



# Media/communications on peacebuilding/social cohesion/changing prevailing narratives on conflict

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## Question

*Based on the available literature, what lessons can be learned from interventions on media/communications for development, focused on peacebuilding/building social cohesion/changing prevailing narratives on conflict?*

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# 1. Summary

The media can play a positive role in peacebuilding/conflict prevention. Recognition of this has led to increasing programmes on media/communications and peacebuilding, with common interventions including training of journalists, and development of pro-peace programme content. However, there are significant challenges in designing and implementing such programmes, and even more in evaluation. While some interventions have generated positive results (e.g. reduced election-related violence), evidence is limited and it is hard to make causal links between interventions and impact. This highlights the need for more research.

This review draws on a mixture of academic papers and grey literature. The literature was largely gender-blind and made no mention of persons with disabilities. The term 'media' in this report refers to both mass media (television, radio, newspapers) and to social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, online blogs) because today both are used as sources or tools of news and information (Betz, 2018: 2). 'Peacebuilding' is defined as 'a process that facilitates the establishment of durable peace and tries to prevent the recurrence of violence by addressing root causes and effects of conflict through reconciliation, institution building, and political as well as economic transformation'.<sup>1</sup> In this review peacebuilding is taken in the wider sense to include conflict prevention as well as post-conflict restoration of peace.

## **MEDIA AND PEACEBUILDING**

**The media can serve as a driver of peace in diverse ways:** building bridges between people and groups; improving governance; increasing knowledge of complex issues; providing early warning of potential conflicts; as an outlet to express emotions; and as a motivator for action to promote peace.

**Types of media/communication interventions for peacebuilding can also be very diverse, including:** media monitoring; media professionalization programmes; peace journalism training; international broadcasting; promotion of an enabling legal and regulatory environment; using media to convey peacebuilding messages; citizen journalism initiatives; and crowdsourcing initiatives to collect and share information. The type of intervention will depend on the context, in particular on the stage of the 'conflict cycle'.

**Key actors involved in media/communication and peacebuilding programming include:** NGOs, e.g. Internews, Search for Common Ground and Intermedia; international broadcasters, e.g. BBC World Service, Voice of America; and tech-oriented organizations, e.g. Frontline SMS, Ushahidi.

**A number of challenges are faced in carrying out such interventions:** willingness and interests of media owners; lack of readership/viewership for peace stories compared to those on violence and conflict; reluctance by journalists on the grounds that the media should be objective; resource constraints; legal and regulatory restrictions; and lack of media outreach.

**Evaluation of media/communications interventions for peacebuilding is particularly challenging:** outcomes are not clearly defined and benefits are hard to measure directly;

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<sup>1</sup> Alliance for Peacebuilding. <https://allianceforpeacebuilding.org/2013/08/selected-definitions-of-peacebuilding/>

conducting research can be difficult and dangerous; and it is difficult to attribute solely to the media/communication intervention when other factors are likely involved.

## **IMPACT**

With regard to evidence of impact/effectiveness of media/communication and peacebuilding interventions, key findings of this review are as follows:

**Evidence reviews:** A 2014 review (Schoemaker & Strelau) of the contribution of media in war to peace transitions and the role of new ICTs found insufficient evidence to prove these. Gagliardone et al (2015) reviewed and compared literature on the role of ICTs in state-building and peacebuilding in Africa. They too found that empirical evidence on the successful use of ICTs was thin. A 2016 Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA) commissioned by DFID looked at a range of interventions, including media and communications interventions, to prevent or mitigate armed violence in developing and middle-income countries (Cramer et al, 2016). It found no overall consistent body of evidence, but the findings suggest that radio, TV programming and digital media can positively affect people's attitudes towards 'others'.

**Kenya** – Training of journalists in peace journalism as well as a range of peace interventions carried out by the media themselves contributed to a marked reduction in election-related violence in the 2013 elections compared to those in 2007.

**Nigeria** – Radio programmes on governance issues (an intervention funded by DFID and implemented by BBC Media Action) led to citizens being better able to challenge officials, resolve conflicts and participate in civic life. Training of journalists in peace journalism in the run-up to the 2015 elections enabled the media to play a big role in sensitising the public on the need to eschew violence, leading to largely non-violent elections. The Nigeria Stability and Reconciliation Programme (NSRP) achieved some positive impacts in strengthening peace architecture, broadening societal participation in peacebuilding, and positively influencing policy and practice in the conflict arena to reduce violence, but the sustainability of its effects was uncertain.

**Burundi** - Studio Ijambo was established by Search for Common Ground (SFCG) in Burundi in March 1995. It is an ethnically balanced team of journalists producing radio programmes (notably soap operas) to promote dialogue, peace, and reconciliation. Studio Ijambo's programmes are widely listened to and appreciated, and have led to people changing their behaviour towards other ethnic groups, as well as pushing on governance issues.

**Rwanda** - In post-genocide Rwanda, a radio soap opera - *Musekweya* ('New Dawn') was introduced, to teach listeners about the roots of violence, the importance of independent thought, and the dangers of excessive deference to authority. A study found it had shifted perceived norms of open expression and local responsibility for community problems, but attitudes toward interaction across social lines were resistant to change.

**Bosnia** – Post-conflict (after the 1995 Dayton Peace Agreement) various media projects were undertaken, including a three-part campaign to support the repatriation of refugees and return of property. It featured public service announcements, billboards, posters, leaflets, etc. targeting refugees and the wider public. An evaluation of the campaign found messages came across clearly, and it achieved its main goals of raising awareness and provoking thought on the issue.

**Nepal** - A number of media assistance programmes have been implemented in Nepal, including a reality show aimed at building trust between police and communities, campaigns for media

freedom, provision of media support related to elections, support for post-earthquake accountability reporting and capacity building, and a weekly radio and TV governance programme. Some of these initiatives and activities have shown success in bringing about change regarding governance and accountability issues.

## LESSONS

**Recommendations for development practitioners are as follows:** include the role of the media in context and conflict analysis; consider the interaction between local information systems and global media networks and audiences; know and understand the audience; give voice to all people – including the most marginalised and excluded – from the outset; promote regulatory reform of the media as part of peace settlements and their implementation; ensure the safety of media workers; ensure that interventions apply the ‘do no harm’ principle; and build linkages with other peacebuilding and state-building institutions.

**This review highlights the lack of evidence showing causal impact of media interventions. More research is needed, particularly on:** changes over time and in different contexts; other factors influencing impacts; how interventions and impact are linked; the role played by different forms of communication/media channels; the role that media and technology play in hybrid spaces of governance; and from a wider range of geographic contexts (much of the available evidence is focused on Africa).

## 2. Media and peacebuilding/conflict prevention

### Different roles of media

The media can play a role in fuelling or exacerbating conflict, seen, for example, in Rwanda where Radio-Television Libre des Milles Collines (RTL) was used ‘to demonize the Tutsi, lay the groundwork, then literally drive on the killing once the genocide started’ (UN official cited in Betz, 2018: 4). RTL urged listeners to pick up machetes, take to the streets and ‘kill the cockroaches’ (Bratic & Schirch, 2007: 7). Similarly, broadcasters in the Balkans polarised local communities ‘to the point where violence became an acceptable tool for addressing grievances’ (Bratic & Schirch, 2007: 7).

However, the media can also serve as a driver of peace. Manoff (1998, cited in Betz, 2018: 18) argued: ‘the basic functions of media are the same as those involved in conflict-resolution processes’. He identified five overarching roles the media play: ‘channelling communication to counter misperceptions; framing and analysing conflict; identifying interests; defusing mistrust; and providing emotional outlets’ (Manoff, 1998, cited in Betz, 2018: 18). Betz and Williams (2017: 12-13) elaborate the roles the media can play in conflict prevention and peacebuilding:

- **Bridge builder** – The media can be used to build relationships. It can support greater cohesion and understanding between people who consider themselves different from one another. It can give voice to the most marginalized in society.
- **Helps improve governance** – Fact-based, independent, transparent, accountable and impartial reporting can serve to hold officials accountable and make public administrations more transparent. It enables citizens to be active stakeholders, to understand policies and use the impartial information provided to exercise their human rights. All of these are critical for conflict prevention.

- Increases knowledge of complex issues - These include issues such as corruption, political injustice, marginalization, lack of economic opportunity and struggles with identity that may drive violent extremism. It can help people critically think about and discuss these issues.
- Provides early warning – of potential conflicts, and possibly create pressure to address the conflict.
- Outlet to express emotions – The media can allow people to express their fears and frustrations and share experiences and advice with others. It can also link people with power holders, enabling open communication and dialogue.
- Motivator for peace – The media can motivate people to take action and to participate in community events.

Betz (2018: 18) notes that, 'if the goal of conflict prevention is to move from polarization to positive relationships, the media can be an effective tool to build these relationships by changing behaviours and attitudes'. However, she adds that the media's impact on behaviour is complex and more likely to work on attitudes and opinions that shape behaviours rather than directly affecting people's actions (Betz, 2018: 18).

## Types of media/communication interventions and actors

Recognising the media's heightened importance in conflict environments, governmental organizations, NGOs, multilateral organizations, broadcasters, and community activists have expanded their efforts to use the media to prevent, manage, and reconcile conflicts (Arsenault et al, 2011: 5). Media interventions (programmes) can be very diverse. They can be differentiated (among others) by form (e.g. television, radio, social media), by audience and by function. Betz (2018: 15) argues that: 'Timing is important when considering the roles of media in conflict prevention and media assistance interventions. It is likely that while the role of the media may not change per se, the needs of the media and thus support to media will likely be different depending on the conflict phase'. The 'conflict cycle' includes the following broad phases: build-up, actual conflict, ceasefire, peacebuilding, post-conflict reconstruction and nation building. 'Media interventions must be tailored according to this cycle' (Betz & Williams, 2017: 2).

Media/communication interventions in relation to conflict include (Arsenault et al, 2011: 7-8):

- Media monitoring involves surveying media for evidence of destructive content such as incitement to violence or extremism. Monitoring may provide early warning of impending conflicts or the reescalation of old ones.
- Media professionalization programmes are designed to encourage media independence, objectivity, and improved standards in editing and reporting. These efforts include journalist training, editorial training, and promoting the use of diverse sources.
- Peace, preventive, and conflict-sensitive journalism training is aimed at building journalists' awareness about the potentially pivotal role they can play in mediating or exacerbating conflict. Such initiatives entail working with journalists to find a means of reporting that balances between two disparate positions or emphasizes peacekeeping goals over objectivity.
- International broadcasting typically refers to radio or television (but also, increasingly, Internet) content directed at foreign rather than domestic audiences. Most international broadcasters are government funded. In conflict situations, these broadcasts may provide

critical sources of information when domestic information sources are silenced or absent. In pre-conflict situations, they may serve as platforms for practising preventive diplomacy.

- Promoting an enabling environment includes interventions that promote media law and regulations that inhibit incitement to violence, government monopoly over communication platforms, and censorship.
- Social marketing or media-for-development programmes use existing media outlets to convey messages about specific peacebuilding issues through such vehicles as radio dramas, public service announcements, and roundtable talk shows.
- Citizen journalism initiatives give people without professional journalism training on Web-based or mobile tools to create, augment, or fact-check traditional media on their own or in collaboration with others. These initiatives are critical in conflict areas where traditional media are biased or lack resources.
- Crowdsourcing technologies are increasingly popular in conflict environments. Crowdsourcing initiatives invite citizens to use geo-mapping, blogging, Short Messaging Services, or other Web-based technologies to collect and share information about such issues as election fraud, violence, and humanitarian crises.

Arsenault et al (2011: 5) and SFCG (2011: 8, 18) give an overview of some of the actors working on media/communication and peacebuilding:

- NGOs such as Internews Network (USA), IREX (USA), Press Now (Netherlands), Developing Radio Partners, Intermedia, Equal Access, Fondation Hirondelle (Switzerland) and Panos are examples of organizations that work to build media capacity and promote messages of peace. They also work with local partners to produce culturally sensitive radio and television programmes aimed at developing collaborative problem solving and mutual understanding.
- International broadcasters such as Voice of America, BBC World Service, Deutsche Welle, Al Jazeera and France 24 seek to ensure the free flow of information across national borders and promote cross-cultural understanding between the target country and the broadcasting country.
- Tech-oriented organizations such as Frontline SMS and Ushahidi, which use new tools for communication (primarily SMS texting) to promote conflict prevention and peacebuilding. They use horizontal communication flows involving an interchange of sender-receiver roles through crowdsourcing and crowdfunding.

## Challenges

### *Implementation*

A number of challenges are faced in carrying out media/communications interventions to promote peacebuilding/conflict prevention. The role of the media – and specifically their willingness to play a peacebuilding role – is determined in large part by media ownership. State-controlled media have obvious biases towards the government; privately owned media have corporate interests (e.g. dependence on advertising revenue), and owners could be allied to particular political parties/support particular ideologies which they seek to promote through their newspapers, television stations, etc.. A very significant issue is that peace doesn't sell, while violence does: the media see conflict as more 'newsworthy' - 'if it bleeds, it leads' is a common journalistic principle (Bratic & Schirch, 2007: 8). According to Bratic and Schirch (2007: 8), those

running the media tend to favour four values: immediacy, drama, simplicity and ethnocentrism – which make it difficult to use the media for peacebuilding. A further issue can be reluctance by media personnel themselves on the grounds that they should be objective and simply report the news (Bratic & Schirch, 2007).

The media can also have economic constraints, which mean they cannot invest in training staff, carrying out investigations and producing high quality programmes. And the media can face legal, regulatory and other restrictions from government; this increasingly applies to social media as well, with platforms like Facebook and Twitter subject to growing censorship (Betz & Williams, 2017: 8). Finally, the effectiveness of media/communications interventions can be limited by lack of media outreach, e.g. due to limited internet connectivity, lack of literacy (Betz & Williams, 2017: 10-11).

Arsenault et al (2011: 5) warn that, 'even the best-intentioned media interventions, if poorly designed, may exacerbate tensions and undermine peacebuilding efforts'.

### **Evaluation**

A further major challenge is posed by evaluation: how to judge the impact of media/communications interventions? Betz and Williams (2017: 3) identify some of the difficulties:

- The intended outcomes of communications interventions are not as clearly defined as, for example, health and sanitation programmes, and the direct benefits cannot be measured to the same degree.
- There are no universally agreed quality standards or specifications for what makes 'good communication'.
- Conducting research in conflict poses practical challenges. For example, it can be dangerous for researchers; they have limited access to beneficiaries and they face resource constraints.
- Mass communication can reach many people including the most isolated - that's a benefit and a curse because it makes it difficult to evaluate impact.
- It is difficult to attribute change solely to the media intervention when other factors are likely at play.

Betz (2018: 5) highlights the lack of data showing how many conflicts have been averted and what methods work best because 'metrics of success for conflict prevention are notoriously hard to come by given that the optimal outcome – the absence of conflict – could hypothetically have been achieved without any intervention at all'.

## **3. Findings from evidence reviews**

The challenges faced in evaluation are confirmed by reviews of evidence for the impact of media/communications interventions on conflict.

Schoemaker and Stremmlau (2014) assessed the evidence used in arguments for the role of the media in conflict and post-conflict situations. They focused on two broad areas within the literature: one, the contribution of media in war to peace transitions, and two, the role of new Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) such as the Internet and mobile phones.

They found serious gaps, with the majority of evidence located in 'grey literature' or policy documents. They concluded (Schoemaker & Stremlau, 2014: 191):

Within the existing literature, there is insufficient evidence to support the vast and ambitious claims about the role of the media and technology in contexts of violent conflict and transition for informing, influencing political choice and the broader empowerment of end-users. It is not that these claims are untrue, but that they are unproven.

Gagliardone et al (2015) reviewed and compared literature on the role of ICTs in state-building and peacebuilding in Africa, with a particular focus on Somalia, Kenya, and Ethiopia. They examined whether claims of the transformative power of ICTs were backed by evidence and whether local knowledge was taken into consideration by ICT-based initiatives. They found that empirical evidence on the successful use of ICTs to promote peacebuilding and state-building was thin. The literature examined was found to exhibit a simplistic assumption that ICTs would drive democratic development without sufficient consideration of how ICTs were actually used by the public (Rohwerder, 2015: 7). The evidence on the role of ICTs in peacebuilding efforts was sparse. The majority of the documents surveyed supported the potential of ICTs to promote peace but tended to mainly provide descriptions of how the technologies were or might be used, with little evidence of actual impact (Rohwerder, 2015: 7).

A 2016 Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA) commissioned by DFID looked at a range of interventions to prevent or mitigate armed violence in developing and middle-income countries (Cramer et al, 2016). As well as interventions focused on economic development, alternative dispute resolution, governance and so on, the REA looked at media and communications interventions. It found no overall consistent body of evidence on media and communication. The most substantial body of evidence in the 12 studies identified addressed the impact of radio (and TV) programming on peace-sustaining inter-group attitudes. The findings suggest that radio, TV programming and digital media can positively affect people's attitudes towards 'others'. 'However, the link from attitudes to (violent or peaceable) behaviour is left unexplored in this literature and it is unclear how meaningful changes in attitudes are for the mitigation and prevention of conflict and whether such changes are durable, or can be readily reversed if conflict returns' (Cramer et al, 2016: 38).

## 4. Examples of initiatives from Africa

### Kenya

The differing roles of the media – inciting violence or preventing conflict – was exemplified by the 2007 and 2013 elections in Kenya respectively.

During the build-up to the 2007 elections in Kenya, a consortium of private media owners ran a campaign with the title 'Give us back our country' in an attempt to mobilise the Kenyan populace. Although it was basically supposed to be a campaign aimed at protesting against what was at that time deemed state inaction, it ended up (unintentionally) pitching the public against the government (Adebayo, 2015). Soon afterwards, headlines from leading Kenyan newspapers created a sense of hopelessness in the Kenyan people, and gave the impression that the nation had reached a boiling point. A classic example was the recurring headline "Kenya Burns" on the front page of the *Standard* for the first two weeks of January 2008 (Adebayo, 2015). Radio stations, in particular the vernacular radio stations, overtly broadcast hate messages similar to those used during the Rwandan genocide. For example, Kameme and Inooro, two Kikuyu

stations, were accused of playing songs that slandered the opposition leader Raila Odinga and his Orange Democratic Movement (ODM), referring to them as “beasts from the west”, while a Luo station, Radio Lake Victoria, played a song in which the government was referred to as a leadership of baboons (Adebayo, 2015). Media reporting throughout the electoral process (run-up, voting and post-election) was highly subjective and polarised the public along ethnic lines. This had significant negative effects. The death toll from the violence was estimated at around 1,300, while the resultant violence after the declaration of the election result left about 600 000 people displaced across the country (Adebayo, 2015). Shocked by the violence, the mainstream media started working to promote peace as early as January 2008 (Maine & Onkware, 2018).

This continued in the 2013 elections, which saw a major shift in the way the Kenyan media reported on the electoral process. ‘The Kenyan media’s behaviour during the 2013 elections was characterised by a determination across the media sector to support peaceful elections’ (Deane, 2018: 18). One factor in this was the conduct of several peace journalism training and retraining programmes for journalists in Kenya, in a bid to forestall a recurrence of the unfortunate violence that engulfed the country in 2008. For example, the Peace Journalism Foundation (PJF), an East African-based peace media NGO with the aim of creating a peaceful society through media, conducted training for Kenyan journalists in the weeks and months leading up to the elections (Adebayo, 2015).

Given that some vernacular radio programmes were responsible for hate speech, which incited the public into violence in the previous election, one of the focus areas of the training included training presenters on how to take charge of phone-in programmes on the radio, as well as with in-studio guests, to avoid public incitement and/or the spread of hate speech. Print journalists, on the other hand, were trained on the need for vigilance regarding the content of their news, so that they do not unintentionally incite the public into violence. In all, more than 200 journalists in hotspots most prone to violence were trained by the Media Council of Kenya, in collaboration with various stakeholders.

Print and broadcast media groups organized peace intervention programmes such as Mobile peace caravans, Kikuyu Elders, Kamba Elders and Luo Elders radio talk programmes, an initiative by radio station Pamoja FM aimed at calming violence (Maine & Onkware, 2018: 659). A number of campaigns promoting peace were run in the years before the 2013 election (Maine & Onkware, 2018: 659 & 678):

- The ‘White Ribbon Peace Campaign’, an initiative by female journalists;
- The “I have no tribe; I am Kenyan” campaign to re-unite Kenyans by humanizing their rivals. In this campaign, the media broadcast religious leaders, political leaders, rival, men and women, young and old; people of every diversity coming together to stand against violence and disunity.
- Along the same lines was the campaign dubbed, *Mkenya mwenye nchi sio mwananchi* translated from Swahili to English as, “A Kenyan who owns the country, not a child of the country”. *Mwananchi* is the Swahili word for citizen while *Mwana* is the Swahili word for child. Therefore, through creative wordplay, the campaign was able to provoke Kenyans to take accountability for their country, thus fostering a feeling of loyalty and unity;
- The above campaign was the first part of a four-phase campaign aimed at peacebuilding before the 2013 presidential elections. The second phase was dubbed *Mkenya Daima* (‘Forever Kenyan’), aimed at dealing with the negative conditions that facilitated the unrest in 2007. Phase three was the ‘Rights Come with Responsibilities’ campaign where the

media played both educative and cautionary roles educating Kenyans on their rights whilst warning them of the consequences of negligence of the law. The final phase 'Conflict Mitigation' ran concurrently with phase three and focused on conflict prone areas with the hope of resolving existing disputes before the elections.

While the 2013 general election in Kenya was not problem-free, it was a marked improvement on the 2007 election, which was marred by violence. The media, a major perpetrator of the 2008 post-election violence, played a more responsible role in 2013 by mobilising and sensitising the public towards peace and non-violence (Adebayo, 2015). One factor in this was the effective training of journalists on peace journalism reportage (Adebayo, 2015).<sup>2</sup> The chair of the Independent Electoral Boundaries Commission, Isack Hasan, lauded the media's role when he announced the results, saying: 'If there was ever a time we needed a partner to moderate the rising temperatures, this was it and the local media came through in a special way' (cited in Deane, 2018: 18).

## Nigeria

### ***Governance radio programmes<sup>3</sup>***

An initiative funded by DFID and implemented by BBC Media Action entailed four weekly radio programmes being broadcast on over 190 radio stations in Nigeria in English, Pidgin and Hausa, between 2012 and 2016. The two debate programmes and two dramas collectively aimed to contribute to enabling more accountable state-society relations, to make societies more resilient to conflict and to empower people to participate in public dialogue and hold their leaders to account. TV Public Service Announcements (PSAs) were broadcast in the run up to the 2015 elections, encouraging Nigerians to go out and vote without engaging in violence. The work was informed by three representative quantitative surveys and nine qualitative studies with audiences, governance and media experts, as well as with partner radio stations to evaluate the impact of the project. In total, it spoke to over 12,000 Nigerians.

Cumulatively the programmes reached an estimated 64.6 million people. The research found the debate and discussion programmes were successful at enabling people to question officials directly and audiences appreciated hearing a diverse range of views and opinions. The dramas were effective at role modelling how people could resolve conflicts, question officials and participate in civic life. Their storylines helped ordinary people and leaders understand their rights and responsibilities and how the democratic processes work by showcasing scenarios people could relate to. People who were exposed to these factual and drama outputs knew more, discussed more and participated in politics more, even when controlling for other factors that may influence these outcomes (such as age, income, education and interest in politics).

However, an expert panel mentioned a number of factors that prevented citizens from holding leaders to account including fear, low expectations of response, lack of structures that enabled people to do so, lack of trust in the law and corruption. The project's training, mentoring and capacity-building activities provided valuable production and editorial skills to broadcast partners

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<sup>2</sup> Other factors were also involved: the Kenyan government's response to the 2007/8 violence was substantial, including passing new legislation making hate speech a crime and ensuring that all mobile phone users had to register before getting a Sim card (viral hate text messaging was also a feature in the 2008 violence) (Deane, 2018: 18).

<sup>3</sup> This write-up is taken from Betz and Williams, 2017: 14.

that had little or none, enabling them to produce and broadcast trustworthy and engaging governance programming.

### ***Media training in run up to 2015 general elections<sup>4</sup>***

Elections in Nigeria in recent years have been marked by violence. Around 800 people were killed in election-related violence in the 2011 elections. The 2015 election was one of the closest in the country's history, with observers characterising it as a two-horse race between the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) and the All Progressives Congress (APC). Prior to the 2015 election several peace journalism trainings were conducted with journalists across the country, to prevent recurrence of the electoral violence seen in 2011. In the north-central state of Kwara, for example, 40 journalists from both print and electronic media were trained and equipped with skills for conflict-sensitive reporting of elections. The training was funded by the peacebuilding programme of the Durban University of Technology. The training had a significant impact: the media played a huge role in sensitising the public on the need to eschew violence and embrace peace. In Kwara state, as in most of the country's 36 states, messages calling on people to vote in a non-violent manner, were aired in local dialects. The media training contributed to ensuring that the 2015 elections were largely non-violent.

### ***Nigeria Stability and Reconciliation Programme (NSRP)***

The Nigeria Stability and Reconciliation Programme (NSRP) was a five-year (2012-17) programme funded by DFID, and implemented by a consortium headed by the British Council. NSRP's objective was to conflict sensitise the Nigerian media and increase opportunities for the public to contribute to governance and peacebuilding.

Activities under the programme included (NSRP, 2014: 2):

- Media mapping in target states, to better understand how local grievances and violent conflict are reflected in the media, to analyse how citizens source and consume media information, and the use of social media. The study informed the design of other work under the programme.
- Conflict-sensitive communications training for journalists;
- Media relations training of key security agencies and senior government officials, with the aim of improving relations between these organisations and the media to allow for greater co-operation in reporting violent conflict in the country.
- Mentoring media houses – training of senior journalists, mostly editors, to act as in-house mentors and cascade conflict-sensitive reporting techniques and content in their respective media houses.
- Provision of technical equipment to support the media's interactive programming and audience engagement (e.g. talk shows, phone-in programmes, social media), with the aim of increasing the participation of marginalised populations (including women and girls) in debates and advocacy around conflict and its causes.
- Measuring change in conflict-sensitive reporting (media monitoring);
- Development of an online postgraduate course in conflict-sensitive communications.

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<sup>4</sup> This write-up is based on Adebayo, 2015.

The final evaluation of the programme, conducted in 2017, focused on how the programme: a) strengthened social institutions (the peace architecture) working to resolve and mediate conflict; b) involved broader society including marginalised communities (particularly women and youth) in conflict resolution; and c) influenced policy and practice in managing conflict. (WYG & UKAID, 2017: x).

The evaluation found a large reduction in perceived violence in the programme target areas during the life of the programme, as well as tangible strengthening of the peace architecture as a result of NSRP activity (WYG & UKAID, 2017: xi). However, it found limited evidence on how far these were connected, and what contribution NSRP may or may not have made through strengthening social institutions working to resolve and mediate conflict.

NSRP sought to broaden participation (notably by women and youth) in peacebuilding, and, as a result, improve the functioning of peacebuilding mechanisms. The evaluation found that although NSRP supported platforms had: a) provided an effective forum for different stakeholder groups (both state and non-state) to come together, and b) been effective in facilitating democratic dialogue, evidence of resulting behaviour changes amongst platform participants was limited, and improved societal participation beyond the NSRP supported platforms was not evident (WYG & UKAID, 2017: xii).

NSRP worked at the local government authority, state and federal levels to increase the capacity of its platforms, initiatives, interventions and society more broadly to influence key actors/institutions in the conflict arena and to bring about positive changes in policy and practice, which would result in enhanced stability and reduced violence. The evaluation found that NSRP had successfully influenced policy or practice change 38 times, but it was unclear to what extent positive influence was sustainable (WYG & UKAID, 2017: xiii).

Key recommendations of the evaluation for future peacebuilding programmes included the need for strengthened monitoring and evaluation; the need for real time learning and for programmes to adapt as a result of changes in context and learning; and for more focus to be placed on legacy and sustainability.

## Burundi

### ***Studio Ijambo***<sup>5</sup>

Responding to the need for balanced and anti-inflammatory broadcasting to counter 'hate radio' in the Great Lakes region, Studio Ijambo was established by Search for Common Ground (SFCG) in Burundi in March 1995. Studio Ijambo is an ethnically balanced team of journalists producing radio programmes to promote dialogue, peace, and reconciliation. The programmes examine all sides of the conflict and highlight the points that can unite, rather than divide Burundians. In addition to its current affairs and news programs, Studio Ijambo produces a wide mix of documentaries, radio drama, discussion, and youth programs.

Examples of these programmes include:

- *Heroes*, which is a documentary highlighting the stories of people who risked their lives to save people from another ethnic group. It resulted in a phone-in follow-up programme

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<sup>5</sup> This write-up is based on Bratic, 2008: 494-497, and SFCG, n.d.: 1.

where listeners contributed their personal stories of others who had helped them during the violent conflict. There were even many phone calls from audience members who had participated in the killings between 1993 and 1996, often expressing regret about what they had done;

- *Iteka; N'Ijambo*, a current-affairs programme focusing on human rights issues;
- *Our Neighbours, Our Family*, a soap opera set in one of the rural hill areas depicting the complexities of conflict through the relationship of two neighbouring families, one Hutu and one Tutsi. Their living experiences are dramatized in a series of episodes that depict the complexities of the relationships between these families due to the conflict.
- A programme dealing with the complex issues of land and repatriation of hundreds of thousands of refugees;
- A programme exploring subjects related to justice in the quest for reconciliation;
- Programmes aimed specifically at youth and children.

Studio Ijambo was set up not to compete with local stations but rather to supply them with pro-social, peace-oriented media content. It later became a centre for training and support for journalists from the entire region. As a result of the training, the journalists launched a new radio station Radio Isanganiro (Crossroads Radio) that features Studio Ijambo programming.

**Media Channels** - Because television broadcasting is in its infancy in most of the regions, radio is indisputably the primary choice of most peace-oriented media projects in Africa. It is still the central source of information for most of the African continent. In comparison to newspapers, radio overcomes the problems of low literacy rates, distribution, language diversity and expense. It is relatively inexpensive to operate and it does not require as much equipment as a television station.

**Audience** - Women and children have been one of the most vulnerable groups affected by conflicts and violence. As non-combatants, women are a group in conflict that is stripped of influence, thus making them victims of violence and oppression. Peace-oriented media efforts therefore aim to empower women to take a more active role during peacebuilding. Studio Ijambo addressed this by selecting a media format – the soap opera – which was likely to appeal to women. In addition, the wars in Burundi (and Rwanda) have been especially cruel to children, who were often recruited and forced to join the armed forces. Hence Studio Ijambo attempted to reach children and the youth population through its programming.

**Effects** - Information on the effects of Studio Ijambo programmes is both anecdotal and empirically generated:

- SFCG reported that 12 million people in the Great Lakes region listened to Studio Ijambo programmes and that 85% of the population in the region had access to radios. fewer than 20% of the audience claimed not to listen to the programmes.
- More specifically, the audience seems to have really appreciated the radio soaps. Based on three surveys conducted since 1999, between 80 and 90% of the population listened to the drama *Our Neighbours, Ourselves* regularly.
- In Burundi, Studio Ijambo asked its listeners about the messages they received from listening to the programmes. 63% mentioned 'reconciliation', while 53% said 'peace'. Studio Ijambo's youth programme *Sangwe* was listened to by a majority of children and youth in Burundi, and 64% of those who listened to it indicated that they thought that it was 'very successful in bringing Burundi youth together'.

- When researchers asked the Burundian people to identify the programmes that helped them change or modify their attitude or behaviour toward the other ethnic group, those that were mentioned most frequently were the radio drama *Our Neighbours*, *Ourselves* and the magazine show *Heroes*. 82% of Burundians who listened to the dramas believed that these particular programmes helped in promoting peace and reconciliation.
- Apart from the obvious impact on the audience, many media projects have claimed an impact on social institutions and public figures. Though evidence of such a relationship is rather anecdotal, often times, attention paid to a particular problem raised in a broadcast alerted the institutions responsible and frequently led to a positive change of direction. One such example was Studio Ijambo's reporting on the killing of refugees in 1997. This later prompted the Voice of America to pick up the story, which indirectly contributed to the closing of the camps in 1998.
- Additional evidence of Studio Ijambo's effectiveness is found in the creation of three comparable studios in other conflict sites (i.e. Studio Moris Hamutuk in East Timor and Talking Drum Studios in both Liberia and Sierra Leone).

## Rwanda

### **Radio soap opera**

In post-genocide Rwanda, a radio soap opera - *Musekweya* ('New Dawn') - was introduced, to teach listeners about the roots of violence, the importance of independent thought, and the dangers of excessive deference to authority (Paluck & Green, 2009). This radio programme was tested in a randomised experiment to assess whether one year after the radio programme began changes could be observed in listeners' deference to authority, willingness to dissent, and collaborative participation in dispute resolution. Changes in individual attitudes, perceived community norms, and deliberative behaviours were assessed using closed-ended interviews, focus group discussions, role-play exercises, and measures of collective decision making.

The study found that the mass media programme was sufficient to shift perceived norms of open expression and local responsibility for community problems, as well as actual open expression and dissent about sensitive community issues such as trust and resource distribution. However, attitudes toward interaction across social lines were resistant to change. The authors concluded that personal convictions about social group boundaries were more difficult to change but argued that personal convictions were less important for behaviour than social and political norms (Paluck & Green, 2009).

## 5. Examples of initiatives from other parts of the world

### **Bosnia<sup>6</sup>**

In 1995 the Dayton Peace Agreement ended the Bosnian civil war between Bosnians, Serbs and Croats by instituting a provisional, internationally-run governing body in charge of peace implementation (the Office of the High Representative, OHR). One of OHR's initial assessments of the Bosnian conflict was that all three sides in the conflict utilized radio and television

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<sup>6</sup> This write-up is based on Bratic, 2008: 19-23.

broadcasting to further their conflict goals and demonize their opponents. Therefore, the OHR decided that the Bosnian media must be given a prominent role and a responsibility to facilitate reconciliation. As a result, a number of small and large-scale media projects were undertaken.

A new national television (Open Broadcast Network, OBN) and radio network (Free Exchange Radio Network, FERN) were created in 1996. From the beginning these stations were able to provide reliable post-conflict coverage. However, they never managed to compete with the popularity of the nationalistic broadcasters who never ceased with their conflict-inciting reporting. Because the election of 1996 brought no significant change in the power structure, more media projects were employed in order to reduce political tensions. One project was a collaboration between the OHR and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) that resulted in an extensive media campaign involving multiple media formats and channels.

At the time, the issues of refugee repatriation and property return were considered to be the major obstacle to peace: the peaceful transformation could not be achieved without the proper and complete return of the population to their homes and properties. Therefore, a three-part campaign was launched to address the issues with refugees returning to Bosnia. The three phases of the campaign were:

- *Dosta je* (It's enough)- calls for an end to the lawlessness;
- *Postovanje* (Respect) - the second phase asked that the right of repatriation be respected;
- *Koliko jos* (How Long) – in the final phase a TV documentary series, 35 minute long stories about people affected by the displacement, was broadcast nationally in prime time on public television channels for several months.

**Media channels:** In order to ensure successful penetration of its message, the OHR had passed a broadcasting regulation that all television and radio stations were obliged to give a certain amount of time to the media campaign. Short public service announcements 21 (PSA) on radio and TV were launched in 1999, and run during national primetime. Soon after, large billboards, posters, print ads, leaflets as well as some non-traditional communication strategies (specially designed folders, matches and diskette holders) were distributed across Bosnia. Most original were the sugar packets served in the coffee shops imprinted with the logo of the '*Postovanje/Respect*' campaign. Given the cultural significance of coffee shops and their importance in the public life of Bosnian society such promotion was a very effective way of reaching the audience.

**Audience:** The media campaign initially targeted refugees who needed to understand that a safe return to their home was possible. The secondary audience was the greater public that needed to be reminded about the legal entitlement of the refugees' personal property, despite the long period of unlawful mass expulsions.

**Effects:** Mareco Index, a commercial public opinion research agency, conducted the evaluation research of the campaign. The first phase of the campaign '*Postovanje*' was seen or heard by 72% of people while 54% saw or heard its follow-up '*Dosta je*.' The third phase, the TV series was watched by 37% of Bosnians. The results also confirmed significant recognition for the main messages and outstanding public awareness in regards to the campaign. 91% of the Bosnian audience saw the campaign '*Postovanje*' (Respect) on television. More people saw the campaign on television than in any other form: TV 90%, radio 61%, posters 53%, billboards 65%, newspapers 56%, sugar packets 16%, leaflets and posters 30%. The strong numbers for the non-broadcasting media are noteworthy.

In addition, the audience research showed that the messages came across very clearly. A majority of the audience understood the messages of the first phase. However, not all the respondents were excited about the design of the message: 60% of respondents neither liked nor disliked the message; but almost 90% of the audience found the campaign to be accurate, useful and fair. The four main goals intended to be communicated by the 'Dosta je' campaign were among the top five interpretations by the audience and the four intended goals of the TV series 'Koliko Jos' were also the top four interpretations of the audience. The two primary goals - to raise awareness of and to provoke thought on the issue - resonated with 59% and 32% of the audience respectively.

## Nepal<sup>7</sup>

Nepal is one of the world's poorest countries and continues to deal with the legacy of its decade long civil war; post-conflict recovery was made harder by the 2015 earthquake which killed thousands and caused severe damage to infrastructure. A number of media assistance programmes have been implemented in Nepal, and the country thus provides a useful overview of how media can be used in conflict prevention. The programmes are listed below by implementing/funding agency:

- Search for Common Ground (2016) – *Pahunch* is a reality show, which features eight contestants from all walks of life who, with the mentorship of Nepali police officers, solve fictional cases of homicide, burglary, domestic violence, human trafficking, and more. The objective is to raise awareness of the challenges faced by the security forces and establish a sense of trust between police and communities. *Pahunch* is likely to serve a secondary role as peace promoter by virtue of providing information and building bridges.
- Nepal International Media Partnership (2015) - has campaigned for media freedom, the right to information and freedom of expression in Nepal since 2005 when the country's civil war was at its peak. Organizations taking part in a 2015 fact-finding and advocacy mission were: AMARC (World Association of Community Broadcasters), ARTICLE 19, Centre for Law and Democracy, Committee to Protect Journalists, International Federation of Journalists, International Media Support, Open Society Foundations, Reporters Without Borders, UNESCO.
- Internews (2014) – Provided media support related to elections. It helped the media better understand election-related issues and strengthened the ability of radio (the most widely used type of media) to facilitate debates on the opinion poll results, ultimately increasing citizen participation in the electoral process. Activities included national opinion polls, radio and web discussions on poll findings, and data literacy training for journalists.
- International Media Support (IMS) (2015) – Supported post-earthquake accountability reporting and capacity building. Journalists from both private and community radio stations were trained in accountability reporting and then reported on post-earthquake reconstruction efforts. Included production of a radio programme, *Jamani*, which focused on post-quake accountability issues.
- BBC Media Action (2007-present) – Produce a debate weekly radio and TV governance debate program (*Sajha Sawal*) to encourage dialogue and debate between communities and their leaders.

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<sup>7</sup> All information for this section came from Betz, 2018: 22-24.

Some of these initiatives and activities, including the IMS and BBC Media Action projects, have shown success in bringing about change regarding governance and accountability issues.

A 2015 BBC Media Action national survey found 89% of audience members agreed that the debate programme *Sajha Sawal*, “makes government officials react to the needs of ordinary citizens” and more than 90% agreed it provided opportunities for marginalized communities to raise questions. Previous research of the same programme showed high engagement and the majority of listeners (75%) and viewers (64%) watched or listened to the programme regularly (at least twice a month) and more than half of the audience had discussed the programme with others. In addition, the survey found there was increased civic knowledge, political engagement and action - attributed to the programme. Those exposed to the programme were more likely to report that it was their right to have a say in how the country was run (86% of those exposed agreed, compared to 65% of non-exposed; 69% intended to vote in the next general election compared to 59% who had not seen or heard the programme).

An assessment of the IMS project, the radio programme *Jamani*, found evidence of impact in the most seriously affected districts. For example, a school in one affected district was still closed three months after the quake. After travelling one day by car and one day by foot, the reporter arrived on the scene, interviewed those affected and involved and aired the story. One week after the segment aired, the school reopened. Another story was produced about people living on what was deemed unsafe land. One day after the broadcast, the district authorities moved the people to a safe place. Producers and reporters involved in the programme praised its important role in holding officials accountable. One producer said: “it’s no longer just a radio programme, it’s like a social responsibility”.

These initiatives show that the media is a critical part of any governance (and thus conflict prevention) strategy. BBC Media Action, the Nepal International Media Partnership and IMS’ efforts go back, in some cases, more than ten years. This suggests efforts such as these should be sustained if there is to be any likelihood of impact.

## 6. Lessons

### Recommendations for development practitioners

Betz and Williams (2017: 14-16) and Betz (2018: 25-27) make a number of recommendations for development practitioners devising and implementing media and conflict interventions:

**Include the role of media in context and conflict analysis** – Context is critical: there must be solid analysis of the state and of the media sector. There is a need to take a holistic view of the contextual, economic, political, ownership and capacity environment of the media sector as well as the sector’s role and relationship with the system at large. Only with such an analysis can there be an understanding of how the media and individual content producers operate in the said environment, which can then lead to a better understanding of how change may be addressed.

**Consider the ‘glocal’ interplay** - Because information today is both hyper-local yet global in reach, development practitioners should bear in mind both global media networks and audiences as well as local information systems and audiences and how, if in fact they do, they interact. When planning for conflict prevention interventions in contexts that appear as local only policymakers and implementers should not ignore the global and regional aspects and potential implications.

**All content producers must know and understand their audience** - What content do people consider relevant and why? What do they produce and with whom do they share or engage? It is important to understand them and engage responsibly with them to gain their trust. Investment is needed in audience research.

**Give voice to all people – including the marginalised and excluded - from the outset** -

Consider how the media can include excluded voices through citizen reporting, radio or video diaries, town hall broadcasts and call-ins. Women and young people are especially important to involve and are often excluded. Programming that addresses migration, violent extremism and other aspects that may be related to conflict should seek out those unheard voices.

**Promote regulatory reform as part of peace settlements and their implementation.** Media regulation has to be part of the political settlement in any fragile state. The regulatory framework needs to include rules for proportionate political coverage of parties and mechanisms for including minority political and cultural interests. It must also include transparent guidelines for setting licences for stations under terms that allow all media actors – even small ones – to participate.

**Ensure safety of media workers** - None of this work can be pursued if media workers are unable to work in safety without being threatened, harassed or killed. Practitioners should be proactive with regard to safety and should address this early in the conflict process and not at the height of a conflict. Press freedom groups and international news organisations have worked together and identified the necessary standards for media safety. These include training in first aid and hostile environments, securing medical insurance for conflict zones or areas of infectious disease, and obtaining protective gear such as bulletproof vests and helmets.

**Do no harm** - The media have the potential to foment violence and spread hatred so all interventions should be implemented with this in mind and with attention to the context, the media sub-system and the interplay between the two. Interventions must be very carefully monitored and adjusted as necessary.

**Build linkages with other institutions** - Much of the work with media in conflict management to date has focused on the media sector itself rather than examining its interplay with other sub-systems and the greater system overall. It is crucial to build key linkages between peacebuilding and state-building institutions and media institutions, thereby supporting more effective media development in post-conflict environments. For example, media-military dialogues can be useful for building trust and understanding between those two sectors and beyond to the communities they serve.

Betz and Williams (2017: 17) have also prepared a very useful list of ‘what doesn’t work’:

- Media that reflects divisions rather than commonalities;
- Programmes that are inaccurate, one-sided, inflammatory and untrustworthy;
- Ill-timed interventions that don’t take account of the political, social and media context;
- Interventions that are platform or technology-centric rather than tailored specifically to the needs of the audience;
- Interventions that put development goals over audience engagement;
- Top-down interventions that fail to allow a diversity of voices – including the most marginalized - to be heard from the outset;
- Local interventions that don’t take account of their global reach.

## Need for more research

There is a significant lack of evidence that shows causal impact of media interventions (Betz & Williams, 2017: 16). Despite their importance, conducting rigorous impact evaluations continues to be a challenge for many development and peacebuilding programmes. In some cases this is due to resources, in others a lack of foresight while others accept the difficulties of conducting such evaluations in fragile contexts. However, it is critical that these are carried out.

Particular aspects on which research is needed include (Schoemaker & Stremlau, 2014: 192-193; Cramer et al, 2016: 40-41):

- Changes over time and different contexts - There is a clear need for more, and more comparative, research. Further research needs to be carefully designed to study comparatively, and over time, the contribution of media interventions in order to try to show more about the extent to which effects are genuine and the conditions under which interventions 'work' and trump countervailing variables. Understanding change over time is important. Most studies are snapshots or case studies of particular incidences – a single popular uprising, the relationship between media and specific political events. Research over longer periods of time provide compelling insights that studies of moments are unable to provide.
- Other factors and links - There is little knowledge thus far on the 'resilience' factors that may intervene to prevent individuals from being swayed by larger scale dynamics of armed violence. And the link between individual behaviour and collective violence is a difficult one to probe empirically. This is another example where more longitudinal research may help. It is important to show how media/communications interventions influence attitudes and how this influences behaviour and actions at individual and collective level.
- Forms of communication - There is a need for more rigorous and in-depth evidence of the role that different kinds of information and different ways of communicating play in broader processes of change over a sustained period. The devil of media-programming effectiveness is likely to be in the detail of content, presenters, and presentation, and their relationship to highly specific contextual conflict dynamics.
- Hybrid forms of governance - There is almost no evidence of the role that media and technology play in hybrid spaces of governance. Where governance is characterized by an absent state and interactions between formal and informal systems of governance, the role for media and technology in political choice and end user voice cannot be assumed to be the same as in stable political environments.
- Wider geographic scope - Many of the studies of effectiveness of radio, TV, and digital media interventions are in Africa, with very few from elsewhere. Research is needed on other geographical contexts.

The literature suggests consideration of the wider context and use of both qualitative and quantitative research methods leads to the most in-depth understanding of the role media and communication plays (Schoemaker & Stremlau, 2014: 193)

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## Key websites

- Search for Common Ground: [www.sfcg.org](http://www.sfcg.org)
- Media for Peacebuilding: [mediaforpeacebuilding.com](http://mediaforpeacebuilding.com)
- Frontline SMS: [www.frontlinesms.com](http://www.frontlinesms.com)

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## About this report

*This report is based on six days of desk-based research. The K4D research helpdesk provides rapid syntheses of a selection of recent relevant literature and international expert thinking in response to specific questions relating to international development. For any enquiries, contact [helpdesk@k4d.info](mailto:helpdesk@k4d.info).*

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