressed, and they expect to see some improvement over time.

Self-censorship continues to present a serious obstacle for journalists in Rwanda, stemming from the country's history, lack of professional confidence in technical skills, safety fears, job insecurity, and business interests. The panelists noted that this problem is more apparent with the public media, which is fully controlled by government. They added that media

## 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).

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*The shortage of modern equipment, panelists said, clearly affects the quality, content, and even reach of news coverage.*

associations are trying to address the issue, although with substantial resistance from some sections of the media.

Panelists agreed that the media cover most key events, provided that they learn of the events in time. However, some sections of the media are excluded from certain functions. The panelists gave an example of certain media houses banned from covering state functions, as well as some key event organizers that favor particular media houses and withhold invitations from others. Reporters cover matters related to state security with care, as even factually correct reporting may lead to problems with the authorities.

Panelists noted that low pay levels in journalism, compared to other sectors, contributes to significant levels of corruption within the profession. According to the panel, the practice of journalists sitting on stories in exchange for money and other gifts has become rampant, and panelists agreed on the need to stop the practice. However, panelists reported that even among those who are paid relatively well, a few are corrupt; they attributed this to a question of character more than pay. “We have seen and heard about journalists selling stories to their sources to supplement their incomes, or sometimes as a matter of survival for others who do not receive any pay from the media houses they work for,” one panelist said.

State media outlets pay better than most private media houses, but a major disparity in pay exists between editors and reporters. According to the panelists, state media reporters’ monthly pay ranges from RWF 180,000 to RWF 300,000 (\$330 to \$550), while pay for editors ranges from RWF 400,000 to RWF 800,000 (\$735 to \$1,475). In private media houses, such as the *Times*, the pay ranges from RWF 250,000 to RWF 1,000,000 (\$450 to \$1825). Freelance journalists and other contributors are paid between RWF 3,000 and RWF 15,000 (\$5 to \$25) per story, and some work without pay to build a name.

Another effect of poor compensation is the exodus of journalists from the profession, fleeing to other fields that are more lucrative than reporting or editing. Many qualified journalists take up jobs as public relations officers for the government or in the private sector. According to the panelists, some journalists are also returning to the teaching

profession, which pays better than journalism as well. Even journalists that came to Rwanda from neighboring countries have left and returned to their homes because of the declining working conditions in Rwanda. This phenomenon has seriously impacted print as well as electronic media in terms of the quality of content.

Entertainment programming dominates most private FM radio stations, which are audience-driven and sponsorship-driven, panelists said. They commented that less time is allocated to news, apparently out of the fear that it may drive away the urban-based, youth listenership. In contrast, public radio gives people more news and educational programs than entertainment, panelists said. They noted that print media are dominated by news stories, especially political reports.

Although media outlets have upgraded equipment and facilities used to gather and distribute the news, there is still much need for improvement, and this is attributed to affordability. Private outlets in particular need more computers and digital cameras (both video and still), mostly for news gathering and production. The shortage of modern equipment, panelists said, clearly affects the quality, content, and even reach of news coverage.

The panelists also suggested that any assistance in this area would be channeled best through independent media associations, which may use them to set up centers or press clubs; or even a few private media houses, which are independent. The press centers address the strain on the country’s many freelance journalists, who can pay a small fee to use press centers as a work base. The panel also hinted that the media support fund, put in place by the government in its 2009/2010 national budget for media development, could be a possible source of funding for upgrades. However, journalists approach this possibility with a healthy dose of skepticism, not sure whether there will be any strings attached.

It is clear that some media houses do a better job than others with regard to niche reporting, which the panel attributed to extra investments in training. Investigative reporting is growing, and some journalists have taken up specialized reporting—but still on a small scale. The panelists reported that print media undertake more investigative reporting than electronic outlets. The major obstacle to better niche reporting is the cost involved in training and preparing reporters in various specialties. Additionally, investigative reporting ventures tend to be very expensive and risky, and few journalists are interested in pursuing such stories.

### OBJECTIVE 3: PLURALITY OF NEWS

#### Rwanda Objective Score: 2.55

The panelists agreed that Rwanda has several sources of news, including print, broadcast, and Internet. The public broadcast media is the main source of news for rural as well as urban areas; private media is concentrated in the capital, Kigali, and other big towns. The only media available to rural audiences is radio. People living on borders with neighboring countries also benefit from foreign radio stations.

Plurality of opinions is somewhat limited on radio, however. State-owned Radio Rwanda covers all the country but provide news generally favorable to the ruling party. There are some local FM radio stations, such as those in Huye, Gisenyi, Ruhengiri, Kyangugu, and Nyagatare, but they are also part of the Rwanda Information Office, a government agency. Only Radio Izuba, and to a certain extent student-run Radio Salus, could be considered independent, “community” stations in the sense of being operated by the community and for the community’s benefit.

The panelists agreed also that the Internet is used mainly in cities and big towns, but the cost is still high and prohibitive to the many low-income Rwandans living in these regions. Blogs and SMS services are also available, but at a cost.

The panelists agreed that citizens are free to access both domestic and international media, and the government imposes no restrictions on anyone who wants to listen to foreign broadcasts or read foreign newspapers. The panelists

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reported that foreign print editions are available on the Rwandan market; their cost is slightly higher than the local newspapers, but still affordable. Citizens are free to access foreign news sources via the Internet, foreign programs, and papers. According to the panelists, the only newspaper banned from the Rwandan media market is *Red Pepper*, from Uganda, but panelists agreed that it is banned primarily on moral grounds, as it publishes a lot of pornographic material.

Few people subscribe to cable or satellite television because the services are costly. And the panel members noted that many of the news sources described above are available only to the urban residents, to the exclusion of the rural population. Indisputably, people living in the capital and big towns have greater access to media sources than their rural counterparts, the panelists noted.

Panelists agreed that the government fully controls the Rwandan public media, which covers predominantly the government’s political and developmental programs. The government appoints public media editors, who display loyalty to their employer to keep their jobs. However, with regard to campaign periods, public media outlets are mandated by law to give equal coverage to both the ruling party and opposition—though panelists agreed that this is not reflected in practice. Public media journalists end up violating this law by allocating more time to the ruling party than the opposition. On the other hand, panelists commended the public media for going the extra mile in their reporting and coverage of issues and programs that benefit the public—including educational, health, and cultural programs that are neglected by commercial broadcasters.

This year’s panel reported that Rwanda has two private news agencies: the local Rwanda News Agency and the regional Inter Press Service. Both operate independently, selling news to various media houses, which subscribe to them at an average cost of \$1400 per month. Larger media houses

#### 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.

*Indisputably, people living in the capital and big towns have greater access to media sources than their rural counterparts, the panelists noted.*

can afford this expense, but small media houses depend instead on their stringers reporting from different parts of the country for local news, and the Internet for foreign news. Rwanda's press is served by a handful of foreign news agencies, including Reuters, AFP, AP, Panos, and MENA.

Most media houses in Rwanda produce their own programs, and the panelists reported that the quality continues to improve from year to year. Despite this, panelists agreed, some media houses still purchase foreign programs, mainly entertainment shows and documentaries. Private media houses produce their own news programming, which differs markedly from public media productions. The panelists also noted the role played by community broadcast media, which is also growing and produces programming tailored to local needs.

Media ownership is easily ascertained; most owners are private, and the Ministry of Information is required to reveal owners of any media at registration via publishing the names of owners in newspapers. To date, there has been no published analysis of the diversity of political views held by those who control the major private media.

The panelists reported no major foreign investment in the media in the year under review.

According to the panelists, social issues are covered widely in all media with no restrictions. The issues include those related to the marginalized—youth, people with disabilities, women, and others. Rwanda has no minority language media, as all people speak the same language, Kinyarwanda, in addition to other languages such as French and English. Panelists agreed that community media have been very effective in reaching their audiences, playing an instrumental role in reflecting social issues.

## OBJECTIVE 4: BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

### Rwanda Objective Score: 1.75

The score for Objective 4 dropped nearly a third of a point from last year's score. Indicators 1 (media are well-managed businesses), 2 (media receive revenue from multiple sources), 4 (ratio of advertising to other revenues), and 5 (government subsidies) all dropped dramatically, and indicator 6 (market research) fell nearly a third of a point. Only indicator 3 (the advertising market) and indicator 7 (broadcast ratings) gained modestly.

Panelists reported that a few independent media outlets run as professional, well managed businesses and turn a profit. The more prosperous media houses are distinguished by their tendency to engage professionals to fill positions in accounting, marketing, and human resources, and using solid business plans for guidance. However, many independent media outlets fail to live up to these management standards, especially as they struggle with the effects of the global financial crisis on the media. Most newspapers have reduced the size of their publications in response to increased production costs combined with low purchasing power. Working journalists live in constant fear of losing their jobs because of the faltering economy. Another serious problem is that many media houses employ unqualified relatives of the owners in management positions; some of these outlets shut down soon after they are launched.

As for community media houses, the panel noted that some are managed well, with sustainable funding from the community and donors, but there are a few insufficiently funded outlets that struggle to stay afloat. The panel also

#### 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.

reported that the public media misuse their allocated funding at times. For example, the state media agency director, Oscar Kimanuka, was indicted on corruption charges in April 2009, and the board dissolved because of the ensuing scandal.

The panelists agreed that private media receive revenue from multiple sources, including sale of copies, advertising, undisclosed sponsorships, and commercial bank loans. The private sector in Rwanda is weak because it is dependent entirely on the government for survival, hence editorial influence cannot be ruled out. The panelists noted that the public media depend on the government as a major source of funding, which in turn dictates their editorial directions. In addition, major advertisers influence the editorial policies of public and independent/private media, through the business they offer directly and through advertising firms.

Last year's panelists characterized the Rwandan advertising sector as underdeveloped, although the panelists noted the emergence of some new firms. This year, the panelists did report some growth, with several new advertising agencies cropping up, including Creative Communications, Data Pro, Creaxio, GR8, and Rusororo. Although they are confined mainly to Kigali, they work actively with all modes of media: online, print, and broadcast. Some media houses have proven successful in developing full-fledged departments to handle advertising business, and employ professionals to solicit new clients.

Again this year, the panelists reported that advertising represents the biggest portion of broadcast programming time—an estimated 70 percent. Print and broadcast editors end up running more advertisements than programming, as they depend on advertisements for funding. Media houses without sufficient advertising struggle to survive.

According to the panelists, the government does not offer direct subsidies to private media. The media have been extended tax exemptions, without effect on editorial independence. However, the panel noted that the Ministry of Finance has included a program in the 2009/2010 national budget aimed at supporting media growth in the country. The Rwanda media community has welcomed this development, in hopes that it will help to expand the sector—provided that the fund has no strings attached.

The panelists agreed that no individual media houses have ever carried out major media research to check on the needs of the audiences they serve. Only a few media houses have tried using informal methods (questionnaires, call-ins during talk show programs) and whether or not the findings were put to use is unclear.

However, the panelists reported that some media houses, such as *The New Times*, recently engaged a Kenyan specialist

to carry out research on their newspaper distribution networks, and management is trying to improve on using the findings. The Media High Council also carried out research, but for its own benefit, not for Rwandan media outlets.

The situation with newspaper circulation figures, broadcasting ratings, and Internet statistics has not improved since the last media survey. Rwanda has no clear and reliable sources, stemming from the lack of professional firms to carry out this work, noted the panelists. They agreed that this presents an opportunity for any media house to step forward and carve out a leading position in the sector.

## OBJECTIVE 5: SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS

### Rwanda Objective Score: 2.17

Again this year, scores for Objective 5 did not change dramatically—with the exception of indicator 7 (channels of distribution), which dropped nearly a third of a point. Indicators 4 (academic journalism programs) and 6 (sources of newsprint and printing facilities) received the strongest scores for this objective.

The panelists reported growth in the number of professional media associations in Rwanda. They now include the Association of Rwanda Journalists (ARJ), the Rwanda Editor's Forum, Press House (set up by PANOS, a regional international development organization), Rwandan Independent Journalists Association, the Association of Rwandans Journalists against HIV/AIDS, Environment Journalists Association of Rwanda, Rwandan Association of Media Women, and many smaller organizations representing particular sectors of the media. These associations work to help their members in a number

### 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.

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of areas. They offer training, defend the rights of journalists in the country, lobby the government for better media laws, and solicit international support for media development. Becoming a member of any of these associations is very simple; requirements generally include an application to the general secretary, filing a form, and paying the membership fees.

However, the panelists offered mixed reviews of these associations' work to date. They characterized several associations as pro-government. Some activities have been carried out in close coordination with the government. Other organizations are rather inactive and therefore lose members.

The panelists agreed that Press House is finally turning into an association for media owners and publishers, though its members have not seen significant benefits to date. Press House reportedly offers its members services such as advocacy for the rights of the publishers, lobbying the government on problems such as high taxes, and access to free Internet. Left out are broadcasters, who the panelists said are thinking about starting their own association to cater to their interests.

Rwanda has a few NGOs working in the media field; most of them are involved in other development work. The only NGO working directly with the media is a coalition of rights groups called LDGL (the French acronym for Great Lakes Region Human Rights League). A regional organization, LDGL helps journalists in trouble in Rwanda, Burundi, and Congo by sending out alerts reacting to various threats, and works to build the professional capacity of journalists. It also conducts a state of the media survey in the three countries and publishes a report every two years, noted the panelists.

The score for academic institutions held steady compared to last year's score; the panelists agreed that Rwanda has public and private media training institutions that offer high-quality degree and diploma courses. The two universities in Rwanda

offering media studies are the National University of Rwanda, with a journalism and communications school; and the Catholic University of Kabgayi, which produces graduates ready to work with the existing media houses. Journalists can take advantage of training opportunities abroad, but those who travel for their studies tend to leave the media for other sectors upon their return because of the low pay in the media field.

One recent challenge to journalism education has been the government-mandated switch to English in the education system. This has forced many to lecture or learn in a language with which they are uncomfortable. It is likely that this challenge will be mitigated with the passing of time and the increase in English usage.

Media houses also offer free, short-term training opportunities, some of which are organized as workshops and funded by international donors. According to the panelists, the courses most in need include basics of journalism, ethics, and investigative reporting. Training efforts to date have focused on these topics; however, the panelists expressed concern that all the training programs that have been carried out target editorial departments, leaving out other sectors of the media, such as advertising and circulation, which also need strengthening.

Newsprint producers and some printing facilities are held privately and run as profit-generating businesses. However, because of high printing costs, some media houses have decided to turn to companies in Kampala, Uganda, where printing runs are cheaper. The panelists agreed that even the government-owned printing press is too expensive for private media houses. However, the panelists said that a new government printing press is being installed, and once it is completed, the cost of printing is likely to go down. Of course, newspapers with stories seen as critical or "negative" to the state cannot be printed from that facility. Furthermore, the panelists questioned the editorial independence of some of the privately run printing facilities. In some cases, private printing houses reject printing even those papers that can afford the steep printing costs if they are seen to be critical of the government.

Again this year, the panelists reported that media distribution channels (kiosks, supermarkets, and shops) are in private hands and continue to be managed efficiently. Private broadcasters manage their own transmitters, but if they run afoul of the government, the state can switch off transmitters without consulting the owner. The government also has its own transmitters, which are managed properly and in a non-partisan manner, according to the panelists.

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## List of Panel Participants

**Kim Kamasa**, managing editor, *Izuba Rirashye*, Kigali City

**Bosco Kagaba**, correspondent, *East African Business Week*, Kigali City

**Jovin Ndayishiniye**, director/journalist, *Les Points Focaux*, Kanombe Airport Town

**Charles Sengabo Muligande**, political analyst, Rwanda News Agency, Kigali City

**Eddie Mwerekande**, reporter/presenter, City Radio, Kigali City

**Nelson Gatsimbazi**, editor-in-chief, *Pusingi*, Kigali City

**Jeanne d’Arc Umwana**, correspondent, Voice of America, Kigali City

**Richard Muratankwaya Kayigamba**, senior reporter, *Umuseso*, Nyamirambo Town

**Mark Akankwatsa Ramba**, editor-in-chief, *Umuseke*, Kigali

**Beatrice Batamuliza**, journalist/media monitor, Africa Press Agency, Kigali City

## Moderator

**Didas Gasana**, editor, *Umuseso*, Kigali City

## Coordinator

**Herbert Mukasa Lumansi**, vice president, Uganda Journalists Association, Kampala, Uganda