

Media and conflict in Bolivia:

Fostering a constructive role for the media in a situation of vulnerable governability

ASSESSMENT

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Abbreviations

ABI	Agencia Boliviana de Información
ABOIC	Asociación Boliviana de Investigadores en Comunicación
AMARC	Asociación Mundial de Radios Comunitarias
ANETV	Asociación Nacional de Emisoras de Televisión
ANF	Agencia de Noticias FIDES
ANP	Asociación Nacional de Prensa
ANPB	Asociación Nacional de Periodistas de Bolivia
ASBORA	Asociación Boliviana de Radiodifusoras
DINACOM	Dirección Nacional de Comunicaciones
FES/ILDIS	Friedrich Ebert Stiftung
ICU	International Communication Union
IMS	International Media Support
KAS	Konrad Adenauer Stiftung
MAS	Movimiento al Socialismo
MNR	Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario
NFR	Nueva Fuerza Republicana
ONADEM	Observatorio Nacional de Medios
PADEM	Programa de Apoyo Municipal a la Democracia
PAT	Periodistas Asociados de Televisión
SITTEL	Superintendencia de Telecomunicaciones
UNICOM	Unidad de Comunicación

Executive summary

The purpose of this report is to analyse the situation of the mass media in the current Bolivian context, and on this basis to develop proposals for interventions that can help to ensure that the media play a role in strengthening democracy and governability in Bolivia.

This analysis is based primarily on information obtained during a mission to Bolivia in September and October of 2006, and has been added to and brought up to date with subsequent additional interviews. A large number of institutions and organizations in the media sector, as well as independent journalists, actively contributed to the analysis presented here.

Among the main results it was found that the growing polarization in Bolivian society is reflected in the media. Some media outlets assume a very active role in representing different interests and show a marked tendency to increase their criticism of opposing positions. When considered together with the particular geographic segmentation of the Bolivian media, this implies a risk at the present time insofar as it also contributes to a certain fragmentation of the country.

Journalism in Bolivia is in a crisis situation characterized by a lack of credibility and prestige. Deficiencies in journalistic capacities, combined with the identification of certain media outlets with private interests and the lack of a widely accepted ethical framework, have resulted in a situation in which Bolivians are receiving incomplete and distorted information which impedes their understanding of strategic and sensitive topics in the development of their country.

Bolivia is experiencing a historic moment of great importance in which different perspectives and world views are clashing in the same space, and mutual understanding is undoubtedly required for what could be an intercultural dialogue working towards the construction of the country, rather than the current tendency for risky confrontation.

In order to work towards a more constructive role for the media in Bolivian society in the present context, this report suggests a strategy which could focus on the following four areas:

- Advocacy for changes in the legal framework
- Spaces for debate and reflection
- Strengthening the quality of journalism
- Protection for journalists

For each of these areas specific interventions of immediate action are recommended. Such interventions focus on attending to the more pressing needs by seeking ways in which the media are not led to play an adverse role in the growing tension and the deepening of the conflict in Bolivia but rather to fulfill a role that makes it possible to create a bridge among the different political positions and current interests, and between these and Bolivian society.

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1 Introduction

Bolivia is caught up in an intense debate in which the media play the leading role. The media appear both as victims and as aggressors; some media outlets lead the way with slogans and the defence of interests which do not appear to concern them; others call for understanding and reaffirm that their duty is to aid in the construction of a Bolivia in which all can live together peacefully, equitably and inclusively; while the most militant are accused of playing a harmful role, taking sides and openly manipulating information.

In spite of the presence of voices which attempt to avoid greater polarization, the media sector finds itself in the midst of a process which presents risks for democracy. On the ground, there is opposition between differing logics of appropriation of the crisis, different societal projects and dominance by race and region of a "fundamentalist [nature] which contributes more overall to the material, legal and symbolic fragmentation of the country than to its integration"¹.

"For the first time I am concerned for the freedom of the press in Bolivia", a person who works in international cooperation stated. And it would seem that there is indeed reason to be on the alert.

This growing tension, observed by sectors of the international community related to the media and journalism, draws attention because of the implications which it may have for the weakening of democracy and for the quality of information to which citizens are exposed. This is the reason for the interest of International Media Support in learning about the situation in depth, and in analysing and evaluating the need for possible immediate action.

In order to better understand the relationship between the media and conflict in the Bolivian situation, International Media Support planned a visit to the country between September 25 and October 5, 2006. The mission held meetings in the cities of La Paz and Santa Cruz with journalists, media directors and owners, analysts, academics, and representatives of civil society and of the government, related to the subject of communications and journalism.

The situation on the ground is clearly illustrated by the atmosphere of discussion within the media themselves. It is not common to arrive in a country and find in the course of one week so many newspaper articles, radio broadcasts and television talk shows in which ideas about the role of the media are debated. *Evo Morales faces a media dictatorship* is the front page headline of a four-column article in the bi-weekly *El juguete rabioso*², while the newspaper *La Razón* has for five consecutive days headlines such as *Evo says that his worst enemies are the media*³ or *Journalists worry about Evo's criticism of the media*⁴. These headlines are barely a sampling of the strength which characterizes a clash which has been added to the many frictions experienced by this Andean country.

The visit of the IMS team began with a roundtable discussion participated in by Bolivian journalists⁵ to exchange ideas and share in the purpose of the mission. This discussion made it possible to identify with those present the essential themes which characterize the current situation of the media, to analyse it and to establish possible spheres of action.

- 1 Contreras Baspineiro, Adalid. "De enteros y medios de comunicación: tendencias en la oferta y el consumo mediático en Bolivia". CEDLA, La Paz, August 2005. Electronic version at <http://www.cedla.org>
- 2 *El juguete rabioso*, 1/14 October 2006. Año 5 No. 161. Pág. 1.
- 3 *La Razón*, September 28, 2006, pág. 8.
- 4 *La Razón*, September 29, 2006, pág. A14.
- 5 The journalists Rafael Archondo, Andrés Gómez, Andrés Martínez, Helen Álvarez y and Mavi Ortiz were present.

The first voices heard in this encounter will repeat themselves throughout the mission: “Nowadays in Bolivia there is a tension which is also expressed in the media and which is beginning to permeate them. Regional, ethical, economic and political ruptures are increasing” ⁶.

Subsequently, individual interviews were held with 42 people between Thursday, September 28 and Wednesday, October 4, 2006⁷. Although the central theme throughout the visit was based on understanding the role of the media in the Bolivian situation, each interview was structured in order to go in-depth on certain topics according to the areas in which the person being interviewed could make the greatest contributions. The information gathered through the mission has been complemented and updated with additional interviews in the months after.

The study was carried out by Marisol Cano, an experienced Colombian journalist and a consultant for IMS, and by Finn Rasmussen, programme officer at IMS. The Bolivian journalists Mavi Ortiz and Andrés Martínez provided materials to the team, as well as helping with the organization of the mission. IMS thanks the Royal Danish Embassy in La Paz for its interest and its support for the planning of the mission. Finally, and especially, it would not have been possible to complete the report without the enthusiastic participation of a large number of Bolivian journalists, editors and other media professionals, and of representatives of civil society and of international cooperation. IMS would like to thank all of these for their contributions to this work.

6 Rafael Archondo, round-table discussion with the researchers.. La Paz, September 28, 2006

7 See the complete list in the appendix. Interviews were held with: journalists (10), media editors and directors (8), owners (1), media analysts and researchers (6), representatives of organizations and unions (4), diplomatic corps (4), international organizations (6), government representatives (1) and parliamentary ombudspersons.

2 Challenges to democratic governability

Bolivia has lived through turbulent years. The period between the year 1999 and January of 2006 represents the destabilization of the models of state, democracy and governability that were intensely questioned "for their exclusive and centralist nature, their lack of representativeness and attention to social needs and for their encouragement of corruption and impunity"⁸.

More than 14,000 protests by social movements in the form of marches, strikes or road blocks marked the first five years of the 21st century. The great majority of these were peaceful but some of them were marked by great violence; the worst and the most tragic episode since Bolivia's return to democracy in 1982 being the clashes between demonstrators, police and the army in October 2003, which originated in a civic neighbourhood strike in the young and impoverished city of El Alto in defiance of the plans of the then President Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada to export natural gas through Chile. Sixty people died in the incidents.

What became apparent at that moment were several crises: the neo-liberal model, which applied orthodox policies of stabilization and structural adjustments in two generations of reforms, but failed to respond to structural problems of marginalization, poverty and exclusion; the pacted model of democracy, that produced five conservative multi-party coalition governments and that collapsed after losing credibility when they used power for their own benefit; and the social integration model that recognized rights and assumed itself to be multicultural but which maintained deep-rooted traces of racial discrimination and contempt⁹.

The history of political development, from the time of independence at the beginning of the 19th century, has been characterized by two traditions that help to explain the current situation. One refers to legalism and constitutionalism and the other to the tradition of mobilization, often marginalized in the formally constituted political system. As John Crabtree explains, these two traditions frequently overlap in a contradictory manner and have helped to accentuate the chronic political instability in the country during a large part of the last two centuries¹⁰.

Bolivia has been and continues to be a relatively weak state with a strong civil society with solid roots in the communitarian traditions of the indigenous rural farmers of the Andean region, who have resisted the invasion of western values such as private property, individualism and profit. These traditions have become intertwined in certain periods of history with the mining unionism which is prevalent in the Bolivian labour force¹¹.

It should be noted that these confrontations and instabilities take place in one of the poorest countries in Latin America and the poorest country in South America, whose *per cápita* income is \$960 and in which only 16% of its inhabitants manage to earn enough income to cover their basic necessities. Sixty per cent of the Bolivian population is defined as poor and of that 60% close to half live in conditions of extreme poverty or destitution, with an income below \$1 per day. Bolivia is also one of the countries in Latin America with the greatest inequality in the distribution of resources.

8 Torrico, Erick. "Antecedentes, resultados y enseñanzas de tres experiencias de observación de medios en los procesos electorales". In "Medios, poder y democracia en Bolivia". Programa de Apoyo a la Ciudadanía Efectiva y la Representación. SUNY-Bolivia. La Paz, 2006.

9 Exeni, José Luis. "Comunicación Política en América Latina: Bolivia". In Chasqui, revista latinoamericana de comunicación. No. 93. Quito, March 2006. <http://chasqui.comunica.org/content/view/446/1/>.

10 Crabtree, John. "Perfiles de la protesta. Política y movimientos sociales en Bolivia". Fundación Unir. La Paz, 2005.

11 Robins, Nicholas A (Ed.). "Conflictos políticos y movimientos sociales en Bolivia". Estudios Bolivianos Vol. IV. Plural Editores. La Paz, 2006.

The international community reacted positively to the election of Evo Morales with the Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS) as president of the Republic on December 18th, 2005, with 53.7% of the vote, the highest percentage in contemporary Bolivian history, a period which began in 1982. His election was perceived as the expression of a political change which had been needed for a long time, as an important step toward institutional stability, at least in the short term, and as an opportunity to advance in the fight against generalized social exclusion and poverty¹².

Morales became the first indigenous president of Bolivia, with his strongest support among that sector of the population, traditionally the poorest of the country, and among a good portion of the middle class. What did it mean then to have an indigenous person in power? First, it offered the possibility that the people could reassert themselves as subjects of their own history; and second, it implied the realization of inclusion, empowerment and reforms, as well as changes in habits, symbols and principles¹³.

In his first year in power Morales advanced a large number of initiatives among which stand out the nationalization of the hydrocarbon sector by a presidential decree, the election of the Constituent Assembly which supposes structural transformations for Bolivian democracy, and the land reform law. The first few months of Morales' mandate passed undisturbed, but this began to break down during the second semester of 2006 until clear signs of increased tensions were showing. Three issues have affected this change: land reform, the Constituent Assembly, and regional autonomies. All the current disputes "are closely linked to the existing rivalry between the central government and the economically dynamic eastern lowlands where the oil and gas industries, agriculture, and the large estates predominate", as confirmed by Crisis Group¹⁴.

There are indications that the popularity of the President has diminished in the second semester of 2006. Two studies demonstrate this: the first asserts that the approval rating of the president fell from 67% to 62% between November and December of 2006, mainly due to a drop registered in the city of Santa Cruz¹⁵; and, the second one, that his popularity declined from 77% at the beginning of his mandate to 59% by December of 2006¹⁶.

The installation of the Constituent Assembly in August of 2006 generated, according to reporter Andrés Gómez, "more disagreements than agreements and it has inflamed a more forceful and organized civic-regional pressure against the government which finds support in the actions of prefects not belonging to the MAS party, in the summoning capacity of the civic committees, whose strength in the Department of Santa Cruz is well known, and in political representation in Congress and the Constituent Assembly dominated by the Podemos opposition party. The civic strike of September 8, 2006 in Santa Cruz, Beni, Pando and Tarija may be the precursor for larger protests, whose background is responsible in large part for what form the autonomous regime will take in the future Constitution and for the discrepancies that exist in this regard between the MAS party and the civic movement in Santa Cruz"¹⁷.

In fact, the eastern regions are afraid that the Evo Morales government may use the Constituent Assembly to replace the prefectures for a decentralized system that would divide the country into 40 regions. Disagreements have increased and there are worrying signs such as the recent strikes by civic groups in those same localities that took place in December of 2006, and which issued an ultimatum to the government to meet their demands otherwise they would declare the de facto autonomy of their provinces through town

12 Crisis Group. "El camino incierto de las reformas en Bolivia". Informe sobre América Latina N°18. July 3, 2006.

13 Exeni, José Luis. "Comunicación Política en América Latina: Bolivia". In Chasqui, revista latinoamericana de comunicación. No. 93. Quito, March 2006. <http://chasqui.comunica.org/content/view/446/1/>.

14 Crisis Group. Reformas en Bolivia: riesgo de nuevos conflictos. Boletín informativo sobre América Latina No. 13, January 8, 2007.

15 The survey, carried out in the cities of La Paz, El Alto, Cochabamba and Santa Cruz, has a margin of error of 3.1% and a reliability rate of 95%. The task was completed by the firm Apoyo Opinión y Mercado Bolivia, and coincided with the social movements and the hunger strike which confronted the civic committees and the prefectures of Santa Cruz, Beni, Pando and Tarija by two thirds of the vote to approve the new text of the Political Constitution and the departmental autonomies. Source: Diario La Razón, December 20, 2006. http://www.la-razon.com/versiones/20061220_005761/nota_247_370234.htm

16 Survey by the firm Gallup Internacional carried out during the months of November and December 2006. Agencias EFE. January 22, 2006.

17 Andrés Gómez in conversation with the researchers.. La Paz, September 28, 2006.

council meetings or collective gatherings. The strongest supporters of Morales reacted by saying that they would march in Santa Cruz if national unity was perceived to be in danger and the President made a call to the Armed Forces to defend that unity, which was understood in the eastern region as a threat of armed repression. Although the government backed down and expressed its willingness to enter into conversations with the opposition about the vote in the Constituent Assembly and regional autonomy, and expressions of conciliation were heard from the opposition, it is true, as confirmed by Crisis Group in a recent report, that "the situation is still fragile"¹⁸.

The eastern region of the country, in which the Department of Santa Cruz is the main player, has been demanding more autonomy for years. There it is considered unfair that the department contributes much more tax revenue than the average of the rest of Bolivia, without receiving much in return¹⁹. That feeling of injustice is often used as an argument by the financial groups of Santa Cruz to increase their influence in the population.

The autonomy issue is without a doubt a key factor in the conflict, and this is symbolized by a large ten-meter long banner that hangs in the main plaza in Santa Cruz: "Yes to Autonomy" and by the numerous green departmental flags flying from the main buildings of the official institutions of the city. The result of the referendum of July 2, 2006, about departmental autonomy reaffirms this idea: in Santa Cruz 70% of the electorate voted "Yes".

Although it is true that from 2003 to the beginning of 2006 the protests and demonstrations of different sectors of the population decreased, they began to increase again after the period of grace given to President Evo Morales since he took the reins of the country in January of 2006.

There is a growing fear of the possibility that the conflicts might end in a significant wave of violence, and speculations of the possibility even of civil war float in the air. There have been accusations from the government about the establishment of paramilitary groups in the eastern part of the country. There is no proof of activities of this nature, and many of the people who were interviewed by the mission said that the threat of a civil war is groundless. "We have never had a civil war, because after all, we are not enemies", said the deputy editor of a Bolivian newspaper.

Nevertheless, polarization is increasing and the pressure on citizens to choose one side or another is getting stronger. Some analysts are sounding an alarm because they find the country divided as never since 1952. And they feel that the division not only has geographic components but it also cuts across the whole country and could lead to a confrontation that would brand the Bolivian population for decades to come. This is considerably influenced by the Evo Morales style of governing, which is based in continual confrontations²⁰.

There is no doubt that Bolivia finds itself in a political and cultural tension that simultaneously demands respect for the multiple ways of living and thinking of very different groups in a multicultural society and at the same time tries to construct common and standardized norms for a modern democracy²¹. This polarization does not occur, as some feel, only between "Paceño" and "Cruceño"²² interests. There are geographically circumscribed groupings of sectors of the western population (principally La Paz, Potosí, Oruro) which support the government, largely due to its policies which are rooted in indigenous thought and to the clear links with social movements. There are also business and civic sectors of Santa Cruz which lead, but do not monopolize, the opposition to the government manifested in Pando, Beni, Tarija and, more recently, Cochabamba. And in each region there are

18 Crisis Group. *Reformas en Bolivia: riesgo de nuevos conflictos*. Boletín informativo sobre América Latina No. 13, January 8, 2007. <http://www.crisis-group.org>

19 Several people interviewed by the mission described it as follows: Santa Cruz pays almost 50% of the country's tax revenues and produces 40% of the GDP for which it should receive larger benefits; La Paz, a city with a million inhabitants, has 12,000 police while Santa Cruz, with 1,500,000 inhabitants, has 3,000.

20 See *La tragedia de la confrontación: el país dividido*, by Alfonso Gumucio. At <http://www.bolpress.com/art.php?Cod=2007011210>

21 Robins, Nicholas A (Ed.). "Conflictos políticos y movimientos sociales en Bolivia". *Estudios Bolivianos* Vol. IV. Plural Editores. La Paz, 2006.

22 Translator's note: "Paceño" refers to the people of the city of La Paz; "Cruceño" to the people of Santa Cruz.

important disagreements about the respective dominant discourses. In sum, it is a confrontation in which two viewpoints of the country predominate, excluding other intermediate positions. The media, almost in their entirety, reproduce that exclusion.

3 Framework of the media sector

3.1 History

From 1880, numerous newspapers emerged in Bolivia in parallel with the beginnings of one of the periods of greatest political stability in that country. Until the end of that period in the 1920s, publications affiliated with a political party were common and had great influence. In this way *El Diario*, founded in 1904, was attached to the Liberal party, while *La Razón* (1917) was associated with the Republican party, as was *La Patria* of Oruro. After the Chaco War, the fledgling Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario created its press organ *La Calle*, which succeeded in attracting writers of the calibre of Augusto Céspedes and Carlos Montenegro.

With the triumph of the revolution of 1952, *La Razón* and *Los Tiempos* of Cochabamba suffered from closures and interventions on being identified as defenders of the *ancien régime*. In the following decade partisan newspapers began to decline and the morning newspaper *Presencia*, of the Catholic church, established itself as the leader of the press in Bolivia for more than a quarter of a century, during a large part of which the country was under military dictatorship and press censorship. This is also the period during which the weekly *Aquí* stood out, as an example of a very influential “trench journalism”. Its founder, the Jesuit Luis Espinal, was assassinated in the decade of the 1980s and, since then, a significant number of journalists state that it is difficult to achieve a level of journalism similar to that developed in these publications.

Without doubt, the principal trend in radio in Bolivia, because of its historic significance and its reach, is the so-called popular radio. Arising long before its theorization in the 1970s, popular radio started to broadcast in 1942 with the mining broadcasters, whose power resided in their financial independence thanks to the contributions of the workers and to their influence based in their links with the strong miners’ unions; an outstanding example of these stations was Radio Nacional de Huanuni.

Catholic educational radio appeared at that time as an attempted counterbalance by the Catholic Church in view of the Marxist influence of the Bolivian workers movements in the radio airwaves, and within a few years had secularized its discourse until it became allied with the labour struggles, especially in mining areas with the mythic Radio Pío XII. The Church also made incursions into rural areas and in the 1970s its radio broadcasters acted as a stimulus for the beginnings of the hugely influential indigenous thought in Bolivia. Radio stations self-managed by the communities themselves, known as community radio stations, were also created in the countryside.

The beginnings of television in the country were typical; that is to say, under the protection of the state. Towards the end of the 1960s Televisión Boliviana or Channel 7 was born during the period of military governments which continued until 1982. The station held the monopoly for broadcasts until the beginning of the 1980s, when the university channels appeared at the same time as colour technology. In 1984, in the midst of the debacle of the leftist government of the Unidad Democrática y Popular, the spectrum

was opened up to private channels; initially Channel 9, which had rightist tendencies, and was somewhat balanced by Telesistema Boliviano, Channel 2, with its proposal for quality commercial television. The frequency of this channel is now utilized in La Paz by the Unitel network.

The decade of the 1980s thus meant a period of important developments for the Bolivian media sector with the increase in diversity, the breaking of the state monopoly over television, the presentation of a reconfiguration of the radio spectrum and the appearance in the sphere of business communications with capital coming from other types of productive activities.

3.2 Legal framework

The legal instruments which provide a framework for the activities of the media in Bolivia are the Political Constitution of the State, the Printing Law of 1925, the Telecommunications Law No. 1632 of 1995, Law No. 494 of December 29, 1979, which recognized the Legal Statute of Journalists and the Supreme Decree No. 20225 of May 9, 1984, which enacted the Organic Statute of the Journalist²³.

Specialists in the field affirm that there is no systematized juridical legislation on the subject of social communication, but rather a large number of diverse legal regulations which make up its legal framework.

The current Bolivian Constitution states in section b) of its article 7 that "everyone has the right to freely express his or her ideas and opinions through any media", and it includes in its article 15 provisions for the "closure of printing houses and other media for the expression of ideas". Because of this, analysts consider that this is one of the most restrictive political constitutions of the Andean countries on the subject of communication.

For its part, the Printing Law of 1925 established basic principles to guarantee freedom of expression and of the press. In its article 8 it stipulates the protection of professional secrecy and provides for the judgement of offences by Press Tribunals. It makes clear that an editor or publisher who reveals to a political authority or to an individual the identity of an anonymous person is liable, as a criminal offender, against public faith.

There appears to be a tacit agreement among members of the Bolivian journalists' union in defence of the Printing Law, in spite of its shortcomings and of the difficulties in its application. "It is a wise law", declares Raúl Peñaranda, previous editor of *La Época*; "It provides true protection for journalists, although the penalties are obsolete", states Juan Carlos Marañón, national news editor of the ATB network²⁴. It is clear that it requires some adjustments; however, fear exists insofar as the wisdom of trying to reform it given the current socio-political climate in Bolivia.

As well as the matters included in the Political Constitution and in the Printing Law, there is Law No. 494 of December 29, 1979, which recognizes the legal status of the journalist. This Legal Statute of Journalists declares in article 10 of Chapter III that the freedom to access information fully is within the rights of the journalist and gives him or her the right of access to all sources of information in order to be able to communicate facts and events without other restrictions than those set out in the Printing Law of January 19, 1925.

23 The following document was used as the main source in this section: Contreras Baspineiro, Adalid. "De enteros y medios de comunicación: tendencias en la oferta y el consumo mediático en Bolivia". CEDLA, La Paz, August 2005. Electronic version at <http://www.cedla.org>.

24 Interviews by the authors with Raúl Peñaranda, previous editor of *La Época*, La Paz, September 29, 2006 and with Juan Carlos Marañón, national news editor, ATB network, Santa Cruz, October 2, 2006.

In 1984 the Organic Statute of the Journalist was enacted in the Supreme Decree No. 20225. In this act, it is established in articles 6, 7, 8 y 27 that "the legal exercise of journalism will be entrusted only to those journalists who hold nationally recognized qualifications and who are recorded in the National Registry of Journalists". However, several of the people interviewed by the mission commented that this law is not fully applied.

There is also the Telecommunications Law No. 1632 of July 5, 1995, and the Regulatory Decree No. 24132, oriented principally towards matters of a technical and technological nature. Bolivian analysts consider that this law represented a step backwards insofar as it excludes matters related to the nature of the media and to the freedom of the press and of expression.

The government of Carlos Mesa enacted the Supreme Decree No. 28168 of May 16, 2005, whose purpose is "to guarantee access to information, as a fundamental right of every individual, and transparency in the administration of Executive Power". Its article 4 recognizes "the right of every individual to access to information as a fundamental premise for the full exercise of citizenship and the strengthening of democracy".

For its part, Bolivia has signed international agreements which are instruments of protection for those human rights related to communication, such as the Internacional Covenant on Civil and Political Rights signed on August 12, 1982, and the American Convention on Human Rights, signed on July 19, 1979.

To these instruments of a legal nature can be added others of an ethical nature which provide a framework for the operation of the exercise of journalism from a perspective of self-regulation. Among these are the Declaration of Principles of the Association of Journalists of La Paz (1990), the Code of Ethics of the Federation of Press Workers of Bolivia (1991) and the Bases for Professional Ethics for Radio Broadcasters. In addition, the journalists' union has agreed to the establishment of Tribunals of Honour and Ethical Codes, based in the defence of freedom of expression and of information, which cover matters such as honesty and service in professional journalism, the relationship with the employer, the rights of others, the relationship with sources and responsibilities to colleagues.

Discussions about the legal framework which regulates activity in the field of communications and journalism have taken on an important vitality in past months in view of the need to introduce the topic in the debates of the Constituent Assembly and in the text of what will be the new Bolivian Constitution.

3.3 Indigenous cultures and the multiplicity of languages

The linguistic and cultural diversity that exists in Bolivia is a characteristic that enriches the country as a nation. In this Andean country coexist 36 ethnic groups, representing 62% of its population of 8.5 million inhabitants.

In the western part of the country live the Quechua and Aymara peoples, the primary descendents of the Inca Empire; and in the Oriente, Chaco and Amazonas regions live numerous groups, among which are the Mosetens, the Guaraní, and the Guarayos.

Bolivia was born as an independent nation on the breaking up of the viceroyalties of La Plata and Peru. The process of construction of the new

state was led by Creole elites and was not supported by the participation of the indigenous population, which formed an overwhelming majority. Their culture and needs were therefore not recognized, and for years this group suffered from exclusion and from social, economic and political inequality.

The richness of these Pre-Columbian societies and their strong capacity for seeking collective and cooperative ways of problem-solving have allowed their multiple ethnic, social and cultural identities to gain increasing representation in a difficult process of democratic construction marked by permanent instability.

The primarily oral and collective nature of these cultures has contributed to the development of particular characteristics of the media. A good part of the importance which a medium like radio has had in Bolivia is due to this oral tradition and to a way of life based in collectivity. This was true when the medium of radio was first used by church organizations which introduced the use of the medium in their relations with indigenous groups of people in the process of evangelization and education, then by social organizations looking for the restoration of the rights of indigenous peoples, and later when indigenous groups themselves discovered in radio an appropriate medium for popular expression and communication.

The deep-rooted influence of their own languages in the indigenous cultures was also a definitive factor in the provision of programming spaces in Bolivia primarily in the Quechua and Aymara languages. In some cases, especially in the case of Catholic Church broadcasters, this had the aim of expanding the process of evangelization and reaching a larger number of towns and villages, and in others the aim was to achieve a necessary understanding that could not be achieved by other means.

More recently, the importance of communication as an essential element of identity and of the dynamics linked to development and to the wellbeing of indigenous peoples has been recognized. This has meant that these groups have themselves begun to demand that their right to communication is represented, among other things, by equal access to the media, by technological resources or by normative and regulatory standards that allow for the granting and the use of frequencies of community media.

4 Description of the media sector

It can be said that the decade of the 80s was a period in Bolivia during which the different media flourished, resulting in a commercial reconfiguration of the media sector.

The principal movements took place with the establishment of commercial television in 1984 which implied the breaking of the state monopoly, the growth in volume of private advertising, the increase of electoral political propaganda, the installation of new radio stations, especially in FM, the doubling of the number of newspaper publications, the emergence of national news agencies and the beginning of coordinated business networks among the owners of television channels²⁵. It was what could be called a media boom which helped to shape a very interesting new diversified spectrum.

At the same time, however, the non-commercial media weakened in numbers, technical capacity and impact for communication: approximately 75% of radio stations under union ownership disappeared, public university television stations languished, educational radio managed to maintain its numerical presence, small community radio stations were established, and the state media subsisted almost on the periphery²⁶, although these acquired a new dimension under the government of President Evo Morales, as will be discussed later.

It was a period during which the media made gains in prestige and credibility while the political class began to lose them. The media began to take the place of the political parties or the justice system, and they were given roles and responsibilities that they did not have a right to, until a critical moment was reached from 2003 onward when a stage of questioning of their work began, originating in certain excesses and in the meddling of non-journalistic interests in definitions of an editorial nature²⁷.

With regard to forms of ownership, the media in Bolivia can be classified as private, state, trade unions or cooperative owned, community-based, municipal and denominational. The centrality that the private sector has acquired is notable. Nevertheless, the country maintains a permanent dynamic of linking large sectors of the population to the creation, management and development of small media outlets, which implies a large variety of options linked to specific areas of interest, albeit with important limitations in terms of size, coverage, and financial sustainability.

In Bolivia the configuration of the media sector exhibits some tendencies similar to those of the globalized world; that is, the orientation of the media as businesses often to the detriment of their social responsibilities and the establishment, however incipient, of communications conglomerates, with their respective links to political and business sectors.

In this respect, it is possible to identify the principal business groups which are owners of media outlets in the country, and are described as follows.

The Spanish Grupo Prisa owns the newspapers *La Razón* in La Paz and *El Nuevo Día* in Santa Cruz, as well as the ATB national television network.

²⁵ Source: Torrico, Erick en Contreras Baspineiro, Adalid. "De enteros y medios de comunicación: tendencias en la oferta y el consumo mediático en Bolivia". CEDLA, La Paz, August 2005. Electronic version at <http://www.cedla.org>

²⁶ Source: Torrico, Erick en Contreras Baspineiro, Adalid. "De enteros y medios de comunicación: tendencias en la oferta y el consumo mediático en Bolivia". CEDLA, La Paz, August 2005. Electronic version at <http://www.cedla.org>

²⁷ Interview of the authors with Cecilia Quiroga, consultant for FES/ILDIS. La Paz, September 30, 2006.

The Grupo Líder, belonging to the Canelas and Rivero families, has a wide network of newspapers throughout Bolivia: *El Deber* in Santa Cruz, *La Prensa* in La Paz, *Correo del Sur* in Sucre, *El Potosí* in Potosí, *El Alteño* in El Alto, *El Nuevo Sur* in Tarija, *El Norte* in Montero, *Gente* and *Los Tiempos* in Cochabamba. The Group maintains business links with the PAT television network (Periodistas Asociados de Televisión).

The Grupo Monasterio, belonging to Osvaldo Monasterio, who was a member of parliament with the Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario of Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada, is the owner of the national television network Unitel. He also has investments in livestock, soy, products of mass consumption, banking and hydrocarbons, and maintains business links with the businessmen Ivo Kuljis and Juan Carlos Durán.

For his part, Ivo Kuljis, who was a candidate for the vice-presidency of the Republic for the Nueva Fuerza Republicana political party, is a businessman with investments in soya, livestock, urban real estate, the Banco Económico, the supermarket chain Hipermaxi and the leather industry, is the owner of the national television network Red Uno and maintains business relations with Monasterio y Durán.

Juan Carlos Durán owns the newspaper *El Mundo* of Santa Cruz, the television network Megavisión, also in Santa Cruz, and maintains relations with the two previously mentioned groups.

The Grupo Asbún belongs to Ernesto Tito Asbún, a well-known businessman and a fugitive from justice, who was principal shareholder with Lloyd Aéreo Boliviano, with investments in the brewery Taquiña and in companies in the packaging sector; he is also owner of the Bolivisión television network and has shareholder participation in the daily paper *Opinión* in Cochabamba, as well as majority shareholdings in Cooperativa Boliviana del Cemento and in Illimani Comunicaciones.

With regard to the denominational media, these belong in their majority to the Catholic Church and historically have played a very important role in the country in spite of their gradual loss of prestige in the past years during which media outlets linked to evangelical groups and other religions have begun to appear, especially in the more rural areas.

The Catholic Church became the owner of 17 communications organizations, with seven regular publications, 42 radio stations, 10 television channels, two companies for radio productions and 10 for video productions, two news agencies, seven bookstores, three training centres, a movie theatre, a printing press and a publishing company. The Conferencia Episcopal, for example, was the owner of the most influential newspaper in Bolivia for 30 years, *Presencia*, which disappeared five years ago. Is also remembered for the publication of the *Diario del Ché*.

Today the Catholic Church is still the entity that owns the greatest number of media outlets in Bolivia. However, these are media that do not share a common editorial policy²⁸.

The union-owned media were heavily hit by the process of privatization, by the decline of mining as a strategic sector and by the relocation of the workers from the mining and manufacturing centres. Mining radio stations that had been linked to alternative communication throughout the world were left without oxygen when they lost the social structure that supported them, as the Bolivian writer and film maker Alfonso Gumucio explains²⁹.

28 Source: Lupe Cajías, referring to the year 1999, cited in Contreras Baspineiro, Adalid. "De enteros y medios de comunicación: tendencias en la oferta y el consumo mediático en Bolivia". CEDLA, La Paz, August 2005. Electronic version at <http://www.cedla.org>. Also interview by the authors with Lupe Cajías, La Paz, October 4, 2006.

29 Gumucio, Alfonso. In Herrera, Karina, "¿Del grito pionero... al silencio, Las radios sindicales mineras en la Bolivia de hoy". FES/ILDIS/Centro de Competencias en Comunicación par América Latina. La Paz, 2006.

Community-owned media, especially radio stations of this type in rural and indigenous areas, have not lost their dynamism, led by the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (Amarc). There are radio and television stations in mid-sized cities, which operate as municipal media, and the Asociación de Municipios (Municipal Association) has reached almost all localities of the country with an information network. Media outlets connected to non-governmental organizations have begun to appear, reflecting the vitality of the social movements, university television channels have a low profile, and the military media have an institutional character that allow them commercial developments³⁰.

The three largest state media outlets are Radio Patria Nueva –the former Radio Illimani–, Canal 7 and the Agencia Boliviana de Información (ABI). The current communications policy of the Evo Morales government is a fundamental part of what he calls a democratic and cultural revolution. Thus, the government has proposed the need for the state media to become participants in social movements, for strengthening the current media and for developing new ones to further the advancement of the social, political and economic reforms embarked upon³¹.

The initiative that furthers these policies is the new network of community radio broadcasters, a project known as Radios de los Pueblos Originarios de Bolivia. This system, that will link 30 radio stations with mainly educational mandates in different parts of the country, and that is supported by the Venezuelan government, was introduced by Morales on August 6, 2006. This plan has generated an important debate among the political and business sectors who question the fact that these radio stations may become instruments for propaganda and indoctrination, and also among the leaders of the community radio broadcasting movement, who feel that the achievements reached during their 20 years of work may be compromised.

A new television channel will join this network of community broadcasters, with support from Latin American, Asian and European countries, as the government has stated; one which will help, in the words of President Evo Morales, to stand up to the attacks that the media make against his government: "Do only the businessmen have the right to television? We, the Aymara and Quechua brothers, have the right to radio and television, friends, and there too we will tell the truth before the world"³².

In spite of the fact that throughout the recent democratic history of Bolivia, the state media have always been used in support of the government party, several analysts have observed that currently a very evident political usage can be noted, even though people working for the media outlets may have the intention of responding to public rather than to government interests³³.

In sum, the reality of the Bolivian media, as expressed by journalist and researcher Rafael Archondo, is that "in spite of the presence of the private media as the central core of media activity, it is sufficiently varied and complex as to give moderately vigorous support to the different socio-cultural identities that coexist in the country."³⁴

It is worth noting that in Bolivia there are no exhaustive and up to date studies about the configuration of the media sector; nor do the entities officially in charge of the area, such as the Superintendencia de Telecomunicaciones (Sittel) – that centralizes information about legally registered media–, and the Unidad de Comunicación (Unicom) have any such information.

30 Data obtained from Contreras Baspineiro, Adalid. "De enteros y medios de comunicación: tendencias en la oferta y el consumo mediático en Bolivia". CEDLA, La Paz, August 2005. Electronic version at <http://www.cedla.org>

31 Interview by the authors with Gastón Núñez, Director Nacional Ejecutivo, Dirección Nacional de Comunicación Social. La Paz, October 4, 2006.

32 Words of Evo Morales. La Razón, May 6, 2006.

33 Interview by the authors with analysts with the media sector during the mission. La Paz, September 30, 2006.

34 Archondo, Rafael. "Una aproximación al poder mediático desde sus prácticas. Ética, cobertura y refundación nacional". En "Medios, poder y democracia en Bolivia". Programa de Apoyo a la Ciudadanía Efectiva y la Representación. SUNY-Bolivia. La Paz, 2006.

4.1 The Press

According to data from 2003, in Bolivia there are 20 daily papers, 4 evening papers and 27 weekly, biweekly or monthly newspapers. Therefore, there are 51 newspapers in circulation, of which 24 are in La Paz, eight in Santa Cruz, five in Cochabamba, five in Tarija, three in Chiquisaca, three in Potosí and one in each of the cities of Oruro, Beni and Pando. More than half of the newspaper circulation in the country is concentrated in La Paz and Santa Cruz³⁵.

The print run of a newspaper in Bolivia does not exceed 35,000 copies, its distribution is limited almost exclusively to the region where it is edited and it reaches mainly the upper and middle classes. In fact, the main Bolivian newspapers are local, with a small presence in other cities of the country. The tendency in recent years has been towards the regionalization of the markets. This was the case in Santa Cruz, where up to a decade ago all the important information came from La Paz, the seat of government, and the media neglected local events. This situation changed in the nineties, when local news became more relevant and new needs of the readers appeared. The response to this challenge by Bolivian newspapers has been the formation of strategic connections among papers from different cities of the country for the purpose of achieving a necessary national coverage³⁶.

In actual fact the main Bolivian newspapers are local with a small presence in other cities of the country. The newspaper *El Deber* is very influential in the whole of the eastern region, that is, Beni, Pando, and Santa Cruz. It is a newspaper of conservative affiliation but is noted for its professionalism, meticulousness and variety. Its counterpart in La Paz, since both form part of Grupo Lider, is the daily *La Prensa*, which is embarked on an interesting process intended to reinforce proactive and constructive professional journalism. In turn, *La Razón*, of the Spanish Grupo Prisa, based in La Paz, is considered to be the newspaper with the biggest influence in Bolivia, whose commitment to quality journalism, democracy, liberty and peace is recognized by Bolivian media analysts. Its associated newspaper in Santa Cruz is *El Nuevo Día*.

That there is no strong national newspaper does not seem to be a question of credibility but rather a response to the reconfiguration of the public, to increasing regional needs, to the size of the Bolivian media market and to the low literacy rate of the population. In spite of the latter, the press is still a basic source of information and opinion, with a strongly-rooted tradition of emphasis on topics of a regional nature.

As well as the daily newspapers there are many weekly, biweekly and monthly newspapers of diverse types that have sprouted in the country in the past decade and that represent an alternative to a journalism which is attached to the traditional agendas of information, and which is very much determined by daily events; as they open a few lines for investigative journalism, establish their own agendas, and strengthen a journalism of opinion and debate. Publications that stand out are *La Época*, *Pulso* and *El juguete rabioso*.

4.2 Radio

In terms of the medium of radio, the most recent data make reference to the existence of 805 radio stations. Of these, 160 broadcast in AM (82 in the capitals and 78 in provinces), 614 in FM (307 in the capitals and 307 in the provinces) and 31 operate in short wave (17 in capitals and 14 in provinces). The city with the largest number of radio stations is La Paz (193), followed

³⁵ Data base developed by Édgar Ramos Andrade in 2003: *Medios de comunicación por municipio. Directorio nacional (La Paz, Bolivia: Red Guía Municipal de Bolivia, Asociación de Concejalas de Bolivia, PADER-CO-SUDE)*. Cited by Adalid Contreras Baspineiro in "De enteros y medios de comunicación: tendencias en la oferta y el consumo mediático en Bolivia". CEDLA, La Paz, August 2005. Electronic version at <http://www.cedla.org>

³⁶ Interview by the authors with Juan Carlos Rivero, deputy editor of *El Deber*. Santa Cruz, October 2, 2006.

by Santa Cruz (152), Cochabamba (119), Tarija (68) and Oruro (66). Fifteen percent of the stations have national reach, 22% have departmental reach, and 54% local reach³⁷.

Radio is the most popular medium in Bolivia; it has a long tradition among its inhabitants and has been widely used by communities in local and regional spheres. A large number of the broadcasters are local or community radio stations that broadcast in FM, many of them linked to the Catholic and Evangelical Churches or to local political leaders who see them as instruments of power. In accordance with the ethnic diversity of the country and its pre-Hispanic legacy, there is programming in native languages, especially in Aymara and Quechua, although there is also some in Guaraní.

The state owned Radio Patria is one of the stations with the widest geographic coverage, although not the one with the greatest influence, as it has been always considered to be the mouthpiece of the government of the time. Among the private radio broadcasters the Erbol, Panamericana and Fides networks stand out. The first is a group of 72 stations located throughout the whole country, several of them connected to the Catholic Church, to which are linked almost a hundred regional stations whose programming focuses on news and educational programs. Many of these stations are connected to sympathizers of the government of Evo Morales. The Erbol network also has a news agency that distributes information to other media. For its part, Panamericana is a station which currently enjoys a large audience. It is owned by the businessman Miguel Dueri. Finally, Fides, owned by the Compañía de Jesús and one of the oldest networks in the country, nowadays takes a conservative stance but played a progressive role during the military dictatorships. It also played an important role in educational radio in the decade of the seventies of the last century. Its principal radio host is the Spanish Jesuit priest Eduardo Pérez, whose morning show "La Hora del País" is heard in a large part of the country³⁸. In the case of radio, the private business model strongly rooted in television has not been able to make inroads. As essentially a cultural and educational media, radio is considered more for its role in disseminating information rather than as a business, perhaps because of its low commercial profitability since it only captures 7% of the total Bolivian advertising pie.

In spite of the loss of prestige of the mining broadcasters as previously mentioned, the radio continues to be an important medium in Bolivia and therefore it is necessary to highlight the role it plays. The 1980s are also significant for the expansion of community and municipal stations, which gained strength with the 1994 Law of Popular Participation, which had a positive impact on the phenomenon because popular participation stimulated the appearance of new radio broadcasters.

The previous spectrum has many facets: municipal radios, radio stations operated by grassroots organizations and by rural farmers and radio stations linked to non-governmental organizations or to projects supported by the Catholic Church. It is a very heterogeneous phenomenon that suffers from great financial difficulties and from a lack of definitions of a legal nature³⁹. But as popular culture in Bolivia is oral in nature, radio continues to be a good fit, hence the demand from many radio listeners that these stations should be strengthened, not necessarily following the government line but rather one of democratic plurality⁴⁰.

37 Source: data base of Édgar Ramos Andrade, developed in 2003: *Medios de comunicación por municipio*. Directorio nacional (La Paz, Bolivia: Red Guía Municipal de Bolivia, Asociación de Concejalas de Bolivia, PADER-CO-SUDE). Cited by Adalid Contreras Baspineiro in "De enteros y medios de comunicación: tendencias en la oferta y el consumo mediático en Bolivia". CEDLA, La Paz, August 2005. Electronic version at <http://www.cedla.org>

38 Source: preparatory document for the mission, drawn up by Andrés Martínez, an independent Bolivian journalist.

39 In order to understand the legal framework of community radio stations in Bolivia the following document may be consulted: "El trayecto alternativo de la radiodifusión comunitaria en Bolivia", by José Luis Aguirre. At <http://legislaciones.amarc.org/06-06-20-BoliviaTrayectoAlternativo.htm>

40 Position declared by José Luis Aguirre, director of the Servicio de Capacitación en Radio y Televisión para el Desarrollo (Secrad) and representative of the Asociación Mundial de Radios Comunitarias (Amarc) in Bolivia. Interview with the authors, La Paz, October 4, 2006.

4.3 Television

Bolivia has 194 television channels (of which 66 are in the capitals and 128 in the provinces), 236 relay stations (166 in the provinces and 70 in the capitals) that guarantee coverage by the national television networks, and 25 subscription channels (17 in the capitals and 8 in the provinces)⁴¹.

The television model in Bolivia is made up of national networks which are connected to a number of regional and local relay stations. The centralist tendencies that originally marked the production of these networks suffered important changes in the 1990s with the incorporation of regional expressions, especially in news programs. In the context of debates about autonomy, this became a determining factor to the point that in a department like Santa Cruz the production of their own regional news programs has been increased so that they can do without programming from the capital, which is incorporated only in the case of items particularly related to La Paz and to its importance in national political life⁴².

The transformation is so significant that in the opinion of the national news editor of the Unitel network of Santa Cruz there has been a shift of the fields of influence from the printed press to television and of central power from La Paz to Santa Cruz that is manifested, among other ways, by the fact that "70% of the advertising pie stays in television, the strongest networks are not in La Paz, and, even though national measurements of ratings are nonexistent except in the large cities, there is data that demonstrates a penetration of 75% and shows that 91% of the population are informed through this media⁴³".

More than 78.2% of Bolivian homes own at least one television set. 45% of the population is exposed to this medium for more than three hours daily, a percentage that doubles among children less than 15 years of age. With regard to programming, 85% is dedicated to entertainment, while 15% is set aside for programs of an informative, cultural or educational character. Of the programming, 75% has its origins in other countries. In addition, 12.5% of homes subscribe to cable television services⁴⁴.

Although news programs represent 9% of the total programming, their importance is reflected by their scheduling and by the audience levels they reach. These programming spaces are concentrated between 8 and 9 p.m. and reach 37% of the audience.

From an economic perspective, this is the medium that captures the largest advertising budgets. Of the advertising pie, 59% is in television, while the press gets 27%, radio 7%, media in public places 5% and magazines and weeklies 3%⁴⁵.

From an informative perspective, and in terms of influence among television viewers, important roles are played by the ATB national network, belonging to the Spanish Grupo Prisa, whose televised evening news program has a large audience; the Unitel channel owned by Oswaldo Monasterio, a businessman from Santa Cruz connected to the Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario (MNR) party, perhaps the media outlet which offers the most formidable opposition to the government of Evo Morales and is a centre of confrontation in the media debates. Important roles are also played by Red Uno, owned by conservative businessman Ivo Kuljis, and Bolivision, owned by Ernesto Tito Asbún, involved in a court case for his role in the financial management of Lloyd Aereo Boliviano (LAB).

41 Ramos Andrade, Édgar. "Medios de comunicación por municipio. Directorio nacional" (La Paz, Bolivia: Red Guía Municipal de Bolivia, Asociación de Concejalas de Bolivia, PADER-COSUDE). 2003, cited by Adalid Contreras Baspineiro in "De enteros y medios de comunicación: tendencias en la oferta y el consumo mediático en Bolivia". CEDLA, La Paz, August 2005. Electronic version at <http://www.cedla.org>

42 Source: Contreras Baspineiro, Adalid. "De enteros y medios de comunicación: tendencias en la oferta y el consumo mediático en Bolivia". CEDLA, La Paz, August 2005. Electronic version at <http://www.cedla.org>

43 Interview by the authors with José Pomacusi, national news editor, Unitel. Santa Cruz, October 2, 2006.

44 Torrico, Erick. With data from 2004 for the analysis of an interview of the Corte Nacional Electoral for the "Segundo estudio nacional sobre democracia y valores democráticos en Bolivia; eje temático "Comunicación y democracia". Cited by Contreras Baspineiro, Adalid. "De enteros y medios de comunicación: tendencias en la oferta y el consumo mediático en Bolivia". CEDLA, La Paz, August 2005. Electronic version at <http://www.cedla.org>

45 Source: Contreras Baspineiro, Adalid. "De enteros y medios de comunicación: tendencias en la oferta y el consumo mediático en Bolivia". CEDLA, La Paz, August 2005. Electronic version at <http://www.cedla.org>

4.4 News agencies and information portals

According to data from researcher Édgar Ramos, in 2003 there were more than 10 news agencies and 45 journalism portals. Of the first group, the work carried out by the Agencia de Noticias Fides (ANF), Red Erbol, Bolpress and the state-owned Agencia Boliviana de Informacion (ABI) is well recognized.

Of a total Bolivian population of 8.5 million inhabitants, 5.2% have access to the internet according to data from 2006 as compared, for example, to 19.5% in Brazil or 16.4% in Peru. With regard to broadband, the penetration is 0.1% compared to 4.3% in Argentina, the country in the region with the highest index⁴⁶. Approximately 20,085 internet domains had been registered by 2006⁴⁷ and there were 480,000 users according to data from the International Communication Union⁴⁸. Other figures related to the sector from 2005 show the existence of 7.08 telephone lines per 100 inhabitants, as well as 26.54 subscribers to cellular phones per 100 inhabitants and the existence of 67,614 internet subscribers. Data from 2003 show 3.4% of households as having access to the Internet in their own homes and 10% of Bolivian households as having a computer⁴⁹.

It was not possible to identify important developments of the media on the Internet, nor was there any information portal that stood out as having an important impact on public opinion. The few existing information portals as well as the digital versions of the traditional media have more impact outside than inside Bolivia, according to a Bolivian researcher⁵⁰.

4.5 Associations and unions

With regard to associations, there are three types of unions in the communications sector: on the one hand the unions or federations, which include any kind of media worker from journalists to administrators, and the associations in the strict sense, some of which represent journalists only and some which represent the media owners.

Among these stand out the:

- Confederación Sindical de Trabajadores de la Prensa, that groups radio, press and television workers
- The Asociación Nacional de Periodistas de Bolivia, that unionizes journalists from the different media and the regional or local associations of the same type
- The Asociación Nacional de Prensa (ANP) that groups the owners of Bolivian newspapers
- The Asociación Boliviana de Radiodifusoras (Asbora) that includes the owners of legally established radio stations in the country and,
- The Asociación Nacional de Emisoras de Televisión (Anetv), that groups the television station owners.

Asbora and Anetv are two associations that show little activity, according to the perceptions of the people interviewed by the mission.

The Asociación Nacional de Prensa, the strongest union in the country, creates spaces for the discussion of current topics, establishes policies for the printed media, and on occasion has interceded before governments or the church when crisis situations have arisen in the country, and acting as mediator and always urging peace and consensus, according to a newspaper editor⁵¹.

46 Source: "La economía de la información", annual report of UNCTAD, Conferencia de Naciones Unidas para el Comercio y el Desarrollo, 2006. Cited by Agencia Efe, 11/12/06.

47 Source: N-Economía a partir de datos de Internet Systems Consortium. www.n-economia.com/informes_documentos/

48 Data updated in September 2006. Source: <http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats2.htm#south>.

49 Source: Agencia para el Desarrollo de la Información en Bolivia. <http://www.bolnet.bo/indicadores.htm>

50 Interview by the authors with Vania Sandoval, coordinator of the Observatorio Nacional de Medios. Sandoval refers to the difficulties of technological access faced by the majority of the population, and also to the large number of Bolivians emigrating from Bolivia in the past years. La Paz, September 28, 2006.

51 Interview by the authors with Juan Carlos Rivero, deputy editor of El Deber. Santa Cruz, October 2, 2006.

The printed media have a more responsible vision of their informative duty, assure several journalists and analysts interviewed by the mission, hence their interest in debating, reaching agreements and setting union policies⁵².

Since 1992 the Asociación Nacional de Periodistas de Bolivia has coordinated the regional associations and maintains a permanent active participation in professional and union issues in the field of journalism, seeking principally to defend respect for freedom of thought and of the press and the free expression of ideas and opinions. In the current situation it has declared itself to be in a state of emergency calling on the parties in conflict to set aside their violent attitudes and denouncing aggressive acts against workers of the press. The Asociación de Periodistas de La Paz exercises a leadership role nationally and enjoys great prestige in the country.

The Confederación Sindical de Trabajadores de la Prensa finds itself in a process of fortification in which it is seeking to increase its coverage and to gain greater legitimacy and impact in debates associated with matters of interest for media workers. In spite of its limitations, the Confederación is making efforts to increase the professionalism of its affiliates, examining ways of responding to the new type of labour relations that have been established in the media since a growing number of independent workers offer their professional services in different areas of production, and participating in discussions and the definition of proposals, together with other unions, about the incorporation of the rights of information, expression and communication in the deliberations of the Constituent Assembly⁵³.

If it is indeed true that the associations and unions of the sector have lost the prominence they had in the past as valid speakers in the different media debates, among other reasons due to the interference of the political parties, they are starting to make new efforts and to create closer relationships with each other. The situation of the Constituent Assembly and the creation of the Consejo Nacional de Ética have played an important role in this. What is missing, is to close the circle with the owners' unions⁵⁴.

4.6 Universities and the teaching of journalism

In Bolivia 32 academic programmes of social communication are currently offered in different regions of the country by public and private universities and technical institutes. There are 3000 students registered in the programme of communications at the state university Universidad Mayor de San Andrés (UMSA), one of the most important universities in the country, and the total number of students enrolled in social communication in Bolivia is 15,000. "The quality of the majority of the programmes is unfortunately very poor", comments a former dean of one of these faculties⁵⁵.

To that poor quality is added a low priority for content in the teaching of journalism in the curricula. There are few courses in journalism and also, as in many countries in the region, the majority of the journalism professors have never worked in the profession. This explains the generalized demand for greater evaluation and training of the professors themselves, and the insistence on the creation of specific lines in journalism⁵⁶.

52 Interview by the authors during the mission. September and October 2006.

53 Interview by the authors with Remberto Cárdenas, president of the Confederación de Trabajadores de la Prensa. La Paz, September 29, 2006

54 Interview by the authors with Sandra Aliaga, vice-president of the Asociación Nacional de Periodistas de Bolivia. La Paz, October 4, 2006.

55 Interview by the authors with Ronald Grebe, researcher at the Instituto Prisma and former dean of the Facultad de Comunicación Social de la Universidad Católica. La Paz, September 30, 2006.

56 This latest project involves ABOCCS, an association composed of the Programmes of Communication of the: Universidad Privada de Santa Cruz (UPSA), Universidad Católica Boliviana "San Pablo" (UCB), regionales de La Paz, Cochabamba, Tarija y Santa Cruz (DI-KONÍA), Universidad Evangélica Boliviana (UEB), Universidad Andina Simón Bolívar (UASB), Universidad Técnica de Oruro (UTO), Universidad Privada Domingo Savio (UPDS), Universidad NUR (NUR), Universidad Mayor de San Simón (UMSS), Universidad Autónoma Gabriel René Moreno (UAGRM) y Universidad Cumbre, and the Observatorio Nacional de Medios. Interview by the authors with Erick Torrico, researcher and director of the Observatorio Nacional de Medios. La Paz, October 3, 2006.

4.7 Organizations related to the media sector

The recently created Observatorio Nacional de Medios (Onadem) is an initiative of civil society which purpose is to contribute to the improvement of the quality of journalism by means of study and monitoring the work of the media. It is part of the Fundación Unir, led by Ana María Romero, former Parliamentary Ombudswoman and a well-respected figure in Bolivia. The Fundación Unir focuses on the construction of a democratic, inclusive and deliberative culture that allows the transformation of periods of conflict to others of reconciliation between society and the state and among actors of society itself.

In association with 13 Faculties of Social Communication in the country, Onadem monitors press coverage of certain topics and current events, among which are the issues of the Constituent Assembly; the nationalization of hydrocarbons; land, territories and autonomies; the regions and coca. The Observatorio also carries out the monitoring of freedom of expression and the right to information. The efforts of the Fundación Unir in the area of information are complemented by the development of a Banco Temático, that attempts to contribute with tools and materials so that journalists can improve the quality of their work by giving context and depth to strategic topics for Bolivian society, as well as with data bases for specialists, as a large part of the Bolivian media does not have libraries or documentation centres, or if they do have they do not offer material with the necessary quality, pertinence, accuracy and timeliness. The Fondo Concursable de Periodismo de Investigación has also been created, since it has been shown that one of the difficulties in carrying out investigative journalism is the lack of resources or the institutional willingness of the editors to support their journalists. The case of investigative journalism draws attention as in Bolivia, according to the coordinator of the Observatorio, there are very few journalists working permanently in this area⁵⁷.

FES/ILDIS, the Bolivian representative of Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, has contributed for two decades in the area of communications and journalism from the perspectives of research, training, and technical consultancy, emphasizing the relationship between communication and politics, and communication in crisis situations⁵⁸. For their part, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, with over 35 years experience working in Bolivia, develops training procedures for political participation, that focus on the strengthening of civil society organizations and of emerging political leaders in their relation with the media.

There also exists an Asociación Boliviana de Investigadores de Comunicación (Aboic) and a recently formed Consejo Nacional de Ética, promoted by journalists, unions, academics, and sectors of civil society.

57 Interviews by the authors with Vania Sandoval, coordinator of the Observatorio Nacional de Medios, La Paz, September 28, 2006; and Gabriela Ugarte, in charge of Comunicación Fundación Unir, La Paz, September 29, 2006.

58 FES/ILDIS works in five areas in the field of communication: 1. Strategies of communication and communication planning for political procedures. 2. Communication and social responsibility, creating spaces for reflection among journalists and between journalists and civil society, as the media are being converted into actors for pressure in the conflict rather than mediators. 3. In practice, productions like the multimedia CD "Comunicación y política" and work in the press, radio, television and video on topics such as decentralization, autonomy, the Constituent Assembly. 4. Strengthening of the public media. 5. Training.

5 Assessment of the media sector

5.1 The media and the conflict in Bolivia

The media play a key role in the definition of the public agenda and today in Bolivia their political role is a major one, in accordance with their historical tradition, but in an atmosphere of crucial definitions for the configuration of the country.

There is already talk of a media war in which discourse and the different political and ideological positions are battling on the field of the media. Some of these attempt to give balanced coverage of the political scene, while others – in particular some television channels – assume positions which are associated with particular currents and structure the news from a perspective which reflects specific political and economic interests, to the point of deliberate distortion.

Evo Morales' criticism that the media are his number one enemy is understandable to a certain point, given that some elements of the media are pursuing him mercilessly, "but it is not suitable for the President to make generalizations that affect all the media", states the managing editor of a Bolivian newspaper⁵⁹.

For a large number of the people consulted by the mission, the media are putting "gasoline on the fire" through intentionally unbalanced coverage with evident distortions in the interpretation of events. For Raúl Peñaranda, former editor of the weekly *La Época* and a well-known analyst of the media sector, "the media find themselves in a phase of excesses in a context which is hugely unregulated in terms of the exercise of journalism"⁶⁰.

It may well be that the situation will worsen, as the government is continuing its declarations against the media, and a good number of them are not modifying their clearly confrontational stance against the Morales government. In the current Bolivian climate, it is unarguable that this will have negative consequences for the work of journalists.

"Bolivia is a country in construction, which requires great responsibility on the part of the media; not only in the correct transmission of content, but also in carrying out a journalism of possibilities. Fifteen years ago in Bolivia we had a journalism of criticism and attack, as a result of the period of dictatorships. Journalism had to fight in the trenches to work towards the recovery of democracy in this country. Once it was able to help to push the situation towards democracy a strange thing happened: now it cannot seem to find its way. In general, in the media we are unable to realize that our contribution in a country under construction is very important and, with honourable exceptions, we are providing a journalism without substance", reflects Amparo Canedo, editor of the newspaper *La Prensa*⁶¹.

"When society is very divided and in confrontation, serenity is lost", states the controversial José Pomacusi⁶². "Fear is produced in the people, when the idea should be not to alarm; the polarization of the media is now a reality in Santa Cruz", comments Juan Carlos Marañón, of ATB⁶³.

59 Interview by the authors with Tuffi Aré, managing editor of *El Deber*. Santa Cruz, October 1, 2006.

60 Interview by the authors with Raúl Peñaranda. La Paz, September 29, 2006.

61 Interview by the authors with Amparo Canedo, editor, *La Prensa*. La Paz, October 3, 2006.

62 Interview by the authors with José Pomacusi, national news editor, *Unitel*. Santa Cruz, October 2, 2006.

63 Interview by the authors with Juan Carlos Marañón, national news editors, *ATB*. Santa Cruz, October 2, 2006.

There is also a generalized perception that the media have lost credibility. Some opinion polls and exploratory studies show this tendency, on several occasions members of civil society have attacked journalists and media workers in demonstrations and it is frequent to hear criticisms of their work when the microphones of different radio broadcasters are opened to the public. As well, a very pertinent publication, *Antimanual del periodista boliviano*, the product of a seminar sponsored by FES/ILDIS, collects solid arguments and harsh criticism from different sectors of society regarding the work of the media; it illustrates the panorama well and shows that the issue is critical and deserves attention⁶⁴.

That the media should lose credibility when they had begun to occupy the space of the political class in deliberations about the course of events in the country is significant.

José Antonio Quiroga, executive director of Plural Editores, provides some background information which helps to explain the situation: "Most of the media in Bolivia are in the hands of private corporations, principally the press and television, while most radio broadcasters belong to networks of the Catholic or Evangelical churches. Relations between these media and the political sector were quite cordial during the first government of Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada (1993-97), very tolerant with those of Bánzer and Quiroga (1997-2002) and since the state crisis began in Bolivia, putting pressure on all social actors, there has been an alignment of the media. They take a much more critical position regarding political power and corruption, and contribute in their way to the discrediting of the party system, until they are converted into one more political actor, thus affecting the generation of political instability in a very special way. It alters the conditions of governability and there is an entrenchment"⁶⁵.

Many of those who spoke with the mission reiterated that the most extreme degree of polarization has been reached. Some of the media are in open opposition to the government of Evo Morales and very favourable to all the options of the opposition who confront him; there are also other media outlets which are impartial, and networks which favour the government. What is being analysed is that this militant alignment is produced by an ideological disagreement with the general orientation of the current government but also because of the way in which it has responded to accusations and comments of the media.

There are many examples which are used as references by analysts when this topic is debated. One of these is the speech given by the president in an indigenous forum in Guatemala⁶⁶ in which, in spite of the inappropriate nature of the situation, he attacked Unitel and the media which are making his life impossible, he accused them of being racist, of being linked to the large landowners who are opposed to the new land policy and of aligning themselves with the transnationals in order to prevent the nationalization of hydrocarbons. All this has produced in these media and in those who feel potentially threatened by association, a hypercritical attitude with respect to the Morales government.

It is true that the government presents opportunities for the press to treat him in a critical way. Because of his political style, Evo Morales frequently makes provocative statements.

The situation in Bolivia is one in which the reality is that some media outlets have become central actors in a process of state crisis which has not been resolved. The conflict has begun to spread to numerous areas and the media are taking sides and distancing themselves from objective and impartial positions⁶⁷.

64 Different authorss. "Antimanual del periodista boliviano". FES/ILDIS. La Paz, 2004.

65 Interview by the authors with José Antonio Quiroga, executive director of Plural Editores. La Paz, October 3, 2006.

66 VII Asamblea del Foro Indígena Latinoamericano. Guatemala, September 2006.

67 Interview by the authors with Cecilia Quiroga, consultant for Friedrich Ebert Stiftung/ILDIS. La Paz, September 30, 2006.

The media are being used to “add fuel to the fire” and to increase polarization and confrontation among different sectors. Responsibility for the current situation of tension is shared. The government acts in an irresponsible way when it states, for example, that in Pando paramilitary groups are organizing, and the media do the same when they hurl accusations against the government without proof, when they abandon topics and do not retract statements when they are required to do so. This increases the differences and makes the creation of possibilities for dialogue and understanding more difficult. Both the private and the public media need a good dose of responsibility in this matter.

As several contributors to the mission commented, what should be analysed, apart from topics strictly related to the media, is the political climate, as the state crisis has not been resolved. Some feel that in attempting to resolve it, the government has presented an option which implies the destruction of the adversary, which would result in confrontation. This is the scene in which the media play a fundamental role in stirring up the conflict, in order to aggravate it, or in offering a calmer or more moderate perspective of the conflicting parties.

An interpretation by Amparo Canedo, editor of *La Prensa*, is relevant: “The problem we have with the President is to know how to translate another world view. One of the problems with journalism in this country is that it is an urban journalism, other than that practiced by some community radio broadcasters. The country and the city use different codes. That is the great challenge”⁶⁸.

The situation directly affects the journalist. “Faced with the lack of alternative spaces for reflection, debate and self-criticism, he or she is trapped between the discourses of the government and of the opposition, in a climate of strong opinion, and must respond to an agenda which is imposed from above and from which it is difficult to break away, a fact that requires great efforts on the part of the reporter”, explains the independent journalist Andrés Martínez⁶⁹.

“What is important is for the government to look after the civic capital it has; I am afraid of confrontation because of Bolivia's history”, said a highly-respected journalist who asked not to be identified.

5.2 Weaknesses in the quality of journalism

In view of the force and the speed with which events are happening in Bolivia, a tendency can be noted for the position of the media to be one of reaction rather than of journalistic control of the situation, leading them to provide news coverage which reveals errors in quality, depth, accuracy, context and analysis.

Much of the weight of the topical agenda is placed on matters of a political nature, something which has been a tradition in Bolivian journalism. Nevertheless, the current situation reinforces this tendency, resulting in an imbalance in the diversity of topics which are covered and a weakness in the capacity of the media to propose their own agenda and to offer their public a wider look at what is happening in Bolivian society.

“We of the media in Bolivia are extremely pessimistic, we are not seeking what may be possible for the country; we work day by day, very rooted in

68 Interview by the authors with Amparo Canedo, editor *La Prensa*. La Paz, October 3, 2006.

69 Conversation with the authors. La Paz, September 28, 2006.

the political agenda. Although some of us have our own agendas we are also captives of the current reality and the situation in which we find ourselves", reflects Grover Yapura, managing editor of the daily paper *La Razón*⁷⁰.

For Tuffi Aré, managing editor of *El Deber*, "the tendency is to amplify and enlarge, in the midst of many preconceptions. The situation gets broken up into the positions of the different participants who make the news in the country. It is necessary to know how to consider the relevance of and to deal responsibly with the topics. It is undeniable that we are faced with a refusal to recognize what is in reality a conflict situation. Journalists lack the background knowledge to analyse and assess. Also, on occasion and in some media outlets, there have been instances in which factors which have nothing to do with journalism affect the assessment of information, with arguments like 'if I make them argue I sell more' or 'my boss wants the government to fall', with the additional difficulty that there are very few open forums for reflecting upon this reality"⁷¹.

These journalistic weaknesses are demonstrated on a daily basis when it is difficult for journalists to know how to question the people they interview, whatever the source may be, to confront them or to demand backup for what they say in their statements. "What is happening now in Bolivia is that everyone talks about everything and the journalist only transmits what he or she is hearing", observes an employee of an international organization⁷².

Insofar as the media affect the political crisis and the evolution of the conflicts, important improvements in the quality of information and specific skills on the part of journalists are needed in order to understand the reasons for the conflicts, their influence and their possible solutions. These are needs expressed by many integrants of the media sector in Bolivia, and by leaders of civil society and members of the academic community. This explains the existence of recent projects such as the previously mentioned Observatorio Nacional de Medios. The media are also a contributing factor in the exacerbation of the conflicts, something which is evident in Bolivia today, and it is important that they feel that someone is watching them and that they are encouraged to reflect on their role in the confrontation⁷³.

In spite of the fact that a more responsible management of the task of providing information can be seen in the print media, there are deficiencies in the case of radio and especially of television which it is urgently necessary to study. At the beginning of November, 2006, the Observatorio Nacional de Medios revealed the principal results of three reports related to how news reports and editorials handled the nationalization of hydrocarbons, land policies and the constituent process in 16 Bolivian newspapers, studied in the period between May and August of 2006. The Observatorio found that the media more frequently circulated negative messages about the nationalization of hydrocarbons, concentrated the information in the use of a single source, and that editorial pages showed a tendency to generate a lack of confidence in the viability of the measure, hinting at a feeling of shock and uncertainty. In general and as a tendency, the study revealed that in news coverage sources of information that may hold positions of some balance or be more reasonable are omitted, that confrontation is encouraged, that superficiality and fragmentation exist, and that there is no continuity, so that information is scattered as are the possibilities for understanding on the part of the populace⁷⁴.

According to the perception of the majority of sources consulted by the mission, this description of the coverage of the topic of hydrocarbons can be extrapolated to other topics, which means that the public is in a very

70 Interview by the authors with Grover Yapura, managing editor of the newspaper *La Razón*. La Paz, September 29, 2006.

71 Interview by the authors with Tuffi Aré, managing editor of the paper *El Deber*. Santa Cruz, October 1, de 2006.

72 Interview by the authors with Robert Brockmann, national information officer, Centro de Información de las Naciones Unidas en La Paz. La Paz, October 3, 2006.

73 Interview by the authors with Ana María Romero, director of the Fundación Unir, former Parliamentary Ombudswoman and former ombudswoman of the newspaper *Presencia*. La Paz, September 29, 2006. In the interview she explains that the Observatorio Nacional de Medios was created with the idea of providing elements to help in the improvement of the quality of journalism, so that there can be self-regulation and criticism based in rigorous studies, with a pedagogical focus and with elements that encourage reflection.

74 Source: Bolpress. <http://www.bolpress.com/sociedad.php?Cod=200611073>, from an interview with Erick Torrico, director of the Observatorio Nacional de Medios.

vulnerable situation in terms of having access to serious, balanced and weighty treatment of information about topics of great sensitivity for Bolivian democracy.

Finally, what is at stake is the quality of the information that Bolivian society is receiving. The case of the Constituent Assembly is a significant example of this. Amparo Canedo, editor of the daily *La Prensa*, comments that she found it paradoxical to see so great an imbalance existing at the beginning of 2006 on the topic of the Assembly between what wide sectors of society know and had analysed with respect to the multiple topics that would begin to be debated and what was known or analysed about the same topics within the media themselves⁷⁵.

The case of television channels deserves special care and study, insofar as several of its newscasts and information programmes have become central players in maintaining the tensions. "Television is still very rooted in sensationalism; instead of seeking dialogue it seeks confrontation which it does not contextualize", remarks Juan Carlos Rivero, deputy editor of the paper *El Deber* of Santa Cruz⁷⁶. But this is not a problem exclusive to television, as he himself considers that the press, on occasion, contribute to a magnification of topics which are unfounded, giving rise to the urgent need to assess information with greater judgement⁷⁷.

On the other hand, journalistic training suffers from the same difficulties in Bolivia as it does in the other countries of Latin America, where the Faculties of Communication emphasize a profile of communicators which is closer to that of organizational communication, public relations and communication for development. Journalistic training is reduced to a few courses and some emphasis at the end of the course of study. Thus, the graduate emerges into the job market with large gaps in his or her journalistic training. This affects the quality of his or her future work in the media. "Few journalists bother to train themselves, and if you do not evaluate yourself you are a danger to society", warns Andrés Gómez, journalist and lawyer, and national coordinator of the radio network *Érbol*⁷⁸.

There is a series of additional factors that affect the quality of journalism and which have been analysed by those who study the topic in Bolivia, such as the average age of journalists, as more than two thirds of those who work in the field are under the age of 35, a variable which is also related to low salaries and long and exhausting days of an average of 12 hours of work a day. There are troubling signs like the fact that almost half of Bolivian journalists have stated that they have written about or worked on topics they did not fully understand at some time or that 69.3% said that they had made mistakes in carrying out their duty as informants⁷⁹.

5.3 Deficiencies in the ethics of journalism

"The press can be incredibly bold on occasion and this affects us as concerned citizens", Ana María Romero told the mission⁸⁰.

A large number of the people interviewed concur with her opinion, commenting on inappropriate behaviour on the part of some journalists and media outlets. There is a trend towards the sensationalistic treatment of information and the manipulation or editing of statements which do not conform to the reality of events in order to obtain favourable ratings or to benefit certain political or economic groups. There is also a growing tendency

75 Interview by the authors with Amparo Canedo, editor of the paper *La Prensa*. La Paz, October 3, 2006.

76 Interview by the authors with Juan Carlos Rivero, deputy editor of *El Deber*. Santa Cruz, October 2, 2006.

77 Interview by the authors with Juan Carlos Rivero, deputy editor of *El Deber*. Santa Cruz, October 2, 2006. Rivero adds that "*El Deber*" is trying to work more professionally, to seek consensus, to be impartial, "in this difficult situation we are going through because we know that at the margin of the search for the common good there are also private interests and we have to treat this very carefully. We have to handle the information coming from all groups, from the government, the civic committees, the prefectures, with much attention. It is undeniable that there are interests behind the discourses".

78 Participant in a roundtable organized by the authors. La Paz, September 28, 2006.

79 Peñaranda Undurraga, Raúl. "Retrato del periodista boliviano". Ceben. La Paz, 2002.

80 Interview by the authors with Ana María Romero, director of the Fundación Unir and former Parliamentary Ombudswoman, La Paz, September 29, 2006.

to mix opinion and information thereby presenting perspectives which alter the truth of the events.

"In Bolivia there is freedom of the press and there are no restrictive mechanisms", states Waldo Albarracín, parliamentary ombudsman. However, he feels that it is necessary for there to be objective agencies for the control of both public and private media and that excesses should be pointed out, as "some elements of the media are utilized for private interests, it benefits them that there is conflict, they distance themselves from ethical goals and do not conform to the guidelines of an impartial press"⁸¹.

Lupe Cajías, director of Movida Ciudadana Anticorrupción, observes that some media outlets believe that the people want news about morbid subjects, a tendency that has become stronger in television newscasts which rather than informing try to provoke emotion without verifying the accuracy of the information and without requiring of themselves an appropriate journalistic treatment. "This is snowballing. It is hard to find seriousness and the darker side of the situation can be found on television"⁸².

The worst offender in this respect is the national network Unitel of Santa Cruz, whose positions have been branded as "a media conspiracy with a very sensationalistic style which unfortunately generates a large audience"⁸³. The media are regulated and at the same time protected by the Printing Law of 1925. Anyone who feels that he or she has been affected by the work of the media finds mechanisms in this Law for the investigation and eventual sanctioning of the media or of journalists. Nevertheless, history has shown that it is extremely difficult to carry out the procedures determined by the Law. As several people commented to the mission, this has meant that the media have unlimited freedom and have abused this freedom. The case mentioned most frequently is that of the network Unitel which, they say, shows a marked lack of respect for citizens and has shown many examples of unethical behaviour. When the journalistic community has protested this behaviour, the channel evoked the impossibility of restricting freedom. Journalists stress that this affects the media themselves, as although they are still one of the most respected sectors in Bolivia, a certain loss of credibility and confidence in them can be seen.

The national news editor of Unitel, José Pomacusi, defends what some classify as behaviour that does not conform to journalistic responsibility and discipline as a media style or profile. "This is a hard-hitting channel that tackles things face on. We have had problems with all of the governments; they have always accused us of favouring the opposition. The current government has made a point of saying that Unitel is its enemy, but the more the president attacks us the more the people watch us"⁸⁴.

Some of the results of the research of Raúl Peñaranda are significant: 53.2% of Bolivian journalists claim that in the medium in which they work questions of ethics are rarely or never discussed. It is considered to be necessary and important that there be rigorous moral and legal sanctions for violations of the ethical code. However, this feeling does not conform to the reality of the applicability of the Printing Law, in a union in which 45.8% of the members claim that they have written or commented on topics without being familiar with them, in which a third of journalists believe that the medium in which they work does not offer its readers balanced information and in which 53.7% of informants state that they have received at some time an offer of a bribe⁸⁵.

81 Interview by the authors with Waldo Albarracín, Parliamentary Ombudsman. La Paz, September 28, 2006.

82 Interview by the authors with Lupe Cajías, director of Movida Ciudadana Anticorrupción. La Paz, October 4, 2006.

83 Comment by Carlos Soria in an interview with the authors, director of the Programa de Apoyo a la Democracia Municipal, Padem. La Paz, September 8, 2006.

84 Interview by the authors with José Pomacusi, national news editor, Unitel. Santa Cruz, October 2, 2006.

85 Data on the prevalence of bribes are as follow: political leaders (43.3%), government authorities (29.1%), business people (15%), union directors (4.7%) and others (7.9%). Peñaranda Undurraga, Raúl. "Retrato del periodista boliviano". Ceben. La Paz, 2002.

Without doubt "a greater application of ethics in journalism is needed", observes the managing editor of a Bolivian newspaper⁸⁶. This also gives rise to demands from different sectors for establishing processes of training and on-the-job training which will contribute to the strengthening of the essential principles of journalism.

5.4 The influence of political and financial interests which affect the independence of the media

The return to democracy in Bolivia two decades ago also meant a flowering of the media sector. Within the ample spectrum comprising community radio and television, newspapers, private radio and television networks, it is possible to identify a significant group which is developing under the protection of certain political parties or the ownership of business groups as has been discussed in a previous section.

There is a strong tendency to use some of these media to champion political positions or to gain economic benefits, which affects journalistic independence. This has led the media to take sides in the conflict, on occasion "entrenching themselves" and taking a position which they have no business doing. For their part, the state media are being taken by the current government to an extreme which distances them from being a true public service. Although they were traditionally used for government purposes, with the discourse of institutionalism and independence, there has been a switch to an explicit identification with the government and a commitment to the changes it promotes.

"In order to understand this phenomenon it is necessary to keep in mind the origins of the different media. The private ones have business and political roots and this affects the journalism they practice. This goes as far as not covering events or situations because of political or business affiliations", explains journalist and lawyer Andrés Gómez of the *Érbol* network⁸⁷. For some analysts the polarization and the utilization of the media for non-journalistic purposes is so serious that, in spite of the opposition and the aid that is given with nuances, there are also situations that determine that "in order to enter a medium it is necessary to be in line with its position; and this leads to self-censorship. This is a situation which has worsened over the past three years"⁸⁸.

However, other journalists like Grover Yapura of *La Razón* feel that "each medium acts in accordance with its editorial line, which should be clear to citizens. The main thing is to work with enormous responsibility on seeing what is happening and not to get involved with the situation"⁸⁹.

The complexity of the situation in Bolivia is the central role of the media, and this central role is not given for informative work based on the essential principles of journalism but rather on carrying it out in a way that is strongly influenced by political and economic structures and by ideological beliefs. Under these circumstances it is not only society which is negatively affected but also the media themselves with respect to what should be one of its guiding principles: credibility.

"The media set themselves up as a platform of power in order to achieve more power. They have moved further away from civil society. Media like television help certain groups or persons to change their media power into voting power. And this also works in the opposite direction; to regain their strength politicians have sought exposure in the media as analysts", says Tuffi Aré of the newspaper *El Deber*⁹⁰.

86 Interview by the authors with Tuffi Aré, managing editor of *El Deber*. Santa Cruz, October 1, 2006.

87 Conversation with the authors. La Paz, September 28, 2006.

88 Interview by the authors with Vania Sandoval, coordinator of the Observatorio Nacional de Medios. La Paz, September 28, 2006.

89 Interview by the authors with Grover Yapura, managing editor of *La Razón*. La Paz, September 29, 2006.

90 Interview by the authors with Tuffi Aré, managing editor of *El Deber*. Santa Cruz, October 1, 2006.

Some journalists warn that the combined pressures of media owners and of society, as Rafael Archondo⁹¹ calls them, inevitably develop into behaviours like self-censorship. "There is self-censorship when private interests are defended", comments Juan Carlos Mara  n of ATB⁹². And in his book *Retrato del periodista boliviano*, Ra  l Pe  aranda provides important data that the author assures have not changed significantly at the present time although they date from the year 2002: "64% of Bolivian journalists admit to having practiced self-censorship in their work at some time: 39.9% for business reasons, 32.2% for political reasons and 14.2% for personal reasons. The practice of censorship is even greater. 71.7% have suffered from it at some time: 38.3% for business reasons, 34.4% for political reasons, 8.9% for allusions to morality and 13.9% for personal reasons. Also, in 20% of the cases censorship is practiced directly by the owners of the media"⁹³.

Juan Antonio Quiroga, executive director of Plural Editores, dares to assert that he knows "intimate details and how information is manipulated, so much so that the government is right when it says that there are very powerful business interests and speaks of a tradition which is quite lacking in transparency on the part of some media outlets. Fortunes have been made in the warmth of political favours and media outlets have been bought in order to have a channel for expression"⁹⁴.

The essence of the topic is credibility. "The media do not have the same impact as they did some years ago; I don't know if this is a result of sensationalism, mainly on television, or perhaps due to a lack of exactitude in terms of information coverage", says Juan Carlos Rivero of the paper *El Deber*⁹⁵. It is also interesting to analyse an alternative view proposed by Grover Yapura of *La Raz  n* for whom the issue of the loss of credibility "is related to the process of historical change in the country as this means that the media are evaluated more and more continually by citizens"⁹⁶, which is the positive aspect of greater societal participation in the debate.

5.5 Vulnerable plurality

Bolivia is a country in which, at first sight, there exists greater diversity in the media sector than in other Latin American countries. None of the media outlets is clearly dominant; there is a diversity of voices and clearly segmented audiences, especially with regard to regional coverage or types of media. This assessment is supported by the analyst Rafael Archondo when he comments that in Bolivia there is more pluralism than in other countries in South America, among many other reasons, because attempts at concentration have failed more because of weaknesses in the business network than because of the strength of civil society⁹⁷.

Although there may well be a diversity and a large number of voices which are demonstrated in the significant number of media outlets with respect to the size of the population, in Bolivia a citizen needs access to a large number of media outlets from different regions in order to understand and interpret what is happening in the country. It is a complex phenomenon in which in spite of the diversity or the variety of media in any one zone, regional differences in the interpretation of reality do not guarantee a universal and independent perspective; which means that it is impossible for people to orient and inform themselves adequately.

Geographic segmentation implies a risk insofar as it contributes in some way to a certain fragmentation of the country. If to this regional connection are added the political affinities and economic interests that arise from the

91 Conversation with the authors. La Paz, September 28, 2006.

92 Interview by the authors with Juan Carlos Mara  n, national news editor ATB. Santa Cruz, October 4, 2006.

93 Pe  aranda Undurraga, Ra  l. *Retrato del periodista boliviano*. Ceben. La Paz, 2002.

94 Interview by the authors with Juan Antonio Quiroga, executive director of Plural Editores. La Paz, October 3, 2006.

95 Interview by the authors with Juan Carlos Rivero, deputy editor of *El Deber*. Santa Cruz, October 2, 2006.

96 Interview by the authors with Grover Yapura, managing editor of the paper *La Raz  n*. La Paz, September 29, 2006.

97 Rafael Archondo, conversation with the researchers. La Paz, September 2006.

ownership of some media outlets in a context in which these are central players in the national debate, independence is therefore limited, plurality is altered and governability is affected.

For example, the news editor of the Unitel network asserts that he is a partisan of the "Cruceño" positions and emphasizes: "We need to make Bolivia more like Santa Cruz, not more like La Paz"⁹⁸. However, Juan Carlos Maraño, of ATB, finds a different motivation in Unitel's choice: "Unitel attacks the government in order to defend private interests; it wraps itself in the Cruceño flag and that can be harmful as the legitimate interests of autonomy are becoming confused with the defence of private interests"⁹⁹.

Raúl Peñaranda, former editor of *La Época*, asserts that "In the Santa Cruz media there is more homogeneity, more unilaterality, and they have become mouthpieces for their leadership, strongly representing the position of the Cruceño Civic Committee. On the other hand in La Paz and Cochabamba the perspectives are more pluralistic, more diverse"¹⁰⁰.

It is a very sensitive topic. The former parliamentary ombudswoman Ana María Romero commented to the mission that the main problem for those which might succeed in becoming media monopolies is that they are being utilized in favour of those who now feel affected by the transformations that are taking place in the country. "Finally what we are experiencing in Bolivia is a democratic revolution that is manifested in the reality of having an indigenous person for president. It is not easy to accept. But there is a concentration of journalistic management in Santa Cruz by the media networks and economic power, which is not advisable"¹⁰¹.

If this tendency should become stronger starting with new commercial interests there could be an increase in the pressure brought about by owners on the management of the media, in the labour instability of journalists and in the growing flexibility of journalistic ethics, assert a number of Bolivian analysts.

Diversity is also in danger as the market is small and the advertising pie is limited. In general, the media are economically weak and vulnerable and their financial sustainability is precarious; this is an even more critical situation for radio broadcasters. The panorama is complicated, explains Juan Carlos Maraño of ATB, "because the financially sustainable media are few and this affects their quality; also, sources of jobs are few and even fewer those which offer job stability"¹⁰².

It would be interesting to explore in the different media what Chilean investigator Fernando Reyes Matta calls "the free zones of expression" as an option for weakening the tendencies towards homogenization, which inevitably add up in favour of polarization. Another option is to promote positions like that of Amparo Canedo, editor of the newspaper *La Prensa* of La Paz, when she comments that the Constituent Assembly is a good example of the challenge faced by the media in Bolivia faced with the possibility of allowing the diverse voices of Bolivian society to emerge. "It is necessary to analyse the dimension of what this implies. We are attempting to make the change in a democratic way, without bloodshed, and to reach a solution for such a terrible and profound historical problem through dialogue. As has already been seen, this will generate moments of high tension, but this country has to use its abilities to maintain a minimum of calm and of dialogue faced with the difficulties. We cannot be so naive as to think that if we sit people down, as they are seated in the Constituent Assembly, with so much economic, political and social inequality, from one moment to another

98 Interview by the authors with José Pomacusi, national news director, Unitel. Santa Cruz, October 2, 2006.

99 Interview by the authors with Juan Carlos Maraño, national news directors, ATB. Santa Cruz, October 2, 2006.

100 Interview by the authors with Raúl Peñaranda, former editor of *La Época*. La Paz, September 29, 2006.

101 Interview by the authors with Ana María Romero, director of the Fundación Unir and former Parliamentary Ombudswoman, La Paz, September 29, 2006.

102 Interview by the authors with Juan Carlos Maraño, national news editor, ATB. Santa Cruz, October 2, 2006.

they will smile and treat each other well, because unfortunately that is not the way it will be"¹⁰³.

Many sectors of the Bolivian population are not represented in the mass media. Many diverse voices do not have access to these media and appear to be excluded from the media agendas and from debates of public opinion; perhaps for this reason also there are limited interpretations of the analysis of the current conflicts, precisely because the strength of polarization passes through the mass diffusion of the dominant positions.

To this can be added a poor knowledge of the rights of citizens with respect to the quality of the information that is received; this also explains the lack of social control of the media.

5.6 Self-regulation: a debate with various positions

The view is shared among journalists that some media outlets show excesses which affect the quality of information and, without there being convincing and systematic studies which can prove this, their credibility. For practising journalists it is necessary for the media to regulate themselves and not for agents external to the sector to establish norms which might affect freedom of expression.

Newspapers in particular have a strong sense of the value of self-regulation and they practice it daily. The figure of the newspaper ombudsperson has only been adopted by one Bolivian newspaper, *El Deber*, but it does not seem to have had the desired impact, perhaps because of a lack of knowledge on the part of the citizens about their rights and about the value that the ombudsperson has when they feel they have been harmed by media activity¹⁰⁴.

Associations of journalists, unionized workers and associations of newspaper and radio owners recently formed a Consejo de Ética to oppose what they call a phase of excesses in the Bolivian media. It is hoped that this will become an agency that promotes reflection and manages to change improper conduct on the part of journalists through rulings of a strict moral character. However, it is an initiative that does not have the approval of a large number of editors and directors of media outlets as they do not feel represented by the integrants of the Consejo, and as mentioned above, they prefer to have their own policies of self-regulation.

Civil society has responded with initiatives such as the Observatorio Nacional de Medios, which has been promoted specifically as an agency for the study and monitoring of journalistic labour. The Observatorio has generated positive reactions especially in academic sectors, and has been given the benefit of the doubt by journalists, directors and editors of media outlets who are hopeful about the results which it may show, and the way in which they will be made public.

Some journalists like Juan Carlos Marañón of ATB do not believe that there is any way of controlling the wrongful intentions of media outlets, but he does appreciate that it will be the public who assesses its work and makes the decisions it considers to be appropriate. He feels that the idea of the Observatorio is interesting, as long as it does not try to control the media. "Self-regulation must be done by the entity itself, not by an external agency and this is the case for tribunals and councils of associations in which people

¹⁰³ Interview by the authors with Amparo Canedo, editor of the paper *La Prensa*. La Paz, October 3, 2006.

¹⁰⁴ Given this situation and the very limited use of this figure by its readers, the newspaper is suggesting the possibility of establishing reader forums instead of the ombudsperson, as a way of encouraging participation. Juan Carlos Rivero, deputy editor of *El Deber* explains that the ombudsperson has been a very good experience, that they have had exemplary ombudspersons, but that they have not been fully utilized "In Bolivia the idea of the ombudsperson is not yet assimilated. People who feel harassed by the media do not even know that they are being harassed. Proof of this is that in the final phase the average number of letters was seven complaints a month. Ombudspersons have had to carry out a campaign of education for the reader, and act as formers of opinion". Interview by the authors with Juan Carlos Rivero, deputy editor of *El Deber*. Santa Cruz, October 2, 2006.

who are not involved in the media participate"¹⁰⁵. On the other hand, the opinion of José Pomacusi, of Unitel, is "to reach an agreement to mark out upper and lower limits. There have been attempts to have the directors of television channels meet to mark the court, to define the territory in which they will compete and to promote understanding, but they have not been successful. Everyone is afraid of external regulation but self-regulation is very difficult. We are really at the upper limit, but we are not going to go beyond that. We have faults, they can criticize us, but if we want to improve journalism I prefer to do it from within and not throwing bombs at it from outside"¹⁰⁶. Nevertheless, he approves of the existence of the Observatorio "because the media need criticism and self-criticism to improve, but the ones who are making the criticisms are not the best"¹⁰⁷, he comments.

"When an observatory looks at or watches over the media using theoretical criteria that do not coincide with journalistic reality the danger exists that the assessment is far from the reality. Journalistic reality is very complex and this should be kept in mind in the methodologies", argues Grover Yapura of *La Razón*¹⁰⁸.

Raúl Peñaranda, who felt that greater freedom is better for journalists, doubts this in view of the phase of excesses in the media and given a reality in which some television channels take on the role of the opposition, as it is obvious that there is too much deregulation and a law which is impossible to apply. "On television there have been cases of lynchings which were encouraged by the presence of camarographers and excesses in yellow journalism with terrible scenes. Especially on channels like Unitel and Red Uno, but there have been no processes of ethical control. It is important to promote the idea of self-regulation, to enforce the ethical codes and to promote the Consejo Nacional de Ética. The situation cannot continue as it is now"¹⁰⁹.

5.7 Risks for journalists may increase

Bolivia is not a country where journalists face great risks in the practice of their profession. Journalists are not assassinated nor do they receive death threats that affect the normal development of their activities. Nevertheless, there have been increasing reports of incidents in which there have been situations of aggression towards reporters and camarographers, especially during the coverage of riots, both by social actors in the protests and by police agents. To this can be added a climate of tension where government finger pointing at the media could lead to an even greater rejection from some sectors of the population of the task of the journalists and expose them to greater aggression and threats.

"The conflicts are of low intensity, there are no weapons involved, but *El Deber*, for example, has cases of a photographer who was stoned and of its journalists being taken as hostages for a couple of hours. It is well known that all media outlets do not have life insurance for their journalists and that there is very little knowledge of the rules of protection and self-protection in conflict situations", points out Tuffi Aré¹¹⁰. "Bolivian journalists have managed to adjust themselves to unstable situations in covering events during periods of political and social tensions. It can be said that they have been well treated by government sources and by the social movements, although there are some exceptions", Grover Yapura said to the mission¹¹¹.

The clear and explicit position of the government in branding the media as enemies has generated a climate of fear among journalists. Reporters from the newspaper *La Prensa* received direct threats from a government authority. The

105 Interview by the authors with Juan Carlos Mara-ñón, national news editor, ATB. Santa Cruz, October 2, 2006.

106 Interview by the authors with José Pomacusi, national news editor, Unitel. Santa Cruz, October 2, 2006.

107 Interview by the authors with José Pomacusi, national news editor, Unitel. Santa Cruz, October 2, 2006.

108 Interview by the authors with Grover Yapura, managing editor, *La Razón*. La Paz, September 29, 2006.

109 Interview by the authors with Raúl Peñaranda. La Paz, September 29, 2006.

110 Interview by the authors with Tuffi Aré, managing editor, *El Deber*. Santa Cruz, October 1, 2006.

111 Interview by the authors with Grover Yapura, managing editor, *La Razón*. La Paz, September 29, 2006.

same newspaper has denounced reprisals that were manifested in situations such as the prevention of their journalists from asking questions in certain situations where government functionaries were making comments¹¹². "This newspaper does not lie. If it sometimes makes a mistake, as any professional or worker may do, the government should ask for an explanation, which is the right of any citizen. But to attack unnecessarily and based on wrong information is excessive. It is not the purpose of newspapers to distort or to elaborate news in a spiteful way. At least that is the case for *La Prensa*", pointed out its director in the editorial of June 9th, 2006, where the cases mentioned were discussed.

In the majority of the Bolivian media, there are no policies of protection for journalists who take risks in carrying out their activities, specifically in situations of social disturbances. The journalists themselves do not have an understanding of such risks, and there are no instruction or training processes in this area. "We have occasionally risked our lives", comments a journalist remembering the events of October 2003. There are cases of cameramen purchasing their own gas masks for protection since the media do not provide this kind of equipment.

Juan Carlos Marañón, of ATB, explains that the instructions given to journalists who find themselves in disturbances where there is an increased risk, is that they should leave the situation. "The channel is not interested in a scoop for the scoop's sake; you do not put the lives of journalists at risk for that. Nevertheless, ATB does not have explicit policies for the coverage of risky situations, even though some precautions are taken. For example, if the demonstrations are taking place among people who speak Aymara, we always try to send a journalist or camerographer who knows the language"¹¹³.

There is a lack of statistics, monitoring, and risk indexes. There is no work on early warnings, let alone follow ups. "There is no register of abuses or systematized information about aggressive acts", says Andrés Martínez, an independent journalist who works in a training project for journalists in this area¹¹⁴.

The months of December 2006 and January 2007 were especially significant for showing a trend towards a clear increase in aggressive acts toward journalists while at work. Journalists, camerographers and photographers were injured in Tarija, Cochabamba and Santa Cruz while covering confrontations between government supporters and the opposition in pro-autonomy marches or reporting on demonstrations of different types. The journalists have been harassed as much as by supporters of the different sectors in disputes as by members of the public forces.

5.8 Deficient labour conditions

The labour market for journalists in Bolivia is limited in spite of the large number of media that exist in the country; most journalists in fact have great difficulty in surviving financially.

As in other South American countries, journalists receive low salaries, work long hours, have few opportunities for training and are faced with conditions of increasing labour instability.

The previously cited study by Raúl Peñaranda reports that 93.7% of Bolivian journalists believe that in the future it will be more difficult to find stable work in the media. The results show how temporary and fixed-term contracts

¹¹² Comment by Amparo Canedo, the editor of the paper in an interview with the authors. La Paz, October 3, 2006.

¹¹³ Interview by the authors with Juan Carlos Marañón, national news director, ATB. Santa Cruz, October 2, 2006.

¹¹⁴ Participant in a conversation held by the authors. La Paz, September 28, 2006.

have increased as a result of the process of labour flexibilization, and give the number of 3,000 new professionals, in the different fields of communication, who enter the labour market each year¹¹⁵.

The subject of labour conditions is a gloomy one, says Vania Sandoval, coordinator of the Observatorio Nacional de Medios. "Nowadays we have journalists selling advertising, labour laws are not complied with, the best journalists leave the sector and there is a constant turnover which affects the quality of the media", she states¹¹⁶.

"Journalists have never been worse off than they are now" laments Ana María Romero. She goes on to say: "Before, they could make a career in the media, work teams used to be supported. Nowadays they are mistreated and circumstances sometimes even force them into corruption"¹¹⁷.

Although labour conditions have never been good, they began to deteriorate in 1998 with the crisis that lashed all of Latin America, comments Robert Brockmann. "A spiral effect was produced. The media begin to receive less advertising income and with that they started to leave their better paid journalists and to contract other younger ones. As the quality of the journalists declined so did the quality of the information. It reached a point at which a great number of newspapers and channels were giving major assignments to students working as interns. For their part, the faculties of communication carry out academic reforms and journalism loses importance in their curricula", he explains¹¹⁸.

Nowadays in Bolivia there is "an enormous army of unemployed people, the person who charges the least is hired, a camarographer is paid US\$ 200 monthly and a journalist with 10 to 15 years experience US\$ 1,000. An additional problem is that censorship is on its way here", Lupe Cajías worried when she spoke with the mission¹¹⁹.

5.9 Legal framework: between the defence of the Printing Law and the opportunities of the Constituent Assembly

The 1925 Printing Law is fiercely defended by journalists. As noted in previous sections, they consider it to be "perfect" insofar as it guarantees that they can exercise their profession freely. They agree that the procedures for its implementation need to be revised as they hinder its prompt and effective application. However, there seems to be a consensus among journalists that this is not the appropriate moment to bring forward these reforms.

There is interest among journalists, unions and academics in bringing proposals before the Constituent Assembly to tackle the problem of how issues like freedom of expression and the right to information and communication should be included in the new text of the constitution. In this respect spaces for dialogue have opened up, meetings, consultations and forums have been positively energized and debate encouraged, initiatives which should be supported and promoted.

It is clear that in Bolivia there is no systematized body of legislation for the wide field of communications but rather a large number of scattered legal regulations which some people call its legal framework. To this situation can be added the rapid changes in communications and information technology and media convergence, which have become a great challenge in terms of the establishment of regulations.

115 Peñaranda Undurraga, Raúl. "Retrato del periodista boliviano". Ceben. La Paz, 2002.

116 Interview by the authors with Vania Sandoval, Coordinator of the Observatorio Nacional de Medios. La Paz, September 28, 2006.

117 Interview by the authors with Ana María Romero, director of the Fundación Unir, former Parliamentary Ombudswoman and former editor of the legendary newspaper *Presencia*. La Paz, September 29, 2006.

118 Interview by the authors with Robert Brockmann, national information officer, Centro de Información de las Naciones Unidas in La Paz. La Paz, October 3, 2006.

119 Interview by the authors with Lupe Cajías, director of *Movida Ciudadana Anticorrupción*. La Paz, October 4, 2006.

It would seem then that the country should confront, sooner rather than later, the three challenges presented by this issue: first, the modification, modernization and improvement of the Printing Law; second, the presentation of the issues of communication, information and expression in the Constituent Assembly, and third, the regulation and standardization of the thriving sector of information and communications technology in the international context, with its corresponding impact at the national level.

To take on these challenges will also be a complex matter that will be affected by the policies of the current government with respect to the media, which are statist in nature and clearly influenced by the Venezuelan government.

5.10 Strengthening the state media, opposing tendencies

The development and the reach of the state media have acquired force as can be seen in the section corresponding to the characterization of the communications sector. Different positions are held on this topic. On one side is the government, which is supporting the development of the media in order to strengthen and convert them in what could be called an advance of the reforms. On the other side is a group, significant in size and impact, of private media who are strongly critical of these orientations of the government and of academic sectors, of the international community and organizations of civil society, which hope for an evolution of the state media towards true public service media.

There are international cooperation sectors which hope to continue with projects which were begun under previous governments in the sphere of communication, politics and the restructuring of the state media as public services. For this reason it is hoped that the Evo Morales government will provide the necessary spaces for reflection to change the current governmental decisions on the structure of the media¹²⁰.

There is no doubt that Evo Morales "wants to bring together local radio and television broadcasters to counteract the large groups and to develop the state media; the problem with this is that it distances them from their vocation as public media", says Carlos Soria of the Programa de Apoyo Municipal a la Democracia (Padem)¹²¹.

Juan Carlos Marañón, of ATB, speaks severely about the topic: "The government of Evo Morales carries out a dictatorial policy with the media. Channel 7 is under the management of the political party of the day and it should really be a public channel. For example, why did it not broadcast the pro-autonomy demonstrations in Santa Cruz in July 2006? On the other hand, the interference of the Venezuelan government in the matter of the media is intolerable. And although the proposal to open more community radio stations is valid, if its purpose is indoctrination, the risks are immense"¹²².

Some analysts are concerned that the governmental initiative on community radio "carries with it the Cuban model of a single voice. The president is uncomfortable with plurality, with attacks, with questioning"¹²³.

In the words of Gastón Núñez, executive director-general of the Dirección Nacional de Comunicaciones, the government is clear that one of the principal elements of the state policy of the Evo Morales government is its line of communication. "We have lived through a fierce media war marked by

¹²⁰ Cecilia Quiroga, consultant for FES/ILDIS who has led important processes in the sphere of communication and politics and in the restructuring of the state media as true public services hopes that the recent dialogues held by her team with the Dirección Nacional de Comunicaciones of the government will permit spaces for reflection in order, if possible, to change the current determinations of the government respecting the structure that the state media should have. Interview by the authors with Cecilia Quiroga, consultant for FES/ILDIS. La Paz, September 30, 2006.

¹²¹ Comment by Carlos Soria in an interview with the authors, director of the Programa de Apoyo a la Democracia Municipal, Padem. La Paz, September 28, 2006.

¹²² Interview by the authors with Juan Carlos Marañón, national news editor, ATB. Santa Cruz, October 2, 2006.

¹²³ Interview by the authors with Robert Brockmann, national information officer, Centro de Información de las Naciones Unidas in La Paz. La Paz, October 3, 2006.

the media of networks of large companies which want to consolidate their hegemony. Evo appears in 2006 with the goal of introducing a national media system based in the social movements as principal allies. 54% of Bolivians are demanding change and the state media play a public service role in this, one of rescuing truth and the principles of this government which champions the demands of the populace. The obligation of the media is to help to carry out the agenda which the Bolivian people requested; that is, a development plan, a Constituent Assembly, a literacy plan. Many people will think that the recent newly created media will be government radio stations and later on, government television stations; but not necessarily. They will demonstrate their social character, their educational and cultural function"¹²⁴.

It is also possible to analyse the topic of the reconfiguration of the state media from the perspective of what could be a legitimate interest on the part of Evo Morales in the presence of media outlets which serve the large part of the Bolivian people who supported him and who do not feel that they are represented in the dominant mass media.

Nevertheless, it is necessary to assess the implications which there might be in the long term if the state media are strengthened with an orientation tending to align them more with the policies of the government of the day than with the individual agenda of a true public service. The strengthening of democracy is undoubtedly favoured by the existence of state media which are autonomous and independent of the governments in power.

To the already complex panorama of the private media is added, therefore, that of the reconfiguration of the state media. It is another ingredient to keep in mind in the analysis and the assessment of the development which the Bolivian conflict might have in future. Ideas about the role of the state media in the processes of construction of democratic societies also differ for the actors in the debate in Bolivia today.

124 Interview by the authors with Gastón Núñez, national executive director, Dirección Nacional de Comunicación Social. La Paz, October 4, 2006.

6 The media in the conflict in Bolivia

6.1 Media, democracy and conflicts

In a democratic society it is hoped that the mass media will carry out three essential functions. First, they should act as a civic forum for the exchange of information and points of view; second, they should be elements of democratic mobilization which provide citizens with balanced and relevant information; and third, they should take on their role of watchdogs relative to the responsibilities of the authorities and other administrative agencies¹²⁵.

The roles elaborated above are ideals that will rarely be fully achieved, even in the most solid democracies with greatest experience.

Nevertheless, in seeking to comply with these ideals, in some countries the mass media advance the strengthening of democracy by contributing to the creation of the conditions necessary for the development of societies with well-informed citizens who can participate actively in the democratic process. In addition, when the media perform their role as watch dogs, they help to ensure that administrative agencies and those who are in charge of them respect their mandates.

These ideal roles referred to above may give the impression of the media as neutral entities, without vested interests, which provide information about events in a particular society, giving its citizens an opportunity for debate. However, this is just one side of the coin. The media are not a neutral actor. They are ruled by interests which determine their editorial policies and their interpretations of reality, and which are clearly manifested in their editorial pages and other spots designated for this purpose. In this respect, they also exercise influence and give shape to the reality which they are reporting.

This dual role is especially important in times of conflict. In situations with these characteristics, the media function as a field in which the actors involved in the tensions or the confrontations can articulate their positions, while the events related to the confrontation are reported by the media themselves and then interpreted and commented on. Meanwhile, the actors in the conflict begin to relate to each other in a way which is influenced by how the media are portraying them and their part in the conflict. In this way, according to Andrew Puddephat, it can be said that the media can be both structure and agency¹²⁶.

It is important to keep this in mind when working out strategies of support for the media and when encouraging actions which may help to lessen the tensions and to promote a resolution of the conflict.

6.2 Vulnerable governability in Bolivia

There is no doubt that the media are faced with difficulties in carrying out a constructive and democratic role in the current Bolivian situation.

¹²⁵ Pippa Norris. "A virtuous circle. Political communications in postindustrial societies". Cambridge University Press, 2003.

¹²⁶ Puddephat, Andrew. "Voices of War: Conflict and the role of the media". International Media Support, IMS. Copenhagen, 2006.

Fragmented civic forums

In spite of the presence of voices which are attempting to avoid greater polarization, the media sector in this country finds itself involved in a process which presents a threat to democracy. On the ground, different logics of appropriation of the crisis, different societal projects and conflicting world views are in opposition.

The increased polarization in Bolivian society, especially between “Paceño” and “Cruceño” interests, is reflected in the media. Some of these take on a very active role in the conflict, promoting specific interests as they represent political and regional positions, while excluding other interpretations and different ways of thought in their own productions. Rather, there is a tendency for excessive criticism of opposing viewpoints and the creation of inaccurate images of the opposition with little basis in reality.

The geographic segmentation of the media implies a risk at the present time insofar as it also contributes to a certain fragmentation of the country. If the political affinities and financial interests that arise from the ownership of some media outlets in a context in which these are central players in the national debate are added to these regional loyalties, independence is affected and plurality is altered.

Both private and state media are being utilized for political ends, taking on a central role and abandoning their traditional role in democratic societies.

Bolivia is one of the countries with the highest proportion of media per capita in the world and so there is –in principle– an enormous diversity of voices and opinions. Nevertheless, trends show that this is a vulnerable plurality which has taken on characteristics of geographic and political division. This factor contributes to the deepening media polarization instead of helping to make it possible for ideas and diverse positions to coexist in the same space while respecting differences.

The multiplicity of media outlets in Bolivia, which could be considered to be an indicator of a vibrant and participatory democracy, may become a risk, as due to the socioeconomic characteristics of the country the media have great difficulty in ensuring financial sustainability, which makes them doubly vulnerable: either to disappearing or to being taken over by financially strong media groups.

The state media, which in principle should respond to the interests of Bolivian citizens as a whole, have deliberately acquired a profile which is clearly identified with the positions of the government, acting in its interests and policies; which, as mentioned in a previous section, adds new characteristics which make the media panorama even more complex.

In this respect, the development trends of the sector show that the media have serious problems in serving as an inclusive civic forum in which diverse positions can coexist in the midst of a responsible debate and in which the ordinary citizen can see himself or herself reflected as well as being able to utilize the information provided to achieve greater understanding and to better interpret the Bolivian situation. On the contrary, a large part of the media have taken on a bias and have assumed editorial approaches which, rather than benefiting the citizen, have pressured him or her to favour one of the parties involved in the conflict.

The crisis of Bolivian journalism

As Erick Torrico says, Bolivian journalism is going through a threefold crisis: "of credibility, of prestige and of professionalism, each affecting the others"¹²⁷.

The precarious state of the quality of information is another obstacle to the ability of the media to provide a service of information and orientation to citizens about the development of events in the country. Given the force and the speed with which events are happening in Bolivia, there appears to be a tendency for the media approach to one of reaction rather than of journalistic control of the situation, leading them to provide news coverage which reveals errors in quality, depth, accuracy, context and analysis.

In the same way, there is a need to improve the competence of journalists and their capacity for analysis and interpretation. There is no doubt that in the media more time is needed for deliberation, interpretation and training than for fostering confrontation.

Sensationalism and the ethical problems of some media outlets encourage this last tendency. The balance is skewed in favour of some of the actors in conflict, especially in television coverage of information. Some very influential media outlets are becoming both an expression and an actor of polarization as they get involved in the conflicts, playing a central role in close relation with financial, business or political groups, and contributing in this way to the instability of the country.

Bolivian journalists face a tremendous challenge in all matters having to do with ethics, self-regulation and the revision of the legal framework which provides a background for their work, and also in benefiting from the results of observatory studies of their work, which contribute from outside by sounding alarms and creating a favourable atmosphere for transformation in the exercise of the profession when it loses sight of the three essential functions of the media in a democracy.

The situation of the media affects the formation of public opinion. It can be said that the average Bolivian citizen is receiving deficient information which impedes an adequate understanding of strategic and sensitive topics in the development of the country: the Constituent Assembly, the land law, the nationalization of hydrocarbons, coca, autonomy, and international relations, to name just the most sensitive issues.

Limitations of the watchdog role

The leading political role which the media now have makes journalists more vulnerable to pressures of different types as well as making them targets for actions coming from inside the media. That is, from editors and owners, as well as from the outside, from social, governmental and business sectors. The risk, therefore, is that self-censorship will increase and that conditions which foster limitations on freedom of expression will be created.

The labour conditions of the journalists themselves add to the increased risk, with low salaries and new contractual arrangements which restrict benefits affecting the quality of life of professional workers and creating the likelihood of moonlighting and corruption.

¹²⁷ Torrico, Erick. "Antecedentes, resultados y enseñanzas de tres experiencias de observación de medios en los procesos electorales". In "Medios, poder y democracia en Bolivia". Programa de Apoyo a la Ciudadanía Efectiva y la Representación. SUNY-Bolivia. La Paz, 2006.

The scenario is not encouraging. There are different trends in media development which increase the threats and which make the governability and the integration of Bolivia even more vulnerable.

From confrontation to comprehension

The polarization and the political use of the media at the present time, combined with the structural weaknesses of the media and of the journalistic profession, seem to come together and affect each other mutually, increasing the negative development of the situation.

There is also little interest on the part of those involved in the conflict to create spaces for dialogue to begin. There is no sign of a solid interest on the part of the government to approach the media, which would be desirable with a view to achieving governability and a resolution to the crisis. However, neither can a desire for rapprochement be seen on the part of the private media outlets which have taken on the most hard-line positions against the Morales government.

Crisis Group has stated that "unless the threatening rhetoric disappears and dialogue, mediation and understandings commence immediately, there could be widespread violence in Bolivia in 2007"¹²⁸. There is no doubt that the media play a crucial role in avoiding a scenario which would be worse than the present one, and the widespread violence which could lead to the disintegration of the country.

Bolivia is experiencing a historic moment of great importance in which different perspectives and world views are clashing in the same space, and mutual understanding is undoubtedly required for what could be an intercultural dialogue working towards the construction of the country, rather than the current tendency for risky confrontation.

In the tense situation which the country is experiencing, confrontation, as a newspaper director said, "has taken root in the word, so the word acquires a great potential"¹²⁹ for modifying the course of the increasing clashes. This is a matter which pertains to the media; and in that lies another of the great challenges for Bolivian journalists.

¹²⁸ Crisis Group. *Reformas en Bolivia: riesgo de nuevos conflictos*. Boletín informativo sobre América Latina No. 13, 8 de enero de 2007.

¹²⁹ Interview by the authors with Amparo Canedo, editor, *La Prensa*. La Paz, October 3, 2006

7 Strategy for helping to strengthen the democratic role of the media

A strategy for contributing to a more constructive role for the media in the present context in Bolivian society could focus on the following four areas.

- Advocate for changes in the legal framework
- Spaces for debate and reflection
- Strengthening the quality of journalism
- Protection for journalists

For each of these areas specific interventions of immediate action are recommended. Such interventions focus on attending to the more urgent needs by encouraging the media not to play an adverse role in the growing tension and the conflict in Bolivia but rather to fulfill a role that makes it possible to create a bridge among the different political positions and current interests, and between these and Bolivian society.

International Media Support will endeavour to take the initiative in starting several of the proposed interventions in collaboration with Bolivian actors, while for others the participation of organizations that could take a leadership role is recommended.

These interventions have the goal of supporting and strengthening some of the initiatives already existing in Bolivia, and for this purpose it is suggested that they be carried out in strict collaboration with institutions and actors which are already working in the area.

It should be pointed out that to take the approach of immediate action does not imply that there are no important needs to attend to in the longer term. As has been shown throughout this analysis, there are issues of a structural nature as well as of capacity in terms of human and economic resources that can not be solved in the short term.

The necessary revision and improvement of the labour conditions of journalists or the strengthening of the university educational system that forms future Bolivian journalists are examples of needs that require long term intervention. In the same way, reflection is needed about the role of the media in Bolivian society and the possibilities of continuing to strengthen the media sector so it will be more inclusive and move towards an approach of participatory communication.

7.1 Achieving changes in the legal framework

Strategic considerations

The Constituent Assembly process is a historic moment in Bolivia, one which may help to strengthen the legal framework in areas related to information and communication. It is a very intense period during which actors with common interests in these areas can meet - as is already happening at certain levels and with certain topics - to develop proposals which have been discussed and consolidated, thus attempting to influence the formulation

of proposals in these areas. In the same way, this process could be linked to the discussion about the transformation of the state media to a system of public service.

Intervention A) **Strengthen the area of freedom of expression in the Constituent Assembly process**

The Constituent Assembly process widens the possibilities for strengthening the constitution in the areas of freedom of expression and the rights of communication and access to information. There is already a procedure in process led by organizations of journalists, media workers and academics, in which FES/ILDIS also participates. It is important to support it to make it more inclusive and to carry out a campaign with the greatest possible impact, starting with technical support and linking with international specialists, reinforcing proactive capacity and the strengthening of democratic values.

Proposed approach:

- The intervention would be oriented towards technically strengthening already existing initiatives, and in the planning of an impact strategy, as well as monitoring and providing technical legal support during the process.
- It is important to involve international organizations such as Article 19, which has a great deal of experience on the topics of rights and information legislation, and in the monitoring of similar processes in other countries around the world.

Possible obstacles:

- Time limitations, since the new Constitution should be finished by August of 2007.
- There might be positions in the Constituent Assembly that would not be interested in supporting this process.

Intervention B) **Promote the role of public service for the state media**

The state media are being used for political purposes and as a strategic counterbalance to the private media which have assumed a strongly critical position against the government. Therefore, the state media are feeding the conflict, and also in the long term reducing its credibility and its impact.

As media at the national level they have the potential to become agencies of public service and platforms for the encounter of the diversity of opinions, interests and cultures in Bolivia. To accomplish this, the state media should make themselves independent of the direct influence of governments and transform themselves into independent public service media.

Several organizations, among them FES/ILDIS, have promoted these changes in the past few years. It is important to find spaces for dialogue and to work towards the greater participation and contribution of Bolivian civil society in this transformation. There are signs of receptivity and readiness in this area on the part of the Dirección Nacional de Comunicaciones.

Proposed approach:

- To develop campaigns for the promotion of debate in society and in the political sector about the importance of transforming the state media into true public services. It would be appropriate to link this discussion with the Constituent Assembly process and the impact campaign in this setting.
- To count on international experts on the topic of the media as a public service; for example Article 19, in planning the campaign.
- To give Bolivia knowledge and experience in similar processes carried out in other countries.

Possible obstacles:

- Some high level government agencies may not show genuine interest in discussing this point.
- There are not many experiences in Latin America related to successful processes in this type of transformation. It would be important to analyse the lessons learned in these processes.

7.2 Platforms for debate and reflection

Strategic considerations

To counteract the growing polarization it is important to strengthen the platforms for dialogue and reflection among the media, as well as within the media itself. Spaces should be promoted in the media or the existing ones that offer a true dialogue and debate of ideas should be strengthened. In spite of the difficulties, this is a favorable moment for the circulation and the confrontation of democratic visions of the country rather than of alignment with one or another of the groups. The priority in the short term should be to focus on the television media, where polarization is most notable, without excluding the possibility of working with the radio sector.

In the same way, through the creation of spaces that promote dialogue between the media and the government there could be attempts to establish agreements with respect to the role of these media in Bolivian democracy.

Intervention A)

Free speech zones in the media themselves

There is a considerable lack of spaces and points of encounter and debate in the media which can make the different positions in the conflict visible in a tolerant and inclusive way. The identification of and support for the creation of what some people call “free expression zones in the media” has been proposed, and this could serve to bridge the gap between the adversaries in the growing conflict. This is an initiative that would also endeavour to promote interest in permanently including a culture of informed debate in the programming spaces and the content of the different media.

This proposal should emphasize the television channels since this is the medium with the greatest impact in the current conflict and the one that has assumed the most aligned positions. It is also the medium of greatest reach and potential impact on Bolivian citizens. Nevertheless, radio stations and printed publications should also be considered, if feasible. It is indispensable that the proposal be based in genuine interest from the media, which implies

a process of consultation and the identification of programs and formats that can guarantee its success and the sustainability of the initiative.

Proposed approach:

- Identify within current television programming, programs and sections of programs (for example news shows) which could adjust the format for the inclusion of "free zone" spaces of debate.
- Explore the possibility of support for the development of new formats and spaces that contribute in the same way.
- Include opinions and interpretations that reflect existing diversity, and that have been traditionally excluded from the dominant media agenda and from public opinion.
- Develop this process in a close dialogue with the different television channels, in a bilateral way, starting with a pilot initiative.
- Apply international production experiences in the programming of debate and dialogue in countries marked by conflict.

Possible obstacles:

- There are political interests in the media that could make the initiative not viable.
- The production of this type of space during the phases of development and of pilot experiences is not financially self-sufficient.

Intervention B) Promotion of dialogue between the private media and the government

It is necessary to promote the creation of legitimate and reliable spaces that encourage dialogue between the media and the government in order to establish agreements with regard to the role of these media in Bolivian democracy. As one of those interviewed said: "Even though it is not an easy task because of the increasing deterioration of relationships, it is essential to work on it". In view of the growing tension at the present time it is important to support initiatives that contribute to lowering the pressure in what some call a "media war". It is worth facilitating the dialogue between the private media and the government, identifying speakers of greatest willingness from both camps.

Proposed approach:

- Identify speakers of high prestige and recognition from both parties as leaders of the dialogue (an option could be to work with Diálogo Inter-Americano or an organization of similar stature).
- Carry out a study of the positions, the arguments and their bases for the identification of a possible "common ground" in order to start the dialogues.
- The dialogues could take the form of conferences and round tables on specific topics of common interest.
- It would be more helpful to start dialogues with a smaller group which is more favourable towards this open exchange, and from this build up a wider and more inclusive platform.

Possible obstacles:

- Lack of a real and sincere interest in dialogue.

- Fear of some media of compromising their independence by establishing dialogues with the government.

7.3 Strengthening the quality of journalism

Strategic considerations

Strengthening journalistic quality is a long-term task, involving a multitude of parallel actions of an educational nature and of work conditions, among other factors. In the short term a more specific focus should be chosen, centring on a discussion about quality, the definition of instruments and the acquisition of capacities surrounding the topics of greatest discrepancy and conflict.

Intervention A)

Encourage discussion about professional ethics among television channels

The lack of compliance to the ethics of the profession of journalism has been identified as a serious problem in a significant number of Bolivian media outlets. In particular, this problem has been pointed out in some television channels, which have taken freedom of expression to the limits of what is journalistically and ethically responsible.

A recent procedure in the field of self-regulation concluded with the establishment of the Consejo Nacional de Ética. In the same way, the Observatorio Nacional de Medios has as one of its objectives to promote discussion and improvements in the journalistic quality of the media. However, these initiatives are greeted with resistance and scepticism by many journalists who practice in the media, including in television channels.

In view of this situation it does not seem feasible to attempt the integration of television channels in the current process of creating standards of professional ethics. On the other hand, however, it is important to look for ways to establish a high level discussion about this dimension of the practice of journalism.

Two ways of facilitating this discussion are proposed:

i) Bolivian dialogue

To establish face to face contacts and discussions among professionals at different levels of Bolivian television channels, with a view to identifying shared interests and contributing to the design of strategies for an effective implementation of the agreements.

Proposed approach:

- Identify television channels which show some interest in this type of cooperation and in the topics for reflection.
- Analyse the possibilities and the feasibility of linking the process with the Asociación Nacional de Emisoras de Televisión (Anetv).
- Carry out activities, including the facilitation of discussions about topics of professional ethics.

Possible obstacles:

- Lack of real interest from television channels and the influence of their financial and political interests.

ii) Twinning

Establish a process of “twinning” in which one or several of the Bolivian television channels match up with a television channel from another country in Latin America in a mutually beneficial collaboration. The method of “twinning” has been successful in other parts of the world; for example, among television channels from Arab and European countries. Here there has been established an institutional collaboration at different professional levels, such as the managerial level, that of the editors and of the reporters.

Proposed approach:

- Identify (a) television channel(s) in Bolivia which is/are interested in participating in an initiative of this type and identify a channel in another country with the same interest. Brazil might be one possibility.
- Identify, together with the channels, the areas of “twinning” in the editorial and journalistic field, and develop a program with a minimum duration of one year.

Possible obstacles:

- Lack of interest from the parties to get involved in this process.

Intervention B)

Encourage debates from outside the television channels about the quality and the ethics of their work

Although there is resistance from some media outlets to the work of the observatories and to the external recommendations coming, for example, from councils on ethics, it is important to insist on an independent, objective and rigorous assessment, like that attempted by the young Observatorio Nacional de los Medios (Onadem). There is no doubt that useful information about the media is needed, hence the importance of analyses of news coverage, journalistic routines and practices, with balanced, systematic and solid studies.

It is important to continue to strengthen the work of Onadem, so that it can develop even more studies and analyses of the work of news programmes both in the private and the public sector, as it has planned to do in its new action lines.

Proposed approach:

- Strengthen the Onadem team in terms of resources and technical support to increase its capacity to monitor television programmes.
- Facilitate and support the contact which Onadem has initiated with successful experiences in this field, developed in other countries of Latin America like Colombia, through connections like the Proyecto Antonio Nariño.
- Carry out a pilot study, focussing on the coverage of topics of the greatest debate and conflict for Bolivian society.

Possible obstacles:

- Lack of human resources and of the internal capacity of the organization to carry out this task.

Intervention C) Strengthen the quality of journalistic work on topics related to the conflict

The growing conflict in Bolivia is developing around a series of topics in which there are different interests, such as the Constituent Assembly, agrarian reform and regional autonomies. It is critical to ensure that journalists have a greater knowledge of the background to these topics, of the different positions that are taken on them, and of the role of journalists in a situation of conflict. In this respect it is important to design offers of training and debate for the journalists that are covering these topics.

A new organization in Bolivia, Pondera, which promotes journalism and democracy, is developing an initiative which may respond in part to this need. It is important to assess it as well as others in the same area.

Proposed approach:

- Identify organizations which can carry out a task of this type, and subsequently develop training activities.
- Focus on working jointly by developing connections among organizations.
- Promote dialogue with media owners and directors to ensure their participation and contribution to this initiative.

Possible obstacles:

- Lack of capacity of the organizations to respond to the existing needs.
- Lack of interest from media owners and directors in this initiative and in the participation of their journalists in the offers of training.

7.4 Protection of Journalists

Strategic considerations

Taking into account the growing tensions and the increased risk for journalists and other media workers, it is important to develop methods of prevention. Experiences from other areas indicate that training in prevention and in self-protection is of great and immediate usefulness.

Intervention A) Protection of Journalists

Bolivian journalists and photographers are not well informed about how they could protect themselves in risky situations such as, for example, demonstrations and roadblocks. Even though for the moment there is not a significant number of cases of journalists who have been threatened or who have suffered from physical aggression, the risk is there and it is important to take preventative measures with training projects for protection and self-protection within the media themselves.

Proposed approach:

- Carry out a study that analyses the problem and its extent.
- Design preventative methods for the protection of journalists, starting with training and manuals, among other alternatives.

Possible obstacles:

- Lack of understanding of the relevance and the need to carry out preventative activities on the part of the journalist and his or her superiors, since there is no experience related to the need for protection.

8 Appendices

8.1 Appendix 1: List of people interviewed

ASOCIACIÓN NACIONAL DE PERIODISTAS DE BOLIVIA

Sandra Aliaga, Vice President

CID SUNY, STATE UNIVERSITY N.Y.

Mónica Calasich, Coordinator Programa de Apoyo a la Ciudadanía

CONFEDERACIÓN SINDICAL DE TRABAJADORES DE LA PRENSA

Remberto Cárdenas, Executive Secretary

DEFENSORÍA DEL PUEBLO

Waldo Albarracín, Parliamentary Ombudsman Republic of Bolivia

DELEGACIÓN DE LA UNIÓN EUROPEA

Miguel Ángel Flórez, Head of Press

DIRECCIÓN NACIONAL DE COMUNICACIÓN SOCIAL

Gastón Núñez Gastón, Executive Director-General

EL DEBER

Tuffi Are, Managing Editor

Carlos Orías, Editor International Affairs

Juan Carlos Rivero, Deputy Editor

EMBAJADA DE DINAMARCA

Winnie Estrup, Advisor

Mogens Pedersen, Ambassador

EMBAJADA DE ESTADOS UNIDOS

Olga Palmer

FUNDACIÓN FRIEDRICH EBERT/ILDIS

Karina Herrera, Researcher

Cecilia Quiroga, Consultant

FUNDACIÓN UNIR

Mabel Azcuí, Coordinator Banco Temático

Ana María Romero, Executive Director

Gabriela Ugarte, Representative of Communication

IBIS

Bernardo Ponce, Programme Officer

Rune Geertsen, Journalist/ Advisor

Morten Schmidt, Advisor

INSTITUTO PRISMA

Ronald Grebe, Researcher

KONRAD ADENAUER STIFTUNG

Peter-Alberto Behrens, Representative in Bolivia

LA PRENSA

Amparo Canedo, Director

LA RAZÓN

Yapura Groover, Managing Editor

MOVIDA CIUDADANA ANTICORRUPCIÓN

Lupe Cajías de la Vega, Director

MUJERES CREANDO

Roberta Benzi, Member of the NGO

María Galindo, Member of the NGO

NACIONES UNIDAS, CENTRO DE INFORMACIÓN DE NACIONES UNIDAS CINU

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OBSERVATORIO NACIONAL DE MEDIOS

Vania Sandoval, Coordinator General

Erick Torrico, Director

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Rafael Archondo

Luís Ramiro Beltrán

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RED ERBOL

Andrés Gómez, National Press Coordinator

RED UNITEL

José Pomacusi, National News Editor

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José Luís Aguirre, Director

8.2 Appendix 2: Bibliographic references

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Web sites

News agencies

Agencia Boliviana de Información

<http://abi.bo/index.php>

Bolpress

<http://www.bolpress.com/index.php>

Newspapers and periodical publications

El Deber

<http://www.eldeber.com.bo>

La Época

<http://www.eldeber.net/laepoca.htm>

La Prensa

<http://www.laprensa.com.bo>

La Razón

<http://www.la-razon.com>

Radio broadcasters

Radio FIDES

<http://www.radiofides.com>

Red Erbol

<http://www.erbol.com.bo>

Radio Panamericana

<http://www.panamericana.bo>

Television channels

ATB

<http://www.atb.com.bo/>

Canal 7 / TVB

<http://www.televisionboliviana.tv.bo/>

Red Unitel

<http://www.unitel.tv/>

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