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Broadcasting Peace: An Analysis of Local Media Post-Conflict Peacebuilding Projects in Rwanda and Bosnia

Devon E. A. Curtis

Department of International Relations, London School of Economics
Department of Political Science, McGill University, Montréal

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Broadcasting Peace: An Analysis of Local Media Post-Conflict Peacebuilding Projects in Rwanda and Bosnia

Devon E. A. Curtis

ABSTRACT

This paper explores the possibilities and challenges of local media to contribute to post-conflict peacebuilding. Many donors are involved in local media post-conflict peacebuilding projects, but there has been relatively little attempt to situate these activities into an overall peacebuilding framework, or to systematically evaluate their success. This paper looks at some of the literature on local media and development to uncover the possibilities for local media for peacebuilding, but argues that distinct peacebuilding objectives must be considered in the designing of local media peacebuilding projects. The paper develops a framework for understanding how different kinds of local media activities can affect peacebuilding processes, yet it also highlights the fact that more sophisticated evaluation tools need to be developed to measure the peacebuilding impact of all kinds of local media projects. Through the analysis of several local media projects in Rwanda and Bosnia, the paper supports the general notion that local media projects can contribute to peacebuilding, but shows that success is by no means guaranteed or absolute.

Cet article explore les défis auxquels sont confrontées les presses locales qui souhaitent contribuer à bâtir la paix dans les zones d’après guerre. D’après l’auteur, bien de donateurs s’engagent dans les projets de paix auxquels contribuent les presses locales, sans vraiment situer ceux-ci dans leurs contextes ou sans en faire une évaluation. À travers une revue de la littérature des relations qui existent entre la presse locale et le développement, l’auteur montre que bien qu’elle ait du potentiel à bâtir la paix, cette presse devrait formuler des objectifs distincts dans ses projets. Un cadre est présenté pour nous aider à concevoir comment les activités de la presse locale peuvent influencer le processus de la paix, bien que des mesures d’évaluation plus sophistiquées soient souhaitables. En utilisant les cas de la presse au Rwanda et en Bosnie, l’auteur démontre que malgré son potentiel à édifier la paix, le succès de cette presse ne reste pas assuré.

Devon E. A. Curtis is a PhD candidate at the Department of International Relations, London School of Economics. At the time of writing this article, she was a graduate student at the Department of Political Science, McGill University, Montréal. She is thankful to Professor Rex Brynen and two anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments and suggestions.

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INTRODUCTION

Peacebuilding has recently become a more central element of the foreign aid strategies of many donor agencies and national governments. As part of this focus on peacebuilding, many donors are supporting local media peacebuilding projects. Yet while there seems to be a general consensus that local media projects constitute an effective means of contributing to peacebuilding, there is a relative absence of work that explains why this is the case or that outlines the explicit linkages between local media and peacebuilding. Similarly, there have been few attempts to measure the success of these kinds of projects.

There are two media research streams that are particularly relevant to the analysis of media and peacebuilding. The first is research on media and conflict. Some donors justify their local media and peacebuilding programmes by referring to the importance of media in times of conflict. Since media can play a crucial role in mobilising people and sustaining conflict, perhaps more balanced local media can serve as a tool to promote peace in war-torn divided societies. Secondly, peacebuilding donors sometimes look at the success of local media and development to justify their programmes. Local media projects can be instrumental in garnering support for development initiatives and contributing to participatory, sustainable development, and if these projects are good for development, perhaps they are also good for peacebuilding.

The importance of local media in conflict and the success of certain media activities in supporting development give some insights as to some of the ways in which local media can contribute to peacebuilding. Nonetheless, peacebuilding should be recognized as a separate sphere of donor activity with its own set of objectives and criterion for success. This essay briefly looks at some of the theories of local media and development, and then discusses the specific objectives and challenges of peacebuilding.

There is a wide range of donor activities that can be classified as local media post-conflict peacebuilding activities. In order to discuss the possibilities and challenges of using local media to contribute to peacebuilding, it is helpful to disaggregate various types of local media activities that can occur in post-conflict environments. For instance, donors may engage in activities that are intended to improve the immediate media environment. These actions may include measures taken against existing media in order to establish an environment that is conducive to peace such as forcefully eliminating or banning hateful and divisive media. It may also include measures to increase security for journalists. Second, donors may support local media projects with a view to providing information about peacebuilding activities and non-governmental organization (NGO) projects, or other general information. Third, there are local media projects that play a pro-active role in directly addressing societal
reconciliation and dialogue. Fourth, there are projects to assist in longer-term peacebuilding and institution-building, such as establishing training schools for journalists, encouraging indigenous media-focused NGOs, and establishing communications policies that will help foster the proliferation of different views and ideas.

Existing evaluation measures for projects in all four categories are weak. The rapid expansion of various types of local media peacebuilding projects has not been accompanied by a parallel sophistication in evaluation. Part of the problem may relate to some of the obscurities in the very notion of peacebuilding. Yet even when the objectives of peacebuilding are more clearly defined, it is difficult to develop clear success indicators for local media projects. There is sometimes a dilemma between tangible indicators and less tangible peacebuilding objectives such as the promotion of a culture of peace or contribution to inter-ethnic harmony, and many donors have failed to develop comprehensive evaluation tools for local media peacebuilding projects.

Nonetheless, based on basic indicators and anecdotal evidence, local media peacebuilding projects from all four categories in Rwanda and Bosnia show that local media can effectively contribute to peacebuilding goals, though success is by no means guaranteed. Through a discussion of several local media and peacebuilding projects in Rwanda and Bosnia that span the four different categories of post-conflict peacebuilding media activities, this paper shows that some local media projects have succeeded in contributing to peacebuilding while others have not. So while a clear potential does exist, donors must pay very close attention to the design and evaluation of their activities.

CAVEATS

Support for “local media projects” covers a wide spectrum of donor activities such as support for street theatre, puppet shows, newspapers, publishing houses, television, and radio as well as newer information and communications technology such as the Internet. This study, however, will concentrate on local media projects involving television and radio. ¹

Secondly, the discussion of peacebuilding in this paper has been limited to post-conflict peacebuilding. Local media peacebuilding activities can take place before, during and following a conflict, and the role of the media in different conflict and peacebuilding situations will vary. Although there is some overlap, pre-conflict, conflict and post-conflict situations are often characterized

¹. Radio and television were chosen for this study due to their importance in Rwanda and Bosnia. In Rwanda, radio is the most important medium for information, whereas in Bosnia, both television and radio have been enormously important.
by different media activities. In order to focus the paper's discussion on post-conflict situations, it will not address the different types of local media peace-building activities that are commonly seen in these other stages of conflict.

A third methodological question concerns the number and type of local media peacebuilding projects included in this study. This paper does not provide a comprehensive analysis of all donor activities involving media in post-conflict Rwanda and Bosnia. Rather, it looks at a cross-section of projects initiated by different donors, including the United Nations, other multilateral and bilateral donors, and NGOs.

Lastly, this paper looks at the impact of externally-supported local media projects on populations in conflict areas. It will not focus on the impact of media on public opinion or policy-making outside the conflict area, even though this impact may be highly influential.

I. THE ROLE OF LOCAL MEDIA IN CONFLICT AND DEVELOPMENT

Donors who support local media activities in countries emerging from crisis often justify their programmes based on the role of media in conflict and/or the experience of local media projects for development.

A. LOCAL MEDIA AND CONFLICT

The role of media in conflict has been studied extensively across time and across culture. Control over communication is a central tool in the maintenance of social power and domination, since it allows leaders, governments, factions or other social groups to publicize their own definitions and perspectives of reality. The battle over communications is therefore part of larger societal conflicts and inequalities (Melucci, 1996).

During armed conflict, control over media and truth production becomes imperative to attract and maintain support for one's side. Control over media is also important to project one's truth to sub-national, national and international audiences.

Today's conflicts inevitably involve struggles over the control of the media and many recent examples highlight this point. Rebels in eastern Congo began

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2. For a list of media activities in pre-conflict, during-conflict and post-conflict situations, please see Hay, 1999, p. 18-19.

3. The extent of the media's effect on policy and public option in external countries is controversial. Please see Gowing, 1997. See also Rotberg and Weiss, 1996; Minear, Scott and Weiss, 1996; Strobel, 1997, for a discussion of the relationship between international media and humanitarian policy.
their offensive by taking control of several radio stations to criticise Laurent Kabila’s government (Radio France Internationale, 3 Aug 1998). In Spain, the government temporarily suspended Egin-Irratia, a private but pro-ETA radio station. Several days later, two San Sebastien radio stations were attacked by pro-Basque independence groups (BBC World Media, 31 July 1998). In Afghanistan, the Minister for the Prevention of Vice and the Promotion of Virtue banned televisions, VCRs, video tapes, and satellite dishes, saying that these media were “the cause of corruption in this society” (Crosette, 11 July 1998, p. A7). During the recent military coup in Pakistan, army troops climbed over walls to seize the state run Pakistan Television Centre (Yahoo Daily News, 13 October 1999). The huge efforts undertaken by leaders and resistance groups to control and manipulate the media show how important it has become as a tool of warfare and influence.

During conflict, history and information about enemy groups are usually distorted in order to ensure compliance, and the rationale behind using local media for peacebuilding is that a more balanced and accurate media coverage can help eliminate some of the biases that were created or fuelled by the media during conflict. This, in turn, will help rebuild societal cohesion and trust.

B. LOCAL MEDIA AND DEVELOPMENT

The experience of local media development projects can also provide some useful lessons regarding the use of local media for peacebuilding. Ideas about the appropriate role for media in development have changed along with changing theories of development over the past five decades (Bourgault, 1995, chap. 9). Proponents of modernisation theories in the 1960s and 70s saw the mass media as a positive tool for development, (Schramm, 1964; de Sola Pool, 1990, p. 201-4), where elites would initiate development ideas and strategies and diffuse them to the rest of society through media channels (Rogers, 1962). Dependency theorists, on the other hand, argued that modernisation strategies reinforced technological and economic dependence on the West and that mass media reinforced dependency through cultural imperialism (Tudesq, 1995; Sussman and Lent, 1991). Dependency theorists believed that the concept of “free flow of information” should be replaced by the concept of balanced information.

Theorists from both modernisation and dependency schools usually defended strong state control over the media, either to stimulate education and economic development, or to serve as a symbol of independence and national control. Yet by the 1970s and 80s, a new model of development which emphasized sustainability, grassroots participation, and community empowerment was gaining widespread currency (Friedman, 1992).
This participatory development model corresponds to a different type of media project and media policy, whereby media should be free from state control and should facilitate interaction and empowerment at the community level (Bourgault, 1995, p. 230; Dua and Gupta, 1994). Media should be used to help mobilize popular participation in social and economic development. In accordance with these objectives, development donors have funded various community media projects, where community members are the producers, managers and sometimes owners of the media outlet. A large number of these projects have focused on radio, due to widespread illiteracy, strong oral traditions and the lack of alternative media delivery systems in many developing countries (Girard, 1992, p. 4).

II. THE NATURE AND OBJECTIVES OF PEACEBUILDING

These newest models of development which focus on community involvement are the most relevant to the study of local media and peacebuilding. The concept of peacebuilding, however, has not been nearly so widely theorized and debated as the concept of development. According to the Canadian government definition, peacebuilding refers to a broad range of activities and programmes that aim to strengthen the prospects of peace and decrease the likelihood of violent conflict in society (http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/peacebuilding/index-e.asp). Ken Bush adds that peacebuilding entails both short-term humanitarian objectives and longer-term developmental, political, economic and social objectives (Bush, 1996, p. 76). In his definition of peacebuilding, Bush also emphasizes the importance of indigenous actors.

As in development, therefore, successful peacebuilding requires an emphasis on local populations, including a knowledge of the local context and culture in which the donor is operating, and significant indigenous participation. Similarly, the importance of radio as the most appropriate medium for development activities in some communities is relevant for peacebuilding activities in many regions.

Many of the countries that rank lowest on UNDP's Human Development Index are also those that are currently engaged or emerging from violent conflict. Donors have realized that a successful peacebuilding strategy is needed to lay the foundation for sustainable, equitable development in countries emerging from crisis. Successful peacebuilding will facilitate successful development and, indeed, may be a precondition for development. Nonetheless, the priorities and objectives of peacebuilding and those of development are not iden-
tical; therefore peacebuilding requires somewhat different strategies than long-term development assistance. The overall criterion for the selection of peacebuilding priorities is political and compared to peacebuilding, development projects are longer-term and often overlook the fragile political context (Ball, 1996, p. 49-50). Lessons learned from development experiences are useful for peacebuilding practitioners, especially the importance of local participation and cultural sensitivities. Nevertheless, knowledge of local media in a development context is not sufficient to understand the objectives and opportunities for local media projects in peacebuilding.

Peacebuilding therefore refers to activities that decrease the likelihood of violent conflict. It includes activities that aim to transform the security environment (i.e. demobilisation, reform of police and military structures), the political environment (i.e. human rights projects and public service reform), the economic environment (i.e. infrastructure development projects and financing), and the social environment (i.e. confidence building measures and education) (Weiss-Fagen, 1995). Local media can be involved in all these different categories of peacebuilding activities. Indeed, some donors classify local media as a cross-cutting peacebuilding issue transcending all categories of activities (United Nations, 1996, p. 3).

III. LOCAL MEDIA AND POST-CONFLICT PEACEBUILDING

In almost all post-conflict environments, information is scarce or biased and media structures are unstable. It is in this general media context that donors will engage in local media for peacebuilding projects. There are, however, many different ways in which donors may intervene, and it is useful to distinguish between different types of local media activities for peacebuilding, in order to understand their opportunities and constraints.

5. By challenging established economic, social and political power structures, development is inherently destabilising and can actually be detrimental to peaceful relations. See Coughlan and Samarasinghe, 1991; and Huntington, 1968. Some donor projects that may seem to be good for development may not be good for peacebuilding (Bush, 1998, p. 23).

6. One advantage of using local media for peacebuilding is that compared to many other peacebuilding activities, local media projects are relatively inexpensive. For instance, a complete radio station can be packed into a suitcase and set up in a few hours to transmit on FM to a radius of 30km, for less than $5000 (Adam, January, 1997, p. 29). Television projects can be more expensive, for example $10.5 million was invested in Bosnia’s Open Broadcasting Network (OBN) in 1996, but less ambitious television projects are much less expensive.

7. Any external media intervention for peacebuilding purposes raises a number of ethical and legal issues that will not be discussed here. The legitimacy of supporting non-partisan information in zones of conflict was the topic of a symposium held by the Swiss NGO Fondation Hirondelle in 1998.
There have been some recent attempts to develop frameworks for understanding how media activities can fit into peacebuilding process. This paper proposes a categorization based both on the type of local media activity and the objective of the activity. Firstly, there are donor activities to improve the general immediate media environment in order to enable peacebuilding, such as activities to eliminate hate media and activities to ensure the security of journalists. Secondly, there are media projects that use local media for informational or educational purposes. These projects will inform the population about peacebuilding initiatives undertaken by a range of NGOs and other actors, including political and economic activities. Thirdly, there are media projects with pro-active social reconciliation objectives. These projects aim to transmit values associated with mutual understanding, community conflict resolution, and peaceful co-existence. Lastly, there are media activities associated with longer-term processes, such as the training of journalists, the establishment and support of indigenous media NGOs, the development of open communication policies, and longer-term community development.

The first category is concerned with the general media climate and immediate security threats. The second and third categories are primarily concerned with the message being transmitted by the media outlet. The last category addresses both the medium and the message. Of course, there is some overlap between the four categories and many local media projects, such as programmes to train local journalists, can affect the peacebuilding potential in all four categories.

A. IMPROVING THE IMMEDIATE MEDIA ENVIRONMENT

After a conflict, the media environment is unstable and sometimes dangerous. Some donors believe that preventing and eliminating hate media and ensuring the security of journalists are early, necessary steps in creating a climate for peacebuilding.

Actions to prevent hate media can include various activities. For instance, they can include efforts to monitor, jam, seize or even destruct radio or tele-

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8. In a discussion paper prepared for the Institute for Media, Policy and Civil Society (IMPACS) supported by the Canadian government, Robin Hay develops key entry points for news media based on different categories of peacebuilding activities in the various stages of conflict (Hay, 1999). In a discussion that centres on the role of news media, Hay looks at why and how the Canadian government could become involved in media for peacebuilding activities. Another framework for assessing and managing local media support activities is currently being developed by the Fafo Institute for Applied Social Science in Norway at the request of the Norwegian government. A report produced by Fafo looks at different ways of categorizing local media programmes, and argues that the best way of organizing local media activities is according to their objectives (i.e. humanitarian reporting, conflict resolution, and institution building) (Eknes and Endresen, 1999).
vision stations. These types of measures are generally considered to be negative actions against media, as opposed to positive actions which aim to offset the impact of hate media through more peaceful measures such as broadcasting alternative views (BBC Monitoring, 31 July 1998). However, many international actors believe that the elimination of hate media is necessary in order to set the stage for positive peacebuilding measures. Jamie M. Metzl takes this view when he argues that the UN should create an “independent information unit” which would monitor broadcasts in zones of conflict and which would have the authority to jam broadcasting signals in “extreme cases” (Metzl, 1997, p. 17). There is strong opposition by some peacebuilding donors to Metzl’s proposal and to these types of actions against hate media. Some people, including freedom of expression advocates, generally believe that hate speech is best combated by more speech rather than censorship (Dworkin, 1994, p. 9-14). They believe that restrictive laws rarely have the intended effect and that repressive governments will use these laws to justify limiting press pluralism. Furthermore, they say that using violence as a peacebuilding measure is risky since violence is prone to generating unanticipated consequences and risks legitimating the use of force (Bush, 1998, p. 24).

In some cases though, a media outlet will clearly cross the line between freedom of expression and direct incitement. The radio station in Rwanda before and during the genocide, is a clear example of where the international community should intervene, because the media was not simply expressing an opinion but was committing an international crime leading to the deaths of thousands of people (de la Brosse, 1995, preface). Nonetheless, most cases of hate media are not so clear and any peacebuilding programme that includes these types of measures against hate media will likely provoke an angry reaction from local authorities. Serious questions about international interference and the violation of sovereignty will also be raised.

A second measure to improve the immediate media environment is to ensure the security of local journalists. Local media peacebuilding projects will not be successful if journalists feel that their personal security is at risk. During a conflict, journalists are often among the first targets and in the delicate post-conflict environment, authorities will try to maintain a tight reign on the press. If journalists begin to broadcast alternative points of view, authorities or local leaders may feel threatened and may respond with non-violent or violent intimidation tactics against journalists. Improving the security environment for journalists is, therefore, an important post-conflict peacebuilding activity.

9. Preventing hate media through “negative measures” is sometimes considered to be “peacemaking” rather than peacebuilding.
There are a number of international groups that address the security of journalists. The Institute Panos, Article 19, the Index on Censorship, the Committee to Protect Journalists, the Women’s Institute for Freedom of the Press, Reporteurs sans frontières and the Commonwealth Press Association all conduct activities to protect journalists. Their activities include raising awareness about violations against journalists, raising legal fees to defend persecuted journalists, and lobbying governments who detain journalists without trial.

**B. LOCAL MEDIA AS AN INFORMATIONAL / EDUCATIONAL TOOL**

In this category of media peacebuilding activity, local media may complement the peacebuilding goals of other projects and may supply the target audience with much needed information. For instance, local media can be used to provide information about the peacebuilding activities of international actors and can help generate support for these activities (UN, 1996, p. 3). In a post-conflict setting, local media can address issues of concern to the target audience such as landmine awareness, human rights awareness, the Geneva Conventions, and the tracing of missing persons. Local media can also provide information about elections, investigations or war-crimes tribunals.

Most United Nations Peace Support Operations include important public information activities which are used to inform and educate the population (Hay, 1999, p. 13-14). In some cases, local media is used to disseminate peacebuilding information, while in others, international actors will set up their own media channels.\(^\text{10}\)

Nonetheless, there are some questions that arise when considering using local media as an informational/educational tool. The news, and information more generally, is not always peaceful. Even in highly peaceful, stable, democratic societies, local media is divisive. Indeed, a well-functioning open media can promote conflict and dissent. In a post-conflict environment, donors must decide how to address news issues that risk enflaming conflict. Should donors support local media that act as an objective information provider and that present all facts that are based on a reasonable degree of evidence? Or, should donors encourage local media to downplay negative news items, in the interest of reducing the likelihood of fuelling conflict? By downplaying potentially explosive news information items, the media may come under the criticism of being biased and non-reliable, yet by reporting potentially divisive items, local media may actually trigger conflict.

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\(^{10}\) For example, the United Nations established a radio station in Cambodia. The station was used to provide information and to counteract the negative perceptions of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) within the local population.
C. LOCAL MEDIA AS A DIRECT TOOL FOR SOCIETAL RECONCILIATION

In this category of local media activity, projects address reconciliation issues directly by promoting understanding and dialogue between opposing parties. Gordon Adam uses the term “media as mediator” to describe this community conflict resolution function for local media (Adam, 1997, p. 28-30).

Conflict, especially ethnic or civil conflict, tends to leave communities deeply divided and, in the post-conflict period, hostilities are typically very easily aggravated. Former networks of social interaction are usually destroyed and individuals may be psychologically affected (Maynard, 1997). Local media can try to change perceptions and attitudes, especially between opposing communal groups, by valorising examples of peaceful conduct and by publicising successful examples of inter-group cooperation (Maynard, 1997, p. 217-21).

There have been several examples of highly popular radio dramas that aim to promote societal reconciliation. *New Home New Life* is a radio soap opera broadcast on BBC in Afghanistan.11 Fictional characters in the soap opera comment on key social issues that are intended to create stimuli for peace among listeners. Past programmes have discussed mine awareness, post-conflict psycho-social trauma, heroin addiction and community conflict. Another radio soap opera, *Geedka Nabadda* (Tree of Peace), uses a similar entertaining format to promote peace and reconciliation in Somalia.

In this societal reconciliation role, the media is not a neutral chronicler of events. Instead, the media has a clear agenda and has accepted that it is inextricably involved in the dynamics of social conflict.12

D. LONGER-TERM LOCAL MEDIA MEASURES FOR PEACE

The last category of local media activities for peacebuilding includes longer-term projects that often address not only the media’s message but also the institutions of the media. These types of activities may include support for the creation of an indigenous professional media, the establishment of journalism schools, support for local media by donating technical equipment and other materials, supporting media pluralism, and supporting training programmes for journalists.

11. A survey in 1994 indicated that eight out of every ten people in Afghanistan with access to the radio listened to New Home New Life regularly (Adam, Issue 18/19, 1994).

12. In an article calling for “propaganda for peace” or “information diplomacy” in areas of conflict, Keith Spicer argues that “broadcasts can convey anti-racist facts and perspectives in the same powerful way that hate is peddled” (Spicer, 1994, 23). Spicer campaigns for an increased presence of international broadcasters in conflict areas, but his argument can also be applied to local peace broadcasting in volatile post-conflict areas.
Donors may also try to pressure or assist the government in reforming its communications policy to make it more conducive to peacebuilding. This will generally include legalising commercial, community and independent broadcasting, and adding legislative provisions against the broadcasting of hate messages. Donors may also provide support and advice regarding editorial independence for the state-owned broadcasting system, since it may be the only system capable of reaching the whole country (Carver and Maja-Pearce, 1995, p. 7).

IV. CHALLENGES

A. POLITICAL CHALLENGES

In each of these four local media peacebuilding categories, donors face difficult political decisions and trade-offs. Jamming signals from media outlets that broadcast hate messages risks strong political opposition and resentment, and can result in the justification of increased press censorship and control by authoritarian leaders. This may go against the longer-term peacebuilding objectives of setting up institutional structures that facilitate media pluralism and openness.

Similarly, donors must think about how to encourage a diversity of views and to support alternative media while at the same time ensuring that media remains non-sensationalist, non-violent, ethnically tolerant and objective. For local media projects with informational objectives, donors must decide on whether journalists should report events as accurately as possible, or whether there should be an editorial gloss in favour of “good news” journalism thereby risking charges of bias and inaccuracy. When local media tries to promote reconciliation directly, divisive points of view may be suppressed.

Longer-term local activities that promote a professional, open and pluralist media may not necessarily coincide with peacebuilding objectives which favour a particular, peaceful point of view. Furthermore, often in news stories, conflict sells, while cooperation does not (Hay, 1999, p. 8). If a donor’s long-term goal is to create indigenous, viable media, they must take into account the media’s longer-term possibilities for revenue sustainability. Similarly, if local media outlets receive a flood of outside support following a conflict, they may not remain viable when outside support is terminated. Lastly, when donors help support the development of a communications’ policy that is conducive to pluralism, they risk political opposition from people who claim that the concept of the free flow of ideas is a Western construct that is not appropriate in their society and culture.
These challenges and potential trade-offs do not mean that donors should cut support to local media. Rather, these potential obstacles and political challenges show that donors must develop a coherent strategy based on the successes and failures of similar projects, as well as the specific political and local context for their particular project. As in development projects, peacebuilding donors must rely on the knowledge and expertise of local partners and must consider local conditions. Additionally, successful peacebuilding requires the development of adequate evaluation tools for local media projects which, up until now, has been slow.

B. EVALUATION CHALLENGES

Many donor agencies have not conducted formal evaluations of their local media peacebuilding projects. Most often, donor agencies base their local media peacebuilding evaluations on anecdotes or ad-hoc approaches, although they often speak of the need to develop more systematic mechanisms to assess impact.

Part of the problem in evaluating local media peacebuilding projects may have to do with ambiguities in peacebuilding objectives. As discussed above, different types of media activities face constraints and contradictions, and when setting their peacebuilding objectives, donors must have a clear idea of the trade-offs and choices that they will face.

Yet even when the peacebuilding objectives are clear, there may be problems in conducting evaluations of local media peacebuilding projects due to difficulties in measurement. The goals of local media peacebuilding projects often do not correspond to tangible evaluation criteria. It is easier to measure the impact of projects dealing with quantifiable measurements, such as malnutrition rates, number of food centres, or housing. Often however, the goal of local media peacebuilding projects is to change attitudes and perceptions and to help heal psycho-social injuries resulting from conflict. These cannot be measured by quantitative indicators. Qualitative indicators are better able to

13. For instance, in ICRC’s project to use local media to disseminate peacebuilding information in Bosnia, the ICRC representative said that he believed that the project helped ICRC secure a safer environment for aid operations, helped trace missing persons and enhanced ICRC’s reputation in the eyes of local people. However, a formal evaluation did not take place (See Adam, May/June 1997, 47). Similarly, a “lessons learned” document for an NGO media project in Bosnia says that: “although no one can quote statistics or empirical evidence to indicate that new violence was averted or new democracy was nurtured, there was a palpable sense among all those concerned that both of these things had, in fact, been achieved.” (Himelfarb, unpublished paper, 1997, p. 3)

14. For instance, a local radio station may be evaluated relatively easily by quantitative indicators such as the number of hours of programming or listener numbers, but these indicators do not say very much about peacebuilding.
capture this type of information, but qualitative evidence is very difficult to collect and calculate, especially in a post-conflict environment. Weak infrastructure and institutions and other urgent priorities mean that it is difficult, if not impossible, to gather relevant, meaningful information.

The timing of local media peacebuilding projects is another factor that makes evaluation difficult. It is generally easier to measure performance in the short term (Kapoor, 1996), but the full impact of local media peacebuilding projects may not be apparent until later. Often, media projects are meant to affect the future behaviour of individual and groups, but it is difficult to develop indicators that capture subtle, incremental behavioural changes.

In post-conflict societies, there are many factors that act simultaneously to bring about change. In a given country, there are typically dozens of donor organisations conducting various peacebuilding and development activities. It is therefore difficult to attribute any particular change in the environment or in attitudes to a specific peacebuilding project (Laprise, 1998, p. 6).

Difficulties in evaluation are compounded by the fact that many donor agencies are not adequately staffed to undertake long-term evaluations. Similarly, donor agencies have an interest in presenting their activities in a favourable light, in order to maintain or increase funding. This may lead to an exaggeration of the initial problem, an overemphasis of positive impacts arising from donor activity and an underemphasis of any negative consequences of the activity. Alex de Waal says that writing a document for a development agency is “often a work of subtle but systematic distortion and re-packaging” (de Waal, 1995, p. 62). The same can sometimes be true for peacebuilding programming.

While the above difficulties cannot be resolved entirely, certain steps can be taken to help the evaluation process (see Laprise, 1998; Love, 1996; Kapoor, 1996). It is encouraging to note that several organisations have recently begun to focus their attention on local media and peacebuilding evaluation. An American NGO, Search for Common Ground, is currently developing an evaluation tool for their local media projects in Liberia using rapid survey methodology. The International Research and Exchange Board (IREX) has also implemented procedures for evaluating this type of project (Eknes and Endresen, 1999, p. 44). Gordon Adam from the International Centre for Humanitarian Reporting (ICHHR) is also developing evaluation techniques and guidelines for media projects. The results of some of this research were presented at a “Lifeline Media Conference” in South Africa in December 1998.

15. For instance, in Rwanda in 1995, there were at least 151 NGOs operating in the country (Crevoisier and Grobet, 1995, p. 100).
Johns Hopkins University has developed a system called KAP, which is a system to determine whether Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices have changed as a result of a given intervention. The Fafo Institute for Applied Social Science in Norway is developing a “tool kit” to help evaluate local media support projects, (Eknes and Endresen, 1999, p. 55), and the Institute for Media, Policy and Civil Society in Canada has developed a series of indicators to serve as a barometer of progress for media peacebuilding efforts (Hay, 1999, p. 21).

Nonetheless, there is a noticeable shortage of detailed evaluations of local media peacebuilding projects. The general guidelines that can be drawn from the experience of local media projects in post-conflict Rwanda and Bosnia should not overshadow the need for more systematic evaluation tools for local media peacebuilding projects.

V. LOCAL MEDIA AND PEACEBUILDING IN RWANDA

Refugees are nourished by bread and information.

Leader of a Rwandan refugee camp at Inera
(Fondation Hirondelle, http://www.hirondelle.org)

The genocide in Rwanda was carried out with a radio in one hand and a machete in the other. The radio served to give and receive orders, and the machete was used to execute the orders (Chrétien, 1995, p. 191). The powerful role of the radio during the genocide is well-known and the importance of hate radio in fuelling and maintaining conflict in Rwanda has led many donors to believe that radio can play a strong role in Rwanda’s post-conflict reconstruction and reconciliation. Given the lack of alternative sources of information, donors believe that radio is particularly important both as a tool to disseminate information about other peacebuilding initiatives, and as a more direct means to promote inter-ethnic dialogue and understanding. Nonetheless, many local media projects in Rwanda have experienced some difficulties, and an examination of some of the challenges faced by these projects highlights some of the general problems that may be encountered by peacebuilding donors.

The hugely influential role of radio in inciting and maintaining the Rwandan genocide has been well-documented (Joint Evaluation, 1996, study II; Chrétien, 1995; Misser and Jaumain, 1994; Deguinne and Ménard, 1994). By broadcasting lists of people that “needed” to be killed and using strategies of personal attacks, misinformation, victimisation of Hutus, and an ethnic interpretation (re-writing) of history, The Radio-Télévision des Milles
Collines (RTLM) radio station prepared the Rwandan population for genocide and legitimised the final solution of extermination.\textsuperscript{16}

After the Rwandan Patriotic Front troops drove the government forces out of Kigali in July 1994, RTLM continued to broadcast using mobile transmitters until it was forced to shut down in August 1994. Since then, however, new radio stations which broadcast ethnic hate messages have emerged in the region.\textsuperscript{17}

The political context in Rwanda is still highly volatile. Rwanda's infrastructure has been devastated, there is a strong desire for revenge among certain ethnic factions, and there are outbreaks of violence, especially in the northwest corner of the country. There is widespread psychological trauma, leading some authors to suggest that the entire society seems to be "collectively suffering a sort of post-traumatic stress disorder" (Thompson, 1997, p. 9).

Since the genocide, the international community has initiated a number of different types of local media peacebuilding projects. One of the first post-conflict media peacebuilding projects was Radio Agatashya, an independent regional radio broadcasting for Rwandan refugees in Kinyarwanda and French. Radio Agatashya was set up by Reporteurs sans frontières in August 1994, but it was taken over by a Swiss NGO called Fondation Hirondelle in August 1995. Its editorial policy was to broadcast anything that would not provoke hatred or panic and it aimed to valorise and develop all information to assist national reconciliation, the reconstruction of the country, peace, and respect for human rights. It aired programmes about nutrition, sanitation, medical information, the search for disappeared peoples and the reunification of separated families. In 1995 and 1996, Radio Agatashya generally broadcast about eight hours per day, with four million potential listeners including one million refugees. Radio Agatashya gained extensive praise, even though it closed in October, 1996 due to funding shortages as well as renewed fighting in Bukavu and other regions. A qualitative evaluation conducted by a sociologist in March 1996 showed that Rwandan refugees felt that Radio Agatashya was their most reliable source of information (Castagno, 1996). Yet, although the evaluation succeeded in measuring the reach and the popularity of Radio Agatashya, it did not look at the impact of its programming on attitudes and

\textsuperscript{16} By 1994, the only other radio stations in Rwanda were Radio Rwanda, which carried RTLM programming, and Radio Muhabura run by the Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF). Although Radio Muhabura was less extreme than its Hutu counterpart, it also broadcast propaganda and ethnic hatred (Deguinne and Ménard, 1994, p. 58).

\textsuperscript{17} Most recently, a hate radio, "La Voix du Patriote" (Voice of the Patriot) has been sporadically broadcasting into Rwanda since November 1997 allegedly from the Kigoma region in western Tanzania (Fondation Hirondelle, Newsletter, April 1998).
beliefs related to peacebuilding, nor did it look at the political implications of Agatashya's activities.\textsuperscript{18}

The Radio Agatashya project illustrates some of the political difficulties that local media projects may encounter. Each group in Rwanda had different expectations regarding Radio Agatashya and all parties to the conflict accused the radio of siding with the "enemy." The Rwandan (Tutsi) government would not allow Radio Agatashya to broadcast from within Rwanda and did not grant it a frequency. The government claimed that the station was pro-Hutu, a suspicion that may have been provoked by Radio Agatashya's emphasis on refugee issues. It is more likely, however, that the Rwandan government, like other fragile post-conflict governments, felt threatened by the idea of media pluralism (Crévoisier and Grobet, 1995, p. 100).

Radio Agatashya's combined role as neutral provider of information and peacebuilder sometimes conflicted. When the first wave of refugees returned to Rwanda, there were a series of murders and arson attacks on camps of displaced people. Radio Agatashya did not develop this information because they did not want to spread fear or panic among the remaining refugees (Crévoisier and Grobet, 1995, p. 13). Hutu leaders charged the radio station with being biased towards Tutsi and Western interests, and they claimed that Radio Agatashya's encouragement to refugees to return home was "propaganda".

Other local media programmes in Rwanda have also faced political stumbling blocks. UNESCO's SOS Médias programme has supported media activities in Rwanda since 1994. SOS Médias provides technical support and training to Rwandan journalists and news directors, facilitates the free flow of information between Rwanda and other countries and aims to create conditions of press freedom in the country. The SOS Programme in Rwanda, however, has had difficulty convincing the Rwandan government to make substantial changes in favour of greater press freedom. The government has allowed nominal changes, but as independent media becomes more important, the Rwandan government is finding ways to restrict its influence. Generally, the government encourages UNESCO's efforts to train Rwandan journalists but blocks other efforts that will lead to media pluralism and freedom.

Donor experience with Radio Agatashya and SOS Médias shows that even if financial and technical challenges are resolved, it takes a long time for a media outlet or project to gain the acceptance and trust of members of a highly fragmented community and to achieve the support of vulnerable local communities.

\textsuperscript{18} This qualitative evaluation was carried out in 8 of the 59 refugee camps in the Great Lakes region. The evaluator conducted quick interviews with resource persons as well as semi-structured interviews and direct observations of 170 refugees chosen randomly.
authorities. Donors must be aware of these factors when designing, maintaining and evaluating their local media projects.

VI. LOCAL MEDIA AND PEACEBUILDING IN BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

In the Balkans, as almost everywhere, those who control the airwaves hold the power. (Soloway, 1997, p. 42)

The role of local media in the Bosnian conflict was no less prominent than in Rwanda, and since the end of the Bosnian war, the international community has supported a wide range of media initiatives. Some of these projects have contributed to peacebuilding in Bosnia, others have had a more limited impact, and still others have been viewed as failures. The inability to reconcile media projects with the difficult political environment accounts for some of the failures, while administrative and managerial obstacles have compounded the problems.

The ethnic extremist media that emerged on all sides of the Bosnian war succeeded in inciting hatreds and shaping the public’s memory through the simplification of events and misinformation (Basic-Hrvatin, 1996, p. 68). In April 1992 in Bosnia, Serbian television issued a list of journalists that “needed” to be eliminated (de la Brosse, 1995, p. 124), and during the war, media outlets were frequently targeted by all sides (Gjelten, 1995).

The struggle over the control of the media has continued after the signing of the Dayton Peace Accords. There has been violent conflict over control of media outlets, as well as more subtle tactics by leaders to muzzle independent press, including limiting access to frequencies, cutting supplies of newsprint, fixing prices and pressuring advertisers to withdraw their business from media outlets that do not conform to the “official” version of truth (Dobnikar-Servga, 1996).19

The international community has been actively involved in the struggle over media control in Bosnia and has adopted two general strategies to counteract the use of ethnic media to promote hatred. On the one hand, there are international interventions aimed at shutting down “hate” radio and television stations. On the other hand, there are more “positive” interventions to support media outlets that contribute to peace, reconciliation and inter-ethnic dialogue and understanding.

The first step in the international media strategy was to break the media blockade by ethnic hard-liners. In September 1997, the US authorised the dispatch of three aircraft to jam radio and television programmes from Pale in response to continued ethnic propaganda, which it said contributed to violence in the Bosnian Serb territory. Later, NATO peacekeepers in Bosnia seized four transmitters of a television network (SRT) controlled by Radovan Karadzic. International officials said that the goal was to force a restructuring of the Pale broadcasting studio to "guarantee the presentation of a more balanced view of events."21

There have also been attempts to use media more positively for peace-building purposes. The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) created a Media Experts Commission (MEC) to monitor the security of journalists, investigate attacks, and report erroneous news. Other donor peacebuilding initiatives seek to promote inter-ethnic dialogue and encourage media pluralism. The largest single media initiative in Bosnia is the Open Broadcasting Network (OBN), run by the Office of the High Representative. It is funded by several bilateral and international organisations including the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the OSCE and the Soros Foundation. The goal of OBN is to encourage the development of a pluralist, professional and multicultural media in Bosnia enabling communication among all ethnic and religious communities. The second high profile media project in Bosnia is the OSCE-supported Free Elections Radio Network (FERN), which was created in July 1996 to provide balanced coverage for the September 1996 elections.

Both OBN and FERN, however, have not lived up to their expectations (Borden, 1997; International Crisis Group, 1997). OBN went on the air before it was technically ready and it did not have a good supply of journalists. Furthermore, both networks encountered difficulties due to the donors' lack of attention paid to politics and local dynamics. OBN was put together without very much input from Bosnians, consequently, it was viewed as being "foreign" (International Crisis Group, 1997, 13). Similarly, OBN and FERN have both focused on Bosniac-controlled Federation territory at the expense of the Serb Republic and Croat-controlled territory. Both networks were sup-

20. The transmitters that were taken by SFOR in September 1997 were returned to the SRT in July 1998 under the conditions that the "public would be objectively informed." (BBC Monitoring World Media, 31 July, 1998).

21. The seizure of media outlets was a military operation. There was heavy security near the towers, combat helicopters and NATO troops that blocked roads with armoured personnel carriers. The international community told the management of Bosnian Serb TV studios in Pale that they would have to replace the editorial staff if they wished to resume control of the transmitters.
posed to develop into pan-Bosnian initiatives, but their dominant presence in Sarajevo has prevented them from making a clear break from the tripartite media scene in Bosnia.

Even within the Bosniac-controlled Federation territory, OBN and FERN were viewed with suspicion. Successive Bosnian governments have protested OBN and have put up regulatory obstructions that limit the network’s effectiveness (International Crisis Group, 1997, 14). The Bosnian government regards OBN as a threat to their sovereignty and control, and claims to reject the Western concept of a free flow of ideas and the “invasion” of offensive foreign commercial values.

Despite these obstacles, most donors still believe that OBN and FERN have the potential to contribute to peacebuilding in Bosnia. Supporters say that the mere fact that the networks still exist is an achievement in such a volatile environment. FERN produces some high-quality programming and attracts some good reporters. The themes discussed by OBN are not found on state television and may be helping to change people’s attitudes and perceptions.

Other local media peacebuilding projects in Bosnia also have mixed success records. In the UN’s 1996 interagency appeal, UNESCO was recognised as the lead agency to help independent media in post-conflict former Yugoslavia. UNESCO has provided several tons of newsprint to independent newspapers in Bosnia, delivered equipment and programs for electronic media and news agencies, and provided training for journalists (UNESCO, 1997, 236).

However, UNESCO has not succeeded in coordinating donor efforts in local media projects. Donor rivalry and overlap is widespread, and overly enthusiastic donor subsidies have inadvertently sparked a decline in the quality of Bosnian media due to the rapid proliferation of independent outlets. The industry would collapse if the donations ended (International Crisis Group, 1997, p. 6).

Somewhat more successful are some of the smaller projects implemented by NGOs. These projects generally have stronger roots in the local community and a deeper understanding of local politics. For instance, George Soros’ Open Society Fund has been relatively successful, but it has been operating in Bosnia for a longer time. The Open Society Fund employs locals with media experience and commits itself to longer-term funding for its projects. For example, instead of offering short training courses for journalists, Open Society sponsored the creation of a school for journalism (International Crisis Group, 1997, p. 11).

An American NGO, Search for Common Ground (SCG), has produced two radio series in Bosnia which rely heavily on local talent and local partnerships. Resolutions Radio is a radio talk show dealing with peacebuilding themes (such as refugees and property rights) with guests from each ethnic group and
a host trained in conflict resolution. Jednostavno Zena (Simply Woman) is another radio show geared towards women's issues. These smaller projects have been generally successful, but they have also encountered political obstacles. The weekly guests on Resolutions Radio are supposed to represent all three ethnic groups, but the show is broadcast from Sarajevo and has difficulty attracting Serb or Croat participants (Himelfarb, 1997, p. 4). Furthermore, Resolutions Radio is broadcast on FERN, so it has suffered from some of FERN's technical problems, especially the unreliability of its broadcast capabilities and the perception of being a "foreigner's" network.

The international community is also playing a role in Bosnian media policy. With foreign involvement, an Independent Media Commission (IMC) was set up in June 1998 to establish a regulatory regime for broadcasting and other media in Bosnia (BBC Monitoring, 7 August 1998). Broadcasters will be subject to codes of practice including provisions against programmes "whose contents and tone carry a clear and direct risk of incitement to ethnic and religious hatred among the communities in Bosnia-Herzegovina, or which could, in anyone's reasonable judgment, provoke violence, riots and unrest." Although there was some debate over the creation of the IMC and especially the foreign involvement, it is too early to assess the impact of this programme.

The peacebuilding media record in Bosnia has therefore been mixed. Some projects have run into technical problems, others have faced strong political and societal opposition. It is clear that many of the projects have peacebuilding potential, but others have not been able to overcome political obstacles.

CONCLUSIONS

In any post-conflict environment, local media will be present and somehow involved in the dynamics of conflict and reconciliation. The goal of peacebuilding donors is to help transform local media into a positive partner for peace. Donors have quite a lot of practical experience related to local media and peacebuilding, but they have dealt with these issues in a relatively fragmented manner. Donors are supporting local media peacebuilding activities, but it is only recently that they are clarifying concepts of peacebuilding, defining clear objectives and indicators, developing concerted frameworks and looking at which kinds of local media activities are best under which conditions. Furthermore, it is becoming increasingly clear that donors must concentrate on developing more effective evaluation tools, using both quantitative and qualitative indicators to measure project impact. In order to create useful guidelines for local media and peacebuilding, effective assessment and evaluation mechanisms for existing projects are critical.
 Nonetheless, the basic claim that local media projects can contribute to peacebuilding appears to be sound. The misuse of the media to incite ethnic violence in Rwanda and Bosnia succeeded because government-sponsored propaganda was not effectively challenged. Media peacebuilding programmes can help prevent the recurrence of this situation. Furthermore, local media projects complement other peacebuilding activities and are a natural component of any integrated donor strategy. Most local media projects are relatively flexible and can build upon the knowledge and interests of the local community. As in many development projects, media peacebuilding projects can help foster community participation and dialogue. They can also address difficult issues of identity, trauma and reconciliation in an entertaining format.

These general advantages imply that donors should continue to support local media projects in their peacebuilding programmes. Nonetheless, examples from Rwanda and Bosnia show that even though local media can contribute to peacebuilding, it is not certain that they always will. The mixed experience of local media projects in Rwanda and Bosnia outlines some of the challenges that donors may face and points to guidelines that may improve the effectiveness of these types of projects.

It is important for donors to continue to monitor dangerous trends such as hate speech and government clampdowns on alternative press. However, the more difficult choice faced by the international community has to do with how to counter hate media once it has been identified. There are some clear instances where it is necessary to physically prevent broadcasting, but the difficulty lies in determining when to draw the line between freedom of expression and dangerous hate media. An aggressive campaign to silence ethno-nationalist media could backfire. There should be very clear guidelines as to when the international community has the authority to intervene and jam media signals.

Projects with peacebuilding informational objectives or societal reconciliation objectives must be based on a thorough understanding of the political and social dynamics of the region. The media is never perceived as a neutral force in a post-conflict environment, so donors must carefully examine the impact of the project on local politics as well as the impact of local politics on the project. Donors must be aware that “peace” broadcasting may threaten and antagonise certain local authorities and actors. In a post-conflict situation, it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to gain the support of all main local actors.

Political obstacles may be minimised if donors try to collaborate with a spectrum of local NGOs and groups to help gain a better political reading of the situation. Terry Thielen believes that Search for Common Ground’s (SCG) success in Bosnia can be partly attributed to the fact that they managed to
build trust among political leaders and local groups (Thielen, 1998). Since SCG did not try to set up their own transmitters in Bosnia, local authorities felt less threatened by their activities. Most larger media initiatives in Bosnia have had more difficulty gaining the trust of local authorities and have misread some critical political signals. For instance, the fact that OBN and FERN concentrated on Bosniac-controlled parts of the country at the expense of the Serb and Croat parts has hindered their ability to effectively contribute to peacebuilding in the region.

Furthermore, local media projects can become the victims of their own success. Governments may tolerate donors’ media activities, unless the activity starts to have a large impact. For example, authorities might not complain if a donor sets up an independent media network, until the network begins to attract a large audience, becoming politically important and potentially threatening. The government may then intervene to limit the influence of the donor-supported media. It might raise ownership or regulatory obstacles or use other indirect tactics to limit the media’s influence. Donors should be aware of this possible reaction from the government as they design the project. They should also pay close attention to cultural and political sensitivities if they try to assist the government in communications reform or in other longer-term peacebuilding measures.

Finally, it should be remembered that rebuilding trust through media programmes is a long-term process and the reconstruction of media structures in a war-torn country is bound to encounter obstacles and trade-offs. Donors should not expect quick, easily-measured results, but rather, should develop ways to assess the ability of local media to spark incremental changes in attitudes and behaviour conducive to the creation of a culture of peace. The recent experiences in Rwanda and Bosnia highlight the enormous challenges that lie ahead for donors, while simultaneously displaying the need to continue activity in this field.

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