

The African Media Barometer (AMB)

The Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung's Southern African Media Project took the initiative together with the Media Institute for Southern Africa (MISA) to start the African Media Barometer in April 2005, a self-assessment exercise done by Africans themselves according to home-grown criteria. The project is the first in-depth and comprehensive description and measurement system for national media environments on the African continent.

The benchmarks are to a large extent taken from the African Commission for Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) "Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression in Africa", adopted in 2002. This declaration was largely inspired by the groundbreaking "Windhoek Declaration on Promoting an Independent and Pluralistic African Press" (1991) and the "African Charter on Broadcasting" (2001).

By the end of 2007, 26 sub-Saharan countries have been covered by the AMB. In 2007 those countries which started the exercise in 2005 were revisited providing for the first time comparable data to measure developments in a country over a two-year period.

Methodology: A panel of experts is formed in each country, including representatives of media and civil society at large in equal numbers. They are serving as panel members in their personal capacities, not as representatives of their respective organisations. The panel should consist of not more than ten members. They will meet bi-annually for two days retreats to go in a self-assessment process through the indicators in a qualitative discussion and determine (quantitative) scores for each indicator. The meetings will be chaired by an FES consultant to ensure comparable results. The resulting reports are made public.

¹ The ACHPR is the authoritative organ of the African Union (AU) mandated to interpret the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights

GHANA

Scoring system: Panel members are asked to allocate their individual scores to the respective indicators after the qualitative discussion in an anonymous vote according to the following scale:

- 1 Country does not meet indicator.
- 2 Country minimally meets aspects of the indicator.
- 3 Country meets many aspects of indicator but progress may be too recent to judge.
- 4 Country meets most aspects of indicator.
- 5 Country meets all aspects of the indicator and has been doing so over time.

Scores for each sector are determined as follows: Members of the panel will, after a qualitative group discussion, attach their individual point-score (1 - 5) to each sub-indicator of a sector. The sum of all individual scores will be divided by the number of panel members. The result will then be considered the final score for the sub-indicator.

This qualitative report, including the scores, serves the purpose of measuring over time (based on bi-annual repetitions of the panel meetings) the progress or otherwise of developments in the media landscape.

Kaitira Kandjii
Director Regional
Media Institute of Southern Africa
Windhoek, Namibia

Rolf Paasch
Director, Media Project Southern Africa
Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation (FES)
Windhoek, Namibia

AFRICAN MEDIA BAROMETER GHANA 2008

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

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

ANALYSIS:

Since returning to democracy in 1992, Ghana has progressed on a number of democratic indicators. This progression has not been without challenges. The most important dimension of these challenges is the country's ability to respond to these otherwise normal hitches that countries experience on the road to democratic consolidation.

The Ghanaian democracy is guided by the 1992 Constitution, the basis for the first multi-party elections held in December 1992 and won by the National Democratic Congress (NDC). Since then, there have been three more elections keenly contested and won by the (NDC) in 1996 for a second four year term and the New Patriotic Party (NPP) in 2000, and 2004 respectively. Among the areas of progression are the dynamics recorded in the media regarding the extent to which protection and promotion of its freedom is guaranteed and how the media in turn help in the protection and promotion of freedom of expression by ordinary Ghanaians.

The Ghanaian constitution of 1992 and the events following have contributed to institution building, strengthening of the civil society environment, and social and economic development. One essential enabler of these expectations is the enjoyment of freedoms including the freedom of expression exhibited primarily through media freedom. In Article 21 of the 1992 constitution, freedom of expression is broadly guaranteed. On media freedom, Chapter 12 Article 162 (1) expressly stipulates: "freedom and independence of the me-

dia are hereby guaranteed”. Clause 2 states that “subject to this constitution and any other law not consistent with this constitution, there shall be no media censorship in Ghana”, and clause (3) notes that there shall be 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 or operation of a newspaper, journal or other media for mass communication or information”.

To further strengthen these provisions, the constitution mandates Parliament to establish a National Media Commission (NMC) to be responsible for ensuring and upholding journalistic standards and ensuring that state-owned media are insulated from government control. Specifically, article 166 states that “there shall be established by Act of Parliament....a National Media Commission which shall consist of 15 members. The institutional representation of the members are clearly spelt out in the following subsections. In response to this constitutional mandate, the NMC was created by the National Media Commission Act in 1993.

It may be stated that the NMC’s constitutional role guarantees media freedom. The expressed concern was, however, the extent to which the NMC does this adequately since the constitutional mandate may be one thing whilst the actualization of the mandate could pose certain challenges. With the use of certain expressions by panelists like “its supposed to”, “mandated to but ...”, points to some challenges that the NMC faces in its effort to carry out its constitutional mandate.

This weakness was expressed in the fact that the NMC cannot summon a media house; and that it is only the high court that can enforce that. As a result, some panelists called for the strengthening of the NMC; but other panelists felt that, in fact, the NMC is doing exactly what it is mandated to do.

Other pieces of legislation, besides the constitution which aim at strengthening the freedom of the media are the Repeal of the

Newspaper License Law since 1992 and the Repeal of the Criminal Libel law.

Other views suggested that, in spite of the legislation which guarantees freedom, the Police Administration has a mandate to invite a media house, under special circumstances when they consider a publication as having implications for national security. However, it is not clear whether this can be used as a harassment tool to suppress ideas and the media, in which case one can contend that it limits, to some extent, expression of freedom.

Overall, however, there was an expressed view that there are numerous channels of expression of views without any arrests or harassment.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 4.5 (2006: 4.2)

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

ANALYSIS:

For a better analysis of this indicator, panelists felt that the kind of definition that is assigned to the term “freedom of expression” is important. For some, the extent to which the term is defined can have implications for how freedom is expressed without fear or favour. There was agreement that the environment for expressing one’s freedom existed. Nonetheless socio-cultural factors may inhibit the access to the medium of expression which then determines the potency of the right to expressing one’s freedom. This does not, in any case, indicate a conscious effort to curtail the right to freedom of expression.

There was consensus on the growing phenomenon of radio phone-ins and text messaging as avenues for people to express and assert their rights. In spite of this, a couple of panelists insisted that socio-cultural conditions may be a limitation against people asserting their rights to expressly share their views. Others felt that the issue is more economic and personal than socio-cultural. The growing phenomena of serial callers whose views tow particular political lines have also tended to skew the direction of debates. Concerns were expressed on whether people felt secure with phone-ins. Other forms of contribution also attracted the attention of panelists who noted that the use of pseudonyms and text messaging without names and the facelessness of radio could be facilitating freedom of expression on one hand and restriction on the other hand. Again, the fact that presenters screen in-coming calls before presenting them on air, some argued, could be limitations to the right to express one's views. The contention was that having many voices on air does not necessarily translate into increased number of people expressing their views. These limitations are also subjected to generational gaps, gender, institutional and religious imperatives.

Again, the style of presentation of views could be a means of curtailing freedom of expression. At the media level, there are unspoken and unwritten restrictions. Thus, as a result of the economic insecurity and vulnerability of journalist, they normally tend to engage in self-censorship or self regulation. In addition, because almost every issue is refracted in political lenses, it has implications for the freedom of expression for citizens and some journalists. This is indicative, to some extent, of the impact of power relations on freedom of expression.

The argument that there has been an increase in the diversification of the channels of expression gained currency with the panelists. Such channels included the use of groups and institutions including civil society groups, identifiable groups like women's groups, youth, religious and disabled organized bodies and even the use of advertisement. The use of such channels of expression, according to some panelist could be due to 'fear' of individual expressions of views.

Another issue that was raised by the panelists was how to characterize people's response to the media, that is, whether people were afraid to express their views or they are being respectful of the system and the powers that be. The consensus was that there had been a change in the media landscape for the better. Nonetheless, because of the socio-cultural, economic, and personal limitations, these changes are not readily evident.

SCORES

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

Average score: 3.3 (2006: 4.8)

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.*

ANALYSIS:

Libel is common in every society. But it is when it is considered criminal or exceeds certain limits that it tends to pose a challenge. The criminal libel law was repealed in 2001, but civil libel law is in place and people, especially politicians, are resorting to it to protect their reputation through suits against journalists, editors and publishing houses. There are excessive fines imposed on those found to be culpable.

The current situation is that aggrieved persons now defer to the NMC for their complaints to be resolved. Even though the existing laws are based on the constitution, it is their application that poses the greatest challenge to law makers and interpreters.

GHANA
SCORES:

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

Average score: 3.8 (2006:4.2)

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

ANALYSIS:

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

SCORES:

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

Average score: 4.8 (2006: 4.2)

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

ANALYSIS:

There are no laws that guarantee the protection of confidential sources of information. Apart from the security forces, priests, lawyers and medical doctors, any other person including journalists can be compelled by the law courts to disclose the sources of their information. The right to information law, when passed could help to guarantee confidential sources of information.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 1.1 (2006: 1.4)

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

ANALYSIS:

The process for the introduction of a Right to Information bill was initiated by the Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA), a local Think Tank in 2002. But the process has been delayed for six years. To expedite action on this, civil society groups including the Ghana Journalists Association (GJA) took up the challenge and played strong advocacy roles to ensure the speeding up of the process. Not much has been achieved on expediting action on the bill. Currently, the bill is at the Attorney General's Department, from where it would be sent to cabinet, then to Parliament before final passage. Taking the current political climate into consideration, it is apparent that, the passage of the bill into an Act cannot happen during this election year, 2008. Among the causes of the delay are the very opposing arguments churned out by leaders and the practitioners like journalists on aspects of the bill.

The prevailing situation is that, even though some public information can be accessed, no public official can be compelled to release any information they consider confidential and therefore not for public consumption. This was considered by some as an emerging culture, which poses difficulties to accessing public information.

A number of factors that could, in fact, restrict access to information include non-availability of the required information; need for

clearance from superiors,

breakdown of computers; uncertainty about the real uses for the information disclosed; and inadequate packaging of information in accessible and usable form. In a nutshell, public information is not easily accessible or guaranteed by law.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 1.4 (2006: 1.2)

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

ANALYSIS:

There are a few media lobby groups which have demonstrated their interest to defend the media. These include the Ghana Journalists Association (GJA) and the Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA). There are few occasions where civil society has taken initiatives on behalf of the media. A case in point is the initiative by the IEA on the Right to Information bill, which was later taken over by the GJA. Generally, civil society thinks of what they can use the media for but not what they can do for the media. Groups like the Ghana Bar Association (GBA) which could be vocal on certain media issues and concerns related to the media directly or indirectly, in which they would have been involved in the past are silent on similar issues now. It is apparent that most organizations have become more inward looking.

For civil society to play any meaningful role in advancing the cause of the media, it needs to understand the roles and general workings of the media and this may imply that the media will have to take the initiative itself, sensitize civil society which can then support the process.

SCORES:

Individual scores: 3, 2, 2, 2, 2, 2, 4, 5, 2, 1, 3

Average score: 2.5 (2006: 4.9)

Overall score for sector 1: 3.1 (2006: 3.7)

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

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

ANALYSIS:**Print and Broadcasting**

It is apparent that the number of media sources for accessing information has increased. For instance, the number of TV channels have increased from 2 to 5 in the last couple of years, the NCA has granted licences to 167 radio stations out of which 130 are operational. The distribution of news has taken on a trend known as ‘cannibalism’ in media circles. Besides the newspaper reviews, which has become a major daily feature of radio stations, there are other radio stations which actually extract information from newspapers and write news for their listening audience. This is common with radio stations in remote areas of the country and some community radios where access to newspapers is a problem. There is a level of disagreement between newspaper companies regarding the impact of newspaper reviews by radio stations on their market. Whilst the mainly small privately-owned newspaper organizations think that the radio stations actually help them to sell their papers, the larger companies tend to think that the exercise adversely affects their daily sales and should therefore be discontinued.

Another concern is the timeliness with which news become accessible to citizens especially in remote areas. The question was posed on whether delayed availability makes the paper or news the same? The response was that since one of the key features of the news industry is timeliness, any deviation from it changes what the paper or the news is, its character and relevance.

Internet

The use of the internet is a growing phenomenon. The means for accessing the internet is growing and becoming more varied and user friendly. There are mobile internet devices sold and operated by cell phone companies and a wide range of businesses of all sizes are getting hooked onto the net. The Government's initiative of making internet accessible to more Ghanaians is currently on a pilot basis in selected districts and schools. However, these are mostly evident in the urban areas and very limited in peri-urban and rural areas.

On affordability, there is no denying the fact that sources of information are quite expensive in Ghana. For instance, the cost of newspapers range between 50p (50 cents) and 70p (70 cents) equivalent, whilst internet access ranges between Gh c1.00 to Gh.c 1.80/ hour in Accra depending on the location. (1 Ghanaian Cedi = 0.83 US \$) On affordability of radio and TV, although not everybody has a radio or TV set, more people have access. This is because one radio or TV set is shared by a number of people, and in some cases there is communal viewing of certain popular TV programmes.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 3.2 (2006: 3.3)

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

ANALYSIS:

There are no restrictions to citizen's access to domestic and international sources by state authorities .

GHANA SCORES:

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

Average score: 4.8 (2006:5.0)

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

ANALYSIS:

There is no organized system for newspaper distribution in the country. Currently, it is only the Graphic Communication Group Ltd, the publishers of the Daily Graphic, which has regional newspaper editions which started in 2007 and are contemplating rolling out of district newspapers. Daily Guide, a privately owned newspaper, also airlifts its newspapers to other parts of the country- particularly Kumasi and the Northern parts of Ghana. Some views were expressed on the challenge of illiteracy and cost which could make achieving the objectives of wide circulation and increasing availability to rural communities a futile exercise.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 2.4 (2006:1.2)

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

ANALYSIS:

The broadcasting law is still under consideration which has generated some advocacy by the GJA. The National Communication Authority (NCA) has been working on the document which has been

passed on to the Ministry of Information and National Orientation (MINO) early this year (2008). There have been series of meetings and conferences to deliberate on this draft but nothing much has come out of it. Government wants to hire a specialist to review the draft and give professional advice on the document. This has however not happened and the document is still pending. The process still has a long way to go. For instance, from the Ministry, it will be presented to the Attorney General's office, then to cabinet, before presenting it to Parliament to be passed into an Act.

With regard to Ghana Community Radio Network (GCRN), there are a number of regulations but no laws yet.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 1.2 (2006:1.2)

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

ANALYSIS:

Community radios by comparison have difficulty in getting licence for their operations. Commercial radios and campus radios have less difficulty in getting licence for their operations. There is however, no clear explanation for this. The fees for the two groups are different and are in favour of community radio, meaning community radios pay less although this has not necessarily translated into increased numbers, an indication that there may be other considerations. But it was not clear whether the fact that community radios are initiated and owned by communities is factored into the fee equation. Panelists cautioned that there must be monitoring of registration and operations of community radio so that stations registered as such do not capitalize on the low fees only to turn community radios into a commercial radio station. There are, however, cases where

GHANA

other groups are establishing community radios for communities. An example is Progress Radio in Wa in the Upper West region established by the Catholic Church.

It was also discussed that though there are few community radios in the country, not all of them are registered with the GCRN making it difficult to know how many community radios are operational in Ghana. It was observed that if community radios are to be promoted consciously, then the fees and other factors must be discussed extensively.

SCORES:

Individual scores: 3, 1, 2, 2, 1, 3, 2, 2, 4, 2, 2

Average score: 2.2 (2006:1.0)

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

ANALYSIS:

The Managing Director and Board of Governors of public media are appointed by the NMC. The NMC is supposed to be the buffer between government and the newspapers. The provisions made in the 1992 constitution allow adequate protection for public newspapers and that insulates them from undue interference. However, there is lobbying by people from all walks of life including public officials and politicians on different sets of issues. Furthermore, although there is no interference by public officials, it is difficult to discuss any issue which may have political undertones.

SCORES:

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

Average score 3.6 (2006: 4.6)

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

ANALYSIS:

Private and State news agencies gather and share information. The Ghana News Agency (GNA) gathers and transmits information to all including the private media.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 4.3 (2006: 4.1)

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

ANALYSIS:

In theory, there is promotion of media diversity. But in practice, it appears that the scenario is different since the shared news is almost the same. The number of radio stations should have pointed to the level of diversity but the content of programming are so similar that, it creates a problem for the diversity factor. The NMC is responsible for content whilst the NCA is responsible for issuing of licence to be based on the content, but these roles are independent of each other. Although content should be considered as a factor in the granting of licences, this is not done; a situation that leads to a lot of similarity in content and therefore a disincentive for diversity. This situation also applies to TV stations.

SCORES:

Individual scores: 3, 2, 3, 4, 2, 4, 1, 1, 3, 2, 2

Average score: 2.5 (2006:2.0)

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

ANALYSIS:

There is no specific measure by government to allow a diverse media landscape. But there is also no measure that stifles media diversity.

SCORES:

Individual scores: 5, 1, 2, 4, 1, 4, 1, 3, 3, 2, 2

Average score: 2.5 (2006:3.0)

2.10 Private media outlets operate as efficient and professional businesses.

ANALYSIS:

Views on this varied. Whilst some panelists thought that by and large media outlets operate efficiently and as professional businesses, others thought otherwise. With regard to private media outlets, specifically news papers, their operations are usually run as sole proprietorships; such operations do not have the needed structures that will allow for their growth. Private media institutions have hardly gone beyond their minimal daily production. Among the private newspapers, Daily Guide is cited as the one that is being run as an efficient and professional business compared to the other private news papers.

On the radio scene, Joy FM and Peace FM are cited as good examples of professionally and efficiently run stations. These radio stations have categories of staff with some considered as “star employees” because of their expertise, experience and ability to pull listeners and crowd; but the majority of the radio stations are below the standards set by Joy FM and Peace FM.

The question of objectivity was also raised by panelists. It was observed that, because of the relatively small investment needed for publishing a newspaper, they can afford to be partisan and take on certain ideological positions. This is not possible with radio (at least openly) since they have to guard against the investments and therefore more interested in reaching a wider audience so as to stay in business. Some TV stations like TV3 and Metro TV are also noted to be objective.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 3.5 (2006:2.6)

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

ANALYSIS:

The state print media, namely Daily Graphic and Ghanaian Times are not subsidized with tax payers' money.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 4.5 (2006:4.8)

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

ANALYSIS:

The private media have complained about the lack of advertisement from government sources. A cursory look at adverts in the Ghanaian Times and the Daily Graphic will attest to the starvation private newspapers face with regard to government adverts in their newspapers. But the exception could be the Daily Guide which has enjoyed increased government adverts in the past few years. Though the reasons are not that apparent, the consideration for outreach could be a factor since government adverts target the entire populace and therefore very much concerned with the reach of a particular medium.

It is also important to realise that strategies adopted by advertising marketing departments have undergone some changes mostly driven by the market. For government advertisement on issues like the campaign for educational reforms, it makes sense to consider the market and wider reach.

However, some private media outlets claim they are not interested in government adverts because government may not have the money to make immediate payments. On the other hand, it was argued that other private media outlets, will not mind placing the advert for government (and for that matter any organization) provided they have the assurance that the payment will eventually be effected. This is primarily because of financial challenges and the growing competition between media houses.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 3.5 (2006:4.6)

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

ANALYSIS:

There is no fair idea of the size of the advertising market in Ghana. But it can be said that whatever the size, it is open only to a few media outlets. The electronic media attract advertising mainly through the introduction of programmes where they get sponsors. It can also be stated that whatever the size of the advertising market, it does not match up to the number of media outlets in the country.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 2.7 (2006: 2.6)

Overall Average score for sector 2: 3.2 (2006: 3.1)

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

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

ANALYSIS:

There is no specific body established to regulate broadcasting. This role is embodied into the NMC and the NCA which are responsible for content and licensing respectively. But since the two bodies are under the Ministry of Information and National Orientation (MINO), it is really not clear the extent to which the NCA is independent from the Ministry. There are allegations of frequency allocation to politically connected people. Panelists cited Oman Fm and Net 2 TV as cases. As a result, it is assumed that both the NCA and the NMC do not have the power to be as independent as they are expected to be.

What must be noted is that, the interference being referred to here takes different and subtle forms through negotiations and informal channels rather than formal and easily recognizable channels. Other arguments also indicate that, the independence of the bodies may be compromised because the chairman and membership are appointed through the Ministry and the later could influence such decisions.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 2.8 (2006:1.4)

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

ANALYSIS:

The appointment of the NCA members is done by the President through the Minister of Information and National Orientation. The selection of the NMC members is, however, with the involvement of civil society with membership categorically stipulated in article 166 section (a) of the 1992 constitution.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 3.6 (2006:1.4)

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

ANALYSIS:

There exists a policy on broadcasting standards which the NMC is supposed to monitor. The NMC tries to ensure fairness of coverage of political issues and diversity. What is not certain is how the policy has been translated into practice. The NMC can only verbally warn and claims to follow up on such cases. But there are often no clear conclusions on such matters. The NMC, according to panelists, is not empowered enough to follow through the warnings they issue. To assure the public of commitment to fairness, the NMC initiated research on coverage of political party activities in the 2000 and 2004 election years respectively.

GHANA SCORES:

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

Average score: 3.2 (2006:1.3)

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

ANALYSIS:

There is no broadcasting policy. This vacuum led to the establishment of the Advocacy Steering Committee (ASC). The ASC has been involved in pushing for the passage of the broadcasting law and other pieces of legislations.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 1.5 (2006:1.0)

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.*

ANALYSIS:

There is a board of governors for the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC). The Board of the GBC is selected by the NMC which is in consonance with constitutional provisions. Article 168 of the 1992 constitution stipulates that the NMC “shall appoint the chair and members of the governing bodies of public corporations managing state-owned media in consultation with the President”. The Board is representative of the larger society.

The issue however, is whether the board can be said to be accountable to the public simply because of its representative character. It was noted however that, since the selection takes into consideration the different representatives of the board, one may say that the board is accountable to the public through the accountability of the board members to their constituents.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 3.8 (2006:4.3)

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.*

ANALYSIS:

There is no law which restricts this. Membership of boards cannot, however, be affiliated to political parties; neither can they hold any political party position. Although this is the stipulation, there is a feeling that there may be some members who may be sympathisers to the ruling party. The reality is that, it will be difficult to have all board membership to be totally independent minded.

SCORES:

Individual scores: 2, 3, 1, 3, 5, 3, 4, 3, 1, 4, 2

Average score: 2.8 (2006:4.9)

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

ANALYSIS:

Article 173 guarantees the independence of journalists. It states that “subject to article 167 of this constitution, the National Media Commission shall not exercise any control or direction over the professional functions of a person engaged in the production of newspaper or other means of communication”. This notwithstanding, there have been cases in the past where there were calls and intimidation from government and political figures on content of papers.

Nevertheless, the situation has dramatically improved. What happens now is what is termed “positive influences”. For instance, when a Minister intervenes to appeal for airing news on an issue considered to be relevant and important for the public good, but which media houses or journalist do not consider as such for whatever reasons. Such cases which could have gone to the NMC are often taken through such channels because of the time-consuming, albeit elaborated process by the NMC to address them. The intervention by Ministers, for instance, is a confirmation of the high expectation of the public about the power wielded by Ministers and for that matter other public officials.

On commercial pressure, panelists agreed for instance that GBC will go ahead to publish news worth its sort on any company and will not be under any commercial pressure just because it considers the company in question as one of its financial pillars or simply because it is a well known and major company.

Panelists however, prefer using the word “lobbying” rather than “interference”, since in their view the former best describe the prevailing situation.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 3.4 (2006:3.1)

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

ANALYSIS:

The GBC does not have total control over its budget. It is a subsidized organization which passes its budget through the Ministry of Information and National Orientation (MINO). The budgets are often cut, and releases often delay, thereby affecting the planning and efficient delivery of activities. It also has internally generated fund (IGF) it uses to meet some of its obligations. Government directly funds capital expenditure for equipment as and when required but normally between 5-20 years for heavy duty and modern equipment.

In the last couple of years, the IGF of the corporation has been increasing and this has in turn led to less dependence on government direct funding.

SCORES:

Individual scores: 2, 2, 2, 2, 5, 4, 3, 2, 2, 1, 2

Average score: 2.5 (2006: 2.0)

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

ANALYSIS:

It is only radio that has nationwide coverage. TV does not have na-

GHANA

tionwide coverage even though it can be accessed in all regions, the reach is not to all districts and towns.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 3.5 (2006: 4.1)

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

ANALYSIS:

There are diverse programmes to suit various tastes and interests. Such programmes are of diverse types like documentaries, news, features, drama, soap operas, reality shows, religious programmes, and sports for adults, adolescents and children. The one most outstanding issue that came up was children's programmes. Foreign generated children's programmes seemed to have prominence over locally generated children's programmes.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 4.2 (2006:4.9)

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

ANALYSIS:

There was no doubt that two political parties, the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the National Democratic Congress (NDC), dominate the debates. Constitutionally, the GBC is supposed to be fair by giving equal airtime to all political parties. But this can be possible

only if all political parties engage in similar number of activities which is not the case. Another challenge is that some of the smaller parties do not have adequate representatives to discuss their parties' issues and concerns which affect the diversity of views and opinions. They also do not engage in enough activities to attract the media as much as the other two (and now the Convention People's Party (CPP)).

One area where there has been imbalance is reportage on issues from the regions which are not adequately covered or have undue delays before reporting on events. Such delays may be attributed to what is considered newsworthy enough and also could be driven by commercial imperatives. As result of this commercial imperative, the GBC has started behaving like the private radio and TV stations which are mainly driven by profits.

Besides political issues, the range of daily programmes, however, reflects diverse programming, views and opinions. Overall, there is an effort to ensure fairness and balanced broadcasting.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 3.9 (2006:4.7)

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

ANALYSIS:

The content of programming is driven by commercial interests. It was also noted that, it is more expensive to produce locally creative content than to import foreign programmes. A new and growing phenomenon is independent or private media organizations which shoot or cover programmes of local content and present to GBC for broadcasting. Although there is new creative local content, it is not

GHANA

enough and sustainable. Ghana can do better.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 3.7 (2006:2.7)

Overall average score for sector 3: 3.2 (2006:3.0)

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

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

ANALYSIS:

The GJA has a code of ethics which was developed through an elaborate and extensive consultations process. The code incorporates international best practices and Ghanaian values. The challenge with the code of ethics is the interpretation given to certain articles. Such different interpretations lead to an ineffective application of the code. Another challenge with the GJA code of ethics is the weakness of the GJA to enforce it. There is a council that is expected to enforce the implementation of the code, but enforcement has not happened. The weaknesses are exhibited in the refusal of editors summoned by the GJA to appear before it. Thus, the main challenge of GJA is the adherence of its own members to the code which they contributed to developing.

The NMC has also developed a code of conduct which is supposed to be self-enforced to assist in the professional operations. Nonetheless, there are a number of breaches evident in the daily practices of members of the profession.

Among the media, it is only the Daily Graphic which has set the pace and developed a document to guide its practices and activities along professional lines; even the GBC has no written code of practice. It is the NMC's broadcast standards developed in 2002 that guide the professional conduct of the GBC. The question that was raised is the extent to which the NMC's standards are owned by practitioners and media houses. For this to work, the sanctions should be mainly exposure of those who fall foul of basic professional ethics.

GHANA SCORES:

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

Average score: 2.9 (2006:2.8)

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

ANALYSIS:

There was no agreement on whether the concern is fallen standards or ethical breaches. But with the publication by the Centre for Media Alliance (CMA) alluding to the fact that the public is losing interest in the media, perhaps one needs to pause to analyze the meaning and implications of this. Another issue identified as potential source for inaccuracy and unfairness is the ideological positions taken by certain newspapers. In addition, the composition of panelists for discussions of political issues at various radio stations could be an avenue for compromising on fairness and accuracy.

The fact that political news dominate discussions and receives more attention may also tilt the balance in its favour. This does not, however, imply that there are more news items on politics than other social, cultural and economic related news.

Other concerns for standards, fairness and adequacy are basic mistakes like accurate spelling and correct English construction in the news papers. There is also the issue of space allocated for companies and organizations and regional representations. The growing phenomenon of “speech journalism” tends to make journalists rely on speeches rather than taking notes and doing analysis of speeches.

SCORES:

Individual scores: 3, 2, 2, 3, 3, 3, 2, 4, 3, 1, 2

Average score: 2.5 (2006:2.8)

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

ANALYSIS:

There are generalist and specialist papers on various issues. Radio stations also cover a wide range of issues. One such generalist paper is the Daily Graphic and Ghanaian Times, whilst specialist newspapers include the financial, sports and entertainment papers. The consideration for covering events are based on the capacity of the media house; the people and institutions involved and the location of the origin of the news. Although important, they are not significant determinants of news coverage.

The lack of coverage of the full spectrum of events is also illustrated by the tendency of journalists to cover only opening and closing ceremonies, and events where Ministers are present. There are also certain events that journalists are not allowed to cover. In addition, some media houses send junior reporters who do not often understand high profile issues and are therefore unable to cover the issues adequately and appropriately.

On recognising the capacity constraints of the media, a growing phenomenon has been the upfront engagement of journalists by civil society to cover salient issues prior to the main event.

Investigative journalism is weak. Well trained personnel who can do a good job are difficult to come by. This affects professionalism in investigative journalism which needs great improvements.

GHANA SCORES:

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

Average score: 3.2 (2006:4.0)

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

ANALYSIS:

Although an increasing number of females get into the Ghana Institute of Journalism (GIJ) and graduate each year, they tend to stay in the profession only for a short period and leave for different reasons which have not been properly investigated. At the GIJ, the ratio of female to male enrolment is 60:40 even though there is no affirmative action for women for admission into the institute.

At the level of management, the picture is a mixed one. Whilst some media houses can boast of a reasonably good number of women about 30-40% in editorial positions other areas of the production process are not favourable to women. At Daily Graphic, for instance, 5 of the 12 editors are women.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 3.4 (2006:3.0)

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

ANALYSIS:

Daily Graphic has a gender policy. An aspect of this policy is translated into a page of issues on women matters which appears three times a week. It was argued that some news papers and adverts

depict a certain negative image of women as dependents. But on the whole there has been progress on gender mainstreaming in the editorial content. In spite of this, editors and writers need to understand the basic gender concepts. On editorial comments, there is hardly any gender analysis.

SCORES:

Individual scores: 3, 2, 3, 2, 2, 3, 3, 4, 1, 2, 2

Average score: 2.5 (2006:3.8)

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

ANALYSIS:

What is often practiced is self-regulation and not self-censorship. This is the case at Daily Graphic for instance. But journalists may not even be conscious of self-censorship. There are situations where a journalist will exercise self restraint to avoid the publication of particular stories because of the possible reprisals that may follow the publication. This is premised on the fact that, in journalism knowing the fact of a matter is not enough justification for publishing stories. There is always the need to factor in a sense of responsibility since the end results and implications of stories are important considerations as well. The stories published should also fall in line with the particular newspapers editorial policies. Objectivity in publication should be a prime factor for journalists.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 3.5 (2006:3.7)

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

ANALYSIS:

Ownership tends to confer a degree of control. Owners of private newspapers sometimes re-write portions of stories to tilt the story in a particular direction, although such acts are clearly adversarial to professional journalism. There are also cases where owners who double as professional journalists may intervene to ensure quality of publications. The ‘interference’ may also be driven by commercial/profit interests, and image projection.

At the level of public broadcasting, there are cases where board members may draw attention of editors to certain issues that may have implications for policy direction. Such interventions are not ‘interference’.

SCORES:

Individual scores: 1, 1, 1, 2, 3, 3, 3, 4, 2, 3, 2

Average score: 2.3 (2006:1.4)

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

ANALYSIS:

The overall situation is that salaries and conditions of service for journalists are bad although the specifics vary. For instance, there are ‘star’ media houses which pay very competitive salaries. On issues such as leave, it is considered better at the radio houses than the others. The worst affected are the print media where the phenomenon of stringers keeps growing. For stringers, taking an annual leave is considered a luxury many cannot afford.

In spite of this situation, the GJA cannot discuss salary and conditions of service issues since it is not a union. Attempts to turn it into a union have proved futile. In any case not all media houses are members of the GJA.

On corruption, some media houses have a clear policy of reporters not accepting money. Some of these issues are also covered in the guidelines on ethics. These policies have been implemented and reporters who violated them have been sanctioned. The Daily Graphic is an example.

It is admitted that, even though policies may exist in other media houses, events on the ground may entice reporters to go contrary to the policy guidelines. One example is the payment of transportation by event organizers. The Editors Forum of Ghana has discussed the issues on a number of occasions. The reality though is that, since conditions of service including salaries are low and reporters may be moving from one event to the other, they are ‘compelled’ to take these offers or in some cases demand them.

In other instances, an event organizer may offer to assist a media house with transportation. Such assistance is communicated formally and may not be considered as ‘corruption’ in the Ghanaian context even though this may not be acceptable in some other countries. There is, however, a risk that it may influence the media house to skew its reportage in a direction that may favour them because of the support it received and which may compromise objectivity.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 1.8 (2006:1.2)

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

ANALYSIS:

There is formal training at the diploma, undergraduate and graduate levels. These programmes are offered by the GJA, the University of Ghana and other private and public institutions like Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (GIMPA). There are other regulatory bodies which do other levels of training, for example refresher courses, special subjects etc, for journalists often in collaboration with the GJA. Institutions with special interests also sometimes organize training for journalists and civil society organizations.

But with the level of development and the increase in journalism as a profession, there is the need for more of such training institutes and short courses to keep pace with trends in socio-economic development and journalism as a discipline and field of practice.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 3.8 (2006:4.7)

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

ANALYSIS:

The umbrella organization is the GJA. There are others like the Editors Forum, PRINPAG and other specialist paper associations. Whilst the GJA is not a trades union, this can be established at the individual media houses to champion internal matters on salaries and conditions of service. Some media houses have their independent unions. Without an umbrella organization to champion their course,

individual media houses can offer any salaries and may not be adequately challenged. Again, because of vulnerability of journalists, they may accept whatever offer they get since they do not have any bargaining power.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 4.0 (2006:4.7)

Overall score for sector 4: 3.0 (2006:3.0)

FOLLOW UP QUESTIONS IN ROUND TWO

Have there been any changes in the media environment over the last two years?

- (a) There have been increases in the number of broadcasting houses, newspapers, TV and radio stations;
- (b) Efforts to sensitize professionals on ethical obligations, professional standards and performance have also increased;
- (c) There is a general increase of informal stringers and interns and also a visible number of young women are joining in the profession.

If positive changes: who or what has been the main cause?

- (a) Codes of standards, professional associations, members of the public and civil society;
- (b) On increased reportage on gender issues, CSO have been instrumental;
- (c) NCA has been issuing more frequencies, whilst for the print media; it is the journalists who have shown increased interest in the enterprise;
- (d) The season (election year) or the issues generated by the economy and society;
- (e) There are more training opportunities now as compared to last year though it is still considered inadequate.

What are the main obstacles for (further) positive change?

- (a) The general economic conditions prevailing in the country forces media houses just to survive. They are not able to

sustain or even increase production levels

(b) Partisan politics.

If negative changes: who or what has been the main cause?

- (a) Increase in the number of journalists, media houses etc is likely to increase the number of negative changes in professionalism and other related matters;
- (b) Informalization of employment in the sector, threats to job security and conditions of service;
- (c) These have been triggered by global trends and domestic realities of the state of the media in Ghana;
- (d) Commercialization has also played an important role in this where -because of the sense to make profits - journalists behave very unprofessionally.

Who could be the drivers/actors for change in the future?

The drivers of change in the future are:

Drivers/Agents	Issue
1. Ghana Journalist Association	Ethical Issues
2. Training Institutions	Professionalism
3. Labour Organizations	Salaries and Conditions of Service
4. Editors' Forum	Peer Reviewing
5. Regulators and oversight Agencies	Adherence to laws and regulations

What kinds of activities are needed over the next two years?

The activities can be grouped into two; the general and the strategic. The strategic issues will have to be identified and structured by

GHANA

the media houses themselves and seek the support from their members and the general public but have some champions who will help them achieve their set strategic goals and activities. The following activities were identified:

- Engaging and collaborating with identified actors on key issues on labour, for example the TUC should be more engaged on the salaries and general conditions of service of journalists in collaboration with the GJA;
- Advocacy on different issues; example to expedite action on the Public Broadcasting Law and Right to Information Bill;
- Develop a clear policy on transport which spells out whether or not journalists should accept this. If not, mechanisms to address the issue need to be spelt out and adhered to;
- Better training on business entrepreneurship to increase the awareness and practice of journalism as an economic or business venture and not a survival strategy profession-just being on the margins;
- Mapping out research areas for more in depth study on critical issues to help address them and also gather a data set on specific issues like gender.

The panel meeting took place at the Continental Hotel, Akosombo, 12 to 14 September 2008.

The Panel:

Ms. Susan Aryeetey, International Federation of Women Lawyers

Mr. J. Ato Kobbie, Journalist

Mr. Affail Monney, Journalist, Vice President of Ghana Journalists Association

Mr. Kweku Rockson, Journalist, Director Ghana Institut of Journalists and Member of National Media Commission

Mr. Ransford Tetteh, Journalist, President of Ghana Journalists Association

Ms. Cathy Bob-Milliar, Upper West Rural Women's Association

Ms. Anastasia Fynn, Ghana Association of Women Entrepreneurs

Ms. Sarah Akrofi-Quarcoo, Journalist, Lecturer School of Communication Studies

Dr. Rose Mensah-Kuyin, Executive Director, ABANTU for Development

Mr. Kingsley Ofei Nkansah, General Secretary of General Agricultural Workers Union

Ms. Rebecca Laryea, Darlings Human Development Foundation

The Rapporteur:

Dr. Beatrix Allah-Mensah

The Facilitator:

Dr Ibrahima Sané