



Communication for Development  
René Roemersma  
De Wittenstraat 31e  
1052 AL Amsterdam  
The Netherlands  
[rene@worldcom.nl](mailto:rene@worldcom.nl)  
<http://www.worldcom.nl/>  
CoC: 34160449

---

# Voices from the border at S 2°30.241' E 028° 51.570'

---

## Radio Maendeleo: a community Radio in the great lakes area



Report for International Media Support – Copenhagen, Denmark

Prepared by René Roemersma – July 2002

---

# Context

In July 2002 a peace deal between the government of Kinshasa and Rwanda was brokered by South Africa (under pressure of the United States). Representatives of the Hutu militias (housed at a hotel in Kinshasa paid for by the government of Kinshasa) rapidly declared that they were not to be used as small change in the peace process. However, a couple of days after the brokered deal the RCD – Kivu declared itself willing to enter in negotiations with the government in Kinshasa.

At the beginning of August a high level negotiating party from Kinshasa left for Uganda to start similar negotiations, apparently with some success.

After the negotiations in Sun City had collapsed, the government of the DRC changed tactics and started a negotiation process with the rebel movement of Jean Pierre Bemba. These negotiations were held in the Western town of Matadi. Bemba was offered the post of prime minister but wanted more. Negotiations got as far as discussing a new constitution and all this without any significant national press coverage, let alone with participation of other political players such as Civil Society.

Civil Society – in general – favours a political solution of the conflict where the concept of regionalism is seen as the most feasible solution for a sustainable state in the DRC. But it emphasises that such discussions and such a process can only be carried out if the armed conflict is taken out of the equation. If Civil Society maintains a coherent stand on this, it only makes sense to develop a regionalized media development strategy. Even if Civil Society is losing coherence such a strategy makes sense, DRC is a de facto regionalized state.

It falls within the scope of such a strategy to support Radio Maendeleo, being a regional Radio trusted by the population. Every political process needs critical observers and allow for participatory discussion on the very future of the nation. So, support for Radio Maendeleo would open the perspective of work with a counterpart in the Kivu with a proven track record.

Together with the Panos Institute for Eastern Africa similar partners can be identified in other regions (Gbadolite, Kisangani, Lubumbashi, Mbuyi Mayi and Kinshasa).

# The Radio

## Background in short hand

The Platform 'Radio Maendeleo' was founded in 1993 by local development organisations (members of the Committee Regional des ONG pour le développement – CRONGD). Its primary objective is to inform and educate the general public on political, economical and social issues.

From 1993 until October 1996 the Radio could operate relatively free and Independent. The footprint was almost the whole of both Kivu provinces and it was received as well in parts of Rwanda and Burundi. In the chaotic situation of the first liberation war the relay transmitter – placed strategically on a nearby volcano, was pillaged, the other transmitter was hidden as a precaution. In October 1996 the Radio had an optimal footprint. After the pillage the footprint was reduced to a radius of approx. 30 km to 50 km. Only after 10 months the Radio was able to start with transmissions again only to be confronted with another war after a year.

At first the new authorities (the RCD: "Rassemblement Congolaise pour la Démocratie") encouraged the Radio to resume transmissions as soon as possible. But the situation deteriorated when the new authorities were increasingly aware of a growing hostility against the RCD from the population and the situation got more tensed and difficult for the Radio.

The result was that at the beginning of July 1999 the Radio was no longer allowed to produce and transmit news programmes, at the end of July the license was revoked by the authorities and in September 1999 the director and head of programming were arrested and jailed for two weeks.

In August 2001 the Radio was licensed again but with the restriction not to broadcast (party) political content and under the obligation to re-broadcast the news programme of the official state broadcaster RTNC.

Under normal circumstances the Radio broadcasts nine hours per day: from 5.00 AM till 8.45, from 11.55 till 14.00 and from 16.30 till 20.00 hours.

At the moment there are regular news broadcasts and news flashes. The rest of the programming contains magazines, documentaries, educational programmes, programmes by the Radio Clubs, infotainment etc.

Broadcasting is mainly done in French and Swahili but also in local languages (Mashi, Hunde, Havu, Lega, Bembe).

## Context of the Radio

In the East-DRC NGO's had to make an adjustment in their strategy according to the development of the political situation The military successes of the rebels during the new war that started on August 2 1998 is seen by the population as an occupation force. After a short recess, NGO's decided to concentrate on issues of good

governance and confront the new authorities with abuses and follow its actions and policies critically.

The Radio bundles the group of most active NGO's in the region and facilitates broadcast time and studio facilities. This way a lot of attention is given to democracy, good governance, (respect for) human rights and gender and women's rights.

Beside that a lot of attention is given to economical development; farmers exchange information on new agricultural techniques, agronomists provide information as well as veterinarians. Social workers use the Radio for their work with groups.

The Radio is the most important instrument for people to have access to local and international news. It also plays a critical role as a independent watchdog of the new regime, not an easy task given the turbulent circumstances in the Kivu and not without risks either.

# The social network

## Institutional and other stakeholders

### Aims

Radio Maendeleo aims at broadcasting information on development activities from NGO's and CBO's; to promote interaction between civil society actors and the population; through information and education in civil rights strengthen local structures and to promote democratic values.

### Platform

Radio Maendeleo is a not-for-profit organization, established in May 1993 by CRONGD/Sud-Kivu (organisations non gouvernementales de développement ). The Radio started broadcasting in August 1993 and apart from the CRONGD Sud-Kivu and IISDR/Bukavu 12 other NGO's are member of the board:

<b>MEMBER NGO's</b>
COOCEC KIVU
COMITE ANTI BWAKI
ASOP
SIKASH
SOCOODEFI

ASSOCIATION ELIMU
ADI-KIVU
CREDESE BAHAI
UWAKI
APIDE
BDD
CDC KIRINGYE

Radio Maendeleo received initial financing from the comité Anti-Bwaki, German Technical Cooperation – GTZ and the Belgian NCOS (no known as 11.11.11.). 11.11.11. is financing operational costs for the Radio until the end of 2002. New core funding has yet to be found for the Radio to guarantee its operational survival.

## The Radio Clubs

From the start the Radio has focussed on Radio Clubs as the participatory basis of the Radio.

There are 73 more or less active Radio Clubs amongst them: Bukavu (8 RC's), Birava (9 RC's), Bushumba (9 RC's), Kabare Nord (12 RC's), Katana (5RC's), Kabare Sud (5 RC's), Idjwi (5 RC's); Katana-Kalehe : (7 RC's) ; Nyantende-Mudusa (4 RC's) ; Uvira-Fizi (4 RC's); Mwenga (5 RC's).

A Radio Club will form itself, as an autonomous entity, once established it receives training from the Radio in:

- Democratic values: freedom, tolerance, respect, equality
- Animation: participation, communication, exchange, project implementation and evaluation

12 of the most active and solid groups have been provided with cassette recorders and cassettes and those groups participate in the production of programmes of the Radio.

## Local cooperation and regional networks.

Radio Maendeleo is an active member of the regional council of NGO's, the CRONGD Sud Kivu and the Bureau de Coordination de la Société Civile Sud Kivu. Furthermore there is an intensive cooperation with lawyers groups and civil rights groups like Heritiers de la Justice and Group Jeremie.

# Internal

## Planning & priorities

As a result from an external evaluation (2001) the Radio has set up an action programme to implement the recommendations from the evaluation. Main points from the programme are:

- Strengthening of the Radio Clubs;
- Training of personnel;
- To improve admin & accounting;
- To strengthen the technical capacities of the Radio;
- Improved marketing techniques for the Radio.

## Personnel

The Radio has a staff of 15 members:

- 4 Journalists
- 2 Technicians
- 1 Cashier
- 2 Watchmen
- 1 Driver
- 1 Receptionist/Secretary
- 1 Programme and Information manager
- 1 Financial manager
- 1 Technical manager
- 1 Director

The Radio also works with an external pool of volunteer producers.

The staff of the Radio is remarkable stable, from the 17 staff members who were working with the Radio from the beginning, 14 are still with the Radio. During the forced closing of the Radio, staff continued working with the Radio, focussing on working with and the training of the Radio Clubs.

# A rapid assessment

During the first few days interviews with various persons have been set up with the objective to make a rapid assessment of the situation of the Radio.

The interviewed were:

- Thaddee Nyawe-Hinyi Balundi – President of the board
- Kamengela Hmba – programme & information manager
- Buhendwa Birali – manager of the Radio Clubs

- Aziza Bangwunu Clotilde – chief editor
- Emmanuel Basema – chief technician
- Emmanuel Bititi – technician
- Joseph Kizungu – technician
- Kizito Mushisi – director

The main questions were what kind of problems one encounters to do their job well and what would be a solution to those problems.

## Production

The journalists are providing a variety of news and information services to the audience:

- Agricultural information (food security, crop treatment, new agricultural techniques).
- Local news & information (sources: NGO's, local government)
- International news (sources: RFI, BBC, VOA, Internet)
- Community news & information (sources: CBO's, Radio Clubs)

For the editorial work the journalist have three computers and a printer at their disposal.

Main problems:

Access to information

- There is no phone line in the Radio and no access to Internet. This makes it rather a hassle for the journalists to use the Internet as an information source because they have to go to one of the three cyber-café that exists in Bukavu.
- Access to the Radio Clubs: due to the security situation, a lot of the Radio Clubs are out of contact with the Radio, which makes it hard to produce local and community news.
- There are hardly any sources for the journalists to use for the production of national news. There is no working formal network of correspondents in the main cities. A lot of the national information gathered is second hand or pre-packaged information (international news agencies, Internet).
- Although Radio Okapi was available for reception per short wave, none of the journalists were using Okapi as an independent and/or reliable news source. Authenticity and accountability of sources was seen as very important, probably one of the reasons that the journalists are reluctant to copy news from another radio station, Okapi is primarily seen as a national broadcaster and part of the “competition”, it is not so much seen as an independent quotable news source.

Technical resources:

- Journalists need to have access to the Internet from their workplace. They are losing a lot of time waiting for an available computer in one of the cyber café and the same goes for the production of the news programme when they depend on information of the Net.
- Field recording kits need upgrading to improve recording quality.

- Computers available for the journalists need to be put on a local area network so that resources, files and Internet access can be shared.
- Journalists need additional training in digital editing and Internet.

## Technicians

There are three technicians at the Radio providing maintenance of the equipment but also acting as studio technicians.

Main problems:

- Studio and transmitter equipment is old and wore out. Many – time consuming – problems are created because of this aging equipment.
- There is a general lack of resources spare parts are hard to come by.
- Technicians need to be trained in ICT and computer technologies to be able to provide adequate service to the Radio.
- As studio technicians they also need additional training in digital play-out systems and digital editing.

## General

1. The Radio is not able to realize all of its objectives. Due to the fact that the main transmitter site is no longer safe and accessible the footprint of the Radio is very limited. Added to that the Radio is transmitting with two Italian (RVR and DB Electronics), 250 Watt transmitters. Given the geographical situation (and specific problems at the antenna tower) the footprint cannot be extended to reach the rural population with the existing equipment. This is a serious limitation for the rural population to have access to information through R.M.
2. Due to the general insecurity of the region the communication with the Radio Clubs is troublesome. This severely hampers the Radio in its possibility to bring the people to the Radio and make them heard.
3. Although the Radio is part of an extended social network, ownership of the founding NGO's leaves a lot to be desired. Founding NGO's are involved in the programming and general direction of the Radio but none of them seems to have budgeted any programming costs to their back donors leaving the Radio without any means. Another worrying phenomena is that of the 12 founding NGO's only one has been paying the annual fee to the Radio.
4. Although the Radio has engaged in a process of strategic planning, strategic management needs to be supported specifically in the field of fund raising. This is all the more urgent since the only back donor (Belgian 11.11.11.) is ending it's financing this year.



# Outcomes

## Strengthening Radio Maendeleo's role as regional communicator

### 1. Enhancing the existing footprint

Prior to the visit of the Radio spare parts have been ordered with the equipment providers for the reparation of the two damaged 250 Watts transmitters. A specific problem is that the equipment is outdated and spare parts are hard to come by. Since the spare parts were not in time available before the visit, they have been sent and received at the end of July. Technicians are now working on the repair of the transmitter.

### 2. Enhancing the future footprint

Together with the technicians a site survey has been done to study the possibilities of antenna sharing with Radio Maria. The Radio has financing for a 5 Kw transmitter and antenna sharing would be beneficial for both Radio Maendeleo and Radio Maria.

### 3. Linkage with donors

A workshop has been held with NOVIB partners in the Kivu region to discuss the possibilities of starting a combined Internet Café. All of these NGOs are also represented in the board of the Radio and will present a common proposal for the set up of such a project. A discussion with these NGOs about including programme production on their budgets is pending. NOVIB has expressed interest in receiving projects from the Radio but they have to be presented by the NOVIB partners since the Radio is not a partner of NOVIB (yet).

Furthermore, the Radio has been accepted as a partner in the Media programme of the Dutch Institute for Southern Africa (NiZA) and can apply for further technical assistance.

Initial discussion took place with the Dutch Embassy in Kinshasa to search for ways for the Radio to present a project. Although interested the main problem for the Embassy in Kinshasa is the monitoring element. If the Radio and its board are to present a plan, it should be taken in account that the monitoring issue needs to be taken in consideration. The same goes for the representation of the European Community.

## Operational linkage between Radio Maendeleo and other community radios

### 1. Media Workshop & Worldspace

A good coincidence with this report is the fact that the Panos Institute – Central Africa together with the Dutch Institute for Southern Africa (NiZA) have held a workshop in Kinshasa (July 1 & 2) which turned out to produce an initial Media Assessment for the DRC.

The main conclusions of the workshop are:

- a. To prepare the congress for the “l’Union de la Presse du Congo” (IPC) with the objective to re-launch and restructure this institute that represents (or should represent) all professional journalists in the DRC.
- b. To launch a project to set up a national press agency for the DRC for printed and electronic media.

These priorities coincide with the findings of another Panos (Paris) project introducing Worldspace receivers with a multi media card & computer. Findings from the introduction of this system in Kinshasa, Bukavu and Lubumbashi underline the necessity of the set up of a national independent news service. Nearly all of the Radio’s and participants of the workshop in Kinshasa representing other media stated that they have access to international news but not sufficient access to national (reliable) news sources. And this is the one thing most needed and not provided on the Worldspace platform.

At this point in time the Worldspace platform is the most efficient to start an information sharing network albeit it for the time being text only.

The Worldspace platform can be made useful if national content was to be put on this platform while the national press agency is being build. Already there exists an informal news bulletin from several NGO’s and other civil society actors that is being distributed by way of email.

Added to this service one could think of distributing selected newspapers using Worldspace multimedia. This requires negotiations with Worldspace because they charge for receiving users as well as for organisations to send information to the users<sup>1</sup>.

Maybe negotiations with Worldspace foundation will prove fruitful to start this service as soon as possible because it’s quite evident that the fact that newspapers from Kinshasa are delivered as photo copy a week after publishing in Lubumbashi, is not favourable for the access to information of the general public.

### 2. Linkage with the Association of Community Radios in the DRC - ARCO

ARCO held its first General Meeting in Mbuyi Mayi, March 2001. None of the Radios of East Congo attended this meeting, all but boycotting this meeting because it coincided with the preparations of the Sun City negotiations and the preparatory committee of the ARCO meeting did not take this in consideration, so ARCO sort of got of on the wrong foot.

---

<sup>1</sup> “I won’t put it up if I can’t make money out of it” was the comment of a Worldspace staff member at the Worldspace corporation office in Johannesburg.

The director of Radio Maendeleo participated in the workshop of Panos/NiZA and contact with ARCO was re-established.

## Co-operation with Radio Okapi

Radio Okapi has postponed the decision whether or not to start a FM repeater in Bukavu. A fact-finding mission of Radio Okapi has visited Radio Maendeleo and both agreed that a possible way of co-operating was in the area of training.

Radio Maendeleo (as others in Lubumbashi) are reluctant to copy the news of Radio Okapi, which is more seen as competition than as an independent news source.

Further, restrictions are put by Radio Okapi in the use of their information and they defend an editorial policy that only permits the local radio to transmit pre-packaged material and does not allow for editing the news feed of Okapi. Unfortunately Radio Okapi did not attend the workshop in Kinshasa so further discussions have not taken place.

# Recommendations

## Radio Maendeleo

1. Footprint and accessibility.  
The Radio is advised to set up a plan of action to upgrade the equipment and expand the footprint of the Radio. One can think of the possibility of sharing the antenna tower that Radio Maria is building and place a 5 Kw transmitter with directional Yagi antenna's. This should give the Radio approx. 75% of its original footprint.
  - To integrate the rural population by supplying a network of cheap CB radio's (license free two-way radio system for civic use) with repeaters. This will give the Radio Clubs in isolated areas the possibility not only to provide information to the Radio but also to communicate amongst them selves as there is a need to address the general security situation.
  - The same band (CB = 27 MHz) can be used for transmitting and relaying the signal to isolated areas thus avoiding the need to purchase (and maintain) an expensive short wave transmitter.

Cost of a 5 Kw Solid State Cold FET transmitter w./stereo generator

F.O.B.: \$26.000

Cost of an antennae system (4 Logarithmic Yagi 6.5 dB gain)

F.O.B.: \$ 6.000

Cost of an auto-supported 30-meter tower

F.O.B.: \$ 8.000

Cost of a CB network (5 repeaters, 100 base stations)

F.O.B.: \$25.000

Cost of Solar Energy for remote stations:

Per repeater F.O.B.: \$ 1.744

Per base station F.O.B. \$ 1.344

Priority for the Radio is the expansion of the footprint for information delivery.

2. Studio Equipment

Two combined digital and analogue studios for production and transmission will cost \$ 42.000 F.O.B.

This would be the second priority for the Radio.

3. Sustainability: a founding NGO workshop

- Revision and evaluation of the project so far and discuss the outcome of the strategic planning.
- To identify possible donors for the upgrade and expansion of the Radio.
- An initial project proposal could then be presented by the NGOs to their funding partners, if necessary support will be provided with the technical set up of the proposal as well as with the budget.

4. Internet access:

At this point negotiations with the Dutch development organization NOVIB have not resulted in a favourable decision towards the financing of a NGO-Telecentre for Bukavu. However, it's important for civil society and the Radio to have autonomous access to the Net.

There is a commercial and professional Internet provider: Bukavu-on-line that can provide a wireless link to the Radio or another NGO. Other users in other buildings can also share this wireless connection. Using a new wireless technology called Community Area Network (CAN) the pipeline is shared with users in other buildings without the need of cabling. The use of a proxy server will rationalize the bandwidth needed for email and web browsing.

## IMS

### Support for Radio Maendeleo

- a. IMS could consider finding ways to assist RM in finding funds for the most urgent things, which are the transmitter of 5 Kw and more specifically the antenna system. This would re-instate the Radio's possibilities to play a regional role, not only in the Kivu but also towards parts of Rwanda (where the Radio had an audience as well).
- b. As a second priority the set up of the two-way radio system deserves support as well. Many NGO's working on the border between DRC and Rwanda are working together with NGO's in the Kivu (often sharing the same back donor like NOVIB).

For trust building, peace and reconciliation those contacts should be extended and made of use for the Radio and its audience.

## Media development support

- a. Partners for Media in Africa (ParMA Website (<http://www.gret.org/parma>) is considering to undertake an in-depth study of the Media situation in the DRC this year. With its own specific agenda, IMS might want to consider the possibility of hooking up to this initiative.
- b. To study the possibility of assisting to resolve the immediate necessity of setting up a national distribution network of independent journalists and civil Society (text only by way of internet and Worldspace). Panos East Africa has the infrastructure to do it but lacks some of the resources to carry this out. Negotiations with Panos Paris are ongoing to look for possibilities of financing distribution of information on the Worldspace platform.

René Roemersma  
Spain, August 2002