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**Technology
&
Networking**

Challenge of Informatics Development and Exploitation in Africa by <i>E.A. Owolabi</i>	1
Charging for Information: a Developing Country's Dilemma by <i>John Kakaire-Menya</i>	8
Internet in Africa, the Highway of Ignorance by <i>B. Kasamwa-Tuseko & R. Bourgoing</i>	10
Africa Technology and Networking by <i>Ali B. Ali-Dinar</i>	12

**Democracy
&
Human Rights**

Press Law 93, 1995 by <i>Salah Eldin Hafiz & Eugene Rogan</i>	15
Strangers and Stringers by <i>Gwen Ansell</i>	18
Prospects and Challenges of the Media in Chad by <i>Gerard Rakls</i>	22

**Religion
&
Social
Communication**

The Laws of Literacy by <i>Henry M. Chakava</i>	25
The Dawn of the Religious State in Egypt	28
Communication and Social Identity by <i>Robert N. Kizito</i>	32
Report of the African Women Communicators Network	42

Insert

The African Files N.5/96 A - P

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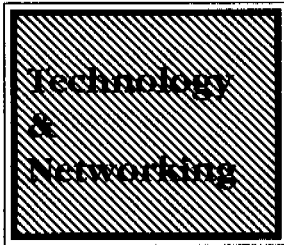
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Challenge of Informatics Development and Exploitation in Africa

The role of Informatics is to enhance human capability. Born of the exercise of human brain and creative power, it has started in turn to facilitate the extension of human productive ability in the various areas where human imagination directs its application.

Having the computer, a complex man made tool at its centre, Informatics covers computer science and technology together with its applications, and the study of its impact on society. At present, wherever human activity is modern and forward-looking, computer lends itself to beneficial exploitation.

Conventionally the basic functions of the computer consist of accepting, storing and processing data, together with out-putting the processed data. These make it get quickly involved also in data transmission and communication. All efforts of Informatics were geared towards making the machine perform these functions efficiently and as a result of proved capability in this area, different applications get developed. Such are the applications that get covered by the generic term of data processing in aid of scientific research, technology, training, management, commerce, industry, agriculture, administration, military operations, finance, banking, economic planning, decision making and space exploration. Extension of some of these evolve to become management information systems.

With intensive research and development, coupled with the progress in electronic technology culminating in microprocessor chips, applications become more generalized and brought within the intellectual reach of most educated people. The text processing software developed for main-frame got adapted to microcomputer and appears as the backbone of the new area of bureautics. Miniaturized chips whose software are precisely programmed to perform specific functions lend new energy to robots and the whole field becomes robotics. Extension of data transmission by the computer, known as telematic, has found practical everyday application in banking. Apart from electronic fund transfer and settlement among banks, clients (the general public) enjoy getting their cash from automatic machines by introducing their credit cards.

The new frontier of Informatics at the moment is knowledge processing (popularly known as artificial intelligence). Most of what have been discussed above are in the realm of conventional data processing. It can be seen then

by E.A. Owolabi*

that conventional computer systems are not stupid, they are quite smart, but they are innocent. They do what they are told. What goes in them is what comes out, maybe in different shapes. They don't know how to interrelate data to produce knowledge. Yet they will continue to be very useful depending on required application.

Knowledge processing computer systems are therefore computer systems that simulate reasoning and generate reaction (or output) in conformity with reason obtained by manipulating both data and knowledge. There will be little physical difference between knowledge processing and data processing computers, but essentially the main difference has to be reflected in the software. While the data processing computer will be using algorithm based software, the knowledge processing computer will be employing software based both on algorithm and heuristic.

The conventional software highlights repetitive processes, the knowledge based software will include inferential processes. This will enable the knowledge processing system to take facts, relate them in logical ways, and thereby produce new facts and even recognize patterns.

Highly parallel computing system is an area where the search for high performance computing system is being directed. This is needed for the next generation of computational problems which will require spontaneity of human brain in applying simultaneously different processes to come out with solutions.

Africa and Informatics

There is, at present, a good amount of Informatics awareness in Africa. Like in other parts of the world, the computer application has been affecting people's life in Africa. Business sectors, particularly banks, use the computer in their modernization efforts to improve services to their customers. This is quite evident in the bank branches in the urban centers. The governments in many of the countries are abandoning manual procedures for computerized ones to improve on a large number of administrative data processing. Anyone in Africa who has not yet received a bill, a notice, or a document generated by the computer, or has not been a subject of a computer record whatsoever, is not yet taking advantage of the modern services and facilities provided by his country, or is totally out of touch with the society.

In many countries on the continent, many institutions of higher learning have Informatics in their training. Some of them have got it introduced into the curriculum of selected secondary schools, while in certain isolated cases privileged elementary schools have their pupils familiarized with the microcomputer.

The urban centers, particularly the capitals of the countries on the continent have proliferation of computer companies both foreign and indigenous providing all sorts of Informatics services. In fact computer products and services begin

to constitute a non-negligible proportion of importation into some of the countries.

Nevertheless, it can be said that Africa is not yet benefitting sufficiently from Informatics possibilities. The reason for this can be traced to identifiable key problems, some of them peculiar to Africa, and some others due to the nature of Informatics development. Some of such problems, inhibiting Africa from taking full advantage of Informatics will be discussed hereunder together with the ways in which they are being addressed.

Lack or shortage of appropriately trained human resources in Informatics is one of the main key problems undermining rational exploitation of Informatics possibilities in many of the countries. As mere acquisition of computer facilities by itself will not guarantee *its productive operation, it is necessary to have trained hands and minds to work it by feeding, programming, analyzing, and managing its capabilities.* The kind of core personnel required need training in hardware, software, and applications. As Informatics as a subject has its own set of doctrines, methodology and practice, profound training in it goes beyond utilization of the packages on the shelf, it enables the specialists to be able to adapt the vendors hardware and software to solve specific developmental problems as well as improve on the capability of the product. This is why Informatics has become a school and university discipline all over the world.

As certain countries face the

problem of lack or shortage of appropriate manpower in this field, they address the issue either by ad hoc training programmes or by importing the necessary manpower. Either of these methods does not provide a sustainable solution in the exploitation of Informatics for development. Since training and education underlines the importance of intellectual and practical aspects of Informatics, countries who want to start, continue, progress, or advance in the exploitation of Informatics for development must engage in vigorous and well planned programmes of training in this domain. There are specialist training, users' training, decision makers' awareness, general education, and computer literacy to deal with in this respect.

Maintenance of Informatics facilities is a serious problem in more than one way in many African countries. In the first place, the climatic and physical situation in many African countries are very demanding on electronic components of the computer hardware. The fact that many of the countries are situated in the tropical zone renders the climate rather hot with much heat impact on the hardware. To alleviate the heat impact more cold air conditioning is required for the computer than in cooler parts of the world.

When air conditioning reduces heat impact, there is again the problem of dust. The electronic equipment is not friendly with dust, whereas many of the countries face dust winds (e.g. harmattan in West Africa from November to February). These

climatic exigencies of hardware maintenance in Africa are in addition to normal maintenance requirements due to part failure, manufacturing error, as well as wear and tear.

The computer software maintenance requirement is not negligible either. There are errors associated with software generation, software failure due to handling and storage problem. A currently frightening software problem requiring urgent maintenance operation whenever it occurs is the software «virus». This is a program bug introduced inadvertently, and which has the capability of shattering the whole production of the computer system. When it occurs many PC (Personal Computer) users suffer from this.

Addressing maintenance problems can be said to be simple. Get a maintenance technician to deal with the machine. But in the case of a computer system, the maintenance technician has to acquire expertise in the specific aspect he has to deal with, be it hardware or software owing to the complexity of the system. Abandoning the machine, which is one of the options people take is not a good solution. The computer is a relatively expensive machine and abandoning it for lack of maintenance expertise is wasting limited resources. Also the job meant for it to be done would suffer. Others address this problem by calling in a computer system maintenance technician. In most cases the technician works for the computer vendor, or he is from a computer maintenance firm.

In actual fact there is a limit

to the computer maintenance operation one can accomplish in-house. The in-house maintenance work is at present limited to trouble shooting, and first-level maintenance. When it is beyond this level which consists of changing recognizable faulty modules, experts on maintenance have to be called. Nevertheless, it is desirable to have some in-house maintenance expertise. This way the useful life of the computer system can be prolonged while computer down time can be minimized.

Isolation of Informatics specialists is reminiscent of the general problem of the isolation of scientists and researchers in Africa. In as much as one can find a larger number of computer users than specialists, scientists and researchers in this field are few in each country on the continent. Moreover, to undertake much needed research and development work in each country in this field requires a critical mass of this kind of specialist. They should be able to have a forum in the country for exchange of expertise, technical data, information, and know-how. In addition contact among them needs to be frequent in order to meet the fast moving changes in the field of Informatics. For them to be effectively current they must be in constant touch with what goes on in the rest of the world regarding the field. Informatics, which is a young discipline, is also a fast growing field. To be able to move with its moving tide in theory and practice, a specialist has to keep on updating his expertise by frequent contact with professional colleagues in the country as well as maintaining a

channel of communication with the rest of the Informatics world.

Solutions applicable to this problem include: establishment of a professional and scientific body in Informatics in the country, publication and dissemination of professional journals in Informatics, and creation of an Informatics network. Informatics specialists in some African countries have organized themselves into professional bodies.

An example of this is the Computer Association of Nigeria (COAN) whose professional activities inspire so much confidence that the Federal Government of Nigeria granted it a charter in 1993. There have been some efforts to organize computer specialists at sub-regional and regional levels as well. An example of such is the Computer in Southern Africa (CISNA), whose membership includes computer specialists from Botswana Malawi, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe, and South Africa.

Brain-drain of Informatics specialists like the general phenomenon of brain-drain of African specialists in most intellectual fields is a problem that needs urgent attention. Brain-drain from Africa's intellectual pool is like capital flight from the African economy. Usually it is the best brain that is wanted elsewhere and therefore he/she is the most mobile. Such mobility has the financial, material, and professional advancement gain for the individual, but the country loses. In the same way, when capital flows away from Africa, it goes to where it can attract more

profit to the investor, but the country is denied the benefit. To complete the analogy, both capital and brain flow in the same direction out of Africa to the favoured region, hence leaving the continent poorer.

One of the suggestions addressing the problem of brain-drain in Africa came from the «Meeting of High-level Informatics Experts in Africa and of RINAF» held in Nairobi, Kenya, in July 1993. The meeting noticed that brain-drain was seriously affecting the progress of Informatics activities in some countries in Africa. The solution suggested was the establishment, by various countries, of governmental systems which could accommodate and retain the intellectual communities in the respective country.

It was further advocated that greater patriotism among the professionals needed to be motivated in order to alleviate this problem. It needs to be stated here that movement of intellectuals is desirable for cross-fertilization of ideas and skill improvement, but it should not be a loss forever of the best brains in the country. There needs to be feedback. Deficit flow of brain from a country is a way to a trophy of national intellectual potential.

This must be avoided by attraction with comparable benefits, availability of equipment and material to work, encouragement of challenging and useful projects, as well as recognition and promotion of indigenous expertise while allowing for a commensurate external input.

«The urban centers, particularly the capitals of the countries on the continent have proliferation of computer companies both foreign and indigenous providing all sorts of Informatics services. In fact computer products and services begin to constitute a non-negligible proportion of importation into some of the countries.

Nevertheless, it can be said that Africa is not yet benefitting sufficiently from Informatics possibilities. The reason for this can be traced to identifiable key problems, some of them peculiar to Africa, and some others due to the nature of Informatics development.»

Total dependence of Informatics industry on external supply is a big handicap for the exploitation of its potentialities to socio-economic development in many African countries. The dependence makes Africa only a consumer continent in matters of Informatics products without any contribution to their production. Some press reported recently that the Informatics industry's contribution to world economy was about US\$360 billion a year. Africa seems not to have productive share of this since it does not take part in its production.

The present reason for lack of participation of African countries in production of computer hardware is two-fold. One is lack of technology to do it while the other is lack of the kind of capital required. Computer hardware production is a very high technology.

This kind of technology and the infrastructure supporting it are concentrated in USA, Japan, and Europe. Africa can also acquire the technology - after all, other developing parts of the world are presently making an appreciable effort. However, Africa needs the capital. Apart from being knowledge-based, the technology also requires very heavy capital support to back it up.

Production of the software part of the computer is an easier way out to the contribution to Informatics products. When one understands that software cost is at least 60% of a valuable computer system, then there is the certainty that this is a profitable venture. Software engineering and

production is an intellectual activity. Investing in software production is within the financial capacity and intellectual ability of many Africa countries. A country can establish one or several application software centers to cater at first for its national need. Then with confidence the market can be expanded like India has done supplying software to as far afield as Europe.

Other things attached to the computer industry are services including consultancy, procurement, outsourcing, maintenance, and specific training services. Some countries have private indigenous enterprises built around such services in addition to foreign firms.

Such enterprises need encouragement as they are good contributors to the national economy.

UNESCO and Informatics

As an intellectual organization of universal dimension, UNESCO has the mandate to promote the development of Informatics possibilities for the benefit of all nations. In addition, it seeks to employ Informatics activities, like in all its programmes, to bring about international peace and understanding through cooperative efforts and projects in this field. As has been shown elsewhere in this paper, the scope of Informatics has grown wide, and the kind of fund propelling it in the world economy has become enormous. Nevertheless an international

organization can still play an important role in this domain if appropriate effort is made. Conscious of its obligations to the international community, UNESCO translates its mandate in this domain to mean concentration on the area of Informatics it can undertake within the limits of resources available to it. The areas of *concentration of UNESCO in Informatics* address most of the challenges and problems discussed elsewhere in this paper and include education and training, promotion of international cooperation, and support to collaborative developmental projects.

In the 1992-1993 biennium, UNESCO's Informatics programme focused on most of the challenges and problems encountered in Africa in the domain. Geographically, the Organization's Informatics Programme covers the whole world since its activities are executed in all regions defined as Africa, Arab States, Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Europe including North America.

In Africa in particular, Informatics Programme received a boost from Informafrika forming part of the special programme known as «Priority Africa». Informafrika is a contraction of the Informatics in Africa, which is a programme action established as a regional strategy to increase UNESCO's effort in this domain in the region. In content the Informatics programme of the Organization favoured education and training, hardware architecture and maintenance activities, promotion of software development and rational

utilization, and computer data network. It also covered encouragement of international cooperation, exchange of experience and technical knowhow, as well as contribution to the development of national strategy and policy in the domain. The activities undertaken are listed hereunder.

Retraining of Informatics Specialists was undertaken in cooperation with institutions of higher learning, which organized refresher courses and workshops for researchers and specialists in Informatics, with a view to promoting cooperative research projects on priority Informatics themes.

National and regional training were undertaken to support institutions in developing countries offering graduate courses in Informatics. Such institutions in Africa included the University of Lagos in Nigeria, the University of Nairobi in Kenya, Institut Africain d'Informatique (IAI) in Gabon, Ecole Nationale Supérieure Universitaire de Technologie (ENSUT) in Senegal, and the Institut National de Formation en Informatique (INI) in Algeria. Liaison with international institutions, NGO's and professional organizations for the purpose of mobilizing projects, organization of seminars, symposia and workshops, with a view to familiarizing young Computer Scientists (especially from LDCs) and women with new techniques and their applications formed part of this group of activities. Another part was the award of study grants in order to facilitate contacts between computer specialists and to enable young

computer scientists and women from developing countries to benefit from the experience of industrialized countries.

INFORMAFRICA grouped sets of activities in line with the special programme «Priority: Africa» and it emphasized development of human resources, in particular for software engineers, maintenance technicians, Informatics managers and trainers.

In this regard, the Regional Training Centre for Micro Informatics Maintenance was established in the Yaba College of Technology, Lagos, Nigeria to cater for mostly anglophone countries in Africa, while the CAFMICRO (Centre Interafricain de Formation et la Maintenance des équipements Micro informatiques) established at the «Université du Bénin», Lomé, Togo, catered for Francophone countries. In addition the «Meeting of High-level Informatics Experts in Africa and of RINAF», was organized in July 1993.

Coordination, information and support constituted the first set of activities directly linked with Intergovernmental Informatics Programme (IIP). These included the organization of the session of the Intergovernmental Committee for IIP in 1992 and the Bureau of IIP meetings. The 33 member Committee included 8 African countries as members. There were also support for the network of 400 institutions of IIPNET; organization of regional meetings (one in each region), involving IIP focal points for the elaboration of regional organization; provision of hardware, software and

documentation to least developed Member States in order to facilitate their participation in IIP activities; and support for activities of NGOs and professional organizations mainly in developing countries.

Implementation of IIP projects was the activity concerned with the support to some 20 projects selected by the Bureau of IIP among which were projects relating to the promotion of information exchange, the informatics and teleprocessing networks, the development of centers for production of software, and for maintenance. In this regard, established Informatics networks were strengthened. Those that were strengthened included the Regional Informatics Network for Africa (RINAF).

In the 1994-1995 biennium, UNESCO plans to pursue its Informatics programme, like its other programmes, with greater vigour. In this regard the purpose of the programme was set to harness Informatics for development and to strengthen the capacities of Member States in this field. UNESCO-ROSTA will pursue this purpose in implementing the Organization's programme of Informatics whose activities fall in line with the requirements of the Member States in Africa. Such activities are described hereunder.

Training for informatics specialists, in particular the training of trainers, will be organized through regional and sub-regional courses, and support will be given to their participation in Informatics research activities in the production or adaptation of hardware and software. Moreover,

short and medium-term training will be provided for technicians and users in order to involve them in the installation and operation of informatics.

Pilot projects are envisaged with a view to introducing teaching of Informatics at secondary, post-secondary, vocational/technical levels of education in developing countries, particularly in the least developed ones. In addition awareness efforts for the decision-makers and educators concerned will be aimed at introducing Informatics curricula at all educational levels.

The implementation of INFORMAFRICA- the regional co-operation strategy aimed at developing computer use and introducing computer science into educational systems, will be continued as part of the «Priority: Africa» programme. New steps will be taken to make training more generally available for educators, software production specialists, maintenance and management staff in academic institutions.

Support will be provided for the execution of some 50 projects selected by the Bureau of the Intergovernmental Committee for IIP (40 new projects and ten undertaken during the previous budgetary period), which give priority to training in Informatics and through Informatics, software development, the setting up of Informatics networks, R&D, and Informatics policies and strategies. Some of the projects will be those in African countries. The fifth session of the Intergovernmental Committee which will be held in December 1994 will look at the way these projects have been

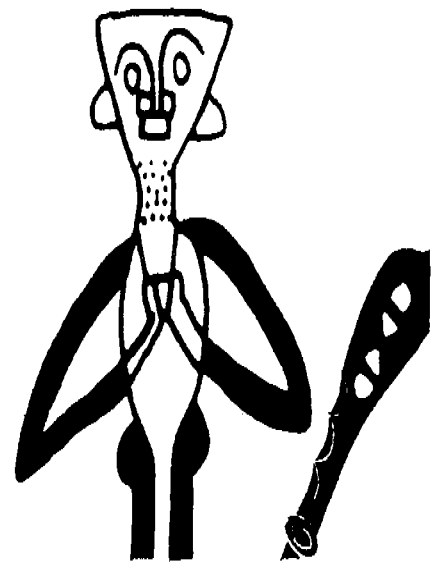
followed up and will assess the activities carried out under the programme.

Regional networks for information exchange between institutions specializing in Informatics will gradually be consolidated through training and the provision of equipment, as planned for the RINAF network (Africa), RINAS (Arab States), RINEE (Centre of and Central Europe), RINSCA and RINSEAP (Asia) and RCII (Latin America and the Caribbean).

Promotional activities will be carried out, in collaboration with members of the Bureau, to make the aims and priorities of IIP better known to donors, in both the public and private sectors. The projects carried out within the framework of IIP will be evaluated, and the findings will be widely distributed to Member States as well as to current and potential donors.

A good international plan needs to be executed in collaboration with all concerned for it to achieve its laudable aim. All Member States in Africa are therefore enjoined to look at their point of entry in the UNESCO Informatics programme and take advantage of it. There is in Africa, the Regional Informatics Adviser based in UNESCO-ROSTA. He is always disposed, as he should be, to implement Informatics activities in Africa in cooperation with the Member States, NGO's, Professional Organizations and competent individuals. □

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Charging for Information: a Developing Country's Dilemma

The information sector is undoubtedly an important element for African development, but it has a cost. Many institutions, groups, libraries etc. have never enough money to cover their expenses.

Most information institutions, libraries and resource centres have never had enough money to cater for their budgets. The budgets are often padded on grants from governments which are inadequate. The absence or lack of enough money often leads information workers and providers to look for alternative ways of funding the services they are providing. The need to generate additional funds for operational expenses and to provide high quality services to the ever demanding information users often forces the providers to charge for information.

In any case, information is power and like electricity in a battery the power can be stored but it is of no use until released from storage and put to work - says Mrs. Chandra Kannapiran.

Just like land capital and entrepreneurship information is a vital ingredient of development.

Governments in developing countries like Uganda try to fight against ignorance, poverty and disease. These three evils are greatly linked to lack of information and knowledge. But funding for the spread of information services to people who need them most has not been even. As a result, some organisations have been forced to provide stop gap services.

One such measure has been to establish Resource Centres with a bias to the organisation of operations like health sustainable agriculture etc. This for only a specialised group of information users. Unfortunately, this leads to the uneven distribution of services.

Yet if people are to be mobilised for development, information must be made available in the right quantities and appropriate quality. This calls for a clear policy on information provision and a right attitude to that policy by policy makers and information users.

by John Kakaire-Menya

Recent developments in information management demand for new approaches. Originally information was free but not adequately planned for. Now, those who produce and distribute the information need their costs.

There are many ways of manipulating information to which the Ugandan society of information users and providers has to change. The use of computers, links to information networks, and databases is becoming a common thing today. The information sector is becoming an important employment provider for consultants, advisors, and computer operators.

Infopreneurship is increasingly becoming a major occupation. But this has serious implications for most people in Uganda. Information and a correct attitude towards it are the missing components in the development equation - be it poverty elimination, clean environment etc. For some reason now we are asking the people to pay for their right and gateway to development. Thus, it appears as if we are running away from our responsibility and in effect complicating the equation.

When information was free people never used it. Today we are asking people who do not understand the importance of information in self-emancipation and development to pay for it!

It appears most people will not understand the logic behind it. Information institutions and workers will have a big job to sell the idea that information is for sale.

The reasons for charging for

information are many. They include the desire to close the gap left by small and inadequate budgets and enabling information workers to serve only the serious users. Other information workers also argue that charging is the only way to measure how useful and effective the services offered are, and the only way to ensure high quality outputs and services.

Methods of charging include: sale of studies, reports, bulletins and newsletters, computerised databases, researches and photocopying services; annual membership fees charged according to category of user, and charging on case by case basis.

That is why change and development are facilitated through access to information data (Policy Alert-MWENGO).

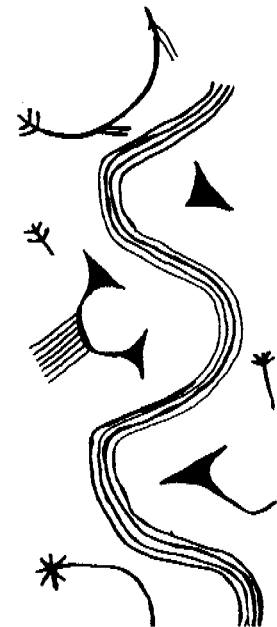
It has also been observed that there are no information services in Uganda that are entirely self-financing.

Many of the publications put out for sale actually do not sell well. One can use the money from such sales as part of cost recovery but not for self sustainance. Moreover, money from such sales is usually mixed up with other monies to the extent that it is not easily available.

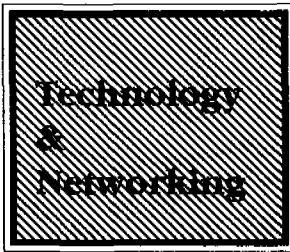
Another short coming of charging is that quite often users are turned away because they cannot afford to pay. And if the services started began as free services introduction of a charge may lead to a drop in the demand for them.

Success in charging for information services depends on a number of factors. Firstly, it

depends on the provision of quality services which are commensurate with the level of charges. Secondly, charges should be acceptable to the users. Thirdly, the services should be advertised so that they get known to the users. Fourthly, one should belong to a network because that gives you ready users and an information base. But lets remember that if information is equated to power and money then it will not be shared easily as each will want to have a larger share. □



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The versions on paper of specialized magazines disappear, the peasants are left without information.

by B. Kasamwa-Tuseko and R. Bourgoing

Internet in Africa, the Highways of Ignorance

In Kitenge, a small town in Zaire that has neither telephones nor electricity, you will not find "internauts" who travel the network. And yet the information highways are discussed. This year, many specialized international magazines, for a long time distributed on the African continent free of charge, have been replaced with electronic versions. "Here, the only source of information on breeding and agriculture was the magazine Ceres published by FAO", Pierre Mwando, a pig breeder tells us. "The head editor informed us that Ceres would suspend publications with the March-April 1996 edition. In this case, in the north of Shaba, we will be even more penalized. We are ruined!". To replace Ceres, that was distributed in 176 countries, FAO (Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations) will organize an information service to be incorporated into its Web page. The former readers who have access to Internet will be able to find there information on breeding and agriculture. Since April, the Canadian magazine Crdi-Explore, of the Centre of Research for International Development (Crdi) no longer appears on paper. It has been replaced by a weekly electronic edition on the World Wide Web. "The head editor is not without a certain humour", Nkulu Butombe, the coordinator of the Catholic schools of the nearby diocese of Kamina, points out. "He asks us to subscribe to their mailing list to receive each week, in our electronic mail-box, articles on agriculture, fishing and breeding. Our western friends are well aware of the conditions in which we live in the rural environment. How could we have an electronic mail-box in the middle of the savana when we have neither a computer nor a telephone?".

The information desert

The inhabitants of the province of Shaba have good reason to despair. As regards press, Lubumbashi has no daily newspaper or magazine specialized in agriculture, education or breeding. For economic reasons, many "weeklies" such as Nyot (Star), Muten (Sun) and the Onomastique only come out once every two years. As regards the State radio (Voix du Zaire) and Zenith, the

private radio of the Salesians, their area of transmission does not exceed 50 kilometres. The second city, also the economic capital of Zaire, is not linked either to electronic mail or to Internet. Even telephone access is a problem. In this "desert" of information, international radios and magazines coming from abroad are the only lights that shine for the Zaireans of Shaba on political, economic and agricultural information. Crdi-Explore was addressed mostly towards researchers. But in these areas that are cut off from information, the circle of its readers went far beyond the area of research. A single copy might have been read by as many as two hundred or three hundred people, and the same was true for the magazine Ceres. Many peasants suffer strongly as a result of their disappearance. The information highways, no doubt useful in the modern world, reduce them, they say, to illiteracy.

The protest served no purpose

"I received hundreds of letters from people who used our magazine to learn French or English", Robert Charbonneau, director of publications for Crdi in Ottawa, tells us. "But who says that it is our business to publish general material for promoting language learning? I do not believe it is". Because 85% of the receivers of the Crdi-Explore were readers from developing countries, for the most part without access to Internet, Charbonneau realizes that the information spread by Crdi will no longer have the same diffusion. "It

is clear that this is a 180° change. We are obliged to do it for financial reasons". Charbonneau explains that the costs of printing and mailing the Crdi-Explore, published four times a year in 15 thousand copies in about a hundred countries, had become too much of a burden for the Canadian organization.

The former employees of Ceres are still suffering from shock at this decision. "I am receiving outraged letters from all over the world", says one of them. "Many tell me that we were their only source of information! Our target was precisely the developing countries. How much did their interests count in this decision? I really don't know". For her part, the director of the information division of FAO, Karin-Lis Svarre, is conscious of the fact that "many persons who live in rural communities, for example in Africa, will no longer be able to have the same amount of information that they had in the past".

But she adds that the disappearance of Ceres was unavoidable due to the budget cuts in FAO. In order to lighten the effect of the disappearance of these magazines, the possibility has been mentioned of sending the old subscribers a printed collection of the texts that will be diffused on the Web sites. FAO and Crdi say however that they are optimistic about the extension of the information highways in Africa. "I continue to be convinced that within two or three years", Robert Charbonneau explains, "our target group, that is the research scholars, will have reached us on Internet". For now, Zaire, like the greater part of the African countries, has no

access to the interactive services of Internet; out of 53 countries, only about ten, South Africa, Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Tunisia, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Morocco and the Ivory Coast are linked. Their diffusion in Africa presents enormous difficulties. In order to fully use the electronic sites of Crdi and FAO, a large multimedial colour computer is necessary as well as a trustworthy and functioning telecommunications network. These networks are usually defective or non-existing on the continent and computers continue to be beyond the reach of Africans, except for a few privileged cases. The joke is that in their last printed issues, Ceres and Crdi-Explore both ran a dossier on Internet and the developing countries. Ceres pointed out the dangers that the countries of the south are running with the diffusion of the new information technologies: "Given that by now the information on scientific development is to be found above all on Internet, the question naturally arises: are we perhaps widening the gap that separates the rich countries from the poor ones, by adding another factor, that of "poverty of information?" □

Translated by Barbara Donovan, Idoc.

Source: Internazionale
27 September 1996
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*Internet offers rich material on Communication in Africa . One site where one finds most a essential source material is the home page of the African Studies of the University of Pennsylvania. Ali B. Ali-Dinar has edited this page:
http://www.sas.upenn.edu/African_Studies/About_African/w_tech.html*

Africa Technology and Networking

- *User's Guide to Electronic Networks in Africa*
This is a new version of the American Association for the Advancement of Science(AAAS) Sub-Saharan Africa Program's "User's Guide to Electronic Networks in Africa".
- *Internetworks in International Development*
Resources on internet, Africa and development.
- *Hardware and Software Suppliers*
List of organizations that provide (sell or donate) computers to Africa.
- *Africa Link*
provides support to USAID partner networks in Africa seeking Internet access to facilitate the exchange of information among their members. Environmental, agricultural, and natural resource management networks are specifically targeted for assistance.
- *Africa Online Information*
Information on networking and collectivity in Africa, and the African countries with full internet access.
- *Facilitating Internetworking in Africa - Proposal by the Internet Society*
This model involves identifying communities of potential users, working with and training local engineers to provide training and services, and establishing permanent network connections. When users are well-served, the network well-engineered, and costs recouped through initial subsidies and reasonable charges for use.
- *Africa Communications Magazine*
This magazine is provided by AFCOM International Inc. Africa Communications provides detailed reports about the communications sector in Africa. Extensive coverage is provided regarding major African communications projects such as the Regional African Satellite Communication Project (RASCOM), as well as comprehensive reporting on developments within the International Telecommunication Union

(ITU), the Pan African Telecommunications Union (PATU) and other regional bodies which shape communications policy in Africa.

□ *Africa on the line? (Lishan Adam)*

An article deals with the state of connectivity in Africa costs and training.

□ *APC Networks & GreenNet Partners: Africa*

GreenNet works with a number of other electronic networking organisations around the world, who share their aims. Some of these are members of the Association for Progressive Communications (APC), others are partners which are not yet ready to become full APC members, but wish to share APC information.

□ *African Gophers*

Gopher sites in some African countries.

□ *African Technology Forum*

African Technology Forum (ATF) publishes a unique magazine on science and technology in Africa, and provides consulting services and networking opportunities for technical and business professionals involved in African development.

□ *AT&T Africa One*

Africa One (Africa Optical Network) is a state-of-the-art undersea fiber-optic system that will provide all African nations with vastly improved far-reaching telecommunications

capabilities.

□ *Black Data Processing Associates (BDPA)*

The mission of BDPA is to sustain a network of information technology professionals that is a positive influence in the information processing industry; a network which shares information, provides education and performs community service.

□ *COMPUTER News*

A Publication of the Kenya Association for the Advancement of Computing Technology (KAACT).

□ *Internet access in Africa*

List of internet access providers in some African countries.

□ *HealthNet: Africa*

HealthNet is a system of Low Earth Orbit (LEO) satellites, simple ground stations, and radio- and telephone-based computer networks. This seamless system functions reliably and inexpensively even in areas with little or no telecommunications infrastructure. HealthNet is also a system of people. There are nearly twenty HealthNet non-governmental organizations in operation around the world today.

□ *Information and Communication Technologies in Africa*

Include information about a High-Level Working Group on Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) in Africa

that was formed at the request of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA).

□ *Internet in Africa?*

This is a system of clickable maps which will enable you to obtain further information about E-mail and Internet access in a country of your choice.

□ *RINAF*

RINAF (Regional Informatics Network for Africa) project was conceived by the Intergovernmental Informatics Program (IIP) of UNESCO which is hosted at the CNUCE Institute of the Italian National Research Council.

□ *Networking in Africa*

Provides relevant information on each country's: Connectivity Providers, Network Activity Updates, Reports and Papers, Miscellaneous Items on Networking.

□ *Sustainable Development Networking Programme (SDNP) in Malawi*

Draft of UNDP Project Document, Lilongwe, Malawi, 6 August 1995

□ *Resourcery's African Telecom Links*

This is Resourcery's directory of Networking, Internet and Telecommunications sites on the Internet relating to Africa.

□ *Sustainable Development Networking Programme (SDNP) in Mozambique*

Draft of UNDP Project

Document, Maputo, 21 July 1995.

□ *Telecommunications in Africa (Michiel Hegener)*

This is a 75K article that deals particularly with the advent and use of internet in Africa. It includes interviews, pictures and WWW links.

□ *Towards National Communication for Development Policies in Africa (Silvia Bait)*

This paper discusses the role of the democratic system of government in the advancement of communication to deliver its agenda.

□ *TRINET and VITASAT*

TRINET will cooperate with VITA in setting up a global communications gateway to Internet and other e-mail networks for developing country universities, research institutes, state agencies and non-governmental organizations. TRINET is the outcome of a United Nations University (UNU) informatics training program which ran at TCD over an extended period of years and included 36 participants from Egypt, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Sudan, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

□ *WolfNet*

WolfNet Communications is dedicated to the development of online services for small hosts in developing countries. WolfNet collaborates with FidoNet and UUCP hosts in Africa and Asia. It provides service and support to non-government, government and commercial Networks. □

Source: COM Press

N.126, October 1996

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Internet for Africanists and Others Interested in Africa

An introduction to the Internet and a Comprehensive Compilation of Relevant Addresses

by Roger Phister

Two aims are pursued with this publication. First, to explain the functioning of the different Internet tools (WWW, Gopher, FTP, E-mail, Mailing Lists, News Groups, Search engines). And, second, to bring the Internet closer to the Africanist community and others interested in sub-Saharan Africa. For that purpose you'll find close to 500 Internet addresses, information on almost 100 Mailing Lists and more than 50 News Groups related to Africa south of the Sahara. The variety of topics ranges from Art to Weather, including Education (mainly Universities outside Africa with African Studies Programmes and Universities on the African continent), International organisations, Libraries, the Media, NGO's, etc. Both the subject and geographic index allow you to find the information you're looking for.

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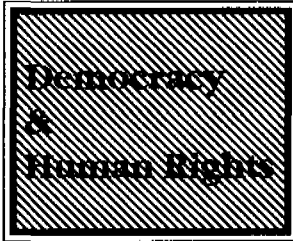
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After a period of relative freedom, Egyptian journalists are threatened by a retrograde new law.

Press Law 93, 1995

In February 1996 the Egyptian Organisation for Human Rights issued a timely report, *Journalists Behind Bars*, which examined the implications of new press legislation on Egyptian journalists. According to their research, 13 journalists have been convicted and sentenced to fines and prison terms in recent months; another 16 are currently under investigation or awaiting trial. Those charged include some of Egypt's best-known opposition journalists, including the editors-in-chief of the Islamist paper *al-Sha'ab* (The People), the Liberal Party paper *al-Abrar* (The Liberals), and the nationalist paper *al-Wafd* (The Delegation). Most have been accused of libel for allegations of corruption against public figures. To date, no major case has involved journalists from the state-owned press. One can only conclude that the government is using new press laws to divide the profession and to intimidate the opposition papers into adopting the tone of the national press.

Press freedom and political liberalisation have gone hand in hand in Egypt. Gamal Abdel Nasser made Egypt a single-party state and, in 1960, nationalised the press. His successor, Anwar al-Sadat, reintroduced political parties in 1976 and with them the beginning of an opposition press. Sadat put distinct limits on political and press liberties, notably in the creation of a government-appointed watchdog, the Higher Press Council (1975) and, in 1980, the Press Authority Law which reaffirmed state ownership of the 10 national press organisations.

The government under Hosni Mubarak may be divided into two camps: one which views democratisation as the main achievement of his rule, exemplified by freedom of expression; and a hardline camp which believes the Egyptian press has gone beyond its limits for the past decade and that, while one can keep talking about democracy, the press needs to be brought under control.

On 27 May 1995, the hardliners prevailed. Without consultation or prior debate the Egyptian Parliament passed draconian new press legislation, Law 93 of 1995. Four thousand journalists of both the government-owned newspapers and the opposition press converged in a series of extraordinary sessions of the Press Syndicate's council to express outrage at the reversal of

**by Salah Eldin Hafiz
& Eugene Rogan**

both the fragile democracy movement and freedom of expression. Many journalists viewed the timing of the legislation as too close to the November parliamentary elections to be coincidental. The critical press is outspoken in its attacks on government figures it suspects of political corruption, lack of ethical standards, misappropriation of public funds and undemocratic behaviour. This could have proved embarrassing during an electoral campaign in which the government was intent on sweeping the polls.

Journalists were left in no doubt that Law 93 was designed to muzzle them through intimidation. It was now an offence to publish stories 'deriding government officials and institutions', a vague and ill-defined term which could be applied to virtually every opposition daily's front page. The law allows for stiff punishments of up to five years' imprisonment and fines of up to LE20,000 (US\$5,650) for 'publication of false news that is harmful to state interests'. Worse yet, Law 93 eliminates previous legal guarantees against preventive detention of journalists: state prosecutors may now take journalists into custody while they are still under investigation.

In response to this frontal assault, the Press Syndicate called on the government to cancel the law within two weeks or face a general journalists' strike, unprecedented in Egyptian history. They were supported by a number of political parties and civil organisations, and more than 30 international organisations including Amnesty International,

Article 19, and Reporters sans Frontieres.

Faced with co-ordinated domestic and international opposition, Mubarak defused the crisis in a six-hour meeting on 21 June with the Press Syndicate council in which he agreed to convene a committee to produce a revised and comprehensive press law within three months. The committee would be composed of members of the Press Syndicate, the Higher Press Council, and various legal experts. Mubarak also responded to opposition papers' complaints of lack of access to government information by ordering ministries to make 'authentic information' available to all journalists, government and opposition alike.

The strength of the journalists' position was reinforced by the fact that the press did not divide into government- and opposition-owned camps. This unity seemed threatened when the composition of the new press law committee was announced in mid-July. Of its 30 members, seven came from the Press Syndicate's council and 12 from the government-appointed Higher Press Council. There were also 11 non-journalist public figures and legal experts. Representatives of the opposition press were completely excluded from a committee that included many advocates of restrictions on press freedoms. Few could doubt the intentions of the new committee when one of its legal experts, Shawki al-Sayed, threatened to file a libel suit against the editor of the opposition paper *al-Wafd*, Gamal Badawi, for publishing an article criticising the composition of the committee and

al-Sayed's appointment in particular. In the event, the suit was dropped and four journalists known for their opposition to Law 93 were added to the committee.

Between July and October, the new committee met only twice for a comparative discussion of the press laws of other nations, without broaching the subject of Law 93 itself. The government was accused of foot-dragging and the committee began to look like a diversion to distract journalists' attention while the government proceeded with election strategies.

A number of draft laws and recommendations were put forward to assist the committee in its deliberations. The Legal Aid Centre for Human Rights, an Egyptian NGO, drafted a press law in August; the Third General Press Conference produced 40 recommendations in September; and the Press Syndicate approved its own draft law of 64 articles on 24 December.

The Press Syndicate's draft seeks to protect journalists from government pressure by rejecting imprisonment and limiting fines to a maximum of LE2,000. It also calls for the lifting of all restrictions on the publication of newspapers and the elimination of all types of censorship. It is unlike anything that the government-appointed committee is likely to produce.

Meanwhile, journalists were targets of legal and extra-legal intimidation. Editor Gamal Badawi was forced off the road and beaten by 10 men who later issued a statement linking the attack to the critical editorial line on Law 93 taken by his paper, *al-Wafd*. And, in spite of assurances from the

government that the press law would not be applied pending the committee's drafting of new legislation, several journalists were charged under Law 93. In October, Magdi Hussein, editor of the Islamist-oriented *al-Sha'ab*, was charged with libel by Alaa al-Alfi, son of the interior minister.

The story, by an anonymous reporter, referred to an altercation over non-payment of a dinner bill by the son of a government minister, both unnamed. Al-Alfi challenged the veracity of the article (and incriminated himself) by producing a paid dinner bill, even though Hussein reminded him that the article mentioned no names.

Hussein was found guilty in January 1996 and sentenced to one year's hard labour, a LE15,000 fine, and LE500 in damages to al-Alfi. The prison term has been suspended though Hussein faces a second libel suit, along with two other defendants from the opposition press, for alleging that a victorious parliamentary candidate had hired thugs to intimidate voters at the polls.

The indomitable Gamal Badawi was the second to be charged, this time by an outgoing member of parliament for allegations of misuse of state property. Abdel-Aal al-Baqouri, editor of the leftist Tagammu party organ *al-Ahali* (The Peoples) and a member of the state-appointed committee to draft a new press law, was sentenced *in absentia* to two years' imprisonment and LE50,000 in fines and damages for printing allegations of influence-peddling by a police brigadier.

The common theme running through these cases is the conduct of parliamentary elections. By all accounts the elections were marred by violence and irregularities at the polls. According to the Centre for Human Rights Legal Aid in Cairo, some 51 people were killed and 878 wounded in election-related violence. Even government officials were forced to acknowledge that some candidates had stormed polling stations and rigged the vote and that, in the words of Major-General Mohammed al-Menshaw, director of the election department of the Ministry of Interior, 'a limited number of violations' were committed by security forces.

The result was the most heavily pro-government Parliament since the reintroduction of multi-party elections. The ruling National Democratic Party won 317 seats outright, and of 113 so-called independents some 99 crossed the floor to rejoin the NDP, which left the government with 416 seats in the 444-member People's Assembly. Perhaps the only positive thing that can be said about the elections was that these violations were reported in the Egyptian press.

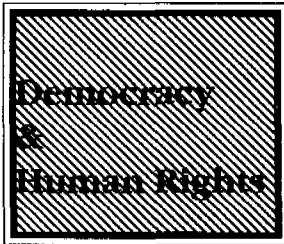
Egyptian journalists await the March deadline for the government appointed committee to present a revised press law with some pessimism. They do not expect liberal legislation to emerge from the committee and are not confident of a sympathetic hearing of their views before the new Parliament when the revised draft is presented for debate. As one leftist journalist explained:

'What we fear is that they will take our law [ie the draft prepared by the Press Syndicate] and the law prepared by the government-appointed committee and come up with something totally different from what we want'. □

Salah Eldin Hafiz is managing editor of the Egyptian daily, al-Abram, and prize-winning author of books on press freedom and democratisation in Egypt.



**Source: *Index on Censorship*
N.2, 1996
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The following article analyzes the relationship between foreign correspondents and local stringers.

Strangers and Stringers

On the eve of Zimbabwe's independence elections, British journalists sat in the bar of the capital's best hotel speculating on the outcome. They consulted African barmen and waiters eager to please these customers and representatives of the colonial power. The conclusion -wired to the home news desks in emphatic terms - was unanimous. No way was Robert Mugabe's ZANU party going to win.

As the cliché has it, the rest is history. And the story is not apocryphal. It tells us just about everything that's wrong with the role adopted by many Western foreign correspondents reporting on Asia, Africa and Latin America - particularly the way that their understanding is mediated by the interpretations of a highly select group of local informants. The British novelist Evelyn Waugh penned his satirical novel *Scoop* on this theme sixty years ago. Waugh was deeply conservative and his caricature of Africa unmistakably racist. But he saved his harshest satire for a press establishment which sent an ignorant, linguistically-handicapped young Englishman off to report on an African war via dispatches tailored to the prejudices of his newspaper-baron boss back in London.

Waugh's satire did not make the deeper political point: that foreign correspondents function as «both the creatures and the creators of that colonial and imperial process by which (especially) the British built themselves a collective identity, defining themselves as “us” and the rest of the world as “other”».¹

So for both practical and political reasons, we need to look again at the conventional Western-world approach to foreign reporting. Practical, because the foreign correspondents may not understand a local situation well enough to get it right. Political, because their alienation (in all senses) from the societies on which they are reporting can produce the kind of exoticisation of the foreign which underpins racism.

That alienation also produces the “bad news syndrome” so offensive to the citizens of Third World countries. The visiting foreigner sees -and complains in his dispatches about - the rutted cart-track he has to drive along. The African villager sees a perfectly serviceable road - for an oxcart, which is what she

by Gwen Ansell

uses.

There is an answer to these problems, and that is to make much more use of reporters based in their own countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. And it can be done.

Between 1990 and 1996 the news magazines *Africa South* (later renamed *Africa South and East*) and in 1995 *African Agenda*, attempted to report African news predominantly through the eyes and in the voices of African journalists based in the countries about which they wrote. We used reports gathered in a range of ways; from journalists with whom we were in personal contact, by commissioning stories from local newspapers, and via news agencies with a good network of grassroots African reporters. There are three such agencies which we found particularly helpful: Inter-Press Services (IPS), Africa Information Afriques (AiA) and The Women's Feature Service.

The magazines clearly pleased their readers - in Africa and overseas. We received a steady flow of subscription enquiries and letters to the editor, and a reader survey conducted by *Africa South & East* in 1993 produced more than 1200 enthusiastic replies. During the time when *Africa South & East* was circulated as a supplement in a South African weekly paper, it ranked high in that publication's own reader survey.

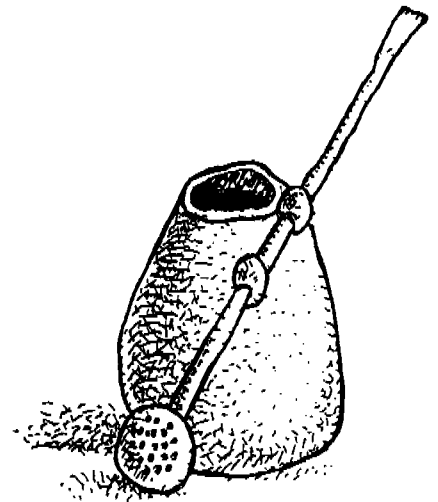
Clearly, then, the kinds of stories produced by African stringers were readable, interesting and entertaining to a broad range of readers.

That should not be surprising

when we look at those stories. On AIDS in Africa, for example, the Western press recounts deaths, orphans and economic devastation, reinforced with the by now clichéd photographic image of the skeletal "victim" with head averted. Our stringers told us about death and sickness too - but also about taxi-drivers in Addis Ababa training as AIDS counsellors; about Ugandan herbal treatments which can relieve secondary infections; about Tanzanian successes in reducing infection through better treatment of other sexually-transmitted diseases; and about Swazi women creating self-help counselling circles.

Their stories were not about victims, but about people in communities working together to survive. We used pictures from African photographers to support the stories. All this was not the result of contrived attempts to create "good news", but simply another part of the complex African reality which visiting foreign correspondents had not seen.

But while our readers enjoyed the stories, others were not so impressed. Johannesburg advertising agency staff expressed horrified incredulity that the names and faces on the pages of our Africa magazine were "all black". (That was four years ago. Things are better here now - a little). Magazine distributors were cautious. Even a colleague on a supposedly liberal weekly expressed the opinion that reports on Africa sourced through London were "more authoritative". Without advertising revenue, publications find it hard to survive. Sadly, ours did not, although there may be hope for renewed donor



funding for *African Agenda* in future.

That, then, is the first problem with sourcing news from stringers rather than foreign correspondents with "authoritative"-sounding names. You've stepped outside the mainstream, and may find commercial interest in your publication waning.

In South Africa, we are seeing the demise of many small, independent, donor-funded publications; the very publications whose pages were the most hospitable to stories from outside the mainstream. Over the past two years, more than a dozen have died here. If you, as German journalists, want to develop a welcoming climate for the stories of Third World stringers, you must nurture your small independent publications.

There are other problems. Many African countries still have poor communication links with their neighbours and with Europe and the US. Even the wonders of e-mail and the Internet require electricity and functioning phone lines, or your own satellite phone. Most African journalists outside metropolitan centres are poorly-paid and poorly resourced, so they do not have access to these facilities. It is therefore much easier to source features which are not time-tied from them than breaking hard news stories.

Western publications do not assist with this problem when they pay highly discriminatory rates to local stringers; robbing them of the ability to equip themselves properly. It is time that journalists' labour organisations in the West took this issue on board,

demanding that publications pay the same rate per story to the African stringer as to the travelling correspondent.

Far less common than these practical problems were problems with the quality of the stories themselves. A writer whose first language is not English (or German, Spanish or French) will commit linguistic sins: that is what we, as editors, are paid to correct and should not be an excuse for rejecting a story.

After all, we also often correct the prose of our homegrown writers. Some few stringers have political loyalties in their country which bias what they write. That, too, is by no means unique to writers from the Third World. But it places a real responsibility on the editor to know his or her subject matter, so that inaccuracies, omissions and special pleading can be weeded out. My six years of editing the prose of African and Western journalists for two magazines showed me that journalists - wherever they come from - share most of the same good and bad writing habits. (And to the writers, of course, we editors are all - in the words of a colleague from the Netherlands - "monkeys with razors").

And then comes the issue of differing news values. The mainstream Western press is oriented towards the large-scale, the fast-moving and, yes, the bad news. TV and radio feed, and perhaps satisfy, the hunger for such news. Many of the stories contributed by stringers from the Third World focus on the less dramatic issues of development, community, and personal life.

«Many African countries still have poor communication links with their neighbours and with Europe and the US. Even the wonders of e-mail and the Internet require electricity and functioning phone lines, or your own satellite phone. Most African journalists outside metropolitan centres are poorly-paid and poorly resourced, so they do not have access to these facilities. It is therefore much easier to source features which are not time-tied from them than breaking hard news stories.»

Does this mean they are "not news"? If so, how does one account for the huge Western market for "personality" magazines recounting essentially human stories of health, relationships and lives? Our experience on *Africa South & East* showed us that the smaller-scale human stories coming direct from communities across Africa could and did engage our readers' intense attention.

We should also remember the disparities which exist in all societies. The local stringer operating from an Abidjan newspaper office, for example, may not have a grasp of events in remote rural areas of Cote d'Ivoire. If he is a man, he may not be sensitive to the activities and concerns of Ivoirien women. If he is a traditionalist, he may choose to ignore certain modern trends; if a moderniser, he may discount aspects of traditional culture too easily.

So, with stringers as with our other writers, we should seek a variety of voices and viewpoints rather than relying on one source. We should also put energy and hard work into identifying the best local journalists in their countries, setting the same high standards for their writing as we do for our own, even as we make allowances for their logistical problems in actually delivering stories.

It is the most patronising form of racism to use a third-rate stringer on the assumption that "there is no-one better out there". On *Africa South & East*, we looked very hard - and found some wonderful writers.

All this raises the question of

what role remains for the travelling foreign correspondent if we draw our stories mainly from local stringers. Emphatically, a role does still remain. As the product of his or her culture, the foreign correspondent is uniquely placed to find the words, the parallels, the metaphors to make overseas events understandable to readers at home. He or she is the perfect complement to the stringer.

But foreign correspondents don't know better than their local counterparts - they simply know different. The visiting photographer may have the latest high-tech camera equipment, but that will not necessarily help him to find the image which sums up an essentially local event or experience. So the keyword has to be partnership.

In South Africa we have had much negative experience of the foreign press corps. Planeloads of them stampeded in for the first democratic election in 1994 - and then departed just as rapidly for Rwanda or Bosnia, declaring their disappointment that there was no bloodbath.

The feeling of many South African journalists and photographers was that we did not need such people to return. But foreign correspondents who are prepared to stay, to see with an open eye, to discard preconceptions and listen to what their local counterparts can tell them, remain welcome as colleagues and partners.

The experience of every country is unique - and yet there is a common experience which unites us all because we are all human. Our task as journalists is

to develop a relationship between travelling correspondents and locally-based stringers which faithfully shows both those dimensions of the African picture to our readers. □

¹ Darch, Dr C. In "Stereotypes For Africa" (book review) IAJ Journal, Vol.1, No 4, Johannesburg 1996.

About the writer: British-born Gwen Ansell has worked as a journalist in various countries in Southern Africa for the past thirteen years, and has acted as stringer for a number of British and American publications. As editor first of "Africa South and East" and then of "African Agenda", she relied on the work of stringers in other African countries to provide the main content of two popular monthly African news magazines. She has thus worked on both sides of the journalistic fence. She is currently Head of the Special Training Department at Johannesburg's Institute for the Advancement of Journalism.

Source: EPD - Entwicklungs-Politik

N.21, October 1996

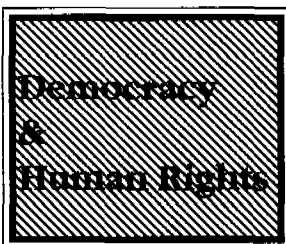
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Prospects and Challenges of the Media in Chad

Only for the last few years, media in Chad began to breath the air of freedom.

Cultivating a culture of peace is a major item on the agenda but existential problems have to be solved first.

N'djamena-based journalist, Gerard Raklss Bongo says pluralism has brought not only painful consequences but also happy changes and hope for the future.

by Gerard Raklss

Like everywhere else, information is disseminated in Chad by newspapers, radio and television. But the difference in this country was that the government was the only source of information until recently.

Pluralism in the media came along with the process of democratisation which began a few years ago. Today's Chad has both state and privately-owned media. The private media organisations are also known as "free or independent press" though they often become victims of various vested interests. The state media are comprised of the national radio, television and the daily, *l'Agence*. There is no fundamental difference among the electronic media because of the fact that they are all state-owned.

The democratisation process forced the government to set up a High Council of Communication (HCC) to deal with the growing demand for the private media. In spite of the creation of HCC and the golden promises to the private media sector, investors continue to hesitate to put money especially in the fields of radio and television.

In the field of the print media, the situation is a little bit better. The number of private newspapers is on the increase. Though the private newspapers have their own specificity, the majority of them talk about government censorship, their financial difficulties and the dangers of competition.

Government Censorship

Censorship from government authorities affects both the state-owned and private media. The journalists of state-owned media are always under the pressure of censorship. Very often, their role is limited to reading communiqués and publishing information favourable to the government.

This type of existence together with the enormous difficulties of living in



When religion is the main driving force behind an NGO's community development programs, those programs are likely to realize, at best, marginal achievement. At worst, the programs will fail, leaving the community in a state of bewilderment and frustration. In the town of Isiolo, Kenya, for instance, two prominent religious NGOs have each constructed huge prayer houses on either side of a street measuring a few hundred meters long. Standing in the middle of that dusty street, one can't help but get the impression that the NGOs are trying to outdo each other in order to attract new members. Once again, there is no harm in different religious organizations building houses of worship. The point is that many religious NGOs the world over use community development projects to lure new members to their religion. This situation is even more pronounced in developing countries. A cursory examination of such projects and programs reveals that most "target" communities have either maintained a position of indifference or cosmetic participation in the face of this approach to development, and in some cases have received the implementing NGO with outright acrimony.

In 1994, the press reported an attack on one international religious based NGO by the local community in Wajir district of Kenya, in which property worth thousands of dollars was destroyed. The NGO was forced to close down its office and all employees of the NGO from outside the district were ordered

to leave. According to development analysts, this was a culmination of a situation that had remained volatile since the NGO entered the district several years before. The NGO (promoting Christianity) was accused by the local community (mostly Muslim) of using relief and rehabilitation projects as a means of converting the local people to join its faith. There are numerous similar cases around the world. If NGOs want to create a positive and lasting impact on the livelihood of the communities they work with, they need to respect the wishes and aspirations of those communities.

They need to avoid the notion that development is tied to a community changing its traditional values, as in "OK, we're prepared to initiate projects for you but it won't help because you are damned anyway". NGOs should first and foremost devote their energies to assisting communities to develop appropriate strategies for addressing their immediate needs - food security, shelter, better health care, formal education. Important as it may be, spirituality must be introduced gradually and flexibly, and even then, it should not be done at the expense of local traditional values. With flexibility and understanding, different religions can complement each other and strengthen all of our work towards sustainable development. □

**Source: Ecoforum
Journal of the Environment
Liaison Centre International
Vol.20, N.2, June 1996
P.O. Box 72461
Nairobi, Kenya**

government censorship during the postal transfer. In spite of the absence of distribution agencies some of the local publications reach the news-stands of provincial towns. This is the case of *Tchad et Culture* which has its own correspondents and distribution network in almost all the big cities.

Competition in the field of electronic media

The foreign radio stations, such as Radio France Internationale and Africa N°1 began FM broadcasting after an accord signed by the government and the representatives of these two radios.

Until then, national radio had the monopoly on all frequencies in Chad. Since the arrival of foreign radios, the national radio began to lose its public. Listeners became more demanding and they began to criticise the state radio for not diffusing important information affecting the people.

The national radio does not hesitate to broadcast the long speeches of politicians or personalities close to the government. Besides, the state censorship does not allow the journalists to make an analysis of the speech or a commentary on an aspect that is not in favour of the government.

If a journalist dared more, he would be simply suspended from his job. This is true not only in the capital, N'djamena, but also in the interior.

The national television has the same difficulties. Besides, they broadcast mediocre programmes and rebroadcast programmes from France, Egypt, Tunisia, Cameroon, USA and China. A serious handicap of the national television is that it is broadcast only from Tuesday to Sunday between 18 and 23 hours and it can be watched only in the capital.

Another development that affects the national television is the private antennas. The inhabitants of the cities in the interior of the country compensate for their television needs by video or private. Near the frontiers, people tune to foreign television programmes from neighbouring countries.

Way ahead

Chad needs better trained professionals, greater understanding and promotion of the media. It is not easy for the media to advance especially when the government continues to be jealous of all those who try to express freely.

The media have also to take into account the basic problems in Chad where the freedom of the press is completely a new reality. Economic problems will give extra troubles.

The pluralism in Chad has already brought divisions especially between the new and old order of information. However, one can at least talk about ethics, start practising real journalism and work for true peace today. □



Source: *Africanews*
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The African Files

Africans on Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation

No. 5 December 1996

Human Rights / Justice

Sam Gonza
Sudanese Bishops Vow to Fight Human Rights
ViolationsB

Santino Makur Kot
Sudan: Rebuilding Lives in the SouthB

Maja-Pierce Adewale [et. al.]
Tears, Anger, ForgivenessC

Sarah McNeil
Singing for Peace and ReconciliationI

Abdoul Traorè
In Mali sta arrivando il SessantottoJ

Report of the African Women Communicators
Network meetingJ

Conflicts / Military

P. Okong'o Ngala
Liberia: Factional Fighting Causes Renewed
BloodshedC

Luke Odhiambo
Nigeria: Military Regime Ousts Top Muslim Leader ..D

Sierra Leone: Looming Peace at LastE

Luke Odhiambo
Benin: Kekerou Back at the Helm, as Soglo Refuses
to Recognize PollE

Nernlor Gruduab
Few Liberians Believe ECOMOG is NeutralF

Edward Said
Lo Spettro del Terrore IslamicoF

Women

Santino Makur Kot
Sudanese Women in Exile CelebrateG

Sam Gonza
Northern Uganda Women Generate Income from
Wild NutG

Juliana O. Atemi
Women Struggle for new Definition of PeaceH

Maber Moqallad
Le Spose Bambine del CairoH

Media / Society

Samuel Sarpong
Media Deny Negating Ghana's Investment
ProgrammeI

Indigenous / Minority

Mali's Tuareg War Ends as Foes Burn WeaponsK

Christina Stucky
Visita al re degli ZuluK

Andrè Hakizimana
La Guerra delle MuccheL

Venuste Linguyeneza
La Verità e la MemoriaL

Adewale Maja-Pearce
The Murderers in our Midst: Letter from LagosL

Economy / SAP

Daniel Mensah Brande
Gold CoastM

Abubakar Momoh
The Structural Adjustment Programme and the
Transition to Civil Rule in Nigeria (1986-1993)N

Theresa M. Ndongko
A preliminary Study of the Socio-Economic Impact
of HIV/AIDS in AfricaN

Wenegoundi Zoungrana
I Compromessi tra Contadini e FinanziatoriO

Kin-Kiey Mulumba
Immagini da un Paese ScomparsoO

Sam Gonza
Conference Protests against Food Dumping in
AfricaP

Hilario Matusse
Mozambique: Picking up the PiecesP

Human Rights / Justice

Sam Gonza

Sudanese Bishops vows to Fights Human Rights Violations

"All Africa Press Service" no.18, May 6, 1996, Blue pages, Kenya, English.

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Last March in Rome the beatification of Bishop Colombo took place. A delegation of 200 bishops, priests, sisters and other Catholic faithfuls came from Sudan for the occasion. Three unwelcome security operators imposed themselves on the group and even insisted going along with them on the pilgrimage to Assisi, Verona, Loreto, Milano and other shrines. The Right Rev. Macram Max Gassis, bishop of El Obeid objected to the presence of security personnel in a purely religious affair. He concluded that "...it was all part and parcel of Khartoum's policy of harrassment of the churches ,.... has the prime purpose of reducing the churches to an insignificant minority. It is a tactic to paralyse the avenues of expansion of the church in Sudan." In the early 1990s during the Pope's visit some Episcopalian and Catholic bishops wrote to the Pontiff, that while Khartoum may roll out the red carpet for him, he should keep in mind that the regime remained absolutely ruthless and blood thirsty. "Their hands are dripping with the blood of innocent people" he added. Some 700 government of Sudan soldiers from the El Saraf el Ahmer garrison on March 23 to 24 descended on the villages in Nuba Mountains especially Kondor and Toror looting, burning anything in sight and terrorizing the whole region. More than 1000 families were left homeless and without food. The soldiers urinated and defecated on food stores and burnt granaries to ashes. The sanctity of the church was not equally respected as the marauding soldiers desecrated the Holy Eucharist and tabernacle, broke the figure of Christ on the cross to pieces, looted the statues of Mary and other church items including benches and vestments. The bishop said that women and girls were raped or taken as concubines while children were taken into slavery. Gasper Biro, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Sudan confirmed these happenings in a report which he released in Geneva last February. He said that extra-judicial killings, disappearance of people, abduction of children for slavery and women and girls for concubinage or rape etc., are a way of life in the Sudan. The two men have been declared "persona non grata" in the Sudan. Bishop Macram also said that the government in Khartoum thinks that self determination for the south of Sudan means separation of the South and North. He said that " determination entails not only separation but the possibilities for consolidation of the union or a confederal or federal arrangement." The Bishop says that he intends to redouble his efforts to make the world know of the atrocities being perpetrated on the people of Sudan. (A9512)

Santino Makur Kot

Sudan: Rebuilding Lives in the South

"New People Feature Service," no. 51, June 1, 1996, PP 11, Kenya, English.

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The concept of Human Rights are sheer fantasies or abtracts unless human institutions ascribe concrete structures to them. Universal declarations are often issued, but they do not mean much unless and until these ideals are made into a social structure which can uphold and give the people the required protection. In April, the vision of a "New Sudan" was advocated by the mainstream rebel factions. SPLA and SPLM under the chairmanship of Dr John Garang formed what they called Civil Society and Organization of Civil Authority. The organization aims to establish civil structures separate from the SPLA/SPLM militia in a bid to focusing on rebuilding the war-torned Christian

dominated southern Sudan. The role of the army was seriously appraised. Dr Samson Kwaje, secretary of SPLM advocated for a purely military role for the army since they have no business in the administration of civil society. One of the resolutions arrived at, was that the civilians should handle their own local administration. Such authority will have the responsibility to administer, collect taxes, and exploit the natural resources such as forestry, livestock and fisheries for the benefit of the local people. The establishment of the rule of law and respect for Human rights are areas of major concern. Bishop Daniel Zindo, Chairman of the New Sudan Council of Churches expressed his vision of achieving genuine peace and harmony for the country. (A9520)

Maja-Pierce Adewale [et. al.]

Tears, Anger, Forgiveness

"Index on Censorship", Vol.25, N.5 (Sep.-Oct. 1996), p.38-69

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This is a dossier that contains different articles from Africa, Europe and Latin America. They remind us that questions of truth, justice and reconciliation are not esoteric academic debates: they lie at the heart of what happens next in countries like South Africa, former Yugoslavia, Rwanda. The transition from totalitarian government to democracy, from war to peace, is fraught with practical, moral and political dilemmas. War crimes tribunals establish criminal accountability; but can the trials of a few individuals be justice enough when thousands have been implicated in horrific human rights abuses? Truth commissions try to create conditions for forgiveness through accountability, amnesty and reparation. The question is how memory might serve reconciliation rather than perpetuate old grievances. Among the different contributions there is an interview with Archbishop Desmond Tutu, chairman of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission that talks of the need to deal with the country's dark past before "concentrating on the future". Other authors show that as South Africa seeks publicity through its Truth and Reconciliation Commission to come to terms with its tormented past, voices on all sides contest the Commission's ability to bring justice as well as truth; to satisfy the need for revenge as well as the desire for forgiveness. The dossier also gives some testimonies and confessions to the Truth Commission. (I0235)

Conflicts / Peace

P. Okong'o Ngala

Liberia: Factional Fighting Causes Renewed Bloodshed

"New People Feature Service" no.50, May 1, 1996, Pages 1-2, Kenya, English.

*

Liberia the first African country to obtain independence in 1847 is today in a serious state of disorder as a result of a six-year-civil war. This report shows how Liberia, a once-proud independent republic is reduced to ruins by two factional rival warlords, Charles Taylor of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPLF) and self-styled "General" Roosevelt Johnson of the United Liberia Movement for Democracy (ULIMO-J). The new attack is on the capital city, Monrovia. Fierce gun battles, looting, shelling has wrecked the entire city and rendered many (mainly women and children) homeless and without food. The shops and businesses are stripped to the bone, windows smashed and cars belonging to diplomats and aid workers wait for spare parts. The streets are littered with shellings and AFJN counted at least 80 decomposing bodies in April, mostly non-combatants. Food supplies

are very low and the only airport has been rendered useless. Since the fighting started an estimated 150,000 deaths have been recorded, 13 peace accords and endless ceasefires have failed to end the war. Charles Taylor, infamous for his NPLF group action of the brutal murder of five American nuns in October, 1992, sparked off the civil war in 1989 when he invaded the country from Cote-d'Ivoire. Johnson of the ULIMO-J was wanted by police for murder and a warrant was issued by the provisional council. Johnson disputed its validity accusing that most members of the police were NFPL men and cannot render fair justice and that COS has no right to issue an arrest warrant since all the faction heads were autonomous pending the outcome of the presidential election in August this year. Taylor responded by sending his men to arrest Johnson. There are grave doubts expressed about the current peace process as a result of the renewed fighting. ECOMOG, the peace keeping force set up in 1990 at the height of the conflict by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to keep peace in the country is regarded by the United States as a key ingredient in the restoration of peace. Nigeria's recent threat to pull away her 8,000 men out of the total 10,000 strong force because of the lack of support by the international community is viewed gravely as the State Department's Glyn Davies renewed pledges of US \$30 million in new equipment and training for ECOMOG, if it plays a neutral and effective peace-keeping role. The US has sent in a special diplomatic team led by William Tadwell, who is currently Assistant Secretary of State, to discuss the specifics of the US aid to be provided. US Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, George Moose will also rescue the 1995 Abuja accords. (A9514)

Luke Odhiambo

Nigeria: Military Regime Ousts Top Muslim Leader

"New People Feature Service", no.50, 1 May, 1996, PP 6-7, Kenya, English

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The Nigerian military dictatorship recently sacked the spiritual head of the Muslim community, Sultan Ibrahim Dasuki of Sokoto, on suspicion of involvement in fraud. He was replaced by a businessman and prince as the new Sultan of Sokoto. The new sultan and president of the supreme council of Islamic Affairs is Mohammed Madicco. Madicco is the eldest son of Sadiq Abubakar III whom Dasuki succeeded in 1988. Madicco was also a contender for the position in November 1988, but lost to Dasuki when military authorities overturned the election in favour of Dasuki. Sokoto state military administrator, Colonel Yakubu Muazu announced the dismissal in a radio broadcast on April 20. The administrator accused the deposed Sultan of the following: he wields considerable political as well as religious clout; misuse of funds donated for the building of mosques; and of financing other religious activities. He confirmed that Dasuki would probably go before a special tribunal for his alleged part in a financial scandal linked to the collapse of a bank when he served as a member of its board of directors. He is also accused of operating beyond bounds by having high-level diplomatic contacts without government authorisation. His lawyers have denied any wrong doing on Dasuki's part. The dismissed sultan, as reported by the Nigerian press, is accused of using his influence with the Saudi authorities to prevent Nigerian Moslem pilgrims into Mecca. The Saudi authorities banned Nigerian pilgrims citing a case of an outbreak of meningitis in Nigeria which provoked anger amongst Nigerian muslims, who make up 47.2 per cent of the population. The military junta in Nigeria hastily sent another prominent Islamic personality, Alhaji Ado Bayero, Emir of Kano, to Saudi Arabia to attempt to revoke the ban. The Emir succeeded in obtaining entry to Mecca for only 3,000 Nigerian muslims on condition that they be vaccinated and come from regions unaffected by the disease. It is widely believed that one of the main reasons for the disaffection between the military regime and the sultan is the presumed involvement of his son, retired Lieutenant Colonel Sambo Dasuki, in the failed coup in March, 1995. The local press has always highlighted that since Sambo was implicated in the alleged coup attempt, the relationship between General Abacha

and Dasuki soured. The government was determined to extract its pound of flesh from the monarch. The regime allegedly saw Dasuki's hands in the Saudi-Nigerian saga and vowed to deal with him, fabricating other allegations against him to support its move. With his disgrace, and his confinement to the north-eastern state of Taraba near Cameroun, it is now clear that Dasuki will be tried by the government's special military regime. (A9515)

Sierra Leone: Looming Peace at Last

"New People Feature Service", no. 49, April 1, 1996, pp. 1-3, English, Kenya.

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At the end of a two-day meeting at the Ivorian administrative capital of Yamoussoukro, Sierra Leone seems to move closer to a peace settlement after the military leader and the newly elected president had a successful dialogue. Over 10,000 people have lost their lives in the 5 years of violent civil war. However a two months ceasefire was reached on 17th of March. Brigadier General Julius Maada Bio, the outgoing Head of State and Foday Sankoh of the Revolutionary Front (RUF) and rebel leader agreed that talks should continue after the military have ceded power to the civilian president-elect, Ahmad Tejan Kabbah. Apart from the March 26 press statement, the March 3 agreement which advocated for further negotiations showed signs of peaceful moves in the region from the two warring factions. Apart from this progress there are serious pitfalls which have continued to hinder the peace process. The recent massacre of women acting as intermediaries between the rebels and the authorities a day before the peace summit was to commence is a case in point. A rebel army sergeant opened fire on members of the Women's Forum, Kenema, which left a countless number dead and 25 hospitalised. 12 people were also reportedly killed by the RUF in southern Sierra Leone, 35 other civilians were brutally murdered on March, 12 by the rebel's army. On March 17, Kabbah of the Sierra Leone People's Party won the Presidential election with 608,419 votes, 59.49 per cent beating his sole rival, John Karefa Smart who scored 414,335 votes or 40.51 per cent. Malnutrition and starvation has its presence in the country due to a crippled agricultural infrastructure and security-related difficulties for aid agencies. About half a million Sierra Leonean refugees are living in Liberia, Guinea and Gambia while thousands live in the squalor of internal camps for the displaced, dependent on food aid and in the midst of contaminable diseases. The election has been successfully held and peace prospects are encouraging, the success of the peace process will now depend on how the newly installed civilian government negotiates with the rebels. (A9516)

Luke Odhiambo

Benin: Kerekou Back at the Helm, as Soglo Refuses to Recognize Poll

"New People Feature Service", no. 49, April 1, 1996, PP 9-10, Kenya, English.

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The Republic of Benin's former military dictator, Mathieu Kerekou came back to power following a smooth electoral victory in a presidential election defeating the out-going President Nicephore Soglo a former World Bank official. Constitutional court president, Elisabeth Pognon announced this on March 23 with the result of the March 18 presidential election which Kerekou won with 52.49 per cent. The defeated Soglo refused to accept defeat and the result of the election and called for annulment in many parts of Benin. There were five days of tension in the country by supporters of Soglo accusing Kerekou of a coup spread, disputing unofficial figures of the votes Members of the constitutional Court received death threats and the home of one of them was spread with machine-guns fire. Pognon said that in spite of difficulties, death threats and pressure of various kinds, the court was able to sit uninterrupted day and night in order to fulfil its mission under the constitution, to proclaim the presidential election result. She also denied allegations of massive fraud by the Soglo

see the primary goal of the project as prevention of environmental degradation before it occurs". (A9522)

Juliana O. Atemi

Women Struggle for new Definition of Peace

"New People Feature Services", no.49, April 1, 1996, PP 8-9, Kenya, English.

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The departure of the United Nations troops from Rwanda is a welcome development to the Kigali government but many Rwandanese refugees in neighbouring countries are pondering on whether or not to return home considering their safety and security. Over 67,000 Hutus are now in Rwandan prisons. Most refugees are reluctant to return home. The Rwandan women in exile rather than succumb to misery have determined and initiated peace-making moves. They have formed a Nairobi based organization Femmes Solidaires pour la Paix, la Reconciliation et le Développement (FESOP) translated to mean Women Together for Peace, Reconciliation and Development. This peace group is in touch with developments in their country and in contact with Rwandanese women's groups in refugee camps in Zaire and Tanzania initiating discussions on peace and conflict resolution. There are two underlying views to the complex Rwandan crisis, the definition of peace and justice is confused with a lot of sensitivities. One speaks either as former oppressors who are today's refugees or as former victims who are today's rulers. There are very sharp differences in opinions of those in Kigali and those in exile. Irrespective of the fact that the Rwandan women are making concrete moves towards lasting peace and reconciliation, it still stands on a fragile foundation as a result of the parties not having started to address the complexities that tore the country apart. (A9527)

Maber Moqallad

Le spose bambine del Cairo

"Internazionale", Anno 3, n.138 (12 Luglio 1996), p.15-17, article from "Al Majalla", a Saudi weekly

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Up to the 1960s, early marriage was nothing strange in Arabian society, indeed it was considered a good thing. Although nowadays things have changed almost completely in the city, in the rural areas things continue as before. There are three main reasons that urge families to contract marriage between children. The first is tied to customs and traditions that encourage unions between close relatives, even if the spouses have not reached a suitable age. The most frequent union is between children of paternal uncles, even when the age difference is huge. The second occurs rarely and is the consequence of sexual violence on a girl. The third, that takes place in the case of a journey or work abroad, is because there is fear that the girl won't be able to marry. In this case things are hurried up to contract the marriage before departure even if the girl is still not of the legal age. This article continues with some practical cases showing the results, be they good or bad, of these early marriages. (I0158)

Media / Society

Samuel Sarpong

Media Deny Negating Ghana's Investment Programme

"All Africa Press Service", No. 23, June 10, 1996, Blue Pages, Kenya, English.

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Of late there have been increased worries over what the Ghanaian authorities consider to be a destructive agenda to derail the gains already acquired and accumulated by the country's investment drive by the local media. Government claimed that the press, especially independent, ones had hidden agenda aimed at discrediting and stifling investment initiatives taken by the government. Kwesi Ahwoi, chief Executive of the Ghana Investment Promotion Centre, a government body charged with the role of investment promotion, accused the media that the image being projected does not reflect the truth and reinforces wrong perception. Ghanaian President Jerry Rawlings also complained bitterly about the alleged anti-government position by the media. The government feels that the media has not been cooperative in their drive to bring investment to the country; rather they have played out to the propaganda of the West. Between 1990 and 1994 only \$35 million came from direct investment despite Ghana's embarkment on an Economic Recovery Programme (ERP) in 1993. From the above the government started a massive image building campaign to attract investment into Ghana. Ghana featured prominently in international media like the *International Herald Tribune*, *the Euromony Financial Times*, *Paris Match*, *Afrique Golfe*, *USA Today*, *Business Direction*. CNN had an effective exposure on Ghana as a potentially emerging investment location. President Rawlings' direct involvement in the investment drive became beneficial to the country after visiting USA, Malaysia and Singapore in 1995. In 1995 Ghana reaped a benefit of US\$ 150 million. Mr Ahwoi and his other colleagues in the government also think that the nation's media have a different agenda not in consonance with the country's collective interest. Mr Kabral Blay-Amihere, President of the Ghana Journalists Association thinks that the government should be proud of the journalists' performance in calling the government to order and correcting certain abnormalities in administering the country. He said that it will be a great disservice to the nation if media practitioners closed their eyes to all the wrong happenings. It is generally agreed that although there may be some excesses on the part of some journalists the country would have been run like a one party state if not for the activities of these journalists. In the absence of a credible opposition in the Parliament the journalists took it upon themselves to play that role through critical analysis of certain government policies. (A9521)

Sarah McNeil

Singing for peace and reconciliation

"Media Development", Vol.XLIII, n.2 (1996), p.31-32

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Senegal's Youssou N'Dour, UNICEF ambassador for performing arts, is a musician whose songs, rooted in the ancient African "griot" tradition of artists and communicators, and nourished by the images of West African Islamic culture, celebrate the child, the family, village life and the city as an integral part of the emerging national identity of a complex, modern African sense of being. The article profiles his vision of using music to promote the cause of children around the world. (I0127)

Abdoul Traorè

In Mali sta arrivando il Sessantotto

"Internazionale", Anno 3, No.133 (7 giugno 1996), p.17-18, translated from the journal "Les Echos", Mali.

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In Mali, the school is not in line with the requirements of the country. And it is far from the aspirations of the young people. These have already rebelled once but they are preparing to do so again. The reasons for this new movement are essentially three: 1) Population growth - the population has doubled over the last twenty years; 2) The collapse of social values - the repercussions of the world economic recession, the liberalization of the economy and the growing monetization of social relationships have transformed society; 3) The growing acculturation of society - due not only to the collapse of values but also to the permanent cultural aggression of the rich and powerful countries who have the means to create models and communicate them to others. These three aspects have created a new youth in Mali: a youth that is trying to invent its own identity, a consumer youth, a divided youth - students do not mix with the rural and working youth -, and finally youth of a poor society. It is thus clear that the reform of Mali schools can only take place through a complete reorganization of the Mali youth. What should be done? 1) get information about the young people; 2) define a real strategy with regard to youth; 3) with regard to the specific problem of schools, extend the educational base to create a great mass of literate people fundamental to economic development. (I0170)

Report of the African Women Communicators Network meeting

Swaziland, (Mar-Apr. 1996), 32 pp.

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This is a report of the African Women Communicators Network meeting held in Swaziland at the Thokoza Church Centre in Mbabane from 31 March to 4 April 1996. The participants were drawn from fourteen countries of East, West, Central and Southern Africa. This meeting which was sponsored by the World Council of Churches (WCC) Unit IV, Sharing and Service was organized by the Ecumenical Documentation and Information Centre for Eastern and Southern Africa (EDICESA) and hosted by the Council of Churches of Swaziland. The African Women Christian Communicators think that for too long the voices of women in Africa have been ignored and worse still the role of women has been taken for granted leading to abuse of women and increasing poverty. The meeting has resolved to address this situation in practical rather than theoretical ways. The voice of women must be heard. To this end the delegates pledged themselves to expose the effects of Structural Adjustment Programmes on the lives of women in their particular countries. It was acknowledged that SAPs are a common factor in all the countries represented at the meetings and this communality should be a source of strength. It was decided that every effort should be made to interest the international media in these issues with a view to a film being made that would be shown in as many arenas as possible and aired at the World Council of Churches 8th Assembly to be held in Harare in 1998, which also ends the Ecumenical Decade of Women. In this way there will be a practical demonstration of the commitment of Christian Women Communicators to enlighten the Ecumenical community and the wider community of the problems facing African women and their attempts to overcome them for themselves. This commitment will also encourage networking, ideas and resource sharing among Christian Women Communicators as well as working in conjunction with Northern Partners. It will also urge the member churches to be more involved in socio economic issues affecting their respective constituencies. (I0236)

Indigenous / Minority

Mali's Tuareg War Ends as Foes Burn Weapons

"All Africa Press Service", no.15, April 15, 1996, Green Pages, Kenya, English.

March 27, 1996 marked an historic event in the four-year bloody civil conflict in Mali when the war came to an end with a bonfire of weapons. The Tuareg nomad rebels, their rivals in the Malian army and the black settled populations set fire to about 3,000 firearms to assault rifles and mortars in that ceremony. This war has claimed over 1,000 lives. The occasion was graced by two West African Presidents, Ghana's Jerry Rawlings and Malian Alpha Oumar Konare. President Rawlings at the ceremony appealed to all African countries still webbed in civil war to do the same. A joint statement issued by Leaders of the United Fronts and Movements of the Azawad and of the Ghanda Koy called for the "rightful, diligent and fair application of the national peace pact and subsequent accords, to the benefit of the peoples of the north; creation of the moral, material and psychological conditions for the return of the people displaced because of insecurity; bring about the real socio-economic integration of northern regions with the rest of the country". They said that the newly established peace accord would remain fragile if the Malian government and their foreign partners did not take concrete measures in education, health and development. After the remarkable destruction of about 3,000 weapons, there have been some plans to develop tourism in the old commercial city of Timbuktu as well as improve the international telephone links and the building of an Airport equipped with modern facilities. But on the contrary Senegal in a 13-year separatist war in her southern province of Casamance has resumed war. Abbe Augustin Diamacoune, secretary general of the Democratic Forces of Casamance Movement (MFDC) wrote to Senegal's Prime Minister Habib Thiam that they will not attend the April 8 peace talk. Diamacoune has constantly appealed to the rebels for a ceasefire but his call has gone unheeded. The future looks bleak for Senegal. (A9523)

Christina Stucky

Visita al re degli Zulu

"Internazionale", A.3, N.127 (apr. 1996), p.7-8, translated by the monthly Tribune, South Africa.

One is a monarch, the other a political leader. Both are Zulu and there is a blood bond between them. Why then is there such tension between king Zwelithini and Mangosuthu Buthelezi? King Zwelithini came to the throne in 1968 on the death of his father and was nominated supreme leader three years later in the presence of 20,000 invited guests. At the same time the South African government limited his responsibilities to a ceremonial role. He remained politically in the shade of his uncle Mangosuthu Buthelezi, however, who was nominated prime minister of the Kwazulu in 1976. Two centuries earlier an ancestor of Buthelezi was one of the regents of the then king of the Zulu and managed to become a counsellor and strategist of the king. So the current Mangosuthu Buthelezi continues to claim the title of "traditional prime minister" while the king is beginning to emerge from the authority of his uncle and distance himself from politics which he says makes the king a slave. (I0129)

Andrè Hakizimana

La Guerra delle Mucche

"Internazionale", A.3, no.136 (28 giugno 1996), p.29-30

translated from the Press Agency Syfia, France.

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Cows have ended up in the midst of the conflict in Burundi. The Hutu partisans have stolen entire herds which they then use for demining the hills, for food and for buying arms. This phenomenon had started around Bujumbura but has now extended to the north of the country, and to the south where, in April, violent fighting took place between military and Tutsi militia on the one side and Hutu extremists on the other. According to one retired soldier the herds mostly belong to Tutsi traders, to the military and to dignitaries of the old regime. The Tutsi cowherds are accused of doing nothing to stop the thefts but although they stand guard over the herds at night no one sees the thieves and they are attributed with having almost supernatural powers. The cow that was once used for the dowry for uniting two families has become for both sides a exchange instrument in this fratricidal war. (I0173)

Venuste Linguyeneza

La Verità e la Memoria

"Internazionale", A.3, no.136 (28 giugno 1996), p.30-31, translated from the magazine "Dialogue", Belgium.

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How can Ruanda be rebuilt after the genocide that took place two years ago? First of all justice must be a priority. But the historical reasons for what happened must be understood. Here there is a double genocide: one genocide that hides another, because the hate that is at the origin of the Tutsi genocide has caused the hate that provokes acts of genocide against the Hutu. To interrupt the spiral of violence the language of reason must be used: stop the massacres and see that they don't reoccur. The opportunity to take steps to bring the real guilty people to justice did arise in 1994 but at the same time people in power saw that by whispering the names of those they wanted eliminated in the right places, they saw results. When it was seen that the authorities did not repress false testimonies; when the government did not back the delegations that were compiling lists of the real accused; when it sanctioned those soldiers who had taken the power of life and death into their own hands; then the path to justice was compromised. The article goes on to offer concrete suggestions for bringing justice to the situation: for example, if there is a lack of magistrates, and it is not desired to use foreign magistrates, why not check those in prison to see if some of them are innocent. The author concludes that he believes that the Churches can still do much for the people: although they are no longer accepted as mediators - their once moral weight is not as strong as it once was - a large part of the population still trusts them, in spite of the errors of the past that a certain smear campaign made much of. (I0174)

Adewale Maja-Pearce

The Murderers in our Midst : Letter from Lagos

"Index on Censorship", Vol.25, n.1 (Jan.-Feb. 1996), p.57-60

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"I have no doubt at all about the ultimate success of my cause, no matter the trials and tribulations which I and those who believe with me may encounter on our journey", Ken wrote in his final

message, but there's little chance that the time will be soon, with or without Abacha at the helm. This letter from Lagos describes the mock trial and inhuman death of the Ogoni nine, including their leader, Ken Saro-Wiwa. He continues: The level of "debate" exercised by the Honourable Ministers - civilians both, and one a professor - in response to the country's most serious external crisis since the civil war in the '60s (and perhaps not even then) is hardly bettered among our "born again" politicians now seeking - at this late hour! - to bury their differences in the defence of democracy, etc., etc. Students, journalists and human rights activists are, of course, making all the usual noises, and, as usual, paying the price for it, but there's nothing new in that. They've always done their job. Would that others did theirs, if only for the sake of the memory of a man who gave his "very life" that we might rid ourselves of the murderers in our midst. (I0203)

Economy / SAP

Daniel Mensah Brande

Gold Coast

"The New Internationalist", N.281 (July 1996), p.16-17.

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Ghana is a symbol of post-independence Africa's pride and prejudice. Known in the dictionary of colonialism as "Gold Coast" for its riches in gold, it also has on sale the relics of the authentic African traditional system of government, discoloured by the bleaching agents of colonialism. Before the advent of European colonialism, the area now called Ghana was divided into political entities with well-organized systems of government. They also had well-defined class systems which supervised their daily activities and differentiated the leader from the led, the possessors from the dispossessed. The advent of Western colonialism brought a new class system: the new privileged class was made up of what could be called the foreign bourgeoisie and the African petit-bourgeoisie. Independence in 1957 brought another class system (like the colonial system) - the oppressors and the oppressed, although in fact there are three well-defined classes: the upper class, the fast-diminishing middle class and the rapidly increasing suffering masses. The upper class controls the economic and political destiny of the country. For them stealing state money is not a crime - but one may be punished for letting oneself be seen while doing so. The middle class enjoyed a degree of respectability and comfort in the early years of independence but when they voiced their resentment at the undemocratic way the nation was being driven and the gap between them and the rulers began to widen, they were regarded with suspicion and the IMF/World Bank SAP reduced them to near paupers. The lowest class, the suffering masses, is increasing fast. This class - workers, farmers, school teachers, most of the operators in the informal sector, the under-employed and the unemployed - contains the most marginalized people in Ghana. The rural poor are more marginalized than their urban counterparts, the women more than the men. To survive, most members of the suffering masses must enter the fast-expanding underground economy. Class differentials in terms of economic power have often led to collision between workers and the middle class on the one hand and the ruling class on the other. The suffering masses who toil to keep the economy of the country moving have never seen the colour of political power. (I0141)

Abubakar Momoh

The Structural Adjustment Programme and the Transition to Civil Rule in Nigeria (1986-1993)

"Africa Development/Afrique et Développement", Vol.XXI, n.1, (1996), p.19-37.

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The current Nigerian economic crisis has its origins in the International Monetary Fund Jumbo loan taken in 1978 by the Obassanjo regime. When the Babangida military junta came to power in August 1985, sponsored by the bourgeoisie in general, it implemented a Transition Programme with two facets: the Political Transition Programme (PTP) and the Economic Transition Programme (ETP) through a vigorous implementation of SAP. Although the main objective was to fulfil and meet the interest of foreign creditors, whatever the conditions imposed, both economic and political policies have produced contradictory results. While economic liberalization has led to more opening up and worsening conditions of the toiling people and accumulation by both the external and internal fractions of the bourgeoisie, political reforms have led not to a complementary liberalization but authoritarianism and repression. The future of the struggle for democracy has been truncated by two events: first, the diversionary "Constitutional conference" which is meant to nip in the bud the Campaign for Democracy's call for a sovereign national conference. Second there is internal wrangling within the Campaign for democracy itself which led to a split in the organization at its National Convention in February 1994. However the Nigerian toiling masses engaged in a protracted struggle to ensure that the mandate given to Abiola by his victory at the presidential polls on June 12 was upheld. This presupposes that the toiling masses are interested in the liberal democratic project. There are three reasons for this: first, the belief that civil rule no matter how bad is more acceptable than military rule, second, liberal democracy courts accountability; third, military rule is inherently and intrinsically authoritarian and this is unacceptable in this era of human civilization. (I0143)

Theresa M. Ndongko

A preliminary study of the Socio-Economic Impact of HIV/AIDS in Africa

"Africa Development/Afrique et Développement", Vol.XXI, n.1 (1996), p.40-55

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The article examines the general evolution of the spread of the epidemic and its impact on the various aspects of economic and social life. At the household level, where fundamental economic decisions are made, HIV/AIDS strips families of their main sources of financial and non-financial support. The industrial sector seems to suffer most from the AIDS epidemic because like the households, it has a considerable stock of physical and human capital in terms of physical assets, skills and experience of its work force. Firms in addition incur greater outlays for health, unemployment, funeral and death benefits. In the health sector, HIV/AIDS patients absorb increasingly large proportions of the hospital system's resources and take up the bed-space of patients with curable diseases while in the education sector the public may put undue pressure on the authorities to exempt children who have lost their parents to AIDS from paying school fees. The article goes on to mention preventive measures already in use: sensitization campaigns through small and mass media; community mobilization programmes aimed at high-risk groups for changing their behaviour; condom promotion which however will depend on the support and good will of the government; prevention of STD and Transmission through contaminated blood through use of rapid blood testing equipment and ensuring that blood transfusions take place only when it is absolutely necessary and unavoidable. However other measures are necessary: 1) Political leaders in Africa must find the courage to provide leadership despite the sensitivity and taboos around AIDS: discriminatory laws must be abolished and the powerless must be given the means to protect themselves; 2) total national commitment

must be seen as a precondition for the control of the HIV/AIDS epidemic - action must come from the Ministries of Finance, Planning, Education, Information, Labour, Agriculture, as well as Health; 3) governments must fight complacency and denial and ensure that they commit themselves to equity and justice in confronting the AIDS pandemic; 4) prevention programmes must be initiated early and should urgently focus on the youth, women and very sexually active groups; 5) community-based home care programmes for HIV/AIDS infected patients and their families should be established in the region. (I0144)

Wenegoundi Zoungrana

I compromessi tra contadini e finanziatori

"Internazionale", Anno 3, n. 128 (12 Luglio 1996), p. 43, article from "Syfia", France.

The most important challenge for the peasant organizations today is their search for autonomy. The financiers are ahead: they do join together. The leaders that express the ideals of the peasants know that they must favour community activities and not individual ones, to be in synthyony with what those they represent want. Now that there is talk of long-term agricultural projects, the problem is even greater. Financers must accept and finance programmes for 4 to 5 years, instead of wasting funds. The funds invested are insignificant and do not permit autonomy. There are no projects at present that permit autonomy. The peasants wants to eat now. This is why it is important to talk about what follows after the beginning. (I0161)

Kin-Kiey Mulumba

Immagini da un paese scomparso

"Internazionale", A.3, no.136 (28 giugno 1996), p.26-267, translated from the weekly "Le Soft de Finance", Zaire.

Although he has ruined the country from an economic point of view, President Mobutu remains a guarantee and the Europeans count on him not to let Zaire collapse into total chaos. Zaire has a strange history - like Belgium, conquered and defeated in 1944, it belongs to the camp of the conquerors. Its soldiers fought Nazi Germany in former German Africa. They freed many cities that now give their names to the streets of Zaire. On the East frontier Ruanda and Burundi were German possessions but after the Ist world war they were entrusted to Belgium who already possessed the Belgian Congo on the West frontier. But Germany continues to be interested in the area of the great lakes and in 1995 organized a meeting between the two enemy presidents, Mobutu of Zaire and Msuveni of Uganda while Bizimungu of Ruanda offered his apologies but did not come, his excuse being that according to American accusations Zaire promoted arms trafficking in the Rwandanese Hutu refugee camps. According to the Zaireans, Belgium however continues to have its say in Zairean affairs and powerful Germany seems to bow its head to what Brussels says in the matter. The West is convinced that Zaire has a government whose main mission is to lead the country to elections. This is the Kengo government. If a wing of the opposition contests this government, it has every right to do so, but the West would like it to reflect on the lengthy duration of the transition and that it should understand that the controversy can only be solved at the urns. The longer the transition period, the more the living conditions of the famous people that everyone claims to represent become precarious and the more the possibility of a relaunch of the already degraded economy becomes a distant reality. It should be noted that for almost thirty years Zaire has been an independent and sovereign country. It therefore seems difficult to continue to justify interferences in a country of which all the international bodies stress the high level of preparation of the national elite. It should

also be noted that it was Mobutu and no one else who took the initiative to start the democratization process in his country. In the various European capitals it is admitted that no one obliged him to do so. Not even in Zaire did anyone ask him for anything. (I0172)

Sam Gonza

Conference Protests against Food Dumping in Africa

"All Africa Press Service" no. 31, August 5, 1996, Green pages, Kenya, English.

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The African Meeting on Food Dumping and Its Effects on Farmers held at the Egerton University, Kenya, called on the African States to issue more strident laws prohibiting food dumping in the continent. They advocated creating more awareness of the implication of food dumping and its far reaching effects during the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), World Food Summit to be held next November in Rome, Italy. The conference was organised by the Kenya National Farmers Union (KNFU) and sponsored by the Protestant Farmers Association of Germany, with Mr Rudolf Buntzel who presented the key note address. Delegates from Kenya, Uganda, Ghana, Mauritius, United Kingdom, Tanzania, Cameroon, Mali and many NGOs also graced the occasion. Mr. Simeon Nyachae, Kenya's Minister for Agriculture Livestock Development and Marketing gave various definitions of "food dumping" during his opening speech. Rudolf Bentzel of the Protestant Farmers Association of Germany decried the flaws in the General Agreement on Tarrifs and Trade (GATT), a treaty regulating international trade "has not been helpful in discouraging the harmful practice of food dumping". "Ecological and social dumping" are not taken into consideration by GATT. The Via Campesia, a coordinating body of farmers from Asia, America and Europe condemned the policies of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank over in balances in the socio-economic profile of poor nations. The Summit is expected to adopt well thought-out policies and strategies aimed at solving food problems at national and international levels. (A9537)

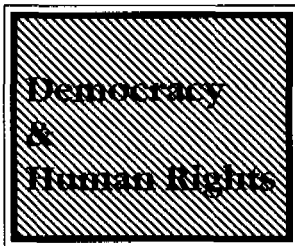
Hilario Matusse

Mozambique: Picking up the Pieces

"Southern Africa Political and Economic Monthly", Vol.9, No.9, June, 1996, Pages 5-6, Zimbabwe, English.

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Mozambique, a country that has seen more years of war than peace is now trying to overcome this degrading past and embark on new and enviable economic development strategies. The country is endowed with natural resources and has all the potentials to be great: large gas fields, minerals, more than 2,000 kilometre coastline and an excellent tropical climate suitable for agriculture. The political atmosphere shows signs of remarkable improvement since the first multi-party elections in 1994. The new political arrangement is based on a pluralistic system aimed at continous process of negotiation and consensus building as contrary to confrontation and acrimony. The economic sector needs improvement hence the government has reduced imbalances on external accounts through the improvement, in resource distribution! This entails provision of support to rural development, increased exports and the curbing of illegal export and import. The World Food Programme (WFP) said that the country is moving towards self-sufficiency which is a neccessary pre-requisite if Mozambique is to be less dependent on foreign aid. Despite these efforts the social conditions of workers have not been translated into poverty elevation in spite of 10 years of Structural Adjustment Programme in the country. (A9540)



The Laws of Literacy

In spite of the lack of state support, Kenya boasts the largest and fastest growing publishing industry in East Africa.

Although state censorship manifests itself in many ways in Kenya, it is not the most significant factor denying Kenyans access to books. Kenya's book publishing industry today is confronted by even more pressing problems: poverty, illiteracy, an underdeveloped marketing and distribution infrastructure plus the absence of a book-buying and reading culture. Publishing in Kenya will continue to remain a minority concern until these issues are tackled; and that will depend on a government with the will and insight to remove outdated laws from its statutes, promulgate new ones and guarantee basic human rights.

Thirty years after independence Kenya still has no clear-cut national language policy. As a result, publishers are compelled to publish unprofitably in any of the three language categories - English, Kiswahili, and mother tongues. Nor, despite attempts in these directions, does the country have an information policy, a publishing policy or a book policy. Efforts to set up a National Book Development Council have so far been unsuccessful. There are also many unresolved contradictions affecting the industry, one of which is taxation. It is not surprising, therefore, that while the government has liberalised book imports, the home-grown variety remains in the grip of a state monopoly.

The industry also suffers from acute shortage of capital. Banks will not lend to it because they consider it risky, and are usually unwilling to accept stocks as collateral. Publishers, therefore, tend to restrict their publishing activity to the 'safe' areas - textbooks and revision books - and to shy away from any long-term investment in areas such as fiction, or academic and reference publishing. This results in duplication in certain safe areas and scarcity in the high-risk zone.

Lack of funds also undermines the quality of the product as publishers resort to cheaper materials, and untrained and inexperienced staff. Even more important are those books that never get published because the publisher has no funds to invest in them.

With the possible exception of printers, shortage of funds affects everyone involved in the book chain. Bookshops, libraries and schools are all starved for cash; authors make very little from writing.

by **Henry M. Chakava**

Poverty remains the greatest obstacle to book consumption in Kenya. The country has a per capita GNP of only US\$300, one of the lowest in the world. Problems of unemployment, food, health and housing, take priority over everything else. Education is perceived only in terms of paying school fees and most Kenyans have yet to accept books as an integral part of the education process.

Another worrying factor is that nearly 50 per cent of the country is illiterate and only a small percentage of those who can read has any disposable income or is in the habit of buying and reading books. Eighty per cent of Kenya's population lives in rural areas with no access to all - weather roads, postal services or electricity. Promoting and distributing books under such conditions is an arduous task indeed.

The Kenyan government exercises censorship of the print media by statutes. These are included in the constitution, the Penal Code, the Books and Newspapers Act, the Official Secrets Act, the Films, Stage Plays Act and the Defamation Act.

Working through the minister responsible, the government can invoke any of these laws to ban a publication. Among the local publications so banned are *Kenya: Return to Reason* by Kenneth Matiba, and the following journals and magazines: *Voice of Africa*, *Beyond*, *Financial Review*, *Development Agenda*, and *Inooro*, a Gikuyu news magazine previously published by the Catholic Diocese of Murang'a.

The list of banned foreign

publications numbers around 20, and includes such books as Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*, *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse Tung*, William Attwoods's *The Reds and the Blacks* - and periodicals such as *Who Rules Kenya*, *Revolution in Africa*, *The African Communist*, and *Sauti ya Wananchi* (Voice of the People) to mention only a few. A ban on a periodical would normally affect all past and future issues. Foreign newspapers or magazines containing an unsavoury story about Kenya have been seized at the airport and destroyed or detained for several days.

For a country of Kenya's reputation, this list is modest. However, over the last 10 years, there has been a systematic attempt to stifle creativity. Several writers have left the country after being jailed, detained, or harassed, to live and work abroad.

These include Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Abdilatif Abdalla, Ali Mazrui, Alamin Mazrui, Maina wa Kinyatti, Micere Mugo, Kimani Gecau, Ngugi wa Mirii and Atieno Odhiambo. Local and foreign journalists have been arrested and/or beaten up in the course of their duty. Publishers' offices have been raided and vandalised, while printers such as Fotoform and Colourprint have had their machines immobilised and materials confiscated and destroyed. Dramatic performances have been denied licences or cancelled without reason. Between 1987 and 1993 the plays affected included *Kilio cha Haki* (A Cry for Justice), *Animal Farm*, *An Enemy of the People*, *Fate of a Cockroach*, *Drumbeats of Kirinyaga* (a musical) and *The*

«Society at large neither respects nor rewards creative talent; writers rarely feature on national honours lists. There is no scheme by which talent is spotted or nurtured: no support for community recreation centres, theatre groups, libraries and other artistic activities. There are no policies nor laws that could provide a framework for the creation of such institutions in the future.»

Master and the Frauds. Ironically, *Animal Farm* and *An Enemy of the People* have previously been prescribed for study as secondary school examination texts.

State censorship is rather more subtle. The Kenyan education curriculum is so packed that it does not allow any time for leisure reading. Consequently, students are now graduating from primary and secondary school without adequate exposure to fictional works.

Literature as a subject has all but disappeared from the school curriculum. It has been 'integrated' into the English Language syllabus and students are expected to study only one novel and one play for their secondary school examination, a far cry from the wide range of texts this subject used to attract. The level of written and spoken language has fallen dramatically among young people and they are no longer able to express themselves properly.

The Kenya Schools Drama Festival is another case in point. During the 1970s, it featured original work, usually written by the students themselves, which took issue with social problems such as corruption, greed, road carnage, social inequality, cruelty to women and children and other ills in our society.

Then, in the 1980s, the government banned what it called 'political plays' from the festival and advised education officers to censor any plays with political messages likely to divide the people. All plays were to project the country in a positive light, promote development and interpret the president's motto of

Love, Peace and Unity. Although the festival continues, it has lost much of its creative sparkle and spice.

This creative lethargy in schools can also be seen at universities and within society in general. Universities have been largely politicised, and a majority of their professors absorbed into the state system. Creativity is stifled through curtailment of literary seminars, journals and writers' workshops, and a general lack of facilities or incentives to promote and reward academic excellence. The country has lost its intellectual climate as well as any debate on important issues.

Society at large neither respects nor rewards creative talent; writers rarely feature on national honours lists. There is no scheme by which talent is spotted or nurtured: no support for community recreation centres, theatre groups, libraries and other artistic activities. There are no policies nor laws that could provide a framework for the creation of such institutions in the future.

From the local community through to schools and the highest institutions of learning to professional societies and clubs, not enough attention is being given to the arts. As one would expect, a creative environment cannot emerge in a society characterised by fear and silence.

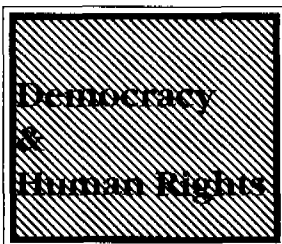
The creation of state publishing institutions represents another subtle form of state censorship. The two state publishers Kenya Literature Bureau and Jomo Kenyatta Foundation are the only ones

allowed to publish textbooks for the Kenyan school system. While commercial publishers are not barred from publishing textbooks, even when these are acceptable, they can only be used as supplementary or reference material.

With this one stroke, the state not only controls the content of what is taught in schools, but is able to keep commercial publishers sufficiently weak and without the funds to invest in risky areas like fiction. The state's involvement in publishing lowers standards by discouraging competition and enables it to censor commercially published books. □

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The Dawn of the Religious State in Egypt

The State: Vulnerable to Infiltrations or Peaceful Coups?

The author of the following article, The Legal Research and Resource Centre for Human Rights, believes that there are major and fundamental changes happening in the state that could lead this country to a situation similar to Sudan, Iran and Algeria, threatening the state which was formed on the respect of the Constitution and international human rights declarations. Therefore, it appeals to all enlightened authorities and to all Egyptians to work toward changing legislation.

For many years we have had comfortable discussions about infiltration, because we knew that we were all citizens of a secular state - contemporary Egypt, which does not discriminate between citizens on account of their religion and keeps a safe distance between governmental and religious institutions. Infiltration, as we all know, can be resisted by a healthy body. It resists until it overcomes any form of infiltration. We have been busy discussing the shape and form of the regime in Egypt, talking about democracy, tyranny, oppression, torture, detainment, emergency laws, the marginalization of democracy, control of the presidential institution, and even the issue of a weak and ineffectual state. The opposition and the intellectual elites, even inside syndicates, were busy with conflicts over power. Not one of us realized that a potential coup to turn this secular state into a religious one will not be based on infiltration from abroad. Instead it will arise from the schizophrenia of the Egyptian state. The issue is no longer a matter of resisting state institutions. The Egyptian state itself has slowly taken on a religious character over the past two decades. Or if that is not true, then one cannot deny that the state seems schizophrenic: sometimes religious, and sometimes secular. Perhaps the best way to describe it is that the government is secular but uses religious institutions and religion itself for political purposes.

In this context, the Egyptian state has insisted that it confronts terrorist groups by itself, by combating violence with violence. It has rejected the participation of intellectuals and all progressive and liberal elements hoping to defend a secular state. At the same time, it has given way to the most dangerous media institution to broadcast a kind of denominational religious thinking that is coming from abroad, which in essence kills the tolerance of Egyptians, and transforms it into fanaticism. The state has utilized all security measures possible and has resisted the role of the opposition, syndicates and non-governmental organizations. In doing so they have stifled the human rights movement in Egypt which defends the right to enlightenment and freedom of expression. Every intellectual was prevented from participating in cultural, media and

education plans for Egypt, which anticipated the rise of popular forces confronting the state. The Egyptian government was following the "lesson" it learned from Sadat's experience with leftists and Islamic groups. In this context, it is only natural that all enlightened people, especially human rights activists, would be surrounded and restricted. The people who make strategic plans for security in Egypt did not see the great difference between people who seek authority and power, and between those who defend civil society and the secular state, who champion democracy and human rights, without seeking any power whatsoever.

A Peaceful Religious Coup

There have been continuous pressures for certain people to announce the establishment of a religious state in Egypt. Some political Islamists say this has been much delayed. For many years, some of them, despite their differences in opinion, have wanted to create a religious state through iron and fire and political assassinations that resulted in the death of President Sadat, though Sadat himself personally made the first step toward creating a religious state by amending the second article of the Constitution that says the principles of the Islamic Shari'a are the main source of legislation in Egypt. Assassination attempts also reached the Minister of the Interior, and the Minister of Information as well as the Prime Minister. Then it turned to thinkers

and writers, and included the assassination of Farag Foda and the attempt on the life of Naguib Mahfooz. Those utilizing violence knew that the international media would publicize such events and hoped this would aid them in forcefully changing the state. This meant that every foreigner - from tourist to investor - was frightened away from Egypt. The country was then placed on the black list for tourism because of what was called "the spread of terrorist activities" in it. This was painful economically to Egypt's economy, not only to official state institutions and the private sector, but also to people working in the tourism industry.

Culture, Education, and the Media

Those who planned to establish a religious state in Egypt planned to inundate the Egyptian mind with information. That is why they drowned the market with tons of publications and cassette tapes from rich publishers and distributors. They also place their advertisements on Egyptian television in an unprecedented manner. Their hands have even reached the educational sector. They put so much pressure on the Minister of Education that the minister himself was about to be removed, and they ignored his decisions from within the ministry itself. Islamic investments came into his and other ministries, and they began to build Islamic schools. The conservative religious discourse began to infiltrate the heads of little children, preparing the way for a new generation in

which sectarian ideas and principles have been planted. Strangely, this was not done in secret, but in public and under the noses of formal educational institutions. The policies and curricula are all controlled by the government.

* There are widespread conditions for censorship of the arts. Censorship is even worse in television, where the religious state is supported more than the secular state. Those same conditions are found in the film and video industries and the video industry, which claim that they are only answering the needs of the consumer.

*The government has allowed the religious institution, and especially Al-Azhar, to have a legislative role, with the ability to direct censorship and intervention in a place like the International Book Fair in front of the general public.

All this has led to the existence of a conservative religious environment. Now people believe this is the will of the state and the rulers. People, who believe themselves to be the representatives of God on earth, have taken hold of the state's institutions, and have taken control of us too.

The constitutional state, the state of law and institutions has been lost under their feet. We cannot overlook the fact that the state itself issued the Islamic investment law which wore the robes of religion, and in the name of Islam painful blows were dealt to the Egyptian economy. Egyptian television was, for them, the best way to advertise to all

Egyptians. Until today, no one has investigated the matter and it remains unsolved.

The Power of the Judiciary

In this environment, where we speak of a peaceful religious coup from within, it is important to say that we defend the Egyptian judiciary. The judiciary is truly our last and final resort from the intervention of the executive power, and from any violations against human rights. The judiciary verdicts are, to us, a final truth! But we cannot ignore the fact that the judiciary is one of the state's institutions and that, like other institutions, it may also be subject to infiltration or peaceful coups from within.

If political and religious games have entered the halls of the judiciary and the courts, then this is truly indicative of a revolution in Egypt. We have noted a suspicious stench coming from some verdicts recently, where some judges have issued political opinions rather than verdicts.

What is worse is when the courts become seminars that pass judgements on opinions and academic work, debating it and making judgements on it that are as far away from the constitution and the law as possible. Though we want to defend the judiciary and show respect for it, we must be aware of dangers infecting it. It is remarkably similar to what happened during the trial of Mohamed Mahmoud Taha, when he was executed in the Sudan for apostasy. This was the beginning

of the coup for the religious state there.

We must not forget the rulings of the *Fatwa* and Legislation Sections of the State Council, and their power that should not have been more than providing an opinion. They have become involved in intellectual struggles, and they consider any creative or artistic matter to be religious which justifies the intervention and supervision of the religious institution. We must also not forget that there are still many cases against famous artists, writers and journalists, and that these matters have been addressed by using all legal and judicial mechanisms.

Lawyers were divided between those who defended freedom of expression and thought and those who defended the religious mentality of the extremists and the fundamentalists.

This climaxed with the verdict against Nasr Abu Zeid and his wife Ibtihal Yunis. For the first time in the judicial system in contemporary Egypt, and for the first time in the history of the Islamic judiciary, a judge incited all Muslims publicly to kill a person as a religious duty!

For the first time, a judge gave himself the right to identify "the right of God" and said all Muslims were sinful if they rejected *hisba*, as though *hisba* were a divine matter from the Qur'an! In an unprecedented interpretation for any Muslim, the judge considered it to be a 'certain duty', challenging legislators over the new *hisba* law that was issued this year, and himself made another new legislation whereby he appointed

himself a legislator... or even a prophet. The judge claimed that all Muslims are apostates if they do not shower other Muslims with *hisba* law suits, and he also said he would not accept a person was a Muslim if he only wanted to use the standard two testimonies customary in a court of law, thereby contradicting everything we know about Islam's tolerance.

Dr. Nasr Abu Zeid says in his memo to the court: "I feel pain and sadness for the accusations that were against me and that distort my ideas and my concepts, and that would pain any Muslim attentive to his religion. I have spent more than 20 years studying it and teaching it and reviving it against everything that might harm it. Is defamation, distortion and threat the reward that a person gets when he is seeking to support Islam and base it on proper academic knowledge and rationality? God has given us brains to use and in the end he will ask us what we did with them."

Although we confess our ignorance of religious scholarship, we have never once heard that the person who does not go on the *haj* (the pilgrimage) is considered an apostate.

The Legislator and the People's Assembly

One more comment remains concerning legislators in our country. Some of the most powerful people in Egypt are legislators, despite everything that is happening, including the so-

called 'elections' of the people's assembly whose legitimacy is still being considered in the courts.

There is a great difference between the way Egyptian legislators issue laws concerning freedom of the press, the independence of the syndicates, the freedom to form parties and organizations, the legislator's ability to issue laws in minutes, and at the same time his weakness in defending freedoms enumerated in the constitution.

Legislators were slow to issue the new *bisba* law until the final verdict of the court of appeals against Dr. Nasr, despite both domestic and international appeals for justice. Legislators did nothing, and yawned in their seats, as if they wanted the judiciary itself to tear Nasr apart.

Surprisingly, that the same comment that we make here came in the verdict of the Court of Cassation, which makes fun of legislators by using loopholes to get around the power of the legislative branch.

The new *bisba* law was also inaccurate, and the court saw that it had the right to ignore it. The judge, in short, did not depart from what the legislator had made, and he referred himself to Article Two of the constitution as well as to Article 280 of the bylaws of the *Sharia* courts, both of which opened the door wide for the judge to dig for whatever he pleases from the school of Abu Hanifa, about which the scholars and *ulemas* themselves become confused.

For all those reasons combined, and many more, we no

longer live in the illusion that the state is secular. We no longer believe that there is infiltration from abroad, and we no longer believe that Egypt is passing through bad political times. Rather, we believe that the religious state emerged the day Article Two was changed in the 1971 constitution under the orders of the head of the state who is also the head of the judiciary. From here, therefore, a religious state and society are achieved, both legislatively and judicially. Now we are merely waiting for the final presidential institution to announce that Egypt is a religious state.

The Legal Research and Resource Centre for Human Rights believes that there are major and fundamental changes happening in the state, that could lead this country to a situation similar to Sudan, Iran and Algeria, threatening the state which was formed on the respect of the Constitution and international human rights declarations, as well as Egypt's constitution of 1923.

The Legal Research and Resource Centre for Human Rights appeals to all enlightened authorities and to all Egyptians to work toward changing the legislation.

This would include changing the second article of the constitution of 1971 and returning to the constitution of 1923 concerning the status of the Islamic *Sharia*. Article 280 of the bylaws of the *sharia* courts should be changed, as well as the new *bisba* law so that it becomes more clear. We appeal to legislators to amend Egyptian laws to conform with international human rights principles!□



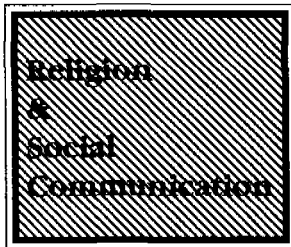
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by Robert N. Kizito*

Communication and Social Identity

Introduction

The title of this paper can be pretentious. If not, its presenter could sound theatrical. Communication as we know it today is a special attribute, a unique gift from God, through which individuals and societies can become truly more human. Like all other animals, human beings will always strive to find better means for survival and to achieve what they desire. What makes us "homo sapiens" and, therefore, different from other animals is the use of thought to investigate, understand and comprehend our environment or circumstances, and to compare and make choices that would maximise our benefit beyond the immediate needs for survival. The intention could be to make life more purposeful or to make the best out of a situation using rational judgement. This process is largely facilitated through communication symbols. In this regard, we can neither be social beings nor truly human without the media of communication. Indeed a Luganda proverb, confirms that "I am clever, when told" (Ndimugezi nga mubulire). That symbolises our human and social nature.

Yet, in spite of being our unique gift from God, Allah, Katonda, Ngai and such other names for our supremely good and kind Creator, communication can be used for good and evil alike. Communication can marshall reconciliation or cause destruction. It can bring knowledge, truth and inspiration, or withhold knowledge and spread disinformation. In the introduction to *Christian Principles of Communication* (1990) as recommended by the World Association for Christian Communication (WACC), the organisation states that: "Information and communication are drastically changing the world we live in. Instead of establishing commonness and solidarity, public communication now tends to reinforce divisions, widen gap between rich and poor, consolidate oppression, and distort reality in order to maintain systems of domination and subject the silenced masses to media manipulation".

Communication practitioners accustomed to truthful and objective

reporting may find this a frivolous or idle hypothesis. However, recent experiences in Rwanda indict how diabolic and sectarian we as media people can be when serving myopic interests to disastrous ends.

During the genocide of 1994, we may recall how the government-owned Radio Rwanda sometimes denied massacres were taking place, while at the same time it exhorted Hutus to kill their Tutsi neighbours. The more extreme privately owned Radio Mille Collines (Thousand Hills) also based in Kigali, urged Hutus to kill "the cockroaches", in reference to Tutsis. "Take your spears, guns, clubs (*spiked with nails*), swords, stones, everything, sharpen them, hack those enemies, those cockroaches," the station said at one time, before its transmitters were knocked out by the advancing RPA (Rwanda Patriotic Army).

I wonder how many of us reflect on the importance or consequences of what we write, broadcast or otherwise communicate! The irony of communication though, is that those who manipulate or misappropriate this gift claim to represent the legitimate interests of people they claim are either oppressed or alienated.

The concept of social identity is not any less impregnated with controversies and contradictions. The quest for identity by any person, group of persons, community or tribe is really a search for recognition, pride, belonging and for some like the African people, a crusade to

restore their lost dignity. Africa and her millions of inhabitants represent a people whose dignity and pride has been so trampled upon more than anywhere else in the world. First it was the enslavers in whose footsteps followed the colonisers, their task both consciously and unconsciously ably aided by a missionary enterprise that sought to belittle and paint as satanic everything African.

Then came independence and with it despotic leadership that has disavowed people's dignity and turned freedom into a nightmare for the majority of the African people. But the real tragedy of the African continent and people is the inheritance at independence of a colonial legacy that frowns on our traditions, values and norms as uncivilized, unrefined, inferior and a potential divisive force.

This has further eroded our dignity and pride leading to a deep-seated feeling of nothingness, worthlessness. But confidence which is one of the requisites for development and progress is built, among other things, on the pride of a people and the recognition and human dignity accorded them.

It is true that many common threads run through African Cultures. However, Africa is not homogenous but a lump of heterogenous peoples curved into common territories to promote and protect the commercial, economic and strategic interests of colonial powers. This has tended to create the illusion that we do not belong to diverse ethnic groups. Against this multifaceted

background, even the most innocent attempt at building or consolidating tribal affinity or ethno-cultural consciousness in the quest to rediscover our roots is termed as "tribalism", an obstacle to development that must be crushed.

Ironically when we are born, when we marry, and when we finally die, rites peculiar to our ethnic origins are performed among other things to give recognition to our diverse cultural backgrounds. This is our social identity.

The late Dr. M.B. Nsimbi popularly known as the grand old man of the Luganda language and Buganda culture, rightly argued that no nation can survive or enjoy lasting peace when a big part of its population that has long established cultural traditions feels humiliated, depressed and engulfed in misguided national standardisation that reduces very distinctive cultures to simple or elementary and commonplace cultural forms such as dance and others.

Even then, rather than being emphasised for their cultural significance, such forms and sometimes people, are only paraded as tourist attractions. Diversity is a fact of life and a gift from God, according to the short-lived group calling itself Buganda Foundation which was first launched in 1984 by some Baganda resident in the Kenyan capital, Nairobi. In a document outlining its philosophy and objectives the Foundation said: "Ugandans need to accept that the diversity of our people is not a curse to bemoan or rupture but a

natural endowment or fundamental characteristic to be positively exploited for the betterment of all our people. We need not grieve over this fact-of-life matter". The Foundation whose principle objectives were to promote cultural growth, socio-economic development and welfare, further argued that if positively exploited, through enlightened and creative political education and programmes, and reciprocal mutual understanding and appreciation of its causes, diversity can be an enrichment rather than an obstacle.

The document calls for creative and intelligent cultivation and development of a "willingness to search for, and appropriately respond to what is common: underdevelopment, poverty, backwardness, ignorance, coexistence and strong nationalism, illiteracy ... By the same token it should not be difficult to accept, understand, and appreciate any differences rather than highlighting them with malice or for selfish ends which is in itself inherently disastrous". Positive cultural growth and ethnic fraternity are in this case not seen as a negation of "state nationalism".

Prof. Ali Mazrui has argued in *The Africans* that today's Africa is the product of a triple heritage: the indigenous (the forgotten), the Western (the harmful) and the Islamic/Arabic (the alternative which should be fused with what is good from the indigenous to arrest the African crisis). The truth, however, is that the indigenous is the basis, and therefore the starting point that should be fused with what is good from the foreign and

not vice versa. The African spirit is instinctively lodged and raised in the indigenous that colonialism and neo-colonialism wanted us to forget. It is this spirit the colonialists sought to completely destroy and erase from our minds but in vain. As Dr. Nsimbi argued, we cannot change the past but we can build a better tomorrow for this continent - free of suspicion between our different tribes; a continent where people can understand, appreciate and respect rather than fear each others cultural values.

A better tomorrow can not be achieved unless people who are not related feel that they are united by mutual respect, recognition and appreciation. In such a nation, a heterogeneous people will form a unit, believe and act accordingly in pursuit of similar ideals and in protection of individual and group interests. The role of journalists and other communication practitioners in this continuous enterprise can not be over emphasised. Your role will, however, be determined by your convictions or editorial policy. I do not share the popular view that it is our heterogeneous heritage that is essentially responsible for Africa's failure to evolve committed, foresighted and sound leadership that is so critical to efficient economic management and development.

It is because of these controversies and contradictions surrounding the key words or concepts (communication, social identity) that I submit, that the title **Communication and Social Identity** can be vain and pretentious. There is, therefore, a need for us to "level the ground"

in order to minimise any misunderstandings. This we shall do by agreeing on a common understanding of the word "communication" and the phrase "social identity", in order to achieve a "level playing field", since as we have noted, most words and concepts mean different things to different people. Perceptions will depend on the frame of mind, convictions, historical and cultural circumstances, and any other prejudices of the perceiver.

This being a workshop on the theme **The Role of the Media in the Democratisation Process**, we shall also venture a common understanding of democracy. We shall then attempt to critique, examine and explore how we as media people may contribute to these concepts reinforcing each other. Naturally these will overlap and the role of communication, or more categorically the challenge to you as media practitioners, will run through the whole presentation. I also intend to be brief and simplicitic to raise more discussion issues rather than providing answers so as to make this a session as participatory as possible. In our discussion we ought to keep in mind that this workshop was intended to specifically relate to our forthcoming Presidential, Parliamentary and Local Authorities elections.

We should note at this stage that these elections are very important as they mark a crucial stage in the implementation of our recently enacted Constitution and, therefore, the restoration of *constitutional democracy*. Direct Presidential elections will be the first ever in this country. We should also note that these elections are

taking place at a time of growing cynicism about politics and politicians. This has led to many people believing that political matters do not matter and hence refraining from casting their vote. It is too late for those not yet registered but registered voters must be encouraged to cast their vote. Ironically, even in America distrust of politicians is said to be at a record high. The trend may not be very different from European countries such as Italy and a few others.

Communication

We have already observed that communication is a unique gift to human kind. We have also noted that communication has potential for both good and evil or mischievous intentions. But what is communication?

This seminar, I am told, includes participants of diverse backgrounds, and it should, therefore, be in order to explain and to remind ourselves that by communication we are not referring to the much simpler activity relating to means of "connecting different places" or to "transportation between places and people". That is the transportation of goods and people by land, water and air; and the transmission of messages through telecommunications or some other means. For our purpose, we are concerned with the notion of "communication in society", whose more meaningful concept derives from the origin of the word itself. Communication comes from the Latin word *Communicare* which means to

share. Naturally, one of the commonest threads that runs through many descriptions of this concept is that communication is a process of sharing experiences, feelings, knowledge, skills, ideas and information between people, nations and generations. As such its content may be educational, entertaining, advocative, or simply informational.

Communication is, therefore, part of every aspect of life. "It has to serve society as a whole and ultimately humankind in its entirety. As a social necessity, communication is, therefore, the responsibility of everyone - governments, formal and informal organisations of people. It should not be manipulated by a few or misappropriated by a single centre of power" - WACC.

The word process, which implies courses of action or series of stages in an operation, is deliberately preferred over and above such words as activity, event or programme. Indeed communication is a broad process that can take place in many different ways. It need not be a telecommunications or for that matter a mass media process. Communication can also be personal or interpersonal, through technical or other intermediaries, or a combination of them. The choice of any particular format or a combination of formats will depend on available methods and resources at any given time, and its suitability in meeting the needs of any given society or the intentions of the communicator. Since it is a process of sharing, communication is therefore a most fundamental issue to development, progress and all

other human endeavours including the building and sustenance of democratic governance. Consequently, communication should necessarily be part of any plan to improve human life and human understanding in any family, culture, society, community or country. As a media practitioner who happens to be Christian, and since communication is by, for and about people, I share the view, that it should reflect the spirit of Christ which I have no doubt corresponds with that of Allah. In other words, communication must seek to constantly inject the values of the "eternal kingdom" into the earthly one, until the kingdom of God and the kingdom of this world coincide. This is a struggle that must be persistent and that demands patience because it is not free of obstacles.

There will always be forces with vested interests working against the noble goal to reach the point where the two kingdoms are in harmony.

Today communication remains largely written despite the onslaught of Radio and Television. But there are also other models of communications popularly referred to today as "alternative communication". Indeed all societies have a language, art forms and traditional technologies, no matter how primitive, through which they communicate. For Africa which is not famed for literacy, proverbs provide an effective alternative medium through which social values and common sense tenets are transmitted with great impact. Through imagery drawn from familiar environment or nature, and from day-to-day

observations and life experiences, many proverbs provide an educational story, picture and caption *all in one*. Despite the tendency for urban modernisation to cast them aside, proverbs remain powerful, and for a speaker who is gifted in their use, the message is vigorously and effectively conveyed. Jesus Christ Himself, recognised the power of parables and proverbs, and the imagery that goes with them. Two thousand years later, His message remains vivid, powerful, and a source of religious discourse.

Like any other form of communication, proverbs are subject to abuse. Positively used, however, they can teach us a lot about the norms of social and human interaction, and about the dignity of human beings as God's children created in his own image. For instance the Fante people of Ghana say **The Word Of The Elder Is More Powerful Than Thunder**, while according to the Wolof of Senegal, **The Child Looks Everywhere And Very Often Sees Nothing, But The Elderly Person While sitting Down Sees Everything**.

These two proverbs acknowledge the wisdom and vast life experiences of elders while recognising the limited knowledge and life experiences of the youth who need to be taught individual and collective values that promote the overall good and welfare of the community. In other words the two proverbs encourage the youth and children to listen and learn, and the elders to teach and educate them. Sometimes I wonder how many of us have ever considered the impact of interjecting our writing (especially

features) and broadcasting with appropriate and entertaining proverbs. The message would not only be effective but would also bestow recognition and pride on our culture. In addition, if you may not be aware, it is now believed that rigid traditional serious journalism has often failed to communicate. On the contrary entertainment seems to be doing better not only at keeping audiences but also at getting serious stories or messages across. Wouldn't proverbs, anecdotes and such other cultural items have a similar effect?

Social Identity

At the start of this session, I was introduced to you by name and official title within the fraternity of the World Association for Christian Communication - Africa Region (WACC-AR). This is as it should be: We normally establish an individual's identity by asking that person's name, job and role and position, if at all any, in any given society, community or group. Personal identity, however, as opposed to a person's identity, implies the inner-self or selfconsciousness and the accompanying desire or spirit to be oneself and to continue to exist as such.

The longing to continue a family line in many ways derives, however spuriously, from the desire to continue self-existence. But personal identity is lived and finds practical expression within a social identity which revolves around a common cultural environment. Social identity gives individuals a sense of belonging,

«Communication is a link between people, nations and generations. It therefore follows that in whatever we communicate or do we must put the interests of the people and the common good first, over and above our personal prejudices. It is only by doing so that we, as members of the respected and influential Fourth Estate, can honestly claim that we are laying a firm foundation for a fair and sustainable society for Africa, where democratic ideals and human rights shall be respected, where ignorance, poverty, hunger and disease shall be a thing of the past, and where the spirit of reckless competition, rivalry and mutual suspicion shall give way to positive complimentality.»

a point of reference, recognition and dignity, and a framework for social and human interaction. In the course of human history, new generations claiming some form of identity or recognition have continually emerged. This process regenerates societies without which people would lose any sense of direction. Social identity tends, as a result, to be steeped in history and people's experiences, with any alienation resulting into confusion, dehumanisation, social misfits, and a feeling of worthlessness.

While we are divided into what some social scientists call pseudospecies such as tribes, nation-states, castes, and classes, and whereas the related prejudices against other groups can be dangerous, I believe that it is possible in any nation to cultivate an all-inclusive human identity side by side with pseudospecies rather than suppressing them. But while this knowledge has existed and has actually been lived since time immemorial, it would seem that for a very long time it was assumed that diverse peoples inhabiting the same geographical boundary, owing allegiance to a single central national government, and respecting the same flag and national anthem, necessarily constituted a living and united nation.

It would further appear that this was presumed true of colonial states where people were involuntarily lumped together as well as of nations that formed in accordance with the peoples free will or as a result of spontaneous localised behaviour. Such people, it was assumed, shared a common identity if somewhat standardised,

that facilitated the pursuit of economic and political goals.

However, in the recent past we have witnessed the collapse and fragmentation of the once powerful empires and the reawakening of previously suppressed local identities based on race, tribe, language, religion or a combination of these. Elsewhere, Africa included, this period has witnessed local cultural reawakening culminating in Uganda, in the revival of cultural institutions.

These developments are a living testimony to the need to recognise, appreciate and understand the plurality of identities that coexist within any one nation-state. It is our job, therefore, as journalists to restore, or cultivate and nurture where it has not existed before, in every school or institution of learning, workplace, village and community a sense of universal solidarity without ignoring or suppressing people's respective cultural, ethnic or other identities as long as such identities do not negate the common good. That is what it means to be salt of the earth for Christians and conscious of the people for the media.

Given that Africa is a most pluralistic society where diverse cultures, languages, traditions and peoples must live side by side, the need to build a democracy that responds to specific needs of different groups of people is a fundamental issue. The recognition of such social identities is an affirmative action in the quest for human dignity. I personally share the view that it is possible to respect the wishes of

ethnic and racial minorities without compromising national or even international goals or pursuits. What is necessary is for communication to raise "a collective consciousness" of a "common humanity" that helps people to appreciate that we are all interdependent.

According to the Mexico Declaration adopted by more than 350 participants from more than 80 countries who gathered in Mexico City in October 1996 to deliberate on the theme **Communication for Human Dignity**: "Social identity and the sense of belonging are human necessities. They have either been attacked and suppressed, or extolled and idealised as ultimate reality, but resulting in tragic consequences. Social identities presuppose the right to use the mother tongue in all media of communication. The media should also encourage the creative use of symbols and images and other folk expressions by which people's identity is strengthened".

In the movement by people from one society to another new one, struggles for identities have emerged which embrace two or more cultural traditions, the Declaration adds. These diversities and new identities must also be recognised. I would add that it is a fallacy to believe that a person whose identity is suppressed can be more productive than a free person who enjoys recognition, appreciation and is therefore proud, confident and full of dignity.

Within the Christian Church, there is now talk of, and an ongoing struggle to inculcate and

contextualise the gospel to root it in the local African cultures and societies. Authors Joseph Healy and Donald Sybertz argue that inculturation "is not a matter of taking the traditional customs of African cultures and making the best ones fit into Christianity. It is not a matter of African culture values being mediated through western culture and thought patterns. Rather it is to start from the reality of the African context and see how the gospel message can become a leaven to it. Stated another way the priority is to be an African Christian rather than a Christian African".

The international community through UNESCO and other agencies also recognises the critical importance of social identities. For instance, the People's Communication Charter, written in preparation for the 50th anniversary (1998) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), calls for "the right to a diversity of languages" and the promotion of "educational facilities to encourage language learning by all people without discrimination."

Democracy and Communication

Democracy is defined by the Longman Encyclopedia as "rule by the people rather than a minority or a single person". On the other hand, the Cambridge International Dictionary of English (which "guides you to the meaning"), characterizes democracy as a system of government based on the belief in freedom and equality

between people, in which power is either held by elected representatives or directly by the people. This random and brief sampling of the descriptions of democracy collaborates the more popular concept "a government (or rule) of the people, by the people, for the people".

But the definition of democracy and the best means of giving it practical expression or political effect have been the subject of intense debate and dispute throughout history. Noting that everything depends on what is meant by "rule" (or for that matter government), and who are to count as "the people" the Longman Encyclopedia makes another notable observation: "The celebrated democracy of classical Athens (5th Century B.C) did not extend to slaves by whom the economy of the city-state (i.e *Athens*) was supported.

For our purpose, we shall strip democracy of the many jargons and various attire in which it is clothed within different western liberal democracies, one party "popular" democracies and other autocracies. We shall also skin it of the theory and philosophy in which it is obscured to simply call it the right to choose.

"It is the right to choose our friends and associates. The right to choose where we want to live. The right to choose where we wish to go and when we want to return. The right to choose what we want to do in life. The right to choose to own property and dispose of it freely. The right to choose our religious beliefs. The right to choose our elected representatives and stand for elected office (on the

ticket of our preferred political party). The right to choose our own peculiar attitudes and opinions and to express them freely. The right to choose a particular development path as opposed to another" - **Communication and Human Rights in Africa: Implications for Development** (1991).

In a way this simplistic definition of democracy incorporates the two definitions above and also corresponds with Jean Jacques Rousseau's conception to which I subscribe. This 16th Century French philosopher and political theorist was among the first thinkers to espouse a modern concept of democracy as we understand it today.

Rousseau held that all individuals should be regarded as equal in rights and should, therefore, be entitled to participate in discussions which affect their lives. He advocated for direct democracy whereby the whole citizenry settled public affairs at public meetings. He, however, conceded that this was impossible in a large community and concluded as a result, that true democracy was not feasible. Unlike Rousseau's time, it is possible today, thanks to new communication technologies, to link people to debate issues and reach a consensus. Nevertheless true or direct democracy will remain a myth due to some other debilitating factors. In the circumstances, constitutional democracy whereby power is held by representatives freely elected by all people who are eligible to cast a vote, remains the most viable option for those who believe in

freedom, social justice and a participatory political system. Constitutional democracy presupposes the following conditions, which for our purpose, we shall call fundamental prerequisites:

- (a) an informed (or educated) citizenry with freedom of speech and association;
- (b) freedom of the press (or communication) to mediate reason, responsibility, mutual respect, freedom of expression and of conscience;
- (c) regular and free elections devoid of any kind of intimidation;
- (d) free and genuine choice between candidates and political parties;
- (e) freedom of opposition parties to organise and to campaign against the government and, if successful, replace it by an established non-violent constitutional process;
- (f) the existence of people capable of expressing their wishes publicly and of discussing the type of society and political process they aspire to;
- (g) equality of all persons accompanied by voting privileges or rights for all adults;
- (h) decision by majority vote but with inbuilt mechanisms to protect and safeguard minority rights including those who subscribe to specific or peculiar social identities;
- (i) an impartial arbitrator or judiciary that is independent of government as well as

constitutional safeguards for basic civil liberties.

An examination of these prerequisites, debatable as they may be for some, should clearly reveal why I prefer the simple phrase "to choose" to characterise democracy. The choice is made by people over competing candidates, parties and options for achieving individual, communal and national aspirations. But for people to make choices and to participate freely in their own governance, they must be informed. And as you and I know, educational and other information, participation and making peoples wishes known are best mediated through mass media and other communication channels.

In Uganda today, we have a Constitution enacted by a Constituent Assembly composed of directly elected representatives, who, it can be argued, embodied every shade of opinion in the country. This is a very reasonable dose of constitutional democracy.

However, some articles of that Constitution, in particular sections relating to political parties and "*federo*" remain so contentious that some politicians, political activists and other operatives are apparently prepared to breach that very Constitution enacted by the people's representatives! What went wrong? Against such a background, what is the future of democratic governance in this country?

Some observers have blamed multipartists and federalists of naivety and reckless opportunism. They went along with the NRM-organised Constituent Assembly



elections, so goes the argument, in the false hope (or miscalculated move) that the electorate would vote-in enough multipartists and federalists to hold sway in the Assembly. If this were true, would it not be a pity that many of us, CADs included, did not have faith in the Constituent Assembly and by extension the entire constitutional process, and yet did not voice our concerns stubbornly enough until after a Constitution we do not favour had actually been enacted? Yet others blame the fiasco on an insensitive, self-conceited and arrogant NRM machinery comprised of autocratic individuals who do not respect democratic ideals and are bent on perpetuating themselves in power at any cost.

Whatever the case, whether or not one group outmanoeuvred the other at that very initial stage that necessarily preceded the forthcoming elections, what can we do as communicators to douse a "constitutional (democracy) crisis" and related problems that could erupt any time now or in the next five years?

The socio-political dynamics in Uganda today may be different. However, it is evident now that in addition to the requirements referred to above in order to institutionalise and sustain democracy, it is necessary that a substantial, vibrant, mature, independent and active "civil society" emerges in any community.

Civil society, which in a way is implied in the "fundamental prerequisites", comprises autonomous groups and movements of citizens acting

collectively in a public sphere outside the realm of government, parliament and political parties to express their interests, passions and ideas to achieve mutual goals and make demands on the State and hold State officials accountable. When the media, which is itself part of civil society, champions such public causes, it can claim legitimacy which elected politicians owe to the electorate. In other words we owe legitimacy to the service we render to the public.

Democracy and civil society can best flourish when facilitated by us writing objectively via an independent media to echo the interests of all groups, subordinate and dominant alike. Civil society implies empowering the people individually and as groups, not just the elites, not only to determine how they should be governed, but also to periodically terminate, as desirable, the mandate given to political leaders through established and known civil means open to all who are eligible according to the dictates of full adult suffrage.

The overwhelming majority of Africans live in rural areas where civil groups are almost non-existent and, therefore, representing a unique challenge (and opportunity) to the media. In Africa many countries have held multiparty elections since the democratisation movement now sweeping across the continent was first ignited initially in Benin in late 1989.

But democratic governance has remained an illusion. Former champions of democracy have become the worst violators of

people's civil liberties. These experiences have shown that a necessary corollary to all the above presuppositions is the existence in power of a sensitive administration that is democratically-oriented enough to respect the expressed wishes of the people to the extent that such wishes are not in conflict with national or universal goals. This impinges on the need to build a democratic culture, which today is perhaps the media's greatest challenge in Uganda and elsewhere in Africa.

Another peculiarity of politics in many African countries that we have to deal with is the unwillingness of political party gurus and barons to tolerate divergent views within their parties. In one of our neighbouring countries, members, in both the ruling and opposition parties, who disagree with dominant views or with party bosses, are quickly disciplined or otherwise ostracised if not altogether expelled from the respective parties.

Here at home in the 60s five cabinet ministers in the then sole political and governing party, the UPC, were unceremoniously arrested in the precepts of the parliament to start a long-lasting detention without trial that ended only after Major General Idi Amin's coup of 1971. Their crime: challenging the views and powers of their colleague and UPC (Uganda Peoples Congress) supreme, President Apollo Milton Obote. In my opinion intra-party democracy (including intra-party pressure groups) is corollary to a true or genuine multiparty democratic system.

In this regard, Kaggwa's DP

Mobilisers Group must be seen as a good development not only for the DP (Democratic Party of Uganda) but for the democratisation process as a whole. It ought to be given as much genuine not cynical media attention as the DP mainstream itself. The myth of the infallibility of party barons and the life presidency of party chiefs must be destroyed because it does not auger well for the regeneration process of political parties and multiparty democracy as a whole.

Conclusion

Allow me in the light of these observations to conclude that you and your communication profession are an integral part of democracy and democratisation whereby decisions are taken by the people through their representatives rather than the elite, where participation is guaranteed for all sections of the population, and where information conveyers are objective and autonomous.

And if the organisers of this seminar will allow me, I would ask that we conclude this session with a ritual while standing on one leg with one arm raised: "I commit myself to practicing my communication profession such that I may contribute to a more free and fair election, and ultimately to a more just and democratic Uganda, irrespective of the many obstacles in my way".

We have, in the meantime, reminded ourselves that democracy is about people irrespective of identity:

government of the people, by the people, for the people. We have further said that communication is a process of sharing feelings, experiences, knowledge and information. But we know that only people have the capacity to share these things in any rational, if somewhat and sometimes incidental way.

In addition we have agreed that communication is also a link between people, nations and generations. It therefore follows that in whatever we communicate or do we must put the interests of the people and the common good first, over and above our personal prejudices. It is only by doing so that we, as members of the respected and influential Fourth Estate, can honestly claim that we are laying a firm foundation for a fair and sustainable society for Africa, where democratic ideals and human rights shall be respected, where ignorance, poverty, hunger and disease shall be a thing of the past, and where the spirit of reckless competition, rivalry and mutual suspicion shall give way to positive complementality. □

*Secretary WACC-AR, Nairobi, Kenya

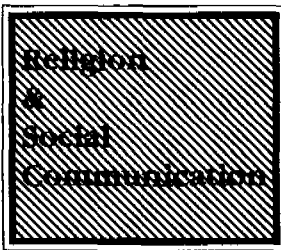
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The African Women Communicators Network meeting was held in Swaziland at the Thokoza Church Centre in Mbabane from 31st March to 4th April 1996. The participants were drawn from fourteen countries of East, West, Central and Southern Africa. This meeting which was sponsored by the World Council of Churches (WCC) Unit IV, Sharing and Service, was organized by the Ecumenical Documentation and Information Centre for Eastern and Southern Africa (EDICESA) and hosted by the Council of Churches of Swaziland.

Report of the African Women Communicators Network

Objectives

Within the framework of the vision born in Limuru, Kenya in September 1993, the African Communicators Network during its first meeting laid down the principles for cooperation, for "consultation on problems and prospects of communication and networking in Africa". Thus the Christian women met to explore and share their experiences and roles in communication networking in the continent.

The meeting was also set to be educational in imparting knowledge of communication skills and the importance of information sharing and networking as necessary tools of development and empowerment of women.

Executive Summary

The foundations of the African Communications Network were laid down in Kenya in 1993, and it was from this framework that this meeting of Christian women was meeting for the first time since then. Among the highlights of the week's programme, the Christian women communicators met to exchange views and to learn from each other's experiences as Christian communicators in the so called developing countries of Africa. Also, to tackle problems together and to pave way for meaningful Christian contribution in the changing Christian arena and indeed the micro environment of today.

The programme topics lined up for discussion consisted mainly of topical issues currently facing the churches and in particular the female constituency. This was an all women seminar and speakers were drawn from Christian women. The topics included:

1. The Role of Women in Christian Communication.

2. Why Affirmative Action for Women?

3. Legislation Affecting Women.

4. Women and Culture.

5. Christian Communication (Northern and Southern perspective)

6. Structural Adjustment Programmes.

7. The Role of Women in Decision-making.

8. Women and Aids.

The spirit of sharing which formed the core of this meeting flourished through group discussions, presentations of case studies and review of areas of regional and international solidarity such as;

- a) Evaluation and follow up on the famous and recent Beijing Conference.
- b) The activities of the current Ecumenical Decade of the Churches in Solidarity with Women, 1988 - 1998.
- c) The plans for the forthcoming WCC 8th Assembly Meeting in Zimbabwe in 1998 which is being taken as an African event.

Of note at this meeting was the presence of women pastors, in its own a very recent development in the continent and an enlightening experience for the attendees. Their experiences and contributions to the gender struggle in the pastoral movement was very moving considering that Christians take it for granted that in God's vine all are equal. Only

to be shocked by such examples as a woman pastor not being allowed to preach from the pulpit.

Recommendations

The week's interactions culminated in very positive proposals. Structural Adjustment Programmes, the monster roaming the whole African continent and barely understood by the masses was found to be the prowling lion which was devastating many efforts of development and creating hopelessness and poor nations.

The women communicators declared war against abuse on women in whatever form. They vowed to share with the whole world the irregularities they are experiencing as marginalized citizens and their situation has been worsened by SAPs and the AIDS epidemic.

Averting SAPs disasters

The delegates pledged to expose the side-effects of SAPs on women through international media. They agreed to produce a film in two parts viz;

- to expose side effects of SAPs
- to provide alternatives to SAPs.

The film and other publications would be used to sensitize their governments as well as the western governments. They suggested to use the WCC 8th Assembly in 1988 as another platform to air their views.

Empowerment of Women Through The Churches

- The women challenged the Church leaders to emphasize the girl child education and assist with scholarships.
- Our Northern partners to support the FOCCESA Women's Resource Centre which is in the pipeline.
- Communication and networking through exchange and internship programmes in order to improve communication within the continent.

Strengthening of the African Network

- Disseminating information through existing information structures such as EDICESA.
- Advocate for Churches to set up information resource units.

Presentations

The Role of Women in Christian Communication
by Judy Ogwa-Manya (Kenya)

In dealing with the Christian communication we have a message to proclaim to the nations. Our primary concern is that all people everywhere may hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ in ways relevant and understandable, Judy said. Basing her discussion on a number of biblical examples she talked about how women have been the pillar of communication from as far back as the times of Sara and Abraham. She talked about the

various modes and channels of communication and the situations thereof, but emphasized that effective communication involves mutual understanding and participation of the parties involved.

This is not without challenge. Lack of support, emotional and physical is not uncommon. Certain situations force women to communicate in silence or even in subjection like Sara to Abraham (1 Pt. 3:6). But the effectiveness of her great influence on Abraham bore the desired results (Eph. 5:22).

Women, therefore, have a duty to communicate and involve themselves in various aspects of development in the family, in the church and in the community at large. All that has to be done is to pray for guidance and allow God to lead the way in order to achieve what He has planned for us.

Affirmative Action for Women

by Eunice Sowazi (Swaziland)

Mrs. Sowazi supported affirmative action for women with statistics which showed how women have been marginalized.

Do you know that:

- women comprise 52% of the world population, therefore in the majority?
- 60% of these women are illiterate.
- In some countries women are not allowed to own land, start business in their own capacity without male support.
- In other countries women are considered as a pressure

group.

She cited with examples from Swaziland, the gender oppressive systems such as lower remuneration for women, no ownership of land, etc. These situations are worsened by the exclusion of women in political and socio-economic decision-making processes. The challenge is not to compete with men but to unify the endeavors of achieving equal opportunities and participation. All these anomalies are indeed good grounds for affirmative action in education and total empowerment. In this regard the focus is on affirmative action in education for the GIRL CHILD as the basis and license to equal involvement and participation in later life.

She said that one of the biggest challenges facing women communicators is how inequality contrasts with the Christian and Biblical dimension, which acknowledges that God created all people in His own image and therefore are equal. Christ said, "I came so that they must have life and have it abundantly". Christ came for all, man and woman. Deriving strength from this, women should therefore not allow themselves to be reduced to below man, but live life in Christ, abundantly. As long as inequality prevails, affirmative action should be advocated, she concluded.

Legislation affecting women

by Ndaipaneyi Mukwena (Zimbabwe)

The discussion was set from a very emotional background of

how the women in the continent have been perpetual minors protected not by law but down-trodden by the males in their societies. She cited the increasing cruelty against women featuring in many cases of rape, incest, domestic violence, polygamy etc. Added to this, the side effects of social and economic problems such as poverty, unemployment, illiteracy created by SAPs, diseases, wars, and so on.

She wondered what our respective governments were doing to combat the above anomalies and how to place women on level ground with the men folk. Further she challenged the role of women communicators in highlighting these often overlooked endemic problems.

With examples from Zimbabwe she outlined how most governments have come up with seemingly positive legislature to improve the status of women, particularly in the struggle for gender equality, but she questioned the impact of these laws, whether it was favourable, and if so favourable for whom?

Her observations were that the majority of women did not know about these laws. First the women were not readily represented on national decision-making structures. Secondly, those women in such positions were only for window dressing. Thirdly the female constituency was not involved in the formulation of laws by way of consultation, education and politicization rather the laws were imposed on them. Because of this the laws naturally became unimplementable.

Where are the women

communicators in the face of these irregularities? She challenged the Christian communicators to be the "salt of the earth". "You are the voice of the people and the ears of the legislators. It is your duty to sensitize and act as honest brokers between the provision of legislation and acceptance by the people" This inspiration comes from Proverbs 31 vs. 8-9.

She acknowledged the pressure being exerted by some NGOs who are fighting for empowerment of women and have won on various issues. She said the struggle is on until total empowerment is achieved in the political, legal and economic fields.

Culture affecting women

**by Phumzile Dhlamini
(Swaziland)**

To tackle this controversial topic three main questions were posed.

- What is culture?
- What is the relevance of some cultural practices?
- What is the role of the church in culture?

It was found out that the underlying reasons for clashing lay in that males and females are "born biologically" whereas men and women are "created culturally." To reconcile these seemingly parallel ideologies is why culture is always a challenge and a strength.

Although any culture has both positive and negative aspects, it is the latter, mainly the gender insensitive ones, which were of concern because these

perpetuated women as minors and servants. Further problems were that culture is so strongly rooted in society that it can only change over a very long time. Worse still, the African culture has been mingled with colonial and western elements so much that the cultures were now competing, putting the older and younger generations at poles due to allegiance to the different cultures. There is also globalization which is encouraging nations without boundaries - is it not another threat to national and tribal cultures - she asked.

Because culture is not static - she said - communicators and the church have a role of exposing the pros and cons of culture. She added that there should be strong emphasis on the good aspects of culture, the traditional dances in Swaziland which encourage non-promiscuity and condemn bad ones like female circumcision, arranged marriages, etc. The culture in the churches was also condemned as it was generally oppressive to women.

Case studies

Interesting information exchange took place when some of the participants shared through case studies their experiences about the role of women in communication in their respective countries.

Kenya - Martha Mbugguss

Mrs Mbugguss is a qualified and experienced journalist now working with the National Council

of Churches of Kenya. In her presentation she shared the challenges faced by women and the churches in relationship to journalism. She said journalism in Kenya is considered a very tough job, therefore a male job. The connotations are that there is strong bias against women/girls joining this trade. This in turn leaves no one interested in exposing or giving positive coverage on women's issues.

There is high competition to enroll for this degree course, and women/girls, due to their already prejudiced status in society, fail to enter colleges for various reasons: social/cultural, economic, low academic performance, etc. Even those that manage to break the norms and enter journalism are assigned non-challenging sections of the media or their stories are censored. Those few often suffer gender harassment of one kind or another e.g. forced into sexual relations for recognition at work which in the long run destroys them.

As for the churches, the role of journalism in professional communication was for so long not seen as a need, but with the changing times, the churches are having to face up to the challenges of communication and to speak up for the voiceless masses. Therefore many are keen to set up public relations/documentation departments in their respective churches. This way the churches can participate in public debates, be they evangelical, political or otherwise. For the meantime the churches speak under the umbrella of the Council of Churches.

She felt that the situation in

Kenya would probably be the same in many of the countries presented at the workshop. She said that the more women and churches got fully integrated into journalism more they would expose the adverse situations facing women in particular.

Mozambique - Rev Mucavela

Rev Mucavela shared the fact that women all over the world have always been the centre of communication. Likewise women in Mozambique have always been the centre of communication in their societies. And more importantly they were the majority in the churches where their impact can be felt, but is often not acknowledged.

Through the Christian Council of Mozambique, the women from various denominations have teamed up to tackle challenges they face to try to find common solutions, in particular gender issues in relation to economic status, diseases, education, etc.

To date these women have taken the serious issue of street girls as a priority. In this regard they reclaim the girls through civic and moral rehabilitation. They were also pressurizing the government to positively make education accessible to all children and in particular disadvantaged girls. She commended the churches who have been committed in helping with these programmes.

The women have successfully started a news bulletin

“WANSAT” meaning “WOMEN” so that they could break the geographical barriers and continue to share useful information.

Rev Mucavela saw two major hurdles to effective communication in her country, Mozambique. Firstly, women and the society at large have been stereotyped for a very long time, through inherited negative and gender segregative social values where women have been brought up as second class citizens to serve men. Secondly, there are language barriers between the many tribes which form a natural barrier to communication between the various women. The only common vehicle would be through Portuguese but with the majority of women unschooled at all, the barriers are indeed very high and wide. Also the mere thought of being united in a foreign language is absurd, she concluded.

Namibia- Judy Matjila

Women were in a serious situation in this country which has just emerged from civil war. Tension still existed between the “remainees” and the “returnees”. So far, the women have not yet emerged as a force, save for a few NGOs and churches which were taking the lead in laying down infrastructure for effective communication skewed to reach the grassroots level.

Swaziland - Ntsiki Zulu

The situation is no different from the other African countries

«Although any culture has both positive and negative aspects, it is the latter, mainly the gender insensitive ones, which were of concern because these perpetuated women as minors and servants. Further problems were that culture is so strongly rooted in society that it can only change over a very long time. Worse still, the African culture has been mingled with colonial and western elements so much that the cultures were now competing, putting the older and younger generations at poles due to allegiance to the different cultures.»

with reference to the communication industry. In general there is no freedom of press which is the main limitation. Added to this and on the women dimension, women still faced all sorts of prejudices, oppression, harassment, even exclusion from entry into media employment. Further there is no proper journalism school in the country which in itself limits the potential would-be women journalists.

Christian Communication: A Northern and Southern Perspective

Christian Communication, a Northern perspective and communicating emergencies was detailed by **Ama Annan** who works for Christian Aid in the United Kingdom.

She explained how her organization is a bridge between the British donors which consist mainly in the church, the government and the public and the partners in the third world countries. Her organization sensitizes the donor community mainly through media communication. Therefore their relationship with the media is strengthened by the partners; responsiveness in communicating genuine needy issues, which will stimulate the donor sources. This information exchange should be continuous and not to be left until situations become emergencies. Advance warning to partners of imminent disasters should be imparted quickly, for example conveying such information as

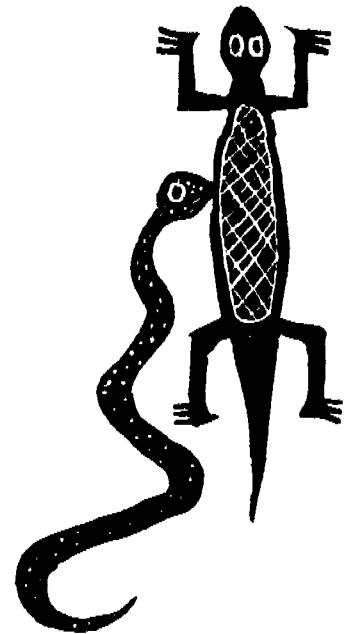
crop failure in this region due to erratic rains, would help partners plan ahead for imminent hunger in that particular region.

Although Christian Aid and other partners send out their own journalists to dig out appropriate information to compete for funds, she emphasized and challenged the present communicators to train in the methods relevant to communicating detail of crisis situations, including what is being done on the ground, accessibility to the area, contact persons and so on. On this stand, she therefore urged the churches to be flexible enough to take the front seat in exposing adverse issues in their localities by employing qualified journalists.

She also pointed out that local journalists are not exposed to Western media therefore they are limited in bringing out items that will stimulate fund raising. Communicators were also urged to liaise with local international reporters and media gurus such as BBC Africa and Reuters for better access, mutual understanding and for assistance with foreign media presentation.

But underpinning the donor/partner relationship, she emphasized not only the need for visibility of situations but total transparency on both sides, which can further strengthen the efforts to assist the needy.

The Southern response was given by **Sandra Bagenda** from Uganda. She said although the churches had been in communication business in Africa for a very long time, the impact had not been felt. This was further worsened by the gap between



church and secular media, often conflicting, leaving recipients confused as to who is addressing the real issues. According to her this situation now demands closer networking between the above media sectors in order to give the true picture of issues. She also challenged the churches to look into existing discrepancies such as lack of trained journalists working with the churches, low remunerations to attract good caliber media persons and unfocused objectives of communication.

These, she said, reduced the church's voice on critical issues. She noted also that air time given to the churches was misused by the proliferation of Western programmes, because the churches were not fully utilizing this time to air their stance on anomalies in their countries. But during the wars the churches were usually very active and vocal but in peace time they found themselves complacent.

Ecumenical Decade: the Churches in Solidarity with Women and the Beijing Conference (Paper read on her behalf by T. Chikuku)

Further information sharing continued when the women communicators exchanged experiences on the above issues.

* This report will be used to produce a film aimed at exposing the damages resulting from SAPs in the region and to air these world wide.

* The report will also be used to produce other related publications for international circulation such as pamphlets, booklets, postcards etc.

At the end of the decade during the WCC 8th Assembly in Zimbabwe in 1998 a communicators network desk will be set up to stimulate international attendees about these SAPs related problems.

Strengthening the African communicators network

* The women communicators resolved to remain loyal to the concept of information sharing and exchange.

* They will disseminate information through existing networks such as EDICESA, Christian Councils, etc.

* They resolved to prioritize women issues in their network efforts.

* To advocate setting up information resource units within their respective Christian councils and individual churches.

* Organize exchange internships programmes, through EDICESA, in the next two years in order to build up communication skills through exposure.

* The women emphasized the importance of increasing the meaningful participation of women communicators and women theologians in the

African communicators network.

* Then women communicators resolved to insist on affirmative action for the girl child in education.

Funding the projects

* They resolved to approach WCC Unit 4 as well as the Global Communicators Network to assist with funds to accomplish the above projects.

WCC 8th Assembly 1998 - Zimbabwe

African women communicators resolved to use this forum as a platform for networking with the rest of the world and to stimulate particularly the western countries to exert pressure on their governments regarding SAPs. They will advocate stronger solidarity among the Christian women world-wide in order to enhance the revolutionary spirit for women to be accepted as equals in all spheres of life. □

Source: Ecumenical Documentation and Information Centre for Eastern and Southern Africa (EDICESA)

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