

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 homegrown 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

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 Malawi 2008

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

1.1 *Freedom of expression, including of the media is guaranteed in the Constitution and protected by other pieces of legislation*

ANALYSIS:

Section 35 of the Republic of Malawi Constitution guarantees freedom of expression, stating that:-

“Every person shall have the right to freedom of expression”.

Section 36 of the same warrants that:-

“The press shall have the right to report and publish freely in Malawi and abroad, and to be accorded the fullest possible facilities for access to public information”.

Section 37 of the Constitution which states that:-

“Subject to any Act of Parliament, every person shall have the right to access all information held by the State or any of its organs at any level of Government in so far as such information is required for the exercise of his rights”.

This section is intended to promote access to information. There have been efforts to enact a Bill for Access to Information which obliges public officers to give information to the public. The Bill, once made into law, will constitutionally safeguard access to information by all citizens.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 3.9 (2006 = 2.5)

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

ANALYSIS:

The right to freedom of expression can be increasingly witnessed in the repertoire of different artists who freely comment on contemporary issues in society. The works of these artists enjoy media attention as much.

The media have taken opportunity of the same freedom to mount provoking Talk Shows which tend to involve people in the rural areas and on the fringe of businesses. The media have also gathered and disseminated information to the public that is politically sensitive as to arouse the concern of politicians who had not been used to scrutiny and satire before.

However, this freedom is practised more in the urban rather than the rural areas where people are gradually gaining more conscience as to the realities of technology and general socio-political development.

What is apparent is that the culture of fear of the establishment and the politician has been wearing away over the past two years

SCORES

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

Average score: 4.0 (2006 = 2.6)

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

ANALYSIS:

Malawi does have laws restricting freedom of expression. Most of the laws date back to the colonial era, when there was no plurality in the media industry. During that period, there was only one public radio and one commercial newspaper.

Most of these laws were never reviewed or repealed commensurate with the new political reality of multiparty democracy that has prevailed in the country since 1994. There has not been any alignment of the present day realities and practices with the old laws.

Al Osman, proprietor and director of Capital Radio has challenged in the Courts some of the laws such as the Protected Names, Emblems, Flags and Places Act. There have been no reviews of the challenges over the past two years and the status quo remains the same since 2006.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 1.7 (2006 = 2.0)

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

ANALYSIS:

Entry into and the practice of journalism is not legislated to the effect that everyone is free to become a journalist in Malawi. There are, however, institutions that oversee standards in the practice of journalism such as the Malawi Media Council, which has to that effect a Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct. Visiting media personnel are required to clear themselves, by convention, with the Ministry of Information and Civic Education.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 4.7 (2006 = 5.0)

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

ANALYSIS:

There is no law protecting sources or confidential sources of information in Malawi. In the absence of such law however, journalists are guided by journalistic codes and conventions such the Media Council Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct for safeguarding such sources.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 1.4 (2006 = 2.4)

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

ANALYSIS:

Section 37 of the Constitution obliges lawmakers to pass an appropriate Act to guarantee access to information. A Bill to that effect, called The Access to Information Bill has been in place over the past two years. It is yet to be passed into law.

In the absence of such a law, many organizations are investing in offices of Public Relations to manage external information requirements.

The media have also invested in a lot of goodwill amongst their sources, such that leaks are not unfamiliar as a result.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 1.9 (2006 = 1.8)

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

ANALYSIS:

There is a large surface area for the interface between the media and civil Society. It is a symbiotic relationship that has allowed each sector to advance its cause by drawing support from the other. Civil society places considerable advertising in the media and where there are incidences of media infringement it is not unusual for civil society to rally up to the media. For most of civil society campaigns, there is always a media component that concretizes the interface

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between the two sectors.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 3.0 (2006 = 4.1)

OVERALL SCORE FOR SECTOR 1: 2.9 (2006 = 2.9)

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:

The mix of government and private ownership of the print media still obtains in Malawi. The private publishing sector has since lost the Chronicle of the Jamieson Publications and the weekly Courier. Both were published in Lilongwe, the Capital City. None of the Blantyre-based publications folded.

However, access to print products is sometimes limited in the rural areas resulting from circulation bottlenecks as the publications are produced from commercial cities.

Broadcasting continued to grow with the setting up of new religious radiostations such the of the Seventh Day Adventist and the assemblies of God ministries. Otherwise, the Malawi Broadcasting Corporation (MBC) remained a state controlled radio operating without funding after the National Assembly in 2007 withheld its allocation due to what was termed 'bias' broadcasts.

A new television, owned by former state President, Bakili Muluzi by the name of Joy Tv was temporarily on air and was stopped pending its application for a broadcast licence. The State controlled television, Television Malawi is expected to merge with MBC in accordance with the provisions of the Communications Act 1998.

Internet services were maintained. The government is meanwhile implementing tele centres in the rural areas to make internet services widely accessible to rural people.

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Scores:

Individual Scores: 3, 3, 3, 3, 4, 3, 3, 3, 2

Average Score: 3.0 (2006 = 2.6)

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

ANALYSIS:

Access to media sources is not restricted by the state. However, there is the Censorship and Control of Entertainment Act which establishes a Classification Board empowered to censor books and audio-visual Materials.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 4.0 (2006 = 2.6)

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

ANALYSIS:

There have not been any new publications specifically for rural Communities. The reach of existing publications in the rural areas is assisted by the establishment of rural libraries by civil society such as the National Initiative for Civic Education (NICE).

SCORES:

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

Average score: 2.3 (2006 = 1.5)

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

ANALYSIS:

The existing legislation is the Communications Act 1998 which creates a unitary regulatory body, the Malawi Communications Regulatory Authority (MACRA). The regulator is responsible for telecommunications, postal services and the broadcasting sector in line with the Communications Sector Policy Statement of 1998.

MACRA has altered the licence rules of broadcasting without the amending of the Act.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 3.9 (2006 = 3.3)

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

ANALYSIS:

Under the licence revision, community broadcasting has been broadened To include ‘private community’ licensees. The initiative, however, does not give special dispensation to the sector.

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SCORES:

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

Average score; 1.3 (2006 = 1.9)

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

ANALYSIS:

The Government publishes the Weekly News, Boma Lathu and This is Malawi which all carry government positions. The publications are under the Ministry of Information and Civic Education. Employees are civil servants and the editorial policy is guided by the proprietor of the day, the incumbent government, through the Ministry.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 1.4 (2006 = 1.6)

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

ANALYSIS:

Apart from the government news agency, Malawi News Agency (MANA), there are no independent news agencies in Malawi

There are, however, efforts by local entrepreneurs to establish newsAgencies, although the market does not seem favourable due to the proliferation of foreign news sources on the internet.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 1.0 (2006 = 1.0)

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

ANALYSIS:

Anyone interested in operating a media firm in Malawi is required to register their firm with the Registrar of Companies. There is also MACRA that licences broadcasters.

A Fair Trading and Competition Act which establishes a Competition Commission has been in existence since 2005.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 1.7 (2006 = 2.1)

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

ANALYSIS:

The government-media relationship does not indicate a conscious effort of government to promote media diversity. The Communications Sector Policy 1998 is emphatic on regulation rather than media diversity. The licensing problems of Joy Tv seem to indicate some resistance towards media diversity.

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Although print media registered with the Postmaster General have concessionary rates for distribution of printed matter, the service is unreliable such that publishers prefer to do own deliveries to sell outlets and subscribers.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 2.2 (2006 = 3.8)

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

ANALYSIS:

There is evidence of efficiency and professionalism in the private media. This can be evidenced by the fact that there has been significant expansion in radio signal on FM, and that no radio station has folded in Malawi. There have also been no significant print media casualties.

The annual media awards by the National Media Institute of Southern Africa (NAMISA) have also assisted in professionalizing the media as many vie for the annual awards. No one media outlet has monopolised these awards, and that serves as evidence of intense competition in the production of quality output.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 3.8 (2006 = 3.7)

2.11 *State media are not subsidized with tax payers' money*

ANALYSIS:

Government print and broadcast media are financed from the state budget. The production of the print media, however, is intermittent and carries minimal to no advertising.

Broadcasters MBC and TVM received 50 percent funding in 2006 and no penny in 2007 from the national budget for perceived lack of professionalism. They continued to be funded through votes other than their submissions.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 1.2 (2006 = 2.1)

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

ANALYSIS:

Almost 80 per cent of advertising in print media comes from Government and Government-funded projects. Most of the advertising is placed in the dailies because of the regularity of their publication and the spread of their target audiences.

Although there is no clear-cut policy on government advertising, procurement procedures would almost certainly favour the same private commercial print media. Private commercial and community media, however, do not enjoy such voluminous advertising from government.

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The market forces seem to dictate government advertising more than issues of power do.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 4.1 (2006 = 3.2)

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

ANALYSIS:

The current growth of the media in Malawi outweighs the advertising market. In addition, the economic downturn has put a squeeze on the advertising budgets of many companies such that the corporate culture in Malawi is hard to analyse and predict.

Indications are that the marketing strategies of the media seem challenged to attract advertising. One of the strategies is in running advertising supplements for niche audiences.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 2.3 (2006 = 2.2)

OVERALL SCORE FOR SECTOR 2: 2.5 (2006 = 2.4)

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 Malawi is regulated by MACRA, which was established by the Communications Act of 1998. The authority is nominally independent.

The previous board of MACRA was dissolved by the Courts as illegal for being chaired by a politician. The board's independence was questionable in its discretionary granting of licence to Joy Radio which is owned by a politician and which contravenes the Act. Currently, a disabled person has a radio station in Lilongwe, Pakiso, but which MACRA granted a licence waiver and is, again, a contravention of the Act.

The current wrangle of stopping Joy Tv from airing until it applies and acquires a licence is perceived as political interference from the present regime, since Joy Tv is owned by the former State President, Bakili Muluzi, who has had his share of political squabbles with the incumbent Head of State, Bingu Wa Mutharika

SCORES:

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

Average score: 1.7 (2006 = 1.8)

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

ANALYSIS:

According to the Communications Act 1998, members of the Board of MACRA are appointed by the State President who uses his own Appointments Committee without the involvement of the public and civil society.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 1.0 (2006 = 1.4)

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

ANALYSIS:

MACRA has licensed all broadcasters who are mandated to put in place mechanisms for dealing with complaints from the public. Complainants are also encouraged to forward their grievances to the Authority, although complaints about public broadcasting have never been resolved.

The lack of resolve of complaints about public broadcasting resulted in the National Assembly withholding 50 per cent of their allocation in 2006 and denying them funding in 2007. The Authority is usually 'active' in taking to task private and commercial broadcasters on complaints.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 1.7 (2006 = 2.8)

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

ANALYSIS:

The guide for licensing is the Communications Act 1998. The Act and subsequent revisions have not been developed in an independent, open and transparent manner.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 2.0 (2006 = 1.6)

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:

The boards of MBC and TVM consist of a Chairman, the Secretary of Information and Civic Education (ex-officio) and six other members appointed and dissolvable by the State President in consultation with the Public Appointments Committee of the National Assembly. It can not, therefore, be said that the public broadcaster is accountable to the public.

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SCORES:

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

Average score: 1.2 (2006 = 1.3)

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

ANALYSIS:

Political office bearers are ‘officially’ excluded from membership, although some are perceived to be proxies for politicians. The Secretary for Information and Civic Education sits on the board as ex-officio and may be political.

Licensees of other broadcasting services are also disqualified from board membership.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 2.7 (2006 = 2.1)

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

ANALYSIS:

The current squeeze of public funding for the public broadcasters

does create room for pressure from advertisers, who are seen as the major sources of funding of public broadcasting. This takes the form of choice of content and choice of placement of their advertisements and programming times.

Although the Communications Act 1998 s 87 (2) guarantees the broadcaster “to function without any political bias and independently of any persons”, the withholding of funding by Parliament for the past two years on account of ‘bias’ has largely gone unchallenged and casts doubt on the independence of the broadcaster.

Further s 45 (2) of the Act allows the broadcaster to “seek the general direction of the Minister in carrying out its duties” that include those of editorial nature.

The bias and general direction advice of the Minister has thus resulted in acts of self-censorship of the public broadcaster.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 2.7 (2006 = 1.6)

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

ANALYSIS:

Both MBC and TVM depend on state subsidy for the bulk of their funding. The 50 per cent subsidy in 2006 and the non-funding in 2007 greatly interfered with their work. The turn around strategies have been to turn to advertising and innovate on some programmes which might earn the operator some income.

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SCORES:

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

Average score: 1.1 (2006 = 1.8)

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

ANALYSIS:

MBC's two radio channels are technically accessible in 90 per cent of the country, while TVM boasts 70 per cent coverage.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 4.1 (2006 = 3.8)

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

ANALYSIS:

MBC Radio One tends to carry a diverse range of a general nature of programming, while Radio Two is slightly tilted towards commercialisation and entertainment. They both carry news bulletins in all key languages of Malawi.

TVM has educational and children's programmes as well as entertainment and business programmes. However, the bulk of their programmes, lately, are spiritual.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 3.4 (2006 = 3.6)

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

ANALYSIS:

MBC and TVM offer a diversity of views but deliberately slant them towards the dominant view of the government. In the process, the opposition's side of the story is usually lacking or pronounced only when it is negative. There is thus diversity with minimal political difference.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 1.3 (2006 = 2.1)

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

ANALYSIS:

MBC's radio programming thrives on local content with as much creativity. The current financial squeeze has seen the broadcaster trying outdo its creativity to unfathomable depths.

TVM's content is challenged by foreign programming and soap operas. The latest additions are free religious feeds from international

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spiritual channels.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 4.3 (2006 = 3.2)

OVERALL SCORE FOR SECTOR 3: 2.3 (2006 = 2.3)

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 Malawi media has several journalistic codes. These include the Malawi Media Council Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct 1995, revised 1999; the Third Schedule of the Communications Act 1998; the Malawi Electoral Commission Code for Media in Elections Coverage and the draft Broadcasting Policy.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 4.2 (2006 = 3.0)

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

ANALYSIS:

From an audience point of view, there have been few complaints to the Media Council and MACRA to signal dissatisfaction with the general objectivity and fairness by the media. There have also been very few litigation cases involving the media.

In practise, however, there are observable leanings by the media to either the right or the left of the political spectrum, thus compromising the degree of their fairness. There are also attempts at sensationalising stories by use of picture, headlining and self-justification. These result in retraction of stories, apology and corrigenda.

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SCORES:

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

Average score: 3.8 (2006 = 2.6)

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

ANALYSIS:

The diversity of content in the Malawi media is self-evident and has been well captured by NAMISA's annual media awards which recognise excellence in sports, environment, business, education, investigation and photo-journalism.

There is specialization going on in the broadcast media, for example where issues of business, health, the environment and culture are gaining popularity.

The coverage of these issues is also being recognised by the different training courses such as on investigating corruption by such missions as the Cassals and Associates of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and business reporting by the Programme on Economic Governance of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)

SCORES:

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

Average score: 3.9 (2006 = 3.3)

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

ANALYSIS:

There are in Malawi role model lady media workers that are gaining or have gained recognition. These include Villant Ndasowa (independent film maker), Maria Chidzanja Nkhoma (Zodiak Radio), Rhoda Zulu (Story Workshop) and June Lutwama (Director, Star Radio).

Over the past two years there have been lady journalists who have claimed media awards such as Rebecca Theu (Nation Publications Limited) and Thereza Chirwa (Zodiak Radio).

There are also lady media trainers who have enthused many female students interested in the media. The general mood is that it should be possible in the near future for both sexes to compete evenly for media ventures.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 3.2 (2006 = 2.3)

4.5 *Gender mainstreaming is reflected in the editorial content*

ANALYSIS:

There has been increased coverage of women issues over the past two years as a result of increased participation of women in society. This is reflected in the editorial content of newspapers such as Malawi News' Female supplement or Weekend Nation's 'Society' supplement. Women achievers are visible in Malawi media. This is a departure from their stereotypical representation of the past,

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when women were associated only with beauty, homemaking and baby sitting.

The challenge of motivating women to take part in public debates remains.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 3.2 (2006 = 2.3)

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

ANALYSIS:

Journalism in Malawi was previously concentrated and practised within state/party-controlled media where self-censorship was a creed. New and independent media are challenged to be independent within the legal framework that has remained intact. Libel and defamation laws still loom.

In addition, there is commercial pressure from large advertisers who have strong ties with politics of the day. Journalists have to handle such clients with care by treading carefully.

By balancing the interests of the old and new media owners, and in fear of losing advertisements, journalists tend to 'conform' in order to protect their jobs. Self-censorship becomes a reality in their working lives.

Others accept gratifications from news sources.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 1.9 (2006 = 2.3)

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

ANALYSIS:

Owners of private media need to make money to survive. They tend to guard their investment jealously. Some of the owners are former or active journalists who have interest in the media craft and business. They thus tend to influence the practise as well as the direction of the private media. Therefore, viewed from a narrow perspective and in the strict interpretation of the term, it can be said that owners of the media do interfere editorial independence.

However, their interference is perceived in a positive way, and not as rather negatively impinging on job satisfaction and security.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 2.3 (2006 = 1.7)

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

ANALYSIS:

Malawian journalists worked for a long time under a patronage sys-

tem. An independent Journalists' Union has just been set up. In the absence of a union, journalists were easily divided to respective loyalties of their employers and they would switch allegiances by moving into different camps that thrived on patronage.

Most media houses do not have adequate facilities and tend to accept offers of transport, phone facilities and allowances from news sources. This is prone to corruption. It is not unusual to hear of political parties having a 'media task force' whose intention is to embellish and create stories in favour of the sponsoring party.

The salary of a school leaver on entry is usually equivalent of \$100 a month, while the Cost of Living Index (at the time of writing the report) shows that it takes about \$150 for one to survive in Malawi for a month. Journalists have to supplement their income in some way. They easily become corruptible.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 1.8 (2006 = 1.1)

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

ANALYSIS:

Malawi has an abundance of training institutions that offer formal qualification programmes ranging from certificate to bachelors level. The qualifications from within Malawi include the Malawi Institute of Journalism certificates and diplomas and the University of Malawi's diploma and bachelors.

Other institutions offer qualifications of foreign examining boards such as the Association of Business and Management (ABMA); (CIMA) and the Shareworld Open University of Cyprus diplomas and degrees.

The current requirement is that all institutions be accredited by the Higher Committee on Education for recognition and standardization of the qualifications.

Courses for upgrading journalists are very rare in the country. These are either hosted in-house or are often tenable outside the country at a higher cost.

SCORES:

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

Average score: 3.9 (2006 = 4.3)

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

ANALYSIS:

There are at least three media unions operating in Malawi at the moment. These are the Communication Workers Union of Malawi (COWUMA); MBC Workers Union and the Journalists' Union of Malawi (JUMA). They are all voluntary.

There are also a number of media associations, the most popular of which is NAMISA. The others are the Nyika, Mzuzu, Lilongwe and Kabula Press Clubs; the Malawi Women Media Association (MAMWA) and Malawi chapter of Gender and Media Southern Africa (GEMSA); the Community Radio Association and the National Editors Forum (NEFORM)

Malawi

SCORES:

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

Average score: 4.2 (2006 = 3.7)

OVERALL SCORE FOR SECTOR 4: 3.2 (2006 = 2.7)

OVERALL COUNTRY SCORE: 2.7 (2006 = 2.6)

Follow-up questions in Round Three

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

The period 2006-2007 has registered

- The withholding of budgetary allocation for public broadcasting due to perceived bias by public broadcasters
- Consultations for the Access to Information Bill, pending its passage into law
- The resuscitation of the Media Council of Malawi and the birth of the Journalists' Union of Malawi (JUMA). The Broadcasters Association of Malawi (BAMA) and the National Editors Forum (NEFORM) have since gone to sleep
- Inauguration of sign language on TVM
- The wrangle of the licence of Joy Tv continued while a Lilongwe-based broadcaster, Radio Pakiso, gets a licence waiver to go on air
- Jamieson Publications' The Chronicle and independent Weekly Courier folded

Agents of positive change

- NAMISA has been a major catalyst for the Access to Information Bill, the revival of the Media Council and the founding of the JUMA

Agents for negative change

- MACRA's refusal to regulate the public broadcaster finally

culminated into Parliament taking the law into its own hands by withholding funding for the broadcaster. The Ministry of Information and Civic Education did not help matters by defending and congratulating the public broadcaster on the occasion of being denied funding.

Change agents and programmes for the future

- NAMISA has to take the country through to the passage of the Access to Information Bill
- Parliament has to drive through the amendment of the Communications Act to enact public broadcasting away from state broadcasting and to reform MACRA
- Training institutions should seriously engage in mid courses for upgrading skill of journalists rather than concentrating on offering formal qualifications only
- There is need for a national conference in Malawi at which a national media policy could be forged by merging the ICT policy, broadcasting policy and other media policies that could be lying around
- There is need to rethink the advertising quantities for radio from government and donors. The current scenario favours print media and may stifle broadcast media

The panel meeting took place at Masongola Hotel, Zomba on 17 and 18 May 2008

The Panel

Rhoda Zulu; Producer Story Workshop; June Lutwama, Director Star Radio and Media Lecturer; Miriam Kamoto, banker; Mabvuto Bamusi, human rights and justice activist; Mandla Mabulasa, lawyer; Levi Manda, Media analyst and lecturer; Felix Mponda, news agency correspondent; Marcel Chisi, human rights activist; Al Osman, owner Capital Radio

Facilitator

Fernando Gonçalves

Rapporteur

Costly Mtogolo

