



DRC Media Environment Assessment Report

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1. Introduction

The Democratic Republic Of Congo is currently affected by the result of armed conflicts between various forces under the control of the central Kinshasa government of President Joseph Kabila, local insurgents, non-Congolese warlords – including perpetrators of the 1994 Rwandan genocide now in exile and forces in opposition to the government in Burundi - and foreign powers (noticeably Rwanda, Uganda, Angola and Zimbabwe). Half of the national territory is not under government control.

No comprehensive description of the media in The Democratic Congo (DRC) exists, and no organization or individual should be expected to have an overview of the media situation in all of the country. For this to be produced, much work needs to be done in the vast rural areas, a large part of this located in isolated jungle, in the towns of the provinces and even in the capitals and major cities of the provinces.

As Congo DRC is not a transparent society, and as it has been fragmented and controlled and influenced by foreign forces and their allied rebels, information about the media situation is scattered and localized. Even key donor organizations or NGO's, which are able to operate on a national scale, might not have much knowledge outside their own special field. For that reason, most reliable information will have to be gathered on the spot. While these spots are many and difficult to access, one will usually find local people involved in media activities readily sharing their information on media affairs.

While problems and possibilities are innumerable, the number of active organizations and key personalities are not overwhelming. The biggest obstacle to real information gathering is the physical distances to be traveled and the costs of this.

Given these constraints, this desk analysis has been done on the basis of a field report from Kinshasa, combined with a search for web information supplemented by a number of interviews with key observers or partakers. Where possible, interviews have been made by telephone.

A word on reliability of information. This can be difficult to assess in the DRC. Instability has reigned for so long that predictions will prove to be fragile. Although Congolese are in general gentle and hospitable, living conditions have for long been deteriorating to such an extent, that many people will tend to rely on nobody but themselves. For many years, law and order has to a large extent been a matter for negotiation and bartering. In such an environment, past performance, popular support and sustainable access to scarce resources should be key indicators assessing potential partners and information about these.

2. Political context

2.1 Laurant-Desiré Kabila comes to power.

In the mid nineteen-nineties, four neighbouring countries were facing very serious armed threats from groups operating from the Congo: Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi and Angola.

In alliance with some of the more militant people of the East, these countries supported and aided the AFDL to achieve its military victory over president Mobutu Sese Seko in May 1997, after which Laurant-Desiré Kabila was named president.

2.2 Kabila antagonise Uganda and Rwanda, loose half of his country

In an attempt to enlarge his independence from his foreign mentors, Kabila allows the same armed groups threatening the four neighbouring countries to resume activity. During the summer of 1998, conflict erupted into the open between President Kabila and his Ugandan and Rwandan partners, and the latter tried to topple him by an armed invasion. The aim of this invasion was mainly to re-establish the security advances, they had gained during their combined victory over president Mobutu, possibly by installing another puppet or very friendly-minded Congolese ruler in Kinshasa.

Kabila never had at his disposal an army of any significance compared to the experienced and dedicated armed forces of the Ugandan, Rwandan, Burundian or Angolan army. As the invasion threatened his capital, Kabila invited armed help from neighbouring Angola and from Zimbabwe, whose president, Robert Mugabe, was then chairman of the Defense Committee of the Southern Africa Development Cooperation. Acting under the auspices of SADC, this committee authorized Zimbabwean, Angola and Namibian armed forces to fight in the DRC in support of president Kabila.

Thus the Rwandan-Uganda invasion, intended to be swift and fast, ended in a drawn-out war of attrition. As a result, by late 1998, the country was roughly separated in half by a frontline running from North-West to South-East.

In the North, Ugandan forces held the territory, in the East and towards the South, Rwandan forces were in control. A group of local politicians and academics were quickly installed as a Congolese civil government under the name of *Rassemblement Congolais pour la Paix (RPC)*, and formally, this body was in control of all civil service, including revenue collection and armed forces.

During 1999, the RPC split in two factions, one seeking allies with Rwanda, the other with Uganda. During the following year, three extremely bloody clashes erupted in Kisangani, the main town in this vast, jungle-clad region, and, crucially, the border town between the Ugandan sphere of interest and the Rwandan (whose RDC-allied group eventually won control over the town proper).

Since mid-2000, the country has effectively been split in three.

2.3 The Lusaka Accord

The main front extended for 2.000 kilometers through swathes of inaccessible land, and long extended lines of supply quickly strained the funds of all the foreign forces. They all soon had access to local riches, mainly minerals such as diamonds, gold, copper, cobalt and oil. In spite of this and other ways of exploiting the local resources, this war of attrition soon strained the resources of all involved foreign forces. Some of them - in particular Angola - needed its troops at home to fight national rebels. In addition, foreign donors were adding pressure to some of these occupying countries. The international community urged peace. Consequently, the internationally brokered Lusaka Accord allowed all foreign forces to relax their involvement, reduce costs and withdraw troops. As a guarantee for the front to hold - as a cease fire line - the UN accepted to place an observer force.

The Lusaka Accord has been violated by all parties to its signing. None more so than president Laurant-Desiré, who persistently sabotaged the implementation of the accord, not least by hindering the UN from operating. Apparently, Laurant-Desiré Kabila intended to increase his grip on the country by making it difficult for his allies, most importantly Angola and Zimbabwe, to withdraw their forces. As his assassination drew near on January 16, 2001, relations between Laurant-Desiré Kabila and his allies were known to be very frosty.

2.4 Joseph Kabila starts implementing Lusaka

After his son, Joseph were installed in a power deal, apparently brokered by Zimbabwe and Angola, hostilities has largely ceased, the UN has been allowed to operate and expand, and troop withdrawals have been initiated.

These positive actions by president Joseph Kabila towards implementing the Lusaka Peace accord, and his smiliar actions to implement cautious security and economic reforms in the areas under his formal control, has earned him international acclaim. United States, the EU and a number of European countries have pledged economic and technical aid; some has even arrived in the Congo. As he lifted a ban on political parties, he removed the last official limitation to free political activites. However political manifestations and marches anywhere in the country is frowned upon by all local authorities.

The ceasefire has however opened a window of opportunity - at present, the only one, The Congolese population has a chance for economic and social reconstitution, and for the first time in years, the Congolese have an opportunity to reclaim some influence over the destiny of their land and their lives.

2.5 A divided, unstable country

At present the country is divided in three main zones:

Half of the country is under the control of the government - i.e. the southern swathe of land extending from the Atlantic cost to the southern tip of Lake Tanganyika including the capital Kinshasa, the copper and cobolt mining town of Lubumbashi and the diamond centre of Mbuji Maji.

In the Ugandan sphere (Provinces Orientale and Equateur and the Northern part of North Kivu), authority is mainly resting with the MLC organization of Mr. Jean-Pierre Bemba, a war lord and prominent businessman based in Gbadolite, home town of former president Mobutu, to whom a number of Mr. Bemba's business associates and allies were connected. His control over the vast territory fades towards the larger towns in the Eastern border region, bordering Uganda. Here, local warlords seems to be in command, as long as they cooperate with the local representatives of the Ugandan army or security service. Only few Ugandan ground forces are thought to be operating.

Economic activities has been extremely adversely affected by the war, which has cut off this region from its traditional trade with Kinshasa

The Rwandan sphere stretches from Kisangani via the Eastern border town of Goma through Kivu, includes large parts of Kasaii Orientale and the parts of northern Katanga. The Eastern-most areas, including the towns of Goma, Uvira and Bukavu, is a heavily populated, restless and ethnic very diverse region. It has a strong tradition of resistance towards outside domination, including the so called Mai-Mai fighters. It is also home to groups related to the Rwandan and Burundian hutus and tutsies, and the region has long played host to armed terror groups rooted in the genocidal Rwandese hutu Interahamwe movement. The Rwandese army is heavily present and involved in ongoing armed activities in order to suppress dissent and terror and in general to hunt down and destroy the Interahamwe.

In this area too, economic activities have been extremely adversely affected by the war. There is a strong suspicion amongst the Congolese, not least peoples of this region, that the Rwandans intend not to leave. Rwanda is heavily over-populated, and they are feared to nurture dreams of a lebensraum in the Kivus.

While the country remains divided, the UN force deployed - Monuc - will be uniquely placed as the only entity which is able to operate nationally. In addition, it has its own fleet of transport vehicles - planes, barges, trucks - a reliable communications network and an efficient security apparatus. All over the country, and in all major towns along or near the front line, a Monuc office will be installed.

In addition, the international Office of the National Dialogue Facilitator, will operate offices in key cities, whose aim it will be to help all Congolese to express their views regarding negotiations towards the political future of the country. The National Dialogue between the government and representative groups from around the country is set to restart outside the country in January 2002.

3. Media Sector Analysis

3.1 Recent history

Independent media are a recent phenomenon in DRC. Before 1990 the state was a one party regime and there was tighter control on all forms of expression. In response to public pressure, Mobutu Sese Seko in 1990 terminated the one party regime and many of its controls,

and dozens of newspapers and other media emerged. In spite of popular will, the transition process did not lead to free elections.

Many of the new media were outspoken in their opposition to the regime - and in the near anarchy of Mobutu's last years there were worse abuses of press freedom than under Kabila. Offices of two newspapers were firebombed, something that has not happened since Laurent Kabila came to power.

Mobutu's regime performed sporadic, but vicious, clamp-downs. Laurent Kabila had a penchant for confiscating radio and TV stations. As Joseph Kabila's government has consolidated itself, suppression of journalists and media has been relaxed.

The main service provided by the state media to the private media is the Agence Congolaise de Presse. This agency has 22 bureaux nationwide equipped with telex machines and transmitters which according to IFASIC have ceased to function, (except at Kisangani) . Despatches are brought to Kinshasa by travellers. At Kinshasa ACP's bulletins are irregular and often seem to lag behind the news.

In the days of the parti-etat the ACP and the Union de la Presse Congolaise were important organs helping to keep newspapers informed of the party line. They have both been allowed to languish. The UPC seems to have little function besides issuing press cards. It used to provide a press centre for journalists, but do no longer.

There is no state newspaper as such, but Le Palmares receives subsidies from the government and prints the views of whoever it thinks has the president's ear. L'Avenir and L'Observateur were also receiving subsidies from government but these have probably been reduced, as L'Avenir has been getting into trouble lately. L'Avenir was seen as the mouthpiece of extremists who voiced what Laurent Kabila was thinking.

3.2 Media description

Everywhere in the country, electronical media is the most important media, even though millions of people are outside the reach of present transmitters. In Kinshasa, a large proportion of the population have access to tv.

Newspapers are mainly produced in the capital. A few number of these reach other towns. None reach cities in the Ugandan or Rwandan sphere.

No other media has a distribution potential as large as radio. However, at the moment, no radio station covers the entire country, nor even the largest cities.

3.2.1 Kinshasa, newspapers

Currently the number of titles has shrunk to perhaps 15-20. Some are not regular. None of these titles claims to have a print run of more than 2,500.

Figures quoted are as follows:

La Reference Plus: 2,500 copies ; Le Potential: 2,000; Le Palmares: 2,500; Le Phare: 1,000; Le Soft: 2,000; Forum: 1,000; Demain Le Congo: 1,000; Salongo: 1,000; Elima: 500; La Tempete Des Tropiques: 500; Umoja: 500; La Semaine de Reporter: 500. Some of these titles might have disappeared or new ones started. All figures quoted are declared by the publication but not verified - and probably exaggerated. The quoted price for a newspaper is around one dollar,

and slightly more outside Kinshasa. Normally these papers have eight pages, of A5 size. The newspapers which cover politics (nearly all do, although the couple of sports and pop music newspapers sell more than any others) say that teachers and civil servants are their market. The official monthly salary for a university professor is \$20, and similar for a mid level bureaucrat. While state servants do what they can to supplement their income it is clear that there is a limited market for the written press in Kinshasa or elsewhere. People often club together to read newspapers, or newspaper sellers display them on boards for the public to read the headlines, which are often untrue, or misleading.

3.2.2 Kinshasa, TV and Radio

Audio visual media have a far wider audience, and feature far less dissident opinion. A report by UNICEF in 1999 found that more than half the population of Kinshasa had some access to TV. The state audiovisual media broadcast regular news bulletins, whereas private, church and community radio and TV news bulletins are shorter and seldom discuss politics in any detail. Oppositionists were not and are still not generally able to voice their opinions openly on state TV. The new TV channel

Tropicana is the only private TV channel which has regularly aired interviews with oppositionists. Catholic radio Elikya is the only radio station in Kinshasa which is noted for giving the opposition air time.

IFASIC lists the wattage of transmitters at TV stations in Kinshasa as follows:

State TV (RTNC) : 12 Kw

TKM : 200 w (it claims coverage over a 40 km radius).

Raga : 750 w (claims to cover Kinshasa and its environs)

Antenne A : 150 w

Canal Kin : 253 w

Tropicana : (not listed.)

RTMV (Radio Tele Message de Vie) (channel of the charismatic pastor F. Kouthino).

Wattage of transmitters for radio as follows:

State Radio (RTNC) : 100 Kw (shortwave); 2 Kw (mediumwave); 10 Kw FM; 50 w FM.

RKM : 200 w

Raga FM : (not listed)

Radio Elikya (Catholic Church) : 50 w FM

Radio Sango Malamu (Pentecostalist) : covers Kinshasa and environs

RTMV : FM - good signal.

All figures are based on the latest IFASIC report, covering 1998. Since then a few commercial broadcasters has opened in Kinshasa. It is said that the broadcasts of these 'eglises de reveil', a mixture of music and preaching, with almost zero news content, are the most popular in Kinshasa.

3.2.3 Media in the Interior

RTNC Kinshasa broadcasts are supposed to be relayed to all provincial capitals, although the relay is no longer working to some of these towns. In most provincial capitals RTNC tries to generate some of its own news.

3.2.2.1 Lubumbashi (Katanga Province).

Some local newspapers appearing are irregularly.

RTNC Lubumbashi (radio) had two transmitters (one FM) broadcasting up to 30 km from the city. The TV had a 1Kw transmitter.

Zenith Radio TV is the only private audio visual operator in Katanga listed. Its radio station had a 50 w transmitter (FM), TV - 100w.

3.2.2.2 Matadi (Bas Congo Province).

RTNC radio - broadcasts from Matadi over 30 km radius. Relays from Kinshasa were not functioning. TV could pick up relays from Kinshasa, however. One private audio visual operator listed - Radio Tele Matadi - broadcast over radius of 100 km. Three local newspapers listed - each weekly, with a print run of 500. Kinshasa newspapers generally available.

3.2.2.3 Mbanza-Ngungu (Bas-Congo Province).

One radio TV operator listed.

3.2.2.4 Kananga (Province Kasai Occidental).

This city of 750,000 people is said to be the largest city in the world without electricity. Already in 1998 it was described as facing enormous problems with its electricity supply. RTNC Kananga was apparently supplied with a generator by UNICEF but had difficulty obtaining fuel for the generator. When it worked RTNC only covered the town and its surroundings. Two other audiovisual operators listed, of which one (KHRT) had relocated to Tshikapa in the south of the province owing to lack of electricity, and the other (RTKM) had had its equipment confiscated by the government. No local print press listed.

3.2.2.5 Mbuji-Mayi (Kasai Oriental Province).

Ten local newspapers listed (probably weeklies or less frequent) - all claiming a print run of around 500 copies. Access to newsprint import from Tanzania, Burundi or Rwanda.

RTNC radio in Mbuji-Mayi had a 10 Kw transmitter which, it claimed, permitted broadcasts up to 70 km from the town. RTNC TV has 2x1 Kw transmitter covering the town. Three private audio-visual operators listed - Kasai Horizons Radio-Tele (KHRT), producing four programmes locally and the rest relayed from RTNC and foreign media for radio and TV, Antenne A relayed from Kinshasa, and La Fraternite Buena Muntu (Catholic Radio - religious and educational).

3.2.2.6 Bandundu (Bandundu Province).

StateTV only picked up in the town of Bandundu. RTNC radio has a 10 Kw (short wave) and 50 Kw (medium wave) transmitter, both in poor repair, so programmes often interrupted. Currently electricity supply to Bandundu is problematic.

Private operator - Radio Tomisa (Catholic) claimed 50 Km radius. Carries news as well as religious and devt messages.

No local newspapers. Very poor distribution of Kinshasa newspapers.

3.2.2.7 Mbandaka (Equateur Province).

IFASIC described in some detail RTNC's radio equipment and staff in the town - and this may be an indication of how broadcasting has deteriorated elsewhere. One short wave transmitter of 10 Kw not functioning since 1991 for lack of electricity; one medium wave transmitter of 2 Kw not working; one relay transmitter 50w FM, also not working. So Mbandaka has only one radio transmitter, FM. Audience for its broadcasts limited to Mbandaka. TV audience also limited to a small part of the population of Mbandaka.

No new recruitment at RTNC Mbandaka for 15 years.

Two local newspapers were appearing, weekly or less often.

Rwandan sphere:

3.2.2.8 Bukavu (South Kivu Province).

4 local newspapers listed - with print runs from 500-1,500.

RTNC radio in Bukavu had one short wave transmitter 2 Kw, and one FM transmitter 100 w. RTNC TV had one transmitter working (2 Kw).

Several missionary societies started radio stations in the 1990s. These were Cherry radio, FM 500w, claiming a 40 km radius, BEST (Bukavu Extension Service Technical) Radio, run jointly with Cherry radio and probably using the same equipment (broadcasting development related info), IBRA radio (also devt related broadcasts), FM 50w, and Radio Maendeleo FM 200w. Radio Maendeleo is described by Fondation Hirondelle as the only independent radio broadcasting on politics in eastern DRC. It was shut down by the RCD but allowed to restart broadcasting this year. **

IFASIC reports that broadcasts from state and private radio and TV in South Kivu can only be heard in Bukavu.

3.2.2.9 Kisangani (Province Orientale).

Five local newspapers listed, since 1999 hardly ever any newsprint available. RTNC radio had one FM transmitter of 50w. Relays with Kinshasa no longer functioning, transmitter not operating. The state TV station had two 1 Kw transmitters, none of which is working today.

One private radio operator listed: Radio Amani, (Catholic, and broadcasting more political news than such radios usually do partly because Cardinal Monsengwo is archbishop of Kisangani. It was closed down in on April 18 by orders of the government but allowed to reopen under the RCD.) Broadcasting to Kisangani and its immediate surroundings).

A private tv-operator lacks transmitting equipment.

3.2.2.10 Goma (North Kivu Province).

No information on the radius of RTNC broadcasts, but they may be more far reaching than in other provinces as RTNC in Goma depends on the equipment of a private radio station (Radio Star) with modern equipment which was confiscated by Laurent Kabila in 1997.

More relevant to this study, perhaps, was a radio station run by an NGO, Radio Agatashya, as this was set up in 1995 by Fondation Hirondelle who now have far more ambitious plans to set up six stations of Radio Okapi around the country, based at MONUC's six main logistics centres. Radio Agatashya was envisaged as a kind of anti Radio Mille Collines, aimed at countering extremist anti Tutsi propaganda in the Rwandan refugee camps. It had a relay at the largest refugee camp 7 km from Goma. Part of the rationale for Radio Okapi seems to be to broadcast to members of armed groups, and their dependents, in the Kivus.

One local newspaper listed.

3.2.2.11 Kindu (Maniema Province).

RTNC at Kindu had a short wave 20w transmitter which was not functioning but relays were still being picked up from Kinshasa. Lack of electricity a problem. Private operators - Tele Kindu Maniema was dismantled by its owner in 1997 to avoid being confiscated like the stations in Goma, Kindu FM, with a 15w transmitter.

Ugandan sphere:

3.2.2.12 Bunia, and Rety (Province Orientale)

Radio Tangazeni Kristu (Protestant), broadcasting from Bunia in Ituri. Radio Rety (Protestant, property of American missionary society CECA 20), based at Rety in Djugu territory. No details of their equipment but according to IFASIC both these stations broadcast exclusively religious messages. It would be interesting to know if they were still functioning during the inter-ethnic fighting between Hema and Lendu in Djugu and Ituri since 1999, and whether they were only broadcasting religious messages at that time.

3.2.2.13 Equateur (northern part, without Mbandaka)

One private radio operator - Radio Bwamanda, in Gemena territory. Run by an NGO, broadcasting on development topics. Only covered the locality of Bwamanda.

(A note on sources of information: This is mainly taken from a study completed in 1998 by the School of Journalism IFASIC incorporating some info from other sources. IFASIC

does not give a complete coverage of radio - there are likely several diocesan and community radio stations not covered here, most of which is not likely to be reliable transmitters of national or local news.

3.4. Government relations with media

3.4.1 Media policy discussions.

A law passed in June 1996 envisaged the establishment of a legal structure charged with the 'control and neutrality of public media'. That law was not respected by the Kabila regime and journalism students seem unaware of it. But there is an ongoing discussion

about the possibility of setting up an independent watchdog body, composed of members of the profession, to monitor professional misconduct. The minister of information talks of establishing two councils, one for the press and one for audio visual media. Many of the media NGOs listed in the next section have petitioned the minister of information to organise a congress with international partners to set up an alternative to UPC, which they seem to think could act as such a body. JED's main campaign is to decriminalise libel and defamation. Without a decriminalisation, they say, trying to get agreement on a code of journalistic conduct or deontology would be premature. International Human Rights Law Group tends to agree. The information minister might welcome this kind of discussion if it helped to improve the regime's image, and brought in some donor funding for his ministry.

3.4.2. Media Freedom

It is generally believed that President Joseph Kabila and most of his close advisers wish to avoid arresting journalists. Since the president reshuffled his cabinet in April 2001, dismissed the Interior minister Geatan Kakudji and other hardliners, and appointed Kikaya Bin Karubi, a former journalist as information minister, relations between government and media have improved. On May 17 the government announced a liberalisation of political parties, and whilst they have not yet been

allowed to demonstrate freely they have been able to express their views more freely in the written press. And since the preparatory talks for the inter-Congolese Dialogue in Gaborone in August the TV channel Tropicana has been airing regular interviews with members of the opposition, as has Radio Elikya,

a Catholic broadcasting service in Kinshasa. This is the exception in the audiovisual media, however. 'We don't touch politics, it's not worth the trouble', is a typical comment from the manager of one TV station.

The year 2001 started with an amnesty, in which the remaining three journalists known to JED to be in detention in government held territory were released. The chairman of JED is clear that there have been fewer infringements of media freedom this year than in previous years.

In 2000 the NGO reported that in Kinshasa alone 15 journalists had been imprisoned for more than 48 hours, (and 20 relatives of one journalist were detained after he escaped).

A precise figure for the number of arrests in the provinces does not appear to be available for 2000.

Between January 28 and November 15 2001, at least eleven journalists in the government controlled part of the DRC were reported to have been arrested and detained for periods of between two days and five months and five days. In the same period it was also reported that two other journalists were beaten up, another paid \$500 for his release from custody and an editor who had been sentenced to four years in prison had to live in hiding. Three other arrests of journalists were reported which may have lasted for two days or more, and several other journalists were arrested for shorter periods.

These details of arrests and other violations of press freedom, collected by the local NGO *Journalistes en Danger*, are probably fairly comprehensive for Kinshasa but may well be less so for the rest of government held territory.

The reduced number of arrests and the unbanning of ten private TV and radio stations seem to reflect a greater tolerance on the part of the regime rather than a more submissive media, although in all media a degree of censorship or self censorship is still the rule and in the audiovisual media dissident opinion is rarely heard. The same kind of newspaper articles that led to the arrest of journalists in 2000 and early 2001 continue to appear, but without earning their authors or editors spells in detention. *Vision* recently published a list of ministers that it predicted would soon be sacked, and several articles have appeared naming allegedly corrupt ministers. The cessation of hostilities on the front lines has helped to ease the tension and reduce the likelihood of journalists 'endangering state security', and is another factor in the recent detente between government and media.

3.4.3. Media Freedom in the Occupied Territories

In September 2001 the United Nations special rapporteur for human rights in the Democratic Republic of Congo noted that there was no freedom of expression in the areas controlled by the RCD.

In all major cities, Kisangani, Goma and Bukavu, journalists and editors have been jailed, beaten and harassed by the armed authority.

Insecurity is rife. Crispin Kandolo, a freelance cameraman, was killed on 5 September 2000 in an ambush in the Kahuzi Biega park in the east of the country, possibly by Interahamwe militias.

4. Organisations supporting media activities

The main organisations with an office in the government controlled territory are UNESCO, Journalistes en Danger, Medias pour la Paix, Media Libre et Media pour Tous, Search for Common Ground, UPEC (Unite de Production pour L'Education Civique, UCOFEM (Union Congolaise pour les Femmes dans les Medias), CENADEP and RHODECIC, (an umbrella group for a network of human rights and development groups inspired by Christianity whose coordinator, Pere Rigoberto Minani, has a project for diffusing press articles). Most of the above were represented at two seminars in Kinshasa in 2001 with Article 19, who produced, with JED, a booklet called 'Towards a New Strategy for Freedom of Expression'.

The Ministry of Information is obviously involved. The Union pour la Press Congolaise does very little. It is said that it has not complained about any arrest of a journalist under the Kabilas.

4.1. An assessment of local media support organisations

Journalistes en Danger is mainly concerned with monitoring abuses against the media, and publishes an annual report on media freedom. In addition, it is lobbying for redress and changes in the law. JED is run by Mbaya Tshimanga, and has been in existence for about four years. It seems to have closer contact with international NGOs than any other Congolese group in this field. It has a website: direction@jed-congo.org

Medias Pour La Paix has a broader remit than JED. It publishes annual reports on civic and media freedom, organises conferences on such subjects as 'On the Road to the Inter-Congolese Dialogue', 'National Reconciliation', 'New Political Order - Why and How', and has run campaigns against tribalism and in favour of good governance. The conferences attract ministers, oppositionists and civil society leaders, basically offering them a chance for political debate, which is otherwise lacking. The organization is run by Modeste Mutinga, editor and proprietor of Le Potentiel, probably Kinshasa's most reliable newspaper. Mutinga is a solid supporter of veteran opposition leader Tshisekedi, but he seems to believe in letting everybody have their say.

Media Libre et Media pour Tous is run by Ipakala Abeiye Mobiko, editor of La Reference Plus, another of the more reliable Kinshasa newspapers, also critical of the regime, though not so pro a particular party. Media Libre is not as widely read or readable as Le Potentiel, and its advertised print run of 2,500 is probably exaggerated. Ipakala says that what differentiates Media Libre from Media pour la Paix, is that his NGO works to help media enterprises as well as to

protect members of the press. He presents himself almost as chairman of a business association trying to help out his fellow members. He says his organisation helps members to get advertisements, adding that there are some newspapers in Kinshasa, which claim to be dailies when they only come out three times a week. It sounds as if this could get mixed up with channeling adverts towards papers, which pay a subscription to Media Libre, or even channeling them to La Reference Plus.

He also talks of helping newspapers to secure cheaper materials. He was particularly interested in how a foreign NGO could help journalists in the interior to get wireless e-mail access. Ipakala has managed better than other editors to get news from the interior, notably from his own Province Orientale.

RHODECIC. A Catholic NGO, Groupe Jeremie, is operating under the leadership of Pere Rigoberto Minani, a Jesuit. Each month Minani's team compiles a dossier de presse and distributes it to member groups. He makes 100 copies in all. They are consulted by people in reading rooms around the country. Currently MONUC planes are helping him to diffuse this service. Less frequently he compiles dossiers of news from the interior, but it is not known to the team whether he diffuses these as well, or if they are just for Kinshasa consumption. He also compiles general reports, and has compiled several on human rights violations in the east.

Formally, Groupe Jeremie has the 'permanence' of RHODECIC. Having the permanence means that Groupe Jeremie is the permanent secretariat for Rhodetic (Human Rights Networks of Christian Inspiration), which has 48 member groups throughout the country. All these groups work for human rights and civic education. Groupe Jeremie has a special link to Bukavu and Kinshasa. Rhodetic links two different types of human rights organisation. This is how Pere Minanai describes it: On the one hand you have lay NGOs, like JED, Asadho, Voix des sans Voix. On the other hand you have in each Catholic parish a commission for human rights - and above them networks of Christian inspiration like Groupe Jeremie, Groupe Amos and Toges Noires. It is not totally clear whether Rhodetic is the only umbrella for these networks, but Minani seems to be in a pretty central position.

CETRACO is a conflict resolution NGO run by Mulegwa Zihindula. He was active at the Addis Ababa conference trying to do his bit for conflict resolution, and seems extremely knowledgeable about the current crisis. He did a thesis on the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement at an American University. He's in his 30's and is quite friendly with Joseph Kabila but also with some of the rebel leadership. He is very concerned about the occupation of the east of the country, but genuinely wants to see a peaceful resolution of the problem. He is also a journalist. mzihindula@aol.com

IFM/ARC is led by Freddy Mulongo, whom the team has failed to establish contact with. He is apparently heading a dynamic organisation and trying to form a federation of community radio, which might be worth finding out more about, as radio is definitely the priority in Congo. It would be useful to know whether he is planning to collaborate with Radio Okapi (below).

UCOFEM lobbies for women in the media. A person to contact would be Dominique Munongo Inamizi, who is a member of the above and also edits a women's magazine, (*Echos de la Femme*). She is also secretary of the union of traditional chiefs, as she's descended from the Mwami Msiri, a king in Katanga in the late 19th century.

4.1.2. Assessment of local media support organisations with direct link to an overseas NGO

Search for Common Ground, is an international NGO, which set up an office in Kinshasa about three months ago. It has HQs in Washington and Belgium. www.sfcg.org and m_ngemba@yahoo.com The programme assistant, Anna Mayimona Ngemba, is also in charge of the media programme. She said they were thinking first of working with radio because everyone can follow the radio. They want to promote the dialogue and diffuse more news about it. Specifically she would work on crude radio broadcasts. She said she would collaborate with the bureau of the Dialogue facilitator. They are also going to work with TV, she said - they've made contact but not yet started. They also want to work in theatre and with cartoons (*bandes dessinées*).

UPEC is a local NGO which seems to have been set up by a Belgian group called CIRE (International Committee for Refugees and Foreigners). The CIRE website is www.cire.be (if you add */upec* you get info on *upec*). UPEC was in action at the Inter-Congolese Dialogue in Addis Ababa providing an electronic news service, with documents and speeches from delegates, some background info and their own reports on how the proceedings had gone each day. They also provided some sound recordings of the participants, also by Internet and some pictures. Maybe they even offered their own voiceovers. Some Congolese journalists made use of their service. The personnel at Addis Ababa included two Belgians.

CENADEP has proved very elusive. Many people have been asked for the number or address of Baudouin Hamuli, director of CENADEP, but the number they give never works and none seems to know where his office is. This is strange as CENADEP is the local branch of PANOS, quite a well known NGO in France, which set up here early this year, and Hamuli himself is a well known character. According to Pere Minani (below) PANOS aims to protect the democratic press, to promote the weaker press and to work on deontology.

Some of Hamuli's speeches on reconciliation (in the booklets of medias pour la paix), seems lacking in ideas, except that reconciliation is an area where he is confident there will still be a lot of work in the future. panos.paris@wanadoo.fr

4.1.3. Foreign media support organizations operating in DRC

RADIO OKAPI is, or will be, a radio station - so it's part of the media rather than a media related NGO. The personnel are in the process of being recruited by a group of people working for MONUC and the Swiss NGO Fondation Hironnelle. The founder of Fondation Hironnelle, who will be taking a hands on role in this project, is Philippe Dahinden, who set up Radio Agatashya in North Kivu in 1995. The foundation was also responsible for Star Radio in Liberia and Radio Blue Sky in Pristina. They've also set up a radio in Bangui and a production facility in East Timor.

The plan is for Radio Okapi to have powerful short wave and FM transmitters at MONUC's six main logistic bases, Kinshasa, Kananga, Mbandaka, Kisangani, Goma and Kalemie. The equipment and studios will be on Monuc premises, guarded by the MONUC units in each place. Monuc will take charge of all transport needs and transport costs of equipment.

Studios will be installed by January 15, local FM broadcasts will begin January 20. Shortly after this, a short wave transmitter based in Kinshasa will broadcast to the major part of the country. Budget for the first 12 months is 2,8 million SFR. Most of these funds have been pledged by the Swiss government.

A funding drive is on its way. Bridging money is badly needed. "How do I make decisions on buying equipment, when donors phone and say, that the allocated money will only be paid out in 'three to four weeks time'? Hironnelle director Jean-Pierre Huny says. "We need to be in place for the dialogue."

Fondation Hironnelle and the MONUC people insist this is not MONUC radio - MONUC is not, they say, providing the funding for equipment and staff, and while they will sign a contract with MONUC to use its premises, they insist they will be reasonably independent when it comes to news.

Studio technicians will be Monuc staff. Half of broadcast time will be occupied by Fondation Hironnelle, which will pay local journalists to produce news and entertainment. These will be formally hired by the UN in order to gain protection.

The third main man in this operation is David Smith, who is MONUC's chief information officer, a Canadian, with considerable experience of radio broadcasting in Africa.

In addition Hironnelle would also like to set up relay stations at numerous places like Bunia and Beni and other potential massacre locations, but that would involved extending the budget.

They plan to broadcast in the five national languages, and to produce programmes, which can be used by other radio stations as well - news bulletins, including news about MONUC, but also other material including programmes for children.

It seems likely, that Okapi can put out more objective news than any station that is not protected by MONUC. The team strongly recommend that IMS gives first priority to an assessment of cooperation capacity in establishing and spreading the reach of Radio Okapi.

Hirondelle hope to make a lasting contribution through training, in which they have been involved earlier in the Congo. From that period, the foundation has contacts to reliable journalists.

Hirondelle, through its cooperation with the UN, will have the capacity to install radio equipment for other radio stations cheaper and more reliable than anybody else.

4.2 Other international org. supporting media/democracy projects in DRC

Search for Common Ground, PANOS and Radio Hirondelle are the main international partners in this field, and these three are all recent arrivals.

IFEX and CPJ are in contact with JED. Article 19 worked with JED and some of the other groups listed above in two seminars last year, and produced a report afterwards - 'Towards a New Strategy for Freedom of Expression'. Carolyn Norris from Article 19 took part and helped JED to write it up. She's at Carolyn.Norris@ukgateway.net

Article 19 visited DRC again quite recently. Reporters without Borders are also collaborating with JED.

IFJ or WAN does not seem to be involved. UPC has no money so can't pay its dues to an

international journalists' union, and the same goes for media proprietors and WAN. Most of the NGOs in the country working on media issues get most of their funding from embassies, and do pretty much want what they want with it.

According to Human Rights Law Group there have been hardly any journalism training initiatives.

According to several sources very little attempt has been made to coordinate assistance.

4.3 Interaction between civil society and freedom of expression organizations

'We communicate prudently', was how Mbaya of JED put it. He was talking about collaboration with civil society groups in DRC. Pere Minani's umbrella group is a sign that there are structures for collaboration. There is a certain amount of rivalry between groups, but civil society in the DRC demonstrated a certain cohesion before and during the inter-Congolese dialogue in Addis Ababa.

They managed to agree on their delegates to the dialogue without undue delay or fuss, and at the dialogue they managed to hold votes among their members and come down on one side of the question, (which was whether the dialogue in Addis should continue). A minority group of them, no doubt bribed by the government, were prepared to act as government stooges and vote in favour of walking out, thereby saving the government from having to take that initiative first, but the majority of civil society delegates voted to stay put, thereby making it clear that the government were the ones blocking the dialogue.

Civil society in DRC is fairly cohesive across most of the country, (or at least not riven by ethnic strife) and has not yet been suborned by the regime. There is a risk of that at the next dialogue, where there will be many more delegates.

No doubt there could be better collaboration between the above groups and other NGOs, as there could be better collaboration between NGOs in general. Actually a lot of them could be shut down without anyone missing them. Most DRC NGOs are undemocratic - many keep the same chairman once he is chosen, or has appointed himself. The International Human Rights Law Group commented that this is a major challenge for the civil society NGOs - to demonstrate that they are not just personal fiefdoms. International NGOs like Human Rights law Group, IFES and others try to nudge civil society in this direction. They also try to create common platforms among civil society - encouraging them to hold joint seminars on their premises.

Collaboration with other groups in the region is rare. IFES, (an international NGO working on electoral systems), organised a conference for civil society from DRC, Rwanda and Uganda last year. They met in Nairobi. IFES said this was the first such get-together arranged since the war started, and maybe there weren't many before the war. People say regional collaboration can be arranged if external donors arrange it, (and pay for it).

It would be good if civil society in the countries involved in the DRC conflict could work out some common reactions, since in most countries civil society is opposed to the war, but there are not much sign of this happening.

5. Possible strategy for a short term media emergency intervention

There is presently in the DRC a major media opportunity. Firstly, the country is at peace for the first time since mid-1996. This has allowed the Congolese the start mending their flows of traffic and goods, along with their social and family lives. Finally, the inter-Congolese Dialogue holds out hope of a break in the political logjam, and the more that people know of what their representatives are discussing, the more chance that they will actually be represented.

For example, if at the dialogue so called representatives of the Mai-Mai, who say they are still fighting, claim to speak for the people of Kivu the people back home ought to be listening to what they are saying. Radio is the only way to reach many of them.

The team will recommend the following:

1. That an immediate contact should be taken to Fondation Hirondelle with the aim of assessing whether and how to support Radio Okapi.
2. That a field visit further investigate the following possible areas of support:
 - a) Training sessions for journalists. This would most likely be very welcome in any type of media anywhere in the country. There have been very few efforts in this line. Maybe the training could be part of a collaboration with Radio Okapi.
 - b) Internet access. During 2000, the then chief information officer at Monuc in Kinshasa planned to open an internet centre on the Monuc compound to service local journalists. These plans have never materialized, but the need is great, and Monuc has all link-up facilities. Such access points at all Monuc offices all over the town would be of immense value for all local journalists, enabling them to interchange information nationwide. In addition, if they learned the websites of Rwandan, Ugandan, Zimbabwean and other regional and international newspapers the public in Congo would be better informed about the forces deciding their fate.
 - c) Internet training might be considered for journalists.
 - d) It would be worth talking to Pere Minani to see if his diffusion of written press could be speeded up. At the moment his service is rather historical. Pere Minani himself is no stranger to the Internet, and perhaps his service could be greatly expanded and vitalized by improving Internet access for his group, its contributors and users.
 - e) Local radio stations. Some of these could possibly cooperate with Radio Okapi/-Fondation Hirondelle. This goes for existing, but limping, stations like Radio Maendeleo in Bukavu and Radio Amani in Kisangani as well as other stations in particular the Eastern part of the country. This is the most difficult to access and the part, where UN protection might be most important. Using its own expertise and technicians and the transport facilities of the UN, Hirondelle will be able to erect and install local transmitters cheaper and more efficient than no other organizations. They could offer training, too. This could be completed once the organisation's technicians are through installing it's own equipment, ie. app. March 2002.
 - e) The printed press, although none are threatened with closure right now, could use attention too, even though the main threat to them is the lack of buying power amongst their readers. These newspapers have very limited access to almost any kind of resources. Internet access and even mobile telephones could be of great assistance.
 - d) A peace concert. This is another of David Smith's initiatives. This could be particularly valuable in the Congo because music is one of Congo's few successful exports these days. The plan is for the four biggest names on the Congo music scene - Papa Wemba, Werrason, J B Mpiana and Koffi Olomide to play benefit concerts in Kinshasa and Kisangani (probably around April) - with live relays between the two.

All these bands have agreed to play together - which is a major reconciliation in itself. They're working on producing some peace songs together, which will be marketed afterwards. The concert should make money, which will then go to other projects. The organisers are trying to keep this as non-profit as possible.

Perhaps the concert could even have some potential for generating more international 'social conscience' i.e. putting the Congo crisis on the map of a conscious young audience.