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RWANDA

The year 2010 was a difficult one for the media in Rwanda as presidential elections fomented a crackdown on opposition voices. One journalist was shot dead in broad daylight by gunmen who have been neither arrested nor prosecuted.

Jean Leonard Rugambage was deputy editor-in-chief at *Omuwugizi*, a tabloid that was the government's most outspoken critic until it was suspended by the country's Media High Council in April, shortly before he was killed. His editor, Jean Bosco Gasasira, is in exile in Uganda for fear of assassination by Rwanda operatives.

More than five journalists were arrested and charged with criminal libel on government orders, and some of them were handed down suspended sentences by the court. These include Didas Gasan, Richard Kaigamba, and Charles Kabonero (*Umuseso*) and Gasasira John Bosco (*Umuwugizi*) for libel.

The Media High Council also shut down two popular private newspapers—*Umuseso* and *Umuwugizi*—the day after the president denounced them in a public speech with the justification that they may lead the country into trouble.

Several media outlets were blacklisted from covering state or public functions before the election, a ban that is still in place. Surprisingly, not a single media association, not even the Association of Rwandan Journalists, now becoming a trade union, spoke out to defend the media houses that were closed and condemn government action.

The deteriorating safety situation has led some journalists to flee to neighboring countries, where they have begun online outlets. Journalists contend that the government will tolerate only positive stories and that anything critical is judged to be reckless reporting and its authors are persecuted. Opposition candidates have faced similar treatment.

Though some journalists believe that media freedom has improved in Rwanda since 1997 and hope that the situation will continue to improve, many journalists and human-rights activists say that if the government continues to move in its current direction, Rwanda is likely to join other African countries where repressive regimes have silenced all independent voices.

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RWANDA AT A GLANCE

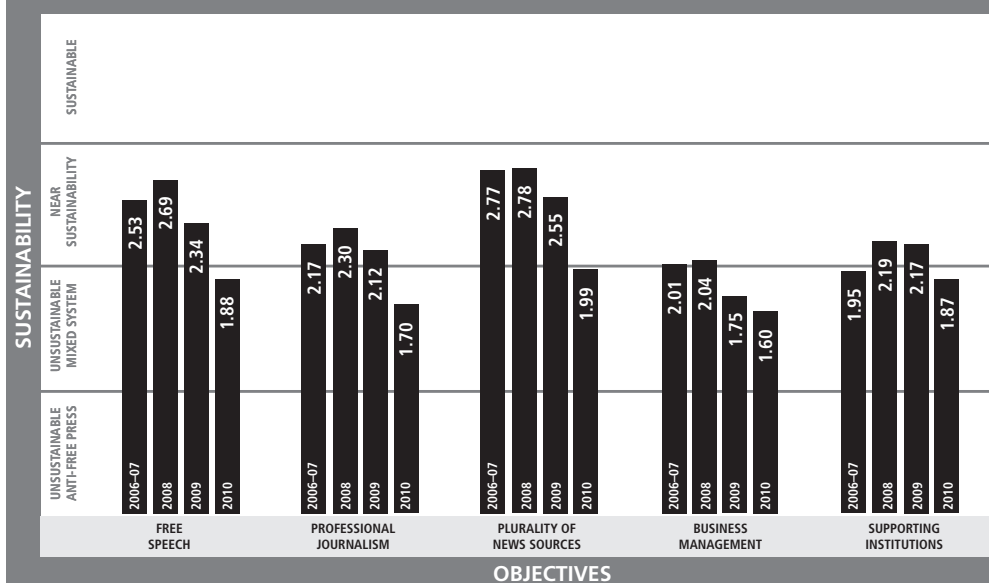
GENERAL

- > **Population:** 11,370,425 (July 2011 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Capital city:** Kigali
- > **Ethnic groups (% of population):** Hutu (Bantu) 84%, Tutsi (Hamitic) 15%, Twa (Pygmy) 1% (*CIA World Factbook*); however, many scholars believe Hutu and Tutsi to be class distinctions rather than actual ethnic groups
- > **Religions (% of population):** Roman Catholic 56.5%, Protestant 26%, Adventist 11.1%, Muslim 4.6%, indigenous beliefs 0.1%, none 1.7% (2001 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Languages (% of population):** Kinyarwanda (official) universal Bantu vernacular, French (official), English (official), Kiswahili (Swahili) used in commercial centers (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **GNI (2010-Atlas):** \$5.537 billion (World Bank Development Indicators, 2011)
- > **GNI per capita (2010-PPP):** \$1,180 (World Bank Development Indicators, 2011)
- > **Literacy rate:** 70.4% (male 76.3%, female 64.7%) (2003 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **President or top authority:** President Paul Kagame (since April 22, 2000)

MEDIA-SPECIFIC

- > **Number of active print outlets, radio stations, television stations:** Print: 39 newspapers (Ministry of Information); Radio Stations: 18; Television Stations: 1 (state-owned)
- > **Newspaper circulation statistics:** Top three by circulation: *Imvaho Nshya* (state-owned bi-weekly), followed by *The New Times* (private English newspaper and the only daily publication), *Umuseso* (privately owned), and *Kinyamateka* (Catholic Church-owned weekly); none has a circulation in excess of 10,000.
- > **Broadcast ratings:** Top radio stations: Radio Rwanda (state-owned), Contact FM (private), BBC (international)
- > **News agencies:** Rwanda News Agency (private)
- > **Annual advertising revenue in media sector:** N/A
- > **Internet usage:** 450,000 (2009 est., *CIA World Factbook*)

MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX: RWANDA



Unsustainable, Anti-Free Press (0-1):

Country does not meet or only minimally meets objectives. Government and laws actively hinder free media development, professionalism is low, and media-industry activity is minimal.

Unsustainable Mixed System (1-2):

Country minimally meets objectives, with segments of the legal system and government opposed to a free media system. Evident progress in free-press advocacy, increased professionalism, and new media businesses may be too recent to judge sustainability.

Near Sustainability (2-3):

Country has progressed in meeting multiple objectives, with legal norms, professionalism, and the business environment supportive of independent media. Advances have survived changes in government and have been codified in law and practice. However, more time may be needed to ensure that change is enduring and that increased professionalism and the media business environment are sustainable.

Sustainable (3-4):

Country has media that are considered generally professional, free, and sustainable, or to be approaching these objectives. Systems supporting independent media have survived multiple governments, economic fluctuations, and changes in public opinion or social conventions.

OBJECTIVE 1: FREEDOM OF SPEECH

Rwanda Objective Score: 1.88

The panelists reported little change in the constitutional provisions for freedom of speech and the press. However, they noted that constitution guarantees are not respected. In addition, a media law passed in August 2009 gives stronger control over the journalism profession by requiring a university diploma to obtain a press card, and it controls media outlets with additional financial and management requirements. The law also includes clauses allowing suspension of media for attacks on the president or divisionism. The Access to Information bill, a good piece of legislation according to all, was drafted but has yet to be voted on. Another law gives more regulatory and punitive powers over journalists and media outlets to the Media High Council. Finally, the penal code categorizes divisionism and genocide ideology, as well as libel and defamation, as criminal offenses in Rwanda.

“The situation has worsened in that freedom of speech has been suppressed by the ruling Rwanda Patriotic Front headed by President Paul Kagame,” observed one of the panelists who remained anonymous for fear of retribution. “Many politicians opposed to his government and journalists who are critical of the regime have been arrested and are languishing in prison; media houses have been closed and some newspapers banned by the regime in power.”

LEGAL AND SOCIAL NORMS PROTECT AND PROMOTE FREE SPEECH AND ACCESS TO PUBLIC INFORMATION.

FREE-SPEECH INDICATORS:

- > Legal and social protections of free speech exist and are enforced.
- > Licensing of broadcast media is fair, competitive, and apolitical.
- > Market entry and tax structure for media are fair and comparable to other industries.
- > Crimes against journalists or media outlets are prosecuted vigorously, but occurrences of such crimes are rare.
- > State or public media do not receive preferential legal treatment, and law guarantees editorial independence.
- > Libel is a civil law issue; public officials are held to higher standards, and offended parties must prove falsity and malice.
- > Public information is easily accessible; right of access to information is equally enforced for all media and journalists.
- > Media outlets have unrestricted access to information; this is equally enforced for all media and journalists.
- > Entry into the journalism profession is free, and government imposes no licensing, restrictions, or special rights for journalists.

Even as journalists are forced into exile, the public has remained silent due to fear of government backlash.

The panel noted that although victims have petitioned the courts for redress, little has been achieved because the judiciary is highly influenced by the state. Those who have managed to recover their freedoms have done so through appeals in higher courts, noted the panelists.

The panelists agreed that Internet access is unrestricted and that neither the government nor service providers impose any kind of restrictions. However, the newly launched online version of *Umuvugizi* was blocked by the Rwandan government shortly after the print publication was shut down. Limited access to the Internet restricts access to online news, but the government is investing heavily to increase Internet access across the country.

Licensing of broadcast media is fair and transparent and is governed by two bodies: The Rwanda Utilities Regulation Agency (RURA) and the Media High Council. An appeals process exists for whoever is denied a license. The head of the former and the majority of the members of the latter are government appointees. Panelists noted that some of the media houses that applied for licenses have never made it through either because owners have failed to raise the required funds and others because they fear the prevailing media situation. Shortly before the elections, the Media High Council published a list of the media outlets legally registered in Rwanda. Noticeably absent were Deutsche Welle, Voice of America, and Voice of Africa.

The panel noted that the tax structure applies the same regulations as it does to all businesses, which makes entry into the media industry relatively easy. However, the political environment has made the market hostile to independent media and has made attracting steady advertising to attain sustainability nearly impossible. The panelists agreed that newspapers are required to pay only VAT (value-added tax) on the advertisements they run and that a 5 percent tax applies to all newspapers and magazines imported from other countries.

Crimes against journalists are on the rise, especially in Kigali. In addition to the murder of Jean Leonard Rugambage, deputy editor-in-chief at *Omuvugizi*, and the subsequent flight of two other editors of opposition tabloids from the country, five other journalists were arrested on charges of defamation and incitement, and some of them are still languishing in prison.

The panelists reported that some of their colleagues have retreated into exile in neighboring countries. The panel noted that most attacks are carried out by the government, and

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The panelist noted that media laws treat state and independent media equally. However, state media are indirectly favored in many ways, especially when it comes to access to information. Members gave examples of monthly presidential conferences and functions held at the State House, to which some media houses are denied invitations according to the government's caprice.

"Since 2008, the government has stood by a decision to blacklist Voice of America, BBC, *Umuwigizi*, and *Umuseso* from covering public functions. Sometimes I buy information from those who attend these functions or pay people to take my recorder. My bosses have appealed to the Rwandan government, but they were denied," reported a correspondent for Voice of America in Kigali. Additionally, the Media High Council issues national press cards that are required for a journalist to cover any public function. The panel also noted that some government agencies favor radio outlets over print publications, as reflected by the journalists invited to their events.

The panelists reported that the government fully controls public media and that editorial independence does not exist.

The top management of public media are appointed by the government through the cabinet, who, in turn, appoints the lower cadres. The ruling party also appoints managers and editors of the main private media outlets, including *The New Times* and its French, Kinyarwanda, and weekly versions.

As in previous years, libel remains a criminal offense, and whoever is arrested and charged in courts of law must prove his or her innocence. In 2010, the panel noted that four journalists—Didas Gasan, Richard Kaigamba, and Charles Kabonero from *Umuseso* newspaper and John Bosco Gasasira of *Umuwigizi* newspaper—were charged with libel and lost the cases. The court ordered each media house to pay a fine of three million Rwandan francs (\$4,000). Kaigamba and Didas were also sentenced to six months in prison, a ruling that they appealed and of which they are awaiting the outcome. Kabonero's two-year suspended sentence has been in effect for almost a year now and is still on. The panelists

fear the diminishing independence of the judiciary, citing a report of the country's ombudsman, which ranked the judiciary as the second most corrupt institution next to police.

The panel reported that access to public information by the media has not changed from last year, in that the government has been reluctant to pass the Access to Information bill drafted two years ago into law. The delay is attributed to the failure of media stakeholders and the government to agree on what kind of information should be accessed by the journalists and who should be in charge of giving out this information.

However, as the situation stands today, the process to access information is lengthy and undefined. If the Access to Information act is passed, it should include clear provisions on how, where, and who should be charged with providing the government information.

The panelists added that today the police and the army each have only one spokesperson who provides minimal information. Ministries with public information officers and permanent secretaries charged with the responsibility of providing information in reality do not supply information, and it is instead only the ministers who speak, often for self-promotion. Even the members of parliament who represent the people refuse to give information to journalists, referring them instead to the speaker.

The panel agreed that citizens are free to access international news and that media houses are free to reprint or rebroadcast foreign material or programs, but the source must be cited or given credit. Foreign-language publications are also unrestricted, and only the cost prevented people from accessing them.

Internet access in Rwanda is the lowest in the region. The government has established telecenters in all 30 districts of Rwanda and has introduced mobile Internet buses to familiarize Rwandan citizens with the Internet.

The panel noted that entry into the profession is now more restricted. The new media law requires any new entrant to acquire some training and a certificate in journalism or communication from a recognized institution. However, for those who are practicing without these qualifications specified under the new law, a grace period of five years has been granted, which started in August 2009, in order to acquire formal training.

"We are happy that media houses have been stopped from recruiting people without qualification under the new law," said one of the panelists. "This will prevent free entry to the profession, promote good standards, and give opportunities to those with qualifications to get jobs."

OBJECTIVE 2: PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM

Rwanda Objective Score: 1.70

Panelists reported a dearth of objective, balanced, ethical reporting. They attributed this to a number of factors, including financial constraints, pressure from editors, lack of qualifications and skills, corruption due to poor pay, influence from external forces, and the exodus from the media profession.

However, the panelists agreed that Rwanda still has some journalists who do their work objectively, but they are often prevented by their editors from publishing or broadcasting these stories. Media-house politics often dictate the content, favoring propaganda over objective journalism.

A code of ethics is in place but is not respected by the majority of journalists, who continue to receive gifts and demand bribes from sources in exchange for positive coverage or to ignore incriminating news. The panelists said that the main reason journalists compromise their ethics is poor pay and lack of respect for the profession by the journalists themselves. "Trainings on ethics have been conducted, and associations like the Rwanda Ethics Commission and the Rwanda Journalists Association have been trying to implement the code of ethics, but in vain," added a panelist.

Self-censorship is very prevalent in Rwanda because journalists, including editors, have a persistent fear of the media's role in the genocide. The panelists noted that apart from this historical problem, journalists practice self-censorship for fear of losing their jobs and lives by

JOURNALISM MEETS PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS OF QUALITY.

PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM INDICATORS:

- > Reporting is fair, objective, and well sourced.
- > Journalists follow recognized and accepted ethical standards.
- > Journalists and editors do not practice self-censorship.
- > Journalists cover key events and issues.
- > Pay levels for journalists and other media professionals are sufficiently high to discourage corruption.
- > Entertainment programming does not eclipse news and information programming.
- > Technical facilities and equipment for gathering, producing, and distributing news are modern and efficient.
- > Quality niche reporting and programming exists (investigative, economics/business, local, political).

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printing information that goes against the editorial line of the media outlet or incriminates the current administration.

The media are free to cover most key events, but high-profile events are restricted to those with an invitation or national press cards. The panelists observed that there is no freedom to cover security-related issues or events, and those who have tried have faced the consequences.

Journalists, especially freelancers, have remained poorly paid in Rwanda, compared with other sectors, leading to rampant corruption in the media. Freelancers, on average, are paid \$100 per month, yet their colleagues working on permanent terms for big media houses earn about \$500 monthly.

Editors who work for big private media houses like *The New Times* earn \$1,000–1,200, but even some editors who are well-paid end up taking kickbacks to ensure that certain stories are run or not run, depending on the demands of the source.

The panel noted that there are some media houses that make journalists work for free and seek out payment from the source, leading to even more corruption. Journalists working for state media are paid better than those working for private media. However, the panelists reported that the disparity is high between editors and reporters in all media houses.

Entertainment takes up 90 percent of the space in broadcast media and news and information only 10 percent, while in print media news takes up the biggest amount of space, about 85 percent, reported the panelists. Radio listeners prefer music over information, and FM stations that play more music attract more advertising.

The equipment used for news gathering and dissemination is quite outdated. Many media houses still use old-fashioned cameras, recorders, and typewriters instead of computers.

This affects the quality of the final product and makes production unnecessarily time-consuming.

Niche reporting is weak mainly due to lack of proper training for many of the journalists. Those who have had a chance

to train and acquire skills lack facilities in which to carry out such work.

The panel recommended that media house owners invest in training journalists in such areas and also encourage them to specialize.

OBJECTIVE 3: PLURALITY OF NEWS

Rwanda Objective Score: 1.99

The panelists agreed that multiple news sources exist, including broadcast, print, and Internet, and that citizens have benefited from a variety of sources of information. Both print and broadcast media cover national and local issues, but rural areas mainly depend on electronic media, which is more affordable to them. Both national and local media are largely shaped by pro-government agendas.

Most media are concentrated in urban areas, and as such, urban populations have greater access to information than those in rural areas.

There is only one true community radio station in Rwanda: Radio Izuba. Radio Salus is a station operated by National University of Rwanda students and serves as a community station for Butaré. The other public stations are controlled by district authorities. The panelists noted that some citizens, especially in urban areas, also depend on the Internet for news and information and that the cost of using the Internet has dropped drastically.

MULTIPLE NEWS SOURCES PROVIDE CITIZENS WITH RELIABLE AND OBJECTIVE NEWS.

PLURALITY OF NEWS SOURCES INDICATORS:

- > A plurality of affordable public and private news sources (e.g., print, broadcast, Internet) exists.
- > Citizens' access to domestic or international media is not restricted.
- > State or public media reflect the views of the entire political spectrum, are nonpartisan, and serve the public interest.
- > Independent news agencies gather and distribute news for print and broadcast media.
- > Independent broadcast media produce their own news programs.
- > Transparency of media ownership allows consumers to judge objectivity of news; media ownership is not concentrated in a few conglomerates.
- > A broad spectrum of social interests are reflected and represented in the media, including minority-language information sources.

The government does not generally restrict access to either domestic or international media, but access either through the Internet or print is prohibitively expensive for the majority of citizens, especially in rural areas where income levels are very low. The government did block the online version of *Umuwugizi*, and *Umuseso's* English version, published in Uganda, was recently confiscated at the border.

Print editions of foreign newspapers are available on the Rwanda market and cost slightly more than the local newspapers, but they are still affordable.

The panelists reported that those who can afford cable or satellite television also have access to international news.

State media in Rwanda are fully controlled by the government, and all top management are appointed by the State, according to the panelists. In the interest of job security, most state media journalists produce government propaganda. However, it was noted that during the election period, the state media tried to balance their reporting by giving airtime and space to the opposition candidates in compliance with election laws. Nevertheless, positive coverage of the ruling party dominates most programming aired on state media, and the coverage of the opposition is overwhelmingly negative.

The panelists observed that public media broadcast public-service announcements, dedicating time to programs that cover issues that benefit the public in areas of health, education, culture, and environmental protection.

The panel reported that the Rwanda News Agency is the only independent news agency that exists after the closure of Internews. This news agency sells news only to subscribers at a rate of \$800 per month. Very few media houses use their services.

It was also noted that several international news agencies operate in Rwanda, including Reuters, AFP, and AP.

The majority of media houses produce their own fairly high-quality programs, noted the panelists, adding that some media houses also supplement their own content by buying foreign content, primarily entertainment programs and documentaries. Some broadcast media copy information from newspapers or other radio stations and run it verbatim without crediting the source.

News programs produced by private media are very different from those produced by public media, as they touch on social issues other than the government propaganda that dominates public media.

The panel noted that community broadcast media exist and have continued to growing their production of programming tailored to local needs.

Media ownership information is easily accessible because the minister of information requires ownership disclosure for registration, noted the panel. The ministry also publishes owners of media in newspapers. No media really represent the vast majority of the population. Most media outlets are owned by ruling party members or sympathizers. *Umuseso* and *Umuvigizi*, considered opposition outlets, are no exception, except that they represent a dissident faction of the ruling party—the faction of the generals who have taken refuge in other countries or been arrested or been victims of attempted murder. The panel also reported that there was only one foreign investor in Rwandan media this year—City Radio, owned by a Ugandan.

The panel reported that minority-language media and papers do not exist in Rwanda because everyone speaks Kinyarwanda to communicate, in addition to other common languages, such as French and English. Journalists do cover issues concerning the minority Batwa tribe. Social issues are covered in all media with no restriction, including issues related to marginalized populations. The panelists agreed that community media have been very effective in providing relevant information to the people and reflecting their unique social issues.

OBJECTIVE 4: BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Rwanda Objective Score: 1.60

The panelists agreed that most independent media houses are not well-managed, which has caused many outlets to collapse. A few that are well-managed have been successful because they employ professionals in appropriate positions. The rest are run as family businesses that employ relatives without qualifications.

In contrast, the panelists reported that state media employ professionals and are well-paid, but cases of embezzlement are common.

There are multiple revenue sources for private media, including from advertising, sales of copies and supplements, and bank loans. Some of these funding sources strongly influence the editorial line of the media house. The panelists reported that the government allocates advertising only to pro-government outlets, thereby weakening the voice of the opposition. The government also exerts total financial and editorial control over state media.

This year, several advertising firms opened in Rwanda but mainly in Kigali. The panel noted that these firms, which are both local and international, actively provide business to most media houses, both electronic and print.

This year, several advertising firms opened in Rwanda but mainly in Kigali. The panel noted that these firms, which are both local and international, actively provide business to most media houses, both electronic and print. Some of these firms double as public-relations companies and carry out promotional works for large companies. The panelists noted that big media houses have their own advertising departments to handle advertising and employ professionals who solicit advertising in addition to business from advertising firms. The panelists reported that advertising takes up the biggest portion of broadcast programming time—an estimated 80 percent. The panel noted that the global financial crisis has affected the media and that most newspapers have reduced the size of their publications because of the increased production costs. Many journalists fear losing their jobs.

The panel reported that there are no direct government subsidies to private media; however, tax exemptions have been extended to some outlets, which has influenced their editorial line. The panel reported that a media-development-fund initiative that had been proposed by the government last year was aborted without explanation.

INDEPENDENT MEDIA ARE WELL-MANAGED BUSINESSES, ALLOWING EDITORIAL INDEPENDENCE.

BUSINESS MANAGEMENT INDICATORS:

- > Media outlets and supporting firms operate as efficient, professional, and profit-generating businesses.
- > Media receive revenue from a multitude of sources.
- > Advertising agencies and related industries support an advertising market.
- > Advertising revenue as a percentage of total revenue is in line with accepted standards at commercial outlets.
- > Independent media do not receive government subsidies.
- > Market research is used to formulate strategic plans, enhance advertising revenue, and tailor products to the needs and interests of audiences.
- > Broadcast ratings and circulation figures are reliably and independently produced.

The panelists agreed that no significant media research has ever been carried out by an individual media house. Only a few media houses have tried informal methods to gauge audience opinion through call-ins during talk-show programs and questionnaires. Often the findings are never used.

Different media houses have continued to claim the lead in terms of audience and circulation in the absence of official audience measurements and circulation figures.

OBJECTIVE 5: SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS

Rwanda Objective Score: 1.87

The panelists noted that several associations exist but are of almost no use to its members. They cited the example of two newspapers, *Umuseso* and *Umuvugizi*, which were suspended by the government without any reaction from any of the associations.

The Association of Rwandan Journalists represents all journalists in theory. Its leadership is closely linked to the presidency and the Media High Council, and most activities organized in the past six months have been conducted by order of Kagame directly or the Media High Council. The board has been due for internal election for quite a while, but it has yet to be held. It is not expected that the elections will bring any independence from the administration. The panelists believe the association has become a money-making venture and pro-government in order to ensure its revenue stream. Its leaders have been accused of working directly for the state; they have never spoken out to defend journalists in trouble but instead always criticize them for being unprofessional.

SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS FUNCTION IN THE PROFESSIONAL INTERESTS OF INDEPENDENT MEDIA.

SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS INDICATORS:

- > Trade associations represent the interests of private media owners and provide member services.
- > Professional associations work to protect journalists' rights.
- > NGOs support free speech and independent media.
- > Quality journalism degree programs that provide substantial practical experience exist.
- > Short-term training and in-service training programs allow journalists to upgrade skills or acquire new skills.
- > Sources of newsprint and printing facilities are in private hands, apolitical, and unrestricted.
- > Channels of media distribution (kiosks, transmitters, Internet) are private, apolitical, and unrestricted.

The Press House was set up by the Panos Institute. Once funding ended, the organization was unable to carry out activities. The cost of the house that the association occupies together with ARJ is currently paid by the government. The leader of the Press House owns Contact FM in partnership with the First Lady's brother, is a member of the Media High Council Board of Directors, and has been due for replacement for several years. He is a strong and active supporter of Kagame.

The Association of Rwandan Women Journalists (ARFEM) is led by an editor at the state radio, who is also a member of the Media High Council Board of Directors and a strong supporter of the decision to suspend the two opposition newspapers.

The Rwanda Editors Forum, led by the former Great Lakes Media Centre director, tries to stay at arm's length from the government of Rwanda but has not conducted advocacy for greater media freedom.

The panelists believe that both the Rwanda Editors Forum and the Press House cater to the interests of media owners and are only concerned about taxes and the rights of the owners but not about the condition of working journalists in general.

Smaller associations include the Rwandese Independent Journalists Association, the Association of Rwanda Journalists Against Aids, the Environment Journalists Association of Rwanda, and other special-interest groups.

"Some of these associations have been turned into government arms and are being used by the state against some of us. Its leaders are agents of the government, and the only role they play is to praise the government for promoting press freedom, which is not even there," noted one of the journalists who has been persecuted by the government. Some of the editors and journalists working for these newspapers expressed fear for their lives, accusing the government of seeking revenge for exposing government corruption.

"We have done nothing wrong; our papers are independent and critical of the government. We cannot just sit back and watch the government messing up our country, harassing the opposition politicians, and grabbing the national resources," complained one of the journalists. "When we expose this in our media to government, it's a crime and this is why we were closed down."

The only association for independent journalists remains unregistered by the government because its founders or leaders are regarded as enemies of the state.

However, the panel reported that becoming a member of any of these associations is as simple as applying to the General Secretary, filling out a form, and paying the required membership fees, which vary from one association to another. But most of these associations are losing members, due in part to poor services.

Nongovernmental organizations working in the field of press freedom and freedom of speech exist, while others have supported media development programs and the media law reform process, reported the panelist.

One NGO listed includes the League for Human Rights in the Great Lakes Region (LDGL), which sends out alerts whenever there is a journalist in trouble. It also conducts surveys on the state of the media and publishes a report every two years. Other NGOs include Human Rights Watch, the Bar Association of Rwanda, and recently IREX, which helped in the process of drafting media laws and funded training and capacity-building programs.

The panel agreed that high-quality public and private media training institutions exist in Rwanda that offer degree and diploma courses, but that education standards are deteriorating. The two universities in Rwanda offering journalism degrees are the National University of Rwanda, which has a School of Journalism and Communications, and the Catholic University of Kabgayi. These institutions produce graduates seeking jobs with existing media houses but who are often unprepared for the work.

Training opportunities abroad are frequent. However, many trainees who return to Rwanda opt for jobs in other sectors in public-relations positions, which pay more than journalism jobs.

Free short-term training opportunities exist and are funded by international donors, the government, or media houses themselves, reported the panelists.

The panel noted that the most popular courses are news-gathering and professional ethics, while the most needed courses are investigative and niche reporting.

The panel noted that though newsprint and some printing facilities are in private hands and run as profit-generating businesses, they hardly benefit the newspaper industry because of their high costs. As an alternative, most private print media are printed for much lower prices in neighboring countries and imported back into the country with a 5 percent tax.

Newspapers that are critical of the government are monitored even at the printing stage. Some papers are censored at this stage and blocked from printing by certain printing presses

within the country. The government printing press that was being installed last year has not been completed because some parts were missing. Thus, no decline in printing prices is foreseen.

Media distribution channels, such as kiosks, supermarkets, and shops, are in private hands and are managed efficiently. Private broadcasters manage their own transmitters, but in case of any problem with the government, the state can switch them off without consulting the owner. The government also has its own transmitters, which are managed properly and in a nonpartisan manner, noted the panelists.

The Internet is neither restricted nor controlled by either the government or business conglomerates, though isolated cases of news sites being blocked have been reported.

List of Panel Participants

Kim Kamasa, managing editor *Izuba Rirashye*, Nyagatare

Abraham Roxy Rumanzi, *Focus*, Kigali

Edwin Musoni, journalist *The New Times*, Kigali

Muligande Sengabo Charles, journalist Rwanda News Agency, Kigali

Beatrice Kabiligi, journalist, *Expression Today*, Byumba Town

Jeanne d'arc Umwana, correspondent, Voice of America-Rwanda, Kigali

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