

NATIONAL DIALOGUE ON MEDIA DEVELOPMENT

KIGALI-SERENA HOTEL

November 25-26, 2010

Introduction

The Media High Council (MHC) in collaboration with the Ministry of Information, Rwanda Governance Advisory Council and the Association of Rwanda Journalists (ARJ) organized a two-day *National Dialogue on Media Development*. The dialogue took place on November 25th and 26th. It attracted paper presenters and participants from the public and private sectors from within Rwanda, the region and internationally. The deliberations took place at Kigali Serena Hotel.

The dialogue, which has become a yearly deliberative event, is an outgrowth of both the country's troubled media past and the desired better future. For as is now well known, Rwanda's media fanned ethnic hatred and the 1994 genocide. The role of RTL, Kangura and other media outlets in spreading hatred, divisive ethnic propaganda and mobilizing support for the genocide against Tutsis is legend and well documented. The media's active role in this dark past created mistrust for the journalists and the media generally; on the other hand, the media's capacity to promote development, free expression and democratic values under certain conditions is also undisputed.

Since the end of the genocide in 1994, the above two positions and understandings of media possibilities have stood side-by-side. Under these circumstances, the most pressing pre-occupation of the Government of Rwanda (GoR) and the MHC in particular was how to learn from the past that left about 50 journalists dead and several in exile and facilitate the building of a responsibly free media that would nurture and sustain development and a democratic culture. For

the last sixteen years, the government has been trying to rebuild the media so that it can play its rightful role.

As a result, and despite the mistrust for the media generated from its role in the genocide, the media was liberalized in 2002 with the promulgation of the 2002 media law. Consequently, today Rwanda boasts of 22 radio stations down from one in 1994; 30 newspapers and a television station. In addition, the number of journalists has surged to more than 400 in total from a handful in 1994. Most of these journalists are employed in the broadcasting sector and a few in the print media. In addition, journalism training institutions were also created—such as the School of Journalism and Communication at NUR, the Great Lakes Media Centre (GLMC) and the faculty of journalism at the Catholic university of Kabgayi. Before 1994, there were no journalism training institutions. On top of that, a constitutional body, the Media High Council (MHC) was created in 2002 with the responsibility of promoting and protecting media freedom.

In 2009, the MHC’s responsibilities were upgraded to encompass licensing and regulating media and promoting media freedom as well as its development. The objectives of all these initiatives were to create an enabling environment for the flourishing of a free and responsible media that would contribute to development and a democratic culture.

Despite the above initiatives however, today, the investment in the media sector remains low as is professionalism in the industry. In addition, claims of lack of media freedoms especially from Western based media watchdogs persist. Due to limited investment in the sector, some media outlets also still operate from makeshift newsrooms with hardly any business plans and without the vision for the future.

Consequently, most private media outlets are unable to hire and retain journalists; some do not pay journalists any remuneration. This state of affairs creates room for all unethical practices and high mortality rates for newspapers and magazines. The common being black-mail, extortion, concentration on coverage of conferences and seminars where they will receive per diems locally called “Giti”, etc. Such practices of course put the profession in disrepute and create credibility gap—which in turn makes it difficult for the profession to attract qualified and experienced graduates mindful of ethics and who would serve as role models to new entrants.

The above challenges seem to have stood in the way of the media taking its rightful place as the Fourth Estate. It is from this context that, in fulfilling its mandate of promoting a free and responsible media capable of contributing to good governance and national development that the MHC, in 2009 on the occasion of the African Press Freedom day initiated the Annual media and government dialogue. The 2010 National media dialogue followed this initiative and was held under the theme “Towards a developed media in Rwanda”. The main objective of the dialogue was to *provide a platform for open debate by all stakeholders on the challenges of media freedom, development and professionalism in the country as well as identifying available opportunities for investing in the media sector.*

To achieve the above objective, the dialogue was organized around the following questions:

- a) ‘Is media a viable business venture in Rwanda?’
- b) How can local and foreign private sector(s) be attracted to invest in the Rwandan media?
- c) How can the present media owners and practitioners position themselves to make profit from the sector while safeguarding the (citizens’) right to know the truth?
- d) What would be a balanced environment that protects media freedom and promote a sustainable media?
- e) How can the professional skills gaps in (the) Rwandan media be bridged to enhance a responsible and professional media?’

In addressing the above key questions, it was expected that the dialogue would bring about:

1. Shared understanding of the challenges facing media development in the country;
2. Agreed upon incentives to prospective investors into the sector;
3. Solid commitments to invest meaningful resources for sector growth and development;
4. Specific laws and policies requiring review, repeal or enacting;
5. General roadmap for implementation of agreed media development strategies.

Dialogue organization and process

As stated, the dialogue was principally organized by the MHC with the active support of the Ministry of Information, the Rwanda Governance Advisory Council (RGAC) and the Association of Rwanda Journalists (ARJ). Participants included cabinet ministers, members of parliament and senior government officials, policymakers and regional media moguls, media owners, editors, Civil Society Organization (CSO) representatives, media watchdogs as well regional and

Promoting freedom, responsibility and professionalism of the media.

international media specialists and scholars. For two days, these delegates freely debated what they considered to be the main challenges to the development of the media in Rwanda; lessons from other parts of the world were shared and a number of recommendations made on what the GoR, media regulators, investors and media practitioners could do to contribute meaningfully to the development and sustainability of democracy in the country.

Opening the dialogue, the President of the Senate who was the guest of honor reiterated the Government of Rwanda’s (GoR) commitment and support for the development of a vibrant, free and responsible media. He reiterated the government’s willingness and deliberate choice to listen and act on the recommendations that arise. This position was also supported by the Minister for Cabinet Affairs who is also the caretaker Minister of Information. Both the Senate President and the Minister for Cabinet affairs acknowledge the challenges the media faces including the burden of history, low levels of professionalism; impediments emanating from policy and legislations as well as low private investment in the sector. They requested media practitioners to play their part and expressed the government’s readiness to play its part to mitigate the challenges. They both however, argued that while the media environment faces challenges, it also offers opportunities for private investment. They called on private investors to exploit the opportunity and pledged the GoR’s support. Outlining these investment opportunities, the Executive Secretary of the MHC stated that the media sector in Rwanda is rich and still “virgin”. He identified private television, media content production, journalism training, broadcasting signal distribution, etc as few among the many that are yet to be tapped.

After the opening ceremony, for two days, there were presentations of planned papers on selected themes from media experts and experienced practitioners—both local and foreign. Paper presentations were immediately followed up by panel discussions which allowed for open debate and brainstorming from all participants. The first day of the Dialogue included the following activities:

Day One

Period	Activity/Presentation	Orientation of discussion
Morning	Introductory remarks	Both the Senate President and the Minister

	Mr. Patrice Mulama, Executive Secretary of MHC	<p>for Cabinet affairs acknowledged the challenges the media faces including the burden of history, low levels of professionalism; impediments emanating from policy and legislations as well as low private investment in the sector. They requested media practitioners to play their part and expressed the government’s readiness to play its part to mitigate the challenges. They however, both argued that while the media environment faces challenges, it also offers opportunities for private investment. They called on private investors to exploit the opportunity and pledged the GoR’s support.</p> <p>Outlining these investment opportunities, the Executive Secretary of the MHC stated that the media sector in Rwanda is rich and still “virgin”. He identified private television, media content production, journalism training, broadcasting signal distribution, etc as few among the many that are yet to be tapped.</p>
	<p>Welcome Statement</p> <p>Hon. Protais Musoni, Minister of Cabinet Affairs in charge of Information</p>	
	<p>Keynote Address</p> <p>Hon. Dr Vincent Biruta, President of the Senate</p>	

SESSION 1

MODERATOR: Mr. Arthur Asiimwe, Board Chairman MHC

	<p>State of the media in Rwanda, an overview</p> <p>Mr. Patrice Mulama Executive Secretary of MHC</p>	<p>In this heated and lively session, participants were treated to two diverging media business models with some participants supporting government led model while others for the private sector & market led model. The general trend of</p>
	<p>Media in Rwanda as a viable business venture:</p>	

	<p>Opportunities and challenges Mr. John Gara, CEO of RDB</p>	<p>discussion from the panelists was that media development in Rwanda will come from within the country because foreign investments often come to buy-into successful media enterprises. Case in point: the Daily Monitor (Uganda), which was a completely private business, is now owned by Nation Media Group (Kenya). Despite concerns that Rwandan newspapers may not be viable media businesses because they are too small and have no capital to grow, participants heard how IPP Media in Tanzania has grown from nowhere to one of the largest media firms in the region. In the case of the Vision Group, the Media Dialogue also heard how Governments can play a major role in providing the platform for media development. The argument was that Government of Rwanda pumps some US \$ 5 million into a media, leave the editorial decisions to the professional and experienced editors and business professionals, and the Government will recover its investment in a matter of decades to come.</p>
<p>Media turned into successful business: the case of the New Vision Group (Uganda) Mr. Robert Kabushenga CEO, Vision Group (Uganda)</p>		
<p>Media, a diversified and successful cross-country business in East Africa Mr. Reginald Mengi, Executive Chairman, IPP Group (Tanzania)</p>		
<p>The experience of the Rwandan media sector Mr. Albert Rudatsimburwa, Managing Director, Contact FM</p>		
<p>The experience of Daily Monitor newspaper (Uganda) Dr Gitahi Githinji, MD Daily Monitor</p>		
<p>General discussions</p>		
<p>SESSION TWO MODERATOR: Steven McCauley, Former consultant with BBC</p>		
	<p>Transforming state media into sustainable public</p>	<p>Can a completely government-dependant media group like ORINFOR make money?</p>

	<p>service media Mr. Jerry Timmins Director, GMT Media Ltd (UK)</p>	<p>Can ORINFOR be transformed to a public media on the lines of successful global names like the BBC? Participants heard a typical African success story of the Uganda Broadcasting Corporation (UBC) a shift from government handouts on the way to profit-making. ORINFOR also detailed its strategic development vision over the next five years – to move away from being responsive to government bureaucrats, to the public demands.</p>
	<p>The Uganda Broadcasting Corporation (UBC) experience Mr. Issa Agaba Mugabo, Consultant</p>	
	<p>The case of ORINFOR Mr. Willy Rukundo, Acting Director General, ORINFOR</p>	
General discussions		
Afternoon		
SESSION 3		
MODERATOR: Mr. Gaspar SAFARI, President of ARJ		
	<p>The role of media watchdogs in the promotion of press freedom and responsible journalism Mr. Ernest Sagaga, International Federation of Journalists</p>	<p>This panel discussion came at the right time when there had been fierce criticism of international media watchdogs for misunderstanding and misrepresenting the Rwanda media situation following a series of critical reports. Submissions from the panelists suggested that Rwanda can transform its media landscape without necessarily copying what is in other places because of the unique nature of its history. Participants, however, also heard that despite the Rwanda situation, government needed to take onboard the need for questions being asked over its performance to be able to create solid democracy Media pluralism however, also comes with</p>
	<p>Regional standards of Press freedom monitoring in Eastern Africa Mr. Tervil Okoko, East African journalists Association (EAJA)</p>	
	<p>The relevance of media watchdog in a post-conflict society</p>	

	Mr. Tom Ndahiro, Consultant/veteran journalist	responsibilities and obligations: the media cannot be a platform for racism, insensitivity and many other societal intolerable vices.
General discussions		

DAY TWO

Morning			
SESSION 4			
MODERATOR: Prof Anastase Shyaka, Rwanda Governance Advisory Council (RGAC)			
	Analysis of the legal and regulatory framework for media in Rwanda Mr. Henry Maina, ARTICLE 19	What is wrong with Rwandan media? What explains why the sector has been deteriorating in quality and performance over the past years? What can be the role of government through the Media High Council and Ministry of Information in creating a media system that is responsive to society and not authority? The Media Dialogue heard the contradictory nature of Rwanda's media sector from preliminary findings of an ongoing sector study. Various loopholes in Rwanda's legal and regulatory framework were highlighted with suggestions to decriminalize defamation which was said to be affecting editorial decision-making. Some sections in the broadcasting law were found to be outdated because they have been abandoned by even countries in this region. How can the media perform in a country like Rwanda where Government seems to	
	The state of media freedom in Rwanda: Findings from the media sector assessment study Dr Christopher Kayumba, MGC Consult International Ltd (Rwanda)		
	Defamation legislation and media freedom in East Africa Mr. Andrew Mwenda, The Independent (Uganda)	How can the media perform in a country like Rwanda where Government seems to	
	Professionalism, a prerequisite to media freedom Mr. Jenerali Ulimwengu,		

	Veteran journalist (Tanzania)	be doing a good job providing for its people? An insightful discussion showed how Rwanda did not need to copy what is in Uganda, Kenya or any other western country – instead Rwanda should construct its own media system
General discussions		
SESSION 5		
MODERATOR: Alphonse Nkusi, Rwanda Governance Advisory Council (RGAC)		
	Developing a professional media in Rwanda: Training and institutional capacity needs Mr. Joseph Njuguna, School of Journalism and Communication, NUR	Data presented at the Media Dialogue showed that trained journalists are not joining the profession, WHY? How can this trend be reversed? Due to very speedy technological advances and the economic situation, the media has found itself caught up with very low resources. How should it respond? What can Rwandan media training institutions learn from other regional neighbors?
	New media and challenges for a training institution Mr. Amadou Mahtar Ba, CEO, Africa Media Initiative	These were some of the issues that were discussed with experiences from Uganda and the technological world.
	The East Africa experience Dr. Monica Chibita, Makerere University (Uganda)	
General discussions		
Afternoon		
SESSION 6		
MODERATOR: Mr. Patrice Mulama, Executive Secretary, MHC		
	Media and nation building Brig Gen Richard Rutatina, Office of The President	Under this session, participants noted that media is a double edged sword. Rwanda having known the worst of the negative role played by media in fanning the 1994
	The need for and extent of	

	<p>media regulation</p> <p>Mr. Anthony Borden, Executive Director, Institute of War and Peace Reporting (UK)</p>	<p>genocide, the dialogue was seen as an opportunity to develop a more responsible Forth Estate. Therefore, questions like these were at the center of the discussions.</p>
	<p>Development and support communication (Radio)</p> <p>Mr. Joseph Bideri, Managing Director, The New Times Publications Ltd</p>	<p>What can the media report in the changing world of terrorism and crime? Who has the responsibility to determine what should be reported? Should media operate differently depending on the stage of development of a given country? How can the media balance</p>
	<p>Inputs from a representative of local journalists</p> <p>Mr. Marcel Museminali, Business Daily newspaper</p>	<p>journalists' safety with demands from audiences? Do broadcast media need to operate differently from print?</p> <p>In this session, participants were treated to varying perspectives of what can be done. The view from the local media was that they wanted to be partners to Government but it also should review how it sees the media.</p>
<p>General discussions</p>		
<p>Plenary Session: Recommendations and Adoption of the Media Dialogue recommendations</p>		
<p>Official closure by Hon. Protais Musoni, Minister of Cabinet Affairs in charge of Information</p> <p>There is no need to keep a system that is not working: was the message from the Minister. Government, he said, was eager to adopt as many policy changes as long as they are for the better. The minister again reiterated the government's commitment and readiness to adopt and implement the recommendations from the dialogue.</p>		

Following two days of expert submissions, general discussions and deliberations, participants at the Media Dialogue made and adopted recommendations to media stakeholders in Rwanda. The recommendations revolved around what investors can do to exploit available investment opportunities, what the government and regulators can do to facilitate such investment and media

freedom and what journalists themselves can do to improve their circumstances and be more responsible. Here below are the recommendations of the dialogue starting with the main conclusions.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusion

- 1) All paper presenters and participants agreed that Rwanda has one of the best investment environments in the world that should be exploited. Investment opportunities in the media market in Rwanda include private television, media content production, journalism training, broadcasting signal distribution, investing in the English language print and electronic media to access and exploit the EAC market and investing in ICT driven media made available by improvement in ICTS and the infrastructure relating to the laying out of the broadband that is set to connect the whole country;
- 2) However, while Rwanda offers discernable investment opportunities in the media, participants concluded that the Rwandan media can only be developed and sustained by Rwandans themselves. Participants also agreed that *freedom of the media cannot be imported*; it can only be locally grown. It was thus concluded that it is the responsibility of Rwandans to develop their own media organs and government in particular to ensure and protect media freedom which is a cornerstone for sustaining the current media investment climate. To do so, Rwandans must have confidence in themselves and in what they do while government reorganizes to be able to clearly and timely communicate its positions and decisions whenever misunderstandings of its intentions are raised;
- 3) The media dialogue was hailed as a success and organizers commended for the effort and a job well done. It was the belief of the participants that holding such an event on an annual basis would not only contribute to open and free debate but would help the country to showcase the available and yet to be exploited investment opportunities. The Minister of Commerce and Industry pledged her Ministry's readiness to support another national dialogue in future.

Policy Recommendations

1. From the discussions, a consensus emerged from representatives of media corporations and experienced investors in the media market that Rwanda offers a good investment climate and the media can be and is a viable and profitable business. However, there emerged two main ideas on how best to exploit the opportunities available in Rwanda. The first is that, since there are some risks that private investors may not be ready to undertake now, the government can kick-start the drive by making a sizeable investment in the sector and later invite partners or sell off the business to private investors. The second option is that private investors and current media outlets owners in Rwanda can form joint ventures;
2. With regard to the problem of advertising, two main suggestions emerged: first that the government should embrace open competition for its advertisements and remove any restrictions to advertising with the privately owned media. Secondly, that media owners should also do some kind of social engineering to help private investors understand the importance of advertising;
3. There was also a consensus among participants that to succeed in today's world, there is a need to move away from the unprofitable government funded media to media run as businesses. This practically means media outlets controlling costs by following basic business rules. Such rules include having clear management structures organized on division of labour; clear and transparent recruitment procedures based on merit; differentiating personal funds from business money and offering attractive remuneration packages to journalists and media employees grounded in contract;
4. While presenters and participants agreed that there is no best model to follow when transforming a government owned media like ORINFOR to a successful public broadcaster, some key principles were suggested for ORINFOR to follow. They include entrenching transparency in decision-making; looking for alternative and sustainable sources of funding, granting editorial independence to editors, etc;
5. Another important area of consensus is that media outlets are involved in the business of 'producing and selling content'. That it is content that brings good business. To have good content, editors and journalists need to be given editorial independence and professionally socialized to always follow basic journalistic principles of serving the truth, balance, accuracy and objectivity in the conduct of their daily work;

6. Following from the above, there was also a feeling that government is sometimes slow in giving information to journalists. Some government officials actually completely refuse to provide information of public interest to the media without reason. To facilitate free access to information and at the same time allow timely communication of the government's intentions and positions, participants urged the government to always provide information in good time to allow the media to do its work. It was also recommended that public officials who deny essential public information to media should be punished both legally and administratively;
7. There also emerged a consensus that libel and defamation should be de-criminalized for it was agreed that it is a source of self-censorship and an impediment in the fight media's watchdog role e.g fighting against corruption.
8. Further consensus was reached on the urgent need for government to enact the Access to Information Law. The dialogue noted that although a draft bill has been submitted to government, it was taking longer than necessary for the draft to be tabled in cabinet for adoption;
9. With regard to whether or not there is media freedom in Rwanda, deliberations indicate that the condition is more complex and should be contextualized. However, it was agreed that certain government actions like denying advertising to private media outlets undermine the overall government commitment to guaranteeing media freedom as a Constitutional obligation. Such practice it was argued, amount to the provision of media freedom through the door and taking it away through the window;
10. Future debates it was suggested should examine the following: whether there is a 'community of journalists' in Rwanda, media and governance and the problem of limits of what can and cannot be published and who can legitimately determine what 'citizens want to know or do not need to know' through the media;
11. There was a feeling that international media watchdogs ought to adopt the same zeal and standards in denouncing genocide ideology and propagandists in media worldwide as they do for media freedom;
12. It was recommended that the MHC endeavor to be seen to be more independent in practice as the Constitution provides and that deliberate efforts be adopted to move toward media self-regulation (especially print);

13. Participants also agreed that there is a close relationship between training and media professionalism, freedom and development. It was however, underlined that training institutions still face challenges relating to limited resources, including human resource, equipment and coping with ICTs. It was therefore agreed that training institutions need more financial and material support to be able to offer the necessary training to journalists, future journalists and media practitioners;
14. With regard to the relationship between the media and nation-building, participants learnt that the media is a national Resource that can serve as an instrument of national power and foreign policy tool to promote national interests. However, participants agreed that while a national resource and a watchdog for holding government to account, the media has boundaries that it should not cross ; particularly not compromising national unity and the security of the country;
15. Participants also agreed that since nation-building is a process, it should not be undermined but supported by the media. As such participants agreed that to help future journalists and media practitioners understand the relationship between the media and nation-building, it was important to include ‘media and nation-building’ in the curriculums of journalism training institutions;
16. The Hon Minister of Trade and Industry pledged the ministry’s commitment and readiness to support and facilitate investment partnerships that might arise from the media dialogue.