

# AFRICAN MEDIA BAROMETER GHANA

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## **Sector 1: Freedom of expression, including freedom of the media, are effectively protected and promoted.**

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### *1.1 Freedom of expression, including freedom of the media, is guaranteed in the constitution and protected by other pieces of legislation.*

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#### ANALYSIS:

In 1992, the republican constitution of Ghana was accepted through a national referendum. This was after Ghana's longest period of military rule from 1981 to December 1992. The first multi-party elections were conducted in December 1992, giving recognition to the constitution. Since then, the country has successfully conducted three elections, which have been declared to be transparent, free and fair. During this period democracy has been gradually consolidated through the building of democratic institutions, the growth of a liberal civil society environment and a generally democratically acceptable political environment critical to economic development and social cohesion.

The 1992 constitution guarantees freedom of expression broadly in Chapter Five Article 21. Chapter 12 article 162 (1) of the constitution specifically stipulates: "Freedom and independence of the media are hereby guaranteed". The following clauses state that "there shall be no censorship in Ghana"; "no impediments to the establishment of private press or media; and in particular, there shall be no law requiring any person to obtain a licence as a prerequisite to the establishment" of any media.

Chapter Twelve also obliges parliament to establish a National Media Commission to be responsible, among others, for the upholding of journalistic standards and the "insulation" of the state-owned media from government control. The Commission was created by the National Media Commission Act in 1993.

The National Communications Authority (NCA) is responsible for allocating frequencies for broadcasting operations, in accordance with the National Communications Authority Act (1993). The granting of frequencies is necessitated by the fact that they are a scarce and limited national resource and is therefore not seen as "licensing" which would be unconstitutional. There have been discussions, though, on whether the allocation of frequencies by a state-body like the NCA does not constitute an indirect limitation of broadcasting activities. Foreign radio stations, for example, have been granted frequencies

relatively easily in the capital Accra while national or local operators have been left out. At present, the NCA “does not account to anybody”.

The question is what would be the best way to manage frequencies without this turning into a censorship tool. In 1992, the then Minister of Communication proposed to give the National Media Commission as an independent body the right to allocate frequencies, with the NCA only functioning as a service institution to the NMC in this regard. Presently, there are attempts under way to develop an ICT policy and a broadcasting law.

The bottom line is that the freedom of *print* media is guaranteed by the constitution and indeed protected by other pieces of legislation. In regard to freedom of *broadcasting* media, there seems to be a major problem that needs to be resolved.

#### SCORES:

Individual scores:           4, 5, 5, 4, 4, 5, 4, 5, 2

Average score:               **4.2**

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*1.2 The right to freedom of expression is practised and citizens, including journalists, are asserting their rights without fear.*

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#### ANALYSIS:

The space for freedom of expression exists and is being used to quite some extent by citizens. In addition, the Courts of Law, the Commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) and the National Media Commission (NMC) serve as guarantors of freedom of expression apart from the media itself. A criminal libel law was repealed in 2001.

It is important to note, though, that of late the frontiers of freedom of expression have been tested further by some media practitioners and pushed beyond what some believe are acceptable limits. This has led to an increase in media related court cases. Damages in significant amounts (up to 1 billion cedi = Euro 100.000) are now being awarded, sums which could push newspapers out of business. It is presumed that many of these court cases could have been avoided if journalists had followed the comprehensive Ghana Journalist Association’s code of conduct or adhered to the NMC’s mediation efforts more willingly.

The prevailing overall notion is that there has been an impressive improvement in the area of freedom of expression, in particular since the presidential elections in 2001.

## SCORES

Individual scores                    5, 5, 5, 3, 5, 5, 5, 5, 5

Average score:                    **4.8**

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*1.3 There are no laws restricting freedom of expression such as excessive official secret or libel acts, or laws that unreasonably interfere with the responsibilities of media.*

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## ANALYSIS:

In general, there are no laws that place undue restrictions on freedom of expression, in particular no law criminalising defamation.

There is, however, an Official Secrets Act which designates certain categories of public life as generally confidential and on which officials cannot be compelled to disclose information. In addition, the Armed Forces Act, the Ghana Police Act and some decrees issued by former military regimes are in place, in fact turning the security agencies into a “no-go area” for the media.

From a legal perspective, there are no restrictions in regard to reporting on cultural matters or “taboos”. There are, however, inherent customary practices, which indirectly put moral or other limitations on freedom of expression. For instance, the death of a chief is not expected to be in the public domain until after a certain period. While it would be in accordance with the law for such information to get into the public domain early, there could be sometimes prohibitive cultural implications and repercussions. In such cases, journalists may therefore exercise more caution than required by any law.

## SCORES:

Individual scores:                    4, 4, 4, 5, 5, 4, 4, 4, 4

Average score:                    **4.2**

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*1.4 Entry into and practice of the journalistic profession is legally unrestricted.*

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ANALYSIS:

There is no legal restriction on entering into the journalistic profession.

SCORES:

Individual scores: 5, 5, 5, 5, 5, 5, 5, 5, 5

Average score: **5.0**

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*1.5 Protection of confidential sources of information is guaranteed by law.*

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Unlike security agents, priests, medical professionals or lawyers, journalists - like all other citizens - can be compelled by a court of law to disclose their sources of information. If they do not comply, they will be in contempt of court. Currently, a Whistle Blowers Bill is under public discussion.

SCORES:

Individual scores: 1, 5, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1

Average score: **1.4**

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*1.6 Public information is easily accessible, guaranteed by law, to all citizens, including journalists.*

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ANALYSIS:

There is no Freedom of Information Act yet. The granting of any access to public information is up to the discretion of civil servants. The process of drawing up such a bill was initiated over six years ago, as was a Whistle Blowers Bill. Government seems unenthusiastic about these laws because of feared implications. One of the envisaged challenges could be the weak professional

calibre and capacity of public information officers in the different ministries who would be the key contacts should the bill be passed into law. As a result, it has been recommended that the Ministry of Information would first need some restructuring in order to address the existing shortcomings and be ready to give direction and professional support once the law has been passed and is being implemented. On its part, the media has also not been as forceful as expected in its advocacy for the passage of these bills.

#### SCORES:

Individual scores: 1, 1, 1, 1, 2, 1, 1, 1, 2

Average score: **1.2**

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#### *1.7 Civil society in general and media lobby groups actively advance the cause of media freedom.*

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#### ANALYSIS:

Civil society and media lobby groups have been doing a lot of lobbying to advance media freedom. Some examples:

- The Ghana Journalists' Association and the Attorney General's Department worked out modalities on how to report on the death of the Ya Na (traditional ruler) of Yendi because of its ethnic and political volatility. This was very innovative as far as media and government relations were concerned regarding issues considered sensitive to political stability and social integration and cohesion.
- Media advocacy played a decisive role in the repeal of the Criminal Libel Law. This was the first step taken by the New Patriotic Party (NPP) government in 2001 after winning its first elections since the country returned to democratic governance in 1992. This action by the government was given different interpretations. While some analysts lauded it as a positive step, others thought it was a 'deliberate political' move to cow media houses and operations and to favour the government in their reportage. It is important to state that the Ghanaian media have come a long way and are not naïve in such things. In other words, even if the latter argument was valid, the government would have had a hard time achieving that goal.

- The massive lobbying that led government to give a building to the GJA in 2001 for use as an International Press Centre. This was then refurbished with funds from members and donors and donations by the general public.

SCORES:

Individual scores: 5, 5, 5, 4, 5, 5, 5, 5, 5

Average score: **4.9**

**Overall score for sector 1: 3.7**

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## **Sector 2: The media landscape is characterised by diversity, independence and sustainability.**

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2.1 *A wide range of sources of information (print, broadcasting, internet) is available and affordable to citizens.*

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### **ANALYSIS:**

There is a wide range of sources of information available to citizens: The four dailies with the largest circulation in Ghana are the state-owned *Daily Graphic* and *Ghanaian Times*, as well as the privately owned *Daily Guide* and *The Chronicle*. *Daily Graphic* is the largest, with a circulation of about 130, 000 on average and about 8 – 10 people reading one copy, in a population of about 21 million.

Data about the media in general are not easy to come by; figures tend to vary from source to source and there are no official Audit Bureau of Circulation (ABC) statistics.

The price of a newspaper is 4,000 cedis (about 40 euro-cent), which is a quarter of the daily minimum wage of 16,000 cedis. This is very costly for ordinary Ghanaians, the majority of whom live in the rural areas.

The electronic media are naturally more accessible, with 28 radio stations in Accra alone.

Internet is easily accessible in urban areas with internet cafés at every street corner. 30 minutes usage costs 3000 cedis. There are efforts under way by government (through the Ministry of Communications) and private business entities to spread access to internet services to rural areas, especially to secondary level educational institutions. One such effort is the establishment of community information centres.

### **SCORES:**

Individual scores:           4, 4, 4, 2, 2, 4, 4, 2, 4

Average score:           **3.3**

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2.2 *Citizens' access to domestic and international media sources is not restricted by state authorities.*

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ANALYSIS:

There are no restrictions by state authorities on citizens' access to domestic and international media. This landscape is very liberal, so much so that it has given people cause to worry because of the type of newsprint found on media stands. Satellite TV is available for those who can afford it, and with it access to *CNN*, *BBC*, *DW TV*, *M-NET*.

SCORES:

Individual scores: 5, 5, 5, 5, 5, 5, 5, 5, 5

Average score: **5.0**

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2.3 *Efforts are undertaken to increase the scope of circulation of the print media, particularly to rural communities.*

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ANALYSIS:

At the national level, there are no deliberate efforts to increase the scope of circulation of print media to rural communities. *Daily Graphic* has plans to publish at regional levels, which may in turn lead to an increase in numbers and quick delivery. Even such a measure may not necessarily improve the outreach to rural communities, due to problems of affordability and literacy levels. Much more than over simply access as such, the concern is over whether rural communities really want newspapers and will be able to afford them, and whether they will be able to read and understand the stories.

SCORES:

Individual scores: 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 2, 1, 2

Average score: **1.2**

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*2.4 Broadcasting legislation has been passed and is implemented that provides for a conducive environment for public, commercial and community broadcasting.*

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ANALYSIS:

There are different pieces of legislation on broadcasting which are not harmonized and, in part, contradict each other: the law establishing the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation, GBC (NLC226 of 1968), the National Communications Authority Act 524 (1996) and the Media Commission Act 449 (1993). The Broadcasting Law sees to the operations of the GBC while the Media Commission Act focuses on the administration of GBC. This creates a lot of problems and inconsistencies. Also, there are divergent opinions as to whether or not the Broadcasting Law (NLC226, 1968) has effectively been repealed by the coming into force of the 1992 constitution.

SCORES:

Individual scores:           1, 2, 1, 2, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1

Average score:             **1.2**

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*2.5 Community broadcasting enjoys special promotion given its potential to broaden access by poor and rural communities.*

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ANALYSIS:

There is no general agreement on the definition of community radio. The NCA appears to follow its own, though non-transparent definition, which is different from that given by the Community Radio Network, with the result that the NCA claims that 35 community radios stations are on air while the Network counts only four.

Although the important role of community radios is being recognised generally, it has taken government some time to come to a minimum level of appreciation with some fear regarding the possible enhancement of ethnicity by such media. It is therefore not surprising that there is currently no national commitment and

support to community radios either through the provision of funds or development of a policy.

SCORES:

Individual scores: 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1

Average score: **1.0**

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*2.6 The editorial independence of print media published by a public authority is protected adequately against undue political interference.*

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ANALYSIS:

The era of political interference in editorial management during the military regime and to some extent the early years of re-democratisation is long gone. Currently, the two public print media houses (*Graphic Communications Group* and *Ghanaian Times*) enjoy editorial independence without political interference. The selection of stories is guided by laid down principles which consider the public's views and interests, fairness and balanced reporting among others. From time to time there is an inclination to favour the government. It could not be established whether this is due to internal processes or subtle interferences from outside.

The constitution protects the editorial independence of public media. Appointments to the boards of public newspapers are made in consultation with the President of the Republic. The editors of public newspapers are appointed by the boards of the newspapers in consultation with the Public Services Commission (PSC) to ensure conformity with public service standards. Editors of public newspapers, however, are not public servants (unlike those in the *GBC*).

In general, the level of editorial independence is appreciably high and recognised as such.

SCORES:

Individual scores: 5, 5, 5, 4, 5, 5, 5, 2, 5

Average score **4.6**

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*2.7 Local and regional independent news agencies gather and distribute information for all media.*

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ANALYSIS:

The Ghana News Agency (GNA) is seen as independent in its operations. It serves both the public as well as the private media and its services are acceptable to all stakeholders, including the privately owned newspapers.

SCORES:

Individual scores: 5, 5, 5, 4, 5, 4, 4, 4, 1

Average score: **4.1**

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*2.8 Media diversity is promoted through adequate competition regulation / legislation.*

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ANALYSIS:

There exists no explicit regulation/legislation for the promotion of adequate competition in the media. Competition is driven by market forces and the private sector is not restricted in this regard. Indeed, the constitution encourages private sector participation in the media.

Although there is plurality of media, the output is not as diverse as could have been expected. Partnerships and cross ownership in the broadcasting field in particular have become a challenge to diversity of media content, thus posing the question whether pluralism promotes diversity.

SCORES:

Individual scores: 1, 2, 3, 2, 5, 1, 2, 1, 1

Average score: **2.0**

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*2.9 Government promotes a political and economic environment which allows a diverse media landscape.*

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ANALYSIS:

According to the 1992 Constitution the State has to “take all necessary action to ... affording ample opportunity for individual initiative and creativity in economic activities and fostering an enabling environment for a pronounced role of the private sector in the economy” (article 36 (1) (b)).

However, specific and deliberate interventions by government to create a cost effective, quality-guaranteed environment for the media in particular have not been noted yet. Critical issues are the cost for printing and raw materials. Import taxes are being levied on newsprint whilst imported books are not taxed.

The industry itself could do more to improve the situation. The lack of consensus amongst newspaper operators regarding the setting up of a joint printing facility was cited as an example. In order to achieve economies of scale, reduce production costs and ensure quality, smaller publications could consider mergers.

SCORES:

Individual scores:            2, 4, 3, 2, 4, 2, 4, 2, 4

Average score:                **3.0**

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*2.10 Private media outlets operate as efficient and professional businesses.*

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ANALYSIS:

Some private media houses explicitly target and “exploit” certain ideological markets or niches for political news. For them the normal economics of business are not a priority: their main interest is rather to ensure that radio stations use their papers frequently as part of their newspaper review programmes in order to get across their political messages. This is an ingenious way of spreading their

headlines, views and, for that matter, ideologies quite effectively and at low cost. But one cannot regard these outlets as professional media businesses.

The mainstream print media and some electronic media, on the other hand, are run professionally.

SCORES:

Individual scores: 2, 4, 3, 4, 2, 2, 2, 2, 2

Average score: **2.6**

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2.11 *State print media are not subsidised with tax payers' money.*

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ANALYSIS:

Both the *Daily Graphic* and the *Ghanaian Times* do not receive any subsidies from government and do not enjoy any tax exemptions. Their funding situation is similar to that of any other medium.

SCORES:

Individual scores: 5, 4, 5, 5, 5, 4, 5, 5, 5

Average score: **4.8**

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2.12 *Government does not use its power over the placement of advertisements as a means to interfere with media content.*

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ANALYSIS:

Generally, this does not happen. Every now and then, a certain department or minister might have certain favourite newspapers which then enjoy special treatment, but there are no deliberate attempts by government to abuse its power of ad spend.

SCORES:

Individual scores: 4, 5, 5, 5, 5, 5, 5, 2, 5

Average score: **4.6**

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*2.13 The advertising market is large enough to maintain a diversity of media outlets.*

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ANALYSIS:

In general the advertising market is not large enough to promote and maintain a truly diverse media landscape.

For adverts, circulation and ratings are key and advertising agencies play a very critical role in the assessment of the appropriate media to be used by their respective clients. Consequently, radio stations have a bigger slice of the market because - compared to the print media - they are easily accessible and have a wider reach. Radio solely depends on adverts while print media rely on both sales and advertising.

SCORES:

Individual scores: 3, 2, 4, 2, 4, 2, 2, 2, 2

Average score: **2.6**

**Overall score for sector 2: 3.1**

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**Sector 3: Broadcasting regulation is transparent and independent, the state broadcaster is transformed into a truly public broadcaster.**

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*3.1 Broadcasting is regulated by an independent body adequately protected against interference, particularly of a political and economic nature.*

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**ANALYSIS:**

The National Communications Authority (NCA) and the National Media Commission (NMC) are in charge of regulating broadcasting. The NCA grants frequencies and thus makes the decision on whether an aspirant broadcaster will be allowed to go on-air or not. The NMC is in charge of content standards only. Thus, the panel agreed that the most relevant regulatory body in Ghana is the NCA.

The NCA is not independent as it is under the Ministry of Communications. Its interest and attention are seen to be skewed in favour of the telecommunication industry, allegedly due to the much higher level of fees payable by phone companies. This leaves little attention for the mandate of broadcasting regulation. In addition, the NCA seems to be giving preference to commercial radio stations, of which there are some 130 on air, compared to only 4 community radio stations (following the definition of the Community Radio Network).

**SCORES:**

Individual scores: 1, 1, 2, 1, 2, 2, 1, 1, 2

Average score: **1.4**

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*3.2 The appointments procedure for members of the regulatory body is open and transparent and involves civil society.*

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ANALYSIS:

The appointment procedure for the NCA is not transparent and open. Although it is supposed to be a technical body, the perception is that non-technical considerations influence certain appointments

SCORES:

Individual scores: 1, 1, 2, 2, 2, 1, 1, 1, 1

Average score: **1.4**

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*3.3 The body regulates broadcasting in the public interest and ensures fairness and a diversity of views broadly representing society at large.*

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ANALYSIS:

NCA's role is merely a technical one: to allocate frequencies, not to assess the content of radio programmes before the granting of frequencies. On the one hand, this is seen as positive with regard to the constitutional provision of no licensing requirements being necessary for media organisations. On the other hand and in the absence of a broadcasting policy, this can lead to a first-come-first-served attitude and thus a sub-optimal overall structure of electronic media within the limited frequencies technically available. There are cases where potential radio operators are being prevented from starting operations due to reasons not always transparent or understandable to others.

SCORES:

Individual scores: 2, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 2, 2.

Average score: **1.3**



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3.4 *The body's decisions on licensing in particular are informed by a broadcasting policy developed in a transparent and inclusive manner.*

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ANALYSIS:

The NCA's activities are informed by the Act establishing it, which is silent on issues of broadcasting policies. There is no comprehensive broadcasting legislation but only an array of pieces of legislation on broadcasting. There is no broadcasting policy in place and the NCA's activities are neither transparent nor inclusive.

SCORES:

Individual scores: 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1

Average score: **1.0**

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3.5 *The public broadcaster is accountable to the public through a board representative of society at large and selected in an independent, open and transparent manner.*

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ANALYSIS:

The selection of Board members of the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation follows a process of wide consultation. Members of the National Media Commission submit nominations after consulting with their institutions and constituencies. Assessments of the nominations are carried out – following criteria such as regional and gender balance - and a short list is presented to the President of the Republic in “consultations”. The President is then expected to submit his comments to the NMC. In cases where the President has any objection or reservation about nominations, he is expected within a specified period to provide reasons for such reservations or objections. If after the set date no responses have been received, the NMC goes ahead with the appointment process. Consultation with the President is a constitutional requirement, but legal circles are debating what such “consultation” really entails.

SCORES:

Individual scores: 4, 5, 4, 5, 5, 4, 4, 4, 4

Average score: **4.3**

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*3.6 Persons who have vested interests of a political or commercial nature are excluded from possible membership in the board, i.e. office bearers with the state and political parties as well as those with a financial interest in the broadcasting industry.*

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ANALYSIS:

Principles for the appointment of members of the NMC board are by extension applied to the board membership of the state broadcaster, the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation. Members of the NMC are appointed on the basis of their technical expertise. These commissioners must not be engaged in active politics. In fact, in late 2005 one commissioner lost her position and needed to be replaced after having been elected national treasurer of the ruling party.

Whilst there are 3 Members of Parliament and 2 members appointed by government on the NMC, neither the NMC nor the GBC have any party-political representation on their boards.

SCORES:

Individual scores: 5, 5, 5, 5, 5, 5, 5, 5, 4

Average score: **4.9**

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*3.7 The editorial independence of the public broadcaster from commercial pressure and political influence is guaranteed by law and practiced.*

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ANALYSIS:

GBC is expected to drive government programmes and promote its agenda as stipulated in the law establishing it. (This law is, however, has not been harmonised with provisions of the constitution and may be in contravention of the basic law).

Despite this stipulation, the GBC operates relatively independently. However, past experiences where there was heavy government presence in the editorial management of the GBC seem to be lingering on in the heads and minds of GBC staff. The concern is whether workers are indeed conscious of significant changes after the year 2000 when a new political party, the New Patriotic Party (NPP) came to power. As it is, workers are still practising a degree of self-censorship.

SCORES:

Individual scores:                3, 2, 2, 4, 4, 4, 4, 3, 2

Average score:                 **3.1**

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*3.8 The public broadcaster is adequately funded in a manner that protects it from arbitrary interference with its budget.*

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ANALYSIS:

The GBC is not adequately funded. There are currently three sources of funding: internally generated funds (IGF), government subvention, and loans and grants. These sources should be balanced with recurrent expenditure. The funding situation has affected plans of restructuring the corporation to enable it operate efficiently and effectively. Such restructuring seems necessary in regard to the ratio between administrative and operational staff, with the former outnumbering the latter.

SCORES:

Individual scores: 2, 1, 2, 3, 3, 1, 2, 2, 2

Average score: **2.0**

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*3.9 The public broadcaster is technically accessible in the entire country.*

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ANALYSIS:

GBC's radio signal has more or less national coverage. The same cannot be said for TV. Settlements along the borders with neighbouring countries suffer from signal spillage from beyond the borders, like Wa in the Upper East region bordering Bourkina Faso, and some towns in the Volta and Western regions bordering Togo and the Ivory Coast respectively. Generally, however, coverage is regarded as sufficient.

SCORES:

Individual scores: 4, 4, 4, 4, 4, 4, 5, 4, 4

Average score: 4.1

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*3.10 The public broadcaster offers diverse programming for all interests.*

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ANALYSIS:

The public broadcaster offers diverse programming for all interests, age and gender groups, and rural/urban audiences. This achievement might be in danger if GBC is forced to "commercialise", in line with indications from some circles in government that the corporation should be run as a commercial entity. This might subject it to the same profit motive governing other private TV stations which happen to be its competitors, such as TV Three.

SCORES:

Individual scores: 5, 5, 5, 5, 5, 5, 4, 5, 5

Average score: **4.9**

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3.11 *The public broadcaster offers balanced and fair information reflecting the full spectrum of diverse views and opinions.*

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ANALYSIS:

GBC genuinely tries to offer balanced and fair information to its audience. The President, however, usually seems to enjoy preferential treatment. There is always one standby camera reserved solely for the president and in most cases a story involving the head of state will be the lead story irrespective of its content.

During election years, issues regarding fair coverage of election activities of political parties are mapped out and mechanisms agreed upon. Yet, under the guise of the state, the party in power takes advantage of incumbency and therefore often gets more coverage than the opposition. This concern is being addressed and each election year sees some improvement in the situation.

Certain government quarters are trying to interfere, although in a limited and mostly subtle way. Editors, however, attempt to be fair and balanced in their news output. Against the background of the past that saw GBC as a mere propaganda tool ("where we come from"), the news these days reflect the full spectrum of views and opinions.

SCORES:

Individual scores: 5, 5, 4, 5, 5, 4, 5, 5, 4

Average score: **4.7**

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3.12 *The public broadcaster offers as much diverse and creative local content as economically achievable.*

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ANALYSIS:

The locally produced programmes of GBC can not compete with the private TV sector any more because of poor technical quality and studio settings as well as bad judgement in selecting personalities invited to the studio. One example is the morning show, which includes the newspaper review. In spite of the fact that GBC TV started such a show, which was well received by the public, it could not maintain standards, leading to TV Three's morning show now being more popular. One reason for the comparatively poor calibre of guests might also be that TV Three is paying higher allowances for appearances on its shows.

SCORES:

Individual scores:           3, 2, 2, 3, 3, 2, 4, 3, 2

Average score:             **2.7**

**Overall score for sector 3: 3.0**

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## Sector 4: The media practice high levels of professional standards.

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4.1 *The media follow voluntary codes of professional standards which are enforced by self-regulatory bodies.*

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### ANALYSIS:

The Ghana Journalists' Association (GJA) has developed a voluntary code of professional standards and established an Ethics Committee. Even though the code is comprehensive and touches on most aspects of professional conduct, it is not fully respected by some of its members. Some of those who were summoned to appear before the Ethics Committee for violating the code have refused to respond to the summons.

The National Media Commission as a statutory body faces similar problems since an Accra High Court decided that the NMC does not have the powers to enforce their summons.

It has been argued that if journalists were to adhere to the code and dispute settlement procedures, the number of media related court cases, which appear to be on the increase, would be drastically reduced. A closer look at such court cases reveals that indeed a majority of cases could have been avoided if defendants followed professional guidelines in their practice.

### SCORES:

Individual scores: 2, 4, 3, 4, 2, 3, 3, 2, 2

Average score: **2.8**

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4.2 *The standard of reporting follows the basic principles of accuracy and fairness.*

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ANALYSIS:

Inaccuracies occur every now and then. Some news reporters, for example, are unable to report accurately if there are no written speeches. This applies to all media outlets - both print and electronic.

There is, however, an apparent lack of fairness, leading to an escalating number of libel cases in courts of law. Some media houses are now putting in place measures to deal with this trend. For instance, at *Daily Graphic* sanctions and incentives are used as punishment and rewards respectively for staff members' conduct.

SCORES:

Individual scores:           3, 3, 2, 3, 2, 3, 3, 3, 3

Average score:             **2.8**

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4.3 *The media cover the full spectrum of events, issues and cultures, including business /economics, cultural, local and investigative stories.*

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ANALYSIS:

Both public and private mainstream media cover many aspects of events and issues, with private media tending to over-emphasise political issues. News coverage is, however, skewed towards urban events. This is now changing as especially broadcast media are increasingly trying to get reports from rural areas. *Daily Graphic* has introduced two pages devoted to regional news.

Taking the media as a whole – including the many specialised publications that concentrate on human interest stories, business, sports, culture and the like – more or less the full spectrum of subject matter seems to be covered.



## SCORES:

Individual scores: 4, 5, 2, 5, 2, 5, 5, 5, 3

Average score: **4.0**

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4.4 *Gender mainstreaming is promoted in terms of equal participation of both sexes in the production process.*

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## ANALYSIS:

Quite a number of women are working in leading positions. The acting editor of the *Ghanaian Times* and the editor of the *Daily Guide* are women. At *Graphic Communications Group of Companies*, two out of the five editors are women. 2004 statistics regarding gender representation on the boards of state-owned media reflect a very imbalanced picture. For example, between the *GBC*, the *New Times*, *Graphic Group* and the *GNA* with a total board membership of 34, only 6 are women, none of whom is the chair.

There are a number of women working in the newsrooms. But the main challenge here remains that women rarely rise to management and decision making positions. Women work mainly on women and social stories, regarded as “soft news” which are not seen as a recommendation for promotions. However, the issue of women’s low presence in management and decision-making positions is a national phenomenon and not typical of the media industry. At the national level, some corrective efforts are being made but these are not yielding the expected results and progress is quite slow.

A “Women in Broadcasting” group is trying to address some of these challenges. It has been working with other civil society groups in an attempt to promote women’s issues in the media and wider society. It must also be mentioned that the GJA has had women Presidents for over ten years. In the last GJA elections held in March 2006 there were two women and one man contesting the presidential position. Although the man won, this was seen as an indication of the assertiveness of women and their aspiration to move into higher positions.

Generally, there is no special effort being made towards promoting women or achieving equal participation in the work place. There is a lot of room for improvement.

SCORES:

Individual scores: 3, 2, 2, 3, 2, 4, 4, 4, 3

Average score: **3.0**

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4.5 *Gender mainstreaming is reflected in the editorial content.*

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ANALYSIS:

The *Daily Graphic* now has one page for women/gender issues each day, an improvement over the previous weekly features. Events such as International Women's Day tend to increase gender media content. In other instances, gender content is triggered by national events. For instance, in 2004 when both the best national farmer and best teacher awards were won by women, the media did well in giving them the prominence required.

SCORES:

Individual scores: 4, 4, 3, 3, 4, 4, 4, 4, 4

Average score: **3.8**

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4.6 *Journalists and editors do not practice self-censorship.*

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ANALYSIS:

In most media houses there is little or no self-censorship. Generally, most media houses are guided largely by professional considerations.

At state-owned media there seems to be a difference between print and broadcast media. *Daily Graphic* maintains that there is no self-censorship and that when there are facts to support a particular story line, the paper will go ahead unrestrained and do what it considers professionally correct. Editorial decisions at *GBC* still seem to be based on bad experiences from a not too distant past: workers there appear to be conscious or perhaps overly conscious of what news and pictures to broadcast – and what not.

All media still regard matters of national security as a “no-go area”.

SCORES:

Individual scores: 4, 4, 4, 4, 3, 4, 3, 4, 3

Average score: **3.7**

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*4.7 Owners of private media do not interfere with editorial independence.*

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ANALYSIS:

There is interference with editorial independence from owners of private newspapers and radio stations. Some of the reasons are the owners' overt or covert political agenda, the fact that they are owned by political parties, the owner's background as a journalist in the case of founder/owners and his/her economic instincts and motivation. Such interferences are causing a high staff/editorial turn over in some media houses.

SCORES:

Individual scores: 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 3, 3

Average score: **1.4**

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*4.8 Salary levels and general working conditions for journalists and other media practitioners are adequate to discourage corruption.*

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ANALYSIS:

With the exception of the *Daily Graphic* and some anchor men/women in the private broadcast media, the salaries and conditions of service for journalists are generally bad. This tends to encourage corruption. The type of corruption can be very subtle and works in different ways. Sometimes, it may be in the form of "appreciation" being paid after the publishing of a favourable story or the decision not to publish a negative story. It is also common practice for journalists who attend press conferences to receive an "allowance" to cover their transport costs

(up to 50,000 cedis = 5 Euros). Organisers of such conferences are aware that journalists might not cover the event if such allowances are not paid. GJA has tried in vain to convince media owners to cover transport costs for their staff.

#### SCORES:

Individual scores: 2, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 2

Average score: **1.2**

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*4.9 Training facilities offer formal qualification programmes for journalists as well as opportunities to upgrade their skills.*

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#### ANALYSIS:

Training facilities offering formal qualification programmes include the Ghana Institute of Journalism (GIJ), the School of Communication Studies at the University of Ghana, the National Film and Television Institute (NAFTI), the Institute of Management Studies (IMS). The GIJ offers both diploma and degree courses. A diploma can be obtained after two years whilst the degree course runs for three years for A Level holders and four years for Senior Secondary School Certificate holders.

The *Graphic* Group provides in-house “skills based training” for all levels of staff, including special technical training for all engineering staff. Reporters in the Editorial Department are trained in report writing and language skills whilst sectional heads receive training in attitudinal improvement techniques. Journalists responsible for caption writing also receive specialised training.

The *GBC* also organises a number of in-house training sessions for all Division and Regional offices with local and foreign trainers.

One challenge with training courses offered is reaching the intended target group. Often senior staff do not attend such courses tailored especially for them due to their work load and the need to meet deadlines. Instead junior staff members are sent who can not appreciate the training offered and are not able to apply the skills gained effectively. This state of affairs seems to be an “Accra phenomenon” as courses in the regions usually receive a better target response, perhaps due to the fact that journalists in the regions are not as privileged in

being offered such training on a regular basis. Among donors who have contributed to training are FES, UNDP and the World Bank.

SCORES:

Individual scores: 4, 5, 5, 5, 5, 5, 5, 4, 4

Average score: 4.7

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*4.10 Journalists and other media practitioners are organised in trade unions and / or professional associations.*

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ANALYSIS:

The Ghana Journalists' Association is a vibrant organisation with about 600 members in good standing. It is a professional body and not a trade union. Currently, there is no media trade union in place. Other media organisations are the Ghana Independent Broadcasters Association, the Private Newspapers Publishers Association of Ghana and the Women in Broadcasting.

SCORES:

Individual scores: 4, 5, 5, 5, 5, 5, 5, 4, 4

Average score: 4.7

**Overall score for sector 4: 3.0**

The panel meeting took place at the Afrikiko Hotel, Akosombo, 18 to 19 March 2006.

**The Panel:**

Mrs. Susan Aryeetey, Lawyer and Women Activist; Mr. Kofi Asamoah, trade unionist; Mr. Ato Kobbie, editor; Mr. Affail Monney, journalist and media activist; Mr. Maxwell Opoku-Agyeman, lawyer and lecturer; Mr. Kweku Rockson, journalist and media activist; Mr Alhaji Abubakar Siddick, Director of university based radio station; Ransford Tetteh, editor and media activist.

**The Rapporteur:**

Dr. Beatrix Allah-Mensah

**The Facilitator:**

Mr Hendrik Bussiek