

# BOTSWANA

## *Media Sustainability Index 2006-2007*

### Introduction

#### **Overall Country Score: 2.51**

Botswana is often lauded as a model of political and economic stability in southern Africa. Since independence in 1966 Botswana has enjoyed stable civilian leadership, though to date the same party, the Botswana Democratic Party, has led the country. A comment by Letshwiti Tutwane, chair of the Center for Advanced African Leadership at the University of Botswana, broadly represented the sentiments of all his fellow MSI panelists: “On the whole, Botswana is a liberal democracy.”

Classified as an upper middle income country, Botswana has a per capita income similar to South Africa but also shares some of its neighbors problems, including high unemployment and a large gap between rich and poor. The eastern part of Botswana is the most densely populated, with rapid migration from rural areas into the communication- and infrastructure-rich east over the past six years. Over the last 25 years Botswana’s economy has been one of the fastest growing in the world, largely due to diamond production, though more recently, however, the economy has slowed. Nonetheless, in the medium-term Botswana expects to enjoy sustained growth of around four percent per year, and presumably media sector performance will reflect this rate. All these factors, in conjunction with a high level of literacy, particularly in urban areas, impact on the reach and growth of media.

Panelist Methaetsile Leepile, general manager of CBET Publishing Company (the publisher of *Botswana Guardian* and *Midweek Sun*), calls media “a relatively small industry” in a developmental stage, and Tutwane points out that “most media houses [are] less than 30 years of age.” Yet Thapelo Ndlovu, of MISA Botswana points out that the media “is very vibrant and highly recognized in the country.” Rapid developments in transport and communications have been critical to the expansion of broadcasting capacity in the radio and television sectors, but the new media sector remains underdeveloped. Although media enjoys a high degree of freedom, it is not without problems: the government persists in trying to influence editorial policy and content through subtle pressures. Related recent developments include the government’s decision in late 2005 to purchase a printing press and take control of the production of its free newspaper *Daily News*.

Botswana’s overall country score is a 2.51, which places Botswana solidly in the “near sustainability” category and at the upper end of African countries studied by the MSI. All objective fell between a 2 and a 3, with Objective 5, Supporting Institutions, leading with a 2.82. Objective 4, Business Management, fell far short of the average however, with a 2.02. Other objective fell close to the average.

#### **OBJECTIVE 1: FREE SPEECH**

**SCORE: 2.64**

Statements by MSI panelists show that they concur with the 2004 MISA finding that “the private press has a long tradition of speaking out on issues affecting the public interest. Perhaps because of this, the Botswana government has sought to curtail the private print media on more than one occasion, and thereby influence editorial policy in a more pro-government direction.”<sup>1</sup> The individual indicator scores

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<sup>1</sup> Mochaba, Raffinetti & White, 2004: 15

do reveal a dramatic mix in this objective. Indicators 1 and 2, related to free speech protection and broadcast licensing, were rated by panelists at just above the objective average of 2.64. Four indicators (Indicators 3, 4, 8, and 9), covering market entry, crimes against journalists, media access to international news source, and free entry into journalism, were significantly higher and ranged up to a full point greater than the average. On the other hand, three indicators (Indicators 5, 6, and 7) associated with preferential treatment for public media, libel laws, and access to information, fell far short of the average (in the cases of the first and last, well over a full point lower).

MSI panelists affirmed that freedom of speech is guaranteed in the Constitution of Botswana. Chapter II Section 12(1) provides for “protection of fundamental human rights and freedoms...but does not specifically guarantee freedom of the press...The right to freedom of expression is not absolute and may be limited”<sup>2</sup>

Principal statutes governing media freedom in Botswana include:<sup>3</sup>

- Broadcasting Act, 1998 (Act No. 6 of 1998) the primary statute dealing with the regulation of the broadcasting sector;
- Cinematograph Act, 1970 (Act No. 73 of 1970) provides for the censorship and pre-classification of films and publications;
- National Security Act, 1986 (Act No. 11 of 1986) provides for terrorism, defense and internal security;
- Printed Publications Act, 1968 (Act No. 15 of 1968) provides for the registration of certain newspapers;
- Penal Code No. 2 of 1964 –sets out conduct that is deemed to be criminal including defamation; and
- Mass Media Communications Bill, 2001 proposes to amend the Printed Publications Act to provide for the registration of newspapers, to establish a statutory Press Council and to provide for the accreditation of journalists.

In 2001 a High Court ruling set an important precedent for freedom of the press. Government had taken a decision to withdraw their advertisements from two independent newspapers; it was alleged that they insulted the President. “The court ruled that, although it could not compel the government to place adverts with the Botswana Guardian and the Midweek Sun, it was nevertheless wrong for government to withdraw advertising solely on account of the stories that the papers were running...The judge declared the ban on advertising to be unconstitutional. He found [it] violated the newspapers’ constitutional right to freedom of expression; in particular, he stated that the ban was intended to influence the newspapers’ editorial policies.”<sup>4</sup> As panelist Zwide Mbulawa, a media management consultant, declared, “Media freedom is recognized in this country as a result of that judgment...every other court will have to adhere to that.”

Like any precedent, this can be challenged. Fiercely opposed by media, and shortly due to appear before Parliament, is the Draft Mass Media Communication Bill (2001), perceived by legal experts and the media industry as a “...direct contravention of the constitution and the ideals enshrined in Vision 2016.”<sup>5</sup> Botswana’s Vision 2016 envisages a Freedom of Information Act being put in place by 2016.”<sup>6</sup> The draft bill, however, if passed, will give the minister sweeping powers over the industry and seriously infringe on freedom of speech and other rights journalists currently enjoy.

Freedom of expression is also curtailed by the National Security Act (1986) which can be invoked in instances involving “defense, public safety and the like.”<sup>7</sup> According to MISA Botswana’s Ndlovu this

<sup>2</sup> Mochaba, Raffinetti & White, 2004: 21.

<sup>3</sup> Mochaba, Raffinetti & White, 2004: 23-24. See this publication for detailed descriptions of these laws.

<sup>4</sup> IPI, 2001. Also cited in Mochaba, Raffinetti & White, 2004: 17

<sup>5</sup> AMDI, 2006: 10

<sup>6</sup> MISA, 2005

<sup>7</sup> Mochaba, Raffinetti & White, 2004: 21.

act makes it possible “for the state to deal with journalists who may be accused of intruding on out of bounds security matters.” This has implications for access to information. “An unusual feature of Section 12 of the Constitution is that it expressly allows for restrictions to be imposed on the expressive activity of public officers, local government employees and teachers.”<sup>8</sup> As panelist Sello Motseta, owner and editor of the *Tswana Times*, says, “a public servant cannot report government corruption and escape punitive action.” “In September [2006] the deputy permanent secretary in the Ministry of Communication, Science and Technology, Andrew Sesinyi, told government media that they should exercise ‘maximum patriotic solidarity, collective responsibility, allegiance to country and nation’ when reporting on controversial issues.”<sup>9</sup> This ideology has not remained a concept: it has been translated into a set of enforceable rules: “Government media workers are governed by the civil service code. This occasionally impacts negatively on their professionalism,” according to Leepile of CBET. It follows that the civil service code also impacts on their freedom of expression.

Leepile further noted that “political interference in the media is not uncommon.” Panelist Irene Tshukudu of the Southern Africa Media Development Fund (SAMDEF) cites an occasion when a story about cattle theft was aired on BTV’s seven ‘o clock news but was pulled from the nine ‘o clock broadcast: “We were informed that someone had stopped that piece of news from being aired because the person implicated was supporting the government.” Speaking from personal experience in the print sector, Lauri Kubuitsile, a freelance journalist with *The Central Advertiser*, offers a different perspective, “I have never had a situation whereby I was unable to publish something because of being ‘bullied’ by the state. Occasionally we have had complaints from members of the public or civil servants because they didn’t like how they came out in an article and they threaten us with litigation.”

Some panelists agreed with Kubuitsile when she said “overall there is freedom of speech and then when it is curtailed there is debate about this.” But important issues may never make it into the open arena of debate because, as Sello Motseta points out, there are no laws to protect whistle-blowers in Botswana. This could be one reason for the low number of action-alerts recorded by MISA in 2003.<sup>10</sup> Regarding public opinion on freedom of the press, Afrobarometer’s research—which is nationally representative—found that the overwhelming majority of Botswana thought that “the news media should be free to publish any story that they see fit without fear of being shut down.”<sup>11</sup> But this does not mean they would mobilize against threats to press freedom or freedom of expression. Panelist Letshwiti Tutwane remarked: “The general public are not very informed about media issues, save for the middle and working classes: they are the ones who do protest when the media is stifled.” Panelist Leepile suggested that “media houses have to be more pro-active in defending freedom of expression and the development of media case law in Botswana.”

Broadcasting is regulated under the Broadcasting Act of 1998, which applies to TV and radio broadcasters operating via “terrestrial, satellite, cable and optical fibre platforms. Online media broadcasters such as Internet webcasters are not covered by the Act.”<sup>12</sup> Section 12 of the Act prohibits anyone from broadcasting in Botswana without a license. Under Section 3 the National Broadcasting Board (NBB) was established as regulator of the broadcasting sector. Although the NBB has the final say over decisions to award licenses, it is not a corporate body in its own right; the telecommunications regulator—the Telecommunications Authority—acts as the NBB’s secretariat. It carries out all functions

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<sup>8</sup> IBID.

<sup>9</sup> IPI, 2006

<sup>10</sup> AMDI, 2006: 11

<sup>11</sup> Afrobarometer, 2005: 12

<sup>12</sup> Mochaba, Raffinetti & White, 2004:24

delegated to it by the NBB, and moreover, has the right to elect officials to the NBB.<sup>13</sup> How the Ministry enforces regulations on satellite transmissions and the media who use them—which do not necessarily rely on infrastructure within Botswana beyond the recipient’s dish—is unclear.

Panelist Donald Koogotsise of SAMDEF and the University of Botswana comments: “Licensing of broadcast media is generally fair and handled by a somewhat independent body. But there are some concerns from certain quarters that appointment of the board for the issuing authority compromises independence.” Kubuitsile adds “The NBB [National Broadcasting Board] have tried to be independent. The fact that they gave three commercial [radio] licenses is a plus. We were there and saw that the process was very transparent – it was very democratically done.” The three commercial licenses were granted to independent stations Gabz FM, Yarona FM, and Duma FM.<sup>14</sup> Radio Botswana’s RB2 station is not licensed, although it has been on air since 1992.<sup>15</sup> Interestingly no MSI panelist or text consulted in this research mentioned this as being non-compliant with licensing regulations.

Community radio is allowed for by the Act, but there is no policy framework for it to operate, according to Zwide Mbulawa. Leepile elaborated: “I think there are concerns over the non-registration of community radio. The debate has been very politicized. Government seems to be very worried that if they were to register the radio stations, they could open up a Pandora’s Box [of tribalism]. In Kgalagadi [in southwest Botswana] there was somebody who for a number of years had wanted to set up a radio station, I believe with assistance of George Soros who has himself been accused of interfering in democracy, as you know. But there could be other concerns: issues of misuse, which from time to time flare up in this country.”

Panelists agree that the domination of the television sector by the state’s BTV needs to be addressed. “The state broadcaster, BTV, has not yet been incorporated as a juristic person separate from the state. To date, BTV is technically still a division of the Department of Broadcasting Services, with negative implications for editorial independence and control.”<sup>16</sup> There is only one private-ownership licensee, Gaborone Broadcasting Corporation TV (GBC TV).<sup>17</sup> In the last five years no new stations were licensed except for a new satellite station BESTV [licensed in 2006] which is not yet operating.<sup>18</sup> Privately owned South African-based satellite television broadcaster, MultiChoice, however, is authorized to beam its DSTV menu of channels into Botswana.<sup>19</sup>

Several panelists commented on the restrictive Cinematograph Act of 1970. Jackie Kabeta, MSI panel facilitator, remarks: “You will think we are living in Zimbabwe, it’s very bad.” The Act applies mainly to the film, theater, and entertainment sectors; it regulates the making and exhibition of films within Botswana and the licensing of cinemas. No films may be made in Botswana without a permit granted by the relevant Minister. “Section 4 stipulates that an application must contain a full description of all the scenes and the text of the spoken parts of the entire film.... The holder of a permit must also apply to the Minister whenever it is proposed to make any material alteration or addition to the text or scenes of the film.”<sup>20</sup> Included in the Act are draconian aspects which permit a Board of Censors, appointed by the relevant Minister, wide-ranging censorship powers. Kabeta feels apprehensive: “Right now the Act is not

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<sup>13</sup> Mochaba, Raffinetti & White, 2004: 24-27

<sup>14</sup> AllAfrica.com, 2007

<sup>15</sup> AMDI, 2006: 19

<sup>16</sup> Mochaba, Raffinetti & White, 2004: 8; Confirmed by several MSI panelists

<sup>17</sup> AMDI, 2006: 25

<sup>18</sup> AMDI, 2006: 26

<sup>19</sup> Mochaba, Raffinetti & White, 2004: 6

<sup>20</sup> Mochaba, Raffinetti & White, 2004: 27

being used, maybe because producers' work was not flighted on the National television, but...three months ago they awarded three production houses permission to flight programs. Now if anything happens that may step on those in authority, you will see the Act being used. At MISA, we'd tell film producers: 'Hey wake up, look at this thing, one day it may work against you, start looking at it now.'

Section 18 of the Broadcasting Act provides for broadcasters to appeal to the High Court against NBB decisions to revoke or refuse to review their licenses.<sup>21</sup> But Section 24 of the Act empowers the Minister to adjudicate appeals; his/her decisions are considered final and may not be questioned in any court of law. "This is of particular concern when it is considered that it is also the Minister who appoints the Board of Censors and the Chief Censor."<sup>22</sup>

Businesses in Botswana fall under the blanket Trade and Liquor Act, although new laws are likely to accompany current policy plans to separate the two sectors, according to media consultant Caroline Lubwika. Operating any business in Botswana requires registration with the General Post Office and there are associated fees and compliance with tax laws such as VAT. But as Lubwika went on to note, "I know that the only time they check if you are registered is if you want business from government."

Panelists agreed that market entry for media is fair, with no laws or tax breaks that differ from any other business. Print sector panelists did not know of anybody being refused permission to start a publication. As discussed above, community radio is allowed for by the Broadcasting Act (1998), but has no supporting operational policy, effectively restricting entry into the market. As has already pointed out, BTV dominates the market and no new television stations have been awarded a license; this, and the prohibitive cost of television broadcasting for local entrepreneurs, no doubt limits entry into the market.

It appears, therefore, that market forces, rather than laws, restrict market entry. Panelist Gwervevende Hamufari of *Mining Mirror* points out that "in our industry numbers are very important and increasingly it is going to be very difficult for new entrants to enter the market. If you are small you will have an uphill battle."

Panelists attested that journalists have sometimes been targets of physical violence and that "police did not intervene to stop the abuse...They were just watching."<sup>23</sup> In terms of public outcry Hamufari offers a comment broadly representative of all the panelists: "people will be writing to newspapers to say that this is not fair. But that is where it ends. You will never see people carrying it to the streets in protest." One panelist recalled arbitrating in a case where a journalist was assaulted: "We called the police. They said, 'We are waiting for this person to lodge a complaint.' I asked the journalist and his/her editor, 'Why are you not following up this case? The editor said, 'My owner.' The journalist said, 'Yes, I was beaten, but my editor is not supportive.' So it weakens the case if the owner is not willing, or for one reason or another they grow cold feet. What is happening is that there is lack of setting precedence, even in libel cases."

MISA Botswana's Ndlovu notes "There are cases where foreign individuals were expelled from the country, apparently for being too 'expressive.'" The much criticized and publicized 2005 expulsion of Professor Kenneth Good, a political science lecturer at the University of Botswana, took a new turn in December 2006 when he lodged a complaint with the African Human Rights and People's Commission contesting the expulsion. "The deportation was a direct result of a speech that Good had been prepared to

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<sup>21</sup> Mochaba, Raffinetti & White, 2004: 26

<sup>22</sup> Mochaba, Raffinetti & White, 2004: 29

<sup>23</sup> Also referred to in MISA, 2005: 199, which gives a full description of this incident.

deliver at a public meeting at the University of Botswana on 23 February 2005. It apparently contained highly critical comments on the conduct of high-level politicians.”<sup>24</sup>

If the Draft Mass Communications Bill (2001), discussed above, is passed, journalists’ rights and editorial independence in all media sectors will be seriously compromised. Presently, panelists agree that courts in Botswana are mostly fair and independent in adjudicating media issues, although there have been instances indicating otherwise. Methaetsile Leepile of CBET put it this way: “The courts tend to award unreasonably high amounts of money to important people (judges, politicians and other public figures) following a precedent set in 2002 in which a substantial amount of money (US\$42,000) was awarded to a sitting judge [Dibotelo] who had been defamed by a newspaper. The ruling gave rise to a spate of suits against media houses by all sorts of characters, including law firms, in recent years. The media houses...have so far not appealed against such judgments and are partly to blame for the rise in civil litigation...They have to be more pro-active in defending freedom of expression, and the development of case law in Botswana.”

Panelist Letshwiti Tutwane noted that the size of the media sector does not encourage legal specialization so that lawyers in Botswana are general practitioners and most are not knowledgeable about media law. In addition, most journalists lack legal knowledge and cannot detect when a story should not be published, particularly when it comes to potentially libelous stories. In these cases they need to know and understand the implications of “the defense we have under our common law, which is called ‘truth for public benefit’. If something is true, you have to prove that it’s in the public interest.”

One panelist pointed out that the current practice of lodging a complaint against government media with the Minister responsible for media is neither ethical nor effective. Caroline Lubwika recalls an instance when the Minister, instead of processing a complaint through appropriate channels, arrived at the newspaper in person: “Her presence in the newsroom intimidates people. It intimidates them to a point where they cannot do anything.”<sup>25</sup>

Botswana uses the term ‘defamation’ in place of libel and does not distinguish between libel and slander. Defamation is dealt with via the (1964) Penal Code. “Defamation laws are very punitive. If information is wrong, liability exists, even if a mistake is made after reasonable steps had been taken to obtain the truth,” according to Sello Motseta. Two types of defamation are recognized: civil and criminal. Civil defamation cases involve private parties and in these cases the Code is generally thought of by panelists as being fair. With criminal defamation—termed ‘Insult’ in the law—the State takes the party or parties to court. Insult laws are potentially damaging to freedom of expression and press freedom.<sup>26</sup> However, even in cases where the President has been ridiculed in cartoons, Motseta continued “they have never taken any steps to prosecute. We must give them credit for that.” Not all panelists felt as confident: Letshwiti Tutwane noted that “We have several dangerous media laws. Fortunately, for the most part, they are dinosaurs that have waited for ages without pouncing on prey.”

Panelists agree that there is a rise in civil litigation against the media. Because legal costs are high in the country heavy damages can result for those who lose, and this deters media outlets that lack resources from going to court. Perhaps for this reason, many cases are settled out of court, resulting in a dearth of case law. Most panelists regard settling out-of-court as being a highly undesirable practice for this reason.

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<sup>24</sup> IPI, 2006

<sup>25</sup> This instance is also referred to in AMDI, 2006: 13

<sup>26</sup> For summary descriptions of defamation and insult laws see: AMDI, 2006; Mochaba, Raffinetti & White, 2004; and Balule Maripe, 2000

Recent research found “the lack of a Freedom of Information Act means Botswana’s citizens are unable to participate fully and pro-actively in the development and democracy of the country.”<sup>27</sup> Some of the MSI panelists said that the development of a Freedom of Information Act (provided for in the national strategic Vision 2016) is being constantly put aside in favor of other policy priorities. As discussed earlier, Section 12 of the Constitution allows for restrictions on freedom of expression by public officers, local government employees, and teachers.<sup>28</sup> These restrictions impact on access to information, as government officials are reluctant to talk, according to Sello Motseta. Letshwiti Tutwane adds: “We have the National Security Act of 1986 of which Sections 4 and 5 protect classified information and the publication of defense and state security news. The definition of these issues is the prerogative of the state. One can rot in jail for up to 25 years.” Associated with the National Security Act, two panelists encountered reticent officials when requesting information on the privatization process in Botswana. Lauri Kabuetsile commented “PEEPA [Public Enterprises Evaluation and Privatization Agency] will say nothing. It refers all queries to the Ministry of Works and Transport. But PEEPA is supposed to be independent of government.”

Panelists agreed with Methaetsile Leepile’s statement that “Opposition political parties have complained about the unequal access to Government media vis-à-vis the ruling party.” They also agreed with Donald Koogotsise’s point that “information access is skewed in terms of government media; they are always given information by government and always accompany Ministers wherever they are going.” Lack of access to public information is keenly felt by media outside of major urban areas as Lauri Kubuitsile attested: “It is very difficult to get facts and news from civil servants. They often want you to go to head office in Gaborone, which is impossible for small local papers like mine. Few civil servants will talk on the phone, which again puts economic and manpower constraints on us.” In addition she finds that local police give information in a somewhat arbitrary fashion.

Gwerevende Hamufari does acknowledge that efforts are being made to improve access to public information via a new system of public relations officers in government ministries. Lauri Kubuitsile added: “There are some more 'new' minded civil servants that are changing the old mindset, but they are still few and far between.”

Panelists agree that access to international news and news sources is not legally restricted in Botswana. However, it is likely that costs and infrastructure associated with the Internet hinder access to web-based international news resources for some individuals and organizations, particularly in rural areas.

There is no reliable information on the demographic profiles or number of practicing journalists in the country. Presently they do not need to be not registered or licensed to practice in Botswana.<sup>29</sup> But if the Draft Mass Media Communications Bill (2001) is voted in by Parliament, local and international journalists will have to be registered and accredited.

Sello Motseta explained that at the moment “If I want journalists to attend a function, I might give them a press card. But really, many of my journalists have never been asked for any identification when they go to meetings and other events.” Section 35 of the Draft Bill would change this too: it will require all journalists “to apply for and obtain a press card from the Director in order to report on any official event in Botswana. [This is] problematic because they place the power to authorize journalists to operate in

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<sup>27</sup> AMDI, 2006: 9

<sup>28</sup> Mochaba, Raffinetti & White, 2004

<sup>29</sup> AMDI, 2006: 14

Botswana directly in the hands of the government. Potentially this gives the government the power to freeze out journalists whose views and opinions it does not like.”<sup>30</sup>

## **OBJECTIVE 2: PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM**

**SCORE: 2.54**

Panelists felt overall that the quality of journalism in Botswana is good, and individual indicator scores fell closer to the overall average of 2.54 than in Objective 1. Indicators 2, 4, and 6 (journalism ethics, coverage of key events, and balance of entertainment with news) achieved the highest scores, all about a half point above the average, while Indicators 5 and 8 (pay levels for journalists and niche reporting) were the lowest, trailing by about half a point.

“Newspapers are most often criticized for being elitist, concentrating on urban issues and tending to use the same sources for information,” said Letshwiti Tutwane. From the viewpoint of small independent newspapers outside of major urban areas there are manpower, financial and geographic constraints associated with gathering information independently. Irene Tshukudu of SAMDEF is of the opinion that “we have seen an improvement in recent years of objectivity in reporting and balanced stories.” But Gwerevende Hamufari noted, “We still have few stories that are one sided, stories that have only one source, and this is a problem.” Zwide Mbulawa added: “Most of the stories do not have technical input from the experts.” And Sello Motseta finds that “journalists writing stories make assumptions about what the readers know...those assumptions are very dangerous.”

Regarding objectivity, Letshwiti Tutwane was adamant that “When democracy is threatened, the media had to do something. So we cannot claim to be neutral when things are going wrong.” He added: “In so far as I know, there is no newspaper here that supports a particular political party. *Mmegi* is a very interesting place: you’ve got different people with different political interests. And we had a policy in the news room: if you know that you support a particular political party, don’t write stories.” In his opinion the independent newspaper *Mmegi*, the most widely read independent newspaper in Botswana, is not biased in relation to political activity.

Debate on the issue of fair and objective reporting reached consensus on the idea that, in reality, everybody protects their own interests. The media policy and financial position of a paper influences its content, while nuances on a range of issues will depend on a particular editor. In the context of this debate Methaetsile Leepile asserted “There’s nothing wrong, absolutely nothing wrong, with a paper taking a position out of principle or out of partisanship.”

Mobilizing against the original (1997) Draft Mass Media Communications Bill, in 2001 journalists formed the voluntary Press Council of Botswana, which launched its Media Code of Ethics in June 2004.<sup>31</sup> The Code acts as a self-regulatory mechanism for media practitioners. In line with international standards the Code addresses standards of professionalism; media roles, duties and good practices; and facilitates the distribution of complaints about ethical irregularities.<sup>32</sup> Panelists were unanimous that the Press Council and its Code has good industry penetration throughout the country and is widely accepted by media professionals. It has also enhanced standards and public confidence in the media.

Nonetheless, instances of unethical practices such as plagiarism do still occur. Lauri Kubuitsile said that “Twice I’ve had excerpts of my stories cut and pasted into other writer’s articles. I’m not sure if this is caused by lack of skills or ethics.”

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<sup>30</sup> AMDI, 2006: 36

<sup>31</sup> AMDI, 2006; IREX MSI Panelists; Mochaba, Raffinetti & White, 2004

<sup>32</sup> Mochaba, Raffinetti & White, 2004: 37

The concept of ethics sparked a long debate amongst panelists about cartoons. Most agreed that cartoons are a “gray area” in media standards and sometimes more “a matter of taste” than a defensible reason to sue. But some drew attention to the tension between tolerance and abuse. This debate divided men, who tended to concentrate on conceptual and legal implications of cartoons, and women, who tended to focus on the social impact of their messages. Most women panelists are concerned about how cartoons depict traditional norms, promote stereotypes and potentially stifle the creation of a more gender sensitive society.

Panelists agree that there is self-censorship both in media and in government. Lauri Kubuitsile pointed out that different organizations have different agendas and that “knowing how to behave” within them may involve a degree of self-censorship due to “fear of backlash.” But the threat of backlash is double pronged and can be exploited as an excuse to not comment to the media: a government director once told Methaetsile Leepile, general manager of CBET Publishing Company, ““You can say this or that, but remember, I have got a family to feed you know my children, blah, blah.”” Methaetsile Leepile goes on to say that “Sometimes a story’s aired and then one of the Ministers will complain and the journalist would be told ‘No these guys were not speaking for our section, they were speaking for another section.’ Or otherwise they are told, ‘You were not instructed by our section.’ Then the journalist would be forced to rewrite the story again or do new interviews. So in terms of government there is a lot of influence taking place. And it’s taken for granted, nobody is complaining about it in the government, even the journalists themselves take it as a given. It’s a normal thing.”

Several panelists are concerned about the “intrusion” of commercial interests on content and editorial independence, particularly the effect of self-censorship associated with maintaining an inflow of advertising revenue, which happens in both government and independent media (discussed in more detail in Objective 4).

Regarding the coverage of key events by journalists, panelists concurred with Irene Tshukudu’s statement, “there is room for improvement.” As Methaetsile Leepile noted, “there is little specialized reporting outside news and sports.” Some media organizations appear to expect to attract advertising when they send out journalists to cover events, and have been known to act in accordance with this expectation. This has implications for coverage of other, perhaps less lucrative, issues and events.

Because of difficulties in accessing public information and situations that curtail free speech (discussed above) it is not always possible to report meaningfully on key issues of public interest.

Panelists agree that the pay levels of journalists in Botswana are low. Lauri Kubuitsile commented “I know as a freelancer it is difficult to make a living wage. I could definitely see where there might be room for corrupt practices because of that, although I have never heard of it happening.” It has become a common occurrence for media houses to lose talented staff to public relations, marketing, and other media communication sub-sectors. Caroline Lubwika notes, “this is slowly eroding the quality of people to champion the cause of freedom of expression.” Nonetheless, government media in particular attract and retains “very intelligent” and “highly educated” staff.

Panelists state that entertainment forms the major part of programming as opposed to news, and that the news tends to be focused on politics.

Recent research<sup>33</sup> confirms panelists’ perceptions:

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<sup>33</sup> AMDI, 2006

- Entertainment and music comprise 54 percent of Radio Botswana’s channel RB1, although the news, which is in English and Setswana, occupies the most popular time slot. Radio Botswana’s second station RB2 focuses mainly on entertainment. Yarona FM has a 75 percent music / 25 percent talk and gospel mix, and Gabz FM has a mix of 80 percent music / 20 percent talk.<sup>34</sup> Duma FM, planning to be on air in September 2007, appears to be aiming for a similar mix to its competitors Yarona FM and Gabz FM.<sup>35</sup>
- There is a rise in the use of edutainment to address issues such as gender, HIV/AIDS and other pressing social issues.
- Television remains dominated by the state, which has deflected a high proportion of Batswana viewers to foreign stations, particularly those broadcasting from South Africa. The research cited here points to a general trend of audiences, particularly the young, as having a preference for entertainment and in increasing buy-in to Western values.

Few panelists spoke to the issue of equipment and facilities used by Batswana media, and research found little information to fill the gap. Methaetsile Leepile of CBET is of the opinion that “the local newsrooms are as modern as any in the world.” But in the experience of Lauri Kubuitsile, who works in the small independent media sector some distance from major urban areas, “the technology that we are using, decided by our economic situation, is becoming obsolete.”

Panelists agree that there is very little specialized reporting in the country. Sello Motseta suggested that this is “the product of an environment where private press is still in its embryonic stages.” Another reason put forward is the limited size of the market: Botswana has a small population, estimated at just over 1.8 million.<sup>36</sup> Market size is likely to account—to some degree at least—for the lack of community reporting, as would the inclination of newspapers to elitism and a catering to Westernized tastes. Motseta, commenting on the urban-centricity of print media, explained “papers tend to be circulated in major urban areas because it makes better economic sense, especially for private press.” A shortage of reporting, according to Zwide Mbulawa, on “social issues and other specialized issues like health” may also be partly attributable to market size and taste, as well as to factors discussed below.

In Gwerevende Hamufari’s opinion “only one or two journalists are doing investigative journalism. Most practice ‘armchair journalism.’” Reasons suggested by panelists, including Methaetsile Leepile, are that some media houses have “poor management and poor coordination,” and that, in the words of Caroline Lubwika, they “lack financial muscle, training, and dedication to working on a story for a long time.” Another reason why journalists are “not eager to do any investigative reporting,” as Leepile put it, is the difficulty associated with getting information from government officials who are reluctant to talk.

Only one panelist, Irene Tshukudu, mentioned seeing an improvement in investigative journalism skills and reporting. And none mention the few magazines that have survived after starting up, and which in fact do cover specialist topics such as business and finance, the environment, and agriculture and mining.<sup>37</sup>

### **OBJECTIVE 3: PLURALITY OF NEWS SOURCES**

**SCORE: 2.53**

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<sup>34</sup> Gabz FM, 2007; Yarona FM, 2007

<sup>35</sup> AllAfrica.com, 2007

<sup>36</sup> CIA, 2007

<sup>37</sup> AMDI, 2006: 27

A plurality of public and private news sources for consumers depends on what platforms and content the industry can deliver, in other words on industry sources as well as resources. As discussed earlier (Objective 1: Indicator 2) licensing laws and practices can be a hindrance to plurality and diversity. Also, newspapers tend to use the same sources of information (discussed in Objective 2: Indicator 1) because of difficulties in accessing public information (discussed in Objective 1: Indicator 7), situations that curtail free speech (discussed in Objective 1: Indicator 1 & 4), skills and infrastructural constraints (discussed in Objective 2: Indicator 8), and finally, marketing limitations (also discussed in Objective 2: Indicator 8).

As mentioned before, panelists are concerned that media is concentrated in the urban areas, favors English, and is “accessed mostly by elites,” according to Letshwiti Tutwane. Regarding language, panelists complain that minority language information sources are non-existent. They are unanimous in criticizing the lack of community media - there are few community newspapers, and no community radio or television stations – and panelists see this as a gap that needs to be addressed. As Thapelo Ndlovu notes: “Community radio is still restricted as there is no political will to legislate for its existence.” (See Objective 1: Indicator 2 for comments on why this could be happening). Domination of the TV sector by government is also of concern. All these factors limit media access for much of the population.

As mentioned in the introduction, Botswana is experiencing a high growth in the media industry, accompanied by a rise in demand for media products. Rapid developments in transport and communications have been critical to the expansion of broadcast media: it was estimated that by 2006 over 80 percent of the population could access good quality radio signals, and 40 percent could access the national television station via terrestrial transmitter. Satellite radio and television coverage is available in Botswana but few can afford it. Marked exceptions to media expansion are the slow development of new media, and except for a few newspapers, a non-existent community media sector.<sup>38</sup> Little information exists on the Internet access, but it is estimated that there are 5499 hosts, 11 service providers, and 60,000 users.<sup>39</sup> Gwerevende Hamufari comments: “In rural areas Internet is not at all accessible to the majority of people.”

Radio is the most popular and widely accessed media in the country. And as Irene Tshukudu points out, “rural communities depend so much on the radio. Print media reaches them later than news on the radio.” Radio’s reach is dominated by the government owned RB1 (public) and RB2 (commercial) stations. Neither of these stations have any real competition, because privately owned commercial stations Yarona FM and Gabz FM, which are both based in Gaborone, can only broadcast to a limited area.<sup>40</sup> It remains to be seen whether Duma FM will broadcast as planned. In Botswana there is a lot of overspill of radio signals, especially from South Africa, which allows for a wide audience for foreign radio stations.<sup>41</sup>

As discussed in Objective 1: Indicator 2, the state’s BTV dominates the television sector: in the last five years, this has deflected viewers to foreign TV broadcasts. The privately owned Gaborone Broadcasting Corporation TV (GBC TV) is based in Gaborone and broadcasts mainly to the capital city.<sup>42</sup> No new TV stations were licensed except for the satellite station Black Entertainment Satellite Television (BESTV) which plans to aim at the emerging black middle class, but the station is not yet operating.<sup>43</sup> Privately

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<sup>38</sup> Info in this paragraph sourced from AMDI, 2006: 5, 13, 23, 26, 27-31

<sup>39</sup> CIA, 2007

<sup>40</sup> AMDI, 2006: 21

<sup>41</sup> AMDI, 2006: 20

<sup>42</sup> AMDI, 2006: 25

<sup>43</sup> AMDI, 2006: 26

owned South African-based satellite television broadcaster, MultiChoice, has been authorised to beam its DSTV bouquet of channels within Botswana's jurisdiction.<sup>44</sup>

Both the appetite for and consumption of print media products are influenced by literacy levels, which are high in Botswana.<sup>45</sup> A significant proportion of Botswana read newspapers and, over the past five years, have had a growing number to choose from. The only state-owned paper is the Daily News, which is distributed nationally, is free of charge, and enjoys the widest readership.<sup>46</sup> At present there are approximately 13 independent newspapers in circulation, mostly weeklies. Lauri Kubuitsile comments: "There are not really any minority newspapers that I know of. This probably has less to do with any type of censorship than with finance and economic viability."

Only one panelist commented on access to international media, which suggests perhaps that access is not an issue excepting for financial constraints, which are most keenly experienced in rural areas. As Irene Tshukudu remarks: "There is predominantly free access to international media through various sources."

As discussed earlier (in Objective 1: Indicator 2, and Objective 3: Indicator 1) "there is a lot of overspill of radio signals, especially from South Africa, which allows for a wide audience for foreign radio stations."<sup>47</sup> But satellite broadcasts, whether for TV or radio, are expensive and not affordable for most Botswana. In terms of international newspapers, this research found no references to restrictions. In fact four South African newspapers (The Sowetan, The Sunday Times, the Mail & Guardian, and The Star) feature amongst the top ten most read newspapers in Botswana.<sup>48</sup>

The topic of public media reflecting views of society as a whole generated a lot of debate. In a comment representative of some of the panelists Gwerevende Hamufari states: "The state media is a big problem because it has no independence. It is not a public entity but rather a mouthpiece for government policy." But not all panelists are in agreement: some think that media – including government media - does not escape powerful interests that necessarily control everybody (as discussed in Objective 2: Indicator 1). And some panelists are of the opinion that compared to some other African countries Botswana generally has a relatively free media climate.

Recent research finds that "the Botswana government has no intention of loosening its grip on the state media."<sup>49</sup> But MSI panelists also acknowledge conflicts that government are struggling to reconcile: "There are powerful political interests that control the ruling party and that put pressure on media. I would assume that they are trying to find a way to solve these problems because in one breath they say 'Let's outsource activities, let's refocus on what government is supposed to be doing in terms of news dissemination,' and in the next breath it appears they are trying to say 'We are the ones that should be the pioneers of news.' So we see that conflict from time to time."

In terms of broadcasting, (see Objective 1: Indicator 5) the constitution of the state broadcaster BTV as a division of the Department of Broadcasting Services has negative implications for editorial independence and control.<sup>50</sup> Methaetsile Leepile offers an alternative perspective: "Yes, it is a government department, it is treated like a government department and it reports to the minister. But it has a chairman of the board

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<sup>44</sup> Mochaba, Raffinetti & White, 2004: 6

<sup>45</sup> Literacy is estimated at 81.2 percent (which is made up of 81.5 percent women and 76.1 percent men). Of the 81.2 percent literate people, 83.3 percent live in urban areas and 64.1 percent live in rural areas (UNDP, 2005: 108).

<sup>46</sup> AMDI, 2006: 27-30

<sup>47</sup> AMDI, 2006: 20

<sup>48</sup> AMDI, 2006: 29

<sup>49</sup> AMDI, 2006: 13

<sup>50</sup> Mochaba, Raffinetti & White, 2004: 8

and ultimately it is responsible to that board. The government media people could argue that they are independent.”

Regarding coverage of the entire political spectrum, Lauri Kubuitsile argues that the public broadcaster “does attempt to offer varying perspectives.” But Thapelo Ndlovu counters: “There are certain issues and certain people that government media doesn’t want to touch.” Opposition parties sometimes complain that they are not covered adequately by the state media. As Methaetsile Leepile says, “It’s probably true. Everyday my twelve-year-old daughter asks me, ‘Why is this guy always in the news dad?’ You know, the front page news, The President. Everyday he is on television. And I say, ‘Well, it’s his station’.” As one panelist observed, and others agreed, it does not help opposition parties to protest, because government media are acting on instructions “from above.” Lauri Kubuitsile adds that there have been reports of programs with opposition parties being edited; “This was recently covered in the national newspapers - when the BCP [Botswana Congress Party] complained that they were edited.” Caroline Lubwika makes the point that because government officials get their orders from the Minister, the public roles and ethical standards of media and of government media professionals themselves – the directors, general managers and assignment editors – are undermined. In her opinion “they are just reporters for government. I don’t consider them journalists, even though they’re the best trained in the country.”

There is only one strong news agency in the country, the state-owned and run Botswana Press Agency (BOPA), which purchases news and media products from international sources.<sup>51</sup> BOPA provides news to government-owned media - radio, television, and the Daily News. Donald Koogotsise adds: “The Daily News has got bureaus all over the place and they do a pretty good job because they provide news on the spot; they are on site.” MISA reports that “BOPA was supposed to gather and distribute information to all media but has failed as it continues to compete with private newspapers.”<sup>52</sup> But MSI panelists did not mention anything to this effect. Caroline Lubwika thinks there was no need for another agency, and another says “there is a need for the creation of independent news agencies in the country.”

The general consensus amongst panelists centered on Donald Koogotsise’s comment: “News agencies are not common locally.” One independent news agency - Front Page - has been set up but is not very active.<sup>53</sup> The established independent newspaper Mmegi has a Reuters server, but for most media houses, Panel facilitator Jackie Kabeta said “the costs of agencies are prohibitive and only those who can afford it are able to utilize them.”

The issue of the correct citing of content was not addressed specifically in relation to news agencies, but rather to citing sources generally. For instance Thapelo Ndlovu says: “In terms of the copyright law, you can get a story - and I am not saying replicate a story - from other publications, as long as you acknowledge them.” Plagiarism was reported by one panelist (see Objective 2: Indicator 2) but not in relation to news agency sources.

Irene Tshukudu commented that “private media rely mostly on international sources as opposed to domestic ones. Community broadcast media does not exist.” Both claims are confirmed by research, as discussed earlier (Objective 2: Indicator 6; Objective 3: Indicator 1).

The independent broadcaster Gaborone Broadcasting Corporation TV (GBC TV) has started broadcasting local news, but remains predominantly reliant on programming from South Africa.<sup>54</sup> Black Entertainment

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<sup>51</sup> AMDI, 2006:

<sup>52</sup> MISA, 2005: 196

<sup>53</sup> AMDI, 2006: 30

<sup>54</sup> AMDI 2006: 25

Satellite Television (BESTV) is not yet broadcasting. It plans to target the emerging black middle class, but judging from the partners it is trying to recruit,<sup>55</sup> news programs are unlikely to be locally produced.

The two independent radio stations - Yarona FM and Gabz FM - are entertainment oriented, as opposed to news-oriented. Details on how much of the two independent radio broadcasters' talk programming comprises news, and what proportion of their news is locally produced, was not sourced. Duma FM is just starting its dummy runs, but press statements indicate that a lot of the content will be sourced from existing stations.<sup>56</sup>

From the list below it appears that in Botswana newspapers have the most diverse spread of ownership, followed by radio, and then television. There are few locally owned magazines, and Internet use is low (60,000 people which represents 3.3 percent of a population of 1,815,508<sup>57</sup>) so these sectors have not been explored.<sup>58</sup>

**Radio ownership:** 2 State-owned (RB 1 and RB 2); 3 Privately-owned by local business interests and minority foreign shareholders (Yarona FM, Gabz FM and Duma FM); 8 International/foreign stations and 1 pan-regional/ African continental station broadcasting to Botswana.<sup>59</sup>

**Television ownership:** 3 broadcasters. 1 State-owned (BTV); 1 Privately-owned by local businesspeople and partner MNet Africa (Gaborone Broadcasting Corporation TV - GBC TV). The third is a new satellite station, BESTV, which is not yet operating.<sup>60</sup>

**Newspaper ownership:** 1 State-Owned (Daily News); Around 13 **commercial papers** privately owned by diverse business interests (Mmegi/The Reporter; Botswana Daily News; Botswana Guardian; The Voice; The Botswana Gazette; The Midweek Sun; The Sunday Tribune; Monitor; Echo; The Paparazzi; The Mirror, The Botswana Advertiser, and the Sunday Standard).<sup>61</sup> A few **community** newspapers, including Ngami Times in Maun.

Panelists agree that media ownership is not commonly known in as far as the general public is concerned. As Lauri Kubuitsile says, "*I don't think the public is very clear on who owns what, and how that may have an impact on media content.*" Panelists do not think this lack of knowledge results from any deliberate attempt by anybody to mask information. Rather, media consumers are perceived as not being particularly interested in knowing. The dominance of TV by the state broadcaster is noticed - even by youngsters, as shown by Methaetsile Leepile's comment (Objective 3: Indicator 3) - so most Batswana are likely to see *this* particular link between content and ownership/control.

In terms of media being representative of broad social interests, there is a large overlap between information relevant to this Indicator and others (predominantly in Objective 3: Indicator 1; but also in Objective 2: Indicator 6) so information is not repeated here. Instead this section deals mainly with geographical spread, and culture/ethnicity - including language.

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<sup>55</sup> See Mmegi online

<sup>56</sup> AllAfrica.com, 2007.

<sup>57</sup> CIA, 2007

<sup>58</sup> A nationally representative research survey has some interesting statistics on the degree to which Batswana trust different media in the country (Afrobarometer, 2005, Round 3 survey of Botswana) but is not linked to media ownership.

<sup>59</sup> AMDI, 2006: 20

<sup>60</sup> AMDI, 2006: 25

<sup>61</sup> AMDI, 2006: 29

Panelists agree that there is little support for indigenous local culture and minority languages. Donald Koogotsise comments: “Stories lack geographical spread, you will find that the concentration is around the big towns. There may be news worth reporting out there in certain villages, but they are not covered.” He comments on the absence of licensed or unlicensed community radio stations: “We have heard of people complaining that the community radio stations may promote tribalism and that they would break up the nation, so there are issues around ethnicity.” As there is little specialized reporting – except for the few magazines that concentrate on business and finance, the environment, and agriculture and mining<sup>62</sup> - there is inadequate coverage of social issues such health and gender.

Commercial is entertainment-focused and cultivates a Westernised audience.<sup>63</sup> Youth issues are the focus of Yarona FM, which has a 75 percent music, and 25 percent talk and gospel mix.<sup>64</sup> Its reach is limited to a fairly small radius around Gaborone where it is based. Gabz FM has a mix of 20 percent talk and 80 percent music.<sup>65</sup> Also based in Gaborone, its footprint extends in a 90 kilometer radius from the capital. It broadcasts in English and targets the economically active 25-49 age group.<sup>66</sup> Duma FM is likely to have a similar geographical reach and content spread as its competitors Yarona FM and Gabz FM. Motsweding FM (a South African station) broadcasts in Setswana, which is widely spoken in Botswana.<sup>67</sup>

Television relies predominantly on foreign programming although government-owned BTV, which is broadcast nationally, is attempting to include minority languages in addition to its current English and Setswana mediums.<sup>68</sup> “Originally conceived as a news and current affairs station, BTV expanded its mandate to include programs of different genres demanded by the Batswana. It now has a local in-house magazine, sports, religion and children’s programs.”<sup>69</sup> Commercial station GBC TV broadcasts within a 50-kilometre radius of Gaborone. Entertainment and sports comprise the bulk of its content although it has begun to incorporate some local content in its newscasts.<sup>69</sup>

Government’s Daily News is distributed nationally free of charge. There are two other national dailies, approximately 10 national weeklies, and only one regional newspaper.<sup>70</sup> The best known community paper is the Ngami Times, which is based in the tourist town of Maun.<sup>71</sup> Newspapers are mainly urban-centric and published in English, which in Sello Motseta’s experience, “*Readers and advertisers prefer.*” Mokgosi (the only vernacular paper, written in Setswana) folded in 2005, but the Daily News and Mmegi carry Setswana inserts to cater for the non-English readers.<sup>72</sup>

#### **OBJECTIVE 4: BUSINESS MANAGEMENT**

**SCORE: 2.09**

Panelists were somewhat divided on the management practices of media. It appears that management expertise is uneven and business practices are as varied in effectiveness and efficiency as in any other business. Opinions ranged from Donald Koogotsise’s comment “some professionalism is displayed” to

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<sup>62</sup> AMDI, 2006: 27

<sup>63</sup> AMDI, 2006: 54

<sup>64</sup> AMDI, 2006: 19-20; Yarona FM

<sup>65</sup> Gabz FM, 2007

<sup>66</sup> AMDI, 2006: 20

<sup>67</sup> AMDI, 2006: 20

<sup>68</sup> AMDI, 2006: 26; MISA, 2005: 202

<sup>69</sup> AMDI, 2006: 25

<sup>70</sup> AMDI, 2006: 28

<sup>71</sup> AMDI, 2006: 13

<sup>72</sup> AMDI, 2006: 30

Letshwiti Tutwane noting that “There is lots of inefficiency. From a management perspective there is no semblance of seriousness other than the motive of just making money.”

Government media’s low advertising rates, wide distribution, free media products and non-collection of monies owed to them, have been working against the financial viability of the independent media sector. It was pointed out that government have now begun to address the situation, at least in as far as they are chasing debtors and have adopted a cash-up-front strategy for advertising sales. MSI Facilitator Jackie Kabeta views these developments as being an advantage for the independent media sector, as it sets a benchmark practice for the industry. She comments: “I personally don’t think that government is a threat anymore. Maybe in the beginning, when we were complacent, but I think that their attitude has helped private media people to jack up their act, stop being crybabies, and take them on. If government advertising comes our way, that’s fine, we’d love to have it. If it doesn’t come our way, we’re not going to mourn...it doesn’t make a difference to our bottom line.”

Thapelo Ndlovu notes that “it’s generally difficult to run a media house privately. A number of publications have died due to economic pressure.” At the level of small publications Lauri Kubuitsile finds that financial resources limit the ability to upgrade outmoded technology. Moreover, as is the case with many small or fledgling papers, she and her staff must multi-task because there is no separation between business and editorial functions. She explains: “As owner of the newspaper, I write the stories, I write the checks, I distribute the papers from my car. This is how it’s run and we’ve had ten years like this.” Sello Motseta argues that factors such as success and sustainability depend on the maturity of a business, “I think the industry in Botswana is divided amongst those that are old and those that are fairly new.” In terms of expertise, he says: “We still see some challenges with upcoming media. These are the people who still need management training expertise to run institutions professionally. I’ve seen a number of small, upcoming ones, who are struggling with challenges. Sustainability becomes an even bigger challenge if resources are not managed optimally.”

Irene Tshukudu speaks for most of the panelists when she says: “The biggest challenge in media remains funding. Indigenous banks remain reluctant to venture into the media funding as it is known to be high risk.” As Thapelo Ndlovu wryly remarks: “Banks will tell you that if you have a lot of money you have to spend it on journalists. If you have a lot of money to waste, spend it in newspapers.” The Southern Africa Media Development Fund (SAMDEF) was mentioned by one panelist who says they “are always ready to help - within their own limits obviously, and within their own terms and conditions.” But recent research reports that some people found these terms and conditions “intimidating.”<sup>73</sup>

Recent research conducted by Mmegi revealed that “there are people who take ABC [statistics from the Audit Bureau of Circulation] seriously, like the ad agencies or big retail chains. That doesn’t necessarily happen with government: there is an unwritten rule in government and parastatals that they have to spread the advertising cake a little. They do recognize that they have a duty to promote media pluralism.” Nonetheless panelists express concern about several government practices:

- In Methaetsile Leepile’s words: “It appears that government media is not doing what it’s supposed to be doing, as it tends to compete with the commercial media for adspend.” This confirms 2005 research, which found that although the Broadcasting Act stipulates that state advertising must be equitably distributed amongst Botswana’s various media outlets, this does not happen. Instead the state privileges its own media to the detriment of the private media sector.<sup>74</sup> This imbalance is highly

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<sup>73</sup> AMDI, 2006: 57

<sup>74</sup> MISA, 2005: 181

unpalatable for independent media professionals because they see themselves as funding the success of government media on two levels: as media organisations and as individuals.

Echoing the majority of panelists Gwerevende Hamufari states: “It’s not fair for government to monopolize advertising. My problem is not that they get advertising, but how they get it. They don’t know how much it costs them to print a newspaper, they don’t know how much it costs them to pay a messenger, they don’t know the dynamics in the market place to an extent that they don’t know how to price. I pay for that from my tax and I don’t work for government. I am in competition with them! Because they enjoy unlimited resources - paid by us, the taxpayers - they can do what they like. The Daily News is the largest circulating newspaper – it prints 65,000 a day – they set the price and they depress prices in the market. People operating in the realm of the private media are handicapped. We are operating at a disadvantage. The playing fields are not level.” The same complaint was recorded years ago and the demise of Mokgosi, a Setswana broadsheet, was attributed to “the hefty competition inflicted by the Daily News.”<sup>75</sup>

As recent research finds “there is currently no competition legislation in Botswana to prevent dominant companies from abusing their position in the marketplace.”<sup>76</sup>

- Another contentious issue is that “some ministries like Home Affairs don’t advertise sufficiently in the local private media, but will advertise aggressively in the international private media,” as observed by Caroline Lubwika.
- Government does not provide an enabling financial climate or operational frameworks for the development of community media. (See Objective 1: Indicator 2; and Objective 3: Indicator1).

The advertising market in Botswana is limited, with most advertising revenue going to radio or newspapers.<sup>77</sup>

- In the commercial newspaper sector, the bulk of revenue is generated from advertising and less from circulation. Newspapers find that in cities the use of Internet to access online newspapers is having a negative impact on subscription numbers and revenue from cover sales.
- In the television sector, government-owned BTV and the South African-based DSTV harness most of the television adspend. Methaetsile Leepile notes: “TV is expensive and tends to be out of reach of potential private sector investors.”
- Independent commercial radio broadcasters Yarona FM and Gabz FM attract revenue mainly from local business.<sup>78</sup> Duma FM is a newcomer and it appears from press statements that the station also aims to attract local investment and advertisers.<sup>79</sup>

Most panelists agreed with Lauri Kubuitsile “certain stories might affect advertising revenue.” As Donald Koogotsise observes: “There seems to be bias towards advertising, with more coverage for those sponsoring advertorial content.” So advertising revenue sometimes gives rise to self-censorship.

Only two panelists refer – tangentially - to the role of international donors in Botswana (See Objective 5: Indicator 3). Recent research found that most media development projects in the state sector are funded by the Botswana government.<sup>80</sup> In the same study “MISA Botswana’s Modise Maphanyane stated

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<sup>75</sup> MISA, 2005: 38

<sup>76</sup> Mochaba, Raffinetti & White, 2004: 18

<sup>77</sup> AMDI, 2006: 26

<sup>78</sup> AMDI, 2006: 19

<sup>79</sup> AllAfrica.com, 2007

<sup>80</sup> AMDI, 2006: 57

strongly that many donors are too selective about which countries or regions are seen as priority areas, so that some areas end up getting more funding than others. Countries such as Botswana have many pockets of poverty and these are ignored because the country is regarded as a middle-income country. He said that he also suspects that too many donors look at the impact on their own countries rather than the needs of the African countries, so they end up going to the countries they think will have more impact on their countries of origin.”<sup>81</sup>

At present it is estimated that “the national media market share has grown to about P150 million of which about P80 million is probably print, with the balance spread between radio, TV and outdoor advertising.”<sup>82</sup>

Advertising is “quite advanced” in Botswana, according to Methaetsile Leepile, and several advertising agencies exist. But “not all media work with them. Most media houses have their own market representatives, who go around seeking for business.” In the print sector, this strategy is probably related to the fact that agencies want audited circulation figures in order to ensure that their clients get good exposure for their adspend. But only larger media houses can afford the services of ABC (Audit Bureau of Circulations) (see Objective 4: Indicator 7). This “marginalizes the smaller people with smaller circulation.” According to Gwervevde Hamufari. Lauri Kubuitsile, whose publication is far from the major cities says that “I don't think advertising agencies ever think of operating outside of Gaborone, except occasionally in Francistown and perhaps recently Maun.”

The geographical accessibility of advertising agencies is not the only problem. Methaetsile Leepile and Sello Motseta explain that “media statistics agencies compile are never made available to us as stakeholders.” So media houses have no clarity regarding the criteria and standards they need to meet in order to be represented by agencies, or where they need to improve, or if they do indeed meet requirements and can argue to that effect. Advertising agencies, or brokers, organize themselves in the form of co-operatives. Sello Motseta explained that for a fee a media house can become a member and be guaranteed advertising, otherwise you are “squeezed out of the market. It has monopolistic tones.” He mentions Capro (a South African agency) locking media houses out because they only give advertising to the Botswana Guardian. Methaetsile Leepile adds: “There should be some sort of mechanism in place to accommodate smaller players in the industry.”

Methaetsile Leepile said “This is not America or South Africa where you generate a specific amount of your revenue just in cover sales.” Panelists all agree that advertising is the main source of income for media. Letshwiti Tutwane estimates that on average advertising generates between 80 percent and 90 percent of revenue in the industry. The government’s Daily News carries so many adverts, “We call them the brochure site!” exclaimed Jackie Kabeta.

Lauri Kubuitsile comments on her publication: “Since our newspaper is free, our news-to-advert ratio can be as much as 30-70. It is our only source of income for the newspaper. And it’s not necessarily mismanagement of resources; it’s that our pool of advertisers is getting smaller and smaller everyday.” One strategy is to move with the growing trend towards advertorials (as discussed in Objective 4: Indicator 2) Zwide Mbulawa comments: “The corporate world pays for inserts/advertorials as forms of stories these days. You pay for your story!” This does not help the high advertising-to-content ratio, but rather, exacerbates it.

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<sup>81</sup> AMDI, 2006: 57

<sup>82</sup> AMDI, 2006: 44

Panelists are unanimous that independent media do not receive any government subsidies. In fact the opposite is true. As discussed in Objective 4: Indicator 2, as taxpayers and in terms of the distribution of the state's adspend, private print media subsidizes the state.

All panelists are in agreement that there is little media market research in the country and what exists is not integrated nor made easily accessible across the different media sectors. A broadly representative comment is that "most media houses conduct [their] own readership and market surveys, usually using external agencies/parties." Furthermore, Thapelo Ndlovu points out that because "rating and circulation are mainly done by the media houses themselves, it compromises their accuracy." As discussed earlier (Objective 4: Indicator 3) only the larger, more affluent media houses can afford to use advertising agencies or ABC services - and thus their reports.

One panelist called on donor communities to fund local organisations to develop this research area.

"Botswana has no independent media research institution...[and] only five out of around 13 newspaper titles published in the country have their circulation independently audited by the South African-based Audit Bureau of Circulation (ABC)."<sup>83</sup> As pointed out above, these 'Big 5' are national publications and are able to afford the services of ABC, but smaller publications cannot.

MSI panelist Methaetsile Leepile adds: "All media products surveys (AMPs) are yet to take root here, though there have been attempts to do that in the recent past by independent private commercial entities. Findings from research conducted by individual media houses suffer from a credibility problem as a result."

MSI panelists agree that audience research and media monitoring is a priority area that needs development in Botswana. As Zwide Mbulawa attests: "We need to produce useful data on regular basis."

## **OBJECTIVE 5: SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS**

**SCORE: 2.83**

There was very little comment from MSI panelists on trade associations and few findings from other research studies to augment panelists' information. Donald Koogotsise remarked: "*I know there's been* media sector within the Chamber of Commerce, but I don't think it has been effective in as far as advancing media issues are concerned. To a larger extent, I think it is now serving the interests of big businesses. So whatever area you are in, as long as you are in a smaller category, there isn't much." Another panelist notes that "we need to agree on a set of norms, maybe set up a Publisher's Association."

Research conducted in 2006 found that "most professional press associations in Botswana, such as the Botswana Journalists' Association (BOJA), [Botswana] Press Club and others have either collapsed or have not been active in the past five years. The only active professional body at the moment is the Botswana Editors' Forum (BEF), which is affiliated to the Southern African Editors' Forum (SAEF) and, by extension, the newly founded continental African Editors' Forum (TAEF)."<sup>84</sup> The same study found that "other media organizations, including the relatively new Botswana Media Women's Association, have not been very active in the past two years."<sup>85</sup> But MSI panelist Donald Koogotsise says that "the Botswana Women's Media Association has been very active." Notably, no female MSI panelists commented on this.

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<sup>83</sup> AMDI, 2006: 2 & 59

<sup>84</sup> AMDI, 2006: 14. Confirmed by another study's findings (MISA, 2005: 205).

<sup>85</sup> AMDI, 2006: 14. Also confirmed by the MISA study

Most panelists mention the active Botswana Editors' Forum (BEF). But several also say that the BEF and other professional associations are not well supported by media professionals themselves. Methaetsile Leepile comments: "Generally media practitioners in this country are not interested in anything. There seems to be a trend: we have had committed individuals to advance certain causes, but over time there is no sustained support. Editors for instance: they are never there for most of the meetings that they have to cover. Even their own Botswana Editors' Forum! I think the Forum has had successful events in terms of panel discussions, but they are driven by one or two individuals." It should be acknowledged, however, that journalists did mobilize to form the voluntary Press Council of Botswana (discussed in Objective 2: Indicator 2), which launched its well distributed and widely respected Media Code of Ethics in June 2004.<sup>86</sup>

A Botswana Workers' Union (BOMEWU) was started up fairly recently by Donald Koogotsise. He resigned shortly after having accomplished his mandate, which was to start the union. "I even had my own lawyer advising, registering it, everything. Now it's up to the journalists to run with it." He concurs with Methaetsile Leepile's comment on a general lack of interest displayed by media practitioners. Regarding the launch of the union Donald Koogotsise says, "my experience has been that journalists are not forthcoming, they are not very eager to support their own organization. We invited them. We booked and paid for a hundred people at The Maharaj Hotel. Only about six or seven people arrived." According to Sello Motseta, an executive committee needs to be appointed to relieve the union's interim structure, but international donor funding is delayed.

Although panelists did not mention government's recently established Media Advisory Council (MAC) recent research found that media practitioners regarded it as an "important form of state support because it allows the state to elicit the views and ideas of media practitioners in the country and to see how they can help to improve things in the sector."<sup>87</sup>

Letshwiti Tutwane points out that "bargaining in any form is unusual in this country and there are few civil society organizations which can take on media issues." Nonetheless, as Donald Koogotsise notes, "generally the past two years have seen a reawakening of organizations that are supposed to protect and advance the interests of media practitioners."

Although Lauri Kubuitsile said "other NGOs do come forward and speak out when they feel that journalists are being attacked or freedom of speech curtailed," MISA was singled out by almost all the MSI panelists as being an NGO that is "active in all relevant spheres" of media. Letshwiti Tutwane, in an earlier research study, commented that "MISA is at the heart of many media development projects in the country,"<sup>88</sup> even driving the formation of the Press Council of Botswana. Sello Motseta does point out, however, that it "represents journalists generally and not publishers specifically." Regarding MISA's efforts to promote free speech and journalist's rights, Caroline Lubwika observes: "It has lobbied for media issues, even taken issues to government, and has become a force to reckon with in the country."

Thapelo Ndlovu remarks that although there are a number of media-related NGOs, "most are inactive due to economic starvation. Because of the country's economic status as an upper middle income country, NGOs are generally neglected by international donors."<sup>89</sup> But there are sometimes negative implications associated with donor funding, particularly around issues of ownership. "One of the reasons organizations

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<sup>86</sup> AMDI, 2006; IREX MSI Panelists; Mochaba, Raffinetti & White, 2004

<sup>87</sup> AMDI, 2006: 56

<sup>88</sup> AMDI, 2006: 43. The whole of Chapter 14 is an excellent resource on media development initiatives, including the activities of media NGOs in Botswana

<sup>89</sup> See also AMDI, 2006: 50

fail is because they are sponsored from outside. I know many examples in the region: The Southern African Federation of Journalists is one. If funding comes from the outside, the perception about money, about privileges, about travel, whatever, can be a problem.”

Although, as Sello Motseta put it, “most old-school journalists do not have relevant degrees,” Methaetsile Leepile observed “the level of education for journalists and other media workers is on the rise.”

Panelists agree that the only credible formal training is offered by University of Botswana’s Department of Media Studies, established in 2001. Donald Koogotsise, who is with the university as well as with SAMDEF, comments: “We are trying to come up with programs. We have a plan to introduce a Masters in Journalism, but we need the capacity first - we want to have two professors. We are also thinking of a postgraduate diploma that will cater for people who are already in service.” The latter strategy is coming up against some resistance (See Indicator 5, next). He continues: “There are other private colleges that offer training but I am very suspicious of most of them. Most are keen on money, but very bad on management. Interestingly Botha and the Tertiary Education Council are quick to register them, I don’t really know what is going on. An example is this Linkonkweng: if you look at their media studies program you will find that they are more into design, they are not really into journalism. And we begin to get worried about what kind of graduates they will produce. Journalists need to do an investigative story and look at some of these schools.”

A media training needs analysis of eight SADC countries - including Botswana – recently conducted by the Sol Plaatje Institute for Media Leadership at Rhodes University in South Africa found that media houses often complain of employing graduates with university-level qualifications who turn out to have few, and sometimes no, practical skills. Media houses then have to invest time, effort and money to bring them up to speed.<sup>90</sup> When MSI panel facilitator Jackie Kabeta asked if media outlets are satisfied with the quality of the graduates from the University of Botswana, Donald Koogotsise replied: “Some of them are already employed in companies, but I think it would be premature to try and make any judgment on that. We only had our first batch of graduates last year.” Methaetsile Leepile adds that “the quality of trainees is OK.”

Regarding entry into the profession Methaetsile Leepile noted “It is not easy for someone without any technical or specialized media training to enter the sector anymore. Few media houses have internship programs and the sector is over-subscribed, with graduates walking the streets without jobs.”

The Sol Plaatje Institute’s media training needs analysis of eight SADC countries found that Botswana, like many other countries, lacks skills in media management and leadership, and many other professional and technical areas in the industry.<sup>91</sup> Sello Motseta confirms: “management is quite a big challenge.” And as discussed earlier (Objective 1: Indicator 5) Media Law is an area where journalists lack training.

Irene Tshukudu remarks that “it would be desirable to find reputable institutions of media learning that break courses down into certificates and diplomas so that there are both full-time and part-time courses.” Donald Koogotsise, of the University of Botswana and SAMDEF, says: “We are aware that there are certain skills which are required by journalists, especially those who are working, who need in-service training. We are fighting with the University because it still seems adverse to the idea of offering certificates or offering diplomas, like post graduate diploma or something of that sort.”

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<sup>90</sup> Milne, Du Toit, Rau & Mdlongwa, 2006

<sup>91</sup> Milne, Du Toit, Rau & Mdlongwa, 2006

Methaetsile Leepile, who works in a large organization, is of the opinion that “all media houses support training of their staff in one form or other, although they may not necessarily have training plans in place.” But in Lauri Kubuitsile’s experience, the courses on offer “almost exclusively take place in Gaborone. This makes them difficult for small newspapers such as ours to take advantage of because of financial constraints.”<sup>92</sup> So access to further training is likely to depend on the size of the organisation for which journalists work. Government media personnel are the best-sponsored to attend training, which accounts to some extent for why most panelists agree that government journalists are the best trained print and broadcast professionals in Botswana.

Many local media organizations in Botswana like MISA and its affiliates such as SAIMED provide short-term training for journalists. But Letshwiti Tutwane finds that “we organize workshops to train journalists, but most of them don’t come, or they stay a while and then disappear, even the editors.” Another reason why government journalists are the best, and perceived as so, in the industry may be that “they always stay on at workshops. I have to commend journalists from government media for that. They’ve always been supportive. And you’ll always find a representative from government media coming to participate.”

Regarding newsprint, most is sourced from South Africa. “There are only two major web printing facilities in the country. This has been the case since 2002,” Methaetsile Leepile observed. All but the government printer [Weboffset] are in private hands. Apparently the market is small: approximately thirty million Pula per year.”

Panelists are apprehensive about a number of government practices in relation to printing:

- Methaetsile Leepile opined “there is an element of favoritism or political patronage in the manner in which Government subcontracts its printing jobs. Only once has the competing commercial press won a contract from the Government, and it is not uncommon for the other competitor to be awarded a contract extension outside the tender process.”
- Government’s decision in late 2005, to purchase a printer and take control of the production of its newspaper Daily News, customarily printed by Mmegi,<sup>93</sup> is a highly contentious issue. An MSI panelist remarks: “We are watching to see if the government press is going to print smaller publications. It’s a challenge that those with presses have to face. I don’t think it’s a good idea for the government to be taking up printing. Government is dishing out money to us in the private sector and telling us to print and do all these other jobs, and at the same time we must compete with them. We are paying taxes to them to pay for that web [Weboffset], which is very unfair. They should be supporting printing and publishing. They are putting us out of business.”

“Why do they start presses? They brought this press when they were talking about cost recovery: commercialization or outsourcing. How do you recover costs when you are going to splash thirty million Pula on a press? For an underutilized facility?” Thirty million Pula is the same amount given earlier as an estimate of the entire market value for printing in Botswana.

Panelists agree that channels of media distribution in the print media are in private hands, apolitical, and not restricted. According to Methaetsile Leepile, “more and more media houses are outsourcing their distribution functions.” Sello Motseta adds that “kiosks in some of the major villages are run by ordinary people, and they are doing well, I know of some well established ones in some places outside Gaborone.”

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<sup>92</sup> The SPI research (Milne, Du Toit, Rau & Mdlongwa, 2006) found that media professionals prefer training to be conducted at actual media organisations, instead of staff having to travel to where the training institutions are located.

<sup>93</sup> MISA, 2005: 38

Even the distribution of the government's Daily News is outsourced. Sello Motseta points out, however, that according to the tender process contracts are supposed to run for twelve months, but nothing has happened for three years.

Lauri Kubuitsile expresses concern that the distribution of Internet service providers makes web access unaffordable for most people. "In rural areas the only service provider is Botsnet, because they are the only ones who offer a local dial-up number. Being a sister company to BTV is, I believe, a conflict of interest. Delaying ADSL rollout to rural areas is to their advantage. Also, keeping up achingly slow dialup connection is again to their advantage." Botsnet is a fully owned subsidiary of Botswana Telecommunications Corporation, and thus government-owned.<sup>94</sup>

Regarding radio, Caroline Lubwika notes: "Government has space on their transmitters, which they can lease to private radio stations. They don't need to invest...But what the three independents who have been awarded licenses will be doing is syndicating their investment and pooling together resources to go national. They will still be leasing masts –on which transmitters are mounted - from government."

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