

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)¹ "Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression in Africa", adopted in 2002. This declaration was largely inspired by the groundbreaking conferences in Windhoek/Namibia on the "Independence of the Media" (1992) and the "African Charter on Broadcasting" (2001). By the end of 2006, 19 sub-Saharan countries will be covered by the AMB. In 2007 those countries which started the exercise in 2005 will be revisited.

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

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.

Peter Schellschmidt
Head of Media Project for Southern Africa
Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung
Windhoek / Namibia

Hendrik Bussiek
AMB Facilitator
Cape Town / South Africa

AFRICAN BAROMETER LESOTHO

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:

Section 14 (1) of the Constitution of Lesotho guarantees freedom of expression:

“Every person shall be entitled to, and (except with his own consent) shall not be hindered in his enjoyment of, freedom of expression, including freedom to hold opinions without interference, freedom to receive ideas and information without interference (whether the communication be to the public generally or to any person or class of persons) and freedom from interference with his correspondence.”

Freedom of the media is not expressly mentioned, but assumed to be encompassed by these provisions of the constitution.

However, this freedom of expression is greatly limited by derogations in subsequent clauses of Section 14. Clause 2 in particular states that freedom of expression is guaranteed as long as it does not interfere with provisions made in the interests of defence, public safety, public order, public morality or public health. Legislation can also limit this freedom

“for the purpose of protecting the reputations, rights, and freedoms of other persons or the private lives of persons concerned in legal proceedings, preventing the disclosure of information received in confidence...”.

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These limitations have led to a large number of civil and criminal defamation suits, with other pieces of 'anti-media' legislation contributing. It seems that a narrow application of the law by the judiciary is to blame for the high loss rate experienced by the media in such defamation and libel cases. The onus is usually on the media to prove the correctness of a controversial story, in other words to prove their innocence - a breach of the principle that an accused is innocent until proven otherwise. The judiciary is not looking at the broader picture of freedom of expression, and certainly not considering media freedom arguments.

A lack of a culture of debate has also been blamed for the increase in defamation suits. Individuals, especially those occupying positions of authority, do not make use of the right-to-reply clause in Section 14 (4). Instead they apply to the courts of law as a first resort, with successful suits being backed by various laws used to stifle the media.

Issues of national security came to the fore in the wake of the political crisis of 1998, when SADC forces led by South Africa intervened in/invaded Lesotho to quell an uprising. Since then freedom of expression related lawsuits have increased, with a trend towards the suppression of views that may be regarded as militant. Before 1998 aggrieved readers approached the newspapers directly, now they approach the courts. Any hint at views and opinions that may incite violence, political or otherwise, is quickly quashed by the threat of civil litigation.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 2.1

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

The guarantee of freedom of expression is always threatened by its constitutional limitations and other dangers.

Culturally, Lesotho is a country that values respect for those holding positions of authority and leadership (chiefs, headmen). These individuals are traditionally not questioned or second guessed and citizens are not used to demand explanations from those in power. With the advent of an active media, questions are being asked and the conduct and decisions of authority figures are being challenged, much to their chagrin. Their displeasure winds up in the law courts in the form of accusations of defamation. The media bear the brunt. People in authority feel threatened by the media and so, in turn, threaten the media.

In the late 1970s, the editor of the Leselinyana la Lesotho newspaper, Mr Edgar Motuba, was vocal against the government of the then ruling Basotho National Party and published material from the exiled Basotholand Congress Party. Motuba was reported missing a number of days later. He was found dead in Silioe, an area in the southern part of the country.

In the early 1990s, the editor of The Mirror newspaper, Mr Mike Pitso, was found dead. He too had been openly critical of the ruling party, exposing corruption by government officials.

The two cases are still a constant reminder to media practitioners and other citizens of what happens to journalists who make use of their right to freedom of expression.

In public meetings at a community level people are reluctant to air

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their views or grievances on issues they have gathered to discuss. This reluctance is borne out of fear of a backlash should they not say what pleases the ears of those in authority. Even in political party structures at community level, members are reluctant to be critical of their leaders for fear of being ejected from the party and ostracised by the community.

Civil and criminal litigation are also a threat to the very existence of media, as local papers The Public Eye and The Mirror have learnt. The Public Eye is facing a 1.5 million Maloti (1 Loti = 1 South African Rand) fine after being found guilty of defamation. The Mirror is currently out of circulation as a result of having its equipment seized following the loss defamation lawsuits.

Where the threat of civil or criminal litigation fails, fear is often instilled by the police or military. Police brutality is common. Criminal suspects experience brutality and torture by members of the police during questioning. A number of suspects have died in police custody. Such deaths will be explained away as being a result of the suspect being “exhausted by questioning” (“o khathalla lipotsong”). Victims of torture do not tell of their experiences. As a result the outside world is not aware of this phenomenon that flouts international protocols.

People in power do not set an example. Parliament and the judiciary are supposed to be separate from the executive. But in fact, members of these institutions do not dare to practice their independence from the executive by disagreeing with it if need be - they do what the executive wishes.

There is no legislation in place to protect fearless expression of views. Citizens are in fear of asserting themselves, and this has resulted in the absence of a collective and proactive reaction to controversial issues that have been reported.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 1.2

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

ANALYSIS:

In 2003, the Lesotho chapter of the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) carried out an audit of laws in Lesotho that impinge on the right to freedom of expression and freedom of information.

The following hinder the right to freedom of expression:

- The Printing and Publications Act of 1967
- The Official Secrets Act of 1967
- The Internal Security (General) Act of 1984
- The Emergency Powers Order of 1988
- The Sedition Proclamation of 1938 (sic!) (Volume II)
- The Law of Defamation
- The Obscene Publications Proclamation of 1912 (sic!) (Volume II)

The following hinder access to information:

- The High Court Act of 1978
- The Criminal Procedure and Evidence Act of 1981
- The Parliamentary Powers and Privileges Act of 1994
- The National Assembly Elections Order, 1992
- The Financial Institutions Act, 1999
- The Police Service Act, 1998

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- The Lesotho Telecommunications Act of 2000
- The Lesotho Telecommunications Authority Rules 2002

All these pieces of legislation contravene the constitutional guarantee of freedom of expression.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 1.1

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

ANALYSIS:

There are no legal restrictions hindering entry into the profession of journalism.

Journalists who want to cover national events have to be accredited with the Ministry of Information which is not an easy process. Access to courts is difficult without a Press Card issued by the police.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 4.2

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

ANALYSIS:

There is no legal protection of confidential sources.

Non-disclosure of sources in court can lead to imprisonment of seven days. Further non-disclosure is in contempt of court punishable by imprisonment of 21 to 90 days.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 1.6

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

ANALYSIS:

Public information is not given out without express permission, even if the information is already in the public domain. It is ultimately up to the discretion of the officer being requested for information to give access. There is no legal recourse in cases where access has been denied.

A draft Access and Receipt of Information Bill 2000 is sitting with the Minister of Communications and has not been tabled before Parliament. The Bill, if enacted, will guarantee all citizens access to public information.

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SCORES:

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

Average score: 1.2

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

ANALYSIS:

Civil society and media lobby groups such as MISA are constantly trying to push the cause of media freedom. Government indeed allows people to raise all sorts of demands, but “they do not listen anyway”.

Ministers of Communications, past and present, have not entered into discussions with civil society to debate media issues of concern. The current communications minister is reported to have said he “is aware of the noise being made through the regional [MISA] headquarters, but nothing will be done if you people do not come to me first”.

Even though they have been lobbied, members of parliament are apparently unable or reluctant to put media concerns on the agenda in parliament or to cabinet, despite having that authority as legislators. As a result, agreements reached with the different structures of government are not implemented.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 3.6

OVERALL SCORE FOR SECTOR 1: 2.1

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:

Lesotho has 21 registered publications which are either weekly newspapers or periodicals. High production and printing costs have however put some newspapers out of business.

These publications can be broken down into the following categories:

- State owned - the government, military and police each have their own publications which they use to put forward news and events within their realm;
- Private/independent - covering news and events in the interest of society;
- Church - offering religious news and perspectives, sometimes venturing into the political arena;
- Political - pushing certain party lines;
- Community - news and views from specific communities.

Although Lesotho has a high literacy rate, it is not every literate person that can afford printed news. The majority of those who are able to read live in urban areas.

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Readership figures have been reported to be 10 percent of the population, with the majority living in the urban areas. Those living in rural areas experience a delay in delivery of newspapers as a result of transport and financial constraints being experienced by media houses. News is therefore often stale.

The overall economic decline has badly affected the media industry. In addition, the duty on newsprint imports is high: “You pay for the newsprint at the border or it rots!” The result is that the highest ever print-run of a newspaper was 33.000, now it stands at 4.500.

As a result of a poor reading culture, people are only interested in buying newspapers when there are hot debates or topics. This affects circulation and income, and therefore the ability for businesses to expand and diversify.

Language barriers are also affecting circulation and earning power. Most of the newspapers are published in English aiming at English speaking readers in urban areas. Sesotho papers are mainly published by churches and distributed in rural areas through church missions.

Broadcasting:

Radio

Lesotho has two state owned radio stations - Radio Lesotho 1 (general public) and Radio Lesotho 2 (youth oriented). In addition to these, the country has seven private stations - People’s Choice FM, MoAfrika FM, Joy FM (an extension of Voice of America), Catholic Radio FM, Thakhube FM, Harvest FM and Khotso FM. There is also overspill from several South African radio stations depending on one’s geographical location as well as the BBC World Service.

Television

Lesotho has one television station with only 8% coverage nationally. There is again overspill from South African Television channels (SABC and e-TV).

Internet:

There are three internet service providers in Lesotho - Leo, COMNET, and Adelfang.

The internet is reported to be used by 1% of the population. Internet cafe patrons are often expatriates, college students, media practitioners and consultants. Government ministries have internet access, but it is limited to officials in higher positions.

Ten high schools in Lesotho piloted an eEducation programme.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 2.5

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

ANALYSIS:

Media sources are not restricted and materials are not censored.

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SCORES:

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

Average score: 5.0

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

ANALYSIS:

Efforts to deliver newspapers to rural areas are hampered by financial constraints. Media houses do not own vehicles and so have no means of ensuring circulation in the rural areas. Government, through the Ministry of Communication, has been approached to provide pool vehicles that would deliver newspapers from both government and the private media. This suggestion, though good, was never taken up nor implemented.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 1.3

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

ANALYSIS:

There is no broadcasting legislation in place. The airwaves were liberalised following the 1993 democratic dispensation, with the first licence for private radio being issued in 1994. The nine exist-

ing radio stations are not classified according to a three tier system (public, commercial, community).

SCORES:

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

Average score: 2.1

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

ANALYSIS:

Little emphasis is placed on the importance of community radio. However, MISA, in collaboration with the Open Society Institute of Southern Africa, has put efforts into establishing a community radio station with the Women’s Group in Berea.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 1.1

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

ANALYSIS:

The editorial management of print media published by a public authority is state appointed. It is therefore not independent. Such media are viewed purely as public relations exercises.

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SCORES:

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

Average score: 1.0

2.7 *Independent news agencies gather and distribute information for all media.*

ANALYSIS:

There are no independent news agencies in Lesotho.

The government runs a news agency - Lesotho News Agency - that sells information to subscribers.

The independent media uses accredited copy from international news agencies such as IPS and IRIN.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 1.0

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

ANALYSIS:

There is no competition regulation.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 1.1

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

ANALYSIS:

In the absence of any media policy there is no effort to consciously promote diversity. Just the opposite: Government competes with the private media for advertising and circulation. Political competitors are not afforded airtime over state radio and their views are not published in state newspapers.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 1.2

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

ANALYSIS:

Private media houses operate on shoe string budgets, few even have accounting mechanisms in place.

As media houses are registered under the Societies Act, there is no obligation for them to pay tax, and they operate basically as NGOs.

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Staff in print media houses average around three people who take on multiple tasks and live from hand to mouth. Staff employed by radio stations number around 8, with some of them multi-tasking.

Income is generated mainly through advertising.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 1.2

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

ANALYSIS:

State media receive 100% government subsidies.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 1.0

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

ANALYSIS:

The Lesotho government has in the past used its power to impose sanctions on publications.

In 2004, government issued a circular to all ministries ordering that advertisements not be placed with the MoAfrika tabloid, after fall-

ing out over unfavourable reportage.

In 2005, the National University of Lesotho pulled all advertisements from Mopheme-The Survivor after the newspaper failed to disclose the name of the author of an opinion article that was critical of the institution.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 1.1

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

ANALYSIS:

The advertising market is potentially large but not accessible. It is predominantly controlled by foreign businesses, particularly South African chain stores. These businesses target high income consumers and use South African media for the purpose which are readily available in Lesotho anyway.

Businesses owned by Basotho do not seem to understand the importance of advertising. The businesses that do advertise seem to have a preference for state radio, television and newspapers.

The result is that more than 90 % of all advertisements are placed by government.

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SCORES:

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

Average score: 1.5

OVERALL SCORE FOR SECTOR 2: 1.6

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:

Broadcasting in Lesotho is regulated by the Lesotho Telecommunications Authority (LTA), a supposedly autonomous body. The board of the LTA, consisting of 5 members including the Chief Executive, is, however, appointed by the Minister of Communications.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 1.1

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

ANALYSIS:

The LTA Act says that the board is appointed by the Minister of Communications “through a competitive and transparent selection procedure”. Candidates for appointment shall be selected and forwarded to him by an “Appointments Recommendation Committee” consisting of nominees from four state departments: the ministries of communications, finance and trade as well as the Attorney-General’s Chambers. It is thus the minister who appoints the members of the board on the recommendation of a ministerial panel.

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The act is silent on how to ensure a “competitive and transparent selection procedure”, but there is de facto no civil society involvement.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 1.0

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

ANALYSIS:

Originally, the LTA was in charge of telecommunications such as telephone services only. In 2001, seven years after the airwaves had been opened up, the authority got the additional power to license broadcasting operators. But in the absence of any media policy, including a policy for broadcasting, the LTA can not regulate the industry in the public interest.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 1.0

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. See 3.3 above.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 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:

Radio and Television of Lesotho are government departments under and controlled by the Ministry of Communications.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 1.0

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 or political parties as well as those with a financial interest in the broadcasting industry.*

ANALYSIS:

There is no public broadcaster in Lesotho.

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SCORES:

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

Average score: 1.0

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

ANALYSIS:

There is no public broadcaster.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 1.0

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

ANALYSIS:

There is no public broadcaster.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 1.0

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

ANALYSIS:

The technology is in place but “it is in the wrong hands”: the state broadcaster is not controlled by the public - therefore there is no public broadcaster.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 1.0

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

ANALYSIS:

There is no public broadcaster.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 1.0

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

ANALYSIS:

There is no public broadcaster.

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SCORES:

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

Average score: 1.0

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

ANALYSIS:

There is no public broadcaster.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 1.0

OVERALL SCORE FOR SECTOR 3: 1.0

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:

Self-regulatory mechanisms in the form of a media council are not in place. As a result there is no professional code of ethics or standards to follow. Media houses are doing what they feel is best, exercising not self-regulation but self-censorship for fear of libel. Media reprimand each other in forums of their peers.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 1.0

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

ANALYSIS:

There is movement towards more fairness and balance. But most of the media outlets are biased towards the interests of their owners: church papers publish the position of the churches; political party papers publish the position of their parties; private papers often represent the position of their owners/editors.

Politicians, officials and other newsmakers are reluctant to provide comments on events or accusations. The result is that too often only one side of the story is being told. The media environment is not conducive to accuracy as there is no legal mechanism (Access to In-

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formation Act) aiding the obtainment of authoritative information, thus making it difficult to be fair and accurate.

In addition, lack of initiative and laziness on the part of journalists is playing a part in unfair and inaccurate reporting.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 2.2

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

ANALYSIS:

Lesotho's media is doing relatively well in covering the full spectrum despite operating on shoe string budgets.

One shortcoming experienced by the private media is the inability to have intensive coverage of issues in the rural areas because of financial constraints. The state owned Lesotho News Agency (because of its financial muscle) however is able to cover rural areas as it has offices in all ten districts.

Lack of time, resources and training has hindered the private media from doing much in the line of investigative stories. The state owned Radio Lesotho, however, does successfully follow up on its investigations as, again, it has the financial means.

SCORES:

Individual score: 4, 2, 4, 4, 4, 4, 5, 4, 5

Average score: 4.0

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

ANALYSIS:

Although Lesotho as a state has a general gender policy and the media should use it to promote social responsibility, there are currently no gender policies in place in media houses. The result is that there are only a few women active in the newspaper industry - the few “are a drop in the ocean”.

There are more women in Lesotho with a journalistic degree than men, but risks due to the lack of stability and job security are causing women media practitioners to pursue other related fields instead of journalism. Many women can be found in public relations, marketing, advertising as well as the technical sides of news production.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 2.3

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

ANALYSIS:

Women newsmakers are not given prominence in the news. The Lesotho Gender and Media Audience study conducted by Gender Links and Gender and Media in Southern Africa (GEMSA) found that women constituted only 21% of news sources. Journalists are trying to mainstream gender into the editorial content, but they need to try harder.

Some journalists are of the view that the gender agenda is imposed on the media and that social demands such as to advance good governance, democracy and equality are “just too great for the media to shoulder”.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 1.6

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

ANALYSIS:

Journalists and editors in Lesotho practice self-censorship for fear of litigation and charges of civil and criminal defamation. Another worry is the potential loss of advertising revenue if a client is dissatisfied with the editorial content. Some publications “still hit”, but they “use some cushions”, because if they “go wrong they will disappear as a media house”.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 1.2

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

ANALYSIS:

The smallness of most if not all media enterprises in the private sector results in the roles within media houses not being clear and multi tasking being the order of the day. The proprietor of a newspaper is often also the editor as well as the book keeper.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 1.0

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

ANALYSIS:

The risks inherent in journalism far outweigh the financial benefits. The pittance earned by journalists in Lesotho (500 to 600 rands for a reporter) and the fact that salaries are often not paid over long periods of time render them easily tempted to accept ‘honoraria’ if they either treat a story favourably (for the newsmaker) or avoid negative stories. The result is a degree of ‘understanding’ between journalists and their benefactors.

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Some journalists cover events where free food and drinks are on offer just so that they can have at least one square meal a day.

The bottom line is that corruption is an unacceptable cancer everywhere in the media industry.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 1.0

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

ANALYSIS:

Formal training is provided at tertiary level. The National University of Lesotho offers a Diploma in Mass Communication.

Other media organisations offer training workshops. They include MISA, the Transformation Resource Centre, the Nordic-SADC Journalism Training Centre and the Ministry of Communications.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 3.4

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

ANALYSIS:

Quite a number of journalists and media practitioners are organised in MISA, Media and Arts Watch and GEMSA Lesotho. Most journalists in the country are employed by government media and are not allowed to join trade unions.

Great fluctuation of incoming and outgoing journalists as well as infighting within some associations hinder the formation of strong organisations.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 1.9

OVERALL SCORE FOR SECTOR 4: 2.0

Lesotho

The panel meeting took place at the Molengoane Lodge, Nazareth, Maseru/ Lesotho on 15 and 16 July 2006.

The Panel:

Mr Keketso Lawrence - Newspaper editor and publisher

Mr Thabo Thakalekoala - Senior print journalist

Ms Mpine Tente - Telecommunications regulations expert

Ms Sophia Tlali - Media analyst and trainer

Mr Lira Theko - Human rights activist

Ms Keiso Matashane-Marite - Gender activist

Rev. Gabriel Tlaba - Cleric and editor of a church newspaper

Mr Setšabi Setšabi - University lecturer

Mr Tom Mapesela - Media activist

The Rapporteur:

Miss Puleng Latela

The Facilitator:

Mr Hendrik Bussiek