
Congolese journalists work under a cloud of fear, and resort to self-censorship to protect themselves in a country still plagued by corruption.



REPUBLIC OF CONGO

The celebratory air of the Republic of the Congo's 50th anniversary in 2011 could not mask its violent history. In total, about 10 coups have been followed by a great deal of deadly confrontations and political turbulence. This country of 4 million inhabitants was once again struck by tragedy on March 4, 2012, when an ammunition depot exploded in a neighborhood in Brazzaville, the capital, killing several hundred people.

Not one Congolese media outlet has conducted an extensive investigation to shed light on the cause of the tragedy, or the exact number of victims. Congolese journalists work under a cloud of fear, and resort to self-censorship to protect themselves in a country still plagued by corruption.

In this context, legislative elections took place during July and August 2012. The MSI panel discussion was held a few days after the elections. The panelists made clear that, despite the existence of a law decriminalizing press offenses, Congolese journalists suffer from harassment and persecution, and journalism remains a perilous career choice. To illustrate the risks faced by journalists, panelists recalled a case in Pointe-Noire, the economic capital and second-largest city in the republic. When a Business Radio Television camera operator attempted to film a polling station suspected of hiding voter lists, a military official assaulted him and broke his camera. Although the case was settled—meaning that the military agreed to pay for a new camera for BRTV—the gesture only materialized because BRTV happens to belong to a government official, General Dabira.

According to journalist Alain Orland M'Badinga, of Congolese magazine *The New Republic*, journalists are subjected to other types of pressure. Panelist Boukette Michel added, "Persecution is common in journalist circles, but goes unpunished because the perpetrators are often under the protection of certain authorities."

Given the hostile environment for the media, Congolese journalists survive through self-censorship—not only for their own safety, but to preserve their friendships with government officials, who own 80 percent of the lucrative media outlets. This is the price that journalists pay to keep their jobs, especially in the public media. The panelists gave the example of a journalist at the national television station (Télé-Congo) who was relieved of his duties for failing to comply with this "law of silence" and airing an interview with an opponent of the regime. The panelists said that print media are considered slightly freer than broadcast media, but are far poorer and thus not as influential.

REPUBLIC OF CONGO AT A GLANCE

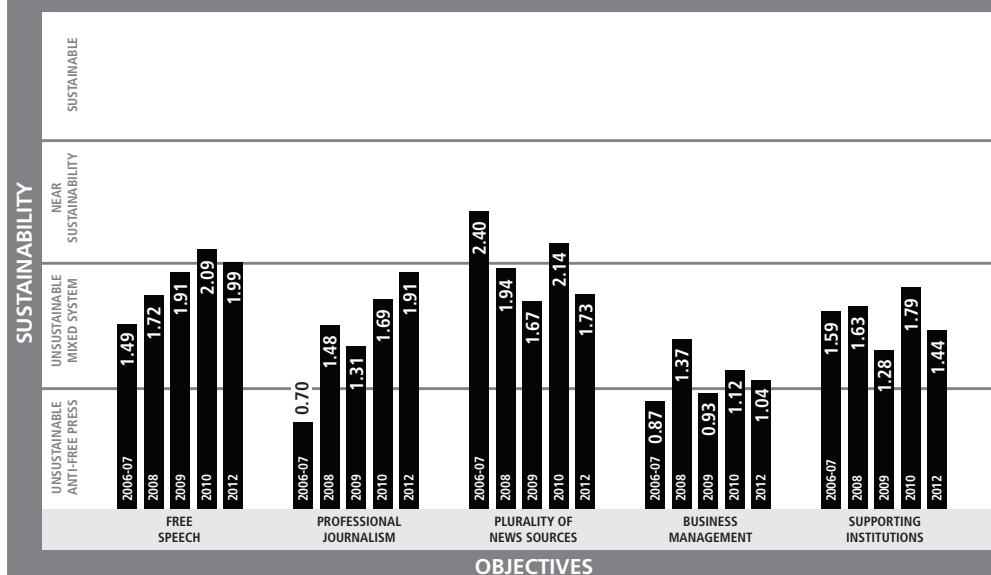
GENERAL

- > **Population:** 4,366,266 (July 2012 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Capital city:** Brazzaville
- > **Ethnic groups:** Kongo 48%, Sangha 20%, M'Bochi 12%, Teke 17%, Europeans and other 3% (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Religions (% of population):** Christian 50%, animist 48%, Muslim 2% (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Languages:** French (official), Lingala and Monokutuba (lingua franca trade languages), many local languages and dialects (of which Kikongo is the most widespread) (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **GNI (2011-Atlas):** \$9.417 billion (World Bank Development Indicators, 2012)
- > **GNI per capita (2011-PPP):** \$3,280 (World Bank Development Indicators, 2012)
- > **Literacy rate:** 83.8% (male 89.6% female, 78.4%) (2003 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **President or top authority:** President Denis Sassou-Nguesso (since October 25, 1997)

MEDIA-SPECIFIC

- > **Number of active print outlets, radio stations, television stations:** Print: 1 daily newspaper (*Dépêches de Brazzaville*), 50 private newspapers (only a handful appear regularly), 10 weekly magazines; Radio Stations: 18, including Radio Liberté; Television Stations: 10 channels
- > **Newspaper circulation statistics:** N/A
- > **Broadcast ratings:** N/A
- > **News agencies:** Congolese News Agency (state-owned)
- > **Annual advertising revenue in media sector:** N/A
- > **Internet usage:** 245,200 (2009 est., *CIA World Factbook*)

MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX REPUBLIC OF CONGO



Unustainable, 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.

Unustainable 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

Republic of Congo Objective Score: 1.99

While the overall score for this objective changed only slightly from last year's study, some significant shifts occurred at the indicator level. The ease of market entry plunged sharply, and there was also significant regression in the areas of legal protection for editorial independence, libel, and access to public information. The lone bright spot was the media's access to and use of local and international news sources, which improved enough to climb into the sustainable zone.

Although flagrant violations of press freedom and violence against journalists are becoming increasingly rare, organizations defending journalists point to several insidious obstacles that hinder the development of a free and independent press. Most significantly, political pressure, threats, and intimidation all fuel the prevailing force of self-censorship.

The panelists acknowledged that the republic has laws to support a free press. Law 8-2001 of November 12, 2001 confirms rights regarding the freedom of information and communication. The merits of this law include the liberalization of the radio-television sector as well as the decriminalization of press offenses. Other statutes include Law 15, on the plurality of the broadcast media; a media professionals' charter; and the 2002 Congolese constitution itself.

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.

Ninety percent of the broadcast media sector is owned by state officials or government allies, and they are not subject to any real fiscal pressures, said the panelists.

However, in explaining the constraints and difficulties in applying these laws, some panelists lamented the absence of regulations to implement them. According to Guy Vourgardi, a historian with an interest in the media, "The laws exist, but they are not enforced in the Congo."

In some cases, the law is skirted completely. For example, Law 8-2001 prohibits censorship, stating: "Access to information sources is free, censorship is prohibited, and no one will be bothered due to his/her ideas or opinions." And yet, as panelists reported in previous studies, it is common for journalists—especially in the state media—to receive inappropriate phone calls from parties seeking to block a particular story. Other journalists have lost their jobs for allowing reports on the political opposition to air.

The body responsible for issuing new press licenses is the Higher Council on the Freedom of Communications (known by its French acronym, CSLC), a media regulatory agency that is subservient to the government. Broadcast licenses are usually allocated to media controlled by people close to the authorities, Vourgardi added, echoing the findings of previous MSI studies. While the republic has a court appeals process for media outlets that are denied a license, many Congolese do not trust the judicial system and see little point in pursuing appeals.

The broadcasting sector has been liberalized, but according to one panelist, the move was only designed to offer up lucrative broadcast media investment opportunities to individuals close to the government—such as ministers, deputies, and generals. Ninety percent of the broadcast media sector is owned by state officials or government allies, and they are not subject to any real fiscal pressures, said the panelists. The publisher of *Le Manager* admitted that for the last five years, he has not paid anything to the state. Vourgardi concluded, "Taxation of the media does not exist, because it belongs to the politicians in power—who are, in this context, judge and jury."

Compared to other central African countries, serious crimes against journalists are rare, mainly because most media are aligned with the government. However, journalists working for the few private media outlets do endure occasional attacks. The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) reported

an attack in Brazzaville on September 17, 2012. According to CPJ, security agents assaulted a video journalist, Sylvie Ndinga, who was working for the private broadcaster MNTV. The agents also detained Yvon Le Pape, an MNTV reporter, for several hours. CPJ wrote that the journalists were covering a high-profile property dispute between a government official and an expatriate business owner, and security agents arrived to disperse the crowd. As a December 2012 CPJ article described, "One officer grabbed Ndinga's camera and smashed it against a wall in an attempt to destroy the footage. Ndinga told CPJ that three other men attacked her as she tried to retrieve her camera. She said her shirt was torn in the attack and her camera was confiscated."¹

Private media outlets are also targeted for other forms of harassment and intimidation. In December 2011, CSLC suspended two private weeklies (*L'Amicale* and *La Voix Du Peuple*) for publishing articles critical of government officials. According to CPJ, "The CSLC accused *L'Amicale* of 'incitement to division and tribal and ethnic hatred, endangering peace, cohesion and national unity,' and violations of journalism ethics over two columns that criticized the prevalence of northerners from [Mbochi,] President Denis Sassou-Nguesso's ethnic group, in powerful government positions, according to local journalists." CLC also said that *La Voix Du Peuple* defamed the president's nephew and provoked civil and tribal conflict with an article that alleged nepotism and abuse of power by Mbochi members.²

Concerning the managerial structure for public media, panelists explained that the minister of communications appoints public media directors based on political affiliation, and that this practice negatively impacts editorial independence. Despite legal protections guaranteeing their independence, public media journalists are not often in a position to challenge their supervisors.

As for CSLC, one panelist said that it serves as the arm of press repression. It harasses journalists and interferes with the media's work by issuing a slew of warnings and sanctions against media professionals. Although journalists are spared from prison sentences as a punishment for libel, they still face lawsuits, intimidation, and other repercussions if they publish

¹ "Journalist attacked, another briefly detained in Congo." Committee to Protect Journalists. December 3, 2012. <https://www.cpj.org/2012/12/journalists-harassed-briefly-detained-in-congo.php>

² "Two Brazzaville weeklies suspended; CPJ seeks reversal." Committee to Protect Journalists. December 20, 2011. <https://www.cpj.org/2011/12/two-brazzaville-weeklies-suspended-cpj-seeks-rever.php>

news that does not flatter the authorities. Vourgardi said, "In practice, libel and its adjudication are controlled by the political class, whose treatment of journalists depends on the journalist's political views."

Similarly, although journalists are not jailed, they are brought before tribunals and the state courts. The panelists gave the example of the *Tam-Tam Africa* editor who was arrested and charged in a Brazzaville court for criticizing a judge. The editor waited in vain for the complainant to appear at the hearing, and the case was dismissed for the complainant's failure to appear.

Access to official information can be troublesome, given that such access is not protected by law. The government prefers releasing information to and through the state media, as opposed to the private and independent media. Journalists rely on their political connections to acquire the information they need.

Media access to news sources is not restricted by law and the government does not block access to foreign or domestic media. With ever-improving Internet access, more and more journalists are able to obtain news online—which factored into the improvement in scores for indicator 8 (media's access to local and international news).

Entry into the profession is relatively free as well, but the panelists noted that working conditions and low salaries are clear practical restrictions. CLSC issues press cards, but except for certain official events, journalists are not required to have a license to conduct reporting. As noted in last year's MSI, the government is not involved in the recruitment of journalists in the private media, but aspiring public media journalists must have a journalism degree and meet eligibility requirements for public service.

The panelists concluded that the republic has laws in place to guide the media, but application is subject to the will of the people with political power and money—who value neither a free media nor independent journalists. This elite group has been able to monopolize the media and control programming in part because access to public information is not regulated by any particular law. Tsiba Dieudonné of Canal FM (a rural radio station) concluded, "The media in the Congo is reserved territory: it is biased toward those in the government."

OBJECTIVE 2: PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM

Republic of Congo Objective Score: 1.91

The panelists agreed that Congolese journalism is not at all professional in terms of quality and content, despite the existence of media standards set by professional organizations. Journalism is neither objective nor documented, and the trend is worsening. As Shungu Godelieve Nana of DRTV Internationale admitted, “In the Congo, the journalist has lost all credibility, and despite the fact that a code does exist, journalists ignore it. This is because anyone can easily be considered a ‘journalist,’ without training, just for being a relative of the boss, or through seniority—regardless of their intellectual ability.”

In the same vein, Dieudonné commented, “Journalism in the Congo seems, in minimal terms, to meet professional standards on the surface. But in truth, the quality is not there.” Dieudonné added that journalists are perceived to be biased in their choice of subjects.

The panelists said that the weakness of professional and self-regulatory associations in the republic contribute to this problem. In general, they said, Congolese journalists do not like the idea of joining together to form a stronger group. They also attribute professional deficiencies to the rampant corruption and to journalists’ subjugation to the financially and politically powerful.

The panelists said that many journalists practice self-censorship under the guise of complying with ethics. As journalist Mayela of Digital Radio Télévision explained, “Journalists practice self-censorship to preserve the peace.”

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).

“Journalists do not have the freedom to address key issues, simply because some seem to be taboo, or they are likely to expose certain leaders,” Shungu Godelieve Nana said.

The panelists recounted the case of a journalist from Dolisie, in the Niari region, who filmed a press conference of a politician during the first round of the legislative elections in July 2012. He refused to process and distribute it, however, under the pretext that the speech was violent, harsh, and threatening toward his challenger in the recent legislative elections. Some panelists said that the journalist should have distributed the footage, out of respect for informational pluralism—but instead, he caved to pressure and abandoned journalistic standards.

The pervasive self-censorship disallows the public from becoming informed on sensitive subjects such as the management of oil wealth, sanitation, unjust enrichment, and corruption. Journalists commonly stick to simply relaying events, missing the opportunity to inspire reflection or awaken the citizenry. Ultimately, the panelists agreed that Congolese journalists avoid dealing with key societal issues (such as human rights, democracy, governance, public finance management cover, and gender) and instead content themselves with peddling official information. “Journalists do not have the freedom to address key issues, simply because some seem to be taboo, or they are likely to expose certain leaders,” Shungu Godelieve Nana said.

The panelists emphasized that neither private nor public journalists are well paid. Vougari, backed by other panelists, held the view that this reality disposes journalists strongly to corruption. Although the republic has a collective agreement to improve journalist salaries in the private press, publishers and promoters largely ignore this convention.

In terms of the technical equipment available to the media, the state media are receiving upgraded equipment—but not necessarily the training that should accompany it. The private sector is still in great need of equipment and technological assistance. As noted in last year’s study, this is a major constraint to any effort for private media to attain national coverage, and many outlets thus are not able to produce quality work.

Social and environmental issues (land use, nature conservation, and sustainable management of forests) are also neglected by the media. Some panelists noted that journalists cannot earn any money covering such topics, and this explains their lack of interest in those issues.

Specialization or investigative journalism does not exist in the country, some panelists maintained. They pointed again to the example of the media's failure to investigate the source of the March 2012 ammunition depot explosion. On the other hand, radio and television outlets in particular no longer hesitate to broadcast material from international news sources.

OBJECTIVE 3: PLURALITY OF NEWS

Republic of Congo Objective Score: 1.73

With about 20 television stations, 40 radio stations, and 20 newspapers, the Republic of Congo has a facade of pluralism, while in reality accommodating only a single line of thinking

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.

and preventing any voice from emerging that is discordant with the president. "Media pluralism does exist, but it offers a limited diversity of opinions," said *New Republic* reporter Alain Orland M'Badinga.

International watchdog group Freedom House reported that most Congolese still get their news from television and radio, while many private television channels are owned by government officials. A recent Freedom House publication noted, "Print media are more independent and critical, occasionally publishing letters from opposition leaders, but are heavily concentrated in Brazzaville and do not reach far into rural parts of the country."³

On the new media front, the government does not restrict Internet and satellite television, but neither medium is widely used. The republic has no particular law regulating access to national or international media as sources of information. The panelists stressed that financial limitations, illiteracy, and the recurring interruptions of electricity supply are major hindrances to access, but they also pointed out that the country has seen some improvement in this area.

The panelists agreed that radio and television media, such as the state-run Télé-Congo, only broadcast official information because public institutions pay media more for airing reports than other sources.

The Republic of the Congo has no private news agencies. According to M'Badinga, journalists and the media make only very limited use of international agencies. Recourse to foreign news agencies through the Internet is often the *modus operandi* of the print media.

Local media outlets are in operation in different regions, but their productions are neither ongoing nor regular. Regional media simply do not have the means to create their own local programs.

The panelists also pointed out the absence of genuine local news gathering, with outlets instead disseminating mostly official information. Specific topics such as the conditions of women, children, the disabled, and tourism are only covered during major events, sporadically, and without thorough documentation.

Social and environmental issues (land use, nature conservation, and sustainable management of forests) are also neglected by the media. Some panelists noted that

³ Congo, Republic of (Brazzaville). Freedom of the Press 2012. <http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2012/congo-republic-brazzaville>

journalists cannot earn any money covering such topics, and this explains their lack of interest in those issues.

Regarding coverage of minority issues, M'Badinga commented, "The media do not attach enough importance to the question(s) concerning minorities." However, according to Freedom House, "Congo's first community radio station, Radio Biso na Biso, launched in 2009, serves predominantly rural communities in the Congo Basin in 12 indigenous languages."⁴

OBJECTIVE 4: BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Republic of Congo Objective Score: 1.04

Again this year, Objective 4 scored the lowest of all indicators, staying in the unsustainable, anti-free-press range. Neither media professionals nor the government show much evidence of movement to improve the conditions.

The panelists acknowledged that none of the public or private Congolese media can be described as well-managed companies that allow for editorial independence. In fact, many publishers and radio and television station operators do not even keep business records, panelists charged. The arbitrary and highly politicized process governing appointments of state media journalists is exacerbated by the media's failure to follow managerial procedures. The poor management, in turn, deters potential investors from the sector.

⁴ IBID.

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 shrinking advertising market is also related to the absence of reliable market or ratings studies.

Last year's MSI noted that typically, advertisers favor television outlets over newspaper or radio, and newspapers especially struggle because printing costs eat up what profits they can eke out. Newspapers are forced to set prices that are too high for most consumers. The exception is the pro-government *Les Depeches de Brazzaville*, which costs an estimated XAF 100 (\$0.20) per copy. It manages to set prices far below other newspapers and magazines, estimated between CFA 500 and 2,000 (\$1.00 and \$4.00).

Advertising is scarce and rudimentary, which the panelists said stems from the lack of companies capable of sponsoring broadcast productions. The few public companies that buy advertising space at low rates are used as bait by the government to keep the media in line—media managers know that if they criticize the state, they risk losing the advertising business.

Furthermore, the republic has no advertising agencies or associated business that could help support an advertising market. Instead, most advertisers negotiate the terms of ads directly with media outlets.

Most of the panelists agreed that the Congolese government does not provide any subsidies to the private media, but Mahinga Rufin, publisher of *Le Manager*, said that a few isolated cases of aid do exist. The panel, however, cautioned that state payments to media have the potential to compromise editorial independence. This is tempered, however, by the reality that the republic has so few truly private media outlets.

The shrinking advertising market is also related to the absence of reliable market or ratings studies. Rufin said that if market studies are rare, ratings and circulation figures simply do not exist—as indicated by the dismal scores for the relevant indicators. This opaqueness transfers to the Internet as well; there are no reliable Internet figures or convincing statistics to help inform media-buying decisions.

Ngoma-Manima went so far as to say that NGOs that support free speech and an independent media do not exist in any meaningful way.

OBJECTIVE 5: SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS

Republic of Congo Objective Score: 1.44

The scores for this objective dipped dramatically compared to the previous year's study. Significant regression occurred in the indicators for trade and professional associations, as well as for the channels of media distribution, which became more political, restricted, and controlled.

After the previous study, panelists lamented the lack of media trade and press associations, and there are no signs of progress in developing such institutions. Although the panelists recognized that such institutions are critical to a healthy media sector, according to journalist Sandrine Ngoma-Manima, "no association or organization supports those in charge of media outlets." Past MSI panels have named several organizations, including Association des Editeurs de Presse du Congo, and the Association des Promoteurs des Radios Privés du Congo. But panelists said that most of the organizations live largely on paper and that true professional associations do not exist in the republic. They said that the Congolese Media Observatory is an exception, but it does not have the support of all news and communications professionals. Consequently, the Congolese media have no specific organizations to help defend and

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.

promote press freedom. The 2012 panelists noted that over the years, more than 20 professional associations have appeared in the country. Starved of support and funding, though, they never seem to last very long.

The 2012 MSI study named several local NGOs that support media freedom, including the Congolese Human Rights Observatory and Association Panafricaine Thomas Sankara. In the past, they have provided legal support to journalists and collaborated with international press freedom organizations. However, some of the panelists held the belief that NGO contributions to media development have been weak. Ngoma-Manima went so far as to say that NGOs that support free speech and an independent media do not exist in any meaningful way.

In the past, some international NGOs have provided support for training and community radio development. In 2010, the communication ministry and United Nations Population Fund teamed up to offer specialized training to journalists in covering health issues, particularly HIV/AIDS.

The panelists agreed that degree programs in journalism are available, but do not provide substantial practical experience. As noted in previous MSI studies, Marien N'Gouabi University and Ecole Nationale Moyenne d'Administration both offer training programs, but only in Brazzaville, and the university lacks a media lab. Any on-the-job training is mostly private and offers little in the way of practical skills. There are short-term training opportunities for journalists in large cities, such as those that the United Nations Human Rights Center offers, but often those in the hinterland are marginalized.

The government does not control private media radio transmitters. The republic has a few printing houses that operate relatively freely, but some printing houses refuse to print certain papers. Panelists also decried the pronounced lack of distribution channels, and noted that no newspaper delivery services or press houses exist. The Congolese media still depend heavily on Kinshasa for supplies. All sources of technical equipment, along with paper and newsprint, are imported.

New media technologies, such as SMS text messaging news services, are not yet available to the Congolese media. The panelists concluded that the communications and technology infrastructure does not meet the needs of the citizens—explaining the slumped scores for indicator 8 (information and communication technology infrastructure sufficiently meets the needs of media and citizens).

List of Panel Participants

Sandrine Ngoma Manima, journalist, Niari County Council on Community Radio, Dolisie

Dieudonné Tsiba, journalist, Canal FM, Brazzaville

Guy Vougaridi, historian, Brazzaville

Espérance Akira Huguet, journalist, TV for All, Pointe-Noire

Pascal Boukete, administrator, Central African Media Organization, Brazzaville

Mayela, journalist, Digital Radio Télévision, Brazzaville

Orland Alain M'Badinga, journalist, *New Republic*, Brazzaville

Sylvie Nadège Mfoutou Banga, judge, Organization for Development and Human Rights in Congo, Brazzaville

Rufin Mahinga, editor, *The Manager*, Brazzaville

Wilfrid Loutoun Gadio Kanga, journalist, *Le Défi Africain*, Brazzaville

Roger Virama Polte, journalist, Radio Pointe-Noire, Pointe-Noire

Nana Shungu Godelive, producer/presenter, Digital Radio Télévision, Brazzaville

Moderator and Author

Jean Bruno Mitsoko, member, *Observatoire Congolais des Médias*, Brazzaville

The Republic of Congo study was coordinated by, and conducted in partnership with, Journaliste en Danger, Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo. The panel discussion was convened on August 8, 2012.