



Research and Technological
Exchange Group

Media Status Report: Burundi

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MEDIA CLUSTER

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Media Status Report: Burundi

I. GEOPOLITICAL CONTEXT

Will the signatures placed on a document on 28 August 2000 in Arusha be enough to cure Burundi's ills?

With its 27,830 km², Burundi is one of the smallest countries on the African continent, only slightly larger than its neighbour, Rwanda, with which it has much in common. Like "twins", these two countries share the pain of a bloody decade marked by genocide and "hate media".

While it is not the main subject of this document, a brief overview of past and recent history in this country in the Great Lakes Region is useful.

If "up until the beginning of European colonialism, the inhabitants of these two countries lived together, as one people, speaking the same language and practising the same religion, whose physical differences (size, skin colour, etc.) that they attribute to each other are, for the interested parties themselves, far from being as obvious as one pretends"¹, independence (1 July 1962) seemed to release demons hidden in the hearts of the population. In October 1965, an attempted coup d'état directed by Hutu politicians and soldiers was followed by massacres of Tutsi farmers by Hutu farmers in the area currently known as Bukeye. In April 1972, the Tutsi massacres directed by the political class and Hutu officers were atrociously quelled. In retaliation, more than one hundred thousand Hutu were massacred and others took refuge in neighbouring countries and a few in Europe. The gap between the Hutu and Tutsi communities became a chasm. In August 1988, new Tutsi massacres were committed by Hutu in Ntega and Marangara near the Rwanda border. The tribalist movement, PALIPEHUTU, claimed responsibility for these massacres. Major Pierre Buyoya who had replaced Colonel Jean-Baptiste Bagaza at the leadership of the country since 3 September 1987, took note of the event and launched a policy of national reconciliation which led to the Charter of National Unity which was promulgated on 5 February 1991 following its adoption by popular referendum. Then the door was opened for the 1993 presidential elections, the landslide victory of Melchior Ndadaye from the *Front pour la Démocratie du Burundi* (FRODEBU) and the Hutu (who make up 85% of the population) rise to power.

¹ Christian Delacampagne, *De l'Indifférence. Essai sur la banalisation du mal*. (Odile Jacob: 1998. p. 174) citing the book *Rwanda : généalogie d'un génocide* by Dominique Franche (Editions Mille et Une Nuits: 1997).

However, this democratic euphoria was short-lasting—on 21 October 1993, the dream fell to pieces with the assassination of the first democratically elected president, Melchior Ndadaye, and large-scale massacres. From 21 to 25 October 1993, between 50,000 and 100,000 Burundians were massacred.

The country has not been at peace since then and neither the return to power of Major Pierre Buyoya on 25 July 1996, nor the inter-Burundian negotiations in Arusha that began in June 1998, nor the signature of the Arusha Peace Accord on 28 August 2000² have put an end to the war or started a period of peace, stability and economic revival in the country. Violence and attacks are still the daily lot of Burundian populations until the fragile peace process can be transferred to Burundi itself and a peace plan can be implemented.

II. THE MEDIA LANDSCAPE

1. Anaemic Written Press

Today, Burundian written press is searching for its identity and a second wind. Its apogee is behind it but then so are the darkest pages of its history.

1.1 Poisoned Spring

The Burundian press's hour of glory was during the 1993 democratic elections—roughly forty newspapers saw the day beside *Renouveau du Burundi*, a government daily created in 1978, and *Ndongezi*³. They were political party newspapers and independent newspapers who all felt that they were contributing to the implementation of media pluralism and the strengthening of democracy.

The assassination of President Ndadaye marked the end of illusions concerning this press. Burundi press during the democratic spring was animated by the defence of political and ethnic interests and blighted by "the venom of hate"⁴. At the end of 1993, both on the Tutsi and Hutu sides, hate-filled publications proliferated. Out of 22 newspapers appearing regularly in Burundi at the end of 1994, fifteen had been created after the October 1993 coup d'état and were, usually, resolutely committed to extremist solutions. Their style was aggressive and defamatory, inciting openly to racial hatred and murder and playing heavily on ancestral fear and resentment. All this was true not only of the written press but also of broadcasting.⁵

² On that date, 19 parties accepted, despite a certain number of reservations, to sign the political peace accord forced out of them by Nelson Mandela; at that date, 4 of the most extremist groups refused to sign but they finally did on 20 September 2000 (in Nairobi).

³ *Ndongezi*, a fortnightly newspaper published by the Burundi Catholic Church, was founded in 1940; in 1979, the Bagaza regime outlawed its publication and the newspaper had to wait until 1998 for its publication to be authorised once again.

⁴ To use the title given by RSF to the study undertaken by Barnabé Ndarishikanye and Jean-François Dupaquier, *Burundi, le venin de la haine. Etude sur les médias extrémistes*, Reporters without Borders (RSF) with the support of the European Commission, 1995.

⁵ 1995 Annual Report (on freedom of the press around the world), Reporters without Borders.

In this context, the *Association burundaise des journalistes* (ABJ) and above all the *Association pour la promotion et la protection de la liberté de la presse* (APPLE) feel very isolated in their struggle for "quality Burundian press".

1.2 The Renewal of Independent Press

They were supported notably by UNESCO who contribute to the organisation of seminars and meetings for journalists from different sides which led to salutary awareness-raising and the creation of the Burundi *Maison de la Presse*⁶.

In 1998 – 1999 Burundian written press was limited to four newspapers: *Le Renouveau du Burundi* and *Ubumwe* both belonging to the State and respectively a French-language daily and Kirundi-language weekly; *Ndongozi y' Uburundi*, a fortnightly newspaper published in Kirundi by the Burundi Catholic Church; and *L'Avenir* published by Mr. Donatien Nyambirigi, a news and analysis weekly created in July 1997 (Mr. Nyambirigi is also a journalist at the *Agence Burundaise de Presse*).

Since the beginning of 1999, 13 new publications have been certified by the *Conseil National de la Communication*. However, out of these, only the following are to be found more or less regularly on the market: the weekly *La Vérité*; the fortnightly newspapers *Umunywangi Infop* and *La Lumière*; and an economic magazine, *Great Lakes' Business News*.

With the exception of the latter (printed on A4 sheets and sold for 2,000 Burundi francs⁷), the *Renouveau* (prepared like a tabloid but reduced by the printer to 280 x 320 mm format and sold for 100 Burundi francs) and the *Ndongozi* (sold for 50 Burundi francs), Burundian newspapers have adopted a twelve-page tabloid format and sell for 600 Burundi francs.

Only the Catholic newspaper *Ndongozi* is published in Kirundi; all the others use French, thus revealing their distribution zone (almost exclusively the capital Bujumbura) and their public (civil servants, international organisation and embassy staff and a small group of educated Burundians). In addition, press runs seem very limited—probably a few hundred copies (500?), a thousand or so for *L'Avenir* according to its publisher. *Le Renouveau*, the only daily, seems to have 1,200-copy press runs. *Ndongozi*, sold for only 50 Burundi francs, is the only newspaper distributed across the country thanks to the network of parishes and missions and yet its press runs have fallen from more than 5,000 copies to 3,200 copies.

One must wonder about the independence of private press. Faced with a lack of material, financial and human means⁸, private press is often the work on one individual with occasional help from freelancers; these publishers and journalists earn their livings through other jobs⁹. And who would be willing to bet on these newspapers' total financial independence from politicians and businessmen?

The mainspring of pluralism and a tool for democratisation, the Burundi written press's weaknesses are poor quality writing and a lack of editorial vision. In a country where illiteracy is very wide-spread (65% of the population on average, 77.5% among women), where all inputs must be imported and are heavily taxed, and where free circulation within the country is

⁶ a press centre

⁷ 1 Burundi franc = 1.0628 CFA francs

⁸ It is interesting to note that the private newspapers (with the exception of *Ndongozi*), are prepared (typesetting and layout) and have their head offices and postal addresses at the *Maison de la Presse*.

⁹ Most publishers and journalists in the private press are also employed by the public media at the same time.

far from ensured, the Burundi press has a long road to travel in order to reach professional maturity and become an economic activity that would allow its promoters to dedicate themselves fully to the press.

1.3 News Agencies: Are They an Original Response to an Unfavourable Economic Context?

Next to the *Agence Burundaise de Presse*, with its surprising imbalance between its daily production (4 pages and a few radio announcements) and its human resources (roughly thirty agents, half of which are permanent domestic correspondents), *Net Press* seems to be an exception in the written press landscape.

Net Press is a agency that distributes news daily in French and English by fax and e-mail to its 150 subscribers, many of whom belong to the Burundi diaspora and accept to pay US\$ 200 per year. However, the quality of its writing is poor and *Net Press* is not safe from certain abuses of language such as when, for example, it qualified armed Hutu groups as "genocidal terrorists".

Nevertheless, the *Net Press* experiment inspires other press publishers who see in it a way to make their opinion heard while avoiding expensive printers' bills and distribution headaches. This is the case of the *Azania* agency created in 1997 and the more recent *Expresso-Le Patriote au quotidien* agency. The latter is in fact produced by the publisher of an irregularly appearing weekly, *Le Patriote*. Unlike *Net Press* who has considerable and adequate computer equipment, the publisher of *Expresso* uses the computer equipment and offices of a family member who has gone into business. However, this situation dangerously undermines the press business.

2. Broadcast Media

In such a largely rural country whose population is dispersed in the hills and confronted with basic survival needs, radio is certainly the most efficient and most appropriate means of communication and information. 85% of the population owns a radio receiver and listening is much easier for a widely illiterate population.

2.1 Public Broadcasting

The Burundi State is the largest broadcaster in the country with one television channel and two radio stations. The national radio stations and television channel are grouped together in an office with commercial and industrial status called *Radio Télévision Nationale du Burundi* (RTNB) and placed under the tutelage of the Minister of Communication.

According to the 1999 annual report on human rights in Burundi published by the Burundi human rights league, Iteka,¹⁰ "the public news media have made considerable progress in the past 15 years. It is true that they had a long way to go. Today, it has become normal—in a labour conflict or in complaint of a government measure—to hear on public radio or see on national television opposing trends expressing their opinions. The progress is timid and slow but real. However, large areas of liberty remain to be conquered. RTNB continues to

¹⁰ Special issue of the *Iteka* bulletin, May 2000.

censure content without true rules of reference and often by attempting to modulate the programming.

2.2 Private Broadcasting

Since the promulgation of the executive order n°1/01 dated 4 February 1992 governing Burundi press that ended the State monopoly on radio and television broadcasting, private or associative radio projects have been born: *Radio CCIB-FM+*, *Radio Umwizero*, *Radio Culture*, and *Télé 10*¹¹.

Created on 16 June 1995, *CCIB FM+* is the first private radio station to broadcast in Burundi since the liberalisation of the airwaves in 1992. It is a private radio station that belongs to the *Chambre de Commerce, d'Industrie, d'Agriculture et d'Artisanat* (CCIB). A primarily musical and entertainment radio station, it finances its activities mainly through advertising.

With the exception of the national radio station, the most-listened-to Burundian radio station is without a doubt *Radio Umwizero* whose audience, according to a recent study, is said to be 41.50% of the population. It was created in 1996 by the *Association pour l'Action Humanitaire* (AAH) thanks notably to funding from the European Commission. After the withdrawal of AAH, *Radio Umwizero* now belongs to the *Association Radio Sans Frontière* (ARF). With a membership made up of radio journalists and producers, this non-profit association under Burundi law received its radio equipment in November 1999 from the European Delegation in Burundi after one year of litigation with another Burundian association (the *Association pour la Radio Umwizero* made up essentially of media non-professionals who claim ownership of the radio station). *Radio Umwizero* has remained faithful to its founders' programming and editorial line—working for reconciliation and peace among Burundians.

2.3 Production Studios

Radio programme production studios must also be cited to complete this overview: *Studio Ijambo*, *Studio Tubane* and *Studio Trans World Radio-Burundi*. The latter is a local branch station of the religious radio station, *Trans World Radio*, that broadcasts in southern Africa on short wave. However, the Bujumbura studios produce notably educational programmes in French, Kirundi and Kiswahili that are broadcast by *Radio Nationale du Burundi*.

*A few lines taken from the Search for Common Ground Web site*¹² *on Studio Ijambo deserve to be quoted:*

Studio Ijambo was launched as a radio production centre in Bujumbura, Burundi in May 1995. In a nation and region in which radio is the most widely used and influential means of mass communication (our listener survey conducted for this evaluation indicates that 99.98 percent of Burundians consider themselves to be regular radio listeners), Ijambo (which means "wise words" in Kirundi) was seen as a direct response to the "hate radio" being used to format violence, killing, and genocide.

Search for Common Ground established Burundi's first independent radio studio, Studio Ijambo, in May 1995, at a time when hate radio was promoting fear and mistrust, and had

¹¹ *Télé 10* is not a television station; it is a company that sells satellite television reception equipment.

¹² <http://www.cgponline.org/studios/Ijambo/index.htm>

fuelled the massacre of hundreds of thousands in neighbouring Rwanda. Studio Ijambo employs a staff of 15 people, both Hutu and Tutsi, producing about 15 hours a week of news, public affairs, and cultural programming. The studio also produces a radio drama featuring a Hutu family and a Tutsi family who live next door to each other. Entitled Ababanyi Ni Tebwe (Our Neighbours, Ourselves), the production describes the trials and tribulations of these neighbours and how, in the end, they reconcile their differences. Indeed the main objective of Studio Ijambo is to create programming to bridge the ethnic gap... [and] heal and restore peace in the Great Lake Region.

Studio Ijambo reaches an estimated 12 million people throughout the Great Lakes Region. It has earned a reputation for unbiased and responsible reporting, with its broadcasts used regularly by Radio Nationale du Burundi, Radio Umwizero, and other news organisations such as Reuters, the BBC, and Voice of America, or the Banque des Programmes de l'Institut Panos de l'Afrique de l'Oueste. Studio Ijambo is also credited with playing a key role in decentralising the media in Burundi and building local capacity for news coverage.

Studio Ijambo staff are seriously considering transforming the studio into an FM radio station.

2.4 Journalists' Associations

There are three journalists' associations in Burundi. One (the *Association Burundaise des Journalistes* (ABJ)) is generalist and two (the *Association des Journalistes de Sports du Burundi* (AJSB) and the *Association des Femmes Journalistes* (AFJO)) are sectoral.

It must be admitted that the first association, which is supposed to unite all Burundian journalists, is barely active. It is the victim of internal disagreements and a certain lethargy among its current General Committee. However, its members, journalists in both the public and private sectors, are at the origin of what can only be called the ornament of Burundian media—the *Maison de la Presse du Burundi*.

2.5 The Media in Burundi: an Economic Sector? ¹³

In Burundi, several media such as *Radio CCIB FM Plus*, *Radio Culture*, *Télé 10* and *Net Press* are the embryos of press firms. However, their viability remains problematic.

In general, Burundian media do not represent significant economic stakes. Economic practitioners in Burundi are barely involved in this sector. Nevertheless, they support private media indirectly as the primary buyers of private press and by the advertising income they provide. However, they are also regularly suspected of bribing journalists so that newspapers or programmes diffuse information favourable to their businesses or harmful to their competitors or of slipping in favourable comments on their activities during interviews that, when repeated by the press, become a form of clandestine advertising.

2.6 The Training Offer

A school of journalism existed in Bujumbura until 1991. Since it was closed in 1991, Burundi has had no permanent training institution for media careers.

¹³ Extract from *Afrique centrale : des médias pour la démocratie*, Panos Institute Paris. (Karthala: 2000) p. 47 and following.

Since it was created in 1997, the *Maison de la Presse* organises workshops and training sessions every year for Burundian journalists, with local support from UNESCO and NGOs such as Africare. Thus, during the summer of 2000, two training sessions in the use of new information technologies were financed by UNESCO and organised at the headquarters of the African Virtual University in Bujumbura who made its computer lab available for the workshops.

III. THE MAISON DE LA PRESSE DU BURUNDI: FEDERATING BURUNDIAN JOURNALISTS AND MEDIA

The idea of creating the *Maison de la Presse du Burundi* was born in May 1995 during a seminar for journalists organised by UNESCO in Bujumbura. Among the recommendations of the seminar was a request for the establishment of a press centre for the promotion of professional journalism. This preoccupation was motivated by the attitude of certain journalists who, instead of informing the public, disoriented the public. It was during the period that RSF accused most Burundian newspapers of being "hate media".

This request by journalists themselves in favour of the creation of a press centre was willingly accepted by UNESCO. Thus, gathered together in a general assembly on 2 November 1996, Burundian journalists founded their *Maison de la Presse*. Certified on 20 January 1997 by order of the Minister of the Interior, the "*Association de la Maison de la Presse du Burundi*" therefore has legal status. The press centre itself was inaugurated on 14 May 1997 and has operated since then essentially thanks to UNESCO support¹⁴.

Crossroads and meeting place for information professionals, the *Maison de la Presse* is independently managed by professional journalists. Today, it has 259 members who have paid their membership dues¹⁵. It is managed by an executive committee made up of 9 journalists who represent private and public press. This committee plays the role of Board of Directors; day to day management is ensured by a director who is a journalist himself and was recruited through a competitive examination.

The *Maison de la Presse du Burundi* is also a centre for debates, press conferences, seminars and workshops. It is also a multi-service centre—typing and formatting newspaper pages at reduced prices, photocopies, distribution of mail to the media, and a documentation centre¹⁶. It is also a newspaper kiosk and a meeting place with a cafeteria. Finally, it is a place of work for all the private newspapers (except *Ndongezi*) whose postal addresses are also there. Today, private newspapers exist in Burundi largely thanks to the material, documentary, logistic, etc. support for the collection and transmission of information that publishers and journalists find at the *Maison de la Presse*.

Thanks to the support of the British Embassy, the *Maison de la Presse du Burundi* is also an Internet access site. This same donor also gave the *Maison de la Presse* a parabolic antenna

¹⁴ For greater detail on UNESCO support to the *Maison de la Presse*, see below, § V.

¹⁵ For its start-up, the *Maison de la Presse du Burundi* counted, in addition to UNESCO support, on the dues paid by its members and public and private press organisations and thus built up its working capital.

¹⁶ In September 2000, the *Maison de la Presse* was waiting for the arrival of the books given by the French Community in Belgium in order to expand this documentation centre.

that allows it to receive satellite TV programmes, thus providing new sources of information for journalists. These acquisitions allow the *Maison de la Presse* to produce a "weekly review of Burundian and international press" broadcast Friday evening by *Radio Umwizero* to a very wide audience.

IV. THE LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK¹⁷

1. Communication Law

In Burundi, the press is still regulated by the executive order of 21 March 1997, promulgated in a rush of acts and measures taken to "restore the public order and State authority" by the powers in place after the July 1996 coup d'état. This executive order applies to all press organisations and all supports for information published in Burundi, whether written, spoken, filmed, televised, etc.

This law, which reaffirmed the end of the State monopoly on radio broadcasting while setting exorbitant subjective conditions, is about to undergo fundamental revision under the impetus of the Minister of Communication, Professor Luc Rukingama, with the support of UNDP and UNESCO. Indeed, with this dual support, the Minister is preparing the organisation of the Estates-General on the Press that shall bring together representatives of the profession, government and civil society and that should formulate recommendations on the reform of press law in order to liberalise the sector.

2. Concrete Application of the 1997 Law in the Lives of the Media

The 1997 law on the press imposes daily constraints on the written press. It provides for three types of deposits (legal, administrative and judiciary deposits) before circulation to be made obligatorily 24 hours before sale, distribution, rental or end of printing for periodicals, and 4 hours before sale or distribution for daily newspapers. This prior deposit obligation is highly restricting. Furthermore, journalists feel that the heavy sanctions provided for in the law—6 months to 5 years of prison and fines from 50,000 to 100,000 Burundi francs (€90 to €180)—are a Sword of Damocles hanging over their heads.

Throughout recent years and still this summer 2000, journalists have been arrested, interrogated and occasionally imprisoned by the services of the *Documentation nationale*; newspapers have been suspended or forbidden to be sold after printing (which is, for financially fragile newspapers, a heavy loss—they must pay the printers' bill without any hope of earnings); and heavy fines have been imposed as sanctions for infractions of the laws on the press and the laws of the republic.

With the organisation (announced for before the end of the year 2000) of the Estates-General on the Press, Burundian press is on the verge of legal and judiciary reform that is much hoped for by all partners.

¹⁷ Taken heavily from the Panos Institute Paris study whose overall synthesis and final writing was done by Michel Philippart: *Afrique centrale : des médias pour la démocratie* (Ed. Karthala: 2000). pp. 49ss.

3. Regulation Authorities

The *Conseil National de la Communication* (CNC) was instituted by the March 1992 Constitution. Today, it is governed by the *Acte Constitutionnel de Transition* dated 6 June 1998 that assigns to it the mission of ensuring the freedom of audiovisual and written communication. The CNC is a constitutional authority that depends upon the President of the Republic who names its 17 members. However, in principle, the CNC is an independent and neutral body with decision-making powers notably as concerns the respect of freedom of the press. It plays the role of government consultant in the field of communication—every year the CNC addresses the President of the Republic a report on the respect of the obligations resulting from press law by the government, businesses and communication professionals.

The Constitution entrusts the CNC with ensuring freedom of the press. The CNC authorises the creation of media and can forbid their creation. It plays the role of judge in the case of conflicts pertaining to freedom of expression and conscience that oppose managers of press entities, their journalists and other partners or press entities among themselves.

Nominated for a 2-year renewable mandate, the CNC is composed of an Executive Bureau made up of a president, vice-president and secretary, and members that represent the public, the State, public press and private press. However, the law does not specify the mode of representation. Thus, with the exception of the president (a judge) and the secretary who manifestly represents the State, one does not know exactly who represents what and it is clear that radio and television station owners and private newspaper publishers are not among the 17 members nominated on 19 August 1998.

According to *Ligue Iteka*, the CNC nominated in August 1998 has worked in a certain spirit of independence vis-à-vis public authorities that has been noticed by civil society and the press. However, in the exercise of its missions, the CNC remains confronted with the real-life powers of certain services and institutions, in particular the *Documentation nationale*. One of the CNC's recurrent problems is its lack of means and permanent staff. Up until the budgetary law of 1999, the CNC operated without a budget and the only State aid was an office reserved for the president in premises shared with the other national councils.

4. Deontology and Ethics

In April 1997, a Burundi press code of ethics and deontology was adopted by the *Association Burundaise des Journalistes*, with the technical assistance of UNESCO who provided an expert and funded the publication of this work in the form of a small pocket-sized brochure. This Burundian press code was inspired on the Munich Charter (1971) and the Mexico Declaration (1980).

Numerous seminars and reflection days have been organised since 1995 under the auspices of UNESCO, of the office of the United Nations Secretary-General's Special Representative in Burundi, of the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights, and of the American NGO Africare in the framework of country-wide pacification campaigns, all of which had an "ethics and deontology" component.

V. AID TO THE MEDIA SECTOR IN BURUNDI

1. Current Support

The economic sanctions and the embargo decreed by the international community in reaction to President Buyoya's taking power in 1996 have also hit the press and media. Thus, the European Union also suspended its support to *Radio Umwizero* when it interrupted aid to Burundi. Since the international community's retaliation for the taking of power by the military, there has been no aid nor any press—whether public or private—or general media support programmes. During the inter-Burundian dialogue process in Arusha, the renewal of aid was pushed back to after the signature of an agreement. Now that the Arusha Peace Accord has been signed, the Burundian media hope for a change in donors' attitudes. Does the preparation of a seminar on "freedom of the press, the law and current tendencies", a true Estates-General on the Press, announce a renewal in support to Burundian media?

In this context of suspension of aid, the support given by UNESCO to the *Maison de la Presse* is even more remarkable. During this period of time, UNESCO continued to take charge of headquarter rental (the *Maison de la Presse* was transferred to a new building donated by the Ministry of Communication in September 2000), the salaries of a director and a secretary, and the security service, and equipment maintenance. UNESCO also provided computer equipment, a photocopier, a fax, furniture, professional tape recorders that are rented to journalists, etc. UNESCO recently granted a new subsidy to increase the supply of computer equipment and Internet access possibilities for journalists.

2. Media Support Needs and Requests in Burundi

The emergence and strengthening of responsible press in Burundi requires the implementation of significant support. Plans and projects are not lacking and are waiting to be launched, most of them are carried by the *Maison de la Presse*, including:

- the creation within the *Maison de la Presse* of a print shop at the service of all newspapers, both public and private;
- the creation of an initiation and continuing education structure for journalism;
- the creation of a purchasing pool for newspaper and other media raw materials (paper, transparencies, ink, tapes and cassettes, etc.);
- the implementation of a newspaper distribution and sale system;
- the creation of a media self-regulation authority

These are not the only projects. Other bodies prepare or wish for the following notably:

- the opening of a training programme in communication at the University of Bujumbura: this project has already been approved by the Ministry of Communication and shall soon be examined by Ministry of National Education;
- the establishment of a press and media support fund for both the public and private sectors by the Burundi State with international aid.

In our opinion, some of these projects—in particular those that aim to support newspapers (the creation of a print shop or purchasing pool, the establishment of newspaper distribution network)—deserve serious feasibility studies. In their present state, these projects have not been studied in depth and their viability is far from sure. They could perhaps find greater solidity by adopting a regional approach (covering Burundi, Rwanda and the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo)?

3. Priorities for Media Support in Burundi

As we have already mentioned several times, the Estates-General on the Press have been announced for Burundi before the end of 2000. They will bring together representatives of the profession, the government and civil society with the double goal of formulating recommendations for the reform of press law and elaborating priority actions to strengthen media skills. This is why, after listing the projects we are aware of, we did not want to jump the gun on the formulation of sector support approaches—exactly that which is expected of the Estates-General.

VI. SUGGESTED READING

Panos Institute Paris, *Afrique centrale : Des médias pour la Démocratie*. (Karthala: Paris, 2000). 199 pages.

Athanase Ntiyanogey, *Répertoire de la presse d'information au Burundi. Des origines à nos jours*. (Edition Intore: Bujumbura, 1994). 169 pages.