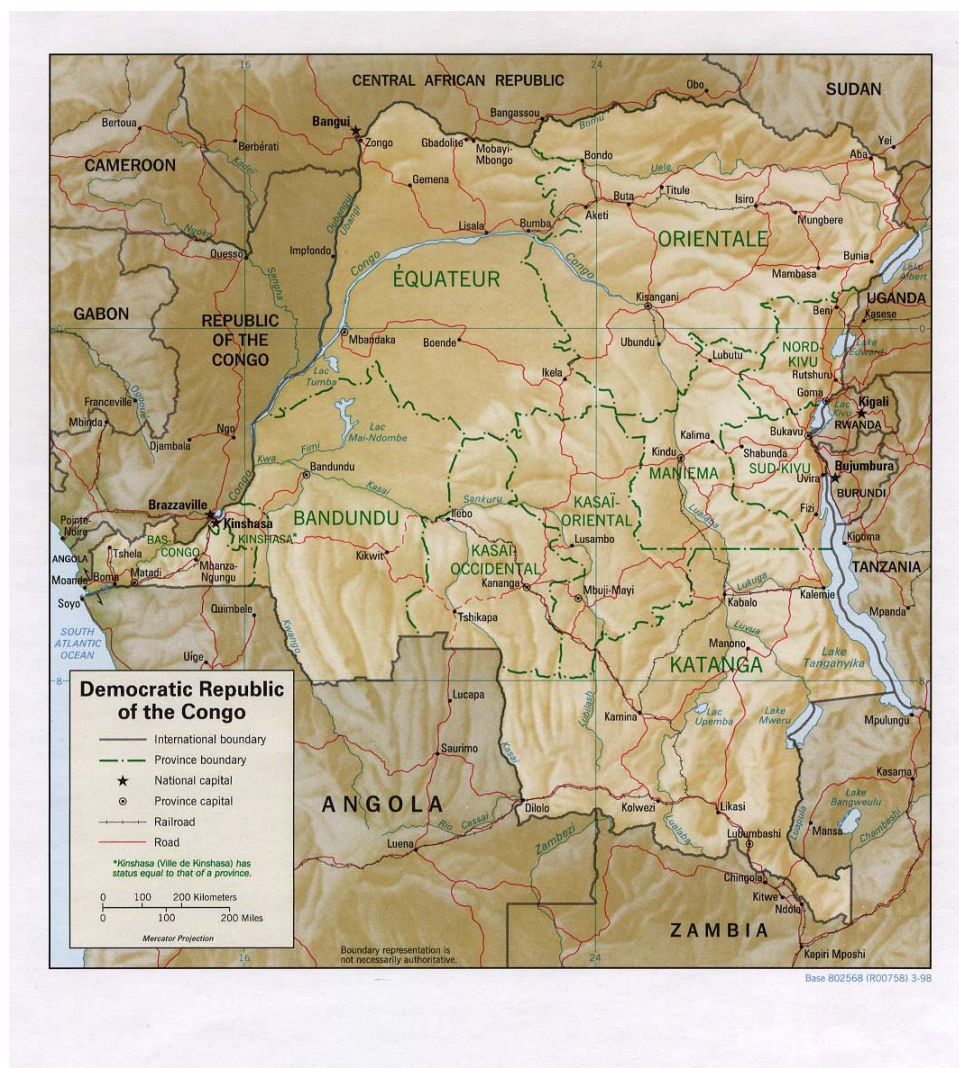


Radio Maendeleo and the regional peace process in Eastern Congo

A political analysis prepared for International Media Support based on an assessment mission to South Kivu



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INTRODUCTION

As one of the few independent media outlets in the Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, Radio Maendeleo (RM), a local community radio station based in the town of Bukavu, the provincial capital of the South Kivu province, has broadcast content of political and development nature for the past nine years.

The present report analyses the role played by RM in the regional peace process in South Kivu.

The report also describes the financial situation of RM and provides recommendations as to how International Media Support may provide short-term support for the radio. It is, however, important to note that it was outside the scope of the assessment mission to audit or otherwise scrutinize RM's financial accounts.

The report first briefly outlines time and place for interviews, then provides an overview of RM's activities and financial situation. Following this, RM's role in terms of informing the population about political events and its role in the regional peace process is discussed. Finally, conclusions are drawn and recommendations outlined.

For those unfamiliar with the region, it is recommended to begin by reading the short introduction to the conflict in the Congo provided in the box on the next page.

METHODOLOGY: TIME, PLACE AND INTERVIEWEES

The consultant visited the South Kivu province of the Democratic of Congo from September 10 to September 27, 2003, where he stayed in Bukavu but also had the opportunity to visit Bunyakiri, a remote district in the jungle some four hours drive from Bukavu.

The main objective of the visit was to report on the Congolese peace process for the Danish daily *Information*, but according to a contract with International Media Support (IMS), the consultant spent a total of five working days on the assessment mission on the ground with one extra working day allocated for preparation of the trip and another working day for reporting.

Interviews were conducted with RM staff, three of the so-called Radio Clubs (confer below) associated with RM, NGOs, RM donors, members of the civil society in Bukavu, representatives of ethnic groups, RCD-Goma authorities, United Nations Organisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) staff, a representative of the local Mai-Mai warriors as well as ordinary RM listeners. Some persons were interviewed on the condition that they would not be quoted by name but agreed to be listed as having been interviewed for the purpose of the current report. Some MONUC sources and one prominent Banyamulenge representative requested not to be identified at all.

Please confer the annex for a list of contact details for RM staff as well as other persons interviewed.

Background on the conflict:

The Kivu provinces in the Congo war

In 1994, Hutu extremists slaughtered an estimated one million Tutsis and moderate Hutus in Rwanda but were ultimately defeated by the Tutsi-led Rwandan Patriotic Army, which seized power in the country, prompting Hutu extremists to flee and set up large camps in the Democratic Republic of Congo, then called Zaire, from where they carried out cross-border attacks into Rwanda.

In September 1996, the armies of Rwanda, Uganda and Burundi invaded Zaire through the provinces of North Kivu and South Kivu, attacking the Rwandan Hutus. In order to pretend that the war was not being led by external forces per se, a rebel movement, the Alliance des Forces Démocratiques pour la Libération du Congo-Zaire (AFDL), was created under the formal control of a former Congolese smuggler and kidnapper, Laurent-Desiré Kabila. Also, a number of Congolese Tutsi, so-called Banyamulenge that had immigrated to South Kivu from Rwanda and Burundi some hundred years earlier, were recruited to tinge the AFDL with an aura of 'rebellion' rather than 'invasion'.

Eventually, the AFDL made its way to the Congolese capital, Kinshasa, where it ousted long-time Zairian dictator Mobutu Sese Seko, replaced him with Laurent-Desiré Kabila and renamed the country the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Due to a variety of reasons, the Rwandan Tutsis – whose army formed the backbone of Kabila's army – became increasingly unpopular and so did the Congolese Banyamulenge, many of whom had profited from their role in the AFDL.

In the summer of 1998, Kabila then decided to throw his Rwandan and Ugandan taskmasters out, allied himself with his former enemies, the Rwandan Hutu extremists, and began orchestrating an anti-Tutsi and anti-Banyamulenge campaign.

The Rwandan and Ugandan armies reacted by creating their own 'Congolese' rebel movement, the Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie (RCD), which later split into several factions, leaving (among other places) South Kivu and parts of North Kivu under control of the splinter group RCD-Goma, backed and controlled by Rwanda.

Eventually, a peace deal was signed in December 2002, which stipulated a withdrawal of foreign troops – that to some extent already had taken place by then – and the setting up of a new transitional government with participation from all major warring parties.

The peace deal also outlined that the many rebel factions should be integrated into a new Congolese army, but at the time of writing only high-ranking rebel officers have made their way to Kinshasa, leaving huge territories of the country under continued de facto rebel control.

Some Mai-Mai – autonomous local nationalist warrior groups based in the jungle of South Kivu and North Kivu that fight the Rwandan-backed RCD-Goma and which in the past carried out massacres of Banyamulenge civilians – have begun a series of UN-sponsored peace negotiations with the aim of being integrated into the future national army as well.¹

Also roaming South Kivu are Banyamulenge forces loyal to Patrick Masunzu, a former RCD-Goma commander that broke ranks and created his own rebel movement in South Kivu, as well as Burundian Hutu soldiers of the Forces pour la Défense de la Démocratie (FDD) that use Congo as a rear base for attacks into Burundi.

OVERVIEW OF ACTIVITIES AND FINANCIAL SITUATION

RM mainly broadcasts development programmes, news and reports from a number of associated so-called Radio Clubs, which are groups of ordinary listeners that report on activities and/or NGO work in their respective local communities.

The radio is popular among all walks of life in Bukavu, though it is being given competition from other FM-broadcasting radio stations, first and foremost the UN-sponsored Radio Okapi, which has had an editorial office as well as an FM transmitter in Bukavu since 2002.¹ Also, local radio stations such as Radio Maria (Catholic), Radio Rehema (Protestant) and Radio Kahuzi (Christian in general) form part of the competition. No systematic listener survey has been carried out recently, but judging from interviews with people on the street and in public transport, RM and Radio Okapi seem to attract the biggest audience in Bukavu.

Brief broadcasting history

RM was established by local Bukavu NGOs in 1993, which are represented in the radio's board that appoints the director of the radio.

Since its inception, RM has experienced many problems vis-à-vis the changing de facto authorities of Eastern Congo, it was harassed by authorities during the era of President Mobutu Sese Seko, shut down in connection with the Alliance des Forces Démocratiques pour la Libération du Congo-Zaïre (AFDL) rebellion and closed down twice by the Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie – Goma (RCD-Goma) rebel movement.

RM was last closed by the RCD-Goma on December 9, 2003, but the ban on broadcasting was lifted on July 7, 2003. Since then, the radio has broadcast on a daily basis from 5.25 a.m. till 9.00 a.m.; from 11.55 a.m. to 2 p.m.; and again from 3 p.m. to 9.05 p.m.²

The radio broadcasts daily news programmes in French of 15 minutes at 6.15 a.m. and 6.15 p.m. followed by slightly shorter versions in Swahili. There are also some shorter news flashes, but most of the airtime is filled by development programmes, Radio Club programmes, announcements on NGO activities, programmes by ethnic groups and music.

RM's footprint

RM broadcasts using an old 250 W transmitter, which through relay transmitters used to reach the main parts of North Kivu and South Kivu. However, following the AFDL insurgency against Mobutu Sese Seko and Rwandan Hutu forces in 1996, one relay transmitter including receiver, solar panels, battery and other accessories – situated on a mountain top near Bukavu – was pillaged by unknown bandits or military groups. As a precaution, a second transmitter was disassembled and hidden.

The result has been a significant diminution of the footprint of RM, which today only reaches some 50 kilometers from RM headquarters, where the transmitter is actually based, and even less westwards where mountains hamper the penetration of radio waves. Although one relay transmitter is still available, the management of RM has decided not to install it in the mountains since the risk of another theft is considered too high due to the ongoing roaming of armed forces in South Kivu.

Instead, a 1,000 W FM band transmitter was purchased recently with funds from the US NGO National Endowment for Democracy (NED) and is soon to be installed at RM's headquarters in Bukavu. With it, the

¹ For more details on Radio Okapi, see www.monuc.org/radio and www.hirondelle.org

² Much of the time in between regular broadcasts is actually filled by pre-programmed music. Also, regular broadcasts are slightly longer during weekends.

footprint of the radio should improve significantly to reach some 100 kilometers to the south and north and perhaps some 50 kilometers into the mountains west of Bukavu.

Furthermore, the Belgian Embassy in Kinshasa has indicated that the Belgian government may provide a small shortwave transmitter (1,000 W) next year that is supposed to increase RM's footprint to cover most parts of North Kivu, South Kivu and some parts of Maniema (plus Rwanda, Burundi and southern parts of Uganda).

Core staff and equipment

RM employs eight journalists plus the editor-in-chief and the head of programmes. The journalist core of RM has largely remained the same since the inception of the radio. One journalist was shot by the AFDL in 1996, while a producer died in a car accident in 2000, but no journalists have ever resigned, not even when – such as is the case at the time of writing – salaries have been significantly delayed. There may be several reasons for this. In part, there appears to be a good working climate and the work of RM is appreciated by the population, if not always by the authorities. On the financial side, although wages are not high (around USD 200 per month), there are not many other journalist jobs around and the UN's Radio Okapi, which pays better, only offers short-term contracts.

RM journalist work using one computer (with Internet access) and MiniDiscs. Most editing and studio equipment is analogue, which the staff hopes could be replaced by digital equipment in the long run.

Radio Club formation and membership

The 75 so-called Radio Clubs, the first of which was created in 1994, form an integrated part of the radio. Radio Clubs are formed by groups of people with two aims in mind: to inform others of their development projects and experiences and to deliver news on events in their areas, the latter often synonymous with denouncement of abuses by local authorities.

Groups that are interested in forming a Radio Club submit an application to RM's Radio Club director, who then pays several visits to the local area where the prospective club members live. Apart from ensuring that the group is a coherent unity and actually has something to say, a major aim of these visits is to establish whether the members – and in particular the leader – of the group are truly independent of local authorities and thus able to denounce any abuses by these authorities. At the more extreme end of the spectrum, some local Mai-Mai warriors applied for Radio Club status in order to diffuse political messages, something that was rejected point blank by the Radio Club director.

Once a group has found a working method that other people or civil society groups may benefit from – it could be within fields such as civic education, agriculture, alphabetisation, rights or similar – they make a trial broadcast. Following approval, the new Radio Club is provided with simple cassette recorders and in some cases also bicycles to use for passing on messages to RM, in which case they sign a contract stipulating RM ownership of the equipment in question. The whole process of forming a proper independent Radio Club involves several meetings and exchange of correspondence and often takes as much as a year, according to the Radio Club director.

Radio Club recordings are sometimes edited by the Radio Club director, sometimes broadcast directly. When Radio Clubs submit important news on for instance abuses by local authorities, RM journalists may choose to broadcast the information without citing its sources.

In a suburb of Bukavu, the consultant visited three of RM's Radio Clubs. One young woman had used the radio to gather 300 young girls who had fled villages in the jungle due to insecurity. A woman who ran a vocational center for widows used the radio to broadcast information on micro credit opportunities, while others used RM to avoid soil erosion by informing citizens of the need to preserve trees on certain spots and to place electric bulbs outside houses to decrease the likelihood of theft at night.

RM also publishes a newsletter from time to time that is used to exchange information between Radio Clubs. In 2002, one group began using the radio to collect voluntary local contributions and encourage local residents to lend a helping hand with the construction of 320 meters of stairs in a busy public place (local authorities rarely engage in infrastructure maintenance). When RM was banned from broadcasting from December 2002 to July 2003, this newsletter was (among many other things) used to continue informing the population on the ongoing construction work.

Also, it is worth noting that quite a few operational Radio Clubs actually live outside the current footprint of RM. Instead, some of them exchange tapes with recordings of programmes.

Languages and ethnic representation

The radio broadcasts mainly in French and Swahili, the two major languages spoken in Eastern Congo. However, eight times per week 15 minutes is set aside for local ethnic groups in South Kivu to broadcast cultural or other affairs in their own language. The Balega, Bahavu, Babembe, Bashi, Bafuliru, Batembo, Banyindu and Banande ethnic groups are currently using this opportunity to broadcast once per week.

Rebroadcasts and external productions

RM exchanges and rebroadcasts programmes of other community radio stations. Among these are Radio Kanyabarunga and Radio Rutshuru in North Kivu, Radio Samazi in Maniema and Radio Isanganiro in Burundi.

Sometimes, NGOs such as Search for Common Ground's office in Bukavu, known as Centre Lokole, produce specific programmes for airing on RM.

Donor partnerships in 2003

The following section contains an overview of the relationship between RM and its main donors for the financial year 2003.

The Belgian NGO 11.11.11³ has for years been RM's main donor and it is currently the only donor organisation with which RM has signed a formal contract. For the financial year 2003, 11.11.11 has pledged and disbursed EUR 35,000 towards the general budget of RM. However, 11.11.11 has revised its mandate and its official aim is now to cooperate with big partner networks or organisations. Thus, some founders of 11.11.11 argue that this revised mandate does not allow for continued large-scale support of RM in the future.

The German Catholic organisation MISEREOR has stepped up its support from previous years and pledged EUR 30,000 for the 2003 budget. These funds stem from a pool of approximately EUR 100,000 pledged for the period covering 2003, 2004 and 2005. However, the disbursement for 2003 has been delayed for months.

The US-based National Endowment for Democracy (NED) has during the past few years provided support through various 12-months projects that run from July to June (NED uses fiscal years that commence on July 1). For the period July 2002 to June 2003, NED paid for various equipment aimed at providing RM with means of self-financing through provision of public services such as Internet access, CD-ROM burning, scanning and photocopying services. For the period July 2003 to June 2004, NED has pledged and disbursed funds earmarked for buying cassette recorders and bicycles for Radio Clubs, a generator to ensure consistent power supply (public supply of electricity is very unstable) as well as the before-mentioned 1,000 W FM transmitter. Total NED contribution for 2003 is approximately EUR 34,000.

The Belgian government has through its embassy in Kinshasa indicated its willingness to support the radio by EUR 95,000.

³ Previously known as the Nationaal Centrum for Ontwikkeingssamenwerking (NCOS)

The delay of the MISEREOR disbursement has brought RM three months in arrears with staff salaries at the time of writing. Also, travel for reporting purposes has been extremely limited for a long time.

However, even if MISEREOR and the Belgian government actually disburses the above-mentioned funds later this year, the management of RM is predicting an overspending of 15 per cent, which is not covered by the total income of EUR 220,664 forecast in the budget. This means that planned activities will either have to be postponed or cancelled, though which ones have not yet been decided.

Certain equipment such as a cooler, a special box for the transmitter as well as special cable jacks and coaxial cables are needed for installing the 1,000 W FM transmitter and were not provided by NED nor included in the general budget of RM. Christian Aid's office in Bukavu has pledged USD 7,118 to pay for this equipment and these funds are said to be disbursed soon.

Technical partnerships and conferences

Apart from the above direct financing by donors, RM has engaged in technical partnerships with the Amsterdam-based NGO Nederlands Instituut voor Zuidelijk Afrika (NIZA), the world community radio organisation AMARC and the Panos Institute for Eastern Africa, that have offered various kind of training for RM journalists as well as production and technical assistance.

Also, senior RM staff is sometimes invited for conferences, typically in order to meet representatives of other community radios. Such travel is paid for by conference organisers, while RM staff takes the opportunity to use such free travel to broadcast reports from other areas of the Congo where they do not otherwise have the means to go.

Self-financing

Self-financing options have been limited. On average, only some EUR 1,000 was gained per month (January to August 2003 figures) from sale of services such as public Internet access provision, on-air advertisement and photocopying services. Since radio advertisement has only been permitted very recently – only the TV and radio stations of the rebel-controlled Radio Television National Congolais (RTNC) were until recently permitted to air advertisements – it is a little difficult to predict how the advertising market develops, but no huge changes are expected.

The Bukavu NGOs that actually 'own' RM are supposed to pay total annual membership fees of EUR 3,500 (2003 figures) of which EUR 1,500 were paid as of end August.

With an annual budget well beyond EUR 200,000, there is no indication that Radio Maendeleo should be able to become self-financing even in the very long term.

DISCUSSION OF RADIO MAENDELEO'S REGIONAL ROLE

Below is a discussion of the role RM plays in terms of informing the public about political news, followed by a discussion of the role it plays in the regional peace process by looking at how RM involves various ethnic groups in its broadcasts.

Radio Maendeleo as a popular information source

There is little doubt that RM is a popular source of information for the population in Bukavu and its immediate surroundings. However, the current limited footprint means that its impact on the regional level is rather limited. However, the fact that Radio Clubs still exists in areas where RM has not been received since 1996 attests to its keen audience in the countryside. A Mai-Mai commander interviewed in Bunyakiri even knew about the radio and as previously mentioned the Mai-Mai have applied for permission to form a Radio Club.

Since most people in Eastern Congo are used to listening to shortwave radio stations, it is likely that even a shortwave transmitter would attract a keen regional audience. If its footprint is widened as planned, it is therefore rather likely that the radio would be able to revive audiences who still remember the radio from the days before its relay transmitters were pillaged in 1996.

Gathering timely and accurate news

Due to the financial restrictions on travel, it is difficult for RM's journalists to get accurate and timely information on events in rural areas. Travel only occasionally takes place when journalists can get a free ride with MONUC vehicles or flights or when they are invited to participate in seminars and conferences in other parts of the country.

Often travelling to a place is the only way to get such information in a timely and accurate manner since there are no fixed phone lines in South Kivu, North Kivu or Maniema, while only major towns such as Bukavu are actually covered by mobile telephone networks.

For example, an umbrella organisation of local NGOs in the district of Bunyakiri, the Plate-forme des Associations de Développement de Bunyakiri (PADEBU), thought RM focused too much on affairs concerning Bukavu. They also suggested RM broadcasted many 'peace programmes' in general, while too little attention was devoted to concrete security problems in the countryside such as Bunyakiri, where citizens suffer from attacks by soldiers of both the RCD and the Mai-Mai. Though Radio Clubs in areas such as Bunyakiri (which is far outside RM's footprint) to a certain extent help filling this news gap, the information is, however, a long time under way due to a lack of mobile network coverage and reports impaired by the fact that Radio Club members by nature are not properly trained journalists.

Concerning national news from Kinshasa or other provinces in the Congo, RM journalists therefore rely heavily on international online and radio media and news websites run by Kinshasa newspapers (print copies of Kinshasa newspapers arrive with huge delays). A few interviewees thought RM was a little too slack when choosing its sources for national news – significant parts of the Kinshasa press are very fond of citing rumours, especially if they are anti-Rwandan – but such claims were difficult to verify or refute given the limits of the assessment mission.

The vast majority of those interviewed regarded RM as a trustworthy source of information. Judging from interviews, the bottom line is that most of RM's listeners tend to turn to RM for local news and development issues, while using the UN's Radio Okapi as a national news source. This held true even for members of the Radio Clubs visited by the consultant.

Uneasy relationship with authorities

RM has had uneasy relationships with the successive authorities that have held sway over Bukavu. And since RM has been known to denounce abuses committed by those in power, it is no surprise that authorities have tried to influence and curb its broadcasts.

When the AFDL rebel movement, created, backed and controlled by Rwanda, Uganda and to some extent Burundi, entered Eastern Congo through the towns of Bukavu and Goma in September 1996, it shot dead one journalist who had identified themselves as RM journalists and closed RM for ten months.

Under RCD-Goma, things remained strained for RM. In particular the head of programmes, Omba Kamengele, was ill-viewed by one of the previous governors of South Kivu, Kantintima Basengezi, who usually threw out Omba Kamengele whenever he turned up at the governor's press conferences. Kantintima also levelled very serious charges against RM. In an interview with the consultant in Bukavu in November 2000, Kantintima thus accused RM of 'extremism' and for having ties with the Rwandan Hutu extremists. The consultant was unable to find any evidence to back up such charges.

Another charge is that the founding NGOs behind RM want to use the radio to mobilise the population against the RCD. To examine this claim, it may be instructive to look at the circumstances concerning the two times when RCD-Goma chose to ban RM from broadcasting (and jailing some senior staff).

The first time RM ran into serious trouble with the RCD-Goma was in July 1999 when it broadcast live from a large meeting between RCD-Goma authorities and the local population, which ended in the dissatisfied audience throwing stones at RCD-Goma representatives. Undoubtedly, the broadcast was no political scoop viewed with the eyes of the RCD-Goma since the rebel movement had evidently not been as successful in explaining its case to the convened population as it had hoped. However, senior RM staff told the consultant that its journalists had actually been specifically invited by the RCD-Goma to cover the meeting. Nevertheless, shortly after RM's office was closed, essential equipment confiscated and its director, Kizito Nfundiko, and head of operations, Omba Kamengele, jailed for 48 hours. The radio remained closed for two years under the pretext that it had violated an instruction not to broadcast stories with political content.

The second time RM ran into trouble with the RCD-Goma was in December 2002. Following a decision by the RCD-Goma to introduce special license plates in the territory under its control, RM and Radio Okapi conducted vox pops among car owners and the general population – who were all vociferously opposed to the move. The result was that RM was again banned from broadcasting, again under the pretext that it had violated a ban on broadcasting stories with political content. However, Radio Okapi, which had conducted similar kind of vox pops, was not harassed.

Again, the consultant tried to verify these claims but without success. In fact, RCD-Goma authorities have been invited to participate in roundtable discussions on air and during his visit, the consultant heard the current governor of South Kivu, Xavier Ciribanya, being given lengthy time to explain himself during several news programmes.

Since the radio reopened in July 2003, there have so far not been any problems. Xavier Ciribanya also told the consultant that although there were a few 'provocative journalists' whose reports he did not like, he generally "had confidence in the radio and that it can play its own positive role in the peace process".

Involving ethnic groups

It is the stated goal of RM to work for peace and peaceful cohabitation among Congo's different ethnicities. For instance, the Radio Club director stressed that many Radio Clubs consist of persons of mixed ethnicities and that he thought working together in Radio Clubs normally ameliorated bonds between various ethnic groups.

As mentioned above, eight times per week 15 minutes is set aside for ethnic groups to report on topics of their own choosing and in their own language.

Members of PADEBU, the Bunyakiri NGO that indirectly represents the Batembo who hail from Bunyakiri and environs, told the consultant that they were happy about this opportunity to express themselves and that those of them who lived in Bukavu often listened to RM. Their main problems were that RM is not received in Bunyakiri, where most Batembo live, and that the Batembo organisation could not afford the membership fee of RM, which would give them access to more direct working relationships with RM.

However, there is one ethnic group whom RM has had problems to engage: the Banyamulenge, ethnic Tutsis of Rwandan and Burundian origin who settled in South Kivu sometime around the end of the eighteenth century. Many of them are pastoralists and coexisted peacefully after immigration with other Congolese and indeed considered themselves Congolese.

However, when the Tutsi-led Rwandan Patriotic Army came to hunt down the Rwandan Hutu extremists in Eastern Congo, they used Banyamulenge front figures to pretend that the war was being waged by an internal Zairian rebel force rather than external invaders. In Bukavu, some Banyamulenge took advantage of the situation, humiliating other Congolese and occupying houses of people that had fled the war. The result was another round of persecution of Banyamulenge, who were singled out on busses in the countryside and killed point blank by Mai-Mai or Rwandan Hutu forces.

The Banyamulenge representatives interviewed by the consultant did not deny that many Banyamulenge had indeed profited from being allies of the Rwandan invaders, but stressed that there was also a large group of Banyamulenge that had stayed away from politics and refrained from exploiting the situation. Although killing of Banyamulenge is rare nowadays, the Banyamulenge feel that they are directly and indirectly blamed whenever things go wrong. For instance, recent rumours have it that the Banyamulenge – in cooperation with the Rwandan Tutsi-led army – are about to start a new war, a so-called ‘third rebellion’, and plot to assassinate Congolese president Laurent Kabila in order to jeopardize the peace process.⁴

The Banyamulenge representatives interviewed by the consultant all stressed that charges of circulating rumours were not levelled against RM with whom they said they enjoyed good relationships. They also said they often listened to RM and appreciated its programs.

However, they felt that the radio rarely discussed their specific problems vis-à-vis other Congolese. They would greatly appreciate if RM “could do something to convince people that the Banyamulenge are not a door for Rwandans and Ugandans to enter Congo again”, as one prominent Banyamulenge representative put it.

Also, Banyamulenge representatives felt they did not enjoy the benefits that other ethnic groups did, saying they did not have a slot of 15 minutes per week to broadcast programmes in their own language, nor was music in their language played on RM. Also, it annoyed them that RM’s opening statement, “You are listening to Radio Maendeleo broadcasting from Bukavu”, which is aired at the beginning and end of daily broadcasts (5.25 a.m. and 9.05 p.m., respectively), is repeated in French, Swahili and eight local languages but not in their language, Kinyamulenge.⁵ Asked why they had never approached RM on the issue, the representative said the issue was too touchy and that even raising the issue might put otherwise good relations with RM staff in jeopardy.

⁴ The ‘first rebellion’ was the AFDL war against Mobutu Sese Seko, while the war of RCD and other rebel groups against Laurent-Désiré Kabila has been termed the ‘second rebellion’

⁵ In fact, some people dispute whether there is actually a language calling Banyamulenge, saying it is merely a dialect of Kinyarwanda and Kirundi, the languages spoken in Rwanda and Burundi

It appears that a lot of the Banyamulenge distrust of RM is based on distrust and misunderstandings. For instance, Omba Kamengele showed the consultant tapes and CDs with music in Kirundi and Kinyarwanda, the languages resembling Kinyamulenge, stacked next to RM's mixing console. RM staff also stressed that Banyamulenge representatives had in the past refused to speak on the radio and that they were often invited for seminars and meetings but almost always rejected such invitations.

Some (non-Banyamulenge) civil society figures acknowledged that from 1996 to 1997, there had indeed been tensions between the Banyamulenge and the civil society but otherwise said that as of present, there were no bad feelings between civil society members and the Banyamulenge. Several Banyamulenge organisations are in fact members of the Bukavu Civil Society Coordination Bureau that registers and represents NGOs in Bukavu. Some of these Banyamulenge NGOs also cooperate with RM in terms of broadcasting on development issues in general – for instance on cattle breeding, traditionally a Banyamulenge speciality – but it appears that the relationship between the Banyamulenge vis-à-vis the rest of the Congolese society is rarely touched upon by RM. There are certain exceptions, however. Search for Common Ground's office in Bukavu has produced programmes for RM on how Banyamulenge children were living with Babembe families in the town of Fizi-Baraka (Southern part of South Kivu) because their parents lived too far from schools. Also, a programme was produced on the problems faced by Banyamulenge who had occupied houses during the first rebellion in 1996-1997 and then had to surrender the properties to the original owners that had returned.⁶

In the presence of the consultant, Omba Kamengele called the president of the Banyamulenge society in Bukavu, Bonoit Kadage, to invite him for an on-air discussion of the latest rumour of a 'third rebellion' and hear the opinion of the Banyamulenge on this issue. In the ensuing broadcast aired shortly after the consultant's departure, Bonoit Kadage was given opportunity to deny the existence of such a plot.⁷ At a meeting also witnessed by the consultant, Omba Kamengele invited Bonoit Kadage to submit an application for broadcasting 15 minutes every week in Kinyamulenge. Bonoit Kadage on his side promised that such an application would be forthcoming, though at the time of writing, RM has not yet received this application.

⁶ Some Banyamulenge were given empty plots elsewhere in Bukavu by the RCD-Goma where they could construct homes, others were taken in by non-Banyamulenge families.

⁷ An opportunity that the governor of South Kivu, Xavier Ciribanya, had been given as well during a previous RM news programme.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

RM plays a positive role in informing the local population in and around Bukavu about development issues, local politics as well as coordinating NGO work. However, the limited footprint of the radio prevents it from playing a significant role in the regional peace process. Its regional role could be enhanced significantly by the planned installation of a shortwave transmitter sponsored by the Belgian government.

Another major problem is RM's inability to gather news in a timely and accurate fashion from most parts of South Kivu (and other places in the Congo) due to financial restrictions on travel outside Bukavu. A first step in solving this problem would naturally be to set aside funds for such travel. However, appointing a professional correspondent in the town of Uvira, about one hundred kilometers south of Bukavu, may also be beneficial since Uvira is situated in the middle of a very dynamic area with Mai-Mai and Burundian Hutu soldiers of the Forces pour la Défense de la Démocratie (FDD) that use Congo as a rear base for attacks into Burundi. At the same time, Uvira is covered by mobile telephone networks, thus making speedy reporting back to RM in Bukavu possible. Also, it would be useful to provide Radio Clubs with appropriate training in reporting techniques and thereby enable them to better fill the 'news gap' from their respective areas.

RM enjoys good relationships with various ethnic groups that contribute to broadcasts. However, many Banyamulenge have been reluctant to team up with RM to discuss their sometimes troublesome relationship vis-à-vis other ethnic groups. Nevertheless, RM should work hard to encourage Banyamulenge to participate in on-air discussions in order to inform soberly and in-depth about this issue and thereby counter rumouring.

Such rumouring may not only bring Banyamulenge at risk, but could also contribute to political destabilisation of the region. Serious reporting on the Banyamulenge issue will become even more pertinent if and when the footprint is increased by shortwave transmitter to cover the whole of South Kivu (and North Kivu and parts of Maniema) since it will then reach the majority of the Banyamulenge population that live further south of Bukavu as well as the Banyamulenge army of Patrick Masunzu. Proper reporting on the Banyamulenge issue could also benefit the planned integration of the Mai-Mai and RCD-Goma forces into the new national Congolese army as stipulated in the national peace agreement, since many Mai-Mai have been very hostile to the Banyamulenge who in turn constitute a significant part of the RCD-Goma army.

Financially, RM is limping along. Although staff salaries have not been paid for three months, this budget item is expected to be covered by forthcoming budget support from the German NGO MISEREOR. New digital editing equipment to replace the current old analogue systems is highly desired in the long run, but falls outside the scope of what International Media Support is able to offer.

However, within the agreement and limits of the consultant's contract with International Media Support, the consultant recommends that International Media Support provides the following assistance to enhance RM's role in the regional peace process.⁸

- Hire a local correspondent in Uvira for one year – USD 2,000⁹
- Increasing funds set aside for travel expenditure in relation to regional reporting by journalists for one year – USD 4,000¹⁰
- Increasing funds set aside for hiring local external consultants to train Radio Clubs in using cassette recorders for interviews and reporting - USD 2,000¹¹

⁸ Financial support for the following projects and purchases would enhance the quality of journalists' reporting in general: two additional high-quality MiniDisc recorders (USD 1,200), two additional computers (with Internet access) in the editorial office (USD 2,000) advanced training for journalists in Cool Edit Pro and Sound Forge digital editing programs by external consultants from two Studio Ijambo technicians from Burundi (USD 1,000)

⁹ One-off recruitment expenses of USD 200, monthly salary of USD 100, monthly mobile telephone costs of USD 25, monthly local travel expenditures of USD 25

¹⁰ Very few funds have been set aside in the budget for this purpose

ANNEX I: INTERVIEWEE LIST

RADIO MAENDELEO STAFF

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OTHER INTERVIEWEES

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Faustin Muliri, journalist and media programmes officer, Search for Common Ground, + 250 + 08413077, + 243 + 813182885, faustinmuliri@yahoo.fr

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Didace Kabingini, president of Bukavu Civil Society Coordination Bureau, + 243 + 98623922, vdd_kandida1@yahoo.fr or sociv_bureausk@yahoo.fr

Jack Kalume, journalist with Radio Kahuzi, + 243 + 813176360, jackkalume@yahoo.fr

Xavier Ciribanya, governor of South Kivu, + 250 + 08303006

Sengos Sumahil, colonel of Mai-Mai (Padiri faction), commander of Bunyakiri area (no contact details available)

Severin Mugangu, professor of law at the Catholic University of Bukavu, + 250 + 08521904, cccgec@yahoo.fr or sco_ucb@yahoo.fr

Bonoit Kadage, president of Banyamulenge civil society in Bukavu, + 250 + 08516256, kmreme@yahoo.fr

Oscar Fitina Kalimba, president of Plate-forme des Associations de Développement de Bunyakiri (PADEBU), + 250 + 08627899, oscarkalimba@yahoo.fr or padebubunyakiri@yahoo.fr

Another Banyamulenge representative and MONUC staff were also interviewed but requested not to be identified.

Apart from the above listed persons, interviews were also conducted with the general population of Bukavu.

Contacting people in Eastern Congo by phone from outside the region

There were at the time of writing no fixed phone lines in South Kivu, though parts of the province – notably the towns of Bukavu and Goma – were covered by four mobile telephone networks. Many Congolese in Bukavu subscribe to two (or more) networks for optimal coverage.

Two networks (Supercell and MTN-Rwandacell) operate using the Rwandan-based mobile telephony network reaching across the Rwandan-Congolese border. In order to reach subscribers from outside Rwanda or the Congo, dial the appropriate international access code + 250 and then 0 followed by the 7-digit number.

Example: In order to call Sosthene Buhendwa Birali from European countries, dial 00243 813184619

The two remaining networks (Celtel and Vodacom) are Congolese based. To reach anyone subscribing to any of these two networks, one will have to dial the appropriate international access code + 243 and then the 8- or 9-digit number. In this case there is no '0' between the international access code and the number itself.

Example: In order to call Oscar Fitina Kalimba from European countries, dial 00250

¹¹ Very few funds have been set aside in the budget for this purpose

ANNEX I: CONTACT DETAILS FOR PARTNERS & DONORS

(not all were consulted)

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