

DRC - Media Landscape

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Overview

With the support of UNESCO, since the beginning of the current year (2020), the DRC has also committed to setting up an observatory for the safety of journalists. Beyond this commitment, no action has so far been taken by the authorities. It also remains unfortunate that no effort has been made to date to guarantee impunity for the crimes that are continuously committed against journalists. The annual “Reporters Without Borders” ranking for 2020 puts the DRC at 150th out of 180 states. And the ranking in Central Africa, carried out by the NGO “Journaliste En Danger” (JED) ranks the DRC 44th out of 53 countries surveyed. According to the NGO, the DRC has recorded 83 cases of attacks on press freedom in just 12 months. These rankings show how much freedom of information and criticism for the media as well as the right of access to information for the population in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) continue to be real challenges. However, in late December 2018, the country inaugurated a new legislature characterized by the election of a new president of the Republic and new members of parliament. Since then, media professionals and defenders of fundamental freedoms have expressed new hopes for the freedom of expression improvement. They asked the new power to reform the legal and institutional framework relating to freedom of expression. To date, some improvements have certainly been noticed (there is not jailed journalists), the country has certainly gained four places in the ranking compared to 2019, but the law and the institutional framework are still not improved. During his constitutional swear, the new president pledged to make the media “truly a fourth power”. Meanwhile, members of Congolese civil society had already take the access to information bill to parliament. The purpose of this text is to oblige all public representatives to allow the public information to be accessible to journalist and to all citizen in the name of the “public's right to information” as well as the “right to know”. This text has not also been voted so far. It is important to say that the poor quality of the press freedom in the DRC is not only a consequence of bad texts and the absence of other complementary laws. It is also a consequence of the institutional and operational weaknesses of the institutions which have been set up to supervise it but which do almost nothing.

The vastness of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), its nine borders, the diversity of its population and economy, continue to negatively affect the media landscape of the country, which is expected to be considered as a true information hub in Africa.

The media market is highly populated but not very competitive and started developing along the current trends in the 1990s. The main steps of this process have been: The emergence of freedom of expression and the adoption of a specific law on the modalities to exercise this freedom (June 22, 1996), the creation of the first public institution of media regulation (2004), the re-foundation of the journalistic profession by the establishment of a media observatory (2004) and the establishment of a second public institution of media regulation (2011). Alongside public media, created by the state and staffed by career agents of the public administration, several other private media have been created and continue to be created from day to day.

The country experiences a diversity of information and a plurality of media that should largely contribute to strengthening the overall quality of its governance. As of January 2020, the DRC has 627 radio stations, 571 print media and television channels listed across its 26 provinces. These figures do not include online media, the exact number of which is not known due to a lack of regulation in the field.

Apart from the community radio and television stations that are present in most of the provinces, the printing houses of the most developed newspapers are located in Kinshasa. Only four or five newspapers are published daily, but within an undeveloped market. The low purchasing power of the Congolese hinders the development of the media market. On the whole, national media are economically unsustainable. Commercial media offer a variety of programmes, most of which are sponsored by paying customers. They also sell commercial advertising to individuals or companies and other organisations that order them. The impact of these media on the population is almost zero. Except for certain commercial media that are getting closer and closer to the population (eg Radio Top Congo FM) by raising up live debates on social, political, judicial and economic events happening in the cities.

The political influence in the creation of media has been a constant feature since the 1990s after the National Sovereign Conference (CNS). The freedom to create private media was felt during this period by political competitors, who saw it as an opportunity to communicate and strengthen their image by means of accessible communications and thus to overcome the exclusion from public media, which were monopolised by the dictatorial regime that was in place. Since the 1990s, all private commercial media have belonged to politicians or are close to political parties and groups. For the same reasons, the civil society organisations and the so-called "revival" churches have subsequently followed the lead of the politicians and created media of a third category known as "associative and community" as well as "faith-based" media. This trend of the 1990s is still present and strong in 2020.

The country has several university faculties and departments as well as higher institutes that devote their teaching to social sciences, media and journalism. This academic training largely provides the basis for journalistic professionalism based on scientific and technical learning. To this end, it constitutes one of the criteria for assessing the technical level of the recipients who wish to enter the profession and who, for this purpose, pass through the professional media organisations (UNPC, ANEAP, ANECO, SNPP, OMEC, etc). Overall, the Congolese school is not efficient or competitive compared to other training institutions in the region and the professional organisations themselves are in a state that requires reinforcement in order to be up to their task. The public institution responsible for regulating the media is still under the political dependence and the internal absence of the technical capacities necessary for the execution of its constitutional and legal missions continue to negatively affect the media's content. All of these are real challenges to professional journalism. On the whole, Congolese media work in fear that is justified by the intimidation and threats that their professionals face from political and military actors. From the 1990s to 2018, the country has been ruled by military regimes and former members of militias. These groups of leaders were avry hostile to media criticism. Even if in 2018 the country got a civilian head of state the situation have not changed so much. It is still not easy for journalists to criticise, even objectively, the quality of political, economic, judicial, security, and other governance issues without facing serious risks. This fear is still reinforced by the rigour of the Press Law,

which offers no possibility for the journalist to establish, when sued, the true character of the information for which he is prosecuted. The serious technical and institutional weaknesses as well as the strong political dependence of the public institution that is in charge of the regulation of the media continue to permit and to reinforce the bad political intervention in the exercise of freedom of the press in general.

All of these factors justify, in large part, the position of the country, among the last, in the rankings regarding freedom of expression in general in the annual reports of Reporters Without Borders (RSF), International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), International Freedom for Expression (IFEX) and other organisations. However, since December 2018, with the election of a new president who is a civilian and who has never been a member of the militias, hope is reborn and human rights defenders continue to push for reforms in order to give more chance to the development of the freedom of expression.

Media

Print

Print media are more present in Kinshasa than in other cities. Exception made in this outbreak period during which there is quite no production of printed medias, in the ordinary time their circulation, often very small, is largely justified by the poverty that characterises the country and the low purchasing power of the Congolese (a director of a public administration has an average salary of US\$200 per month). The maximum daily production is 1,500 copies (by newspaper Le Potentiel). The rest of the newspapers issue between 1,000 and 300 copies per day. The low number of printing houses in Kinshasa and the lack of printing companies in the rest of the provinces also do not allow any competition based on supply and demand. This negatively influences the price of newspapers (between 2,500 Congolese francs for ordinary newspapers and US\$5 for the Le Soft International) and reduces the possibility for the average Congolese to access them. The newspapers that appear in the East of the country print their publications in neighbouring countries (Burundi, Uganda and Rwanda). In Kinshasa, the very limited amount of print media sold results in large quantities of unsold newspapers at the end of each day, estimated at more or less 60 percent of production according to the editors of Le Potentiel, Le Phare and La Tempête des Tropiques.

To secure their income, these media are getting closer to politics. And that's why most of them do not have an editorial line. They offer their services to the highest bidder. They live from selling newspaper space to politicians and advertising. Many of their columns are furnished with advertisements that are their second source of income. According to the "Conseil supérieur de l'audiovisuel et de la communication" (CSAC) which is the public medias regulation institution the DRC has about 571 print media, including weekly, monthly, bi-monthly and satirical (such as Le Grognon, Le Tapis Rouge, etc). Most of them are very local, with a provincial scope and limited to the places where they are printed, with the largest number concentrated in Kinshasa, as it remains the main city in the country, where most of the political and administrative activities are located, together with most of the country's intellectual class and public institutions.

To highlight the difficulties experienced by this media category in the DRC, the research and consulting firm called "Target" speaks of "the descent into hell with only 1 percent audience in 2018 nationwide against 8 percent in 2017." Poverty and low purchasing power of the Congolese are not the only threats to print media. There is also a kind of loss of interest, reinforced by the easy access to news from the Internet. This access is even made easier by smartphones, personal computers (lap top) and tablets which allow direct access to web sites that broadcast information in real time. These tools has brought an important contribution for the self-training, information and entertainment of the public in this country, where gaps in the

supply of electricity do not allow the use of television and the computer optimally. They help to facilitate access to information and the distribution of information without going through the cable system which is also very expensive. Their impact is particularly felt through the speed and ease with which they are used to distribute information or to access it. The rapid flow of information through these tools also allows the population to take appropriate measures, for example in case of pandemics or endemic diseases against which the population must protect themselves, take measures to obtain the drinking water when the public company which is in charge of its management announces that there will be cut.

Radio

According to Target, "radio is the number one medium in all provinces except Katanga, Kinshasa and Kongo-Central, where television is in the lead. The Internet and cable channels scored highest in Kinshasa (48 percent) and Kongo Central (30 percent) respectively." Radio is the most followed media in the DRC especially in out of Kinshasa and other Congolese towns. One of the reasons is that radio receivers are often easy to carry and portable, and sometimes don't require a supply of electrical energy to operate. Electricity is often subject to shortages in the DRC, which in this case is compensated by portable generators or batteries. The audience of radio has increased of 11 percent, from 61 to 72 percent from 2017 to 2018 against only 48 percent for television, according to Target.

Alongside the Congolese National Radiotelevision (RNTC), which is the public radio and television channel established throughout the country, several private radio stations operate, including private commercial radio stations and private community and associative radio stations. There are also denominational radio stations created by so-called revivalist church promoters, most of them without a precise status. The Catholic Church and the Kimbanguist Church have also created radios and televisions, which seem to work in a more structured way, with a more or less precise and stable editorial line, whereas on the whole the other media created by church promoters are meant almost essentially to exalt their creators. Public radio, exclusively in the hands of supporters of successive political regimes in Kinshasa from the times of the dictatorial regime of Mobutu to this day, as well as private radio stations, have very limited coverage radius of times to a single province. Radio Maendeleo (community and associative radio) which transmits from Bukavu is one of the exceptions and covers a part of Burundi and Rwanda too.

In the hinterland, associative and community radios are an important bulwark (sometimes the only bulwark) of access to information for the population. Radio Okapi, which was created with the United Nations and Fondation Hironnelle (this Foundation has left the project since 2017. The project is getting accomplished by the only UN), seems to cover the gap left by all these other radio stations and covers the whole country by distributing speech in a much more structured and relatively equitable way. This radio covers quite all the areas of the situation of the country especially issues regarding peace and development. It often organizes debates between politicians from the regime and opponents, giving also possibility to civil society organisations and to the population from all over the country to express themselves on several challenges they face daily. Its audience is nation-wide. Moreover, which makes a big difference with other Congolese Medias, Okapi radio does not ask for payment when covering events. Several hundreds of associative and community radios of the DRC are united in the Fédération des Radios de Proximité de la R.D. Congo (Federation of Local Radio Stations of the Congo - FRPC) which is an association functioning as a platform for its members. It replaced the ARCO (Community Radio Association of Congo).

Television

The impact of audiovisual media (radio and television) is still very low because they use a very old technology, analogy transmitters, sometimes craft, and very old recorders, etc. This impact is also low because of the generalist nature of these media which cannot afford the costs to product programs more technically attractive. The Congolese audiovisual sector does not have thematic media with specific editorial lines. As a result, it does not have the capacity to retain listeners and viewers.

The difficulty of retaining listeners and viewers decreases any possibility of establishing reliable statistics on the consumers of these media.

In general, television is much less present in the hinterland than radio largely because of the irregularity of the electricity supply. Most of its airtime is dedicated to the dissemination of political discussions, sports programs (more generally football), advertisements, films, theaters and music. On Sundays, in Kinshasa, musical chronicles are broadcast throughout the day.

Media consumption habits are diversified depending on whether one is in urban, peri-urban or rural areas. Theatre, sketches and music are the most popular programs in peri-urban and rural areas, while in urban areas the population is more involved in news, sports and political programs. Television is one of the most followed media in Kinshasa (88 percent of the population), in the former province of Katanga (71 percent) and in Kongo-Central (88 percent) particularly influenced by the kinoise trend dominated by political, sports, musical and theatrical emissions. The Internet and cable channels are more followed in Kinshasa (48 and 27 percent respectively according to the study by Target), Kongo-Central (20 and 30 percent respectively) and the former province of Katanga (28 and 17 percent respectively) and only in the principal towns of the provinces of North Kivu and South Kivu (roughly 50 percent according to estimates by the General Secretariat of the Ministry in charge of the media, and about 33 percent for the Internet and 4 percent for cable television according to the Target study).

The rise in value of cable channels is largely justified by the diversity and high quality of programs offered as well as by the excellent quality of images.

Digital Media

According to Target, the concept of "Digital" refers directly to the "Internet" in the Congolese environment. When talking about "Internet", most Congolese users think of Google, Facebook and WhatsApp. According to a 2018 study on the digital environment in the country, up to 41 percent of respondents have a mobile phone. This figure falls by 4 percent when it comes to the possession of a smartphone and it goes down to 3 percent regarding the possession of an Internet connection in Congolese households. Data on the profile of Congolese Internet users also emerge from this study. The majority of Internet users are of the age group 18-34 years, mostly male students. For these Internet users, Facebook is their first destination when they are connected to the Internet. Facebook is followed by Google search and WhatsApp.

It is important to note that with the advent of the Internet, Congolese in urban centers are connected to social networks. According to Target, the political situation (including restrictions on the use of the Internet at certain events), as well as the prices of smartphones, which are considered expensive by the majority of the Congolese, can explain the stability of the Internet audience standing at 24 percent. The Internet has promoted the development of a new way of communicating and disseminating information. It has also fostered the creation of new professions in the media world "online media", "E-influencers" that combine writing, audio and visual as well as traditional media.

In the DRC, online media, social networks, so-called networks of E-influencers, etc, are gaining more and more importance, due to the easy access to the Internet (via tablets, laptop and smartphones, etc) for people of all ages. In the absence of a regulatory mechanism for digital media, it is difficult to say how many actually exist in the DRC. Nevertheless, a group of online media established in 2015 is based in Kinshasa and has 20 members. This organisation, called the *Association des médias en ligne* (Association of online news media - MILRDC), aims to promote the production and access to online information for all and to defend the interests and the interests of its members on the professional, economic, social, legal and other fields. These media have the advantage of offering, often, free, fast and extensive access. However, they face great difficulties because of the resistance of political decision-makers to criticism and contrary thinking. Thus they are, from time to time, victims of cuts imposed by the political regime in place, in order to stop or postpone the dissemination of

information considered as "politically incorrect." Online journalists have experienced several restrictions on the use of the Internet during periods of anti-regime protests. They have increased significantly in number since the beginning of the 2000s, when media, both written and audiovisual, started having websites on which they display information, usually for free.

The online media thus publish the information or the announcement to reach the largest masses possible in a very short time. But their work remains negatively affected by the poor quality of the Internet and the negative intervention of the political authority during the signal cuts. The interruption of the Internet by the Congolese authorities had the bad effect of also interrupting the work of these media during the whole time of the interruption. It has undermined the public's right to information and has caused financial shortfalls for these media and for those who depend on it, particularly with regard to advertising, which is the main source of their finances.

Digital media has broken conventional patterns of information privatisation and high-cost information and brought together sources of information that have been made available to the general public with electronic devices. Information flows faster. Although we must not neglect their contribution to the rapprochement of communities and individuals, it should be noted that the information circulating through social networks remains unreliable and sources are often not very credible.

Social Networks

In the DRC, social networks have become the means of rapid communication with easy and massive access to information (photos, videos, voice messages, etc). The most used are Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. It is within the framework of the continuously increasing use of social networks that a network called E-Influencers has been created in the DRC. Formally grouped on July 7, 2017 with the support of MONUSCO (BCNUDH), it has set up a guide to frame its work through a sort of self-regulation mechanism. The group affirms that they are "convinced that the promotion, the protection and the enjoyment of freedoms constitute for the e-influencers a means of concretising the public's right to information, advocated by the Congolese Constitution and by the legal instruments at international and regional levels and to which the DRC is a part. Congolese E-Influencers committed themselves "to promote these freedoms through online activity in the strict observance of ethics".

The social networks are most often used by young Congolese to exchange personal information, photos, and short videos. They are also used to distribute press articles "picked up" on the Internet through free access sites. Interest in their use is generally very limited to the only members of the constituted groups. There are no national statistics on their access and use, and their influence on the opinion mobilisation, for example, remains low, not because of the small number of users but because most distributed messages are of very limited interest to the public opinion with respect to individual members of constituted groups.

It should be noted that social networks play a very important role in the public debate as well as in the rapid and widespread sharing of information. They allow all leaders to easily mobilise their supporters. They also allow human rights defenders and journalists to issue timely warnings and information, especially in sensitive cases. For example, during the 2011 elections and the 2018 elections, social networks were used extensively to warn of human rights violations, electoral cheating, irregularities in the electoral process, and so on. They have also been used to distribute evidence such as images, videos, audio recordings, etc. Most of the messages distributed by social networks have blamed public institutions, particularly the one in charge of the electoral process. Between 2014 and 2015, social networks played an important role in raising awareness on the proposed constitutional amendment. On January 15, 2015, thanks to massive mobilisation, public protests stopped the ongoing attempts to change the constitution. If the current government of the DRC is able to understand the role and importance of these networks, it could use them or persuade them to pass messages of information and mobilise public opinion on several issues still affecting the population such as different pandemics and endemic diseases (including Ebola,

cholera, diseases related to poor hygiene, COVID19, etc).

Opinion Makers

Among the main opinion makers in the DRC there are:

- Politicians, often taking advantage of important deadlines and political circumstances to sell their brand image through speeches, usually limited to their self-promotion (Digital Congo, TV 50, RALIK, Groupe l'Avenir, Canal Futur, Canal Kin, etc);
- Promoters of “revival churches” medias, for preaching reasons but also for a kind of self-promotion and promotion of their churches in a highly competitive space (media created by pastor Sonny Kafuta, media created by pastor Mutombo Leopold, media created by bishop Pascal Mukuna, media created by pastor Sikatenda, , etc);
- The Catholic Church and the Kimbanguist Church, in the framework of the promotion of their respective doctrines through the dissemination of their cults, as well as debates often focusing on issues related to development and human rights (Radio Maria, RTCE, RTK, etc);
- The civil society organisations for the promotion of local development through the “radios de proximité” (Proximity radios or associative and communitarian radios like Radio Maendeleo in Bukavu, Radio Sauti ya Mkaaji in Kasongo, etc);
- Businessmen simply wanting to invest in the media field to gain financial benefits from advertising but also requests for airplay (Raga TV, Raga FM, CNTV, Antenna A, etc).
- It is important to note also the presence of the media created by humanitarian operators and international organisations or even by the United Nations. Such is the case of Radio Okapi which was a joint project of “Fondation Hironnelle” and the United Nations which covers almost the whole of the DRC. Fondation Hironnelle has left the project since 2017.

The target audience of these various information channels is diverse: For media created by politicians, auditors and viewers are usually members of their political organisations or simply their relatives. The influence of the discourse promoted by these media is thus very limited and with a small social impact. These media nonetheless contribute to informing about the most prominent political trends. They contribute to the media plurality of the fact that often their websites also publish information and analyzes carried out by other media. They are accessible by smartphones.

Politicians are the most prominent opinion makers in DRC. Not only most of them are the holders of private media, but they are also in a good financial position to access both public and private media. Those closed or member of the current political regime take also advantage in using public media which quite exclusively belong to the regime. The promoters of the églises de réveil (awakening churches) are the second group to influence the public/internal opinion. They are able to reach a critical mass of population using their own media and accessing other media, also having, like politician, means for that. They also use both public and their own media to advertise on themselves. In general, the Congolese do not trust politicians as they appear like liars and opportunists, changing at several occasions their own speeches and alliances.

The religious media, generally based in the cities, are more followed by the members of the revival churches. These members generally follow the sermons and prayers that are organised live by these media. These are usually media that have no development program. Their general impact is thus limited to the dissemination of religious doctrine.

The associative and community media, generally installed in the hinterland and in the villages, are followed by the members of those villages. These media organise generally programs focused on community development and peace. From time to time they organise political programs. Community members organize sometimes form themselves as “listening clubs” to

track, criticise, and make suggestions for the programs they broadcast. The impact of these media is felt particularly through communities affected by conflicts and poverty. Such is the example of the Radio TV Christian Assembly (RTACK) of Kinshasa which is property of Pastor Pascal Mukuna's church.

Blogs remain simple tools for personal communication, with scarce influence on the public opinion and very limited access. They are like personal websites. In addition to these individual spaces, there are other websites that are regularly and popularly frequented, particularly as they display information that is of primary use for the Congolese intellectual class looking for work, for example. This is the case, for example, of Mediascongo.net, which publishes daily, with regular updates, about vacancies and open tenders through agencies of the United Nations System, the Congolese government public services, the European Union, international and national NGOs, etc. The interest directly displayed by those who use is all the more obvious as the information they find there is very often relevant. This is also the case of Radiokapi.net because the information it publishes is generally considered credible and plural. The latter site has the advantage of publishing information on open job openings across the country as well as tenders.

But it is also important to note that there are several social issues that are still ignored by the media. The situation of various internally displaced persons fleeing conflicts, social insecurity or cases of diseases, the situation of foreign refugees in the DRC or even of Congolese who have gone abroad seeking refuge, the public expenditures trends, are all issues hardly ever covered by Congolese media. It is the same on issues about statistics, education, health, humanitarian situations, etc. The absence of specific public communication mechanisms on these topics widens the "black spots" which are not covered and which are not brought to the attention of public opinion and deciders.

Sources

Analysing the importance of the Congolese media, in terms of classification order, is at the same time analysing the question related to their financing and their productions, which is dependent on the context and the political circumstances of the country. The politicians, usually members or close to the powers in place, are the most demanding applicants for space in the media and they are the best players by their frequent visibility and simply by their political speeches without any real impact. It can be said that media revenues come largely from the payments received from the policies. It goes without saying that the importance of the media in order of ranking is often dependent on a "politically correct" behavior as each of the policies and each of the regimes think particularly to safeguard their brand image and not of promoting debates of ideas in a pluralist framework and freedom of expression. In most cases, media production is limited to conveying policy monologues or direct exchanges between journalists and a political actor. Few productions bring together several policies at once or several politicians and other social actors around an open debate. In the current context, this importance is as follows:

Newspapers

- [Forum des As](#)
- [L'Avenir](#)
- [L'Observateur](#)
- [La prospérité](#)
- [La Référence Plus](#)
- [La Tempête des Tropiques](#)
- [Le Palmarès](#)
- [Le Phare](#)
- [Le Potentiel](#)
- [Le Soft International](#)

Radios

- [B-One FM](#)
- [Digital Congo FM](#)
- [Fédération des Radios de Proximité de la R.D. Congo](#) (FRPC)
- [Radio Candip](#)
- [Radio Maendeleo](#)
- [Radio Maria](#)
- [Radio Okapi](#)
- [Radio Télé 50](#)
- [RTNC](#)
- [Top Congo FM](#)

Television

- [AMEN TV](#)
- [Antenne A](#)
- [Couleurs TV](#)
- [Digital Congo](#)
- [Nyota TV](#)
- [Radio Télé Catholique Elikya](#) (RTCE)
- [Raga TV](#)
- [RTNC](#)
- [Télé 50](#)
- [Télé Kin 24](#)

Digital media

- [7 sur 7](#)
- [Actualité](#)
- [Association des médias d'information en ligne](#) (MILRDC)
- [Congo virtuel](#)
- [Depeche](#)
- [Direct](#)
- [Journal des Nations](#)

- [La prunelle RDC](#)
- [Matininfos.net](#)
- [Mediascongo](#)
- [Politico](#)

Opinion Makers

- [Mediascongo](#)
- [Radiookapi.net](#)
- [RTNC](#) (with controversial content)
- [Le Phare](#)
- [Le Potentiel](#)
- [Le Soft International](#)

Organisations

Trade Unions

Since the 1990s, a group of journalists has set up a union called *Syndicat National des Professionnels de la Presse* (National Syndicate of Media Professionals - SNPP) which has the advantage of bringing together all categories and bodies of media and along with journalists. The SNPP is formed as a non-profit association, enjoying the decades-long support of the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ). But it remains very weakly structured because of the poor commitment of media professionals in defending their contractual rights. More than 90 percent of Congolese media professionals don't have contracts and are not paid regularly.

As for the owners of press houses, they are equally united in some sort of unions structured as non-profit associations. The editors of the written media are grouped together in the National Association of Publishers of Congo (ANECO) and the owners of radio and television through the National Association of Private Audiovisual Enterprises (ANEAP). These two organisations are not effective because of their weak internal structure and because of their lack of vision. Only the association of associative and community radios, the *Fédération des Radios de Proximité de la R.D. Congo* (Federation of local radio stations of the Congo - PRPC) seems to constitute a real lever for the reform of the legal and institutional framework of the media in general as well as the professionalisation and the reinforcement of the capacities of its members in particular.

Journalist Associations

The main journalist associations active in the DRC have the form of non-profit organisations. The main entity is the *Union nationale de la presse du Congo* (National Union of Media Professionals - UNPC), which was set up in March 2004 at the end of a major congress of media professionals that had the ambition to rebuild the journalistic profession in the DRC. It brings together all the media professionals who adhere to it and to whom it issues a professional card. It functions as a self-regulatory organ of the journalistic profession throughout the entire DRC. In this capacity, as a sort of "police officer" of professional ethics of the field, it permanently monitors compliance with the provisions of the Code of Ethics and Deontology of the Congolese journalist and imposes sanctions in all circumstances of violation. It also monitors attacks on the freedom of

the press and issues warnings and other denunciations, protests, with the aim of their ceasing. Totally independent of the political regime in place and functioning as a trade union of media professionals, it replaced the Zaire Press Union (UPZA), which at the time was affiliated to the Popular Movement of the Revolution (MPR), the sole party of dictator Mobutu. The UNPC has serious operational difficulties due to its technical weaknesses, budget and sometimes to its highly contested political positions. Its credibility and legitimacy are unfortunately at the center of several discussions within the sector, to the point that its jurisdiction is ultimately limited only to professionals who have adhered to its statutes.

Journaliste en danger (Journalist in Danger - JED) was created in 1999 by a group of media professionals and is a member organisation of the Congolese civil society specialised in the surveillance of freedom of the press. Since 2004, it has been mandated to be the warning network of the Central African Media Organisation (OMAC) whenever freedom of the press is infringed. In monitoring freedom of the press, JED operates in each of the DRC provinces and in other countries where it operates with correspondents, who are primarily responsible for alerting the Kinshasa office of any cases of violations of human rights and freedom of the press in their respective environments. More than any other association in the field, JED ensures a permanent and quality work in the reinforcement of the democratic governance through the defense and the promotion of the freedom of the press, a particularly important component of freedom of expression.

News Agencies

The Congolese Press Agency (ACP) is the only national news agency. In addition to it, there are other news agencies, mostly foreign, which are alternatives for accessing information in the DRC, mainly for the intellectual class and for other media. They are essentially: Associated Press (AP), Agence France Presse (AFP), Bloomberg, Reuters and Xinhua News Agency.

According to the information available on its website, ACP was created on 12 August, 1960 by decree of the Prime Minister of the time, Patrice Emery Lumumba, on the ashes of the representative office of the Belgian Agency, BELGA, in Kinshasa. The CPA was granted legal personality by presidential decree of 3 February, 1967, making it a "public institution of a technical, administrative and commercial nature." On 2 April, 1981, the ACP - renamed Agence Zaïre Presse (AZAP) in 1971 - became by order a public company placed under the dual technical supervision of the Ministry of the Press and Information, and administrative of the Ministry of the Wallet. During the advent of the regime of the Alliance of the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of the Congo (AFDL), the agency has regained its original designation of ACP. Its missions are:

- Searching both in the Democratic Republic of Congo and abroad for elements of accurate and objective information to be made available to users, at a cost;
- Studying and implementing programs or means of information in writing and by images that can serve the international credit of DR Congo;
- Ensuring the existence of a network of institutions that gives it the character of a world-wide news organisation;
- Making special efforts to promote the development of the country through the information it disseminates;
- Taking into account, in the dissemination of its information, the mission of mass education that is incumbent on the Congolese people.

It is important to point out that the ACP is a public media totally in the hands and under the influence of the successive political regimes in Kinshasa since its creation. In terms of agency, its audience is very small because of the unattractive and political nature of its productions. It sells almost nothing outside the DRC.

Audience measurement organisations

The DRC does not have diversified professional bodies for audience measurement or even media ratings. There are,

however, some reports of surveys conducted by Target and similar companies, which are carried out to "better guide the choices of advertisers, communication agencies and media." The media audience in the DRC is determined not by a deliberate and plural choice of listeners and viewers but by the constraints that limit their choices, in terms of material and contextual possibilities. On a material level, access remains conditioned by financial capabilities. Many Congolese would like to have a TV set that unfortunately costs far more than a small portable radio, especially in the hinterland. From a contextual point of view, the country continues to face a shortage of electricity distribution. And the choice of television becomes impossible, including in cities there are areas not provided or irregularly provided with electricity. It is this contextual difficulty that explains why radio is largely preferred as a medium.

For Target, poor access to electricity is a principal cause of the use of radio, which "grew by 11 percent between 2017 and 2018 to reach 72 percent, against 48 percent for television and 9 percent for cable channels." This situation is reinforced by the more and more regular interruptions of the Internet, which has become a means for the political regime in place to control and restrict the freedom of criticism from media in general. The print media occupy the last place for two essential reasons: there are limited to main towns, most of Congolese population cannot afford their daily cost and reading does not yet appear to be a point of attraction for the Congolese in general and for young in particular.

Sources

Trade unions

- [Federation of local radio stations of the Congo](#) (PRPC)
- [National Syndicate of Media Professionals](#) (SNPP)
- [National Union of Media Professionals](#) (UNPC)

Journalist associations

- [Journalist in danger](#) (JED)
- [Observatoire des medias congolais](#) (OMEC)
- [Union Congolaise des femmes des Médias](#) (UCOFEM)
- [Union nationale de la presse congolaise](#) (UNPC)

News agency

- [Congolese Press Agency](#) (ACP)

Audience measurement organisations

- [Immar](#)
- [Target](#)

Policies

Media legislation

The Congolese Constitution protects freedom of the press through its articles 23 and 24. These provisions are in accordance

with the international instruments to which the DRC is party in the field of human rights in general especially the provisions 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 9 of the African Charter on people Human Rights, the Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression in Africa, the Munich Charter, etc) considered as part of the legal framework applicable in the DRC. More specifically, the freedom of the press is governed in the DRC by Law No 96-002 of 22 June, 1996 laying down the procedures for the exercise of this freedom. This legal framework is supplemented by:

- Leganet website (www.leganet.cd);
- Larriers Codes, Democratic Republic of Congo, Volume VI, Public and Administrative Law, Vol. 1- Public Law, Editions Africa, pp 310-370, 392-475;
- Larriers Codes, Democratic Republic of Congo, Volume VI, Public and Administrative Law, Vol. 2- Administrative Law, Editions Africa, pp 310-370, 392-475, pp 15-47, 356-380;
- Organic Law n° 11/001 of 10 January, 2011 on the composition, attributions and functioning of the Superior Council of Audiovisual and Communication (CSAC, which is the public institution for media regulation in DRC);
- Directives and Decisions of the Superior council of audio-visual and the communication.

The legal framework on freedom of the press in the DRC is therefore abundant. Still, it does not promote a real freedom of criticism for the media because of the constraints contained in the penal code. This code seems to protect the honor and reputation of individuals, especially political and military leaders, to the detriment of the public's right to information. Offenses such as "defamation" or "harmful imputations", "spreading false sounds", outrages on the Head of State etc, are provided for and punished by the Penal Code to intimidate the media and deprive them of any freedom of criticism. Journalists are thus prosecuted and sentenced to prison whenever a person (generally a political or military leader) tells the court that the journalist's article has harmed his honor.

The DRC does not have a specific national policy in the field of public information. Each of the media develops programs that seem to him the most profitable. The obligation given by the 1996 and 2011 laws to reset every 4 months the programmes they want to develop to the regulatory authority is generally not followed because of the weakness of this institution and because of corruption. The consequence is that the programs broadcast by all these media are opportunistic.

Accountability systems

It is impossible to talk about accountability of the Congolese media. Compared to consumers (listeners, readers, viewers), the Congolese media behave rather opportunistically. In many cases, they report only on current political issues, leaving aside other issues of economic, social, development or human rights concerns. In relation to themselves and the professional rules (ethic and deontology) that govern them, this accountability is even less. First of all because of the weaknesses of the professional structures that struggle to impose the respect of ethics and deontology. Secondly, because of the absence of contractual mechanisms in the media, concerning the professionals who periodically work without pay. The absence of salaries in the media dangerously exposes the independence of professionals, especially in relation to their sources. In most media, professionals are paid by their sources to publish certain stories or advertise certain events that the source is involved in (this type of payment is generally called *coupage*). This long-standing practice is a form of corruption known to all media owners, public and private, and has unfortunately become a consecrated mode of operation. Sponsors of articles and media programs pay for time to be anchored, or even sometimes to attack an adversary, especially in the political sector. Finally, the weakness of protective institutions in general and of institutional justice in particular, does not allow for the establishment or strengthening of the revocability of the media. They relay the practice of corruption through impunity. In general, they do not know much about the importance of protecting the freedom of the press as a fundamental value in the democratic

governance of modern states.

Regulatory authorities

The country has a public institution that is responsible for regulating the media. It is the *Conseil supérieur de l'audiovisuel et de la communication* (Superior Council of the Audio-visual and the Communication - CSAC) which was instituted by article 212 of the Constitution promulgated in February 2006 and modified in 2011. It is, within the meaning of Title V of the Constitution and Article 2 of its Organic Law, an "independent and autonomous institution, support for democracy" which has (Article 8 of its organic law) to guarantee the freedom of the press, information and other means of mass communication; to protect the press; to ensure the respect of the deontology in information; and to ensure the equitable access of political parties, associations and others to formal means of information and communication.

According to its organic law, the CSAC is composed of 15 members including delegates from the Presidency of the Republic, those of the government but also those of the national assembly and the Senate. The presence of these delegates from political institutions visibly correlates the institutional independence of the CSAC. Its technical expertise is undermined by the fact that, on the whole, these political delegates often do not have the proven technical capacity to work within this institution, which is both technical and independent. Because of its strong political dependence, the CSAC is often criticised for being more than tolerant of the professional faults committed by the public media, generally at the service of the political regime in place, as well as the other media that are close to this regime. It is accused to be severe to private media (commercial and associative/community) who seem to be more or less equitable in their debates.

Sources

- [Commission électorale nationale indépendante](#) (Independent National Electoral Commission - CENI)
- [Conseil supérieur de l'audiovisuel et de la communication](#) (Superior Council of Audiovisual and Communication - CSAC)
- [Journal Officiel de la République Démocratique du Congo](#) (Official Journal of the Democratic Republic of Congo)
- [Leganet](#)
- [Ministère de la culture](#) (Ministry of Culture)
- [Ministère de la justice](#) (Ministry of Justice)
- [Ministère des finances](#) (Ministry of Finances)
- [Ministère du plan](#) (Ministry of Planning)
- [Ministère en charge des médias](#) (Ministry of Media)
- [Présidence de la RDC](#) (Presidency of RDC)
- [Primature](#) (Prime Minister)

Education

Universities and schools

The DRC has dozens of faculties and departments of public and private universities dedicated to training in communication and journalism. They have qualified and competent, but very poorly paid teachers, as for most of the agents and civil

servants of the State, and who are in very small numbers in relation to the demand. The country has more or less 3,000 teachers with less than 500 dedicated to teach communication and journalism for all the universities in all its 26 provinces. The fact that they are also very poorly paid (less than 1,500 dollars for the ordinary teacher) pushes them to seek complementary jobs, especially through other universities (especially private). This situation strongly affects the quality of the teaching provided by teachers who are unmotivated and who cannot give the best of themselves. These faculties and departments of communication and journalism also have libraries, which are unfortunately not up to date. Internet connection is not ensured within these faculties and departments because overall they don't have sufficient financial means for their operations. The lack of motivation of teachers, the lack of equipment and didactic materials also affects the quality of the training that students receive, which is not competitive compared with what their colleagues in other countries receive. New technologies are not taught in a practical way in the faculties of communication and journalism. These faculties lack teaching materials and the students do not perform practical exercises. Moreover, teachers are poorly trained on new technologies. The fact that many lessons are purely theoretical does not give the finalists the opportunity to present themselves as well-trained technicians. And this weakness of training negatively affects their subsequent professional benefits.

The most important Journalism and Communication Science courses are available at:

- *Institut Facultaire des Sciences de l'Information et de la Communication*(IFASIC). This one is the most specialised in journalism training.
- *Université catholique du Congo* (UCC)
- *Université de Kinshasa* (UNIKIN)
- *Université Evangélique en Afrique* (UEA)
- *Université Libre des Pays des Grands Lacs* (ULPGL)
- *Université Officielle de Bukavu* (UOB)
- *Université protestante au Congo* (UPC)

Professional development

The journalism profession in DRC is one that offers free access to all people including those who do not have a university education in journalism and who come to train directly in practice. Yet Ordinance-Law N 81-012 of 2 April, 1981 is clear on the status of journalists working in the DRC as to the conditions of access to the journalistic profession, particularly with regard to the apprenticeship of the profession, namely through a probationary period. Internships are mandatory. But this is not respected by most media. The structural weaknesses of the CSAC, the OMEC and the UNPC, make any improvement of this situation unforeseeable. Several finalists from schools in communication or journalism are directly embracing the profession in one or the other professional category of the media field. They do not take any further training in terms of professional preparation. Nevertheless, there are journalists who have never received academic training and who have trained themselves on the job.

Indeed, the country currently has journalists who have degrees in medicine, law and economics. In most cases, these professionals from other scientific fields work as specialists when reporting on issues within their areas of training. They present themselves as experts on these questions and their productions are generally better presented. There are some who practice journalism as their main job and others who exercise it as a secondary profession. The presence of sectoral experts in the journalistic profession is an advantage in terms of the quality and accuracy of their reporting. However, in accordance with the Ordonnance-loi of 1981 on the status of Congolese journalists, it is important that upon entry into the profession all these people make a two-year professional internship to learn about journalistic ethics and deontology.

Media Development Organisations

Media development organisations in DRC also have the form of non-profit organisations. One of the oldest one is the *Union Congolaise des Femmes des Médias* (Congolese Union of Media Women - UCOFEM), which is a member organisation of the Congolese civil society which was created in 1997 by a group of women journalists committed to promoting the rights of women and their leadership position by and through the media. Its purpose is of promoting the rights of its members. With more than 300 members, all women, UCOFEM is established throughout the DRC fighting for equal opportunities through the promotion of gender-specific rights and through the fight against discrimination. The impact of the work of Congolese NGOs in general is low because of the very low level of their professionalisation and their institutional and operational capacities. However UCOFEM constitutes an important organisation which pleads essentially on the citizen participation of the woman. It is an opportunity in the fight for equal rights in this country where women, poorly educated and burdened by various customs constraints, are often left out of spaces where important decisions are made.

The *Observatoire des Médias Congolais* (Observer for Congolese Media - OMEC) was set up at the end of the *Congrès de la refondation* (Re-foundation Congress) of journalism in March 2004 to support the UNPC in the work of internal monitoring of the professional ethics and professional conduct of journalists. It was intended as an internal court of peers, to judge journalists on purely professional faults. It is struggling to function because of the same flaws that affect the UNPC and it needs to be strengthened operationally in order to constitute a real hub of protection of media professionals and an alternative to the prosecution against journalists by holders of power (military, economic, political, etc) on the background of their refusal of media criticism.

Some of the associations mentioned in Journalist associations are also active as media development organisations: UNPC as it should in principle bring together all Congolese media professionals and JED as its training sessions on several occasions have strengthened, to a certain extent, the professional capacities of several actors in the field.

Sources

Universities/Schools of Journalism

- [Institut Facultaire des Sciences de l'Information et de la Communication](#) (IFASIC).
- [Université Catholique de Bukavu](#) (UCB)
- [Université catholique du Congo](#) (UCC)
- [Université de Kinshasa](#) (UNIKIN)
- [Université Evangélique en Afrique](#) (UEA)
- [Université Libre des Pays des Grands Lacs](#) (ULPGL)
- [Université Officielle de Bukavu](#) (UOB)
- [Université protestante au Congo](#) (UPC)

Media development organisations

- [OMEC](#)
- [UCOFEM](#)

Telecommunications

Mobile network ecosystem

Since the 1980s, the innovations brought by telecommunication were numerous and mostly related to accessibility, costs and services. The constant review of the prices has favored accessibility for all Congolese to a personal cell phone. In the meantime, progressive innovations have allowed for a more than diverse use of the cell phone. Not only for calls, but also for photos, videos, storage, audio recording, Internet connection sharing with the computer, etc. Quite often, Congolese have more than one cell phone. There are some who have even four or five, or who have two or more SIM cards from the same distributor.

Along with the public administration services of the state, telecommunication companies are among the major job-seekers. And alongside extractive companies, they are also among the largest contributors to the country's fiscal resources. Faced with the decay of the social sector, they play a major role in supporting basic infrastructure and education. They bring equipment to hospitals, homes for the elderly, centres for the disabled, NGOs, schools and sometimes support promising students through scholarships. On the whole, these activities contribute to the fight against poverty and the strengthening of solidarity.

Unfortunately, most of these activities are not organised systematically and programmatically. They seem to be organised in such a way as to publicise those who do so without the involvement of the sectoral ministries. In most cases they are organised without any initial-needs surveys and without any subsequent evaluation. Most of these activities are concentrated in major cities for publicity reasons. However, it is important to note that some of these activities have indeed strengthened the capacities of some private schools, notably by providing students with access to tablets as teaching and class work materials.

Company profiles

Since the promulgation of the law of 16 October, 2002, which has liberalised the telecommunication domain, the DRC has five main mobile service providers: Vodacom, Airtel, Orange, Africell and Standard Télécom. Five more companies operate besides them, using cellular technology for reasons of short-range communication (walkie-talkies). The emergence of private companies in the field of mobile/cellular telecommunication has been favored by the decay of the public company which was licensed since the end of the 1970s.

The figures published by Target in 2017, documented on the basis of statements made to the ARPTC, report 28.8 million subscribers to Vodacom as leader with 33 percent of all users, 30 percent to Orange, 23 percent for Airtel and 13 percent for Africell. The relevance of this study could, however, be called into question, as regards the classification in order of importance of telecommunication companies.

The social capital of the telecommunications companies comes from foreign investors, with the exception of Vodacom Congo, part of whose social capital is Congolese. More and more, these companies have set up a messaging system, which allows for individual savings and money to be transferred across all corners of the country.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, cell phone companies have gained importance and visibility because of their impact on the state budget and especially in the employment domain. Meanwhile, the public service that operated fixed telephony, the *Office Congolais des Postes et Télécommunications* (Congolese Office of Posts and Telecommunications - OCPT) has not worked since the 1980s, especially because of the mismanagement of the dictatorial power of Mobutu. Even after Mobutu,

this service has never been rehabilitated because of a lack of vision of the successive political regimes.

Main trends

Since 2015, the DRC has experienced several innovations based on ICTs. This is the case with new technologies aimed at providing tailored solutions in the mobile payment sector, including mobile banking. In 2018, money transactions that were exclusively carried out on mobile phones are now also carried out between mobile phones and ATMs installed by private banks through the streets in Kinshasa and the provinces.

The most used applications on cell phones are those that allow access to social networks, and capture and store files including audio, visual, photos, documents, etc. Young people tend to use apps largely to communicate and share experiences (capturing and sending pictures, videos, sounds, etc), and often play games on phones, contributing to the increase of the gaming trend.

More and more, as stated above, phones also serve as tools for sending or storing money (Orange Money, Mpesa, Airtel Money). This trend allows for occasional financial "fixes", which can cover large sums up to US\$3,000. The possibility of financial transaction by telephone favors purchases. By phone, people in DRC can renew their subscription to cable channels, buy phone credit for their SIM cards, pay debts, lend money, make donations etc.

At the social level, these operations made possible the strengthening of ties and relationships. They reduce the cost of financial transactions through couriers and facilitate the procedures for sending money and accessing the money sent. They also facilitate the online purchase of various services such as telephone credits, the subscription to cable television channels, the payment of debts, etc.

Other innovations have brought solutions in the field of family planning, through applications created by Congolese people, such as the mobile application *Cycle M* that helps women to track their menstrual cycle. In the field of health, the application *Palu Check* helps people who download it on their mobile phones to be diagnosed with malaria. Other Congolese apps include *PayWebPhone*, otherwise known as "the Congolese mini paypal" which is an online payment system resulting from a Web/GSM marriage. The *UB-BO X* decoder system can capture and record more than 50 national and local TV channels without having to use a satellite dish. The decoder is used with a rake antenna (radio) to receive the signal. *Pre-Exetat* is a mobile application of education for pupils in fifth and sixth grades. It works on smartphones with the Android operating system and allows students to have questions (items) that could help them self-evaluate.

Mobile coverage

The cell phone is currently one of the main means of communication throughout the DRC. The public fixed telephone service does not cover the whole country, which, in principle, is entirely covered by cellular telephony. But the territory is so vast that in each of the 26 provinces there are "black holes" where there is no cellular coverage. These uncovered parts are generally considered unprofitable spaces.

All telecommunication companies offer technology based on 3G. Since the end of 2018, Vodacom, Airtel and Orange started progressively to offer 4G services, yet at slower rates compared to 4G in other countries. The signal is well received in Kinshasa and in the major cities of the other provinces. The areas that are not covered are in very remote rural areas and far from the city centers.

In theory there are no age groups or gender or social and ethnic groups excluded from ICT access. However, we cannot overlook the fact that in order to be part of the users of this technology, one is required to have the means to buy a phone

and to buy a traffic plan. It should be also remembered that all cell phone companies are commercial enterprises that seek to maximise profits. The abovementioned "black holes" are either areas inhabited by very poor populations or areas isolated by water or forest. The poor are thus effectively excluded. There is no sectoral policy to promote access to ICTs for all the Congolese. The poor governance of the country, does not allow an optimal deployment of these companies throughout the country and does not allow an economic recovery of these poor and destitute populations.

Mobile ownership

During the 1980s, the use of the services of the Telecell network was prohibitively expensive (rental and non-purchase of the device at US\$1,000 and calls per minute at US\$3/5). Towards the end of the Mobutu regime and at the beginning of the regime of Laurent Désiré Kabila (1997), with the arrival of a new investor (Cell Net) the cost rose to US\$300 for the purchase and no longer the rental of a GSM device. Local calls went from US\$3/5 to less than US\$1 per minute/call. The price went even lower.

The majority of the population has access to cellular services, since costs have become more accessible. During the 1980s, the rent (not the purchase) of a cell phone could reach US\$1,000. And this amount was paid each month by the cell phone holders (Télécell). Between 1997 and 2000, cell phones cost (per purchase) between US\$300 and 800. Currently, in the DRC, one can buy a cell phone for US\$10 only. Commercial competition among the various cellular operators is the main cause of this gradual decline in prices.

A large number of Congolese and most public officials communicate via cell phones. Journalists use telecommunication daily to do live reporting and share information online. Also human rights defenders do so to alert and communicate in a rapid and direct manner about violations. Political actors also use it to mobilise their supporters.

In general, all the inhabitants of the DRC use mobile phones to share messages, photos, videos or recordings either directly on social networks (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp, etc) or via email with a network of friends, colleagues or close family members. It was during the 2006, 2011 and 2018 elections that cell phones were widely used by media professionals to make telecommunication more widely available to all these professional and social categories (live coverage by journalists, alerts on human rights violations by human rights defenders, very broad communications about election cheating by election observers and by the general population). The very wide use of telecommunication to monitor the action by the government and other institutions has rolled back electoral cheating. But it has somewhat embarrassed the government, which has, at each of these deadlines, cut off access to the cellular Internet to protect itself but also to prevent the dissemination of information that could disturb public order. The government, unable to control the content of the Internet more broadly, is limited to cut off the signal as soon as it feels attacked by posts of Internet users using cell phones.

Sources

- [Africell](#)
- [Airtel](#)
- [Canal Plus](#)
- [Congovirtuel.com](#) (a larger list of commercial enterprises in the DRC telecommunication field is posted on this site)
- [Orange](#)
- [Standard Télécom](#)
- [Vodacom](#)

Innovation

Landscape analysis

The DRC does not have an integrated innovation system that could facilitate or accelerate innovation in the country. Without a developed public administration and without policies to improve the education system, the innovation landscape is unlikely to improve. Technological innovation remains blocked by the low budget of the country and by the issue of generalised corruption. In 2018, the Minister of Justice claimed that the country was annually losing US\$14bn due to corruption. This, for example, is one of the causes of the slow implementation of the optic fiber, which is already used by several other neighboring countries. This situation does not allow the education system to function optimally and to train youth in ICTs. Nor does it allow the public administration to modernise and be competitive. The innovations that exist come from the creativity of young Congolese, supported by private companies such as banks and cellular telecommunications companies, in the development of several applications in the fields of health, education, research and development, employment, online training, etc. The new political party in power since December 30, 2018 has raised hopes, but the challenges to face remain in place.

Private companies have started to take initiative to address disparities involving women, people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups who do not have means to obtain education. To address visible disparities, some cell phone companies such as Vodacom and Airtel have begun to support the training of girls in school and to teach adult women digital literacy. Others have developed support programmes for local projects, such as the installation of private communication booths, support for phone card resellers, etc. These initiatives should be capitalised by the government in order to become target points to address permanently through specific policies.

Profiles of main tech parks, accelerators, hackathons

Tech parks, accelerators and hackathons are difficult to implement in the DRC, which has a budget of US\$5bn a year and no opportunity to support the creativity and dissemination of innovations across the country. In most cases, private banks and cellular communication companies support such innovation initiatives. There are some autonomous platforms that are dedicated to the dissemination of information specific to the development of sectoral groups. In the social field, organisations such as the Disability Group and other NGOs have started to build websites on which they advocate for human rights in general. Unfortunately the low level of training and education on ICTs offered to the population, especially in the interior of the country, acts as a brake. As a result, these innovations and technologies remain elitist and cannot be accessed by the entire population indistinctly, particularly in the hinterland.

Sources

- [Société Congolais des Postes et Télécommunications](#) (SCPT)
- [Office Congolais des Postes et Télécommunications](#) (OCPT)

Traditional forms of communication

Summary

Traditional modes of access to information are different according to the cultures, habits of local communities and the languages they use. People living in the forests use messengers who move from one territory to another to either pass a message or search for information that the community leader or the community itself needs. This is the case in communities living in the equatorial forest (some villages in North and South Ubangi are perfect illustrations).

On the whole, communities deprived of any possibility of accessing information through the media organise themselves around their customary chiefs and receive information, instructions and guidance only through him or through its organs (people working for him in a sort a local government) committed as communication relays. In all the communities throughout the villages in the DRC, the customary chiefs are the points to impulse and even for the management of all information. In all these communities, customary chiefs act through their collaborators who constitute relays. However, radio is becoming more and more prevalent in all regions and constitutes the source of information on the country and on other countries. Because of poverty, some of the communities have only one person or two owning a radio. In this case the whole neighborhood often comes to listen to the radio at their home and in the evening mainly men share the information received around the local drink during their traditional discussions.

Sources

- FAO. [Les moyens de communication traditionnelle](#)
- Institut français de RDC. [Les instruments de musique et de communication de la RDC](#)
- Memoireonline. [Communication et Journalisme](#)
- Memoireonline. [Les moyens de communication traditionnels en zone rurale dans l'espace culturel koongo: cas du département du Pool](#)
- Tackborse. [Les systèmes traditionnels africains de la communication](#)

Conclusions

Conclusion

In the DRC, media and journalists do not enjoy sufficient protection from public authorities and institutions. They work and live permanently in the fear of closure, prosecution, administrative hassle and even acts of violence that may come from political sympathisers. The fear in which they operate and live is a consequence of the refusal of acceptance of media criticism in general by political actors which include the organizers of institutions and managers in charge of portfolio services. This fear and intimidation is reinforced by the provisions of the Penal Code, which seems to protect people's honor and public credibility to the detriment of the public's right to information. Meanwhile, direct and indirect government support to the press, which has been planned since 1996 by law, has never been organised. In particular political contexts, such as the current electoral process, the media and their professionals are much more in demand, particularly from candidates and political majorities. This solicitation is just as intimidating, especially towards the media and the professionals who broadcast information from one political competitor in contradiction of another one. It is characterised by a high level of corruption, through the above mentioned practice of the *coupagne*, meaning the purchase of the work and consciousness of journalists, who usually have no other means of subsistence.

The administrative and financial harassment that the media companies are constantly facing is not likely to favor their

development. There are many basic services *Agence nationale de renseignements* (National Agency of Information - ANR), *Direction générale des impôts* (General Directory of Taxes - DGI), *Direction générale des douanes et accises* (General Directory of customs and tariffs - DGDA), *Société congolaise des droits d'auteurs* (Congolesse Society of author's rights - SOCODA), *Fonds culturel congolais* (Congolesse Cultural Fund - FPC), whose over-taxation continuously weakens the possibilities of financial and economic development of the media, particularly under the commercial aspect which is already weakened by questionable practices. For example, apart from *bracicoles* (beer breweries) advertisers are very small in number. Communication companies go through advertising agencies that subtract media for ads. This further decreases the price-fixing freedom of advertising by the media.

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