



Media News

Netherlands Institute for Southern Africa

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Zimbabwe's Media to establish self-regulatory media council

by Abigail Gamanya

The media in Zimbabwe have taken a stand: to establish an independent self-regulatory media council to promote journalistic standards and freedom of expression. To help it achieve these aims, one of the roles of the Council will be to arbitrate complaints against the media, writes Abigail Gamanya, co-ordinator of the Media Alliance of Zimbabwe.

Drawing inspiration from the Banjul and the Windhoek Declarations and concerned about the state of the media and the repressive nature of media regulation in Zimbabwe, the Media Alliance of Zimbabwe (MAZ) which comprises the Zimbabwe Union of Journalists (ZUJ), MISA-Zimbabwe and the Media Monitoring Project Zimbabwe (MMPZ,) initiated the idea of self-regulation in consultation with other media civic partners . These included, Zimbabwe Editors Forum (ZAE), the Federation of African Media Women – Zimbabwe (FAMWZ), and the Zimbabwe National Editors' Forum (ZINEF).

The two declarations recognise effective self-regulation as the best way of promoting media excellence. The current repressive statutory regulatory regime that is

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managed by the government appointed Media and Information Commission (MIC) under the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA) provided the urgency to replace this statutory instrument for controlling media

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.

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activity with an independent council. For example, AIPPA contains flagrant violations of the constitutionally guaranteed right to freedom of expression and arbitrarily curtails freedom of expression, by imposing unreasonable restrictions on the practice of journalism and turning this right into a privilege.

Petty reasons

Furthermore, the licensing mechanisms under AIPPA effectively paralyse the development of the media. In addition, its provisions are selectively applied only to the privately owned media. As a result, four newspapers – *The Daily News*, *The Daily News On Sunday*, *The Tribune* and *The Weekly Times* – have either been closed or denied licensing for petty reasons that do not outweigh the constitutionally guaranteed right to freedom of expression.

This, in turn, has encouraged a climate of extreme intolerance and severely unbalanced attitudes by the government and the ruling party towards issues relating to media freedom. In the journalism fraternity, fear of prosecution under AIPPA discourages investigative journalism and promotes self-censorship, which compromises the public's right to fair and accurate information.

It is against this background that MAZ realised the need to safeguard citizens' rights to freedom of expression, and the media's role in facilitating the enjoyment of this fundamental right which serves as the cornerstone of any aspiring democracy.

Hence the Alliance and its partners are advocating a media council that is independent of government control, which will encourage a more tolerant media environment and better standards of journalism. This will be achieved by making the council accessible to the public to ensure that the media is accountable to all Zimbabweans. It is MAZ's hope that when in place, the Council will build the public trust and confidence in the media which has been undermined by years of persecution. This has led to severely depressed

media development and a subsequent flight of skills from the profession

Judgements

The independent council will also allow media to operate freely without the fear or threat of closure as is the case under AIPPA or statutory regulation. Besides, the spirit behind the independent council is not to punish the media, as under AIPPA, but to amicably resolve disputes. The council will first encourage finding an amicable solution between an aggrieved party and the 'offending' media institution. If this is not possible, the council will arbitrate in the dispute and will issue judgements. Where it finds that professional misconduct has occurred, the offending media institution will be obliged to publish (or broadcast) an apology and a retraction giving this similar prominence as the offending story, together with the pronouncements of the council.

Clearly, the professional credibility of a journalist and a media institution that repeatedly falls foul of the media council will be seriously compromised and its reputation as a reliable media organisation will also suffer. It is envisaged that this will nurture ethical and professional standards of journalism in Zimbabwe. The proposed Media Council of Zimbabwe will promote growth of the sector by reducing litigation against the media.

Unlike statutory regulation where the Media and Information Commissioners are appointed by government, the proposed council will have a representative 11 -member board drawn from all sectors of civil society and the media fraternity. And unlike AIPPA that is intended to impose heavy restrictions on freedom of expression; the spirit of the Media Council is, that freedom of expression is a fundamental right that should be enjoyed by all citizens. Rather, it is intended to encourage the professional exercise of that right based on international journalistic standards of fairness, accuracy and balance. Many laws already exist that more than adequately provide for punitive compensation for those whose

reputations have been unfairly harmed by media organisations. The council therefore sees itself playing a conciliatory role between the public and the media in issues relating to professional misconduct where financial compensation is not sought.

Encouraging professional journalism

In normal democratic societies where a diverse media community compete for the attention of the public, unprofessional media organisations will not long survive. Public rebuke works well in democracies where the media freedom is recognised as a fundamental human right and provides a sharp incentive for media organisations to uphold international standards.

It is also recognised that these regulations are designed to promote media excellence and is not intended to replace statutory legal recourse to compensation that is available to the public. These are known as civil defamation laws, and in Zimbabwe even criminal defamation laws still exist that provide for custodial sentences for worst offenders.

Clearly then, there is no place for AIPPA on Zimbabwe's statute books. Defamation laws already provide ample compensation and punishment for offending media organisations and journalists.

What remains is to establish a system of encouraging professional journalistic practice and an institution that will help promote free expression. The independent media council is intended to be just such an institution.

Abigail Gamanya is the co-ordinator of the Media Alliance of Zimbabwe

Links

Windhoek declaration:
http://www.unesco.org/webworld/fed/temp/communication_democracy/windhoek.htm

NiZA sponsors Namibian youths to be heard

by Joost Blankenspoor

Radio is the easiest and cheapest way to communicate to the masses in a vast country such as Namibia. However, a national radio-show for the Namibian youth is practically non-existent. *Slice of my World* is a project sponsored by NiZA to change this. Finally, young Namibians from all regions can make their voices heard.

Dutchman Joost van der Port is the creative thinker behind *Slice of my World*. Van der Port teaches at the Media and Theatre Studies (MATS) department of the College of the Arts (COTA) in Namibia's capital, Windhoek. "I am always in search of projects that facilitate my students as well as the Namibian society," he says. "Apart from that, these projects have to be built up in a way that they deserve succession in a more professional environment later on."



Focusing on youth is very important in Namibia. According to the United Nations half the Namibian population is under 24 years of age.

Slice of my World will be a radio programme in which a compilation of diaries can be heard and discussed. The personal stories of around 50 learners (Grade 10 and 11) from nine different Secondary Schools countrywide have to become the catalysts for dialogues and debates between youth from every part of Namibia. The diaries enable scholars to express their own views on topics they choose themselves.

Van der Port explains: “All these local diaries bundled together make up a cross-section - or slice if you like - of beliefs, feelings and observations of our target group (16 to 18 years) in a respective city or town. In other words, we do not pretend to objectively present their lives, but show only a slice of their world. Our first priority for this project is to bring Namibian youth from the same age in contact with each other to talk and learn about their lives. How do others handle HIV/Aids, alcoholism and teenage pregnancy?”

NiZA has already been supporting the regionalisation of education given at MATS for three years. MATS doesn't only teach in Windhoek, but also in other areas of the country. Within the framework of this regionalisation programme, Van der Port has been working with learners on radio and television skills before the idea of *Slice of My World* arose.

Offshoot

The new project is an offshoot from those earlier training sessions, in which scholars came in touch with media for the very first time. Van der Port figured it would be a waste of time and resources to only teach learners the basics of broadcasting, without a concrete and practical project to follow it up. The radio project will not only be a platform for the producers to communicate with each other, but it also aims to integrate the listeners as well. “Listening scholars will be able to make a call to the live radio-show - broadcasted on national radio NBC - and react on the productions of their peers. They all have the same problems and interests, but because of the vast distances in Namibia, they hardly ever have

the chance to discuss them with other members of their age group. For the schools it is very honourable to be part of this project, because they see it as a privilege for their students to get on national radio,” says Van der Port.

Job opportunities

In addition, MATS can guarantee a better influx of its students. “At present, our intake is frustrated by the low standards of our applicants. Media literacy is a blind spot, which shows that secondary schools are not offering any education in media whatsoever. *Slice of my World* can educate learners and get them interested and motivated to come and do a course at MATS,” Van der Port hopes. As a result of the rapidly growing sector, there are many job opportunities available. According to MATS statistics, 70 to 75 percent of MATS postgraduates find a job in the direction they graduated in.



However, making personal diaries is not a lesson in objective journalism. Asked how *Slice of my World* could be linked to a course at MATS later on, Van der Port replies: “We do not want to tell them how to be good journalists just yet. Firstly, scholars need to come into contact with their creativity and develop enthusiasm towards radio, and media as a whole. At the same time, they are already learning how to handle the equipment and are building up their interview skills. Initially, enjoyment is the keyword as far as I am concerned.”

At the end of 2006, Julien Schrijver – a NiZA-Youth Programme placement at MATS - managed a round of workshops at the schools, followed up by the first productions. *Slice of my World* will start with ten recorded compilations of ‘slices’ on NBC Radio at the end of March. But the ultimate aim is for a weekly programme of half an hour, produced and live presented by MATS students. People can then phone in to react on productions. “For instance, a learner from Gobabis (in the east) can react on a diary from Rundu (in the north). Maybe he can make a remark or just a compliment, making *Slice of my World* an interactive show,” Van der Port says.

Although the diaries are still in its infancy, Van der Port still has dreams to take the project a few of steps further: “Perhaps in time we can ask other (African) countries to start up similar project and make *Slice of my World* an international programme. Compilations of diaries from different countries can then be broadcasted on a number of radio-shows. Much of the misunderstanding between people originates from a lack of acquaintance with each other’s situation, which is the case in Namibia but surely in the rest of southern Africa as well. These kinds of exchanges can play a major role in overcoming the differences between one another.”

Joost Blankenspoor (joost.blankenspoor@gmail.com) is a former participant in NiZA Media Programmes’ Youth Programme. This programme provides young Dutch journalism graduates the opportunity to gain work experience with a South African or Namibian media organisation. Joost works at *The Big Issue Namibia*.

MMPZ analyses gagging of independent media

Newsflash

Media Monitoring Project Zimbabwe (MMPZ) published the book *Election voices silenced, media coverage of Zimbabwe's 2005*

parliamentary election. The book documents the gagging of Zimbabwe's independent media voices ahead of the 2005 parliamentary election and the manipulation of the media under government's control to disseminate the propaganda of the ruling ZANU-PF party. It records the silencing of free expression in Zimbabwe.

More info: monitors@mweb.co.zw or tel/fax: +263 4 703702

Masterclass ‘Africa in the News’

by Jorrit Meulenberg

Is there any future for young Dutch journalists who want to write about Africa? And if so, how and where should they start? Those are just a few of the questions discussed during the masterclass ‘Africa in the News’ in Amsterdam, organised by the Netherlands Institute for Southern Africa (NiZA). Journalists with experience in Africa shared their views, gave advice and answered questions from the audience, most of whom were journalism students and young journalists.

The masterclass was tied to the youth programme of NiZA’s Media Programme, which offers Dutch journalism graduates the opportunity to work for media in South Africa and Namibia. So far, 38 journalists have participated in the four-year-old programme. This year, another group of 8 will be working for Southern African media and NGO’s for the first time, including two photographers who shall work for Johannesburg-based *The Star Die Burger* in Cape Town.

The new website that has been created specifically for this youth programme, www.afrikajournalisten.nl, was officially launched during the masterclass. On this site one can find information on all past, present and future youth programme participants as well as their weblogs. The site has been set up by NiZA

to help these young journalists with Africa experience to stay in touch with each other, and also to make them easier to find for the Dutch audience and potential employers.



Journalist Bram Posthumes

During the masterclass, experienced freelancer Bram Posthumus gave future Africa-journalists some general advice about writing about the continent. He said they should avoid being influenced by what is written about Africa from the Netherlands, and should watch out for the pitfalls of simplifying African issues or trying to explain everything about Africa in terms of ethnicity or religion. “There is a false sense of exoticism surrounding Africa, you should try to de-exoticise it and approach it in a purely journalistic manner. Politics is just politics, it should not make a difference whether you are writing from Africa or from Germany or Italy.”

InsideAfrica.tv

A less conventional approach to covering Africa was represented by Tim Metz, the young journalist behind video website InsideAfrica.tv. He explained how he has been trying to show a side of Africa that does not fit existing stereotypes, by showing aspects of African everyday life that Dutch audiences do not expect. An example shown during the masterclass was a short video Metz had made in Kenya. It started out with romantic images of children playing around traditional houses and women getting water from taps, but suddenly switches to the same people talking about the popularity of modern cell phones. “Fighting stereotypes is something you can not easily do through the

news,” Metz argued. “But on the Internet there is room for this type of thing. If you are going to Africa and have a plan of making videos or keeping a website: just do it.”

The debate with three mainstream media ‘gatekeepers’, responsible for the Africa news selection of their medium, featured some less encouraging remarks for young freelancers who dream of having their Africa stories being broadcasted on the Dutch TV news or published on the front page of a Dutch national newspaper. According to Wim Bossema of ‘de Volkskrant’: “Freelance journalists just do not make it to the news pages, so my advice would be to stay far from the news.” “Do not only try to work for newspapers, but also look at websites and magazines,” Marieke van Twillert of NRC Handelsblad added.

Video connection with Joburg

Correspondent Bram Vermeulen, who covers Southern Africa for the NOS TV news and NRC



Dutch ‘gatekeepers’ and on screen, correspondent Bram Vermeulen

Handelsblad participated in the debate through an Internet video connection, was not so pessimistic about the opportunities for beginning journalists in Africa. He rejected the suggestion that readers do not show enough interest in Africa.

Vermeulen also challenged the future journalists in the audience: “I don’t understand what you are doing over there in Amsterdam. How can you possibly fill a venue with journalists who would want to write about Africa, but are not doing it? There are 53 countries here, so there is more than enough work to do!”



A question from the audience

One of the upcoming NiZA-starters remarked in return that it was not the amount of work he was worried about, but the possibilities of selling it. “I am sure that if you just come here and write good stories, you will be able to sell them,” Vermeulen replied, remembering his own decision to just ‘go there and try’. “Every offer will create its own demand.”

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Links

Website of the young journalists:
www.afrikajournalisten.nl

A rare victory for freedom of speech in Zimbabwe

by Jeanette Minnie

Trevor Ncube, owner of the Zimbabwe Independent and Zimbabwe Standard

newspapers had his passport taken away by the Zimbabwean government. Jeanette Minnie gives an overview of what happened.

How many Dutch citizens criticize their government while travelling abroad? Hundreds? Thousands? Imagine them being denied passports and confined to the borders of The Netherlands. Imagine that a passport is no longer sufficient documentation for leaving the country, and that an exit visa first has to be applied for stating the reason for travel. Ever heard of an EXIT visa before? We all know that we need to apply for visas now and again in order to enter certain countries, but a visa to leave one’s country? Sounds like a B-grade Orwellian science fiction movie, doesn’t it? It’s the sort of thing, however, that is considered by the ZANU PF authorities in Zimbabwe for real to control critics like Trevor Ncube.

Trevor Ncube is the last remaining publisher of independent media in Zimbabwe. Four independent newspapers were shut down in recent years and another three have been taken over by the Central Intelligence Organisation. Ncube owns the *Zimbabwe Independent* and *The Standard* newspapers and also publishes the *Mail & Guardian* newspaper in South Africa. Ncube, a Zimbabwean, resides mainly in neighbouring South Africa while travelling frequently to Zimbabwe. In December 2005 the Zimbabwean government confiscated his passport on arrival in Bulawayo. Within the week Ncube brought an urgent application to the High Court which ordered the Zimbabwean government to return his passport. At the time he said he believed the Zimbabwean authorities had hoped he would illegally cross the border into South Africa to return to his home and family. As such he would have been performing a criminal act and this would have allowed the authorities to confiscate his newspapers in Zimbabwe.

The government had ratified an amendment to the country’s constitution a few months earlier enabling it to withdraw passports from citizens wishing to travel outside of the country “where

it is feared ...believed ... or known” that the citizen will harm the “national... defence...or economic interest of the state”. Ncube was nevertheless able to win this round because the government had not yet enacted corresponding legislation with guidelines to define which offences warrant the withdrawal of passports.



Trevor Ncube

Sanctions

The Minister of Justice Patrick Chinamasa was quoted as saying at the time that “There are people galavanting across the globe calling for sanctions against the country. Those are the ones we are targeting.”

In an interview with Worldpress.org he refused to confirm or deny reports about official deliberations on exit visas: “Are you afraid?” he asked the Zimbabwean journalist writing from Britain. “Whether we introduce the visas you are talking about is not the issue. The issue is that we should not allow saboteurs to go round the world badmouthing the country.”

A year later in December 2006 Ncube applied for his passport to be renewed. Not only did the Registrar-General Tobaiwa Mudede refuse to do so, he also revoked Ncube’s citizenship on the grounds that his father had been a citizen of Zambia. In his view this meant that Ncube was also a citizen of Zambia. Under Zimbabwean law a citizen may not hold the citizenship of another country – a law enacted in 2002 when thousands of white commercial farmers and hundreds of thousands of their black workers were violently being forced off the land. Many of them with links to Malawi, Zambia, Britain and Australia not only lost their homes and livelihoods, but their Zimbabwean citizenship as well.

Oath

For Ncube to discover he was apparently a citizen of Zambia was something of a shock. He had only visited Zambia very briefly three times before. Both Ncube’s parents were Zimbabwean citizens at the time of his birth. His father once lived in what was called the “Central African Federation”, comprising of Northern - and Southern - Rhodesia and Nyasaland which fell under the control of colonial Britain, until the Federation dissolved in 1963 and Northern Rhodesia became Zambia and Nyasaland became Malawi. Only much later on Southern Rhodesia became Zimbabwe. During the Federation times though, many citizens regarded the three territories as one country. However, Ncube’s father had again acquired Zimbabwean citizenship by the time Ncube was born. This is the story of a great many Africans who “lost” and sometimes “regained” their countries in the post-colonial independence era.

Ncube said at a press conference in Johannesburg recently that a passport official in Harare told him that the problem could likely be solved if he went to the Zambian Embassy and took an oath renouncing his Zambian citizenship. Ncube promptly followed his advice. It was nevertheless very demeaning, he said, standing in another country’s embassy and renouncing a citizenship he never knew he had. On returning to the relevant Zimbabwean Home Affairs office, however, Ncube was told that the oath would make no difference. And by renouncing his Zambian citizenship he had now in effect rendered himself stateless! The Registrar-General later argued in court that Ncube’s renunciation had come too late and that by law Ncube had been supposed to renounce his Zambian citizenship in 2002 during a specified grace period soon after the law forbidding dual citizenship came into effect.

Ncube’s lawyer, Stanford Moyo, and Justice Chinembiri Bhunu of the High Court took a different view of the matter. The fact that one qualifies for citizenship in another country does not mean that one has acquired or been granted

citizenship of that country, the court found. Justice Bhunu ruled that Ncube was indeed a citizen of Zimbabwe by birth, ordered the Registrar-General to renew his passport within 7 days (which Ncube has indeed received), further ordered the state to pay Ncube's costs, and awarded high costs because the Registrar-General was also in contempt of the High Court's ruling a year ago when the state was ordered to return Ncube's passport to him. The Registrar-General was not helped by the fact that Justice Bhunu had also been the presiding officer of the court in that case.

Ncube says there are an estimated 1,5-million Zimbabweans with parents born outside of the country and that his case has put a stop to the abuse many of them also suffer from the Registrar-General's office. "The attempt to use citizenship as a tool to fight perceived political enemies and to settle personal scores must be condemned in the strongest terms," he said. Ncube says his faith in Zimbabwe's judiciary has also been vindicated, despite instances of intimidation and politicisation of the judiciary.

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Links

www.mg.co.za
www.thezimbabweindependent.com
www.worldpress.org

SABC and Telkom block self-confident communities' rights to media

by Elvira van Noort

A draft mid-term evaluation report of the Johannesburg based Freedom of Expression Institute (FXI) states that their Media and ICT's (Information- and communication technology) programme has managed to create higher levels of self-confidence in township communities to fight for their rights to communicate and demand universal access

to media. However, the report points out that it remains difficult to use this power because public broadcaster SABC and telecommunications company Telkom are reluctant to listen.

Since the start of the Media & ICT's Programme three years ago, head of the Programme, Virginia Setshedi, has successfully attempted to strengthen self-confidence about media access in deprived rural communities and Soweto. These communities still have no regular access to media and "can hardly afford a loaf of bread, let alone a newspaper", states Setshedi. The hitch is that newspaper penetration in South Africa is the fifth lowest in the world and other media, such as community radio stations, are only benefiting the black business elite.



Virginia Setshedi of FXI

To face these and many more challenges, underprivileged communities need the power and knowledge to engage in activities that could contribute to the improvement of their media rights. Setshedi tries to better the communities' knowledge by taking copies of the South African Constitution to meetings because "some people have never heard of the Constitution and others don't understand what their rights are". At the meetings and workshops people find out how to start a community radio station or where to direct complaints about SABC or Telkom but "it depends on their [the communities'] needs. The FXI responds to questions from the community, or the communities' empowered

people, and we try to come with a fitting solution when we meet”.

But now FXI faces a new challenge. It has proven difficult to use the newly-gained self-confidence and power of the community against the much-criticised practices of SABC and Telkom.

Challenges: SABC and Telkom

There is a lack of collaboration on the SABC’s side to work together with FXI; and Telkom remains ignorant about issues that rise from the community. The next step for the Media & ICT’s Programme is to solve the communication issues between the community and the companies. The goal is to ensure that both SABC and Telkom start caring about the more unfortunate South Africans who can’t receive any public broadcasting channels or afford a landline.

“We will keep on talking with the SABC to try and increase our input in their programming”, says Setshedi. This is necessary because, as the draft evaluation report indicates, the SABC has shown an increase in the censorship of controversial programmes and started censoring news bulletins. But while Setshedi meets with the SABC to improve the relationship between them, the public broadcaster remains reluctant to work with community representatives who could provide insights on their programming. The representatives are people who live in the community and work with FXI at meetings.

These people, “who watch SABC news, they don’t just watch it: they check the content of the news, how the news is covered, and who is in the news,” explains Setshedi. This is then reported by FXI and later used to put pressure on the SABC to “listen to the views of poor communities.” The reported information is also used to revitalise a non-governmental organisation named Friends of Public Broadcasting that, according to the FXI website, “facilitates public input into the public broadcaster”.

FXI also meets with Telkom but the company remains ignorant about issues that rise from the community. The main problem resurfaces is

Telkom’s rates; they are among the most expensive in the world. To make matters worse, Telkom recently reduced the prices for international calls while the prices for local calls were increased. Again they are not listening to the poorer communities.

“Telkom is following a particular economic strategy that is attached to our broader macro-economic policies that talks of commercialisation and corporatisation. Even if we go and challenge the CEO of Telkom it is not going to change anything if we do not place our campaigns in this context,” explains Setshedi. To bridge this, FXI works with other organisations (such as the Anti Privatisation Forum) that know about “issues such as anti-privatisation and anti-commercialisation. It is easier for them to understand why there is no access to landlines and, for instance, why there is no access to water”.

The future

The Media & ICT’s Programme will continue its work for another three years. As the draft report states, the Programme must try to “provide capacity building support to Community Radio Stations” and “partner with media institutes in order to influence the nature and scope of training received by media workers, to include a focus on freedom of expressions as it applies to the media & ICT needs of marginalised communities”.

Furthermore, FXI will try and expand the Programme into other areas in South Africa and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) to enhance its level of impact.

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Links

FXI: www.fxio.org.za

Also read: Police attack FXI picket at SABC (<http://www.bizcommunity.com/Article/196/15/13322.html>)

New publications by JED

Newsflash

Journaliste en Danger (JED) produced two new publications. In their report *La liberté de la presse en période electoral*, JED gives an overview and analysis of the freedom of the Congolese media to perform during the electoral process in 2006. In their second report, *La liberté de la presse en Afrique Centrale 2006*, JED gives an overview of media freedom and media freedom violations in 2006 in Central Africa (Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Burundi, Republic of Congo, Central African Republic, Chad, Gabon, Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea).

Reports available for download (only in French) at:

La liberté de la presse en période electoral: http://www.jed-afrique.org/fichiers/documents_url_21.pdf

La liberté de la presse en Afrique Centrale 2006: http://www.jed-afrique.org/fichiers/documents_url_22.pdf

Synergy between radio stations during elections in DRC

by *Elles van Gelder*

Kizito Mushizi of NiZA Media Program partner Radio Maendeleo in the Democratic Republic of Congo and freelance radio and ICT consultant René Roemersma reflect on the role the radio station, together with other media, played in covering last year's elections.

The general elections in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) were billed as the first fully democratic vote to be held in the country since Patrice Lumumba became prime minister in 1960. Radio Maendeleo set up a project called *Media synergy for covering elections* to inform the people on their rights to vote.

“We linked ten local associative and community radio stations throughout the province of [Bukavu] North and South Kivu and about 20 in the sub-network called RATECO,” Kizito Mushizi, director of Radio Maendeleo in Bukavu reports. “The collaboration was intended to give complete and reliable information about what was going on.” Among the stations were local stations Radio Maria, Radio Kahuzi, Radio Apide and public radio station RNTC.



Caravane meeting in Beni, eastern DRC

During the approval of the constitution, the first election round and the second, the newsroom of Maendeleo was composed of 35 journalists from those radio stations and four technicians. During the elections, the team produced twenty news bulletins in both French and Kiswahili. “We received information and reports from the correspondents we disseminated all over the province and used information from other partner radio stations to cover the elections from all over the country,” recalls Mushizi. “In this, we focused on the preparations of the elections in the local districts, the organisation, the voting

operations, the first results and the security situation.”

Travelling the country

Part of the *Media synergy for covering elections-project* was *La caravane Média-Société Civile Sud-Kivu et Nord-Kivu*. Over a period of 10 days, a team of about nine journalists and members of civil society organisations travelled through North- and South-Kivu to inform people about the elections. Mushizi: “We sent correspondents to Bukavu, Idjwi, Kabare, Walungu, Fizi, Uvira, Kalehe, Mwenga and Shabunda. It was an exciting job to cover the elections and to work along with international observers, journalists, the population and officials. But it wasn’t an easy job, due to the lack of roads. Above all, most of the places had no access to electricity.”



The caravane on the road

NiZA’s consultant, René Roemersma, helped to set up the media synergy programme and the *caravane*. “It is a project that we definitely would like to do again,” says Roemersma. Reflecting on the lessons learnt Roemersma does think it is important to prepare the civic education programme more thoroughly. “There were lots of in depth questions from the people in the villages, such as how do elections work and what is the role of the electoral commission?”

The *caravane* broadcasted three hours per day, mainly from one location. “Although we asked civil society representatives to tell about our visit, lots of people in the villages thought we were a

political party that was there to campaign,” tells Roemersma. “In every village we set up our provisional [radio station] studio and emitted through a local radio station and in the main studio in Bukavu on a public square or sporting ground. Usually between 500 and 700 people attended. They asked questions and placed remarks about the elections.”

Commenting on the process, Mushizi says the project went like he expected. “Although the organisation of a team of different journalists from several newsrooms with different levels of professionalism was quite tricky, the experience was relevant. The election time was interesting and historical. And we hope to run this same project during the upcoming local elections.”

He adds that the project could be exported to other countries. “There have been small *caravans* in Angola mainly aimed at voter education, for example how voters should register themselves. The next election will be in 2008/2009 and I think it will be a great idea if journalists and people from civil society can travel the country and prepare and inform the people about the elections.”

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Links

Radio <http://www.radiomaendeleo.org/>

Maendeleo:

Gender: moving from commitment to implementation

by Jeanette Minnie

Since the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 the number of women in decision-making positions in the 14 countries of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region has risen more rapidly than anywhere else in the

world. NiZA supports the Gender and Media Southern African (GEMSA) Network to make a change.

The SADC region (20%) is second only to the Scandinavian countries (40%) in terms of the number of women in parliament. The global average stands at 16.8%. Some of the reasons for this rapid rise include not only the determination of gender equality groups in southern Africa, but also their integrated and well-organised approach to gender transformation in society. There is significant cohesion between groups in and across different countries and between civil society organizations (CSO's), civil servants and elected politicians. The formation of partnerships between CSO's and with governments is a key ingredient in this unfolding success story.

One such partnership is the Southern African Gender Protocol Alliance. A progress report on the Alliance was recently submitted to the annual Media Partner Consultation meeting of the Gender and Media Southern African (GEMSA) Network - an umbrella organisation of individuals and institutions in the SADC region who work to promote gender equality in and through the media – and one of the members of



the Alliance.

The Alliance also includes Gender Links who plays a leading coordinating and research role, the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA), the Centre for Research, Education and Development of Rights in Africa (CREDO-Africa), the Southern African Research and Documentation Centre (SARDC/WIDSA), the Southern African Forum for Aids (SAFAID), Women in Law in Southern Africa (WILSA), Women in Law and Development in Africa

(WILDAF), Women's Land and Water Rights in Southern Africa, the Women in Politics Support Unit (WIPSU), the Zimbabwe Women's Resource Centre (ZWRCN), the Gender Unit of the SADC Secretariat (the SADC is the sub-regional inter-governmental organ of member states in the region) and the SADC Parliamentary Forum.

Ambitious undertaking

The origins of the Gender Protocol Alliance are to be found in an audit of compliance of government undertakings made in relation to the SADC Declaration on Gender and Development adopted by member states in 1997. A key finding of the 2005 audit was that the SADC region had to move on “from an era of commitments to an era of implementation”. The Declaration would have to be elevated to the status of a Protocol, because only Protocols are legally binding on member states.

The Protocol would seek to consolidate all commitments and reporting requirements of member states in relation to the adoption of other related conventions and treaties such as the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing and Africa Platforms of Action, the UN Declaration of Commitment on HIV and AIDS and others. The Protocol would also raise the current target of 30 percent women in decision-making (in parliament) by 2005 (which was not met) to gender parity (50%) in all areas of decision-making by 2020, in line with the African Union (AU) position. The Protocol would also be accompanied by an action plan and institutional structures to ensure regular and effective reporting, benchmarking, monitoring and evaluation, and appropriate sanctions for non-compliance.

It is a very ambitious undertaking. A first draft of the Protocol has been produced under the guidance of a task team and was distributed to GEMSA's partners at its partner consultation meeting in February. The draft will have to be studied for comment by CSO's and governments over the next few months. Some of

the Media Partners raised concerns about media freedom issues in the draft at the partner consultation.

Lobbying

NiZA is supporting the project through providing funds for lobbying and advocacy activities that take place annually alongside the SADC Heads of State Summits. The Gender Protocol Alliance has undertaken very successful lobbying activities at both the 2005 and 2006 Summits. In 2005 it succeeded in persuading the Heads of State to raise the 30% target to 50% and in 2006 the Summit endorsed the process of drafting the Gender Protocol and directed the SADC Secretariat to ensure that thorough consultations would take place with member states.

The main aim in 2007 is to have the Protocol adopted at the Summit which takes place in Lusaka, Zambia in August. A full house of activities are planned between now and then including strategic planning and caucus meetings, advocacy capacity building sessions, inclusion of more organisations in the Alliance, developing a communication strategy, lobbying in various countries of the region as well as on a regional level and conducting a high profile media campaign.

Supporting networks and partnerships between media organizations is one of the key principles of NiZA's Media Programme. It has funded the GEMSA organized annual Media Partners Consultation meetings since 2004 and some of the Heads of State Summit lobby and advocacy activities of the Gender Protocol Alliance for the past two years. It also supports a range of networks beyond the gender and media sector. Successfully functioning networks are hard to achieve and frequently fail. When they succeed, however, they deliver impact way beyond what individual organisations can usually achieve by themselves, as the Gender Protocol Alliance shows.

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

Links

GEMSA www.gemsa.org.za

Gender Links www.genderlinks.org.za

North - South NGO tensions around Media Development in Africa

by Jeanette Minnie

Two major continental investigations that offer hope for renewed international interest and increased support for media development in Africa took place last year. Both arose from a recommendation in the 2005 Report of the (Tony Blair) Commission for Africa that “Independent media institutions, public service broadcasters, civil society and the private sector, with support from governments, should form a consortium of partners, in Africa and outside, to provide funds and expertise to create an African media development facility”.

The BBC World Service Trust (BBC WST) promptly reacted to the report by establishing a project called the ‘African Media Development Initiative’ (AMDI) in partnership with two African universities (NiZA Media Programme partner Rhodes University in South Africa and the Ahmadu Bello University in Nigeria). Extensive research coordinated by these universities was conducted by a network of African researchers across 17 countries. The development of the project was also guided by an advisory board of African media experts. The AMDI project was funded by a wide range of donors including the UK Government's Department of International Affairs (DfID), the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the International Finance Corporation (World Bank Group) and Irish Aid.

At the same time the UK's DfID called on the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) to conduct an extensive consultation among African media practitioners and African

media support and development organisations, to provide a framework for guiding the development of media in Africa. The UNECA inquiry is known as the ‘Strengthening Africa’s Media’ (STREAM) initiative. The UNECA, with financial assistance from DfID and from OSISA in Southern Africa, convened 5 sub-regional consultative meetings in East, West, South and North Africa. (Two meetings were held in West Africa to facilitate both English and French speaking countries). In addition, UNECA also conducted a well-structured email consultation across Africa which elicited some hundreds of opinions and suggestions from media owners, editors and journalists, trainers and media support organisations. UNECA also appointed a task force of media experts to help design and guide its physical and online consultation process.

Agreement

The two reports thus far (one is still in draft form at the time of writing in mid-February) show significant agreement in many of their findings and recommendations. This comes as no surprise because at least 4 people served on or were closely associated with both the AMDI advisory board and the STREAM task force. The question obviously arises as to why two different initiatives were launched to look into the same issue. No satisfactory answers have been forthcoming, not even to all advisory and task force members of the AMDI and STREAM initiatives*. It would seem that the UK Government’s DfID may have felt politically uncomfortable with a British-led inquiry - the AMDI initiative - into an African question and therefore decided to initiate and capacitate a purely African-led inquiry as well - the UNECA ‘STREAM’ initiative.

Setting the North-South issues aside for the moment, both inquiries are valuable and complementary because the AMDI inquiry, guided by academics, makes use of social scientific research methods, while the STREAM inquiry draws validity from democratic consensus among a wide range of African media practitioners. Similar findings in the two inquiries

therefore make a compelling case for particularly these issues to be addressed in Africa. Some of these include that international donor support for media development in Africa has been weak and uncoordinated resulting in fragmented and limited impact; that there is a serious need for media legal and policy reforms to promote media freedom and freedom of expression and to overhaul outdated regulatory frameworks that do not facilitate convergence between broadcasting and new technologies; the widespread lack of standardised and systematic professional and ethical conduct in much of the media in Africa; the corresponding need for on site media training at media houses, accreditation of training institutions and urgently addressing the deplorable working conditions of journalists; addressing the financial sustainability of the media through a range of measures; and providing much-needed capacity to improve and strengthen many areas of research into the media in Africa. Significantly and equally important is that both studies emphasise that a new development initiative should be “African-led”.

Way forward

Both inquiries also contain a range of other recommendations that warrant serious consideration. Currently representatives of both initiatives and other international actors are attempting to find a mutually agreed way forward in order to consolidate the two sets of findings into a single framework, which could be supported by the international community. This is most likely to take place at an All-African stakeholders conference later this year – i.e. if the legacy of colonialism does not bedevil the preparatory talks.

According to a participant in the talks and despite commitments to an African-led initiative, heated discussions have taken place between some African representatives, particularly NiZA media program partner Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA), and the BBC WST over issues of African vs. British control and roles in relation to the proposed

conference. It is fair to speculate that important questions for stakeholders in Africa include: Who will be in charge of the programme and administration of the All-African conference – a British or an African lead agency, or both? If an African Media Development Facility is indeed agreed and created at such a conference, who will be in charge of it – a British or an African agency, both or someone else? If an African institution or partnership of institutions is placed in charge of such a facility, who will they be?

At this stage the quest for an African Media Development Facility may be in some danger of a North-South stand off, not between governments, but between Southern and Northern media development NGO's. This is not all a bad thing. It is high time that the relationship between Northern and Southern media development NGO's is examined and debated. In Africa a number of media development NGO's and networks have emerged over a number of years that are more than capable of implementing and administrating complex media development projects. They do not require logistical, administrative or content supervision or support from Northern NGO's. Nor do they need assistance from Northern NGO's in terms of raising funds from international donors. At the same time many African NGO's still exist that suffer from severe capacity constraints, and who continue to rely on Northern NGO's to assist them. The time has come to reflect on these changing dynamics and to consider new paradigms for cooperation and equitable partnerships between Southern and Northern NGO's. Hopefully the leading stakeholders in Africa and Europe who all wish to contribute to a new era of media development in Africa will be able to rise to the occasion.

*Note: The author of this article is a member of the UNECA 'STREAM' task force.

The final report of the UNECA will be available in the near future. In the meantime a draft report entitled "African Framework for the Development of a Sustainable and Pluralistic

Media" can be obtained from Jeanette Minnie at jcmin@iafrica.com

The summary Research Report of the African Media Development Initiative (AMDI) can be read at www.bbcworldservicetrust.org/amdi

NEW PUBLICATION : The Southern Africa Media Diversity Journal: Issue 2

Newsflash

The second Gender and Media summit closed in Johannesburg in September 2006 with a call for greater media diversity in all areas - ownership, content and audiences. Held under the theme "Media Diversity: Good for Democracy, good for business" the summit highlighted a number of ways in which the media is failing in one of its core functions – giving voice to the voiceless. The summit, convened by NiZA Media Programme partners: Gender Links (GL), the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA), and the Gender and Media Southern Africa (GEMSA) Network brought together 224 media practitioners, editors, media marketing executives, as well as gender activists. The two day programme featured 81 examples of good practice in diversifying sources, markets and ownership of the media. Some 50 of these have been selected for the second edition of the Southern Africa Media Diversity Journal.

The Media Diversity Journal reflects the enormous amount of work that is already taking place and aims to spur all involved to take that work to even greater heights to create a media that is a powerful force in building democracies through ensuring that all citizens, women and men, young and old, of all ethnic and racial hues, have their say.

To Order - Call Mwenda Mkhize on +27 11 622 2877 or email admin@genderlinks.org.za.