

Fall 2016

Analysis of Media in Rwanda: Internship with the New Times

Rhiannon Snide
SIT Study Abroad

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P.O Box 4582. Kacyiru South, No 24, KG3 Ave, Gasabo District, Kacyiru Sector

**Analysis of Media in Rwanda:
Internship with the New Times**

By: Rhiannon Snide
December, 2016

Abstract:

This report examines the effects and expectations of media in Rwanda today, specifically in reference to the New Times daily newspaper. I spent one month interning with the New Times as a news writer, spending approximately 45 to 50 hours a week with the institution. Within this month, I was able to use both primary research and secondary research to analyze the role of media in Rwanda's society today. Interviews with head editors of the New Times and conversations with paid journalists from the New Times provided me with much of the information specific to the news outlet, while desk research provided me with more of a background on general media. This research exposed the aims of the New Times and general media within Rwanda to oppose propaganda that may be harmful to societal views. It discusses history of media in Rwanda and the negative effects various types of media have on a society; and the challenges and aims of today's Rwandan media in addressing the context of a post-genocide society.

Acknowledgements:

To all the Staff at SIT, Rwanda:

Thank you for your hospitality and support through the entire process of my internship. Without the contacts provided by this program I would not have found the connection to the New Times which resulted in my opportunity to intern. The spacious monitoring provided by Celine, Sunday, and Mercy, in particular, to keep me safe is especially appreciated.

To the New Times:

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to see and experience the inner workings of your news outlet. A special thanks to my two editors, James Tasamba and James Munyaneza, for their guidance and support; your advice, allowed me to grow as a writer and understand media in Rwanda from a different context.

To my SIT Peers:

Thank you for being a support system throughout this whole experience. Discussions about not only ISP, but daily life and our experiences allowed me to feel comfortable in where I was throughout this whole process and gave me the encouragement to keep moving with my internship. Both the fun and serious times we have shared have given me a wider outlook on the world, something I will carry forever.

To my Reader:

Thank you for taking the time to read my analysis of media in Rwanda, and my time with the New Times. Media is so important for the public to pay attention to and understand, as it shapes public opinions and informs people of relevant happenings. It was my pleaser to spend a month researching this topic and writing for the New Times.

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I. Introduction

Mass media has been a key participant in publishing government, social, and economic happenings, along with many other forms of news that would be unattainable for the general public. Access to this information allows opinions to be formed on various public matters, that in turn creates social change. If this outlet is corrupt in anyway, public opinion can be subconsciously changed to inflict harm to certain groups, or create changes in favor of certain groups. In more recent times media has altered into various forms, becoming accessible through video, online streaming, radio, and print. Print being the longest existing form of mass media, and the type of news source I interned with for a month, will be the focus of this report as I present the roles of media within Rwanda, and my experiences with the New Times.

II. Background of Media: Literature Review

2.1 Media Corruption

Press is often looked at as a tool to eradicate and callout corruption within both the public and private sectors, an ideal that is not always accurate. A quote from Reporters without borders World 2016 Report published in USA Today magazine expressed some flaws in modern media.

*Most of the movement . . . is indicative of a climate of fear and tension combined with increasing control over newsrooms by governments and private-sector interests. The . . . Index reflects the intensity of the attacks on journalistic freedom and independence by governments, ideologies, and private sector interests.*¹

Corruption within media itself is hardly unheard of as the report explained, but in no way is all media corrupt. A discussion presented by James Lull's *Culture-On Demand: Communication in a Crisis World*, shared how media throughout the world could remain unbiased and useful, regardless of the other corruption that takes place throughout the world. He found that the more accessible information has gotten the less corrupt world leaders could become.²

*computers and digital media... [ensure] that a ready stock of cultural information is always available. As part of the process, the world's political, economic, military, religious, and cultural elite must be able to stand up to the disinfecting sunlight of transparency and the discerning court of global public opinion.*³

¹ FREEDOM OF THE PRESS ON ENDANGERED LIST. (Cover Story). (2016). USA Today Magazine, 145(2855), 1-3.

² Lull, James (2007). *Culture-OnDemand: Communication in a Crisis World*. Oxford; Blackwell Publishing, 2007.

³ Lull, James (2007). *Culture-OnDemand: Communication in a Crisis World*. Oxford; Blackwell Publishing, 2007. pp. 149

Both claims are correct in their own right, as media has enough power to either harness its own, or expose corruption throughout the world. There are numerous cases to demonstrate either argument of mass media revealing or enhancing corruption.

Through monetary bribes, self-interests, and other forms of corruption, the media can be a very dangerous tool as it reaches out to all people. The Emory Law journal of 2006 outlined the dangerous ways media can be corrupt, promoting interests of business, political figures, etc. Sharing an example of the National Rifle Association in the United States using radio media to promote self-interest. The NRA created radio station called NRANews that was broadcasted to “approximately four hundred thousand Sirius subscribers as well as an online audience at nranews.com.”⁴ This news station was aimed at political elections occurring in 2004, and negatively portrayed John Kerry, the democratic presidential nominee in 2004 because the democratic party ideals of gun ownership were not in line with those of the NRA.⁵

As discussed in the previous section, media is looked to by the public for information in order to form opinions and become informed of the happenings in the world. When such information is being received from a biased source with special interests in mind, the public’s opinions are not genuine, because they cannot receive accurate information. Burger discusses this issue in a quote “it could be argued that. . . media conglomerates . . . pose a much more realistic threat to valid interests than do ... entities not regularly concerned with shaping popular opinion on public issues.”⁶

⁴ CORPORATE MEDIA POWER, CORRUPTION, AND THE MEDIA EXEMPTION. (2006). Emory Law Journal. 55(1). 161-192.

⁵ CORPORATE MEDIA POWER, CORRUPTION, AND THE MEDIA EXEMPTION. (2006). Emory Law Journal. 55(1). 161-192.

⁶ First Nat'l Bank of Boston v. Bellotti, 435 U.S. 765, 796-97 (1978) (Burger, C.J., concurring). "Making traditional use of the corporate form,"

2.3 Rwandan media prior to 1994 Genocide

This threat was demonstrated through the propaganda leading up to the 1994 Genocide against Tutsis. Through various outlets, i.e. print, and radio, a message of discrimination against Tutsis was forced into the lives of all Rwandans. Kangura, a Hutu extremist newspaper and RTLM (Television Libre des Milles Collines), a Hutu extremist radio station, both were major distributors of propaganda encouraging the slaughter of Tutsis leading up to 1994. In particular, RTLM directly ordered the execution of all Tutsis and stated the locations of Tutsis on air, after President Habyarimana's plane was shot down.⁷

The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda found the owners of both news outlets guilty of inciting genocide, proving that media plays a large role in influencing customers on public matters. Determining the criminal offenses of media outlets relied heavily on legal analysis, not only on the obvious phrases promoting genocide, but the tone, content, accuracy, and intent were all examined factors.⁸

2.4 Media post 1994 Genocide

Such influence on the population, and results of media influence in the 1994 genocide has led to hesitation from the government to grant total freedom of press in Rwanda, according to the Harvard International Review. A censorship policy was created to avert the incitement of further tragedy. President Kagame's media policy specifically states, "any attempt, via the media, to

⁷ INTERNATIONAL LAW -- GENOCIDE -- U.N. TRIBUNAL FINDS THAT MASS MEDIA HATE SPEECH CONSTITUTES GENOCIDE, INCITEMENT TO GENOCIDE, AND CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY. -- Prosecutor v. Nahimana, Barayagwiza, and Ngese (Media Case). Case No. ICTR-99-52-T (Int'l Crim. Trib. for Rwanda Trial Chamber I Dec. 3, 2003). (2004). *Harvard Law Review*, 117(8), 2769-2776

⁸ INTERNATIONAL LAW -- GENOCIDE -- U.N. TRIBUNAL FINDS THAT MASS MEDIA HATE SPEECH CONSTITUTES GENOCIDE, INCITEMENT TO GENOCIDE, AND CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY. -- Prosecutor v. Nahimana, Barayagwiza, and Ngese (Media Case). Case No. ICTR-99-52-T (Int'l Crim. Trib. for Rwanda Trial Chamber I Dec. 3, 2003). (2004). *Harvard Law Review*, 117(8), 2769-2776

incite a part of the Rwandan population to genocide, is liable to the death sentence.”⁹ The Harvard review further discusses the censorship in Rwandan media in relation to criticisms of the government, referring to instances where journalists and media members have been beaten, and threatened for negatively portraying the government. One case included Agnes Nkusi-Uwimana, who was put in prison for a year after printing a letter from a reader in a bimonthly journal that was critical of the government. Furthering the watch on media is the, High Press Council which monitors the main news sources in Rwanda for “unacceptable content.”¹⁰ These precautions are all taken solely due to the major impact media has in encouraging social chaos within a community. By regulating the media, the government has better control when it comes to regulating the country’s ideals.

2.5 Present Media in Rwanda

There are 35 radio stations, 50 newspapers, and 12 television stations throughout Rwanda today, a number that has grown and is still growing since 1994. According to the 2016 Rwanda Media Barometer an 8.9 percent increase in Rwanda media development has been achieved since 2013; out of a potential 100 percent, Rwandan media earned a grade of 68.9 percent, surging from the 60.7 percent that was earned in 2013. Seven ‘indicators’ were used to determine this development over the last 3 years, including economic progress of media outlets, compliance with journalistic codes of conduct, promotion of democracy and media self-regulation, which received the highest score at 82.18 percent; over 6 percent higher than any other sub-factor, and improving 10.68 percent from 2013. Supporting institutions that reinforce freedom of expression and ability was the lowest scoring indicator at 59.4 percent, but did undergo an increase of 7.5

⁹ (2007, Summer2007). On the Air. *Harvard International Review*. p. 6.

¹⁰ (2007, Summer2007). On the Air. *Harvard International Review*. p. 6.

percent in the last three years. the upward trend in results and statistics reiterate the effectiveness of the ongoing media reforms that began in 2011, which promote public media broadcasting, self-regulation, and improve the public's access to information.¹¹

Kagame's government has been urging more freedom of press in a systematic way to ensure hate speech, and other slanders are not promoted and Rwandan media is taken seriously by both national and international players.¹² Recently President Kagame has passed an 'Access to Information Law' stating, "this Law shall enable the public and journalists to access information possessed by public organs and some private bodies. This Law shall also establish modalities and procedures to promote the publication and dissemination of information."¹³

¹¹ Mbungiramihigo, Peacemaker, Cleophas Barore, and Collin Haba. *Rwanda Media Barometer*. Rep. 2nd ed. Kigali: Rwanda Governance Board, 2016. Print.

¹² Mbungiramihigo, Peacemaker, Cleophas Barore, and Collin Haba. *Rwanda Media Barometer*. Rep. 2nd ed. Kigali: Rwanda Governance Board, 2016. Print.

¹³ LAW N° 04/2013 OF 08/02/2013 RELATING TO ACCESS TO INFORMATION from Official Gazette n° 10 of 11 March 2013

III. Background of The New Times

3.1 Beginnings of New Times

The New Times is Rwanda's leading daily newspaper, that was created in 1995 by three individual shareholders who sought to "create a platform through which Rwandans and non-Rwandans would reason together, seek dialogue, promote reconciliation and healing and contribute to the country's development."¹⁴ Beginning in a post genocide context, just one year after the 1994 genocide against Tutsi, the shareholders' aim was to help rebuild the country by changing the role of media, as it had a largely negative impact on the country leading to 1994. By delivering legitimate news and promoting development and unity, the New Times investors fought against the propaganda that was intertwined with media prior to 1995.

To easily communicate with countries outside Rwanda, the paper was chosen to be published in English, but a sister paper owned by the same shareholders, called *Izuba Rirashe*, was also created in Kinyarwanda. Further, a paper is published every Sunday by the same shareholders called the *Sunday Times*.

Until 2006 the New Times was purely a hard copy paper published weekly, but ten years ago, an online version of the news source was launched called *the New Times Online*; which expanded readership and modernized the media source to be more compatible with present times' electronics and mobile devices, and expanded to a daily newspaper.

¹⁴ Munyaneza, James. "James Munyaeza Interview." Personal interview. 16 Nov. 2016

3.2 Description of New Times

The New Times is the leading daily newspaper of the 50 throughout Rwanda. The online publication being one of the most viewed websites among Rwandans in Rwanda and abroad. Supplying not only regularly updated stories online, but through Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram has expanded readership significantly. Problems with readership has impacted the New Times growth otherwise; the low reading culture throughout Rwanda has a negative effect on profits. Editors have expressed that opening the EAC borders and regional integration process expanded opportunity for the news outlet's readership and profits.¹⁵

In an interview with the leading editor of the New Times, James Munyaneza, the paper was explained as free independent and professional media with no government affiliation, but “are aware of the complexity of the world around us and particularly the burdens left behind by a tragic history.”¹⁶ The editorial line specifically is designed with the context of Rwanda's history in mind, specifically the 1994 genocide against Tutsi, along with respect for the world's happenings.

Rwanda has faced much scrutiny for media censorship, something that none of the New Times's editors felt was oppressing the news outlet. The constitution states “freedom of the press and freedom of information are recognized and guaranteed by the state,” but restrictions remain, such as jailtime for anyone who slanders “the head of state or other public officials.”¹⁷ While these restrictions are in place, journalists from the New Times feel it necessary to self-censor due to negative forthcoming of past media no matter what the law states.¹⁸ Comments from editors at the New Times expose that these restrictions are encouraged by the news outlet and self-

¹⁵ Tasamba, James. "James Tasamba Interview." Personal interview. 16 Nov. 2016

¹⁶ Munyaneza, James. "James Munyaneza Interview." Personal interview. 16 Nov. 2016

¹⁷ "Rwanda." *Country Report | Freedom of the Press | 2015*. Freedom House, 2015. Web. 21 Nov. 2016.

¹⁸ Tasamba, James. "James Tasamba Interview." Personal interview. 16 Nov. 2016

ensorship would take place through the publishing of the New Times with or without government regulation in order to prevent conflict and bias.

The New Times has numerous full time journalists, but often uses articles from supplement writers also, expanding their fluctuating number of writers to over 50. The paper has a total of 9 sections: news, business, opinions, women, lifestyle, technology, sports, education, and health; and two editors, one news editor and head editor, who control the paper's content. Writers first review story ideas with either editor, who then approves or disapproves the content, and then revise the finalized product before it is published.

The inner workings of the New Times are very similar to the workings of newspapers throughout the United States in regards to the employment set-up and hierarchy. The process of researching and creating articles is similar also in that the paper has a network of contacts that are constantly aiding in the discovery of happenings within the country and journalists seek out news through previous articles or these contacts.

IV. Internship Experience

My duration at the New Times consisted of interning as a news writer from Monday to Friday. Searching for news stories, sources, and leads spent major portion of my time, followed by reporting on the discovered information. News meetings were held every morning from 8am to 9am with my editors to discuss potential stories and story angles, and to ensure all reporters had the resources necessary to obtain any information necessary.

Numerous stories I partook in were government sponsored events throughout Rwanda that were to be announced and summarized. These events often led to ‘follow-up’ pieces which I could go further into topics discussed at the event. These pieces allowed me to understand the background and details of stories, such as cross border trade barriers between the EAC.

This story began as a summary of the East African Community week conference; which then led further to a story explaining the aims of EAC week (highlighting cross border markets); which then led to a story about plans the EAC has undertaken to extend cross border trade; expanding my knowledge significantly on EAC trade relative to Rwanda. Other stories during my internship covered general happenings within Rwanda that were to be announced and summarized, such as government programs that were recently implemented, measurements of development within the country, and visits from government authorities to Rwanda.

Writing about these various events gave me knowledge not only into the workings of The New Times; but I also became very educated on specific developments throughout Rwanda. Almost all pieces I partook in were positive developments in the country, at no time during my internship did I see, or write an article that was critical of anything the government introduced or lacked.

4.1 Challenges

In relation to my time news writing at The New Times, many challenges were presented, obstacles included specifics that are common in journalism throughout the world, such as uncooperative sources; while others were specific to the context of an American journalist getting used to an unfamiliar setting, such as a difference in language.

Personal Challenges:

Oftentimes getting answers from public officials was difficult, as they repeat pre-written/pre-approved responses that may or may not answer specific questions completely. This hindered the quality of articles written; preventing new, detailed information, or opinions from being exposed in the news. Although frustrating, this barrier was overcome mainly by reiterating questions in various ways, speaking privately with officials following public events, or seeking out new sources that would provide necessary information.

A challenge faced by almost anyone entering a new country is the language barrier. In my particular case the language difference presented an issue when reaching out to sources and performing interviews. Numerous articles I wrote during my time with the New Times required someone to accompany me to the interviews, or events to translate information. This is also a problem in itself because the translation from Kinyarwanda to English may not be exact; featured information may be lost in the translation hindering the article's accuracy or details.

In line with the language barrier, finding and maintaining contacts was difficult, as it is difficult to communicate, and the short time I have doesn't allow for me to engage in more stories with individuals to create a network. Most journalists have a web of various contacts that they can rely on for trusting sources, this web was only available to me through my editors when

they provided me with contacts, ensuring that they can speak English, which also narrows my source abilities.

Limitations in regards to the scope of understanding media in Rwanda are relatively constraining. As an intern for the New Times, I spent about 45 hours a week working for the newspaper, which allowed a very in depth analysis and understanding of the internal workings of that specific news outlet, but no comparison to other news outlets in Rwanda. This report is a case study of the New Times Daily Newspaper due to this constraint.

Furthermore, time was a major constraint to the scope of this study. Spending only one month with The New Times, precedence took place with finding and constructing news articles, leaving miniscule time for further research. Interviews were limited to editors of the New Times, limiting the opinions and results of this study to those found from only one news source out of the many in Rwanda.

New Times Challenges:

Expressed by many journalists from the New Times was a goal of expansion for the paper. Both editors explained that changes and improvements made to the paper are all in hopes to expand readership, whether that be in the East African Community or throughout the world. There are numerous achievements and tactics that has allowed the paper to grow, but also much competition that restrains this growth.

One event that I attended towards the start of my internship was the Rwanda Media Dialogue, which released the Rwanda Media Barometer and presented the Rwanda Media Awards. During the awards ceremony, many colleagues from the New Times were present and

showed much disdain when only one award was presented to a New Times writer, and none to the New Times as a whole.

Journalists from the New Times conversed after the ceremony expressing their disappointment and explained the reasons why their paper did not get the recognition they believe is deserved. One reason being that the online news which won the most viewed website, was a tabloid news site that did not commonly publish truthful articles, making reads more interesting, although inaccurate. The New Times' news team verifies stories through sources to ensure accuracy, a quality found in legitimate news sites.

The main hindrance to expansion for the New Times seems to be competition with tabloid type news sources. Producing articles with minimum three sources and verified information means the articles produced will be more in depth and informative, but take longer to construct. Tabloid type news sources produce articles without using sources, allowing them to be more creative and produced in quicker time, as assumptions are used as facts. Although this type of news writing may hinder the readership of the New Times, I found that the New Times almost never had to retract articles in comparison to the repeated retraction other news sources partake in.

4.2 Critical Analysis

Expressed by many journalists from the New Times was a goal of expansion for the paper. Both editors explained that changes and improvements made to the paper are all in hopes to expand readership, whether that be in the East African Community or throughout the world. There are numerous achievements and tactics that has allowed the paper to grow, but also much competition that restrains this growth.

Providing accurate and necessary information to the public is inherent of a credible news source. By taking the necessary time to collect truthful information and sources, the New Times is following the standard ethic guidelines of journalism that other news stations may not abide by. While this process may take longer, I find that a credible news source is of much more use to the public than a tabloid, as it helps shape public opinion and promote any necessary change. The New Times proved itself a legitimate news source with no private interests or government affiliation.

Maintaining neutrality and accuracy was emphasized by editors during my time at the New Times. Morning news meetings allowed editors to critique the angles and sources being used by writers on specific stories

V. Recommendations

5.1 Recommendations for The New Times

In achieving the expressed desire of the New Times to expand its readership and coverage there are numerous changes or additions to the paper that could be added over time. While the current growth with technology and social media has expanded the paper, adding different types of journalism, searching out more stories, and continuing to follow the social media trends could all benefit this expansion goal.

Investing in more journalists to create in-depth investigative stories would add definition to the paper and encourage new readership. Training would be necessary to ensure all pieces follow constitutional laws, but once properly trained these writers could produce work that no other news outlet in Rwanda has been producing. Investigative journalism that exposes threats, problems, and other happenings that are not obvious to the public sets small news outlets a part from professional large news entities and would engage more readers.

Continuing to follow social media trends will also expand, or at least maintain, the readership and accessibility of the New Times. By creating Instagram and Twitter younger millennials will be more likely to engage in reading of headlines, and articles. By following trends with new social media outlets of forms of reading news through technology, younger generations will be more likely to become loyal readers of the news outlet.

These recommendations come from my observations while working for the New Times accompanied by the goals that were shared with me by the New Times employees and should be reviewed as recommendations from an amateur journalist.

5.2 Recommendations for future interns

As I found much reward through this internship, I feel other interns interested in the inner workings of foreign media would find similar rewards. The only recommendation that may improve the quality of a future intern's time with the New Times would be to request a formal meeting with the two head editors prior to the internship start. In this meeting a layout of hours and days that are expected to be worked should be drawn out with compensation from both the student and editors.

I found that some days I would work for 14 hours while others would be drawn out without a task for the first half of the day. On days that a story will not be published, or won't be worked on until later in the day, it is my recommendation that a student use that time for their independent study project and inform their editors of how that time will be used to ensure no time is wasted doing redundant tasks.

VI. Conclusion

The New Times has established itself as a credible and popular news source throughout Rwanda. By creating a base of reliable sources and outlets over the last 21 years the New Times has grown from a weekly to Rwanda's leading daily paper. While this growth is tremendous, it was clear throughout my entire internship that the shared goal of every editor, journalist, and staff within the media outlet is to expand further. Based upon the improvements made in comparison to the propaganda that was media prior to 1994, the New Times is within reach to expand into a news source for more than just Rwanda.

Expanding throughout at least the East African Community within the next 10 years seems attainable based upon the growth that has been occurring over recent years in regards to social media. Articles being covered by the New Times have also expanded to not only internal Rwandan affairs, but international news as well. EAC affairs, political news from the United States, and major happenings around the world are included in the paper also. While this writing comes from supplement writers, it begins a good basis for the New Times to start expanding and hiring their own writers in more areas than just Kigali.

Fighting against the genocide ideology and propaganda that overtook Rwanda's media sector prior to the 1994 genocide against Tutsis has been successful for the New Times. Now established as an unbiased, non-government affiliated entity, the New Times produces news that does not encourage a particular way of thinking, but rather just informs the public of public happenings for their own opinions and concerns to take place.

In regards to expansion this quality will help the news source gain credibility, but to gain more readership investing in investigative reporting may improve readership. By digging deeper

into public matters that may be of concern to citizens in the EAC, more people may be inclined to read the paper.

While the goal of expansion does seem attainable, the New Times must keep persevering to keep up with technology, social media, creativity, and the news to become as big of an entity that was expressed as a goal by the staff. Coming from such a dark past the New Times has already transformed into an example of Rwandan media from a special interest driven career, to a respectable unbiased news provider.

Chapter VII: Appendix

Americans in Rwanda speak out on US elections

By: Rhiannon Snide

Published: November 08, 2016

With just hours until the opening of polls for one of the most contentious presidential elections in US history, there is a sense of uncertainty and unease within the American community in Rwanda.

“Almost every day the topic of the US elections has been coming up in conversation. People always ask about Donald Trump...he seems to be a form of entertainment for many people here,” explained Katherine Tabachnick, a 20-year-old student currently taking field lessons in Kigali as part of her college programme.

None of the American citizens in Rwanda that this newspaper spoke to backed Republican candidate Donald Trump but some said they had met Rwandans who favoured the billionaire over Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton.

But some also said many people hardly judge Trump based on policy issues.

“I’ve found that the [Rwandans] who really follow and talk to me about the US elections get the most sensationalist news about Trump...people I’ve spoken with usually refer to the most outlandish things Trump has said, and not the more realistic policies he also offers,” said Peter Freeman, a 21-year-old student who is currently in Kigali as part of a study trip that also involves a stint in Ghana.

Compared to past elections, both candidates have encountered much rancor throughout their campaigns. Trump continues to face animosity for his uncensored language, and sexual assault allegations; while Clinton has had to content with allegations of corruption since the discovery of a private email server she had used during her time as Secretary of State.

In yet another twist to a rollercoaster campaign for both candidates, the FBI early this week cleared Clinton on the 650,000 leaked emails sent over her private server.

“This election and its candidates are making the US look ignorant and unprofessional...we’ve lost a lot of our credibility as a responsible and modern world power,” stated Brannon Lambert, a 20-year-old study abroad student in Kigali.

With the Election Day unfolding across the US today, polls split support for the two candidates almost equally.

Americans abroad are as anxious as those back home about the results.

Meanwhile, responding to an email inquiry from *The New Times*, officials at the US State Department have said, no matter the outcome of the election, Rwanda's relations with the US will remain steady.

“It's important to recognise that the major challenges Africa faces are clear, and likely to be similar for the next administration. We should also recognise that we've had bipartisan support on U.S.-Africa policy for years, and I don't expect that to change,” Linda Thomas-Greenfield, Department of State Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, said.

About eight million Americans are abroad, according to the Association of American Residents Overseas, with about 3,000 of those residing in Rwanda. Approximately 60 of these have already voted through the US embassy in Kigali and their ballots have been dispatched to Washington.

Meanwhile, speaking via a video link, a prominent American freelance journalist, Eduardo Cue, told dozens of journalists, lawyers and academics at the US embassy in Kigali that the media had fallen short in helping the public make an informed opinion about the presidential candidates.

For instance, he said, the media did not go out of their way to investigate Trump “because they thought he would auto-destroy himself and lose the campaign.”

As a result, Cue explained, they gave him over two billion US dollars' worth of free airtime, as opposed to the US\$746 million free publicity that was given to Clinton.

Cue said public trust in the media was being eroded because many view the media as mainly profit-driven, with figures showing that only 32 per cent of Americans have confidence in the accuracy of mainstream media. He said there is need for major reforms to ensure accurate and necessary facts are presented to the public.

Call for gender mainstreaming as fourth media awards are held

By: Rhiannon Snide and Rodrigue Rwirahira

Published: November 08, 2016

At least 19 journalists and media outlets yesterday received different prizes under the Development Media Awards in a gala dinner held to celebrate the African Information Day.

The awards that included different cash prizes ranging from 500,000 up to Rwf1,000,000; trophies and certificates, were bestowed in different categories and the benchmarks included originality of the story, the relevance of the story towards the development of the nation, quality, the techniques used, among others.

According to Alphonse Nkusi, who presided over the panel of judges during this year's awarding exercise; they received 276 entries which were submitted by practitioners covering a period between March 3 2015 and June 1 2016.

“A panel of three judges took a whole week analyzing the entries and came up with winners in different categories, including news-coverage; investigative reporting; feature reported stories; talk shows; video and photo journalist; female journalist and popular journalist as voted by the public,” he said.

Nkusi is also the officer in charge of media development at Rwanda Governance Board.

Frederic Byumvuhore from *The New Times* scooped the news coverage award which earned him a cash prize of Rwf500,000, a trophy and a certificate, while Umutoni Carine a female journalist scooped the two most important awards of the event, best female journalist and the journalist of the year award and both awards earned her Rwf1,500,000.

Speaking shortly after the awards, Byumvuhore who is still pursuing his bachelor's degree in journalism said that the award will be pivotal in his career advancement.

He emerged winner through his article, ‘defiled, impregnated by her dad.’

Thanking the winners, Prof Anastase Shyaka, the CEO of Rwanda Governance Board thanked all stakeholders for their contribution towards the development media awards, which were taking place for the fourth time.

He however challenged media houses to embrace gender mainstreaming, to ensure more women winning awards in the future.

“Over the four years, there is a lot that has been done, from 33 entries to 276 entries this year, it is very remarkable, we are seeing credibility and impact is noticeable, he said.

Journalists challenged on upholding media principles

By: Rodrigue Rwirahira & Rhiannon Snide

Published: November 08, 2016

Media practitioners have called for more emphasis on principles of independence, fairness and accountability as prime kits to tell the African story through the African media.

Driven by the concept of ‘Africa that we want’ motto through the ‘Africa Media that we want’ mantra, the call was made when journalists gathered in Kigali, yesterday, for the Africa Information Day, which was celebrated in parallel with the eighth National Media Dialogue.

This, officials said, should reflect and build on the positive stories, structures and reforms that have continuously been emerging to transform positively the Rwandan media landscape.

Johnston Busingye, the minister for justice and attorney-general, said it is the role of the media to take its story to the greatest height and defy the past negative narrative that has always been fueled by hostile western media institutions.

“In the past our story (Rwanda) was told as a tiny, overpopulated, ethnically divided and poor people country, it is up to the media to challenge such narrative,” he said.

“Most of the time our positive stories were underreported, unreported or distorted, the story outside there has been nothing else other than one of disease, corruption, wars; this is an opportune moment to see how better we can position African media with other positive stories on the global landscapes.”

Minister Busingye reiterated that the drive to promote the ‘Africa media that we want’ motto fits well with the ongoing African Union reforms to make the continent more reliable on itself other than looking for aid from Western donors.

Challenged by issues around the ability to tell Africa’s own and actual stories, the media fraternity equally resounded the need for more professionalism, state support for financial avenues to allow independent media but, more importantly, on how to get rid of the often Western narratives on the status quo of African affairs.

Enhancing professionalism

Kabral Blay Amihere, a Ghanaian media consultant, who was on a panel of experts to discuss the role of the media in Africa’s development, said there is need for states to enhance professionalism to help media tell the African story from a perspective that is as professional as possible.

“We need to enhance capacity because the issue of quantity is fair, but the quality, competence; we need to work on those. There is a need to promote social media, because the numbers in

Africa are far way behind the West; this will help in telling the true African story in due time,” he said.

Amihere, however, said by telling the stories, journalists should not be mouthpiece of their states but rather people’s representatives who will front public needs before responsible authority, educate and inform the people while setting the agenda.

“States should move on to create an enabling atmosphere for the press to take advantage of the infrastructure, they are not obliged to be mouthpieces for government, rather seeing themselves as representatives of the people, and reflecting the people’s need,” he added.

Prof. Anastase Shyaka, the chief executive of Rwanda Governance Board, whose agency oversees the regulation of the media in the country, argued that several reforms in the past have helped the country to tilt the sector in the right direction.

“Information that we share should be at the heart of Africa’s transformation and to the Africa we want as it was agreed upon recently by the African leaders,” he said.

The One UN resident coordinator, Lamine Manneh, commended The media for their continuous efforts to inform that public on matters that affect their daily lives. He also commended the government for its efforts to enhance the media landscape and pledged continued support to media development as a key ingredients to deepening democracy.

Ondrej Simek, head of political press and information section at the European Union, said the media landscape both in the western world and in Africa share some commonalities, although adequate training to journalists, acquiring reliable sources, and creating more efficient financing, are obstacles the Rwandan media can address to be able to move toward “the media we want.”

“These are all challenges that need to be addressed, and they certainly don’t differ in the media, West or East,” he said.

In their recommendations, the dialogue called on African states to create a hospitable environment for media to ensure an unbiased press, by encouraging dialogue that promotes social responsibility.

The media’s role as an educational tool to aid in development and democracy was also stressed, not simply relying on the negative issues that are happening in Africa and not to toe the line of distortion and hostile Western media that have been infamous for portraying the continent negatively.

The media was also encouraged to restructure business plan, so the press can thrive and adapt to new technologies while still maintaining profits.

Media industry grows 9 per cent, says report

By: Rodrigue Rwirahira & Rhiannon Snide

Published: November 09, 2016

The new Rwanda Media Barometer has commended an overall improvement in media development, which saw the sector grow at 8.9 per cent in the last three years.

But the survey also cited economic constraints, poor retention of best journalists, sluggishness in capacity building, among others, as one of the main issues affecting professionalism in the sector.

The current benchmark on the media development, a survey published every two years, stands at 69.6 per cent, up from 60.7 per cent in the last report published in 2013.

The research, the second of its kind, sought to analyse media development and determine the impact of recent media reforms.

It sampled 200 journalists, 200 civil society organisations, 200 businesspersons, and 2,400 citizens. It was conducted by a team of four people under the supervision of Dr Christopher Kayumba, a journalism lecturer at the University of Rwanda.

Kayumba said they used two broad metrics to measure media development, first using a generic single indicator of an upward growth of 8.9 per cent and how the sub-indicators affected the well being of the sector and its members.

He said the survey was measured using frameworks of structural conditions of the media, specifically legal aspects of the sector, number of media houses, television stations, websites and daily newspapers.

The overall objective of the research was to measure the effectiveness and usage of the media in the Rwandan context, identify issues and challenges that hinder media development, and generate recommendations to improve the sector.

The report said supporting institutions that reinforce freedom of expression and ability scored lower, at 59.4 per cent.

The report said the upward trend proves the effectiveness of the ongoing media reforms that promote self-regulation.

Homegrown

Emmanuel Mugisha, the executive secretary of the Rwanda Media Commission, said the barometer is a homegrown analysis and self-assessment instrument with focus in underscoring how to address persisting challenges.

“The media continues to experience similar challenges. As Rwanda Media Commission, we continue to express concerns over the serious ethical violations occasioned by media financial instability,” Mugisha said.

“In our recommendations during the validation of the barometer, we stressed the need to promote viability of our media houses so that they can sustain professionalism and undertake serious investigative journalism,” he said.

The sentiment was also echoed by the authors of the report, who noted that media practitioners decried legal instruments that still hold journalists liable for defamation.

Kayumba said journalists have been demanding that defamation be decriminalised and made a civil case.

Going forward, Kayumba added, it will be the task of government to take note of the recommendations and address them.

US 2016 election: Embassy officials expect peaceful transition of power

By: Rhiannon Snide

Published: November 09, 2016

Officials from the US Embassy in Rwanda, yesterday, predicted a peaceful transition of power to ensue in the US as results of the presidential election unfolded.

Based on America's longstanding record of democratic and nonviolent elections, US embassy officials stated they believe this tradition of diplomacy will continue, regardless of whether the Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton, or Republican candidate Donald Trump, wins the election.

The officials made the remarks at a news conference addressed by Brooke Kidd, consulate officer of the US to Rwanda, and Marissa Rollens, acting public affairs officer for the US embassy in Kigali.

"Americans really enjoy the democratic process, it allows anyone to run for office and everyone to express their opinions," said Rollens.

American initiatives in Rwanda and Africa in general are expected to continue without modification no matter the election results, according to officials.

"Our commitment to Africa has remained steadfast. We've inherited many initiatives from prior administrations – PEPFAR and AGOA, to name just a couple," stated Linda Thomas-Greenfield, Department of State assistant secretary for African affairs earlier this year.

Greenfield expects initiatives championed by President Obama such as, YALI and Power Africa, to also be seen through by whichever administration follows his presidency.

The conference detailed logistics of voting abroad in American elections, outlining that after submitting a federal postcard application American citizens abroad are mailed a ballot and can return their votes through various procedures depending on their selective states.

Only 60 out of the estimated 3,000 US citizens in Rwanda used the US embassy in Kigali as means to submit their ballot, while others are expected to have mailed ballots via DHL or FedEx, to have faxed ballots directly to their town or state registrars, or to have registered for early voting before they departed from the US.

"We want all Americans abroad to feel they have easy means to vote, whether that be at home or abroad. There is no reason for Americans not to vote in elections, there are many options to submitting a ballot no matter where they are in the world," Rollens said.

After tallying of votes, results are expected early Wednesday.

New equipment makes Rwanda regional hub for testing food samples –officials

By: Rhiannon Snide and James Karuhanga

Published: November 10, 2016

A new laboratory equipment donated to the Rwanda Standards Board (RSB) by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) now positions Rwanda as a regional hub for testing samples from countries in the region, an official said yesterday.

During the official hand-over ceremony, yesterday, Raymond Murenzi, acting director-general of RSB, told guests that the event epitomises the importance of USAID's contribution to Rwanda's efforts to enhance the trade environment.

It will help improve the efficiency and effectiveness of product testing in order to reduce the testing costs and, ultimately, improve export competitiveness across the region, he said.

Murenzi added: "This high tech and powerful piece of equipment will not only allow Rwanda to test and certify its own export products, but will also position Rwanda as a regional hub for testing samples in a number of areas, including food, cosmetics and waste water."

He noted that USAID, through TMEA, authorised the purchase of Inductively Coupled Plasma Mass Spectrometer (ICP-MS) testing equipment that is used to assess the purity of Rwanda's export products.

The equipment is crucial in ensuring that goods produced in Rwanda meet quality standards required by advanced markets in Europe, Americas and elsewhere.

USAID mission director, Marcia Musisi-Nkambwe, said two years ago, the U.S. government, through USAID, partnered with TMEA to support the Government of Rwanda's efforts to increase intra-regional and international trade and reduce the time and costs of trade.

"Through this partnership, USAID invested \$5.7 million to: improve market access and reduce cost of trade and transport; enhance the trade environment; and improve the competitiveness of Rwandan products and firms."

"This spectrometer will contribute to reducing testing time for Mercury and Arsenic by 88 per cent from 60 days to seven days. The testing cost will also go down by 50 per cent per test. This is a significant achievement that USAID is proud to be part of."

According to TMEA country director, Patience Mutesi, the fact that this testing equipment is the first of its kind in EAC is a testament of Rwanda's emergence as "a centre of innovation in the region."

“With this investment, Rwandan SMEs will be able to access both regional and international markets and it will contribute towards the EDPRS II target to increase Rwanda’s exports by 28 per cent annually,” Mutesi said shortly before the officials were given a demonstration of the testing equipment at RSB premises in Kicukiro.

Ministry targets youth in EAC Week integration drive

By: Rhiannon Snide and James Karuhanga

Published: November 15, 2016

The Ministry of Trade, Industry and East African Community Affairs is looking to more youth involvement in regional integration agenda, a top official said yesterday, at the launch of the latest edition of EAC Week.

François Kanimba, the Minister for Trade, Industry and East African Community Affairs, said this yesterday during a news conference to launch the seventh EAC Week.

The campaign will run under the theme: “Regional Integration: A Necessity for Development.”

“There was a general agreement at EAC-level that the focus should be on how regional integration is a key driver for economic development. This is the key message wherever we are going to go, particularly when we talk to the youth,” Kanimba told journalists in Kigali.

“This message will be emphasised as a mobilisation tool for the youth to maximise their potential to contribute to the regional integration process. Youth can contribute in different ways.”

Held annually in all EAC Partner States during the month of November, the EAC Week aims to increase awareness among citizens on the EAC integration agenda.

The three-fold objective of this EAC Awareness Week is: updating Rwandans on key achievements under EAC integration, promoting awareness on key ongoing projects and programmes, and addressing the public’s concerns and questions on the bloc’s integration agenda.

The minister added: “When you look at the skill development programmes we are implementing, particularly in Rwanda, skills are a fundamental ingredient to realise benefits of regional integration process. Skilled people can move around and take advantage of the existence of business opportunities here and there.”

“In Rwanda, we have an incredible emerging entrepreneurship spearheaded by our youth in areas such as ICT. This is an area where a young entrepreneur can very quickly benefit from regional integration. These are just a few examples we are going to highlight when we talk to them.”

The idea of the EAC Week was adopted at the 20th meeting of the EAC Council of Ministers in March 2010.

Among other activities, today, the ministry has scheduled a youth forum with the youth in Musanze District which will be followed by a border sensitisation event at the Rwanda-Uganda border in Kagitumba, where a high-level delegation from both countries will interact with the border community on Thursday.

The main objective of Thursday's activity, the minister explained, will be to jointly examine ways how to further boost cross-border trade in the area.

Finally, on Friday, the programme will be concluded with an EAC awareness festival, to be held in Kigali.

Last year, the sixth edition of the EAC Awareness Week, held under the theme, "Eight Years of Rwanda in the EAC: Deepening the Regional Integration Agenda," focused on students and border communities.

Formal trade with EAC

According to statistics from the ministry, Rwanda's exports to the bloc declined by 10.3 per cent last year, from \$142.45 million to \$127.76 million

However, it is noted, an increase in exports to the EAC is forecasted to 10 per cent this year and 15 per cent in 2017.

Last year, Rwanda's imports from the Community totaled \$121.62 million, representing 25 per cent of the country's total imports, eight per cent lower than the previous year.

Govt invests in more cross-border markets to enhance regional trade

By: Rhiannon Snide & James Karuhanga

Published: November 17, 2016

Construction of cross-border markets along key borders linking Rwanda with its neighbours will be accomplished in the next five years and, once completed, will enhance regional trade, Francois Kanimba has said.

The Minister for Trade, Industry and East African Community Affairs, who was on Monday speaking to *The New Times* about the seventh East African Community (EAC) Week, said the markets infrastructure has been an important programme the ministry has been undertaking.

“It has been one of the most challenging infrastructure programmes. Constructing these markets is resource-consuming and requires significant amount of time and energy to conduct feasibility studies to make sure that when you mobilise resources to construct markets, they are designed in such a way to have an impact,” Kanimba said.

The minister said the Government has an ongoing comprehensive programme covering the whole country.

“There are other small markets for which we continue to mobilise resources to make sure all are completed in the next five years,” he said, listing several ongoing big and small projects.

When members of the East African Legislative Assembly (EALA) visited Gatuna border post on the Rwanda-Uganda border, earlier this month, members of Gatuna Cross Border Trade Cooperative appealed for their advocacy in the establishment of a modern market.

This, the traders insisted, would allow them to reap more from regional integration.

“For the cross-border market in Gatuna, we have done the feasibility study, but it has to be reviewed because it was not properly conducted. We are working with TradeMark East Africa (TMEA) to see if their second phase strategy can take it into account,” Kanimba said.

“And we hope they will because it’s one of the main cross border infrastructures really urgently needed.”

TMEA commits

TMEA country director Patience Mutesi said they are currently working with the ministry – their implementing partner – to fund construction of Rubavu and Rusizi cross-border markets.

Rubavu, she noted, has been “contracted and we are expecting construction to start this month.”

“Discussions are ongoing for Rusizi. But TMEA Rwanda is committed to support the construction of the two markets,” Mutesi said, noting that \$5 million (about Rwf4 billion) will be injected into the two projects.

Construction of Karongi cross-border market, which was launched in April, is ongoing. It was expected to be completed within a year at a cost of Rwf1.58 billion.

Once complete, it is expected to boost trade between Rwanda and DR Congo.

On Tuesday, Kanimba said a completed market is at Akanyaru, on the border with Burundi.

“This was a good example because this cross border market was 100 per cent constructed by the district in partnership with the Ministry of Trade and Industry and the local development agency,” Kanimba said.

Others under construction include one in Cyanika, on the border with Uganda, where work is done is at 60 per cent. The Cyanika border post works is funded by a development partner based in Geneva, Switzerland, the Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF).

The EIF is a multi-donor programme that helps least-developed countries play a more active role in the global trading system.

Kanimba said EIF is also funding construction of the market at Karongi.

Funding is also expected from the World Bank to construct cross border markets at Rusizi II and Nyamasheke.

For the projects at Kagitumba and Rusumo, the minister said, support will come from the African Development Bank (AfDB).

“We got approval to construct these markets by the African Development Bank, which is going to fund the rehabilitation of the road from Kagitumba, Kayonza to Rusumo. And they accepted to include the construction of the two cross-border markets in the project,” he said.

Other projects

The ministry is eyeing similar projects at the Nemba and Ruhwa border linking Rwanda and Burundi.

According to the ministry, records currently indicates that the five border posts through which the highest percentage of goods in transit are: Gatuna (30.6 per cent of total flow of goods), Rusumo (16.6 per cent), Kagitumba (15.2 per cent), Kigali International Airport (15 per cent) and Cyanika (3.7 per cent).

Rwanda’s informal imports are mainly from Uganda, followed by Burundi, DR Congo and Tanzania, respectively.

However, insecurity in Burundi has led to a reduction in Rwanda's exports to Burundi in the recent years.

Exports to Uganda reduced by 51.2 percent from \$4.1 million in quarter four of 2014 to \$2 million in quarter four of 2015.

Rwanda imported 6.4 per cent less, from \$61.3 million to \$57.4 million in the same time period.

Hides and skins are the main exports to Uganda, worth Rwf2.9 billion followed by beans at Rwf1.6 billion.

Imports from Uganda, in the same period, were dominated by Portland cement worth Rwf53.4 billion followed by vegetable fats and oils at Rwf32.2 billion.

Exports to Tanzania also reduced by 66.7 per cent from \$1.5 million in quarter four of 2014, to \$0.5 million in quarter four of 2015. Imports increased in the same time by 24.6 per cent from \$18.7 million to \$23.3 million.

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