

Local radio: fostering community development or ethnic hatred? Donor dilemmas and perspectives from Rwanda, D.R. Congo and Kenya

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The rise and spread of local radio in Africa is a striking contemporary phenomenon. Over the last ten years the numbers of small radio stations have mushroomed all over the continent due mainly to the widespread liberalisation of the airwaves, the falling costs of the necessary technology and a thirst for alternatives to government-controlled media. In a recent study of media in sub-Saharan Africa (BBC World Service Trust, 2006), it was found that local commercial radio grew by an average of 360 percent between 2000 and 2006 and that community radio had grown on average by a striking 1,386 percent over the same period¹. For example, in Tanzania, whereas there were only eight independent local radio stations in 2000, there were 32 in 2006 and in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) there are now over 150 community radio stations when there were only ten in the year 2000.

Local radio is any radio station that is not received nationally, is independent of government, is set up to serve a particular locality, and which broadcasts in vernacular languages. It may be of a community nature, meaning set up and owned by the community, often on a not-for-profit basis, with a participatory remit. Or it may be a private commercial station, often relying on advertising revenue which is mainly oriented towards entertainment. In both cases a local radio will be small, will invariably broadcast on FM, will have a low-powered transmitter, and will serve a radius, typically, of between 5 and 25km. More often than not, it will be a shoestring operation and will be run by a handful of young, semi-professional and/or volunteer staff. Most community radios, and some commercial FM stations are wholly or partially funded by aid money - whether this is a direct grant from a local NGO or international donor, or through sponsorship of air-time or public-service announcements from public, educational, denominational or charitable bodies.

Here I will explore the nature of local and community radio in the light of development and I will look, in particular, at its double-edged nature. On the one hand it has the ability to foster community cohesion and development but on the other, it can be a negative force and can stoke ethnic hatred and

¹ Statistics for 11 countries for which consistent data were available: Botswana, Cameroon, DRC, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia.

violence. Thus, local radio can sometimes build communities and it can sometimes - even unwittingly - play a part in destroying them.

By looking at recent experiences in Rwanda, DRC and Kenya, my aim is to point up the dilemmas of supporting local radio from a donors' perspective and to suggest some strategies and practical ways forward for donors and other development actors in circumstances where there is a danger that local radio will be used for ill rather than for good.

Background

During the late 1990s and early 2000s, as local radio stations started to proliferate in Sub-Saharan Africa, some of the positive development gains that this phenomenon entailed were documented. In terms of governance, for instance, community radio in Mali showed that it was able to prompt transparency on the part of local officials and started exposing many instances of bribery and corruption (Konaré in GFMD, 2006). In terms of health and educational gains, evidence from Madagascar, for instance, has shown that knowledge about HIV/AIDS, safe motherhood and child vaccination is higher among local radio listeners (Metcalf et.al., 2007) and in Tanzania radio dramas have helped significant numbers of couples to adopt family planning methods (Rogers, et.al. 1997). Local radio can also act as a warning system in natural disasters, a messaging system for far-flung communities, a price-index for poor farmers, and a lifeline giving vital information in humanitarian emergencies (Skuse, A.). It has also proven its worth in terms of fostering community cohesion, from urban youth radio in Senegal to peace radio in Northern Uganda, to township radio in South Africa (Panos, 2007).

As a consequence of this body of evidence, the World Bank recently hailed community radio as 'playing a vital role in empowering poor people, accelerating local level and community problem-solving, and producing more demand for accountability' (World Bank Institute - no date). The Swedish government development agency, Sida, has a policy of supporting local media - particularly radio - in Africa to promote democratisation and human rights (Sida, 2006). The British Department for International Development has produced several briefing papers highlighting the relevance of radio in poor communities and especially its role in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (Skuse, 2006). USAID - the United States' development agency supports independent radio as part of its policy of democracy promotion (USAID, 2005). The list of local radio' supporters in the name of development is long and does not stop at the big bilateral agencies. It also includes the European Union, United Nations, church groups, independent foundations (such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation) and local and international NGOs such as Save the Children, Oxfam who will often fund a local radio element as a small part of a wider community development programme.

Local radio in Rwanda, DRC, Kenya

Rwanda, D R Congo and Kenya have seen an expansion of local radio over recent years, alongside their African neighbours. I will be detailing some of the development gains for which local radio has been and continues to be responsible in each of these three countries. But Rwanda, DRC and Kenya are also interesting for presenting us with instances where the dream of local radio has occasionally turned sour. This is perhaps most notoriously manifested in the case of Rwanda and the role that *Radio-Télévision Libres des Mille Collines* (RTLM) played in the genocide in 1994. But we also see this in the context of the war in the D R Congo in the late 1990s where hate radio emerged again, and very recently in the post-electoral bloodshed in Kenya, this year, where local radio was found to have been inciting ethnic violence.

Rwanda

A brief look at the history of radio in Rwanda shows that the experience of *Radio Television Libre des Mille Collines (RTLM)* between 1993 and 1994 was a watershed in terms of media development in that country. A policy of allowing pluralism had been adopted in 1991, and consequently a diverse set of newspapers started appearing, but the only independent radio station to emerge was *Radio Television Libre des Mille Collines*, in 1993. The *RTLM* was controlled by a private consortium made up of Hutu politicians and businessmen and it rapidly established itself as a fashionable alternative to the staid government channel, mainly because of its Western style presenters, its popular music and its youthful image. Subsequently it became increasingly politicised, broadcasting 'Hutu power' propaganda. After President Habyarimana's aeroplane was brought down in April 1994 the station notoriously called for hunting down and eliminating the 'cockroaches' and 'snakes' who threatened to eradicate the Hutu of Rwanda. It supported, guided and encouraged the work of the militias who systematically killed hundreds of thousands of Tutsis - even to the point of broadcasting the names and addresses of the supposed 'enemy within' - resulting in the terrible final death-toll of about one million Tutsis and moderate Hutus (Frère, 2007).

After these events, the Kagame government, as a response to this trauma, severely restricted all media and regained exclusive control over the airwaves. It was not until 2002 that a new, more liberal, media law was voted in, and not until 2004 (ten years after the genocide) that the government-controlled Rwanda media council (*Haut Conseil de la Presse*) agreed to the six radio stations who had requested private licences. Five of these started broadcasts during the course of the year, Radio 10, Radio Flash, Radio Contact, Radio Izuba (a community radio station) and Radio Maria (a church-based station). Radio Salus, based at the University started in 2005 and eight other stations were authorized in 2005 (Frère, 2007) of a national and local nature. Since then, the airwaves have slowly become more plural and we now find twelve independent radio stations in Rwanda (Ndikumana, 2008).

Clearly, though, radio's record in Rwanda has been indelibly scarred by the *RTL*M experience and relations between government and the independent media are still strained. Most journalists admit to self-censorship (Ayonone, 2005) and many feel that too many of their number are accused of "divisionism" when, in their view, they are simply raising issues of poverty, corruption or ethnicity (Kavanagh, 2004). Fears of whipping up ethnic hatred can - it seems to them - become a convenient excuse for censoring and outlawing any opposition to the Tutsi-dominated government. In a recent country overview Reporters Without Borders described relations as 'appalling', asserting that 'even though the government denies it, Rwanda's independent press is forced to live under relentless harassment from the highest levels of the state.' (Reporters without Borders, 2008).

However, there are several examples of local radio now playing a positive developmental role in Rwanda. Radio Izuba, for instance, regards itself as a 'real' community radio, serving a small locality in the East of the country with educational and developmental content and a network of listening clubs to act as a link between the community and the station (Thomson, 2006). Although it was initially not allowed to carry news reports under its community licence it does now cover local news and has played a strong role in encouraging local people to participate in the traditional *gacaca* courts that are trying cases of genocide throughout Rwanda (Kattenburg, 2006). Radio Contact and other popular commercial FM stations have recently been running educational campaigns about HIV/AIDS and have been raising money for orphans and street-children. A new station in Kigali, Voice of Africa Kigali FM, is another new local station set up specifically to serve the minority Muslim community and it has an educational remit. Two private stations (as well as the national government-controlled stations) transmit a very popular educational soap opera, '*Musekweya*' (New Dawn) devised by a Dutch NGO called La Benevolencija, working for reconciliation and genocide prevention. This soap opera apparently reaches 90 percent of the population and features fictional characters from Tutsi and Hutu villages resolving their conflicts in peaceful ways and "represent a new attitude that harkens back to a much gentler generation of Rwandans." (von Scheven, 2008).

D. R. Congo

The way local radio has evolved in the D R Congo, since the media was officially liberalised in 1990, has been quite different from the Rwanda case, being much more a picture of haphazard expansion in the context of war and post-war, where the state itself has been very weak. In 2003 a transitional government was set up following the devastating war which is estimated to have killed 3.5million people. Three years later, in 2006 a count of radio stations throughout the country (GRET, 2006) showed that in this period radio stations had almost tripled in number to 220, with an estimated combined audience of 40 million people (Myers, 2006).

Most of these radio stations are privately owned and set up by politicians, businessmen and churches - some, about 150 - have the status of community stations and are financed by NGOs and from announcements and revenue from their own members. The advertising market in the DRC is developing slowly and many private local radios survive on a mixture of local advertising by beer, airline and mobile phone companies and on airtime sponsored by NGOs and other local groups. Another important source of income is the system of *coupage*, which is a widespread but essentially corrupt practice whereby interested parties (typically politicians) pay journalists to cover stories and to boost themselves or to smear their opponents. This obviously has negative consequences for independence and quality, with rumour and sensationalism being the order of the day. All in all, the media scene in the DRC is vibrant and diverse but at the same time chaotic and politically polarised.

Local radio has attracted large audiences in this huge country, where there are over 300 vernacular languages and significant numbers of people living spread out over wide areas with almost no roads, low literacy and few links with the outside world. The only radio station that functions properly on a *national* scale is the UN station, Radio Okapi, while the government-controlled national broadcaster, the *Radio Télévision Nationale Congolaise* (RTNC) has suffered extensive damage to its studios and transmitters in the war and therefore no longer covers the whole country. So the population falls back on their local stations for information in their own languages, despite their uneven reputation.

In many cases, for example, Radio Maendeleo in Bukavu, local radio is a positive force for development. In Maendeleo's footprint there are many examples of increased literacy as a result of radio programmes and actions in radio clubs, improved livestock keeping and a reduction in violation of human rights (Myers, 2006). There are many other positive examples of radio stations running health campaigns, promoting agricultural know-how, producing good quality content on civic rights, current affairs, political debate, peace-building and electoral education. International organisations like the Panos Institute and Search for Common Ground have helped strengthen these radios with equipment and training. The high turnout at the presidential elections in 2006 was, in part, attributed to the responsible work of local radio stations (Frère, 2007).

Agencies have criteria with which to choose their partner stations. They must be non-profit, non-partisan, non-confessional and have clear editorial guidelines ensuring impartiality, balance and accuracy as well as internal management rules of an associative nature. Unfortunately, there are several stations that do not conform to these norms. In recent years ethnic hatred has surfaced regularly against Kasaïans, ethnic Tutsis and people of Rwandan origin on various local radio stations. Accusations related to witchcraft and child-sorcerers have been orchestrated, particularly by the confessional stations. During the electoral period, particularly, the anti-foreigner phenomenon of *Congolité* emerged and was propounded on-air by DJs in border areas, and anywhere in which the spectre of 'foreigners' coming to 'steal' indigenous resources could be whipped up. With many radio stations

controlled by politicians, presidential candidates, and by business-people closely associated with politicians, the electoral period in 2006 saw serious violence partly orchestrated by commercial stations such as those of the Radio Liberté chain owned by presidential candidate Bemba, and on the other side, Digital Congo, owned by Kabila (Frère, 2007).

Kenya

Kenya has experienced a notable expansion in vernacular commercial stations since 2000 and a more modest growth in community radio. The new political dispensation after the Moi era was a key factor in the rise of independent media after 2002 (BBC WST 2008). Abdi and Deane (2008) attribute the media boom in Kenya also to 'a dynamic economy with one of the most dynamic advertising markets on the continent and a population which consumes news and information voraciously.' From data obtained by the BBC in 2006, 34 stations have come into existence since 2000. Out of this number, five are new outlets of the state broadcaster KBC while 29 are non-state stations: international (4), pan-regional African (1), private commercial (22) and community (2) (BBC WST, 2006).

More up to date research by Abdi and Deane shows that in fact there are now eight community radios in Kenya, but all with a very small broadcast footprint. The best known of these is Radio Mang'elele which is owned by a cooperative of 33 rural women's groups and has been broadcasting, with help from a grant from Sweden, since 2002. The relatively small number of community radios has been caused by the high costs and the bureaucratic difficulties of obtaining a community licence. There would seem to be a reticence and suspicion on the part of the government towards such licenses: as the community media NGO, Econews, sees it, 'the Kenyan government has consistently hesitated to promote community media amidst concerns it could exacerbate social and ethnic tension' (quoted in Abdi and Dean, 2008: 11).

However, a look at the development gains and the peace-promotion work of the community sector in Kenya belies this view. For instance, Pamoja FM in Nairobi's Kibera slums has youth shows that cover topics such as the need to avoid drugs, gangs, and teen pregnancy. When it came to the post-election violence in January, one of the station's presenters, Mohammed Abubakr was quoted at the time as saying: 'We don't tell them [who should be] president, and make them want to fight, we tell them the situation in Kibera, which shops are open, where there is food, where there is fuel, where they can buy airtime for their cellphones.' (Baldauf, 2008) There has been very constructive rural development promotion at radio Mang'elele where radio programmes provide women with information on planting methods, best planting seasons and yield improvements approaches that can help others and improve farming and the living standards of communities in general. It also airs programmes on women's rights, nutrition and HIV/AIDS. As a result of the quality and appropriateness of the local content aired, women have been able to seek redress in areas where their rights were violated; cotton and horticulture farming has been increased with improved yield and nutrition levels within the

population; and certain beliefs, such as witchcraft, questioned and discussed openly (Nguri & Kimani 2005).

Abdi and Deane (2008) show that it was not the community stations but the commercial FM stations that were responsible for much of the hate speech and ethnic prejudice that emerged onto the airwaves in the aftermath of the elections earlier this year. As one Kenyan journalist put it, "The ethnic hate our radio station was propagating about those from outside the community was unbelievable. The unfortunate thing is we let these callers speak vile and laughed about it." Another local broadcaster said afterwards, "We took sides in the issue and we became subjective, forgetting our professional tenet of objectivity and neutrality. In fact, this polarization was so bad in the newsrooms that some broadcast journalists refused to cover or read news that was not favourable to the candidate or party they supported." (Oyaro, 2008)

On the other hand, these same FM stations have also, arguably, been a force for democratisation because their free-ranging studio discussion, phone-ins, political discussions and interviews with celebrities combined with music have opened up new spaces for political and public debate. They have created new channels for civil society organisations to have their voices heard in the public arena (Dean, Mue & Banda 2002). They have also allowed many of the minority language speakers in Kenya to hear and contribute to debate in their mother tongue for the first time in their history – as Ngesa from Kenya's Daily Nation newspaper put it: 'these [stations] reclaim the ownership of the ghetto's ear... [they] are the stations to tune to because they speak the language of the poor man – the downtrodden, the lowly' (Ngesa, 2008)

Analysis

It is important to understand what allows hate speech to emerge and why radio stations do it. It is also important to distinguish between different types of radio stations and different types of programming. An analysis of the formats in which hate-speech arises shows that mainly it is on free-ranging music shows, hosted by disc-jockeys; live call-in programmes where the public is allowed to express its opinions unfettered; and it is insinuated by way of jokes, proverbs and vernacular sayings. It also emerges and gains impetus through careless reporting of rumour as fact, through allowing extremist politicians free-rein, and from inflammatory language used, often unwittingly, by presenters.

For example, in Kenya in January 2008, on Kass FM - a Kalenjin-language FM station - there were references to the need for 'people of the milk' (the pastoralist Kalenjin) to 'cut grass' and complaints that the 'mongoose' (Kikuyu incomers) had come and 'stolen our chicken', (Reuters Alert-net quoting Kenya National Commission on Human Rights (KNCHR), 2008). Such speech emerged mainly on call-in programmes where media monitors observed that 'the announcers do not really have the ability to check what the callers are going to say' (Handa, quoted in Reuters/Alertnet, 2008).

Furthermore, the obscure and metaphorical language used makes monitoring and control much more difficult. In Kenya, vernacular music was also used to raise ethnic tensions. For example, two Kikuyu stations, Kameme and Inooro, played songs mentioning 'beasts from the west', a veiled reference to opposition leader Raila Odinga and his Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) colleagues, who come from western Kenya. Radio Lake Victoria played a Luo-language song which referred to 'the leadership of baboons' (Reuters Alertnet, 2008). Talk shows have also been singled out: 'in which a politician suddenly comes out of nowhere calling on people to stand and fight for this cause and sometimes literally calls on the youth to rise up and fight.' (Mitch Odero of the Media Council of Kenya, quoted in Abdi and Deane 2008)

The youth and lack of training of broadcasters means that they are often unaware of the power their words have – what may seem to them like a light-hearted remark in the studio can be taken by some groups of listeners to be highly offensive and provocative. Furthermore, because they are often inexperienced, they are unable to properly question, contextualise and balance the views of very partisan politicians, particularly when live on-air. The poverty of the stations and the low remuneration of individual journalists mean that they are more likely to comply with anyone with money who wishes to buy air-time to blatantly denigrate their opponents or to whip up mob violence to exploit an already delicate ethnic or economic situation for a political end. For example, there have been allegations that some racist pop songs were sponsored by political factions in the recent Kenya crisis (Reuters/Alertnet, 2008).

On the whole, community radio stations tend not to indulge in irresponsible reporting and rumour-mongering, not because they do not have inexperienced broadcasters - they do - but, compared to commercial stations, they have tighter editorial policies and less scope in their schedules for talk-shows and live phone-ins. Whereas many local commercial stations have proprietors with strong political allegiances, community radios are less open to bias because they are closely controlled by their management boards who normally represent the diversity of the community from which the radio station has grown. Nevertheless, community radios are not always irreproachable. For example, the author knows of one particular community station in South Kivu in the DRC with an excellent reputation that, nevertheless, has been known to broadcast anti-Tutsi jokes.

The Power of Radio

The extent to which radio broadcasting has the power to provoke and sustain prejudice and violence has been debated since analysis of the propaganda campaigns of the first and second World Wars (see for example, Lasswell, 1935). Although this is not the place to enter into the 'media-effects' debate in any depth, it is nevertheless interesting to note that it is often those who argue for the use of radio for promoting positive public behaviour change (improved health, agricultural practices etc.) who point to the power of radio in negative situations (i.e. Rwanda) as 'proof' that radio 'works'.

Certainly, the *RTL*M broadcasts in Rwanda made the killing process quicker and more horribly efficient (e.g. broadcasting names and whereabouts of Tutsi individuals) than it might otherwise have been, but radio's capacity to do this unaided is doubtful; pogroms took place in Europe and elsewhere, before the radio was invented.

But belief in mass media's power to lead a gullible public, to dehumanise the 'enemy' and to encourage mob-violence raises its head periodically; most recently in Kenya: in the words of Linda Ochiel, principal human rights officer at Kenya's National Commission for Human Rights –

"People treat it [derogatory statements about other ethnic groups] as a big joke. They don't know such stereotypes eventually get fixated in people's minds when they begin to kill people. It's one of the triggers of violence in this country. When we begin to dehumanise other Kenyans and depict them as animals, it's easy to take a achete and hack them to death" . (Reuters/Alertnet, 2008).

Suffice it to say that the recent experience in Africa - as touched on above - has sparked this debate anew, and has - perhaps understandably - made would-be supporters of local broadcasting more wary of its potential negative effects.

Some Pointers for Donors

In this context, international donors and development agencies are faced with some difficult choices about the best ways to support independent radio in developing countries. For instance, are more local vernacular radios necessarily a good thing? Will encouraging pluralism propagate hate? Will promoting the human rights of journalists produce irresponsible reporting? On the other hand, will supporting regulation entail undue censorship and repression? This final section will present a number of options and strategies that aid donors and international agencies might consider in such difficult situations.

The first point is that context is important and any attempt at a 'one size fits all' approach is not sensible. In conflict and post-conflict areas, for instance, there are strong arguments to be made in favour of robust regulatory mechanisms to control hate speech in volatile situations. There is, for example, some evidence that strong media monitoring around the 2005 referendum in Kenya drastically reduced instances of hate speech on local radio (Reuters/Alertnet 2008), that the work of the media regulator in the DRC (the Haute Autorité des Médias) did the same around the DRC elections in 2006 (Myers ref.) and that a ban on live media broadcasts in the post-election period in Kenya this year was somewhat effective in calming the violence (Warungu, 2008)². A report from the London School of Economics (Putzel & van der Zwan, 2005) makes precisely this case: that, whereas in most places

² However, it must be noted that this ban did not extend to international media, internet-based media (e.g. blogs) or cell-phone texting, all of which, reportedly, carried hate messages and incitements to violence during the first months of 2008 in Kenya (Abdi and Deane, 2008; Oyaro, 2008)

the encouragement of freedom and diversity is desirable, in 'crisis states', 'liberal' templates for media development do not work. Therefore more emphasis on regulation is desirable in such situations. This study even goes as far as to say that 'the Rwandan government took a logical decision to impose constraints on the media in the decade after the genocide when the psychological and emotional wounds of the national still ran so deep' (Putzel & van der Zwan, 2005:14)

Another important distinction for donors to understand is the difference between community radios and private FM stations. As outlined above, they both invariably broadcast in local languages, but community stations tend to have a clearer development remit and a more consensual management structure. Donor agencies and their partner NGOs running these stations are able to monitor these radios' outputs relatively closely and control hate speech. The problem for the donors, though, is ensuring community radios are financially sustainable without commercial pressures skewing their public service aims and compromising their capacity to be a voice for the poor. This is why, in some cases, it may be justified for outside donor agencies to fund community radio stations in the long-term, particularly in places where minorities need a media outlet, and in places which are so isolated and marginalised that the commercial sector - i.e. advertisers - would not naturally find a market.

That said it is also important for donor agencies to build capacity to guard against the possibility of hate speech emerging - even in donor-funded community radio stations. As we have seen, this often arises because of young, insufficiently remunerated and inexperienced staff. Media development and peace-building organisations such as Internews and Search for Common Ground are running just these kinds of capacity building courses in Africa. For instance, in South Kivu, DRC, Search for Common Ground has a mobile trainer working in Kiswahili with local radio journalists to understand the causes of the conflicts in their area; to distinguish between violent and non-violent conflict and to discern where adversaries may find 'common ground' and may help each other. Journalists are taught the difference between reporting rumour and fact and about verifying their sources; about researching their subject; about balancing their reports and finding knowledgeable people to interview, rather than filling air-time with uninformed opinions expressed by callers. They are also given practical experience in mediating conflictual situations in the studio; tempering their own language; and interviewing victims of rape and violence in a sensitive manner. Station managers are encouraged to structure their journalists' time with regular editorial meetings which emphasise news and information-gathering *from* the local population rather than reacting to information sent in - or worse - paid for - by local interest groups. Furthermore, they are given business training in order to work towards financial independence.

Donors must take the long-view and, if it is not appropriate to actually fund radio stations in a locality at present, at least investing in training for the future may be constructive. For instance, in Rwanda, despite the undeniable fact of an autocratic government, international donors and aid agencies remain keen to find ways to support the development of the Rwandan media scene in the

long-term and the UK's Department for International Development is, among others, training future journalists at the School of Journalism at the University in Butare. By contrast, in situations which are very plural - even to the point of anarchy as in the DRC - donors should not see the lack of regulation and the potential for radio to arouse hatred as a signal that the media sector should be avoided. On the contrary, long-term capacity-building with regulatory bodies, journalists' unions and with professional organisations needs to be done so as to turn a potentially volatile situation into a well-regulated, but vibrant and plural media scene.

Finally, in order to encourage good quality local news reporting it can be appropriate, paradoxically, to fund big, international radio. This strategy has proved its worth in the DRC, where the international community (the United Nations and a group of bilateral donors, notably the UK) have backed Radio Okapi. This station, run initially by international staff, but now increasingly by Congolese, broadcasting in the five main Congolese languages, has brought independent, reliable news and current-affairs to the Congolese public since the signing of the peace accords in 2002. The organisation that is ensuring its editorial independence is Fondation Hirondelle, an international organisation of journalists that establishes media operations in crisis areas³. As such, Radio Okapi has become a touchstone for news standards and has become a reference point for the public and other journalists. In the 2006 elections, some commentators referred to 'the Okapi effect', meaning that the presence of this 'gold standard' helped prevent standards slipping among many (though not all) local radios who were anxious to prove that they could also report on the election process fairly and professionally (Frère 2007).

Conclusion

To conclude, let us return to Rwanda. By failing to pay attention to the media sector and by turning its back on local independent radio as something too controversial, the donor community could risk allowing the spontaneous emergence of what it would most like to avoid – a much greater evil, namely hate speech. Romeo Dallaire, the Force Commander for the UN mission during the Rwanda genocide, has pointed out not only how he lobbied (unsuccessfully, as it turned out) for resources to jam radio *RTLM*, but also how strongly he felt that strong monitoring and an *alternative* to *RTLM* was needed before and during the period that the killings took place. It is fitting to end with his chilling reminder of the role of radio in the genocide but also his call to journalists to act responsibly:

'The *genocidaires* used the media like a weapon. The haunting image of killers with a machete in one hand and a radio in the other never leaves you. ...The media can be both a weapon and a conscience to humanity. Journalists can be powerful, individually and collectively. But they can also be manipulated very easily... my advice [to journalists] is

³ Fondation Hirondelle began by setting up an alternative to *RTLM* in Rwanda: Radio Agatashya began broadcasts in July 1994 in Rwanda, Burundi and the Kivus, in an attempt to counter the destructive messages of hate radio.

...stay dynamic in the search for the truth, for you are an instrument of the absolute called 'justice' (Dallaire, in Thompson (ed), 2007).

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