

FONDATION
croix-rouge française

| Pour la recherche humanitaire et sociale



Humanitarian workers and Journalists in Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo A negotiated friendship

Marie FIERENS

Doctor in Information and Communication Science

Postdoctoral Researcher at F.R.S-FNRS, Centre de recherche en information et communication (ReSIC), Université libre de Bruxelles



Les Papiers de la Fondation n°16

May 2018

This research was conducted in response to the call for postdoctoral fellowships by the French Red Cross Foundation.

The French Red Cross Foundation, created on the initiative of the national society of the French Red Cross, has the vocation to initiate, support and reward research projects which put in perspective the principles, practices and aims of humanitarian action in transition.

By launching calls for papers and postdoctoral fellowships, awarding research prizes and organising scientific events, the French Red Cross Foundation aims to define the issues of tomorrow's humanitarian action, to accompany the actors and people involved in international solidarity, and to broadcast the knowledge gained through critical cross-examination, whilst encouraging debate.

The arguments and opinions expressed in this article engage the author alone and do not necessarily reflect those of the French Red Cross Foundation.

The contents of this article are subject to French legislation on intellectual property and are the exclusive property of the author.

It is forbidden, for other than private, pedagogical or scientific uses, to reproduce, distribute, sell or publish this article, integrally or in part, in any format, without specific and prior written authorisation, which should be requested from the French Red Cross Foundation.

© All rights reserved.

To reference this article:

FIERENS Marie, "Humanitarian workers and Journalists in Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo: a negotiated friendship", Fondation Croix-Rouge française, Les Papiers de la Fondation, n° 16, May 2018, 28p.

Summary

This research questions the relationships that humanitarian actors in Goma (capital of the North Kivu province, Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo) have with Congolese journalists working in the city. The analysis of sixteen semi-structured interviews with humanitarians and media actors helps understanding how they interact. The article sets out the context of their exchanges, the objectives they pursue, the means they use to achieve these objectives and the way they assess their collaboration. More generally, it emphasizes the importance of taking into account the perceptions towards each others, in order to achieve the effectiveness of the humanitarian relief.

Keywords: Humanitarian actors, journalists, communication, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Goma.

Acknowledgments

The identification of resource persons and the fieldwork were made possible thanks to the essential cooperation of Mr Albert Tulinabo, editor of the newspaper *Le Peuple Souverain*, published in Goma, who is also the coordinator of Goma's "Club of journalists friends of the Red Cross". I would like to thank him for that. Thanks also go to all of the media and humanitarian players who kindly agreed to take the time to talk to me. I hope that they will recognise themselves in this research and that it will be useful for them, in one way or another. Thanks also to Professor Marie Soleil Frère who accompanied this research all along.

List of Acronyms

ICRC: International Committee of the Red Cross
DRC: Danish Refugee Council
HCR: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
JED: Journaliste en danger (Journalist in Danger)
Monusco: United Nations Organisation Stabilisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo
MSF: Médecins Sans Frontières
OCHA: Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
UNO: United Nations Organisation
DRC: Democratic Republic of the Congo
RTNC: Radio télévision nationale congolaise (National Congolese Radio-Television)
Remed: Réseau des médias pour le développement (Network of Media for Development)
UNFPA: United Nations Population Fund

Humanitarian Actors and Journalists in Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo: a negotiated friendship

Introduction

This research focuses on the relationships between humanitarian workers, employed by international organisations based in Goma, and Congolese journalists working in the town. Goma, capital of the North Kivu province in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), has been the scene of ongoing crises for the past few decades¹. As a result, it is home to hundreds of international humanitarian organisations² which lead initiatives designed to raise awareness amongst the city's journalists regarding the causes which they defend. In this context, humanitarian workers foster sustained exchanges with Goma's media players. These relationships take different forms: the creation of clubs for journalist "friends" of humanitarian organisations, training workshops for journalists, the distribution of information material amongst journalists, equipment provision, media trips, press conferences, etc.

Whilst the goals of these partnerships – including informing journalists and therefore the widening population of the humanitarian workers' activities – seem commendable, their implementation sometimes raises questions. The professional reality of Congolese journalists shapes the ways in which they conceive of their exchanges with humanitarian workers. The majority of these journalists are only on very basic wages, and have not benefited from any professional training. In the eyes of some of them, the exercise of journalism is a means to survive, namely thanks to the practice of "coupage"³, or thanks to the simultaneous pursuit of other activities which are seen as profitable. Consequently, financial or material support, including that supplied by humanitarian organisations, is, for them, a window of opportunity⁴. By examining the practices linking humanitarian workers to journalists in Goma, the research studies the strategies deployed by both the humanitarian actors and by the journalists over the course of their interactions. By studying their routine interactions, this study aims to contribute to situating both humanitarian and media players in the implementation of operations of information, education and communication likely to result in greater autonomy for recipients of humanitarian aid.

¹ Mbavu Muhindo, V., *De l'AFDL au M23 en République démocratique du Congo*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2014.

² Büscher, K. and Vlassenroot, K., "Humanitarian presence and urban development: new opportunities and contrasts in Goma, DRC", *Disasters* 34 (2), 2010, pp. 256-273.

³ "A practice which consists of granting a fee to journalists who have come to cover an event, the amount of which is fixed by the organisers, in order to motivate them to write an article, often a positive one." Elongo, V., *Mutations politiques et pratiques journalistiques au Congo-Zaïre*, DEA thesis, Université libre de Bruxelles, 2004, p. 56, quoted by Frère M.-S., "Informer dans un pays morcelé et déchiré", in Frère, M.-S. (dir.), *Afrique centrale. Médias et conflits. Vecteurs de guerre ou acteurs de paix*, Brussels, Éditions Complexe, 2005, p. 124. See also Lapess Munkeni, R., *Le coupage : Une pratique d'allocation des ressources dans le contexte journalistique congolais*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2009.

⁴ See Megaloudi, F., "Les médias se multiplient, mais la communication humanitaire n'atteint pas sa cible", www.irinnews.org, May 28th 2013, consulted on April 6th 2016.

Substantial research has already been carried out concerning the relationship between the international media and humanitarian workers. Studies have been carried out by field actors and by academics. They highlight the ambiguous role played by the media in humanitarian action⁵, as well as the “dangerous liaisons” uniting journalists and humanitarian workers⁶. Some of these studies illustrate the complexity of the process of gathering and broadcasting information in the context of emergency situations⁷ and call into question the very relevance of communication for humanitarian NGOs⁸. Others focus on the media strategies of humanitarian actors, deployed with regard to international media⁹, and on the ways in which certain campaigns essentially aim to stir up emotional responses from Western audiences¹⁰. Researchers have also sought to understand the ways in which media coverage of emergency situations can foster foreign intervention¹¹, according to the well-known and controversial “CNN effect”¹². And yet, in spite of the critical preventive role which is or could be played by local media, and although a number of studies highlight the need for humanitarian agencies to integrate them in their media strategies¹³, publications focusing on the links between humanitarian workers and local media are still few and far between¹⁴.

Methodology and Research Contingencies

This research work was supported by the French Red Cross Fund, over the period of a year. Using a qualitative approach, sixteen semi-directive interviews were carried out with humanitarian workers and journalists in Goma. The interview guide for journalists and humanitarian personnel was developed in a similar way, in order to enable data combining

⁵ Brauman, R. et Backmann, R., *Les médias et l'humanitaire*, Paris, CFPJ, 1996.

⁶ Alliot, P., *Médias et humanitaires : les liaisons dangereuses*, Thesis, Institut Universitaire de Technologie, Tours, 2000.

⁷ Boegli, U., “A few thoughts on the relationship between humanitarian agencies and the media”, *International Review of the Red Cross*, 38 (325), 1998, pp. 627-632.

⁸ Dauvin, P. (dir.), *La communication des ONG humanitaires*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2010.

⁹ Vestergaard, A., “Humanitarian branding and the media: The case of Amnesty International”, *Journal of Language and Politics*, 7 (3), 2008, pp. 471-493.

¹⁰ Franks, S., “The CARMA Report: Western Media Coverage of Humanitarian Disasters”, *The Political Quarterly*, 77 (2), pp. 281-284. Fusaschi, M., “Victimes à tout jamais. Les enfants et les femmes d'Afrique. Rhétoriques de la pitié et humanitarisme spectacle”, *Cahiers d'études africaines*, 2 (198-199-200), 2010, pp. 1033-1053. Lavoine, Y., *L'humanitaire et les médias*, Lyon, Presses universitaires de Lyon, 2002. Gorin, V., “La couverture médiatique de la guerre civile du Biafra au regard des enjeux humanitaires dans les médias français, suisses et américains (1967-1970)”, *Le Temps des Médias*, 2 (21), 2013, pp. 176-195. Mesnard, P., *La victime écran : la représentation humanitaire en question*, Paris, Textuel, 2002.

¹¹ Balabanova, E., “Media Power during Humanitarian Interventions: Is Eastern Europe any Different from the West?”, *Journal of Peace Research*, 47 (1), 2010, pp. 71-82. Rotberg, R. and Weiss, T., *From massacres to genocide: The media, public policy and humanitarian crises*, Washington, Brookings, 1996. Soderlund, W. et al., *Humanitarian crises and intervention: Reassessing the impact of mass media*, Columbia, Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, 2010.

¹² Which broadly refers to the influence of the media on foreign policy.

¹³ Moke, M. and Rüther, M., “Media and humanitarian action”, in Gibbons, P. and Heintze, J. (Eds), *The Humanitarian Challenge*, New York, Springer, 2015, pp. 253-263.

¹⁴ See Frère, M.-S., “Les médias ‘chiens de garde’ des élections au Burundi et en RDC ? Une critique de l'assistance internationale aux médias”, *Afrique contemporaine*, 256 (4), pp. 119-138.

with regard to shared issues, discussed by the two categories of actors. The analysis of the interviews takes into account the categories created by the questions formulated in the interview guide, which are themselves functions of the research aims. The latter consisted in identifying and better understanding the context in which relationships between people from media and humanitarian spheres are established, the goals pursued by these people, the means which they use to achieve these goals, and the way in which they evaluate the consequences of such a collaboration. It is important to note that the term “humanitarian” was not attributed an a priori definition, but was instead left to the discretion of each respondent. The taking into account of the communications equipment supplied by the humanitarian workers, of certain media productions resulting from this and of internal documents from media and humanitarian organisations further informed the analysis of the interviews.

I had initially planned two trips to North Kivu. However, given the prevailing unstable security situation in DRC, especially since the violence linked with the challenges to the current president, Joseph Kabila¹⁵, the French Red Cross Fund expressed the wish that the second field assignment be cancelled. Since the overall architecture of the research had been developed to include a second trip to Goma, this modified timetable largely set the limitations of this article. It can namely account for the obvious imbalance in the number of interviews carried out with humanitarian workers and media players: five interviews were carried out with humanitarian workers identified as being major players by the journalists of Goma, and eleven with media players. The latter proved to be very accessible. They did not need to be granted any prior authorisation from any superiors and were all willing to answer questions. Carrying out interviews with some people working in the humanitarian sector in Goma, however, was more complicated. Whilst it was possible to get an appointment with the communication department of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the two people who made up this service nevertheless refused to answer the questions of the interview guide, on the grounds that an internal procedure requires requests to be first made in writing and by e-mail, for the communications department to then request permission to answer the questions from their superiors. This procedure was duly followed. However, I was unable to carry out any interviews with the communications department of the ICRC in Goma up to the time of writing. The person in charge of communication at Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) in Goma also had to seek advice from their superiors before answering my questions. But the request was made informally and I received a positive answer very quickly. The interview was therefore carried out in Goma. It was also very easy to get an interview with the senior assistant for public information at the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in North Kivu, as well as with Red Cross personnel in North Kivu. The latter – national – organisation was considered in the present research as a “natural and privileged partner” of the ICRC¹⁶. Again because of the cancelled trip, the documentary resources gathered as well as the interviews carried out are fewer than originally anticipated.

¹⁵ Joseph Kabila's second term came to an end in December 2016 and the Constitution forbids him from running for a third term. The President nevertheless stayed in power. The Congolese government has not planned to replace him before December 2018.

¹⁶ ICRC, “Cooperation with the National Societies”, October 29th 2010, www.icrc.org, consulted on August 3rd 2016.

Specific Interactions

The city of Goma is home to the offices of over a hundred international humanitarian NGOs and more than two hundred national NGOs. It is also the headquarters of fifteen UN agencies¹⁷. The capital of the North Kivu province further hosts a number of Congolese media organisations: Radio télévision nationale congolaise (RTNC), Radio Okapi (radio of the UN Mission for stabilisation in DRC, Monusco), three commercial radio-television stations¹⁸, a commercial television station, four commercial radio stations, a community-run radio-television station¹⁹, a community-run radio station, a faith-based radio-television station²⁰, six faith-based radio stations²¹, and a dozen written press outlets²². In this context, journalists and humanitarian workers in Goma come into contact often. The programme schedule for the city partly reflects these interactions. It is strongly influenced by content relating to humanitarian aid. For example, the editor-in-chief of the community radio station Pole FM estimated that roughly 30% of his air-time is devoted to messages linked to humanitarian aid²³.

Humanitarian personnel and journalists operate within a particular context which makes up the framework within which the two categories of actors interact, negotiate their respective roles and adapt their ways of working. According to the respondents, the structuring elements of this relationship include the precarious nature of the journalists' profession in DRC, the few investments made by humanitarian organisations with a view to developing their communication with regard to local journalists, the preponderance of radio in the Congolese media landscape, the population's prejudices against humanitarian personnel, and the "fragility" of the Congolese state²⁴.

Journalists' professional precarity

The two categories of actors – journalists and humanitarian workers – have very different professional profiles, which gives their relationship its asymmetrical nature. Whilst the personnel of humanitarian organisations and UN agencies have a work contract and a comfortable salary, Goma's media personnel are little or not remunerated and rarely have contracts²⁵. The journalists I interviewed highlighted the extremely precarious nature of their

¹⁷ List of humanitarian contacts in North Kivu, produced by UN OCHA Goma on March 27th 2015.

¹⁸ Of which one actually operates only as a radio station.

¹⁹ Whose TV transmitter no longer works in Goma.

²⁰ Which is, in reality, commercial.

²¹ This summary of the media landscape was drawn up by Albert Tulinabo, in November 2017.

²² Radio and television broadcasting is dependent on electricity supplies, which are often lacking in DRC, or, for those media outlets which possess one, a generator. Written press outlets are generally published on a fortnightly, monthly or quarterly basis. However, the stated frequency is hardly ever respected.

²³ Kalenda, D., editor-in-chief of Pole FM, personal interview, Goma, October 4th 2016.

²⁴ See for example Brock, L., Holm, H.-H., Sørensen, G. & Stohl, M., *Fragile States: War and Conflict in the Modern World*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2012.

²⁵ According to a study carried out by Edgar Mahungu, a professor of journalism in Goma, only three of the city's twenty-odd press outlets make their employees sign a work contract. Mungazi Cosmas, "Goma : Les journalistes amis, une bonne affaire pour les ONG", *Syfia Grands Lacs*, Goma, February 8th 2013.

economic and professional situations. A number of them had worked for different media outlets, for longer or shorter periods. The “media companies” themselves are not sustainable institutions and cannot guarantee employment for their journalists. This situation reflects the working conditions of a majority of Congolese journalists, whether they work in Goma or elsewhere. In 2013, a study put forward the main challenges facing the Congolese media sector. It emphasised the media’s poor financial and material resources. This precarity is largely due to an unregulated and disorganised advertising market, a lack of investment on behalf of economic operators, bad internal management, and unfair policies by public authorities with regard to private media. Journalists’ wage conditions and contract terms are also described as extremely precarious and unregulated. Further, there are numerous deficiencies in the training of media professionals, due to the shortcomings of primary and secondary education, of training courses offered by journalism institutes or of continuing education. Moreover, DRC remains the country where the freedom of the press is the most threatened²⁶, which drives journalists to practice self-censorship²⁷. Generally speaking, Congolese journalists are perceived as being unprofessional by the humanitarian personnel in Goma. The media players themselves recognise their own weaknesses and the shortcomings of their media. However, the professional situation of journalists employed by Radio Okapi is particular. The latter are employed contractually and enjoy salaries which theoretically protect them from attempts at corruption or ethically unacceptable collusion. They have significant technical and financial resources at their disposal to carry out their work. The information which they broadcast is generally considered to be reliable and independent by listeners²⁸ and by humanitarian actors. Moreover, the UN radio devotes a significant amount of airtime to messages which humanitarians need to broadcast. It is therefore one of their privileged partners.

Persistent prejudices towards humanitarian workers and weaknesses in their communication

The residents of Goma have lived with humanitarian workers since the middle of the 1990s²⁹ but have seen no real improvement in their situation. They therefore question the efficiency of humanitarian action, as well as its rationale. The head of the commercial station Virunga Business Radio expresses this feeling:

“When we see humanitarian workers, their living standards, big new cars, visiting hotels and restaurants where a bottle of beer costs ten dollars, we say to ourselves: ‘What are

²⁶ In 2017, the Worldwide Press Freedom Ranking Index ranked DRC in the 154th position, out of 180 countries. The 2017 report of *Journaliste en danger* (JED) detailed violations of press freedom which journalists were subjected to over the course of the year. It particularly highlighted the responsibility of the Congolese state in the stifling of the press. JED, “Rapport annuel 2017. République démocratique du Congo. La Répression se banalise”, Kinshasa, 2017, available online at: <http://jed-afrique.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/JED-RAPPORT-2017.pdf>.

²⁷ Bwiti, G., Fierens, M. and Frère, M.-S., “Médias pour la démocratie et la transparence en RDC (Lot 1)”, 2013 baseline study, France Expertise Internationale (DFID/SIDA/Ministère français des Affaires étrangères), pp. 111-112.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 40.

²⁹ Büscher, K. and Vlassenroot, K., “Humanitarian presence and urban development: new opportunities and contrasts in Goma, DRC”, *op. cit.*, p. 259.

they really doing here? Are they on holiday or are they working?' [...] They've been doing the same thing for 20 years and nothing has changed"³⁰

Humanitarian workers' communication with the population of Goma, which is underdeveloped, does not always help to correct these prejudices. This underdevelopment can be explained in different ways. According to OCHA's senior assistant for information in North Kivu, few humanitarian organisations based in Goma employ communications officers³¹. Moreover, when someone is in charge of communication as part of one of these organisations, they usually work alone and have other duties alongside. For example, in the North Kivu province, MSF has a Belgian section, a French section and a Dutch section. Only the Dutch section has a "field communications officer". In practice, then, one single person is in charge of the relationship with the Congolese press. Moreover, the "communication department" of MSF Holland has only existed since 2012 and is still under development. The field communications officer admits the weakness of the relationship which the organisation has with local media, in so far as it is usually limited to the publication of press releases and activity reports³².

Generally speaking, most of the humanitarian organisations based in Goma willingly recognise the role of local journalists in the implementation of humanitarian action. However, they also recognise that they do not work in an optimal manner with them, due to a lack of time and resources. OCHA is an exception in Goma's humanitarian landscape. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs is responsible for gathering humanitarian actors together in order to intervene in a coherent way in emergency situations and ensure that there is a framework within which each worker can contribute to the collective intervention³³. It makes substantial efforts to maintain relationships between journalists and humanitarian workers. At the start of the decade, OCHA launched a platform intended to synergise humanitarian NGOs' communication, the Humanitarian Information Group (HIG), which assembled the communications officers of partner humanitarian organisations. The latter meet up once a month in order to "plan certain activities together". The members of the platform, which was created in 2010, organise joint demonstrations and field visits with journalists³⁴. Moreover, the media players of Goma are entitled to use OCHA's Internet connection as part of their work. OCHA's way of communicating is generally appreciated by Congolese journalists.

Radio: a privileged medium in a fragile state

Journalists deem the Congolese state to be incapable of ensuring the population's security and of transmitting reliable information. Most of them therefore seek to take on this role, at least partially. To do so, they wish to have access to information held by humanitarian actors. For their part, humanitarian organisations who wish to reach "aid recipient

³⁰ Kubuya, T., director of Virunga Business Radio (VBR), personal interview, Goma, October 4th 2016.

³¹ Prekabo, V., senior assistant for public information, OCHA North Kivu, personal interview, Goma, October 5th 2016.

³² Manengu, A., communications officer, Médecins Sans Frontières, personal interview, Goma, October 5th 2016.

³³ United Nations website, <http://www.un.org/fr/humanitarian/overview/ocha.shtml>.

³⁴ Prekabo, V., senior assistant for public information, OCHA North Kivu, personal interview, Goma, October 5th 2016. In 2017, Vicky Prekabo changed duties at OCHA. The platform no longer appears to be operating.

populations” favour partnerships with radio stations, which are very popular in North Kivu³⁵. A humanitarian worker explained this trend:

“It’s said that radio has many advantages here because for radio, you don’t need electricity. For little transistor radios, you can use batteries which cost nothing. But television is only present in urban areas³⁶”.

Indeed, television requires basic minimum investment on behalf of viewers, and an electricity supply which is often lacking³⁷. It therefore remains the preserve of a certain elite. Written press outlets are not, for their part, very valued by humanitarian workers. The Congolese are not in the habit of reading the newspapers, namely because literacy levels are low³⁸, newspapers are expensive³⁹, their publication rates are random, and because the information conveyed is often out of date, given the time it takes for newspapers to be printed⁴⁰.

Humanitarian workers in Goma often seek to reach those Congolese situated outside of the province’s capital, but they struggle to identify adequate “relays”. The press effectively has a limited distribution range. Only Radio Okapi has a national network⁴¹. Pole FM radio covers a large part of North Kivu province.

Differing objectives

The concerns of both categories of actors are not always the same. When they interact with journalists, humanitarian workers are guided by a single aim: to make known their action. The journalists, for their part, wish to collect and share information, ensure a mediating role between humanitarian workers and the population of North Kivu, and generate profits. These profits can be financial, or based on information or contacts.

Journalists seeking to broadcast information

Journalists and their editorial boards lack the means to travel and gather certain information outside of Goma. The use of the Internet does not resolve this problem inasmuch as the equipment density outside of the capital and cities in the province is nearly nil. The contact maintained between media players and humanitarian workers is a means of

³⁵ IMMAR, “Étude médias en RDC. Résultats d’audience avril 2016, Goma”, summary document, p. 11.

³⁶ Prekabo, V., senior assistant for public information, OCHA North Kivu, personal interview, Goma, October 5th 2016.

³⁷ Only 15% of the Congolese population has access to electricity (in a non-continuous manner, given the frequent power cuts). Radio Okapi, “15% de la population a accès à l’électricité ‘avec délestage’”, <https://www.radiookapi.net>, July 9th 2016, consulted on December 15th 2017.

³⁸ In 2016, 74.04% of people over 15 were literate. UNESCO Statistics Institute, “Democratic Republic of Congo”, <http://uis.unesco.org/fr/country/cd>, consulted on December 15th 2017.

³⁹ Between 3\$ and 5\$, whilst 90.7% of the country lives on less than 2 \$PPA per day. UNESCO Statistics Institute, “Democratic Republic of Congo”, <http://uis.unesco.org/fr/country/cd>, consulted on December 15th 2017.

⁴⁰ There is no printing press in Goma. Newspapers are therefore printed in Kampala, Uganda, some 500km from Goma, or in Kigali, Rwanda, which is closer but where printing costs are higher.

⁴¹ Fondation Hirondelle, “Radio Okapi : Un réseau national durable d’information au service de la population Congolaise”, project document 2013-2014, October 2012, p. 8.

overcoming this difficulty. The latter have privileged access to information, namely thanks to their capacity for travel, their networks of contacts and their financial resources. Moreover, certain humanitarian organisations allow journalists in Goma to use their Internet connection. Journalists particularly appreciate the press trips organised by humanitarian organisations, since they are opportunities to obtain information about the prevailing situation outside of Goma, in other areas of the North Kivu province. Only Pole FM radio has local correspondents⁴² and therefore does not need humanitarian workers to collect information from the province. Yet even these correspondents have reduced mobility and therefore also cross-check their information with humanitarian workers. The latter also enable radio correspondents to broadcast their information from hard-to-access areas, thanks to their Internet connections⁴³. Radio Okapi, for its part, has human, material and financial resources of its own and therefore does not depend on international organisations to gather information.

Journalists seeking to ensure a liaising role

Certain journalists say that they want to play a role of “go-betweens”, or intermediaries between humanitarian workers and aid recipients, by producing programmes in which the population can express its needs and by passing these concerns on to humanitarian workers. For Albert Sumaili, who has been a written press journalist for 25 years, this role is essential and contributes to the success of humanitarian operations.

“I think that we have a big part to play. You know that the actions implemented by humanitarian organisations here do not always reach their targets. We need to see the impact of the activities which they carry out in the field in order to say: ‘that works, that doesn’t work’⁴⁴”.

For the editor-in-chief of the Emmanuel station, it is important for it to have Congolese journalists to address the Congolese population. “To talk to these local populations, we need to have journalists who are also local and who say: ‘these people, they are not dangerous but they’re coming for you’⁴⁵”. According to her, Congolese media players need to clarify the role of humanitarian workers, in order to dispel any ambiguities.

“Sometimes, when we see a white person, we see someone from an NGO, we see the vehicle of an NGO, and we say to ourselves: ‘We have the answer to everything, we have the solution to everything’. So you need someone, an interpreter, a spokesperson who can say: ‘Hold on, they start there and they finish here’⁴⁶”.

Certain journalists also consider the fact of reporting the precarious living conditions of the majority of Congolese, the fact of drawing the attention of humanitarian and government workers, as a form of humanitarian action. In doing so, the journalists of Goma defend their part in the restoring and maintaining of peace. Their very limited freedom of expression nevertheless hinders this function. It is indeed dangerous to relay information which calls the Congolese state into question. Journalists therefore often practice self-censorship.

⁴² The radio includes local correspondents who work from Masisi, Rutsuhuru, Lubero, Walikale, Bukavu et Beni. Kalenda, D., editor-in-chief of Pole FM, personal interview, Goma, October 4th 2016.

⁴³ *Idem*.

⁴⁴ Sumaili, A., editor of the newspaper *L'Étoile du Kivu*, personal interview, Goma, October 5th 2016.

⁴⁵ Kabuya, M.-N., editor-in-chief of the radio-television station Emmanuel, personal interview, Goma, October 4th 2016.

⁴⁶ *Idem*.

Journalists seeking benefits

Collaborating with humanitarian workers enables a number of journalists to generate profits. These include information, such as when they participate in press trips which feed the contents of their media.

In a context characterised by the preponderance of the informal economy⁴⁷, and given that “the humanitarian sector” has become the main source of economic opportunities⁴⁸, for the population in general and for journalists in particular, these profits can also be of a financial nature. There are different forms of remuneration for journalists. They are called “transports” when, after a press conference, the journalists receive a sum intended to cover their travel expenses. They are more often called “per diem” when referring to the 5 to 7\$ received daily by the journalists when they attend training workshops organised by humanitarian workers. They can also take the form of a more significant remuneration when it is expressly a question of broadcasting an infomercial, by which journalists participate in the organisations’ communications actions. “If humanitarian workers want us to accompany them in their communication [...], at some point, they have to pay”, explained a journalist⁴⁹. This wage can be formalised in a contract or given in an informal way. It is then known as “coupage”. Humanitarian workers prefer the first option, political players the second. The amount of the pay conditions the journalists’ “motivation”. One of them related a telling exchange.

“A colleague who worked for Mishapi⁵⁰ and is now at the RTNC said to me: ‘coupage gives me inspiration... When you have coupage, you write your paper, you feel you could even write a paper ten pages long!’⁵¹”.

With a few exceptions, including OCHA and Monusco⁵², humanitarian organisations generally accept to provide these “transports” and other “per diem”, conscious of the fact that this is often the only financial remuneration which their journalist interlocutors possess and therefore, the only means of ensuring their presence. They nevertheless claim to struggle to meet the journalists’ financial expectations, owing to limited budgetary resources. For this reason, they limit the number of media invited to their briefings and prefer to send out press releases, which are cheaper.

When interacting with humanitarian actors, certain journalists also seek to make contacts likely to help their personal development. A journalist, now head of the communications and public relations department of the Red Cross in North Kivu, puts it bluntly.

⁴⁷ The informal sector represents 90-95% of the active population. UNDP, national report on human development 2016. “Croissance inclusive, développement durable et défi de la décentralisation en République démocratique du Congo”, August 2017, p. 71, available online at: <http://www.cd.undp.org/content/rdc/fr/home/library/planification-du-developpement/rapport-national-sur-le-developpement-humain-2016--rndh-2016-.html>.

⁴⁸ Büscher, K. and Vlassenroot, K., “Humanitarian presence and urban development: new opportunities and contrasts in Goma, DRC”, *op. cit.*, p. 259.

⁴⁹ Katondji, B., news anchor at the Congolese Media Observatory and commercial director of RTNC, personal interview, Goma, October 3rd 2016.

⁵⁰ A commercial radio-television station.

⁵¹ Kalenda, D., editor-in-chief of Pole FM, personal interview, Goma, October 4th 2016.

⁵² The press cafés organised by OCHA and Monusco’s press conferences do not involve any financial transactions.

“Maybe I’d like to be part of a big humanitarian organisation one day, or for my name to be included in the list of people who have brought assistance to the Congolese community. [...]. There’s no reason to hide, to cover one’s face. Men are always dynamic. We are never static. [...]. Anyway, it’s a question of ambition. Because one must always seek to emerge.⁵³”

Whilst this search for benefits is understandable – given the economic, social and political context in which the journalists work – and indeed often understood and accepted by humanitarian workers, it remains questionable and a source of reservations. The journalists are aware of this.

“You have to see how journalists mass together at Monusco, nearly every day, over there. In the hope of not only getting information, or a job, but also to see if any receptions are being organised⁵⁴”.

We must note, however, that Radio Okapi is a singular case. Most of its journalists do not seek to make a profit when they work with humanitarian operatives. Indeed, they enjoy substantial travel expenses and comfortable salaries.

Humanitarian workers who want to communicate

For their part, humanitarian organisations foremost want to make their actions known in the North Kivu province, and to make them understandable by the population. They are aware that most Congolese struggle to understand the role of the myriad international NGOs present in Goma and in the province. They also know that a number of them harbour prejudices against them. This is why some of them contact Congolese media. OCHA’s senior assistant for public information explained.

“We recently realised that, for several years, we had been there, but the local population was still wondering what we were doing. ‘You go past here in jeeps, but what are you doing?’ [...] ‘You pass by, but you don’t fix the road’. ‘You drink every night, but what are you doing?’. ‘This school is in tatters but you’re not rebuilding it!’. ‘The buildings here, you have to help the state to renovate the public buildings!’ We decided the media had an important part to play⁵⁵”.

Aid recipients are the main targets of humanitarian workers’ communications actions.

⁵³ Rushago, V., head of the communications and public relations division at the DRC Red Cross, North Kivu province, personal interview, Goma, October 3rd 2016.

⁵⁴ Sumaili, A., editor of the newspaper *L'Étoile du Kivu*, personal interview, Goma, October 5th 2016.

⁵⁵ Prekabo, V., senior assistant for public information, OCHA North Kivu, personal interview, Goma, October 5th 2016.

Specific means

Given their singular aims, and the divergent professional contexts which they operate in, humanitarian workers and journalists develop specific means to reach their goals.

Groups of journalists - “friends” of humanitarian workers

Certain humanitarian actors appear willing to work with structured groups of journalists. The latter have understood this and have gathered together in “clubs of journalists friends of...”⁵⁶. These clubs are organisations within which member journalists can enjoy training, press trips and privileged access to information held by partner organisations. According to some media players – who often work for a salary as journalists –, these clubs are a means of subordinating members journalists. The term “friend” is seen as a euphemism to justify a “win-win” relationship with is ethically unacceptable⁵⁷. As “friends”, it is indeed very difficult for them to criticise the dysfunctions which they may notice. For others, the clubs are “closed circles” reserved for journalists who enjoy “advantages” linked to their status as members of the club⁵⁸. A media player wondered, “Why were all the journalists in Goma not made journalists-friends of the Red Cross?”⁵⁹. The difficulties in accessing information, together with the economic context in which the journalists work, explain in large part the appeal of these kinds of initiatives for media players⁶⁰. The coordinator of the club of journalists-friends of the Red Cross in North Kivu notes with regret that: “most [of the journalists in the club] are after the money”. He nevertheless qualified:

“But the objectives are commendable. Some say, ‘how can I go to that meeting when I have a family that needs to eat? [It is] better to look for something first’. That is the main problem. It’s why they came to those meetings. They came with very good ideas, but in the back of their minds there is still the 5\$ [for transport]”⁶¹.

Until recently, there was a club of journalists “friends of the Red Cross in Goma”, associated with the Red Cross and supported by the ICRC; a club of journalists “friends of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees”, associated with the UNHCR, and a “network of journalists and communicators for the population”, associated with UNFPA. By 2017, these associations had stopped meeting on a regular basis. Such organisations tend to fizzle out. They are considered, by humanitarian workers, as short-lived by nature. The latter invest in the training and informing of member journalists of these clubs which are “friends” of their organisation and offer them a “per diem” or a “transport” – roughly, 5\$ per meeting – for a more or less defined period of time. Once the journalists are considered to be sufficiently familiar with the organisation’s activities and capable of treating the information which it wishes to broadcast, these clubs are supposed to meet up on their own initiative and without support – namely financial support – from the humanitarian workers. In reality, however, these organisations generally stop functioning as soon as the humanitarian workers’ support is suspended.

⁵⁶ See Mungazi, C., “Goma: Les journalistes amis, une bonne affaire pour les ONG”, *op. cit.*

⁵⁷ Kubuya, T., director of Virunga Business Radio (VBR), personal interview, Goma, October 4th 2016.

⁵⁸ Kalenda, D., editor-in-chief of Pole FM, personal interview, Goma, October 4th 2016.

⁵⁹ Kubuya, T., director of Virunga Business Radio (VBR), personal interview, Goma, October 4th 2016.

⁶⁰ Mungazi, C., “Goma: Les journalistes amis, une bonne affaire pour les ONG”, *op. cit.*

⁶¹ Tulinabo, A., coordinator of the “Club of journalists friends of the Red Cross” in Goma and editor of the newspaper *Le Peuple Souverain*, personal interview, Goma, October 7th 2016.

Only Remed, the Network of Media for Development, created in 2008, has remained a privileged partner for nine years of various humanitarian actors based in Goma. Remed differs from the aforementioned clubs in that it has structural financing and a defined status. It brings together dozens of media outlets and numerous journalists. Remed is an intermediary platform between 44 media organisations in North Kivu⁶² and six humanitarian or development organisations, which are also financial partners: UNICEF, the biggest; the Danish Refugee Council (DRC); Butterfly (South Korea); Oxfam; Living in Peace; and Caritas. Its aim is to “promote the use of media as a tool for development, democracy, peace, health, justice and solidarity”. The network thereby intends to:

“give the population of North Kivu in particular, and of the Democratic Republic of Congo in general, the chance to have free access to information and correct training to change behaviours and mentalities in the perspective of development”⁶³.

In practice, media partners sign a memorandum of understanding with Remed, in the framework of a project developed and financed by one of the partner organisations. This memorandum provides, for example, that a media outlet commits to broadcasting the partner organisation’s adverts for nine months, and makes a journalist available to ensure the production of outreach programmes. In exchange for these services, the media outlet receives the sum of 500\$. Many journalists consider Remed to be a communications agency rather than a media network. It perpetuates the confusion between information and communication by not clearly identifying the source of the messages which are broadcast, and short-circuits the forms of collaboration informally put in place by journalists and humanitarian workers. Journalists are indeed no longer in a position to directly and individually receive the “per diem” and “transports” offered by most humanitarian workers.

Broadcasting platforms bought by humanitarian workers

Most of the humanitarian content broadcast on the radios in North Kivu is developed by the humanitarian workers themselves, who then offer “ready to broadcast” items to the media which seem appropriate for the relaying of their message. Less frequently, certain media outlets produce content themselves on behalf of humanitarian organisations, in exchange for financial remuneration or equipment necessary for journalistic activity (dictaphones, computers...). These programmes are dedicated to a humanitarian organisation and announced as such when they are broadcast. There are also cases where a humanitarian organisation approves of a pre-existing programme. It can then suggest to the media outlet to finance said programmes (usually up to 2000\$ per month), without asking for its name to be mentioned⁶⁴.

⁶² Remed has 74 member radio stations in the North Kivu province, 3 written press outlets and 4 television channels, 12 in the South Kivu province, and 18 in the ex-Katanga province.

⁶³ Promotional document, Remed.

⁶⁴ Mukosasenge, V., director of information programmes at the community radio-television station Tayna (RTCT), personal interview, Goma, October 2nd 2016.

Targeted contact, by initiative of humanitarian workers

Humanitarian workers are often the initiators of the relationship which is established with media players. Various reasons are put forward, both by media and humanitarian workers to explain this one-way trend. It is mainly a question of humanitarian workers' lack of accessibility and the journalists' lack of resources. In order to target media outlets and journalists, certain humanitarian organisations carry out a monitoring of the province's media outlets in order to know which ones are communicating effectively about their actions. Humanitarian workers also have lists of contacts, which mention the names of the journalists who are supposed to be the most important in the region. Humanitarian organisations also themselves carry out "surveys" in the areas in which they operate, in order to establish lists of journalists and media outlets. Finally, certain communications officers are former journalists and therefore maintain personal contacts amongst the journalists of Goma.

Training workshops organised by humanitarian workers

Journalists are regularly invited to "training workshops" organised by humanitarian workers who want to provide keys for understanding to the people who will be broadcasting their message. Given the journalists' low level of training, humanitarian workers want to make sure that the message will not be garbled and thereby a potential for misunderstandings which might jeopardise their actions. The topics of the training workshops depends on the actions of the humanitarian organisation which organises them. As one journalist explained, most of these workshops also recall the basic principles of journalism.

"Our memories are refreshed concerning the different formats of journalistic genres [...]. They tell us: 'right, journalists behave this way, they should not do that' [...]. They also display the activities of humanitarian organisations. [...] Once they have told us about our job, they tell us about their activities.⁶⁵ "

The journalists get a meal and generally receive a "per diem" or a "transport" at the end of the training sessions. "It is never more than 10\$. But the food is good, there is always a buffet, worth between 10 and 15\$ per person", explained a regular attendee of these training sessions⁶⁶.

Press conferences

Press conferences are also regularly organised by humanitarian organisations. Following some of them, the journalists on the guest list receive a "transport" of about 5\$. The "press café" which OCHA organised every month until recently were particularly appreciated by the journalists of Goma. This was a communications framework, well known to both the journalists and humanitarian workers of the city, which enabled dialogue between the two categories of players. The aim of these press cafés was to share information.

⁶⁵ Sumaili, A., editor of the newspaper *L'Étoile du Kivu*, personal interview, Goma, October 5th 2016.

⁶⁶ Tulinabo, A., coordinator of the "Club of journalists friends of the Red Cross" in Goma and editor of the newspaper *Le Peuple Souverain*, personal interview, Goma, October 7th 2016.

“The aim, briefly, is to put us in contact with the media, to give them information from the source, based on topics we are developing as humanitarian workers. This takes the form of a conference. [...] For example, there is a disease which is decimating the banana plantations. That’s a danger because there are families that depend on these banana plantations. We call the media to a press café with this issue as a title.”

No financial remuneration is offered to the journalists as part of these press cafés, but this by no means curbed their participation.

“We were very clear at the beginning, by saying: ‘you are journalists and you know that in this line of work, if you are going to cover something, you must not take money. You know this.’ We discussed it at length⁶⁷”.

These press cafés were very well received by the journalists. And yet, they stopped being organised following the recent replacement of OCHA’s senior information assistant.

Monusco also organises a weekly press conference, which is not remunerated. It serves as a communications space for the Mission and for all the United Nations agencies in DRC. The press conference is broadcast live on Radio Okapi. A journalist explained the interest sparked by this weekly meeting.

“People know that every Wednesday, you have to follow what is being said in the Monusco’s weekly conference. The questions relating to the population, questions which hurt, are being asked there by journalists, before coming back to the newspaper. We wait.⁶⁸”

Added value, stumbling blocks and misunderstandings

The interviews shed light on the ways in which humanitarian and media players evaluate the consequences of their interactions. Each of the two categories of players was questioned on the advantages and drawbacks of such collaborations.

Advantages, according to journalists

Journalists emphasise the benefits which they have reaped from the press cafés which used to be organised by OCHA. These meetings not only gave them the feeling of being considered as valuable partners – “at least they’re thinking about us”, as Albert Tulinabo put it⁶⁹ – but also allowed for the deconstruction of certain prejudices held by the population with regard to humanitarian workers, and the fluidification of information broadcasting.

The collaborations with the ICRC and MSF were also appreciated by the journalists of Goma since both organisations sporadically covered logistic and transport costs for journalists, and thereby made security information accessible, which was considered essential for the population.

⁶⁷ Prekabo, V., senior assistant for public information at OCHA, North Kivu, personal interview, Goma, October 5th 2016.

⁶⁸ Kabuya, M.-N., editor-in-chief of the radio-television station Emmanuel, personal interview, Goma, October 4th 2016.

⁶⁹ Coordinator of the “Club of journalists friends of the Red Cross” in Goma and editor of the newspaper *Le Peuple Souverain*, personal interview, Goma, October 7th 2016.

In addition, certain humanitarian organisations have “focal points” and personnel in conflict zones which are “source-relays” enabling journalists in Goma to obtain information relative to security in certain difficult-to-access areas.

The training workshops organised by humanitarian workers are also considered to be places to gather information and reinforce skills. These workshops are still deemed useful by some journalists because they contribute to bringing peace to the region. “There are training activities for example on the topic of peace. [...] When we organise workshops with community leaders, we also call on the journalists to attend and to broadcast it⁷⁰”. The role played by humanitarian workers in this context is therefore appreciated.

Improvements, according to humanitarian workers

Humanitarian workers also noted certain advances made possible by journalists. Thanks to their work, certain humanitarian players observed that they had easier access to the populations targeted by their actions. This is particularly true for the Red Cross in North Kivu. The relationship with the media contributed to the humanitarian workers’ action being better accepted. “We saw it, every time we arrive, we don’t get stones thrown at our cars⁷¹.” Motorcyclists even offered to transport the organisation’s personnel. Having been made aware of the Red Cross’ work thanks to the information broadcast by media outlets, mainly radio stations, the population now understands their actions and facilitate them.

“Often, there are barricades on the roads, stones, tyres. But often, when we see the Red Cross vehicle go by, the people who understand, who are always informed, say ‘the Red Cross is here, we have to let them pass’. Even onlookers will move the stones if they hear that the Red Cross needs to get through.⁷²”

Humanitarian workers nevertheless pointed out the numerous stumbling blocks that hinder their relationship with Congolese journalists.

Unprofessional journalists, according to humanitarian workers

The journalist’s lack of professionalism is frequently deplored by humanitarian workers. Community radio stations are seen as particularly unreliable partners in this respect. According to MSF, certain journalists interpret the reports provided by the organisation in their own way, without cross-checking or verifying the information, thereby obliging the organisation to contact the radio stations to correct incoherences and oversights.

“Especially when the information relates to security issues. It’s rare for these incidents to occur and for us not to have to call one or two radio stations to ask that the information be corrected, because it is incorrect, or because the sources are not varied enough⁷³.”

This lack of professionalism contributes to humanitarian workers’ reservations. “We need to be sure that it’s really worth it and gather all the necessary information regarding these

⁷⁰ Sumaili, A., editor of the newspaper *L’Étoile du Kivu*, personal interview, Goma, October 5th 2016.

⁷¹ Muamba, M., provincial president of the Red Cross of North Kivu province, personal interview, Goma, October 5th 2016.

⁷² Rushago, V., head of the communications and public relations division at the DRC Red Cross, North Kivu province, personal interview, Goma, October 3rd 2016.

⁷³ Manengu, A., communications officer, Médecins Sans Frontières, personal interview, Goma, October 5th 2016.

media outlets and these journalists”⁷⁴, explained MSF’s communications officer. Information broadcast on the radio may be misinterpreted by the community and thereby disrupt humanitarian operations and endanger personnel. Humanitarian workers also consider that journalists lack proactivity. OCHA’s senior assistant for public information made the following observation:

“There are lots of media outlets which do not act professionally. A journalist is not someone who stays around and waits for information. A journalist is someone who seeks out information. [...] They are here, they wait. For them to go somewhere, we have to give them transport. Very few of them are after a scoop”⁷⁵.

Amongst the probable reasons for this passive attitude is the fact that journalists have neither the financial means nor the logistical resources to contact humanitarian workers. The journalists, for their part, say that they are tired of coming up against systematic refusals to communicate on behalf of humanitarian organisations, which must request permission from their superiors before divulging certain pieces of information. MSF’s communications officer also puts forward the hypothesis that the journalists are not interested in the quality of the information they gather so much as in the financial profit which they can reap from it. Certain media players are indeed only disposed to broadcast the information they have gathered in exchange for a sum of money – an attitude which other colleagues condemn. It is a long-standing way of working common to many journalists, which is rarely called into question. “It has been incorporated that if humanitarian workers hold a press conference, they have to pay. They have the money for that.”⁷⁶ Journalists also point to the humanitarian workers’ responsibility, which perpetuates this routine. “The responsibility is shared in this situation, where people are stagnating. Things can’t move forward.”⁷⁷ In addition, they have a long list of aspects which they deem to be problematic with regard to the relationships linking them to humanitarian workers.

Numerous stumbling blocks, according to journalists

The main criticism levelled by journalists at humanitarian workers is their lack of accessibility and their desire to control information. International humanitarian organisations are indeed not considered to be very open with regard to Congolese media organisations. Progress has been noted, but immediately qualified.

“For some time, NGOs have begun to re-evaluate their own positions, they have started to create communications departments. But these are reporting services for their headquarters, rather than for local media.”⁷⁸

MSF is considered by journalists as being an organisation which is very difficult to access, and which only communicates very rarely and in a very controlled way. Contacts nevertheless depend on the person dealing with the journalists within the organisation. The employees’ personalities, professional profiles and the ways in which they were recruited are decisive. “It all depends on who the news producers and communications officers are, in the

⁷⁴ *Idem.*

⁷⁵ Prekabo, V., senior assistant for public information at OCHA North Kivu, personal interview, Goma, October 5th 2016.

⁷⁶ Kalenda, D., editor-in-chief of Pole FM, personal interview, Goma, October 4th 2016.

⁷⁷ *Idem.*

⁷⁸ Kubuya, T., director of Virunga Business Radio (VBR), personal interview, Goma, October 4th 2016.

different organisations. Because recruitment in NGOs is often on the basis of career tracks.⁷⁹»

The ICRC is also considered to be difficult to access and disinclined to communicate. Journalists consider that the organisation is particularly “hierarchised”. “At the ICRC, if the director of the sub-delegation is not there, no one says a word.”⁸⁰ From the journalists’ point of view, the steps required to obtain information are numerous and discouraging.

“When you call someone [from the ICRC] who is here [in Goma], they will say that you need to call Kinshasa. They say: ‘You have to call someone in Geneva’. Do I have the phone number of a media person in Geneva? So you see, it’s a bit complicated.”⁸¹

MSF’s communications are judged just as severely. “You ask one person, they refer you to another. And another, and it becomes a long story.”⁸² The journalists of Goma have only limited credit on their mobiles, due to a lack of financial means, and stop chasing up information after two or three phone calls. For his part, MSF’s communications officer says that he does not receive many calls. He also emphasised that the journalists always wanted immediate answers. It is, however, difficult for him to answer quickly in the case of information relating to security, since a clear and strict procedure must be followed. The communications officer must ask his head of mission for permission to express himself. The head of mission must himself contact the director of operations in Amsterdam, who must then make contact with the headquarters’ communications officer. Whilst waiting for a reply from headquarters, MSF broadcasts official reports intended for all media outlets.

The Congolese Red Cross is seen as being more accessible than the ICRC, “because it’s the national Red Cross society, they are Congolese. If someone is a communications officer, you can get an interview with them, even over the phone.”⁸³ And yet, the hierarchy still structures the circulation of information. It is usually managed on the provincial level, but in some cases, communications need to be treated on the national level. “If it’s information about what we are doing, and what the movement is about, we can talk about it. But if it’s sensitive information concerning the authorities, we hold back.”⁸⁴ Sensitive information includes that relative to conflict situations, such as statistics of dead and wounded, for example. The Red Cross effectively has information which the Congolese government does not want to be broadcasted.

“We work together or rather concomitantly with the military during the war. [...] It’s the public authorities who give the information and as soon as the public authorities have already given that information, we cannot go against it.”⁸⁵

It is argued that this system of communication is “adapted” to the prevailing situation in the DRC. According to the provincial president of the Red Cross in North Kivu, divulging

⁷⁹ Wundi, T., editor-in-chief at RTNC and main correspondent for *Journaliste en danger* (JED) in Goma, personal interview, Goma, October 3rd 2016.

⁸⁰ Kalenda, D., editor-in-chief of Pole FM, personal interview, Goma, October 4th 2016.

⁸¹ Malivika, A., correspondent for *Voice of America* (VOA), personal interview, Goma, October 4th 2016.

⁸² *Idem.*

⁸³ Kalenda D., editor-in chief of Pole FM, personal interview, Goma, October 4th 2016.

⁸⁴ Muamba M., provincial president of Red Cross North Kivu province, personal interview, Goma, October 5th 2016.

⁸⁵ *Idem.*

sensitive information would be counter-productive, both for the organisation and for the journalists.

“I can inform a journalist. He will repeat the piece of information and that same evening, they will come and get him, he will disappear. The family will be left without a parent and then it's over, it's forgotten about, except that he was the motor and the key person for that family. So why give him a piece of information which is going to put us both in danger?⁸⁶”

This way of doing things is incidentally consistent with the principles of the International Movement of the Red Cross.

“For example neutrality. The Red Cross is supposed to be as neutral as possible in everything that it does. If we cannot give the right information [...] we might plunge the Red Cross into partiality, instead of being impartial. We have to be careful for this reason.⁸⁷”

The president of the provincial committee of the Red Cross in North Kivu also explained that giving information was not part of his organisation's main missions.

“Our main task is not to give information. Our mission is to attenuate and alleviate human suffering, we are concerned with the most vulnerable, whereas it's the journalists' job to seek out information.⁸⁸”

At OCHA, the communications process is also organised according to a hierarchy, in order to avoid “misunderstandings”. Hence, Vicky Prekabo can share information with journalists who contact him, but the journalists can only quote the “Head of Public Information” and the information must always be analysed internally before being disclosed. Like the provincial president of the Red Cross in North Kivu, he also emphasised that OCHA's mandate did not include the support of media organisations as its main mission. “We just concluded an agreement to exchange information. For our part, we feel that when we give them a piece of information or a scoop, that's already a lot.⁸⁹”

Another complaint reported by the journalists is the lack of independence imposed by their relationship with humanitarian workers. According to certain media players, as soon as they report on the “misconduct” of humanitarian organisations, their relationship with them deteriorates. “If you denounce the damage they're doing, you become their enemy.⁹⁰” Journalists therefore report practicing self-censorship for fear of losing the benefit of financing.

⁸⁶ *Idem.*

⁸⁷ Abedy, D. A., head of the communications and public relations unit of the Red Cross, Community committee of Goma, personal interview, Goma, October 5th 2016.

⁸⁸ Muamba, M., provincial president of Red Cross North Kivu province, personal interview, Goma, October 5th 2016.

⁸⁹ Prekabo, V., senior assistant for public information, OCHA North Kivu, personal interview, Goma, October 5th 2016.

⁹⁰ Malivika, A., correspondent for *Voice of America* (VOA), personal interview, Goma, October 4th 2016.

“It can cut, I’ve experienced it before. We’re always at loggerheads with communications officers, who are Congolese, and they clearly say to you: ‘if you speak ill of the organisation, it’s me you’re targeting, so it’s my head’⁹¹”.

The communications officer could make a bad report to his superiors, and the disgraced media outlet would risk losing the benefits it enjoyed with regard to the organisation. Moreover, the journalists who benefit from press trips or training are bound by a kind of unwritten contract precluding them from criticising the organisation covering the costs head-on. The various means of remuneration are therefore incriminated by the media actors themselves. One journalist, employed by international media outlets, and therefore on a regular salary, suggests that humanitarians should stop paying journalists, in order to promote independent journalism. But local journalists are not so categorical.

“When you are a journalist in the Congolese context of precarity, of poverty, how are you going to react to these humanitarian workers who give you 20\$, 10\$? Would you presume to say known negative things about an NGO which gave me 20\$? In all independence, I don’t think so. It’s this motivation which distorts the work a little bit.”⁹²

Some journalists also complain that humanitarian actors only communicate according to their own interests. “When they hold press cafés, I would say it’s in a way to justify themselves, to say what it is they are doing, where and how they’re doing it”⁹³. Some training workshops organised by humanitarian organisations seem to be orientated towards the humanitarian workers’ interest alone, who especially want to be able to justify their expenses to their sponsors. Given the significant number of humanitarian organisations in Goma which offer training workshops, the latter are moreover considered to be redundant and of little relevance. NGOs are also accused of wanting to put their actions forward, first and foremost, during these training sessions.

The remuneration provided for in the contracts between humanitarian workers and journalists is also seen as ridiculously low. “It’s a small amount. Obviously, we don’t have the choice, so we accept it.”⁹⁴ Humanitarian workers are therefore taking advantage of journalists’ economic precarity in order to broadcast their communications. Certain journalists want humanitarian workers’ expectations to be clarified – do they want the journalists to pass on information or to guarantee their communications? – and that the budget which the humanitarian workers allocate to media players be managed accordingly.

“For me, there is a difference between information and communication. If it’s a piece of information, I’m happy for it to be free. But if you want communications, you have to say things which suit you, especially since you are going to integrate these communications into your reports and we help you to reach the targets which you are funded to reach. You receive colossal sums of funding which you can manage as you see fit. Why do you not put a significant amount aside for the media, which would enable serious media outlets, for example, to be able to correctly remunerate the journalists who are sent to cover such things?”⁹⁵

⁹¹ Mukosasenge, V., director of information programmes at the community radio-television station Tayna (RTCT), personal interview, Goma, October 2nd 2016.

⁹² Kubuya, T., director of Virunga Business Radio (VBR), personal interview, Goma, October 4th 2016.

⁹³ *Idem.*

⁹⁴ *Idem.*

⁹⁵ *Idem.*

However, since the journalists are insufficiently trained, they are not always aware of breaching professional ethics when they accept forms of “coupage”. The system is therefore perpetuated, to the benefit of humanitarian workers.

Another reproach often levelled at humanitarian workers by journalists is their propensity to only pay attention to international media outlets. Humanitarian workers bring in journalists from large European or American newspapers, whose media products are never broadcast through the Congolese media. The population of Goma is therefore obliged to listen to international media in order to keep informed. According to media players, these reports, broadcast outside of the African continent, serve to justify the sums spent by humanitarian organisations and to attract the interest of sponsors. And yet, Congolese journalists claim jurisdiction: “We have the advantage of direct proximity in relation to humanitarian action.”⁹⁶

Ultimately, many journalists consider that their relationship with humanitarian workers is unfair and that the poor information flow caused by this imbalance hinders humanitarian action.

Beyond observations

To report on the relationship between journalists and communicators, Jean-Baptiste Legavre uses the oxymoron of “rival associates”. Journalists and communicators are associates in the sense that they have common, or at least crossed or convergent, interests: a communicator needs representatives, a journalist needs information⁹⁷. They are also rivals because they do not have the same definition of what constitutes “good information”. In Goma, the nature of their interactions is complicated by the fact of the structural environment in which both categories of players operate. The weakness of the state apparatus, the lack of job opportunities and the professional precarity of the journalists mean that a number of them consider humanitarian organisations mainly as money and job-generating enterprises. These media players also see these organisations as foremost catering to the international community and their sponsors⁹⁸. For their part, humanitarian workers are wary of Congolese journalists’ ways of working, which is deemed to be unprofessional and potentially detrimental to their action, and do not allocate significant investments in order to develop their communication with local journalists.

The goals pursued by both sides are another determining factor of the relationship, since “if the nature of the issues structures the ‘associate-rival’ relationship, it is precisely because both parties’ *success criteria* are ill-defined and subject to varying assessments.”⁹⁹ Journalists have shown their desire to make profits in terms of information, contacts or money, and to take on a humanitarian or humanist role, whilst humanitarian workers, whilst attributing an humanitarian role to journalists, do not consider it their role to develop the media or to monitor the circulation of information, beyond their own communicational aims.

⁹⁶ *Idem.*

⁹⁷ Legavre, J.-B., “Entre conflit et coopération. Les journalistes et les communicants comme ‘associés-rivaux’”, *Communication & langages*, 2011 (169), pp. 105-123.

⁹⁸ Büscher, K. and Vlassenroot, K., “Humanitarian presence and urban development: new opportunities and contrasts in Goma, DRC”, *op. cit.*, p. 267. The authors make reference to the population of Goma as a whole, not journalists specifically.

⁹⁹ Legavre, J.-B., “Entre conflit et coopération. Les journalistes et les communicants comme ‘associés-rivaux’”, *op. cit.*, p. 117.

And yet almost paradoxically, and in a way that is considered to be self-serving by media players, they do not hesitate to offer training sessions relative to journalism.

Analysing the context of the relationship between media players and humanitarian workers, as well as the goals which they are pursuing, enables us to identify the constraints and tensions which they have to work around¹⁰⁰. In Goma, this improvisation is illustrated by the fact that it is often humanitarian workers who initiate interactions with journalists. They use their human and financial resources to buy media space and to organise training workshops on topics which are of value to them. For their part, journalists say that they lack the financial means to reach the humanitarian workers. According to them, international organisations only communicate when they deem it necessary and do not pay enough attention to them. Media players therefore develop strategies and forms of exchange to approach those whom they would like to consider as “partners”. These exchanges especially take the form of “clubs for journalists friends of humanitarian workers”. Even if the word is never used, in the eyes of some journalists, these “clubs” are akin to a kind of clientelism. For James C. Scott, a clientelist relationship can be defined as a special case of a link between two people

“Involving a largely instrumental friendship in which an individual of higher socioeconomic status (patron) uses his own influence and resources to provide protection or benefits, or both, for a person of lower status (client) who, for his part, reciprocates by offering general support and assistance, including personal services, to the patron.”¹⁰¹

It is indeed tempting to assimilate humanitarian workers – who have information and economic resources which media players do not – to patrons, and journalists belonging to a club – who are often concerned with not upsetting the humanitarian organisation which guarantees the functioning of their organisation – to clients. Considered in this way, this “partnership” is akin to a lopsided friendship, a relationship which is unequal (as friendship should not be)¹⁰².

The shortcut used here to assimilate the interactions between media players and humanitarian workers in Goma to their mere clientelistic expression is nevertheless obvious and does not reflect the complex nature of their exchanges. A number of aspects of this relationship, highlighted by those concerned and detailed above, bear witness to their subtlety and added value, thereby invalidating the hypothesis of a straightforward instrumentalisation of one group by another. Therefore, the spaces for exchange between journalists and humanitarian workers – including those which offer no remuneration, such as OCHA’s press cafés and the press conferences organised by Monusco – are deemed useful both by humanitarian workers and journalists, as are certain aspects of the training workshops. Humanitarian workers and journalists also agreed that their relationship contributes to the smooth functioning of humanitarian action. Moreover, the two categories of players are made up of individuals acting in their own ways. The interviews with the journalists and humanitarian workers testify to the fact that their interactions are partly based on singular and contrasting interpersonal relationships, which cannot be accounted for by the attributes and behaviours generally allocated to the sum total of the category to which they

¹⁰⁰ *Ibidem*. The author analyses the relationship between journalists and communicators, in a general manner.

¹⁰¹ Scott, J. C. 1972. “Patron-client Politics and Political Change in Southeast Asia.” *American Political Science Review* 66 (1), p. 92.

¹⁰² Rivers, P., *People in the Sierra*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1971, p. 140.

belong. Moreover, the media's and humanitarian workers' ways of working are diversified, as illustrated by the examples of Radio Okapi or OCHA, which are unique in many ways. Finally, humanitarian workers reject the clientelist reading of their relationship with journalists. Whilst they are aware of being of a higher economic status in relation to media players, they do not intend to abuse of this situation. They simply wish to take into account the journalists' professional reality in Goma. They know that their communications activities run the risk of being boycotted by a number of media players if no "per diem" or "transports" are forthcoming.

Addressing the relationship between humanitarian workers and media players in Goma from the perspective of clientelism – that is, taking into account the perception of certain journalists – has the merit of highlighting the origins of certain "misunderstandings" which hinder their collaboration. Humanitarian organisations are effectively caught up in narrative schemas which differ from the ways in which they consider themselves¹⁰³. Identifying these narrative schemas is a means, for humanitarian workers, of changing them and emphasising the fact that humanitarian aid is not simply a set of actions, but also a discourse regarding said actions¹⁰⁴. Journalists too have every incentive to take into account the way in which they are considered by humanitarian workers insofar as the lack of professionalism and appetite for financial remuneration which are attributed to them are reasons, for humanitarian workers, not to consider them as privileged partners.

Identifying and understanding the perceptions which each group has of the other by initiating a dialogue between journalists and humanitarian workers in Goma, and distinguishing these perceptions from the structural context within which they operate and which is harder to influence, are major challenges, since these perceptions are liable to influence behaviour. This process of identification nevertheless requires humanitarian workers and journalists to clarify the constraints and expectations which structure their ways of collaborating. The challenge is to consider that the relationship between information and humanitarian action is more than just instrumental¹⁰⁵. In the context of insecurity which characterises North Kivu, information can indeed be a means of saving lives, protecting residents and their property. For every humanitarian organisation, adopting a coherent communications approach means fostering the support of victims, simplifying complex situations, preserving one's independence and preventing insecurity. All of which are crucial goals in contexts of war where rumours and misinformation circulate massively and uncontrollably¹⁰⁶. On a more pragmatic level, journalists and communicators in Goma have every incentive to clarify their relationship and to highlight both the tensions and the compromises at work¹⁰⁷, since, as rival-associates, they cannot hope to be rid of each other in the foreseeable future and therefore have no other choice but to negotiate¹⁰⁸.

¹⁰³ Dijkzeul, D. and Wakenge C. I., "Doing good, but looking bad? Local perceptions of two humanitarian organisations in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo", *Disasters* 34 (4), 2010, pp. 1139-1170.

¹⁰⁴ Dauvin, P. (Dir.), *La communication des ONG humanitaires*, op. cit., p. 60.

¹⁰⁵ Brauman, R. and Backmann, R., op. cit., p. 15.

¹⁰⁶ Dijkzeul, D. and Moke, M., "Public communication strategies of international humanitarian organizations", *International Review of the Red Cross*, 87 (860), December 2005, p. 691.

¹⁰⁷ Legavre, J.-B., "Entre conflit et coopération. Les journalistes et les communicants comme 'associés-rivaux'", op. cit., p. 123.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 108.

Bibliography

- Alliot, P., *Médias et humanitaires : les liaisons dangereuses*, Mémoire, Institut Universitaire de Technologie, Tours, 2000.
- Balabanova, E., "Media Power during Humanitarian Interventions: Is Eastern Europe any Different from the West?", *Journal of Peace Research*, 47 (1), 2010, pp. 71-82.
- Boegli, U., "A few thoughts on the relationship between humanitarian agencies and the media", *International Review of the Red Cross*, 38 (325), 1998, pp. 627-632.
- Brauman, R. et Backmann, R., *Les médias et l'humanitaire*, Paris, CFPJ, 1996.
- Brock, L., Holm, H.-H., Sørensen, G. & Stohl, M., *Fragile States: War and Conflict in the Modern World*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2012.
- Büscher, K. and Vlassenroot, K., "Humanitarian presence and urban development: new opportunities and contrasts in Goma, DRC", *Disasters* 34 (2), 2010, pp. 256-273.
- Bwiti, G., Fierens, M. and Frère, M.-S., "Médias pour la démocratie et la transparence en RDC (Lot 1)", 2013 baseline study, France Expertise Internationale (DFID/SIDA/Ministère français des Affaires étrangères).
- Dauvin, P. (dir.), *La communication des ONG humanitaires*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2010.
- Dijkzeul, D. and Moke, M., "Public communication strategies of international humanitarian organizations", *International review of the Red cross*, 87 (860), December 2005, p. 691.
- Dijkzeul, D. and Wakenge, C. I., "Doing good, but looking bad? Local perceptions of two humanitarian organisations in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo", *Disasters* 34 (4), 2010, pp. 1139-1170.
- Elongo, V., *Mutations politiques et pratiques journalistiques au Congo-Zaïre*, DEA thesis, Université libre de Bruxelles, 2004.
- Fondation Hirondelle, "Radio Okapi : Un réseau national durable d'information au service de la population Congolaise", project document 2013-2014, October 2012.
- Franks, S., "The CARMA Report: Western Media Coverage of Humanitarian Disasters", *The Political Quarterly*, 77 (2), pp. 281-284.
- Frère, M.-S., "Informer dans un pays morcelé et déchiré", in Frère, M.-S. (dir.), *Afrique centrale. Médias et conflits. Vecteurs de guerre ou acteurs de paix*, Bruxelles, Éditions Complexe, 2005, pp. 98-132.
- , *Afrique centrale. Médias et conflits. Vecteurs de guerre ou acteurs de paix*, Bruxelles, Éditions Complexe, 2005.
- , "Les médias 'chiens de garde' des élections au Burundi et en RDC ? Une critique de l'assistance internationale aux médias", *Afrique contemporaine*, 256 (4), pp. 119-138.
- Fusaschi, M., "Victimes à tout jamais. Les enfants et les femmes d'Afrique. Rhétoriques de la pitié et humanitarisme spectacle", *Cahiers d'études africaines*, 2 (198-199-200), 2010, pp. 1033-1053.

Gorin, V., "La couverture médiatique de la guerre civile du Biafra au regard des enjeux humanitaires dans les médias français, suisses et américains (1967-1970)", *Le Temps des Médias*, 2 (21), 2013, pp. 176-195.

ICRC, "Cooperation with the National Societies", October 29th 2010, www.icrc.org, consulted on August 3rd 2016.

IMMAR, "Étude médias en RDC. Résultats d'audience avril 2016, Goma", summary document.

JED, "Rapport annuel 2017. République démocratique du Congo. La Répression se banalise", Kinshasa, 2017, available online at: <http://jed-afrique.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/JED-RAPPORT-2017.pdf>.

Lapess Munkeni, R., *Le coupage : Une pratique d'allocation des ressources dans le contexte journalistique congolais*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2009.

Lavoine, Y., *L'humanitaire et les médias*, Lyon, Presses universitaires de Lyon, 2002.

Legavre, J.-B., "Entre conflit et coopération. Les journalistes et les communicants comme 'associés-rivaux'", *Communication & langages*, 2011 (169), pp. 105-123.

Mbavu Muhindo, V., *De l'AFDL au M23 en République démocratique du Congo*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2014.

Megaloudi, F., "Les médias se multiplient, mais la communication humanitaire n'atteint pas sa cible", www.irinnews.org, May 28th 2013, consulted on April 6th 2016.

Mesnard, P., *La victime écran : la représentation humanitaire en question*, Textuel, Paris, 2002.

Moke, M. and Rütther, M., "Media and humanitarian action", in Gibbons, P. et Heintze, J. (Eds), *The Humanitarian Challenge*, New York, Springer, 2015, pp. 253-263.

Mungazi Cosmas, "Goma: Les journalistes amis, une bonne affaire pour les ONG", *Syfia Grands Lacs*, Goma, 8 Février 2013.

Radio Okapi, "15% de la population a accès à l'électricité 'avec délestage'", <https://www.radiookapi.net>, July 9th 2016, consulted on December 15th 2017.

Rivers, P., *People in the Sierra*, Chicago, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1971.

Rotberg, R. and Weiss, T., *From massacres to genocide: The media, public policy and humanitarian crises*, Washington, Brookings, 1996.

Scott, J. C. 1972. "Patron-client Politics and Political Change in Southeast Asia." *American Political Science Review* 66 (1), 1972, pp. 91-113.

Soderlund, W. and al., *Humanitarian crises and intervention: Reassessing the impact of mass media*, Columbia, Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, 2010.

UNDP, national report on human development 2016. "Croissance inclusive, développement durable et défi de la décentralisation en République démocratique du Congo", August 2017, available online at: <http://www.cd.undp.org/content/rdc/fr/home/library/planification-du-developpement/rapport-national-sur-le-developpement-humain-2016--rndh-2016-.html>.

UNESCO Statistics Institute, "Democratic Republic of Congo", <http://uis.unesco.org/fr/country/cd>, consulted on December 15th 2017.

United Nations website, <http://www.un.org/fr/humanitarian/overview/ocha.shtml>.

Vestergaard, A., "Humanitarian branding and the media: The case of Amnesty International", *Journal of Language and Politics*, 7 (3), 2008, pp. 471-493.

Interviews

Cited interviews

Abedy, D. A., head of the communications and public relations unit of the Red Cross, Community committee of Goma, Goma, October 5th 2016.

Kabuya, M.-N., editor-in-chief of the radio-television station Emmanuel, Goma, October 4th 2016.

Kalenda, D., editor-in-chief of Pole FM, Goma, October 4th 2016.

Katondji, B., news anchor at the Congolese Media Observatory and commercial director of RTNC, Goma, October 3rd 2016.

Kubuya, T., director of Virunga Business Radio (VBR), Goma, October 4th 2016.

Malivika, A., correspondent for *Voice of America* (VOA), Goma, October 4th 2016.

Manengu, A., communications officer, Médecins Sans Frontières, Goma, October 5th 2016.

Muamba, M., provincial president of the Red Cross of North Kivu province, Goma, October 5th 2016.

Mukosasenge, V., director of information programmes at the community radio-television station Tayna (RTCT), Goma, October 2nd 2016.

Prekabo, V., senior assistant for public information, OCHA North Kivu, Goma, October 5th 2016.

Rushago, V., head of the communications and public relations division at the DRC Red Cross, North Kivu province, Goma, October 3rd 2016.

Sumaili, A., editor of the newspaper *L'Etoile du Kivu*, Goma, October 5th 2016.

Tulinabo, A., coordinator of the "Club of journalists friends of the Red Cross" in Goma and editor of the newspaper *Le Peuple Souverain*, Goma, October 7th 2016.

Wundi, T., editor-in-chief at RTNC and main correspondent for Journaliste en danger (JED) in Goma, Goma, October 3rd 2016.

Other interviews

Biteketa, T., Deputy head of the communications and public relations unit of the Red Cross, Community committee of Goma, Goma, October 5th 2016.

Ngala, J., editor-in-chief of Radio Okapi in Goma, Goma, October 1st 2016.