



# Media News

Netherlands Institute for Southern Africa

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## Revealing research on DRC media freedom

**Voters in the DRC went to the polls for the first time in 40 years without having the foggiest idea of the candidates' concrete plans for the future of their country. That is the main conclusion in a research report on the media situation in the DRC, which was compiled by investigative journalists belonging to FAIR (the Forum for African Investigative Reporters) and published by NiZA.**

According to the report, the politicians' plans weren't actually covered during the election campaign in the country's media, which virtually without exception, simply praised their own, and lambasted the other sides.

On the eve of the elections in the DRC, NiZA decided to commission an investigation into the negative conditions in which journalists in that country are supposed to do their job of informing the population. Was it, after all, now possible to exercise good professional journalism in the DRC, with its history of dictatorship and civil war? The immediate incident that led to this question was the murder, eight months ago, of journalist Franck Ngyke Kangundu. While the journalists were still busy compiling their dossier, a second journalist, Bapuwa Mwamba, was murdered on the 8<sup>th</sup> of July.

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## Corruption

The FAIR journalists –hailing from Kinshasa, Johannesburg and Amsterdam- who investigated both the Ngyke case as a case study, and corruption in the Congolese media in general, concluded that the murder had everything to do with the corruption problems. The murdered journalist drew his salary, with lots of

NiZA's Media Programme supports civil society organisations in Southern Africa that contribute to the creation of more democratic and open societies where governments are held accountable to citizens'needs and interests. To this end the Media Programme supports the strengthening of our partner organisations so that they can: 1. Influence the media and freedom of expression policies and legal environment in the SADC region to reach a conducive freedom of expression environment, 2. Increase access to information for citizens, 3. Train media professionals to deliver more balanced and accurate information on key political, social and economic issues, 4. Improve the financial sustainability of media outlets.

[www.niza.nl/medianews](http://www.niza.nl/medianews)  
(un)subscribe: [medianews@niza.nl](mailto:medianews@niza.nl)



Kabeya, the director of the Congolese Press Union and TV journalist, fled after the airing of a critical documentary of his making on the role of Vice-President Jean Pierre Bemba during the civil war in the Central African Republic.

Le directeur a fui : The director has fled. Okokufa muyaka ya pamba : You will die a stranger for nothing Na critiquer mokonzi. Tika nakimi. : I should not have criticised an authority. I have to run. Bolingi boboma ba journalistes nionso to nini? Do you want to kill all journalists eventually, or what?

perks, from his job at the pro-government newspaper *La Référence Plus*. In return, he was supposed to do nothing but sing, time and time again, the government and governing party leaders' praises. But because Ngyke personally did not agree with the governing party, he also anonymously published anti-government articles in newspapers belonging to the opposition. The consequence of this behavior, concludes the research report, was that Ngyke became seen as a 'traitor' by the governing party who paid him. This, most probably, led directly to the murder, by death squad on his doorstep in Kinshasa, of both him and his wife Helene Paka.

The core of the problem in both the Franck Ngyke and (opposition journalist) Bapuwa Mwamba murder cases is, according to the report, the virtual non-existence of independent media houses in the country. All media in the DRC are either financed (in the case of the most and most powerful media) by the governing party or by opposition leaders.

The public, in need of real information, loses out while the 'propaganda machines'

belt out adverts for their sponsors and criticism – often without much content- against their 'enemies'. 'You have to be blindly loyal to the one who pays you', is the guideline for journalists in the DRC, says the report, while noting that, in the case of opposition media, this is no absolute guarantee for safety. After all, Bapuwa Mwamba was personally loyal to his papers' opposition line. In his case it seems, therefore, according to the report, as if powerful individuals in the governments' camp had

enough of Mwamba's criticism.

### Culprit

Shortly before his death, the journalist had criticised 'police intimidation' in the election campaign. He had also investigated the illegal trafficking of diamonds in the province of West Kasai. Mwamba's editor at his newspaper *Le Phare*, Polydor Mbuyayi, isn't the government's favorite person at the moment either. In his capacity as chairman of the Congolese Media Observatory OMEC, Mbuyayi is treating a complaint against a pro-government TV channel, deposed by opposition leader Mbemba, who says the governing party funded a propaganda film made by the TV Channel, Tropicana, against Mbemba. The offending film –the making of which, the NiZA/FAIR report found, was at the very least *aided* by the government, accused Mbemba of human rights violations.

The report doesn't point a finger at a culprit behind the two murders of journalists. It says in its introduction that the research was no more than a case study, and all findings should still be tested by the justice authorities in the DRC. It

does, however, present indications, - mainly of high level secret service involvement -, that seems to show that the DRC government and governing party may well be involved in the Ngyke murder. The report states that President Joseph Kabila himself had reason to be annoyed with Franck Ngyke Kangundu, who had – whilst in the pay of Kabila’s party - a particularly damaging anti-Kabila article published.

### **Democratisation**

The report adds fuel to the debate on how to assist ‘democratisation’ in the DRC. The United Nations, the West, its former colonial patron Belgium and new powerful southern neighbor South Africa all want to get back to business with a –now legitimised- new government. The country has massive natural resources and many, both in- and outside the country, can’t wait to form or renew alliances with a view to lucrative contracts. Particularly the DRC’s western and South African sponsors and business partners need to be seen to be dealing with a ‘good’ democratic authority in this regard –which is why much donor funding has been directed at institutions whose task it is to help build democratic structures, such as the High Media Authority –which oversees professional media practice- and the journalists’ union UNPC.

The Niza/FAIR report, however, has found that both HAM and UNPC are led by pro-Kabila authorities, whose bias weighs heavily in their daily practice. HAM sanctioned media which published unfounded accusations against the government, but ignored similar offences from pro-government media against the opposition. The UNPC’s president, who is also the director of Tropicana TV, even produced the propaganda film against opposition leader Mbemba.

A positive recent development is the founding of a branch of the Forum for African Investigative Reporters in

Kinshasa. FAIR consists of journalists who promote ethics and professionalism within the profession, and who have already published investigative journalistic work of a high standard.

*By Evelyn Groenink*

*Evelyn Groenink (pinkie2@telkomsa.net) is an investigative journalist who lives and works in South Africa. She is also the coordinator of the Forum for African Investigative Reporters (FAIR).*

### **Links**

FAIR:

<http://www.fairreporters.org/>

NiZA:

[http://www.niza.nl/index\\_en.phtml](http://www.niza.nl/index_en.phtml)

### **New Manager for NiZA’s Media Programme**

*Newsflash*

**NiZA and the Media Programme team are happy to announce that Mr. Gérard Bueters will become our new Media and Freedom of Expression Programme manager.**



*Gérard Bueters*

Bueters has studied Sociology, Mass-Communication and Cinematography and has over 20 years of working experience in both written and audiovisual journalism. He has worked

as an independent journalist and producer, but also in co-production with NGO's like Unicef and Medicines sans Frontières. At media consultancy and training level he worked for projects in – amongst others - South Africa, Ukraine and the Ural and Vietnam. Bueters will start his job in September.

More on Bueters and his ideas and vision for the media programme in the next issue of MediaNews.

### Links

You can find Bueters' C.V. on:  
<http://www.mediateam.nl/index.htm> (Click bottom button C.V.)

### **NiZA scholarship 'the most wonderful blessing'**

**With the help of the Netherlands Institute for Southern Africa (NiZA) two African journalists receive much needed financial support while writing their thesis for a Masters degree in Media Studies.**

The drop-out rates in the second phase of the Masters degree in Media Studies at Rhodes University in Grahamstown (South Africa) is high because part-time students can't find the time to finish. But with the help of NiZA, South African journalist Alison Stent and Zimbabwean journalist and director of the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) Rashweat Mukundu will be able to take three months of unpaid leave to finish their part-time study in peace.

The programme they have been selected for is a new project called 'Building Master's Level Research in African Media'.

Stent calls the bursary "the most wonderful blessing" and "a gift from the hand of

God". She was in a state of despair while trying to finish her degree. "I am so busy at work and so tired when I get home; I was beginning to think I would never finish".

Mukundu, the second recipient of the bursary, is also grateful. "I was paying for all my study costs and coming from Zimbabwe where the economy has virtually collapsed with inflation of over 1000%, paying fees in foreign currency is a struggle." Mukundu now expects to finish his thesis in December.

### **Major shift**

NiZA decided to hand out the bursaries because they see building a generation of African media intellectuals as crucial in the development of societies. Mukundu agrees and says that "the scholarship programme is a major shift in that it is an investment in the long-term future of Africa, creating capacity within its people to do things themselves and hopefully, be self-sustaining in the near future."

The focus of Mukundu's thesis is Operation Restore Order (*Operation Murambatsvina*), a large scale Zimbabwean government campaign to forcibly clear slum areas across the country which left millions of people homeless. By examining the coverage of this programme in *The Sunday Mail* (state-owned) and *The Standard* (private) he seeks to "expose how expedient truths are carefully crafted for the purposes of retaining and maintaining political power and social control."

Stent's thesis deals with the coverage of the Zuma rape trial in South African tabloid *The Sowetan*. She focuses on the clash between modern and traditional discourse. The bursary consists of support for fieldwork, travel expenses to Grahamstown (where Rhodes University is based) and accommodation.

By *Elvira van Noort*  
([elviravannoort@hotmail.com](mailto:elviravannoort@hotmail.com)).

*Elvira van Noort is a Masters student in Media Studies at Rhodes University and a freelance correspondent based in Grahamstown, South Africa.*

#### Links

Rhodes University:  
<http://www.ru.ac.za/>

### IAJ and MISA Swaziland launch journalism training centre in Swaziland

*Newsflash*



NiZA-partners the Institute for the Advancement of Journalism (IAJ) and the

Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) Swaziland recently launched a Journalism Centre of Excellence in Mbabane. The Centre aims to provide in-country training for practitioners in the Swazi media industry. The establishment of local Centres of Excellence is part of IAJ's efforts to make journalism training more accessible in the region.

With support from NiZA's media programme IAJ is working to establish their regional programme in Swaziland, Angola, Zimbabwe, Zambia and DRC. For more information:

#### Links

Read more about the centre in the *Swazi Observer*:

<http://www.observer.org.sz/main.asp?id=24599&Section=main>



Institute for the Advancement of Journalism

#### IAJ:

<http://www.iaj.org.za/>

#### MISA Swaziland:

<http://www.misa.org/swaziland.html>

### New and old challenges for Development Workshop Angola

**Development Workshop in Angola is celebrating its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The NGO matured from a small organisation into a big player with a wide spectrum of activities including some interesting projects concerning access to information.**

Development Workshop Angola (DW) was established in 1981. The staff, which at the time comprised of four people, mainly focused on rural programmes in the southern part of Angola. The organisation currently employs around 250 people and runs wide-ranging programmes. Together with local partners, DW focuses on peace-building, micro financing and urban and rural settlements, among others.

“For many years it was the only NGO in the country,” says Allan Cain, co-founder and director of DW. “Later on, other NGO's and the government replicated some of our initiatives. These have often been innovative. Our programmes have responded to the changing needs of the people in this country. During and after the war these were different so we had to reshape our projects. For example, we now pay a lot of attention to issues such as democracy and local government, which were difficult issues to tackle during the years of conflict.”

Although Cain has many achievements to be proud of, he modestly attributes it to his staff. The Canadian adds that he is satisfied with the community projects run by his organisation in the central highlands, the region highly affected by war. “We made a big contribution to post-war reconstruction and settlement,” tells Cain. “We connected 1000 communities to water and assisted almost 200 communities to build schools.”



Allan Cain

### Access to information

Although the organisation in the past mainly focused on securing basic needs, access to information has been a ‘cross-cutting theme’, says Cain. Most renowned is AngoNet, initiated in 1989. Because of the war, communications infrastructure in the country barely existed. In the first years of its existence, AngoNet provided the only public Internet service of the country. At the end of the 1990s, commercial providers came onto the playing field but their services are very expensive.

“We see that access to information for NGO’s and communities is fundamental in the process of development,” says Cain. “AngoNet is a means to do so. It supplies affordable Internet services to local NGO’s in Angola. It is highly important for NGO’s to be connected so they can implement and organise their projects.”

At the moment, DW is also busy setting up telecenters, similar to Internet cafés, where local NGO’s can have access to communication and information technologies as well as have Internet connectivity through wireless community access networks. Two of these centers are already up and running in capital Luanda and in Huambo. The other four will be in key cities in the other provinces. “We are looking for partners to run these telecenters

as local enterprises,” tells Cain. “We want to set up a sustainable model and then leave it to these local organisations.”

The telecenters don’t only focus on increasing the effectiveness of development and humanitarian organisations in Angola but also want to provide citizens the opportunity to access the World Wide Web, and to stay informed and involved. That’s why the centers will be open for people from the community as well.

### Ondaka

DW also runs another project on the issue of access of information. Although a more ‘old-fashion’ form of print media, Ondaka is by far not less exciting. Ondaka is a community newspaper written by communities themselves with a distribution rate of 5000 copies every month. Written in Umbundo and Portuguese, it is the only national language periodical published regularly in Angola.



“It was set up during the war, in 2000, and mainly targeted the conflict affected area, the central highlands,” tells Cain. But although the battles are fought all around, the bulletin kept publishing. “People in this part of the country feel they previously were excluded from decision-making. Ondaka, which means ‘word’ in Umbundo, is a tool for peace building. Both contributors and readers have become full participants in post war reconciliation by airing their views through Ondaka.”

Key in the publication is that it isn't written by professional journalist, but by community writing groups. "They wrote about the threats to land tenure, about being displaced for years, conflicts with the commercial farmers. These views are aired and read by local residents including government officials. It is a really dynamic publication," says Cain.

He continues: "It is very much thanks to NiZA that we achieved this. They made sure we learned from other community newspapers in other countries, such as Zimbabwe. NiZA has been one of our oldest and closest partners for many years. For an organisation of our size, it very important to have a like-minded partner. Some of the big international NGO's have large international infrastructures. We don't and I think we don't need to if we work together."

The human rights or peace building departments of DW and NiZA have joined forces in writing a project for the elections this year. "We need to assist in informing and mobilising Angolan civil society organisations about these elections. Back in 1992, during the last election, the country was soon back to war. People lost their faith in democracy. We are setting up a civic education program to give this hope back and show that democracy can work. It will be another great challenge for Development Workshop."

*By Elles van Gelder.*

*Elles Van Gelder (elles@ellesvangelder.nl) is a freelance journalist. She is the editor-in-chief of MediaNews.*

#### Links

[www.dw.angonet.org](http://www.dw.angonet.org)

#### Need an ICT plan? Call an eRider

**"Ungana-Afrika brought some light into our station. We had equipment, but did**

**not use it efficiently. They have helped us to make better use of it to the advantage of the station. They have helped us to save money." With few exceptions, non-profit organisations in Africa, like the rural community radio station in South Africa quoted above, are continuously plagued by a capacity crisis in ICT with no or little ongoing technical support. The NGO Ungana-Afrika supports them.**



eRider Angel Kgekolo

A very normal experience is that expensive commercial service providers are summoned to rural areas from the cities far away to attend to problems, which sometimes have nothing to do with genuine hardware or software problems, but with a simple lack of operational skills. Such service providers can take days to arrive, charge high fees not only for their services but also for the long distances they have to travel, attend to a minor problem or return to the city to purchase parts with even more delays - only to be called out again in the not too distant future to attend to the same 'problem'. In the meantime the NGO, radio station or community

organisation's equipment or software stands around unused.

A further point made by a number of community radio stations during the course of an evaluation of an ICT capacity building assistance project in South Africa recently, is that commercial service providers do not provide any skills training for clients and there is either no or an extremely limited amount of transfer of knowledge involved. They therefore do not provide a sustainable solution or service to poorly resourced and trained ICT users.

### **Mobile ICT-consultant**

A new NGO registered in South Africa with a sub-regional outreach into various countries of Southern Africa has stepped into this breach to help provide a solution. Ungana-Afrika (UA) was co-founded a few years ago by a few young people – one Finnish, one American and one South African. Ungana-Afrika provides eRider services. An eRider is a multi-disciplined mobile ICT consultant working on the ground with non-profit organisations. eRiders have a strong understanding of the technology needs of non-profits and the unique opportunities ICT can bring to them – at a lot less cost!



Kgokolo working with community radio stations

According to UA, the eRider concept began as a model in the United States in 1997 where several foundations provided technology assistance to a group of

grantees. Since then the model has gone global and the major focus is the developing world. With the assistance of, among others, the Open Society Institute and other Open Society foundations in the world, there are now over 30 active eRiding projects (support groups) around the world, of which Ungana-Afrika is one.

### **ICT tools**

eRiders attempt to provide a holistic approach to technology support, which includes an in-depth understanding of how the beneficiary organisation works, how it integrates (or fails to integrate) ICT's into its programmes and the steps needed to use technology as a tool in its work. The last point is important because technology is not an aim in itself – it has to proactively contribute to an organisation achieving its mission and objectives. eRiders do not, for instance, favour any particular brands of hardware or software, whether commercial or open source. They search for ICT tools that will best assist an organisation in achieving their goals.

Another community radio worker had this to say about the help he received from Ungana-Afrika: "I can now research the latest music on the Internet, and I can cut and edit radio programmes digitally. When I started I did not even know what a mouse was".

*By Jeanette Minnie.*

*Jeanette Minnie (jcm@iafrica.com) is an advisor to NiZA on the issue of freedom of expression.*

### **Links**

<http://www.ungana-afrika.org/>

### **New handbook on court reporting**

#### *Newsflash*

On August 17 NiZA media programme partner the Association of Independent Publishers (AIP) and the South Africa National Editors Forum (SANEF) will launch a handbook for court reporting in



Johannesburg. The handbook consists out of two parts: *Reporting the Courts - A Handbook for South African Journalists* and the additional *Reporting the Courts - A desk guide and glossary*.

For more info contact SANEF at [admin@sanef.za](mailto:admin@sanef.za)

#### Links

SANEF:

<http://www.sanef.org.za/>

AIP:

<http://www.independentpublisher.org/>

### Highway Africa celebrates its tenth anniversary

**This year the Highway Africa conference (HA) in Grahamstown, South Africa, is celebrating its tenth anniversary. The five-day ICT conference that attracts more than 500 journalists from 40 African countries runs from September 11 to 15 at Rhodes University.**

Ten years after its creation seems like the perfect time to critically reflect on the role that new media has played in building democracies and pushing development in Africa. Therefore, the focus of HA 2006 will be on assessing its successes and mishaps.

It will examine where HA has come from, where it is now and where it is going to be tomorrow and in 2016; after another ten years of conferences.

According to Chris Kabwato, who has been the director of the organisation for three years, “We shall be looking back to the birth of the Internet and what it has meant for journalism and the media. So I look forward to discussions around radio, print, TV and their relationship with the Internet and mobile technologies.”

Questions that Kabwato will seek to answer include some unsurpassed discussion points: “Is print dying? Will our news become less serious and more like

fast food - a headline and one paragraph? Will I be watching the 2010 World Cup in South Africa on my mobile phone?”



Chris Kabwato

#### Future

HA will also glimpse to the future of ICTs in Africa. “In Africa we are yet to engage fully with a specter of convergence of technologies. But the struggle is on the horizon. Global convergences (like the major TimeWarner merger) are and will be used to debate Africa’s destiny in a globalised world.”

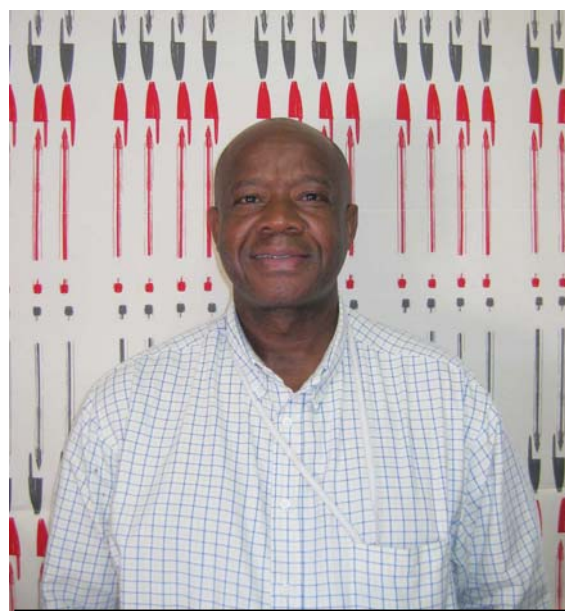
The most obvious change since the first conference is Kabwato’s influence on developing HA into more than a conference. “Highway Africa has actually evolved into a programme with four components: Research; Education & Training; News Agency; and the Conference.” The research component is being worked on right now: a highly skilled team is researching the use of ICTs in various institutions such as hospitals and schools in the Eastern Cape Province. The third component, the Highway Africa News Agency (HANA) is dedicated to reporting on ICTs in Africa. Editor Mongameli Jabavu works on partnerships between community, public, and commercial media by providing them all with the same content. “In this way we can close the existing gap about ICT-reporting between the different media,” says Jabavu.

Jabavu points out that there is no education about ICTs in Africa. “We just buy the product without thinking how it could affect people’s lives.” He refers to the new Journalism and Media Studies building at Rhodes University called ‘African Media Matrix’. “Look at this new Rhodes building with all its technologies and then look across the street: there you can find nothing that comes even close to ICTs. We want to find out more about the lack of ICTs and make everyone aware of the effects.”

All in all, the conference seems to be HA’s main component. And although Kabwato argues that the value of the conference lies in “bringing people of a particular profession together on a regular basis” he argues that in 2016, HA will be virtual. “With the exception of the few that are there in person, the majority are sitting behind their computers in the comfort of their home-offices participating in the deliberations.

The agenda remains new media and its impact on journalism (practice) and media (institutions).”

In the future HA should be “the platform



*Mongameli Jabavu*

for launching our research projects, for cutting-edge new media training, for mobilising journalists around key issues such as freedom of press and a space to network effectively” says Kabwato. “I think we are getting there but there is still some work to be done.”

#### **Information on the conference:**

Everyone who wants to visit the Highway Africa conference needs to register online at <http://www.highwayafrica.ru.ac.za/> The themes of the 2006 conference are: ‘Context’ (Africa and the digital revolution); ‘Production, Producers and Players’ (African bloggers etc.); ‘Technologies and Services’ (satellite and wireless); ‘Content and Uses’ (activism, convergence etc.); and ‘Audiences’ (how do Africans use ICTs).

Whoever is interested in news from HANA can subscribe online to use the articles for free; as long as the source (HANA) is acknowledged. See <http://hana.ru.ac.za>

*By Elvira van Noort  
([elviravannoort@hotmail.com](mailto:elviravannoort@hotmail.com)).*

*Elvira van Noort is a Master student in Media Studies at Rhodes University and a freelance correspondent based in Grahamstown, South Africa.*

#### **Links**

Rhodes Journalism & Media Department  
<http://jms.ru.ac.za/>

Highway Africa:  
<http://www.highwayafrica.ru.ac.za/>

#### **New media law for Angola**

**Recently, a new Media Law has come in force in Angola. In general, the new rules aim to establish ‘orientating principles for the legislation on social communication and to regulate the practice of press freedom’. Jurist and Media Consultant Anacleto Pereira has**

## **a look at the differences between the old and new law.**

The new Law, nr. 7/06, comprising a total of 90 articles, replaces the previous Law nr. 22/91, and has been approved at a very particular moment of Angola's history. After all, the process of preparing for elections is currently taking place and the Angolan people will exercise their voting rights for the first time since 1992.

Compared with the old law, this new legal diploma introduces an enormous innovation, which is the abolition of the state monopoly on television broadcasting and the press agencies and the opening of these areas to the private sector, as well as the explicit recognition of the right to set up community radio stations, it nevertheless lacks the definition of any orientating principles regarding the setting up of such radio stations.

The new law also introduces some changes concerning the ownership of media companies, allowing that any entity may own these kind of businesses. Worth noting is that under the previous legislation, aside from national citizens, only foreigners residing in Angola could benefit from such a right. However, the newly introduced Media Law still prohibits foreign citizens to exercise the function of General Director within the media companies and organisations, allowing this privilege to only be granted to Angolan citizens.

The free establishment of journalistic and editorial oriented businesses, which consequently was not subject to any previous administrative authorisation, constituted a right expressly granted under the old law. The same does not apply under the new Media Law. Although the present law does not impose any form of restriction on exercising this right, it does oblige every new journalistic agency to be registered prior to its constitution.

## **Broadcasting**

However, the same does not apply to the areas of radio and television broadcasting. The recently approved Media Law stipulates that broadcasting activities must be subject to previous licensing; which may only be granted after entering into a public tender, which must be opened and ratified by the Ministers' Council. Therefore, the new law did not embrace the vindication made by the majority of the organisations representing the media, regarding the assignment of such a competence to an independent regulatory body. Such procedure would have been more in compliance with the Windhoek Declaration on the Freedom of the Press or with the African Charter on Broadcasting.

On the other hand, and similar to what happened during the previous media legislation, the exercise of broadcasting activities on both, short wave and long wave, remains exclusively in the hands of Rádio Nacional de Angola (RNA). Besides, this organ still retains its capacity as the public broadcasting service operator.

By attributing to RNA the monopoly of short wave transmissions, the new law neither solved nor safeguarded the matter of the acquired rights in terms of transmission on this frequency by other radio operators, such as NiZA media programme partner Rádio Ecclesia, which, for many years, has claimed the right to spread its transmissions throughout the whole Nation.

## **Sanctions**

In terms of liability, any "activities that may be damaging to the interests and values protected by law" and, most particularly, the so-called crimes of abuse of the press freedom and of disobedience, as well as the attacks against the freedom of the press, are sanctioned with measures of civil, penal or disciplinary nature. In this area, however, there is clear evidence of a legal option for the application of civil sanctions, instead of penal ones.

With regards to defamation of the President of the Republic, the new law also introduces a considerable change. As opposed to the old Law under which mentioning the President could be perceived to be a crime in itself, the new Law does not specifically refer to this type of crime, and by doing so making the general penalty codes applicable. This means that journalists that defame the Head of State have the right to prove that the information published is based on documented facts. This was legally forbidden under the old law.

The law also includes regulations on some of the main rights and duties that must guide the practice of social communication activities by its main agents, the journalists, as well as on the mechanisms concerning the auto-regulation of the profession. The law establishes, for instance, the obligation that the journalistic profession must be regulated by a Journalists Statute, which is to be approved by the government and by a Deontological Code to be adopted by the associations of journalists in a meeting expressly called for by the National Council of Social Communication. In accordance with the law, this organ is in charge of guaranteeing the objectivity and exemption of information and to safeguard the freedom of expression and thinking in the press.

Since the differences registered in relation to Law 22/91 do not appear substantial, only time will show the efficiency and effectiveness of the Law presently in force, both in respect of protecting the freedom of the press, as well as regarding the development of the Angolan media sector, a sector recognized as structurally and economically fragile.

*By Anacleta Pereira.*

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(anacletap@angola.osisa.org) is a Jurist  
and Media Consultant based in Luanda,  
Angola.*

#### links

Declaration of Windhoek on Promoting Independent and Pluralistic Media  
[http://www.unesco.org/webworld/wpfd\\_00/background.html](http://www.unesco.org/webworld/wpfd_00/background.html)

African Charter on Broadcasting  
<http://misa.org/broadcasting/acb.html>

#### **Urgent need for education on access to information rights**

**During his recent visit to the distant, northern province of Niassa, Alfredo Libombo, director of MISA-Mozambique, was startled by the political intolerance that's suffocating the local media. He visited five districts, which were so-called 'liberated Frelimo areas' during the independence struggle. But in the following civil war, some of them came under Renamo reign. The current result is a lot of political tension.**



*Alfredo Libombo*

An example. "I visited Niassa just after the leader of Renamo, the biggest opposition party in the country, had been there. I felt many echoes of that visit. In Muembe district, the first secretary of Frelimo had advised the population to hide themselves

because a ‘bandit’ was on his way (‘bandidos’ was the Frelimo designation of Renamo fighters during the civil war – ED). Of course not everybody believed that story, but some had indeed fled and hidden themselves. But imagine if the population would have reacted in another way and prepared themselves for this ‘bandit’? Everyone knows that the Renamo leader always walks surrounded by his bodyguards who are former fighters. What if they would also react? This could have ended very badly.”

Alfredo says that in the same district Renamo had paid for an advertisement on the local community radio to announce the visit of its leader. This resulted in some commotion. The local Administrator had no objection to the broadcasting of that spot, but the Frelimo secretary was against it. As a result, it was not transmitted. Oddly enough, Renamo then forbade the radio journalists to cover the visit.

### **Education campaign**

The lack of democratic space in this province is being perpetuated because the people have no idea about their rights. Alfredo: “Even the volunteers that work with the radio stations have no clue about the Mozambican Press Law, which protects them and guides their work. This prevents them from participating actively in the democratic process.”

Niassa is a very large province, but fairly underdeveloped and far away from the capital Maputo. There is little infrastructure and the roads are a nightmare -no wonder there’s not much information circulating. The national newspapers arrive weeks after publication and even so, mainly in the provincial capital. According to Alfredo, that is why Niassa province boasts the largest number of community radios, namely nine.

Unfortunately, the political parties still feel a strong need to control the radios and use them for their own benefits. This has to do,

among other things, with the low level of education of local public servants, which inhibits their understanding of democratic laws. The high degree of analphabetism among the population is no stimulus for their participation in decision-making.

MISA feels it is imperative to set up a large education campaign in the rural areas to inform the people about their constitutional rights and duties with regards to access to information and media freedom. The community radios could play an important part in this. “We hope that NiZA is interested in collaborating with us to this regard - to organise concrete enlightening activities, with local governors, traditional leaders, politicians and ordinary citizens.”

*By Elma Doeleman.*

*Elma Doeleman (elma.doeleman@niza.nl) is NiZA Country Co-ordinator Angola & Mozambique*

### **Links**

MISA Mozambique:  
[www.misa.org/mozambique](http://www.misa.org/mozambique)

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## **Voice of the People wins award**

### *Newsflash*

Independent radio station Voice of the People (VOP) has won an international media award formerly held by global giant BBC World Service. VOP was selected by One World Broadcasting Trustees from the six short listed entries in the special award category which ‘recognises an overseas community media project that has made an outstanding and unique contribution of sustainable development or human right’.

VOP was established in June 2000 to give ordinary Zimbabweans a voice on issues that affect them on a daily basis and is run by Zimbabwean-based trustees who

include journalists and lawyers.

**Links**

Voice of the People:  
[www.radiovop.com](http://www.radiovop.com) and  
[www.vopradio.co.zw](http://www.vopradio.co.zw)

Human Rights Watch on VOP:  
<http://hrw.org/english/docs/2006/02/08/zimbab12632.htm>

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