



# Greater Horn of Africa Peace Building Project Asgede Hagos

CASE STUDY SIX:

## Media Intervention in Peace Building in Burundi - The Studio Ijambo Experience and Impact

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in Controlling Violent Conflicts and Building Peace**  
*A Study of Three Approaches in the Greater Horn of Africa*

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The full report can be found at:

[http://www.usaid.gov/regions/afr/conflictweb/pbp\\_report.pdf](http://www.usaid.gov/regions/afr/conflictweb/pbp_report.pdf)

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## Executive Summary

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### Objectives

The principal purpose of this study was to assess the impact of Studio Ijambo, a radio production program, on peace building in Burundi.

The project was also designed to draw lessons learnt from the experience and impact of this intervention that can be useful in similar areas of conflict. The assessment was conducted in five interrelated areas of peace building in Burundi on which the investigation focused: inter-group relations, social and political mobilization, political elite negotiations, public institutions and processes, and mass or elite conflict behavior.

### Key Findings

Studio Ijambo was established in 1995 in the Burundian capital of Bujumbura as a direct response to the hate propaganda that pervaded the airwaves in the Great Lakes region of Africa, where hate radio is believed to have played a significantly destructive role in the mid 1990s. The Burundian press not only reflected the deep ethnic division “but also actively promoted it,” and its members tried to “rival each other over calls to kill, or in packing and advancing their mutually macabre ideologies” generating “mutual terror and distrust based on historical fears” (Rich 1997, 63).

The radio program, funded by USAID, was set up as part of a broader response to the hate campaign, to support and enhance peace building and strengthen local capacity to manage and resolve conflict in Burundi.

All in all, there is substantial evidence that the journalistic, dramatic and cultural components of Studio Ijambo’s programs have had positive effect in all of the five areas of investigation. The findings of a survey as well as focus sessions and in-depth interviews of nearly 270 Burundians in eight social groups and subgroups reveal Studio Ijambo’s broad impact on inter-ethnic relations, social and political mobilization, political elite negotiations, public institutions, and mass or elite conflict behavior. The results indicate a relatively high approval of Ijambo’s productions.

The impact is even more definitive and visible in the contributions the program has made to change the Burundian media culture and practice, especially in the areas of news gathering and training of journalists to cover conflicts.

### Inter-Group Relations

Generally speaking, Ijambo has made significant contributions to the development of a culture of peace in Burundi. Most of the respondents cited some of its cultural or dramatic components of its programs as contributory factors to the changes in their views about members of other ethnic that groups. The participants almost consistently gave the statements in a 27-item questionnaire relating to tolerance and coexistence a

high mark as the program's contribution to peace and reconciliation efforts, rating it 4.5 out of a possible 5 for this sub-category.

Responses from the Burundians who participated in this study from both ethnic communities have been particularly positive about Ijambo's 'soap opera' called "Our Neighbors, Our Selves," and the magazine show "Pillars of Humanity," popularly known as "Heroes." When asked to name programs that helped them modify, and/or change their attitudes, and/or behavior towards members of other ethnic groups, if any, most of the participants identified these two shows, more than any of Studio Ijambo's other 15 programs at the time of the study.

As an independent and credible source of verified news and information, Ijambo has become instrumental in the fight against a recurring source of ethnic tension: rumor-mongering, which can have catastrophic consequences in such a highly polarized society torn by mistrust and fear. At least the 1988 massacre of Tutsis by Hutus was triggered by a false rumor that the former was preparing to attack the latter.

The findings also show that the media intervention has at least strengthened the belief of many of the people on both sides of the ethnic divide that dialogue is the only rational alternative for Burundi at this critical period in its history. The issue is systematically stressed in many of Ijambo's cultural and dramatic programs, as well as in its news editorial content.

### **Social and Political Mobilization**

One of the original goals of the radio program was to empower civil society to strengthen its efforts in the peace building process.

Many of the local and international NGOs have had access to the radio production studio and have been using it as a vehicle to reach their targeted sectors of the population. Studio Ijambo has also been serving as a forum for the civil society, which, like the rest of the society, is itself, divided along ethnic lines.

Studio Ijambo's innovative programming approaches, which include letting the people define the conflict and measure its effect, personalizing the conflict through such shows as "Heroes," and presenting it in a relaxed, conversational tone—has created and maintained a broad audience for its productions in Burundi. Such innovative approaches are critical for radio to be effective, not only as a source of credible news and information, but also as an instrument of social and political mobilization for the purposes of peace building.

Ijambo was instrumental in influencing some policy changes pertaining to several issues, but especially the internally displaced. It was the first to bring to light killings of Hutu refugees returning from Tanzania by Burundian government soldiers in 1997. The camps were closed a year later.

Furthermore, a series of programs in 1996, 1997, 1999, and 2000 on the plight of the

internally displaced in the camps around the capital, especially the very young, are also believed to have contributed to a mass return from what some describe as “concentration camps” to their homes in Bujumbura’s neighborhoods. Ijambo has been using the weight of public opinion to force the government to respond to several of its exposes regarding the camps and other issues.

Furthermore, a weekly HIV-AIDS information program, which hammered the Ministry of Health with a series of reports on critical condom shortages in the country, also forced the Buyoya government to respond immediately. A few weeks after the program was aired, said Ijambo director Francis Rolt, “the [Ijambo] producer was called to the Ministry of Health so that she could be shown the condoms which the Ministry had finally imported” and was asked “to stop talking about the issue now that she’d seen the condoms” (Rolt 2001). The correspondents and producers also cited in the interviews in Bujumbura in June 2000 similar critical programs that prompted immediate government attention.

### **Political Elite Negotiations**

Right from the start, Studio Ijambo opened up new channels of communication for those who did not have access to the government-owned media, and as result, provided a reliable forum for what came out to look like an indirect dialogue between the parties and ethnic blocs. In fact, the project was founded on the premise “that journalists could make a significant contribution to opening and maintaining avenues of public discourse” (Rich 1997, 63).

This has also exposed the Brundian people to the different political visions and platforms the parties have been debating among themselves. This educational function of the media, which encourages informed participation from the people, naturally affects the negotiation process.

How much the opposition parties in Arusha depended on the independent media to talk to the Burundian people could be seen in their clamor to get the attention of Studio Ijambo correspondents who covered the negotiations in Tanzania.

### **Public Institutions and Processes**

As the first independent radio production program in Burundi that tried to pry open the state’s monopoly of public information, Studio Ijambo has effected some institutional behavioral changes. Though it is difficult to say precisely what part of the changes can be attributed to this media intervention, there is no question that today the state and some of its agencies, including the armed forces, have shown some level of tolerance towards the independent media.

Studio Ijambo has achieved a high level of credibility as a neutral source of news and information in this highly polarized sociopolitical environment, which is riven by mistrust and fear. Studio Ijambo correspondents who worked for the government-owned radio before joining the Ijambo team said they could see a big difference in their level of

acceptance especially by the opposition when they started covering the Arusha negotiations. They could also see the same changes in attitude and behavior in their coverage of the parliament. In both cases, the subjects would refuse to talk to the government radio and television reporters, but seek Studio Ijambo reporters out instead.

Through its practice of team reporting, Ijambo has helped raise the level of professionalism through systematic and conscious efforts to protect its programs from being contaminated by ethnic bias. In a society where there is so much hatred at close quarters between the two main ethnic groups, it is very difficult to avoid such contamination. However, there is no question that its innovative team reporting practice has sensitized the rest of the media and has shown to what extent a news organization must go to deliver balanced, fair and objective news and information to its audience.

### **Mass or Elite Conflict Behavior**

A media intervention can serve as an effective alternative to violent expressions of differences between the different sides to a conflict. Studio Ijambo, as an independent forum for dialogue, has been providing that alternative and the culture of peace it has been helping to cultivate is showing encouraging results overall.

Even the members of the Burundian armed forces, who, as the findings of the survey indicate, have had the least favorable attitude towards Ijambo's programs, have shown tolerance toward the private media with which they have been clashing over the parameters of media coverage of military and rebel activities in the countryside. Some of the changes in their behavior are credited to Studio Ijambo that they said they listened to as a credible source of news and information.

Furthermore, there is substantial anecdotal evidence that some of the programs have had even deeper impact on at least some portions of the society. Studio Ijambo staffers frequently receive telephone calls or mail messages following the airing of "Heroes" from some members of the audience to express regret for having participated in killings themselves during the 1993-96 period or to give the names of other "heroes" they knew whose stories should be told.

### **Conclusions and Policy Implications**

These findings have important policy and operational implications for donors and policy makers trying to support, implement, or design radio interventions in peace building processes. The experience of Studio Ijambo illustrates that radio can be a high-impact, low-cost instrument of intervention not only as a reliable source of news and information, but also as a vehicle of social and political mobilization in peace building. However, there are critical lessons that must be drawn from this and similar experiences from the region to ensure the effectiveness of such intervention. Some of the replicable practices and lessons learnt from the Brundian experience are:

**INNOVATION:** A media intervention, to be effective, must use innovative approaches in programming, training and general practices of journalism to draw and sustain an

audience large enough to influence public opinion. It must keep reinventing itself in order to overcome professional and cultural challenges to capture and sustain the critical mass necessary to effect meaningful change in conflict situations.

Studio Ijambo's innovative programming approaches--which include letting the people define the conflict and measure its effect, personalizing the conflict through such shows as "Heroes," and presenting it in a relaxed, conversational tone--has created a broad audience for its productions in Burundi.

**INDEPENDENCE:** Another important lesson from the Studio Ijambo experience and impact is that independence of government control—at least in its operation--is a necessary precondition for a mass media intervention to obtain the necessary results in peace building. One of the primary functions of such an intervention is to serve as a reliable forum for all sides to the conflict. For such a forum to be effective, it must be viewed by all sides as being impartial and credible.

In the Burundian experience, the state-owned media's unwillingness to give Mandela's historic speech a full play at the very start of the negotiations in Arusha once again made it clear how indispensable the independent channels of communication are in a peace process. As stated above, Studio Ijambo was the only media organization that translated it into Kirundi, the Burundian national language and produced it. Though it is difficult to measure the extent of the effect of the translated version of the landmark speech, which laid down the framework of the peace process, a few of those interviewed recalled listening to the Kirundi version aired over what was then Radio Umwizero. That the government media did not give the speech the coverage it deserved in the language the people understand best or even French may be a reflection that some in the Tutsi-dominated government were not exactly happy with some of the key provisions of the peace proposal. How unhappy some within the Tutsi community were became clear as the August 28 deadline approached.

**CONFLICTING VALUES:** Some of the key journalistic values and principles, such as openness and objectivity, by which a peace radio should be guided to be credible and effective, may be unacceptable in societies that value secrecy and ethnic loyalty more than anything else. The Ijambo experience is that such culturally-based challenges must be overcome or at least minimized early through rigorous training and innovative investigative approaches so that the local correspondents can function in the two worlds a media intervention puts them in—one new, the other old.

**SUSTAINABILITY:** In an attempt to reduce its dependency on other broadcasting outlets, Studio Ijambo "is supporting its journalists in their plans to set up their own independent radio with the same aims as Studio Ijambo," the current Ijambo director explained. "Apart from adding a fresh new independent voice to the airwaves in Burundi, this will enable the Studio to broadcast its programs without having to depend so much on media organizations, such as the state radio, which doesn't necessarily share their aims and objectives of Studio Ijambo" (Rolt 2001).

Donors and policy makers should encourage such indigenization of the intervention

instrument to ensure sustainability of the peace building process. On the other hand, efforts must be made to avoid anything that might add to the institutional tension between Studio Ijambo and the government since that may even jeopardize the slight opening of the political system now underway. The interplay between the small independent media and the state in that country must be guided very carefully and slowly.

**NETWORKING:** Studio Ijambo should explore the possibility of working with regional actors in the media sector not only to expand its audience, but also to protect itself from any attempt to silence it by any single country. For example, a peace radio needs assessment conducted in neighboring Uganda revealed interest among NGO organizations, a media association and an academic institution to contribute to a new independent media intervention in the conflict-ravaged northern part of the country.



## Introduction

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The principal objective of this study was to assess the impact of Studio Ijambo, a radio production program in Bujumbura, Burundi, set up in 1995 as a direct response to the hate propaganda that pervaded the airwaves in the Great Lakes region of Africa, where hate radio is believed to have played a significantly destructive role, especially in the Rwanda massacre of 1994.

The project was also designed to draw lessons from the experience and impact of this intervention that can be useful in similar areas of conflict.

The radio program, funded by USAID, was set up to support and enhance peace building and strengthen local capacity to manage and resolve conflict in Burundi. However, the assessment must first be viewed within the political context of the conflict that needed such an intervention.

## The Conflict

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The protracted peace negotiations in Arusha, Tanzania, to end the seven-year old Burundian conflict, which has claimed more than 200,000 lives, reached the moment of truth on August 28, 2000, and showed once again the depth of the gulf that separates the two main ethnic communities in the country. The negotiations, which started in July 1998, came to a virtual deadlock when some of the Tutsi-bloc parties refused to sign the pact mediated by former South African President Nelson Mandela. However, it also showed how much the international community wants to avoid another Rwanda in this troubled region, though donors seem also equally determined to see the negotiations come to an end. Both of these outcomes of the 25-month negotiation process have significant implications for peace building in this highly polarized society.

President Bill Clinton's presence at what was supposed to be a peace signing ceremony in Arusha, at the invitation of the chief negotiator, showed how much the international community wants this peace process to work and prevent another Rwanda-type tragedy. The Clinton trip was also an indirect response to the bitter criticism that the Western nations, especially the U.S., as well as the United Nations, could have prevented the massacre that killed more than a million, mostly Tutsis and also moderate Hutus, in Rwanda. The Burundi-Rwanda crises are intertwined, and the former has all the characteristics that led to the massacre in the latter in 1994. In fact, Nyankanzi describes the two as "identical twins" that "share identical ethnic composition, history, culture, and language" and "like identical twins, if one is sick the other becomes sick, too" (1998, 53). The assassination of Burundi's first democratically elected president, Melchior Ndadaye, a Hutu, in 1993 is believed to have served as an additional flash point for the 1994 massacre in neighboring Rwanda. Both nations also share a legacy of neglect by the West. Klinghoffer, who describes the Burundi-Rwanda relationship as 'symbiotic,' says, "Burundi's travails during the spring of 1972 bear much in common with those experienced by Rwanda in 1994; except for the ethnic mirror imaging," and the "moral indifference the world showed in 1972, "surely provided a poor precedent when the 'international community' had to consider its response to the Rwanda genocide of 1994" (1998:9-10).

When Clinton's acceptance of Mandela's invitation to join the signing ceremony was announced, some saw the move as an arm-twisting ploy by the chief negotiator to pressure the reluctant parties, especially the Tutsi bloc of ten parties, to meet the August 28 deadline. The announcement came as one of the many attempts Mandela and his team tried during the weeks leading up to the deadline. For example, the week the White House announced the Clinton visit, the Mandela team had two former Burundian heads of state--Sylvester Ntibantunganya and Jean-Baptiste Bagaza--as well as current President Pierre Buyoya, in South Africa in an attempt to break what was looking like a serious impasse in the Arusha negotiations. The deadlock cast more and more doubt on the negotiation team's optimism that the 19 Burundian parties would reach a comprehensive peace accord and meet the August 28 deadline, though the delegates continued to be divided mostly along ethnic lines on the key issues.

However, as the deadline approached, despite the unprecedented gesture on the part of the international community in support of the 25-month peace process, the optimism slowly began to evaporate. In the end, even Clinton's presence, along with 12 other heads of state who had come to witness what was to be a historic ceremony, and Mandela's blunt warning, aimed at the five holdout Tutsi parties, could not salvage the peace plan; once again, the impasse exposed the intractable nature of the ethnic factor which defines the political crisis in this highly divided society.

Right from the start, there was an attempt especially on the part of the Tutsi parties to downplay the ethnic factor, stressing that there were 19 "political" parties, and not two ethnic-based camps.

However, the final days of the long negotiation process showed that ethnicity is what defines the crisis. The 19 political parties were finally reduced to two ethnic blocs. The ten-party Tutsi bloc balked on most of the key issues that called for parity and asked for more talks on reforming the army, the transition period, cease-fire arrangements and the electoral system. Both groups accused each other of blocking the talks. The failure of the Arusha talks was not totally unexpected, given the depth of the gulf that separates the Tutsi and Hutu blocs of parties, centering around cease-fire, reforming the army, the electoral process, and the duration and leadership of the transition.

Mandela had expressed a great deal of optimism that the crisis would soon come to an end. In fact, the former South African president and his team of negotiators had initially set a July 20 deadline for the 19 Burundian parties to sign a peace accord. When that looked unachievable, the team moved the deadline to August 28. However, many who followed the talks and were familiar with the complexities of the remaining unresolved issues, and the breaking down of planned parallel talks between the Tutsi-dominated Buyoya regime and the Hutu rebels in South Africa, doubted these issues could be resolved by then and that the deadline could be met.

Buyoya, who was the first to endorse the new initiative, was forced to warn against Mandela's raising unrealistic expectations, mostly abroad. However, when Mandela set the initial deadline in July and the moment of truth approached, Buyoya was among the first to express doubts about it. The president's initial enthusiasm about the Mandela initiative had more to do with past efforts led by the late president Julius Nyerere who the Tutsis viewed as less than an impartial mediator. In fact, many of the Tutsi intellectuals who participated in this study accused him of being "pro-Hutu." This perception of the late Tanzanian president among the Tutsis seems to be wide spread. When Mandela visited Burundi to "sell" his peace plan to the army high command and the people in June, many cited Nyerere's failure to visit the country and talk to the people directly during the period he served as mediator as evidence of his being "anti Tutsis."

Speaking at the Arusha conference site in Burundi on July 20, Buyoya warned "against the premature signing of a peace accord to end the war in his country, saying more work remained to be done than indicated by the chief mediator. Buyoya said. "We have made new progress, but there are still problems to settle, such as the setting up of

transition institutions and their durations, the modalities of a cease-fire, the electoral system and guarantees for the accord” (Washington Times, July 21, 2000, A15). What Buyoya enumerated, along with the issue of reform of the Tutsi-dominated army, are at the heart of the problem. Of these, it looks the Mandela team thought the reform of the army was the least intractable and tried to get some agreement on it first from both sides. The Buyoya government seemed to have accepted the proposal that would set quotas to allow the majority Hutus to have a 50 percent representation in the Burundian national army, which is now more than 80 percent Tutsi. However, when Mandela addressed the army high command in Bujumbura, during his June visit to Burundi, the army brass said, this would hinge on a cease-fire agreement, which in turn depended on the Hutu rebels who were never part of the negotiation process; according to Guy-Emmanuel Ntambutso, who served as one of two official translators for Mandela when the former South African president addressed the high command in June 2000. Thus, the seeds of the latest failure to end the violence were planted early in the negotiation since the cease-fire issue was at the heart of the problem that led to the failure in the negotiation process in August. Another critical issue was reforming the armed forces; though there was some agreement on the 50-50 proposition, there was a difference right from the start on who from the Hutus should be in the army. The Burundian army brass has been opposed to the incorporation of the Hutu rebels into the national army because they feared such a move would expose the Tutsis to yet another genocide.

Some of the intellectuals complained that both sides “have really been dancing around the issues,” afraid to face the difficult decisions, but at the same time trying to avoid appearing the intransigent party in front of a world waiting to see a breakthrough in the negotiations. There are some indications that the parties never really grappled with the critical issues that divided them until as late as a week before the first deadline Mandela had proposed. The European Union representative Aldo Ajello said, “We are moving from general discussion into the phase where the real problems are discussed” (Reuters August 13, 2000).

Many of those who participated in this study also cited lack of involvement of the people as another shortcoming of the peace process. Furthermore, many of the parties that played a critical role in the negotiations and even in the final outcome of the process don’t have any followings among the people at home. In our group and individual interviews, we found out many of the small entrepreneurs who listen to radio, judging by their responses to our other questions, never understood what the Mandela team was proposing pertaining to the amnesty issue. In fact, the different “spins” by some of the elite factions had affected the perceptions of some of the respondents on the peace process. This was particularly evident on the key, and one of the most sensitive issues: whether or not to offer amnesty to those behind the assassination of Burundi’s first democratically elected president, as well as those accused of inciting, leading or conducting massacres of Tutsis that came in the wake of the assassination of Melchior Ndadaye, a Hutu. The spin from some Tutsi factions had Mandela advocating amnesty for those accused of genocide, and the Hutu version had Mandela calling for amnesty for those behind the assassination. Yet, the negotiators did not seem to have a public

relations strategy to counter these and other potential distortions that may have contributed to the August 28 deadlock. In Burundi, a society riven by mistrust seems it does not take much to stir the deep-seated fears both ethnic communities feel of each other.

The failure of the Arusha negotiations has implications for peace building effort in Burundi because it adds to the impression that this is an “insoluble” crisis. Donor fatigue which was evident in Mandela’s attempt to accelerate the process since he took over as chief mediator is also bound to affect existing as well as potential peace building initiatives to change the culture of violence in Burundi. Most, if not all, of the non-governmental organizations now engaged in peace and reconciliation activities in the country depend on international assistance. Many of these organizations are doing what the government should be doing in the rural areas. Some of the government ministries don’t even have any kind of presence in some parts of the country; but the NGOs do.

The inability to move forward on the peace front may also have exacerbated the already tense sociopolitical atmosphere in the country, especially because of the high expectations the Mandela team had raised about the outcome. There are also the divisions within the Tutsi bloc parties, with some signing the accord, and the others willing to scuttle it. As to what effect this is going to have on the next journey on the road to peace to end the conflict, it is hard to say at this point. However, in the past, intra-Tutsi competition added significantly to the Tutsi-Hutu tension [Lemarchand 1994, 84-89).

However, one thing that was encouraging from the responses of both Hutus and Tutsis in this study is that both sides to the conflict seem to feel that enough is enough, that negotiation is the only way to end the cycle of violence by both groups. This is the overall assessment of most Burundians who represented a broad cross section of the urban sectors of the population and some displaced rural residents who fled the violence mostly outside of the urban centers. These included: small entrepreneurs; professional and non-professional women; university professors; college students; representatives of local non-governmental organizations; youth; and even members of the Burundian armed forces. When asked to cite something different today compared to two years ago, most of these people said the changing mood among the people from both sides of the ethnic divide that violence is not the way. There is no question that this feeling will provide the internal pressure that is necessary to keep the peace process going, forcing even the extremists to keep looking for a peaceful alternative to violence.

## The Intervention

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### The Rationale

The Rwandan experience pertaining to the 1994 genocide, where people carried the radio with one hand, and the machete with the other, has shown how effective radio can be as a vehicle for anti-social messages. It also showed how much the people where literacy is low depend on radio as a primary means of mass communication. Chalk, writing about the role hate radio played in the Rwanda genocide, said, “Radio is the premier means of reaching the public with news and information in countries where most of the population is illiterate and television sets are rare” (1999, 93).

The privately-owned Radio Television Libre de Mille Collins (RTL), which helped fuel the genocide, proved what radio could do as a source of anti-social messages, especially in conflict situations where information and sources of information play a more significant role, than in areas and times of peace. However, the Rwandan experience also gave the world an idea of radio’s potential as an instrument of pro-social messages.

It is this experience and rationale that led to the establishment of Studio Ijambo in Burundi, which has almost all of the sociopolitical characteristics that led to the social explosion next door in Rwanda. It was founded in March 1995 in response to hate radio propaganda from the Rwandan media, both broadcast and print, as well as from Radio Rutomoramungo that was based in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Though the Hutu-run RTL was the most known of the hate mongering media outlets that were widely implicated in the Rwandan massacre. There were also other radio and newspapers in the Great Lakes area that prompted Studio Ijambo and others to counter the hate-filled airwaves with something more positive and definitely balanced and objective news and information. For example, one of the three Rwandan media officials that were tried in Arusha by the international criminal tribunal in Rwanda was Hassan Ngezi editor of *Kangura*, a newspaper believed to have incited Hutus leading up to the 1994 genocide. Three years earlier, the pro-Hutu paper was denounced by the International Commission of Jurists for inciting hatred. The other media officials on trial were Ferdinand Nahimana, a founding member of RTL and director of the Rwanda Office of Information, and Jean-Bosco Barayagwiza. In addition to RTL, *Kangura* and other “private” media, there was also the government-owned Radio Rwanda that was also accused of similar crimes during the 1994 massacre. Chalk says RTL was in many ways an extension of Radio Rwanda. In fact, “with the benefit of hindsight, it seems likely that RTL was founded to evade key clauses of the Arusha Peace Accords of 1993, which barred the government of Rwanda, as well as the RPF, from incitement to violence, promoting discrimination based on ethnicity, and issuing propaganda inciting the people to hate” (1999, 96).

In addition to the hate campaign that spilled over from the Rwandan media, Burundi was also directly targeted by hate radio, based in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

(DRC), especially Radio Rutomoramgingo which broadcast anti-Tutsi messages in 1994; another media outlet that poisoned the Great Lakes airwaves was Radio Candid, which spread even more virulent anti-Tutsi hate messages during the same period (Myers et al. 2000).

Furthermore, the Burundian local vernacular print press was accused of contributing to the hate campaign aggravating even further ethnic relations at this crucial juncture of the nation's history. Two newspapers, one on each side of the ethnic divide in that country, were said to have played destructive role in this polarized society. *The Crossroads*, on the Tutsi side, and *The Witness*, from the Hutu side, both in Kirundi, added a great deal to the ethnic tension in the country. Rich, who saw the local media in action during the depth of the latest mass killings, said, the Burundian press not only reflected the deep ethnic division "but also actively promoted it." The year Studio Ijambo was established, both Hutu and Tutsi media tried to "rival each other over calls to kill, or in packing and advancing their mutually macabre ideologies" generating "mutual terror and distrust based on historical fears" (1997, 63).

Another reason that necessitated the establishment of Studio Ijambo was the clear absence of a credible source of news and information to serve as an antidote to the ethnic-laced propaganda from within and outside of Burundi. Such a source of verified information could have empowered the listeners to counter the hate messages. In general, when a media audience has a source where the listeners can verify the news and information, it makes it difficult for those who want to "spin" it to fit their purposes.

This was the social and political climate in most of Central Africa, especially in the Great Lakes region, when Studio Ijambo was established in Bujumbura six years ago. Apparently, this was part of a broader response to the hate propaganda that dominated the airwaves in this region. This was the outcome of a growing awareness among donors and non-governmental organizations of the value of radio in conflict prevention, resolution and peace building. For example, Ijambo was preceded by Radio Agatashya, which was set up in the eastern part of the DRC within weeks after the start of the 1994 Rwanda massacre. It was established by Fondation Hironnelle, a European NGO. In fact, Radio Agatashya was one of two radio that aired Ijambo's programs in the spring of 1995 until the latter went off the air a year later.

Describing the sociopolitical climate in Burundi, at the time Search for Common Ground was looking for ways to contribute to peace and reconciliation, in this central African nation, the UN Special Commissioner for Human Rights, Paulo Sergio Pinheiro, said: "Burundians are currently living in an atmosphere of mistrust, hatred, and exclusion, withdrawn into themselves and often hostile to anything unfamiliar." Adding, the UN report said, "The cumulative effect of continued loss of loved ones," the sad memories or a desire for revenge that follow, "has created a context conducive to the development of extremist and totalitarian ideologies among the population" (UN 1995, 1).

This grim description by the UN official of the social and political environment, which was "hostile to anything unfamiliar," sums up the condition Studio Ijambo was born and

tried to survive in as an independent source of news and information and as an impartial forum for all the sides to the conflict.

## The Beginnings

The Washington, D.C.-based PVO Search for Common Ground, a private volunteer organization, sent a delegation to Burundi in late 1994, as a direct response to the Rwandan genocide as well as the frightening level of hate propaganda, targeting the Tutsis in the three Great Lakes nations--Rwanda, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The trip was also in response to an invitation to this American PVO, along with other organizations, including Refugees International, from a special United Nations representative for Burundi to help avoid a repeat of the Rwandan tragedy in neighboring Burundi. In the spring of 1995, Search for Common Ground opened a field office and launched a radio studio program "aimed at creating mechanisms for ethnic reconciliation, and decreasing levels of distrust and violence." Then in January 1996, the group established a women's center to help "develop the capacity of Burundian women to promote peace and reconciliation in their families, neighborhoods, and communities" (Idriss, briefing, June 12, 2000; also Rolt, briefings, June 2000).

Studio Ijambo was set up as the first independent radio production house in Burundi to try to use the airwaves for peace and reconciliation. The first Burundian to be recruited by the Search for Common Ground team in Bujumbura in March 1995, journalist Alexis Sinduhiji, says of Studio Ijambo's mission: "Looking back on it, I understand that Bryan [Rich] wanted to create a radio station whose goal would be to diminish or help end the violence by using a very subtle and complex approach that would try to add coherence and perspective to the crisis.... [But] I was fascinated by Bryan' determination. He didn't know our society, its intrigues, its lies, or its manipulations.... I also felt sorry for him not being able to comprehend the reality facing what he proposed" (1998, 9). Rich, who left in 1997, knew that Burundi was a big challenge; he also knew that it represented a historic opportunity to show that the media can be a potent instrument of peace and reconciliation. As a result, he and his pioneering team of five Hutu and Tutsi reporters, defined the project's mission and agreed upon some basic goals to achieve, the most important of which:

- "to position on the studio as a neutral and independent voice and to be inclusive of all sides." In addition to developing a credible source of news and information, the team tried right from the outset to make the radio production center as a forum to bring all sides to discuss the issues that separate them. Rich says, "The premise of the project was that journalists could make a significant contribution to opening and maintaining avenues of public discourse" (1997, 63).
- to build a wide audience "of ordinary people, both perpetrators and victims of violence. " Right from the start, the team decided to let the people tell their own stories, instead of the reporters interpreting the information, so that the people's "eyewitness accounts would define the conflict and its consequences on everyday life and would propose solutions."



- “to create, encourage, and reinforce the confidence and credibility of local journalists.” For that, it was necessary to have a team composed of Hutus and Tutsis working together and respecting the basic rules of journalism as well as showing the common ground they shared” (Sinduhiji 1998, 9; emphasis mine).

When the program started, the team had to reinvent new tools of coping with the stumbling blocks they faced at practically every point of the way. As part of its mission statement, Search for Common Ground lists 24 methods in its “toolbox” of interventions, four of which are related to the mass media; producing television programs, peace radio, training of journalists on covering ethnic-based conflicts, and inter-ethnic investigative teams that work on in-depth articles to be published in the areas of conflict.

In addition to grounding them in the basic skills of journalism, Studio Ijambo provided training to the editorial staff in conflict prevention, management and resolution. But, the most difficult part of this was the specialized training that was designed to help the local journalists reconcile conflicting values, some rooted in the old culture, and others in the new evolving newsroom culture. Of the culturally based challenges a journalist faces in Burundi, ethnic loyalty is probably the most important because it negates the fundamental principles of journalism, especially independence and objectivity. Describing the cultural and environmental factors that stress such loyalty, Rich said, “Overcrowding, rigid family loyalty and regional and ethnic identification mean that journalists must counter incredible pressure to attain even the most basic degree of objectivity.... In Burundi, being ‘independent’ is equated with betrayal, and therefore the notion of independence itself is alien and dangerous” (1997, 63). In addition to the training that the journalists had to go through, the team also started a unique assignment strategy that sent ethnically diverse teams of reporters to cover the divided society.

Developing reliable news sources in a culture that values extreme secrecy and a society riven by mistrust was another challenge that the pioneering group had to deal with in its news and information gathering and verification methods. They had to develop techniques of verifying controversial information, which included sending double teams of ethnically diverse reporters; they also took extreme measures to protect their sources.

The founders—and their successors today--also went to extreme lengths to avoid being perceived as partisan, favoring one party or the other, one ethnic group or the other. In such a highly politicized environment, even the appearance of political partisanship for a media organization could seriously jeopardize its operations. However, Burundian government officials did not imply in any of the interviews that Studio Ijambo was partisan. To avoid being perceived as an opposition to one group or the other, the team “used Tutsis to report on the activities of the primarily Tutsi army and used Hutus to report on the attacks by the Hutu rebels. This gave the reports credibility and authenticity since people knew the journalists by their voices” (Rich 1997, 65).

Security for the journalists was, and still is today, a critical issue for the founders of Studio Ijambo that was born in the middle of 1993-96 killings. At all times, it took security measures to ensure continuity in the flow of information as well the security of its correspondents during times of total security breakdown. Ijambo even had to cover some of the hard political stories during the height of the killings by using rotating teams of journalists hoping to diffuse any unnecessary attention on any single reporter. Also as part of its security measures, the team instituted a policy of what it called an “open engagement” with the government to minimize any potential source of suspicion about any of its undertakings.

It provided some additional security for the reporters in this violently divided society and assured balance of perspective in their respective stories by working in multiethnic teams.

Using innovative methods and guided by the objectives described above, Studio Ijambo produced four news and cultural programs by the end of 1995. Today, the number of programs it produces has grown more than four-fold. At the time of the field work in June 2000, it produced 17 news, current affairs, radio magazines, and cultural programs, including a very popular soap-opera, “Our Neighbors, Ourselves,” which has been described as a continuing “story of hope and reconciliation.” The setting, in the rural hills of Burundi, provides a good background for the gripping story that is centered around two neighboring families, one Hutu, the other Tutsi, trying to provide a model for coexistence during a difficult time. The theme of the show, which went on the air in July 1997, can be summed up in this excerpt from the soap opera’s transcript: “We all have something in common no matter what they say. Even day and night meet at sunrise and sunset.” It is written by a popular and prize-winning local playwright, Marrie Louise Sibazuri, who now resides in Belgium. *The Wall Street Journal* says, the play is designed “to show that it is possible to overcome the mistrust that prevails between the minority Tutsi and majority Hutu groups” (Zachary 2000, 1). In many ways, the format is based on similar dramatization techniques used by such producers as Norman Lear in the United States in trying to drive a difficult and complex social issues home. Using the situation comedy format in “All in the Family,” Lear tried to confront the difficult issue of race relations in the 1970s.

Another popular show is “Heroes,” which recognizes the exceptional courage some individuals showed by saving members of the other ethnic group during the height of the ethnic massacres in 1993-1996 at the risk of losing their own lives.

Studio Ijambo programs depended mostly on Burundi’s state radio network, and Burundi’s only independently owned radio, then known as Umwizero, which was struggling as a commercial station. In fact, the National Radio and Television of Burundi (RTNB) was the first to pick up Studio Ijambo programs. “The agreement was part of an attempt by the state media to quell criticism that it was overtly biased and to show that it was open to collaboration with outside producers” Rich says. RTNB agreed to give Studio Ijambo a total of 90 minutes, in two-45-minute segments and to broadcast the programs with Ijambo credit and without editing; however, the group agreed that the

national radio had the right to refuse if it thought the submissions objectionable. The founding team considered establishing a relationship with the state media as “an important achievement,” because, in addition to providing an outlet for its productions, the agreement gave Ijambo some level of acceptance among the different factions of the ruling elite.

This almost total dependency on the national radio began to ease when Studio Ijambo started to use Radio Agatashya in Zaire, which gave Ijambo programs a regional reach that it could not get from RTNB, and an outlet for stories it could not use on the national radio. This relationship even created a stirring within the RNTB staff for more openness within their own organization. “Amazingly, journalists from within the state media started to provide us with information, that they themselves couldn’t use but knew we would be able to corroborate and send to Radio Agatashya as part of our daily news package,” said Rich (1997,65). Other outlets for Studio Ijambo’s programs are the Voice of America, the BBC World Service, which give its productions an even wider reach, and helped reduce its dependency on the state-owned radio network.

As to the size of the audience of these programs and actual geographical coverage, it is very difficult to even try to estimate, as its programs are broadcast by other stations. However, several figures and numbers were banded around during the study period, including “About 12 million.” But, the figures may be much lower than that. Studio Ijambo’s director Francis Rolt, said when the program is in French, the maximum it can reach is only 15% of the 6.5 million Burundian population. Most of the 17 programs are now broadcast in Kirundi, the national language.

## Impacts

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In this section, we will examine the impact of Studio Ijambo programs in the five interrelated areas of peace building in Burundi, on which the in-depth interviews, focus groups, and surveys focused: inter-group relations, social and political mobilization, political elite negotiations, public institutions and processes, and mass or elite conflict behavior.

### Inter-Group Relations

There is evidence that the journalistic, dramatic and cultural components of Studio Ijambo's programs have had positive effect in all of the five areas of investigation. The result of the survey of 160 Burundians in eight social groups and subgroups also reinforce the overall outcomes of the individual and group-based investigation; the results indicate a relatively high approval of its productions. Explaining why the strong audience support right from the inception of the organization, Rich, says, "As anywhere, providing information faster and in more depth translated into credibility and respect by listeners" (1997, 64).

In the more specific areas, the findings show that at least some of Studio Ijambo's programs, especially the dramatic and cultural components, have had a positive effect on ethnic relations. Responses from nearly 270 groups and individuals who participated in this study from both ethnic communities to Studio Ijambo's 'soap opera' called "Our Neighbors, Our Selves," and the magazine show "Pillars of Humanity," popularly known as "Heroes," have been particularly positive. When asked to name programs that helped them modify and/ or change their attitudes and/ or behavior toward members of other ethnic groups, most of the participants singled out these two shows more than any of Studio Ijambo's other 15 programs that were aired at the time of the study. Almost all of the respondents could remember messages from the soap opera relating to tolerance or coexistence. The magazine show "Heroes," which tells the stories of those who saved the lives of members of other ethnic groups, at the risk of their own, during the height of the latest cycle of mass killings (1993-1996), for example, has generated a great deal of response and interest from both Hutus and Tutsis.

There is also substantial anecdotal evidence that some of these shows have had even deeper impact at least on some portions of the population. Some Studio Ijambo staffers remember calls following the airing of "Heroes" from some members of the audience to express regret for having participated in killings themselves during the 1993-96 period or to give the names of other "heroes" they knew whose stories should be told.

In general, it seems that Studio Ijambo has contributed to the development of a culture of peace in Burundi, especially tolerance and coexistence. Although, it is difficult to determine how much of the changes in attitude, and, may be even behavior about tolerance is attributable to the radio production studio, many respondents cited some of its cultural or dramatic components of its programs as contributory factors to the

changers in their views about members of other ethnic groups. Here, efforts were made in posing the questions--in tones and substance--to reduce the social desirability of the responses to avoid the possibility some participants would choose the socially accepted responses--so they could feel freer to express their views, no matter how unpopular or socially unacceptable. However, the participants almost consistently gave the statements relating to tolerance and coexistence a high mark as the program's contribution to peace and reconciliation, rating them an average of 4.5 out of a possible 5 for this sub-category.

From the data, it is also possible to infer that Ijambo has contributed to the realization that dialogue as an alternative path to violence. Many of those participants could recall some statements from some of the programs or the studio's motto "Dialogue is our Future." All of those individuals who raised the issue expressed agreement that dialogue and negotiation are the only rational path to Burundi's future.

Ijambo has made significant contributions to the professionalization of the Burundian media. There is no question that its innovative team reporting practice has sensitized the rest of the media in the country and has shown to what extent a news organization must go to deliver balanced, fair and objective news and information to its audience.

The indispensability of independent channels of communication in the peace process was made even clear at the start of the latest peace process led by former South African president Nelson Mandela. Studio Ijambo was the only media organization that translated into Kirundi, the Burundian language, and produced the historic speech in which Mandela laid down the framework of the peace process. Though the speech was carried as a news item over the government media mostly in French, Ijambo was the only news organization that tried to bring it to the people in its entirety as a way of getting the people involved in the peace process. Though it is difficult to measure the extent of the effect of the translated version of the landmark speech, a few of those interviewed recalled listening to the Kirundi version aired over what was then known Radio Umwizero, now called Radio Bonesha. That the government media did not give the speech a full play in the language the people understand best or even French may be a reflection that some in the Tutsi-dominated government were not exactly happy with some of the key provisions of the peace proposal. How unhappy some within the Tutsi community were became clear as the August 28 deadline approached.

As an independent source of verified news and information, Studio Ijambo has also become instrumental in the fight against a recurring source of ethnic tension: rumor-mongering. A Tutsi journalist, who witnessed the 1993 massacre in the northern district of Bujumbura, Kamenge, explained how catastrophic rumor-mongering can be in a society torn by mistrust: "In 1988, based on false rumor that the Tutsis were preparing to attack them, Hutus had taken their machetes and massacred their Tutsi neighbors in Burundi" (Sinduhije 1998, 5). This was a replay of similar incidents on both sides of the ethnic divide during the previous cycles of massacres and retaliatory mass killings.

## Social and Political Mobilization

One of the original goals of the program was to empower civil society. All indications are that many of the local and international NGOs have had access to the radio production studio and have been using it as a vehicle to reach their targeted sectors of the population. Of these, the Women Peace Center, which was founded in early 1996 by Search for Common Ground, naturally has a special relationship with Studio Ijambo in its attempt to reach out to as many women as possible and help them build peace and reconciliation capacity at all levels of society, starting at home.

Ijambo has been serving as a forum not only for the different contestants in the conflict, but also for the civil society in its peace building efforts. “We have to remember that the civil society is also divided ethnically,” said David Gakunzi, director of Bujumbura’s Martin Luther King International Center. He said, Studio Ijambo should be the voice of the civil society and that it must get involved in social issues such as prostitution, AIDS and corruption, and serve as a bridge between the different sectors of the civil society to help it identify areas and issues of common interest. Many of the participants in the study said that Ijambo has been all that, though some felt that some social issues, especially prostitution and AIDS, are not given the emphasis they deserve.

Studio Ijambo’s innovative programming approach has created a broad audience for its products. Such innovative approaches are critical for radio to be effective as an instrument of social and political mobilization. Gakunzi remembers how Radio-Television Libre des Mille Collins (RTL) used popular music to draw the youth to its audience during the period leading up to the 1994 massacre in Rwanda. “It seems Mille Collins made a conscious effort to mobilize the young for the massacres that followed,” he said. Many of those who participated in this study cited the high level of professionalism as well as the relaxed tone and approach in presenting the programs in all of Studio Ijambo’s dramatic, cultural and news programs. Evidence of the effect of Ijambo’s approach is its growing audience. Of the 267 participants less than 20 percent said they didn’t listen to Ijambo’s programs, though some times there was some confusion as to whose program they were listening to since Studio Ijambo’s productions are aired over other radio stations. Some of the respondents said that when a Studio Ijambo program is aired over Radio Burundi they get confused as to the program’s origin.

There is also substantial anecdotal evidence that shows that Studio Ijambo’s exposes in 1996, 1997, 1999, and 2000 may have been instrumental in pressuring the government to change at least some aspects of its policies pertaining to refugees and the internally displaced. Ijambo was the first to bring to light killings of refugees, Hutus returning from Tanzania, by Burundian government soldiers in 1997 and internationalized the story by giving it to VOA which aired it promptly. At least partially due to the media pressure that Studio Ijambo set in motion, the Ministry of Defense closed the refugee camps in November 1998. Furthermore, a magazine series in 1996 focusing on the plight of the internally displaced in the camps surrounding the capital, especially the very young, is also believed to have contributed to a mass return from what some describe as

“concentration camps” to their homes in Bujumbura’s neighborhood of Buyenzi and Kinama.

### **Political Elite Negotiations**

Right from the start, Studio Ijambo opened up new channels of communication for those who did not have access to government-owned media, and as result, provided a reliable forum for what came out to look like an indirect dialogue between the parties. In fact, the project was founded on the premise “that journalists could make a significant contribution to opening and maintaining avenues of public discourse” (Rich 1997, 63).

This has also exposed the Brundian people to the different political visions and platforms the parties have been debating among themselves. This educational function of the media, which encourages participation from the people in support of one political vision or the other, naturally affects the negotiation process.

How much the opposition parties depended on the independent media as the channel to their people could be seen in their clamor to talk to Studio Ijambo correspondents who covered the Arusha negotiations.

### **Public Institutions and Processes**

As the first independent radio production program in Burundi that tried to pry open the state’s monopoly of public information, Studio Ijambo has effected some institutional behavioral changes. Though it is difficult to say precisely what part of the changes can be attributed to this media intervention, there is no question that today the state and some of its agencies, including the armed forces, have shown some level of tolerance towards the independent media. Government officials, including the minister of information and the director general of radio and television reflected the degree of tolerance that is evident in the institutional behavioral changes of the Burundian state.

Studio Ijambo has achieved a reasonable level of credibility as a neutral source of news and information in this highly polarized sociopolitical environment, which is driven by mistrust and fear. Studio Ijambo correspondents who worked for the government-owned radio before joining the Ijambo team said they could see a big difference in their level of acceptance especially by the opposition when they started covering the Arusha negotiations. They could also see the same changes in attitude and behavior in their coverage of the parliament. In both cases, the subjects would refuse to talk to the government radio and television reporters, but seek Studio Ijambo reporters out instead.

One of Studio Ijambo’s strongest impacts may be on the media’s institutional credibility. Through its practice of team reporting, Ijambo has helped raise the level of professionalism through a systematic and conscious effort to protect its products from being contaminated by ethnic bias. In a society where there is so much hatred at close quarters between the two main ethnic groups, it is very difficult to avoid such contamination. However, there is no question that its innovative team reporting practice

has sensitized the rest of the media and has shown to what extent a news organization must go to deliver balanced, fair and objective news and information to its audience. Sometimes its assignment editors even had to send out two different teams of ethnically mixed reporters separately to make sure the accuracy of the facts of the difficult stories (Sinduhije 2000).

It is exceptionally difficult to achieve a reasonable level of credibility as a neutral source of news and information in a highly polarized sociopolitical environment as the Burundian society is. However, in the eyes of its audience, Studio Ijambo has achieved a high level of credibility, given the constraints, as an impartial source of news and information. Adrienne Sindayigaya, the first Hutu correspondent to join the program in 1995, said, Studio Ijambo “was the first [independent radio program] to give an honest, balanced information without hiding the truth and that tried to seek solutions to the problem” (Interview with author, June 20, 2000).

The level of impact can be seen from the reaction of those who disagreed with Studio Ijambo. Of the eight groups that participated in our survey using the rapid method of data collecting in the field, the soldiers group disagreed with Studio Ijambo most. Yet the members of the group admitted they listen to the program as an important source of information. The impact of such effort has been a level of credibility never seen before in Burundi among the common people, the opposition, and even the soldiers as a source of information, according to some NGO and opposition party representatives. Studio Ijambo correspondents and production personnel who worked for the government-owned radio before joining the Ijambo team said they could see a big difference in their level of acceptance especially by the opposition when they started covering the Arusha negotiations. They could also see the same changes in attitude and behavior in their coverage of the parliament. In both cases, the subjects would refuse to talk to the government radio and television reporters, but seek Studio Ijambo reporters out instead. However, Ijambo reporters admit to some level of self-censorship when they interview rebel leaders and cover the war so their stories would be aired over the state radio, one of the six stations that carry Studio Ijambo’s programs. The other stations are Radio Bonesha, the Voice of America, the BBC World Service, and Radio Netherlands International. Added to that list of outlets Ijambo’s programs is the recently launched Bujumbura-based African Public Radio (Rolt 2001).

It can also be stated that Ijambo, through its practice of team reporting, contributed to raising the level of professionalism through a systematic and conscious efforts to protect its products from being contaminated by ethnic bias. In a society where there is so much hatred at close quarters between the two main ethnic groups, it is very difficult to avoid such contamination. However, in addition to hiring some of the best reporters available in the country, and instituting rigorous training program, Studio Ijambo put in place a system of team reporting, assigning its correspondents in ethnically balanced teams to protect its correspondents as well its products from ethnic bias.



## **Mass or Elite Conflict Behavior**

A media intervention can serve as an effective alternative to violent expressions of differences between the different sides to the conflict. Studio Ijambo, as an independent forum for dialogue, has been providing that alternative and the culture of peace it has been helping to cultivate is showing encouraging results overall.

Even the members of the Burundian armed forces, who, as the findings of the survey indicate, have had the least favorable attitude towards Ijambo's programs, have shown tolerance toward the private media with which they have been clashing over military and rebel activities in the countryside. Some of the changes in their behavior are credited to Studio Ijambo that they said they listened to as a credible source of news and information.

Furthermore, there is substantial anecdotal evidence that some of these shows have had even deeper impact on at least some portions of the society. Studio Ijambo staffers frequently receive telephone calls or mail messages following the airing of "Heroes" from some members of the audience to express regret for having participated in killings themselves during the 1993-96 period or to give the names of other "heroes" they knew whose stories should be told.

## Conclusions and Policy Implications

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These findings have important policy and operational implications for donors and policy makers trying to support, implement, or design radio interventions in peace building processes. The experience of Studio Ijambo illustrates that radio can be a high-impact, low-cost instrument of intervention not only as a reliable source of news and information, but also as a vehicle of social and political mobilization in peace building. However, there are critical lessons that must be drawn from this and similar experiences from the region to ensure the effectiveness of such intervention. Some of the replicable practices learnt from the Brundian experience are:

**INNOVATION:** The Ijambo experience is that for a peace radio to be effective it must use innovative approaches in programming, training and general practices of journalism to draw and sustain an audience large enough to influence public opinion. It must keep reinventing itself in order to overcome professional and cultural challenges in trying to capture and sustain the critical mass necessary to effect change in conflict situations.

Studio Ijambo's innovative programming approaches--which include letting the people define the conflict and measure its effect, personalizing the conflict through such shows as "Heroes," and presenting it in a relaxed, conversational tone--has created a broad audience for its productions in Burundi.

**INDEPENDENCE:** Another important lesson from the Studio Ijambo experience and impact is that independence of government control—at least in its operation, if not ownership--is a necessary precondition for a mass media intervention to be effective in peace building. One of the primary functions of such an intervention in peace building is to serve as a reliable forum for all sides to the conflict. For such a forum to be effective, it must be viewed by all sides as being impartial and credible.

A BBC team that looked at radio media during this time in the Greater Lakes region, said that providing credible, balanced news and information is a function of independent media; "a function that should be supported and encouraged by international donors for its value in promoting better governance and in building a more empowered and informed civil society" (Myers et al. 2000, 31).

In the Burundian experience, the state-owned media's unwillingness to give Mandela's historic speech a full play at the very start of the negotiations in Arusha made it clear once again made it clear how the indispensable independent channels of communication are in a peace process. As stated above, Studio Ijambo was the only media organization that translated into Kirundi, the Burundian language, and produced the program. Though the speech, which laid down the framework of the peace process, was carried as a news item over the government media mostly in French, Ijambo was the only news organization that tried to bring it to the people in its entirety as a way of getting the people involved in the peace process. Though it is difficult to measure the extent of the effect of the translated version of the landmark speech, a few of those

interviewed recalled listening to the Kirundi version aired over what was then Radio Umwizero. That the government media did not give the speech a full play in the language the people understand best or even French may be a reflection that some in the Tutsi-dominated government were not exactly happy with some of the key provisions of the peace proposal. How unhappy some within the Tutsi community were became clear as the August 28 deadline approached.

**CONFLICTING VALUES:** Some of the key journalistic values and principles, such as openness and objectivity, by which a peace radio should be guided to be credible and effective, may be unacceptable in societies that value secrecy and ethnic loyalty more than anything else. The Ijambo experience is that such culturally-based challenges must be overcome or at least minimized early through rigorous training and innovative investigative approaches so that the local correspondents can function in the two worlds a media intervention puts them in—one new, the other old. . Both the minister of information, Luc Rukingama, and his director general for radio and television, Innocent Muhozi, in separate interviews reiterated the need for journalists to be “responsible.” In Burundi, as in most of the rest of Africa, the standard to measure responsibility is usually set by the state

**SUSTAINABILITY:** In an attempt to reduce its dependency on other broadcasting outlets, Studio Ijambo “is supporting its journalists in their plans to set up their own independent radio with the same aims as Studio Ijambo,” the current Ijambo director explained. “Apart from adding a fresh new independent voice to the airwaves in Burundi, this will enable the Studio to broadcast its programs without having to depend so much on media organizations, such as the state radio, which doesn’t necessarily share their aims and objectives of Studio Ijambo” (Rolt 2001). Donors and policy makers should encourage such indigenization of the intervention instrument to ensure sustainability of the program.

On the other hand, efforts must be made to avoid anything that might add to the institutional tension between Studio Ijambo and the government since that may even jeopardize the slight opening of the political system now underway. The interplay between the small independent media and the state in that country must be guided very carefully and slowly.

**NETWORKING:** Studio Ijambo should explore the possibility of working with regional actors in the media sector not only to expand its audience, but also to protect itself from any attempt to silence by any single country. For example, a peace radio needs assessment conducted in neighboring Uganda revealed interest among NGO organizations, a media association and an academic institution to contribute to a new independent media intervention in the conflict-ravaged northern part of the country.

## Theoretical Framework and Methodology

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The negative role the mass media played--both broadcast and print--in the Great Lakes region in the mid 1990s confirms the findings of early media researchers who feared mass media content would erode those cultural values that protect individuals from manipulated information and other propaganda techniques. Ever since the media became powerful enough to reach mass audiences, research in the antisocial effect of media content has dominated more than any other type of investigation in mass communication. By contrast, "the impact of pro-social effect content is a newer area and grew out of the recognition that the same principles underlying the learning of antisocial activities ought to apply to more positive behavior" (Wimmer and Dominick 2000, 375-76). Some of this was prompted by the success in the United States of the public television series "Sesame Street" and "Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids," both of which showed that the mass media channels can also be used as vehicles for positive messages.

There have been many empirical studies that focused on antisocial effect of the modern mass media content. Many studies have established a causal relationship between media content and anti-social attitudes and behavior. For example, the 1972 U.S. Surgeon General's Report, which was issued ten years later, said, "The consensus among most of the research community is that violence on television does lead to aggressive behavior (National Institute of Health 1982, 8). Though some researchers questioned the direct relationship between the two variables, others support the Surgeon General's findings and conclusions. But, even those who saw only slight relationship between the two variables pointed out its social implications. For example, "Rosenthal (1986), who concluded that even a weak relationship could have substantial social consequences, examined the practical implications of this weak relationship (Wimmer and Dominick 2000, 378). Congressional mandating in the Telecommunications Act of 1996 to force manufacturers to include a V-chip or a computer chip to allow parents to block negative media content is an acceptance of that preposition.

However, most of the research on media effect dealt with television, which is the most important single medium in the rich and developed societies. Radio is to the developing nations what television is to the West. Television, a visual medium, is too expensive for most of the media consumers in the developing nations. Furthermore, "the reality in Africa today is that oral communication still remains the primary means of social interaction" (Hagos 1993, 2). Awa says, "In few regions of the world has the oral tradition persisted as in Africa" (1988, 141). Radio has a better chance of success in reaching out to the people in developing nations than any other modern mass medium, although its format may be a little bit difficult for the peasants accustomed to slow, two-way traditional communication systems. The format of modern radio is usually too compact and two one-dimensional to be readily understood by the peasant who is used to slow, interactive formats.

The different data gathering methods used in this study looked for both anti-social and pro-social impact of Studio Ijambo's content programming in all three areas of investigation: inter-group relations, social and political mobilization, and public institutions and processes.

Altogether, 267 people participated in the study. Of these, 160 participated in the written survey conducted the last three days of the fieldwork because the questionnaire was constructed based on the content that came from the interviews and focus group discussions during the first week of the investigation. The 27-item questionnaire was then given to eight groups--professional women, nonprofessional women, NGO workers, youth, university students, soldiers, small entrepreneurs, and consumers--with 20 people in each. The rest of the participants were: 42 were from 6 focus groups, with an average of 7 people in each; 30 random street-level intercepted interviews; 25 one-on-one in-depth interviews, ranging from the minister information to the Kamenge district administrator, to a blue-collar construction worker in southern Bujumbura; and ten reporters, editors, producers and other media representatives, some of whom were interviewed in groups, while others participated on one-on-one basis.

Because of lack of adequate capacity in data gathering in Burundi, and many other factors, including security, time as well as cost, a non-random sampling selection method was used in this study. As a result, rapid, low-cost appraisal methods were used to gather data systematically to determine the nature and extent of impact, if any, of Studio Ijambo. These methods, if used based on established procedures that minimize bias, can generate systematic, verifiable, and thus credible information that decision makers can use. The USAID Center for Development Information and Evaluation, in a paper on performance monitoring and evaluation tips, places the rapid appraisal methods, between the informal methods, which are susceptible to bias, to the highly structured formal methods which generate quantitative data. "They are neither very informal nor fully formal. They share some of the properties of both and that is their strength as well as their weakness" (USAID 1996).

This study takes advantage of all the rapid method's strengths--low cost, quick, and it allows a great deal of flexibility in gathering the data. Attempts were made to avoid or at least minimize the effect on the outcome of the rapid appraisal's limitations: limited reliability and validity, lack of quantitative data, low credibility with decision makers. For example, one of the common limitations of such methods is that it is very difficult to generate quantitative data on which generalizations can be made. To avoid that, the questionnaire was designed to generate quantifiable responses from Burundians cutting across the socioeconomic and sociopolitical spectrum of the society. Also to enhance the reliability of the qualitative methods used, the rapid appraisal survey method was only used to supplement the findings from the other methods.

Deacon et al. argue that "quota samples are widely favored in research where speed is essential." These kind of "samples are not compromised by low response (You keep going until your quotas are full" (1999, 50-51). Some of the potential sources of errors that can affect the level of confidence are the problem of "bunching" in quota categories.

In the two women categories in this study--one group of professional women, the other made of nonprofessional--we noticed there was a “bunching” in age: The average age of the professional women participants was 28, while those in the second category ranged in age from 28 to 70.

Other problems associated with quota sampling may include the time and place at which one quota is sampled. To avoid this problem from creeping into our quota, we selected our sample at a time when we could get most of the members from the category. Furthermore, to avoid place or geographical “bunching,” we got the quotas from the different sectors of the Bujumbura, including the Central Market, an urban melting pot.

In all this, the main goal was to be able to make generalizations based on true representative samples of the broader population. In order to achieve greater confidence in the samples representatives, we tried to cover most of the societal groups--women, both professionals and non-professionals, small entrepreneurs, consumers, soldiers, local and international non-governmental organization representatives, youth, as well as the elite.

This study has also used focus group sampling method in order to provide social context for the one-on-one in-depth interviews conducted throughout the period of the field trip. Again, the selection of the focus groups was designed to help make broad inferences by including as many socioeconomic groups as possible in the survey. The selection was also intended to provide contrast on the issues. For example, the elite focus group based at the University of Burundi represented a good contrast--ethnically as well as in terms of social class--to the working class group in the southern section of Bujumbura. The inclusion of the professional and nonprofessional groups was also hoped to provide additional insight into the attitudes and behavior of the woman media content consumer. The nonprofessional women group was made of mostly Hutu housewives and unemployed widows from the poor northern district of Kamenge of Bujumbura, while the professional women were from relatively more affluent parts of the capital.

Most of the focus groups were ethnically mixed. However, the women’s focus group of ten participants was largely dominated by Hutu women from the area of Bujumbura decimated in 1993 by the army in an attempt to flush out Hutu rebels that were believed to have infiltrated the neighborhood, forcing the residents to flee the area. Today, the residents are slowly returning to the area and rebuilding their homes (most of which were destroyed when the army bombed it indiscriminately). In fact, two of the Hutu women were widows who lost their husbands when the Tutsi-dominated Burundian army bombarded their homes in retaliation for Hutu massacres of Tutsis, sparked off by the assassination of the first Hutu president in 1993. Only two of the women were Tutsi. Most of the women belonged to associations that were formed to help each other. The women said they have managed to draw some Tutsis into their associations who were forced to flee the area because of the massacres.

To add depth that one would not be able to obtain through nominal techniques of measuring complex media content messages, a scale was used in the survey. The 27-item questionnaire tried to measure the impact of Studio Ijambo in the three predetermined areas of investigation by asking the participants to indicate their degree of agreement or disagreement with statements gleaned from interviews during the first week of the field trip.

## Studio Ijambo/Burundi – Questionnaire

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Dear respondent,

This questionnaire is part of a project designed to assess STUDIO IJAMBO's contributions, if any, to ethnic reconciliation and peace building in Burundi. Your participation in this survey is very much appreciated.

The following scale uses statements grouped into three interrelated categories to measure the impact on or contributions to reconciliation and peace building in the country since its establishment in 1995. Please mark your responses by indicating one of the following choices to which numbers have been assigned: Strongly Agree (5 points), Agree (4 pts.), No Opinion (3 pts.), Disagree (2 pts.), and Strongly Disagree (1 pts.).

### I. STUDIO IJAMBO'S IMPACT ON INTER-GROUP RELATIONS

Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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1. "Studio Ijambo's programs give useful advice on ethnic tolerance and coexistence."  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. "Most of its programs urge people to work together."  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. "It has helped people to be less afraid or suspicious of other ethnic groups."  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. "It provides a voice for the voiceless."  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. "Its objective and balanced information reduces rumor [as source of ethnic tension]"  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. "By exposing ethnic hatred on its shows, it has given people courage to work for unity"  
\_\_\_\_\_

7. "It has shown courage in covering the difficult issues."  
\_\_\_\_\_

8. "It is still too timid to cover the difficult stories of the conflict"  
\_\_\_\_\_



9. "It can do more with the resources it has"

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## II. STUDIO IJAMBO'S IMPACT ON SOCIAL AND POLITICAL MOBILIZATION

10. It provides Burundian leaders a forum to dialogue among themselves instead of demonizing each other"

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11. "It provides access to political parties not allowed to use the government-owned radio"

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12. "It forces politicians to talk to the people and about the issues that concern people"

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13. "It gives the youth the opportunity to present and discuss their issues and concerns"

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14. "It has helped revitalize civil society by urging its role in the peace process"

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15. "It is doing a good job in creating awareness" about women's rights, prostitution & AIDS]

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16. "It has been urging and helping women to join in and work with associations"

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17. Its ethnically mixed team-reporting practices "teaching coexistence" by example.

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18 "It should expand its coverage of the countryside"

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## III. STUDIO IJAMBO'S IMPACT ON PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS AND PROCESSES

19. "It has contributed greatly to weaken government monopoly of public information"

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20. "It has [helped] force government media institutions not to take the audience for granted"

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21. "It was set up when it was needed to restore the public's faith in [the institution of] radio"

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22. "It works to find solutions to our problems"

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23. Its team reporting practice "assures balance in the process of information gathering and dissemination, which is necessary for reconciliation"

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24. "It is [helping] restore traditional cultural values & systems-- important for unity and healing"

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25. "The revival of the national culture means the revival of positive values, which stress coexistence"

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26. Some of Studio Ijambo's programs should be televised and given more time on radio.

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## Persons Interviewed

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1. Luc Rukingama, Minister of Information, and Member of Parliament
2. Innocent Muhozi, Director General, National Radio and Television
3. Domitien Ndayizeye, secretary general, FRODEBU
4. Remy Nkenguruf, secretary general, PARENA,
5. Nkunzimana Paul, chief of Kamenge District
6. Antoine Ntamikevyo, director of Radio Umwizero
7. Alexis Sinduhije, former Studio Ijambo correspondent
8. Shamil Idriss, Director, Search for Common Ground
9. Francis Holt, Director, Studio Ijambo
10. Patrick Bizinbavyi, journalist, Radio Umwizero
11. Adrienne Sindayigaya, correspondent, Studio Ijambo
12. Abdul Bakari, coordinator, youth program, Studio Ijambo
13. Willy Nindorera, former acting director, and producer, Studio Ijambo
14. Zenon Manirakiza, deputy administrator, CRID (Center for the Revival of Indigenous Culture and Development)
15. Deo Ntigayindusha, Executive Coordinator, Martin Luther King International Center,
16. Prof. Barbara Ndimurukundo-Kururu, University of Burundi
17. Dr. Nizigiyimana Domitien, University of Burundi
18. Prof. Father Liboire Kagabo, University of Burundi
19. Prof. Thareisse Nsabimana, University of Burundi
20. Dave Rothrock, country representative, Catholic Relief Service
21. Driss Moumane, assistant country representative, Catholic Relief Services,
22. Andy Nicholson, country representative, Christian Aid

23. Ambassador Balthazar Nahimana, University of Burundi
24. Ngendakumana Boniface, National Planning Program
25. Shirahi Gomba Silver, small entrepreneur
26. Kiramvu Domittle, small entrepreneur
27. Ciza Damien, small entrepreneur
28. Kigeme Oda, small entrepreneur
29. Bigirimana Evariste, small entrepreneur
30. Kalisa Alfred, small entrepreneur
31. Prof. Sulayman Nyang, Howard University, Washington, D.C.
32. Guy-Emmanuel Ntambutso, interpreter